

FATHOM THIS!

The monthly e-letter from San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Celebrating 20 years as a national park 1988-2008

April, 2008

Issue #3

Welcome to the monthly e-letter from San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park; *your* national park on San Francisco's historic waterfront. Join us in April during the park's 20th anniversary, with programs and events for the whole family, such as National Park Week, when we participate with national parks across America in inviting you to explore your heritage. During that week, we are partnering with the San Francisco African American and Cultural Society in presenting the 150th commemoration of the 1858 Black Exodus from San Francisco (details in the National Park Week section of newsletter), and are hosting an Open House event. For more information about the park, please call the Visitor Center at 415-447-5000, and for a complete quarterly schedule of special programs, including ranger-led tours and traditional sea music programs, please visit the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/safr>.

The e-letter now has a name: "Fathom This!" The inspiration came from a recording of the same title by New Hampshire chantey singer Barry Finn, and the title is adopted here, with his blessing. Feel free to forward this e-letter to friends, and enter it into blogs, in whole or in part. One may sign up to receive it, or cancel at any time, by emailing the editor at peter_kasin@nps.gov. The list of subscribers is never sold or loaned.

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NATIONAL PARK WEEK

National Park Week, April 19-26, is an annual, Presidentially-proclaimed week for celebration and recognition of the exceptional natural and cultural history preserved in the country's 391 national parks. Parks across the country will be hosting events throughout the week culminating in National Junior Ranger Day, on Saturday, April 26. We invite you to the park to take in programs for this special week, and deepen understanding of your maritime heritage.

In addition to the special programs listed below, there are daily ranger-led tours of the 1886 square-rigger *Balclutha* beginning at 2:15pm (ships admission fees apply). Every Saturday and Sunday, 10:30am-11:30am, join a park ranger for a free walking tour of the Aquatic Park Historic District, The Cannery, and Fisherman's Wharf, leaving from the lobby of the Argonaut Hotel, adjacent to the Visitor Center. No reservations needed.

Here's what's in store for you during National Park Week:

KLEBINGAT LECTURE SERIES: THE SAGA OF WILLIAM SHOREY

Saturday, April 19, 6pm, in the Maritime Library, Lower Fort Mason, Bldg. E, 3rd Floor. Donation: \$5.

Park ranger Carol Kiser will tell the story of the extraordinary life of William T. Shorey, who worked his way up from seaman to become the first Black captain of a whaling ship on the West Coast of North America. For more information on this audio-visual program and talk, and for reservations, please call 415-561-7040, or email melani_van_petten@partner.nps.gov.

1858 BLACK EXODUS: SAN FRANCISCO TO VICTORIA, BC

Tuesday, April 22, 10am-noon, on Hyde Street Pier. No fee.

In 1858, a number of African Americans began a migration from San Francisco to Victoria, BC aboard the steamer *Commodore* (formerly, and later renamed, *Brother Jonathan*), to escape discrimination and the threat of slavery. This migration eventually reached to over 800 people. This April, weeklong events mark the 150th anniversary of this significant but now little-known event in San Francisco history. Join us for a commemoration ceremony and reenactment of Mifflin Gibbs's farewell speech to the African American families about to embark on their journey. For more information, please call the Visitor Center at 415-447-5000. For information on all the events and activities of the commemoration week, please call the African American Historical and Cultural Society at 415-292-6172, or visit the Exodus' website at <http://www.sfexodus.org>.

OPEN HOUSE EVENT

Wednesday, April 23, 4pm-7pm, in the Visitor Center, 499 Jefferson Street, at Hyde Street. No fee.

Meet park staff, and staff from the park's cooperating association and library friends. Learn more about ongoing projects, events, ranger-led programs, volunteer opportunities, and give us your feedback. There'll be information stations throughout the Visitor Center.

HERE COMES THE GREAT WHITE FLEET!

Saturday, April 26, 2pm-2:45pm, in the Visitor Center Theater. No fee.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Great White Fleet's visit to San Francisco. President Theodore Roosevelt sent the fleet of white painted ships on a world cruise, in an age when America was beginning to assert itself as a world power. Join park ranger Tom Jares for an audio-visual presentation on this noted event in U.S. Navy and San Francisco history.

HERCULES ENGINEERING TOUR

Saturday, April 26, 2pm-2:45pm. Meets at *Hercules* gangway. Vessel admission: Adults, \$5. Ages 15 and under, free. Free with national park passes.

Explore steam technology and its effects on the working environment of a steam engineer. Park ranger Chris Edwards leads a guided tour of this 1907 tugboat's engine.

JUNIOR RANGER DAY

Saturday, April 26, 10am-4pm, on Hyde Street Pier and aboard historic vessels. Vessel admission: Adults, \$5, ages 15 and under, free. Free with national park passes.

Join kids of all ages and raise a sail, take a hand at the ship's pumps and at the capstan, sing sea chanteys with park rangers, and make maritime crafts. Children ages 5-12 can earn the official Junior Ranger badge. Pick up a Junior Ranger activities booklet at the Visitor Center front desk or Hyde Street Pier ticket booth, and begin your children on an exploration of their maritime heritage!

