

2023 FALL
VOL 04

the Shellback

in store for
2024

*Masquerade Party December 31
NYD Regatta January 1*

Tacky Trophy Time

How things came to be

Star of the Fleet

Balclutha and San Francisco's last
great commercial fishing fleet

SINCE 1867
MASTER MARINERS
BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

WWW.SEMASTERMARINERS.ORG

The Master Mariners Benevolent Association (MMBA) is a San Francisco club dating back to 1867. Its purpose is to foster participation in yachting and the preservation of well designed, properly constructed, and well maintained classic and traditional sailing craft.

Members include owners and aficionados of traditional sail and classic boats.



The Shellback is published each quarter. We welcome clever articles, photos and graphics, suggestions and more. Email contributions to the editor for consideration.

2023 newsletter editor is Martha Blanchfield.
martha@renegadesailing.com



The MMBA is a 501(c)(7) California Corporation governed by an elected Board of Directors whose members each serve a three-year term.

In 1988, the Board established the MMBA Historical Small Craft Preservation Foundation (HSCPF), a separate 501(c)(3) corporation whose mission is to support charitable activities; the name was later changed to Master Mariners Benevolent Foundation (MMBF).

Polly (1929 sloop, hull 19) was one of four Bird boats built by W.F. Stone & Son Boat Yard in Oakland. MMBF contributed to her restoration in 1988.

Freda, one of the West Coast's oldest sailboats (1885), was built in Belvedere. She was completely restored by the Arques School of Traditional Boatbuilding in Sausalito. On May 31, 2014, *Freda* was re-launched at the Spaulding Marine Center.

In maritime tradition, a seaman who has crossed the Equator is initiated as a "trustworthy shellback" into the court of Neptune. He or she may also be called a son or daughter of Neptune. Bestowal of this title acknowledges the prowess of a mariner who is able to brave the uncertainties and dangers of the sea.



New Year's Events



Masquerade Party

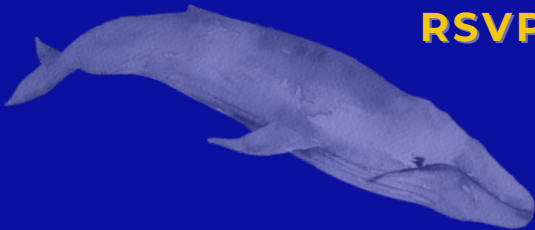
MMBA members are invited via boat or car to Steve and Maggie Hutchinson's New Year's Eve Masquerade Potluck. Please RSVP with the total # of guests and if you are bringing your boat over to the (no utilities) guest dock.

December 31
8pm-2am

Point San Pablo YC Party
no host bar and live band

\$20 per person

RSVP melissa.flick@sfmastermariners.org



New Year's Day Sail

Set sail (rain or shine) for our annual New Year's Day Regatta. Course starts on the east side of Treasure Island between TI and Aida, racing to Point San Pablo Yacht Club. Monitor channel 72 on your VHF and earn 1 minute of motor time for every flag you fly! Racers and guests please join us ~3pm for a Chili & Fixins Potluck and Tacky Trophy ceremony - find the most ridiculous trophy to honor the Master Mariner you love.

January 1

12 noon race start

~3pm Point San Pablo YC Potluck
RSVP melissa.flick@sfmastermariners.org

Table of Contents

From the Directors

Commodore's Message	6
Directors' Reports	8

Articles & Info

MMBA 2024 Calendar	12
New Member <i>Olive</i>	13
Tacky Trophy	14
Member List	15
The Alaska Packers Association and the Great Star Fleet	16
Formation of Foundation	20
History of the MMBA	22

Activities

New Year's Eve and Day Events	4
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Emma Chevalier fashions two copper coins for placement under the mast of Cheoy Lee Olive, one of the newest MMBA boats. See page 15 for profile.

Cover: Paul Dines and Reno Cambridge on Freda B take a break during a return from racing on San Francisco Bay.

Laying the Mark in 2023

Are we laying the mark? That is the question we ask ourselves at our board meetings. 2023 has been another year full of surprises, hurdles, sadness, joy and jubilation. All of which seemed to come at a break-neck speed. I feel very lucky to work with such a great group of people who make up our board of directors. With all of their help, we were able to navigate around all the marks this year and cross the line in respectable form.

It is efforts from the board and volunteers that make our events possible. This year, we were able to increase our membership levels from the previous several years, along with a record high level of Sponsorships, which turned out to be instrumental in supporting the elevated costs associated with pretty much everything else.

The resurrection of *The Shellback* has been a welcome and necessary tool this year in communicating with our membership. We are very grateful for all of Martha Blanchfield's talent, hard work and artistry in making this possible. Communication with our membership has been one of those areas that has suffered, and we look forward to improving even further in 2024. With such a relatively small group in our organization, we can't afford to have missed opportunities (no-shows to events) due to lack of communication.