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION MONTH

For a week in April, volunteers are recognized in national, state, and regional parks, and in private institutions nationwide. We're extending national Volunteer Appreciation Week to the entire month. Two of the park's volunteers will get surprise awards this month. Their contributions will be highlighted in future newsletters.

Several volunteer projects are happening this month. On Saturdays, April 5th and 12th, Boy Scouts will be applying linseed oil to the interior sections of the replica Chinese Junk *Grace Quan*, and will be re-painting sections of Hyde Street Pier's railings. On Friday, April 25th, volunteers from the California State Automobile Association will be re-painting the west end seawall near the Aquatic Park Bathhouse Building (Maritime Museum and San Francisco Senior Center). The

CSAA has been a partner since 2005, assisting the park in several restoration projects.

We invite you to volunteer and become an important part of preserving maritime history! Enter into this community of maritime enthusiasts, and help support your national park. For more information, please call the Volunteer Coordinator, Terry Dorman, at 415-556-1613, or email him at terry_dorman@nps.gov.

HIGH SCHOOL AND GIRL SCOUT BOATBUILDERS

Jason and the Argonauts: Small Boat Shop assistant curator Jason Rucker reports on youth boatbuilding projects.

Over the past eight years San Francisco high school students have built seven Pelican sailboats and two skiffs at the park. Over 100 students have worked on the construction of these boats which now grace Aquatic Park and are used to teach rowing and sailing skills to students of all ages.

This year marks a dramatic acceleration of youth boatbuilding and sailing programs at the park. Two groups of Girl Scouts and two different high school groups will build at least five boats at the park this year. While they're building they'll also be learning to sail aboard Pelicans and the Scow Schooner *Alma*, will row aboard skiffs, and will learn more about the historic craft at Hyde Street Pier.

Most of these students arrive at the pier without any experience sailing or building. They approach the projects with understandable trepidation. By launching day, they have built a boat that they're proud of and that they know how to use. This experience goes beyond the details of boatbuilding, imparting lessons of teamwork, problem solving, and self-confidence.

PELICAN BOAT RACES

Sailing Program Director Madeline Eustis reports on Aquatic Park boating.

The art of small craft sailing is the backbone of any seasoned sailor's body of knowledge, and it's a great way to refine sailing skills. The Pelicans that the park owns and maintains are now more accessible than ever. During the second half of April there will be Pelican races in Aquatic Park on Tuesday evenings. For dates, times, fees, and more information on how you can participate, please contact Lucas Lineback at 415-567-4653, or llineback@maritime.org.

CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONY REENACTMENT

Saturday, April 12, 2pm, aboard *Balclutha*. Vessel admission: Adults, \$5. Ages 15 and under, free. Free with national park passes.

King Neptune and Queen Aphrodite hold court in a costumed reenactment of this colorful ceremony. Greenhand sailors (or "polywogs") crossing the equator for the first time were put before a "court," as experienced sailors in full

costumes sat in judgment, playing the roles of barber, doctor, jury, and king and queen of the underwater kingdom. Join the park's Living History players for this and other activities on monthly Living History Day, and experience how a ship's crew would break the boredom of long sea voyages by staging this unique ceremony.

BOAT LAUNCHING

Wednesday, April 16, 12:15pm, at the pocket beach, Hyde Street Pier. No fee. The Small Boat Shop on Hyde Street Pier will be launching the NPS work boat that was built for the park by staff and volunteers. The public is invited to the launch and christening ceremony. The pocket beach is on the right-hand side of the pier as you walk in, just opposite the shipwright's shop.

C.A. THAYER UPDATE

Phil Erwin, the 1895 schooner C.A. Thayer's Chief Shipwright, reports on April's work.

Work continues on the interior joinery rehabilitation and preservation analysis. We have completed the Borate saturation and Poly Vinyl Butyl consolidation of about half of the "electric compartment" overhead paneling. The results, thus far, are very encouraging. Panels formerly desiccated beyond function now have the solidity to take and hold paint and fasteners. We have started disassembling one window unit to evaluate its method of construction and will create a repair rationale.

If our efforts on this track continue successfully, we should significantly increase the amount of historic joinery that we will be able to re-install following the Aft House reconstruction. Meanwhile, we are fabricating stanchions and safety lines that will be placed on the deck to enhance the visitor experience. We anticipate being able to offer better and safer access to the vessel soon. Details will follow as they develop.

(The editor would like to thank Ms. Polly Vinyl Butyl and Mr. Joinery Borate for their assistance with this update).

LOOKING AHEAD

Celebrating Alice Watts / Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month programs and exhibits / *Alma* public sailing season begins / boatbuilding and restoration updates / honoring park volunteers / library updates

LINKS

<http://www.nps.gov/safr> Official website of San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

<http://www.maritime.org> San Francisco Maritime National Park Association, the park's member-supported assn.

<http://www.hydestreetpierlivinghistory.org> The park's Living History program.