We all know how much work and effort go into maintaining these vessels to keep them active and safe. It is equally important for us as an organization to keep our membership numbers up and to recruit new potential vessels and bring them into our folds. Don't be afraid to solicit potential members if you know of any. The MMBA is an amazing organization that brings much joy to my life. With all of the hustle-bustle and craziness in this modern world, it's crazy how much sense it actually makes to own a wooden boat.



Hans List

Commodore 2022 - 25

Sequestor

hans.list@sfmastermariners.org

2023 Highpoints



Once again, we were able to host our Sponsorship Luncheon at the St. Francis YC which we are so grateful for. The professional staff, iconic location and wonderful meal are all part of what makes this such a great event. The Regatta Room was filled with sponsors and skippers alike, and a great time was had by all.

Our annual regatta officiated by Sausalito YC was one of the highlights this year. We had 51 vessels competing and enjoyed the hospitality of the Encinal YC for the awards ceremony and after party. I would like to encourage more vessels to attend the post-race festivities in the coming year, as it is always a great time to mingle and tour each other's boats.

The Wooden Boat Show at the Corinthian YC was one of the best that I can recall. We had a great turn-out of boats and a large crowd of enthusiasts perusing the docks. I do believe it was our biggest attendance ever.

Belvedere Classic hosted by San Francisco YC and Jessica Cup hosted by St. Francis YC combined to round out the Bay Championship Series, which also was successful (unfortunately, I had to miss the Jessica Cup) and continues to draw attention.

New Year's Day Race, Spring Fling and Cruise-out to China Camp were well attended and enjoyed by all.

MMBA DIRECTOR REPORTS

Gena Egelston, Vice Commodore

This year, and for the last three, I have had the privilege of gathering and updating all the winning trophies and perpetual awards for our MMBA Annual Regatta, Great Schooner Race & Belvedere Cup, as well as the Bay Championship. This is a monumental, yet time-honored, feat that starts in early March and ends just after the Jessica Cup--which concludes each season's race series for our classic yachts. It has been a true honor getting to know the winners, their boats, and the longstanding history behind such an amazing organization, and one that makes you feel like a member of the family on and off the water.

In 2024, I will turn over my duties outlined under trophy management to MMBA director Diane Walton. I will then jump into website administration, a task to which we have all been looking forward. Some of those objectives include:

- Encouraging members to interact more by improving the site's experience
- Adding new site features
- Keeping up-to-date
- Making it easier to find information / reach a fellow member or board director

In 2023, I had the pleasure of being re-introduced to fellow classic boat owners who are now acting as board members; each of whom has expressed a genuine passion for the MMBA and what it means to the sailing community.

These new directors bring skills to push the organization to new levels--from database management and technology, to creative event planning and savvy financial knowledge.



Liz Diaz, Rear Commodore

While taking the sponsorship reins this year, it became clear to me just how important sponsorship is to the functioning of our organization. Not only is it critical for raising funds to cover our basic operating expenses, but it has allowed me to connect personally with the generous businesses and representatives who assist us.

We are proud of the banner year we are wrapping up, and hope to reach even further heights in 2024.

Keep your eyes open for upcoming sponsorship applications. If you know of businesses or organizations that may be interested in our efforts, please send me their contact information; I will personally connect with each one. We look forward to 2024!

KC Crowell, Treasurer

I have spent the last quarter of 2023 getting my head around our current financial position and working to build-out better systems and processes to serve both board and membership needs.

My hope is that the work I'm doing now, though a bit tedious, will mark an end to any deferred maintenance and put us in a position to do more fun stuff in the future.

I hope to continue this work into 2024, and build a system that future treasurers can use to better serve the needs of members.

One thing I've learned--just like my time working as a purser on tall ships: the captain might be in charge, but everyone's gotta respect the person who controls the checkbook.



Neil Gibbs, Membership Chair

2023 by the Numbers:

- 6 New Vessel Owners
- 17 New Friends of the MMBA
- 89 Member Vessels
- 19 Lifetime Members (Past Commodores)

The MMBA continues to seek wooden sailing vessels that are hiding in the shadows without the benefits of membership in our association. These "lost boats" are out there, perhaps in your harbor, waiting for you to bring them in from the cold. For only 29 cents per day, a sad and lonely craft can once again feel the wind in her sails. Won't you help?

If you know of a boat that would be a good candidate for membership, ask her owner to consider joining the MMBA. Direct him/her to our website and encourage to have a look. And while you're at it, why not *ask your crew* to become Friends of the MMBA? Friend memberships make great last-minute gifts!

It all happens at the online store:
sfmastermariners.org

Diane Walton, Trophies

I began to understand what the MMBA Board is about in 2023. It is not just a cool group of people meeting once a month at San Pablo Yacht Club, plus at a few events during the year, but nine people committed to furthering the livelihood of wooden boats. Each person has a different way to show it and all celebrate "a big picture legacy."

This year, I learned more about the Annual Regatta and Wooden Boat Show. I also enjoyed participating in a few committees.

In 2024 I will help reward those who continue to sail and love wooden boats. Yes, I am the next caretaker of the MMBA potpourri of trophies: a slew of racing and attribute trophies--from large to small, ornate to simple--all of which have a story. Gena Egleston has passed on the role to me. I'm also happy to share what I've gotten to learn, to help both grow the membership (boats are members, not people), and find sponsors (definitely people!) who appreciate the vessels and honor San Francisco Bay's history.

From being a member of the Board, I found a few new places to visit: I love the bar at the San Pablo Yacht Club and its neighbor, the Richmond Natatorium.



Melissa Flick, Events

Who likes to party? We do--in many different ways. We'll still have our usual races, cruise-outs, and the Wooden Boat Show, but we are expanding our event list this year to bring us together more often, by water and land. We plan to join with local yacht clubs for their fun events, so if you hear of something that Master Mariners would enjoy, please let me know. Check the event calendar on page 23.

To kick off 2024 right, please join us for all or any of our New Year's Events:

- New Year's Eve Masquerade Potluck at Point San Pablo Yacht Club starting at 8pm, \$20/person
- New Year's Day Regatta from the east side of Treasure Island to Point San Pablo Yacht Club, 12 noon start
- Chili and Fixins Potluck and Tacky Trophy Ceremony at PSPYC starting at 3pm (estimate based on weather)
 - Gaff boats bring chili
 - Marconi boats bring salad or side dish
 - Everybody bring a tacky trophy

Please RSVP to melissa.flick@sfmastermariners.org with your total # of guests, which of the above events you'll be attending, and if you will be coming to the PSPYC guest dock.

Upcoming events:

- China Camp Cleanup (date TBD)--to thank the Friends of China Camp for hosting our annual Cleat Cruise and Labor Day BBQ
- March 16 Spring Fling and St. Patrick's Day cruise-out to San Rafael YC. Traditional grub, Irish dancers, live band

Mark Harris, IT/Data Management

In late 2023 I began changing the mechanics of board business. This began with getting all members onto the Google domain (sfmastermariners.org), merging sfmastermariners.com, and rationalizing the group memberships (e.g. sponsorship@, membership@ and so on). This includes making more clear who gets what email notifications for board business.

Coming soon are Google Calendars so that members and the public can reference our event dates, reminders, and community meetings.

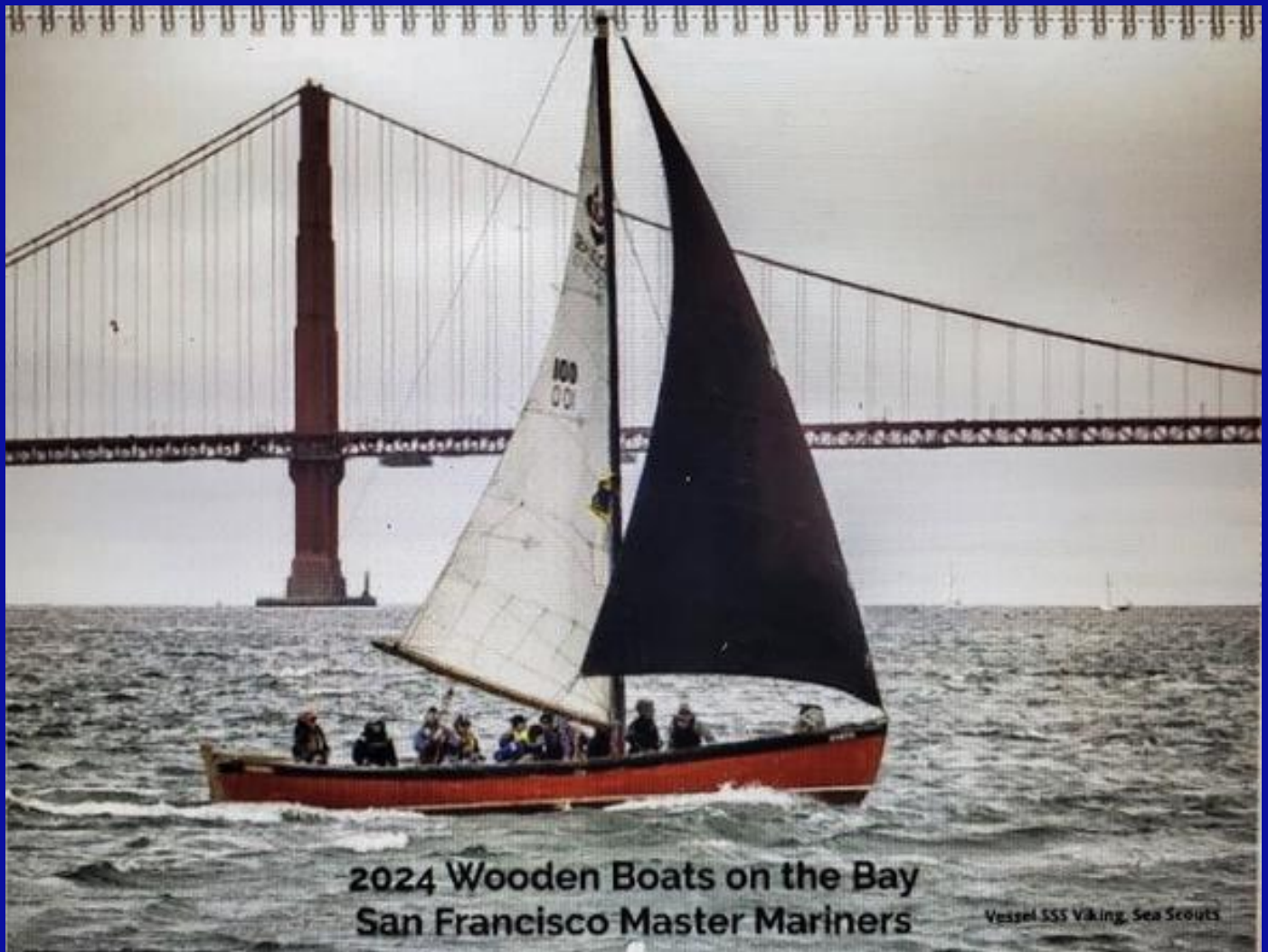
None of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of our veteran Bill Conneely. Thank you, Bill.

This work will continue into 2024. We could use your help. If you have experience administering Google Workspace, email me at mark.harris@sfmastermariners.org.



John Muir, Regatta Support

2024 MMBA CALENDAR



More than 100 calendars will be in the hands of the happy sailors who pre-order.

This calendar was created to keep our eyes on these beautiful boats on the bay. Sometimes there is a lot of time between sightings, and with this exceptional collector's item, folks can have the great views every day that we only see when we are out in company.

Order on our website while supplies last.

-- Liz Diaz, Rear Commodore



OLIVE



The 'Crewe d'Accoutrement' includes Kathryn Kreyling, Emma Chevalier and Leslie Brogan. This is a group of friends who fell in love with sailing when each moved to the area three years ago. All live in the East Bay and were participating together in a mix of classes--on dinghys at CalSail, racing Friday night BYC beer cans, and boating independently with others.

Kathryn says it soon became clear all wished to share their sailing passion with others. A decision to share a vessel would elicit a connection to the world in a way that only wooden boats can provide.

Olive was acquired from Victor Early, who had raced her in the MMBA Regatta 10 years prior, and who had undertaken many repairs over the years. Says Kathryn, "I believe *Olive* was found run aground in the estuary and had broken frames--a common problem for Cheoy Lee folkboats. He had new frames laminated and sistered to broken ones, took off the keel timber and sandblasted it, soaked it in epoxy, and replaced keel bolts. She is now stronger than before and, with recent care by Steve Hutchinson and team, is back to racing MMBA regattas."

Purchased in May 2022, she was in decent condition although her maiden voyage was a tow from Oakland Estuary to Berkeley Marina due to a bit of rot at base of mast. She was de-rigged, the base was scarfed and repaired by Hutchinson. Twelve coats of varnish were added and the ladies themselves did the re-rigging. Re-stepping was completed with placement of two copper coins under the mast--the coins display an olive branch and a hamsa, as hand-punched by Emma.

Olive is looked upon as a 'picnic' sailer because the crew loves to take her on daysails and sunset sails on the bay.



Top L to R, then bottom: workday; *Olive* at Master Mariner's Regatta 2023 where crew earned the Lyle Hess Perpetual Trophy for fastest elapsed time; Crewe d'Accoutrement showing Emma Chevalier, Leslie Brogan, Kathryn Kreyling, Jacqueline Zalstein.

View the coins photo on page 5.

Tacky Trophy

Copy by Tom List, *Polaris*
Tacky Trophy by...
do you know?

My earliest memory of the tacky trophy is January 1, 1983.

I joined Master Mariners in 1982. Dianne Brenden had set up a New Year's Day Race with the Tacky Trophy presentation at the end of the race; each trophy to be given to the person who finished in front of you.

A lot of recycled items with "rapture of the deep" themes appeared. The trophies began to take on a little more creativity, thanks to the devious mind of Ed Witt. One year he built the notorious "Butt Block Trophy," which was a rather shapely butt carved out of wood and mounted on a pedestal.

That award was followed the next year with the infamous "Wench Winch," a figurine of a lady's torso with an operating wench handle which actually revolved. From that point on, no rules applied. There were trophies made from objects found in cooling water pumps, objects that bent your propeller, and especially items to be found in the bilge while replacing keel bolts.

The main purpose of the Tacky Trophy is to recycle things that bring a moment of amusement--things that were bestowed to you by a well-meaning person, but that just cannot remain in your house anymore. This tradition has been ongoing for more than 30 years, with hopes of many more.

2023 MMBA Member Vessels

AIDA	Melissa & Andrew Flick	MATTHEW TURNER	Call of the Sea
ARGOSY VENTURE	Bill Belmont - PC	MAYAN	Stacy & Beau Vrolyk
ARUA	Winston Bumpus	MISTRESS II	Jennifer Hinkel
ASOLARE	Karnell & Elizabeth Hillscan	MORNING STAR	Barbara Ohler & Gary Costigan
AURORAL	Don Ketman	NAUTIGAL	Robby & Dolores Robinson
BLACK WITCH	Sandee Swanson	NEJA	Jim Borger
BOLERO	Tim Murison	NIKE	Al Cavey
BOUNTY	Dan & Sue Spradling	NIMUE	James Koss
BRIAR ROSE	Jack Sloane	NIRVANA	Bill Conneely
BRIGADOON	Terry Klaus - PC, Lindsey Klaus	OCEAN QUEEN V	Pacific Seafarers Foundation
BRIGHT STAR	Ted & Laddie Hall	OLIVE	Kathryn Kreyling
CATNIP	Dan & Sue Spradling	ORIOLE	Jock Maclean
CHANCE	KC Crowell	OUessant	Jennifer Hinkel
CLOVER	Terrence Moran	PANDA	Daniel Maloney
CREDIT	Bill & Janice Belmont - PC	PATIENCE	Ed & Phyllis Gibson - PC
CUCKOO	Bill & Kathleen Claussen	PATITA II	Michael & Sarah Schmale
CURLEW	National Park Service	PEGASUS	Peter Hayes
CYBELE	William Turnbull	POLARIS	Michael Burton
ENCORE	Bert & Sisi Damner	RANDOM	Kers & Kathleen Clausen
ESPIRE	Rick Drain	RENEGADE	Russel & Christine Katz
EVENTIDE	Gregory Milano	ROBIN G.	Jan Van Sickle
FAIRWYN	Richard Leland	ROWENA	Katherine Dobson & Ted Zerrer
FARIDA	Mike & Sue Proudfoot	RUBY	Josh Pryor
FLAME	Robert & Steffanie Roche	SALTY DOG	Thomas Bamberger
FLOTSAM	Wesley & Roger Nunez	SALUTE	Greg Booth
FOLLY	Allen Gross	SEA LOVER	Chris Jannini
FREDA	Spaulding Marine Center	SEA QUEST	Stephen Carlson
FREDA B.	Paul Dines- PC & Marina O'Neill	SEA RAVEN	Alan Hugenot
FREELANCE	Rich & Liz Salvini	SEABIRD	John Muir
GASLIGHT	Joyce Dostale	SEQUESTOR	Hans & Sophie List
GERDA	Diane Walton	SERENA	Scott Green
GOLD STAR	Jim Cullen	SSS VIKING	Sea Scouts
GREY GOOSE	Walter Brewer	STROMA OF MEY	Barry Rabbitt
HANA	Brian Boyd	SYRINX	Lowell Harrison
HOLGANZA	Mattia Cosmi	TREEBEARD	Jim Parsons
HUMMINGBIRD	Will Cambell	UNDA	DeeDee Lozier - PC
JOHN T.	Ariane Paul - PC & Alex Paul	VECTIS	Louis & Sara Nickles
JUDY J.	Cory Lancaster	VELEROSA	Hans Hansen & Mark Harris
KAY OF GÖTEBORG	Neil & Elly Gibbs	VERITY A.	Terrence Tucker
KAZE	Elizabeth Roso Diaz	VIXEN	Steven & Linda Kibler
KOOKABURRA	Martin & Sue Koffel	WATER WITCH	John & Gena Egelston
LIVELY LADY	Ted Hoppe	WILETIE	Ken Wadsworth
LYDIA	J. Emmett & Laura Clark-Moore	YUCCA	Michael & Louise Zolezzi
MAGIC	Tim Maloney		
MAKANI KAI	Ken & Kristine Inouye - PC		

In appreciation of the 2023 Friends of the Master Mariners

Martha Blanchfield
 Charles Bronson
 Lauren De Remer
 Carl Flemming
 Richard & Susan Geiger
 John Hamilton & Carol Leonard
 Mardi Jackson
 H. Walter & Deirdre T. Johnson
 Tom List & Suzanne Statler
 Brian Lockett
 Marco Misbach
 Cliff Niederer
 Roy & Darnell Sobert
 Sylvia Stompe
 Barry Stompe
 Shelly Willard
 Matt Woll
 Richard Zollezzi



The Alaska Packers Association and the Great Star Fleet



19 Ships of the Star Fleet

Star of Alaska (ex-Balclutha)

Star of Bengal

Star of Chile (ex-Coalinga)

Star of England (ex-Blairmore, ex-Abby Palmer)

Star of Falkland (ex-Arapahoe, ex-Steinbek, ex-Durbridge)

Star of Finland (ex-Kaiulani)

Star of France

Star of Greenland (ex-Hawaiian Isles)

*Star of Holland (ex-Homeward Bound, ex-Otto Gildemeister,
ex-Zemindar)*

Star of Iceland (ex-Willscott)

Star of India (ex-Euterpe)

Star of Italy

Star of Scotland (ex-Kenilworth)

Star of Lapland (ex-Atlas)

Star of Peru (ex-Himalaya)

Star of Poland (ex-Acme)

Star of Russia

Star of Shetland (ex-Edward Sewall)

Star of Zealand (ex-Astral)

*Star of Alaska, one of the two surviving Star Fleet ships,
is now in San Francisco under her original name,
Balclutha. Photo: PD*

What do the *Star of India*, *Balclutha*, and *Kaiulani* have in common?

They were all once part of the Star Fleet, the ships that sailed for the Alaska Packers Association in the early years of the 20th century. The APA, a sprawling business headquartered in San Francisco and dedicated to selling Alaskan salmon to the world, oversaw the last great commercial sailing fleet.

The Alaska Packers Association (APA) was formed in 1893 in San Francisco. The market in Alaskan salmon had seen a drop in prices in the prior decade due to too much competition and not enough consumer demand. In response, twenty-five of the thirty-three Alaska fishery-related businesses banded together to form the APA to coordinate operations and pursue a better marketing plan. The salmon business entailed taking workers and supplies by sea, primarily from San Francisco, up to Alaskan fishing grounds in the spring and then bringing the men and canned fish back in fall. For a few years, this was accomplished by chartering ships, but soon the APA shifted to purchasing vessels, supplementing them with chartered ships as needed. To transport over the ocean the small army of fishermen and cannery workers, along with canning machinery and coal to fuel it, tin to fabricate the cans, and box shooks to make the wooden crates that held the cans, required a lot of space—what maritime historian Harold Huycke dubbed “floating warehouses.” The APA needed plenty of room aboard its vessels, but had no need for speed. The economical choice was to purchase wooden sailing vessels, which could be had for bargain prices as the general market for ships was turning towards steam. The sailing vessels were crewed by the same men who would be fishing for the salmon in Alaska.

Around the turn of the century, the preferences of the APA shifted from wooden ships to more durable iron-and steel-hulled vessels, beginning with the iron-hulled *Euterpe*, which you will remember from our last installment of *Sea History Today*, and the barques *Coalinga* and *Himalaya*. Among the ships to follow was a foursome of ships that had begun their sailing careers with James P. Corry and Co. of Belfast, which favored ship names beginning with “Star.” The APA leadership so approved of the Corry tradition that had bestowed the names *Star of France*, *Star of Russia*, *Star of Bengal*, and *Star of Italy*, that it changed the names of its other iron- and steel-hulled sailing ships to “Star” names, and thus the North American Star Fleet was born. The APA would of course also own and charter smaller vessels and steamers, but it is remembered in the maritime community for its sailing fleet.

Salmon catch at the Alaska Packers Association cannery, Nushagak, Alaska. Photo: John Nathan Cobb; PD



The APA established an efficient process of catching, canning, and delivering salmon to distribute in the continental US, but of course production is only half of the challenge of business. As the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park's Diane Cooper phrased it, the company had to deal with the question: "How do we find more consumers who know what canned salmon is, what to do with it, and want to buy it?" Cooper explained:

"At that moment in time the vast majority of the salmon pack went to foreign markets. Although salmon was known along the northeast coast and the west coast, fresh salmon was expensive and considered a delicacy indulged in by the rich. In these areas canned salmon did not rate. Throughout the rest of the United States, Americans were unaware of salmon and its great nutritious value."



The sailing ships of the APA wintered in what is now known as Fortman Basin, Alameda, California. Photo: PD

The APA set out to spread the word about canned salmon. The can labels, often a bright red to catch one's attention on the shelf, featured homey scenes of fishing and delivering salmon to market, illustrations drawn from nature, or nostalgic images of home life. The Alaska State Library has [a lovely sampling of these labels](#). The biggest tool in the APA marketing toolbox, however, was the cookbook *How to Eat Canned Salmon*, first produced by the Karluk Packing company and then adopted by the APA and distributed in 1904 in a special edition for the St. Louis World's Fair. [How to Eat Canned Salmon](#) offered enticing recipes for dishes like salmon croquettes to persuade households to introduce their product into their weekly menu planning.

Each spring, the ships loaded with coal, supplies, and men sailed up to the canneries around Bristol Bay, including Nushagak, Kvichak, Ugashik, Naknek and Egegik, and to other locations such as Chignik, Karluk, Alitak, Fort Wrangell, and Loring. Harold Huycke described the routine:

Crews were split into gangs of from 12 to 18. Prior to World War I, gangs numbered 18 men. Two were assigned to keeping quarters on the ship clean, one man to repair and keep nets in order, and the balance of the gang to do the ship's work under way. Upon arrival of the ship at its cannery both anchors were let go and a swivel shackled into the chains so the ship could swing freely. As the stores were unloaded, the upper yards were lowered to improve stability. All hands then turned to in getting the cannery ready for operation, doing everything from carpentry to overhauling the boats and barges.

The Chief Mate was beach boss, more often than not, and it was he who had to make order out of chaos. With the growing strength of the fisherman's union, delineations were made in the work performed by fishermen, and eventually [their] carpentry and miscellaneous chores were lessened.

Over the summer months, fishermen brought in the salmon and the cannery crew processed and canned it, packed the cans in crates, and loaded it onto the ships. In the fall, once the ships had been loaded with all of the processed salmon, they headed back to San Francisco to unload, and then on to Alameda for the winter.

By the 1920s the APA, which had since become part of California Packing Company (CALPAC) corporate family, was slowly transitioning to steam, beginning with the gradual sales of its aging wooden ships, including several sales to Hollywood—mostly to be blown up or sunk on camera. Then, gradually, the Star Fleet was sold off. The very last ship to go was Star of Finland, sold in 1939. You can read about the rest of her story in [Sea History](#).

Today, we can still visit two veterans of the great Star Fleet—*Star of India* in San Diego, and *Balclutha (Star of Alaska)* in San Francisco. And, in some way, we can thank the Alaska Packers Association for keeping them active and cared for during that time, when the merchant shipping world was abandoning sail for steam.

Sea History Today is written by Shelley Reid, NMHS senior staff writer. Past issues can be read online by clicking [here](#).

On the Fourth of July of 1867,

the Boatman's Protective Association staged a race among working sailboats in San Francisco Bay. After repeating the event in 1868 and 1869, the Association was recognized under a new name: the Master Mariners Benevolent Association.

Knowledge of the histories of the Master Mariner's Benevolent Association (MMBA) and the Master Mariner's Benevolent Foundation (MMBF) are essential to understand the respective roles of each organization and their relationship to one another.

While each entity is independent, they complement one another, and collectively serve the interests of all MMBA members and our community.

The Master Mariners Regatta raised funds from local maritime businesses to benefit the widows and orphans of seamen lost at sea—the spirit of which is reflected in the MMBA Burgee, a Herreshoff anchor with an “H” across its shank, standing for Hope.

By 1891, steam engines were replacing sails and the era of the regatta ended. In 1965, the Association was revived in honor of National Maritime Day, and the regatta resumed among traditional sailing vessels.

In 1978, the MMBA Articles of Incorporation were filed with the State of California, which re-established the MMBA as a not for profit social organization (California 501(c)(7) corporation) to promote the fraternity of wooden sailboat owners, the maintenance of their vessels, and traditional seamanship through the Annual Master Mariners Regatta and subsequently other events (its “Specific Purpose”). The MMBA remains one of the oldest and largest associations of traditional wooden sailboats.

Historical Small Craft Preservation Fund

In 1988, the MMBA Board of Directors established the MMBA Historical Small Craft Preservation Foundation (the “HSCPF”), a tax deductible public benefit corporation (California 501(c)(3) corporation) to help fund the restoration of the Bird Boat *Polly* (commonly known as the “Polly Project”). Since the materials, labor and capital donated to the project were tax deductible, sufficient materials, labor and capital were contributed to successfully complete *Polly's* restoration.

Annual Wooden Boat Show

In 1994, to further promote core MMBA values (benevolence), and to create a permanent venue for its Annual Meeting of Members, the MMBA Board of Directors initiated the Annual MMBA Wooden Boat Show to be held at the Corinthian Yacht Club to raise funds to promote and fund the preservation of classic sailboats, the associated skills, and traditional seamanship through education.

Knowledge of the histories of the Master Mariner's Benevolent Association (MMBA) and the Master Mariner's Benevolent Foundation (MMBF) are essential to understand the respective roles of each organization and their relationship to one another.

While each entity is independent, they complement one another, and collectively serve the interests of all MMBA members and our community.

Sail San Francisco (SSF)

In 1999, the state of California budgeted a significant sum of money to celebrate the state sesquicentennial. A portion of the state's funds had been allocated to Sail San Francisco (SSF) for the reception of thirteen Class A Tall Ships and their crews that would sail from many countries into San Francisco Bay. The state employed Alison Healey to design and organize the event.

With the vessels underway, California elected a new governor who reversed the allocation of funds for the event, and Healy was suddenly unemployed, but she remained committed and took on the additional challenge to secure funding for the four-day event and the re-provisioning of the vessels.

To attract the scope of donations to pull off the event, she needed a 501(c)(3) entity to provide donors tax deductions for their contributions. She approached the MMBA Board of Directors for assistance, and in May 1999 the MMBA Board modified and amended the HSCPF Articles of Incorporation to change the corporation's name to the Master Mariners Benevolent Foundation (MMBF), establish a separate Board of Directors, and expand the corporation's "Specific Purpose" to include funding the SSF event.

Accordingly, tax deductible donations were channeled through the MMBF to fund SSF. Alison Healy managed to secure sufficient capital, services and provisions to make Sail San Francisco a success. The event drew tens of thousands to the waterfront.

HISTORY OF THE MMBA

In contrast to the East Coast, San Francisco was a crude and raw place in 1867. Its vessels were not those of the rich, used just as play toys, but vessels that were used in everyday business of commerce. They were the scow schooners, the lumber schooners, the brigantines, the barkentines, and the oyster sloops. As a result, their captains were first and foremost men of the water, and they had a courage and charter all their own.

During the late 1800's, there was a great deal of money flowing into San Francisco from the Comstock Lode and other mines. The demand for materials was great, and the load fell on the fraternity of the waterfront since those were the days before the ferry service and bridges of the San Francisco Bay. Up and down the waterways of the Delta and along the rugged coast of California from the north to the south, vessels of all description carried the necessities of everyday life.

Thus, it was in 1867, that a contest was established among those coastal sailing ships and San Francisco Bay and Delta workboats to help celebrate Independence Day. That first contest was the start of San Francisco's Master Mariners Regatta.

Thousands of spectators crowded Telegraph Hill to view the hotly contested battle of two bluewater sailing ships around a tight, 18-mile, inside the Bay course. More than 40 vessels raced for prizes that ranged from opera glasses to a cord of wood, or a ton of potatoes--all donated by local merchants. But the most coveted prize of all was, and still is, a silken swallow-tailed banner emblazoned with a strutting gamecock with the words CHAMPION embroidered across in large letters.

A great story is told of those times: during the 1880's, in a waterfront bar known as the Exchange, two skippers placed a bet between themselves. Both had commercial vessels, and both thought they could beat the other in an all-out confrontation of sail. The date was set, and the course was set.

Riding on the outcome, not only the original bets, but side bets amounting to over three-thousand dollars! The course was run as a match race, and the heavy bettor won, saying, "I don't know of any easier way to get the money, other than knocking him over the head and stealing it!"

Unfortunately, the winning vessel, a scow-sloop named *P.M. Randell*, caught fire in Suisun Bay while hauling a load of hay the next year and a rematch was never run.



Events

December 31 - January 1

New Year's Eve Masquerade Party and New Year's Day Regatta & Chili Potluck at Point San Pablo Yacht Club

TBD

China Camp Cleanup--to thank the Friends of China Camp for hosting our annual Cleat Cruise-out and BBQ Labor Day event

March 16

Spring Fling and St. Patrick's Day Cruise-out to San Rafael Yacht Club with traditional grub, local Irish dancers and live band

May 17

Sponsors/Skippers Luncheon at the St. Francis Yacht Club

May 25 and 26

Master Mariners Regatta and after-party at the Encinal Yacht Club
Continental breakfast dockside the next morning

June 22 and 23

Annual Members Meeting and MMBF Wooden Boat Show at the Corinthian Yacht Club

August 3

Galilee Harbor in Sausalito "Maritime Days"

August 31 to September 2

Labor Day China Camp Cleat Cruise-out

October TBD

Jessica Cup and Small Boat Cruise-out (new)

TBD

South Beach Harbor Cruise-out and Giants game (or other event)

Board of Directors

Hans List, Commodore

Gena Egelston, Vice Commodore

Liz Diaz, Rear Commodore

KC Crowell, Treasurer

Neil Gibbs, Membership

Diane Walton, Trophies

Melissa Flick, Events

Mark Harris, IT/Data Management

John Muir, Regatta Support

Bill Conneely, Staff Commodore

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