

# Days of Old Windjammer Recalled in New Shipmasters Club



## Expansion of Merchant Marine Brings Important Organization Into Being and Re-ives Sea Yarns

By SAMUEL A. WOOD.

DOWN at the foot of the tortuous old street that the ancient Dutch folk of this town created as a mere cow track is an organization with a mighty short past but a magnificent future, according to the 200 young and old skippers that make up its membership. It is the Shipmasters Club of New York, to give it its complete title, and it occupies an oblong room that soon will be too restricted for its expanding membership and interests on the ground floor of 21 Pearl street.

Some of its old time navigators who have been years out of the game still suspect that they might be able to negotiate in a smart way and after the shiploads of the serpentine street if it were flooded without once scrapping the buildings, but the youngsters of 20 or 40, who form more than half of the active membership of the club, are inclined to doubt it.

There was no American merchant marine in overseas service on the remotest horizon when in November, 1913, five skippers—Capt. Ben Corning, commanding a Panama Railroad liner; Capt. Charles H. Knowles, now with the Morgan liner El Norte; Capt. Walter A. Pondleton, an old clipper ship navigator; Capt. Whidden A. Harvey and Capt. Frank W. Irvine—got together and formed the Shipmasters Club at an office at 5 Coenties slip.

They had hard sledding until the new merchant marine began to appear hull down on the rim of the season. Then there came a rush among the younger men to enter the war carrying service of Uncle Sam, and the Shipmasters Club began to benefit by swiftly increased membership.

Unlured for a Great Fleet. The old and young skippers are united for the biggest Yankee mercantile fleet on the seas and believe that their club will help to bring about the day that the Stars and Stripes will not only fly in every port but will discover new ports to wave over. Naturally many of these three hundred—more than a third of whom will never more tread the quarter deck as their daddies used to do—have much to say to one another in the periods when they meet in the big room at 21 Pearl.

Some of the veterans are not "scientific" as the newer generation of skippers are, but they say this did not prevent them from making port without accident, and that they have noticed that the scientific folk sometimes go aground in spiky weather, or smash on reefs or rocks in stress just like the rule-of-thumb men sometimes do.

The veterans—that is the rule-of-thumb navigators—are willing to admit that they were guiltless of grand old sailing, that they had even heard of skippers on the western coast who paid little or no attention to chronometers, getting along with little more than the equipment of Capt. Christopher Columbus, and never losing a ship. One of this sort once held up a scientific old timer in midocean by discharging his engine union down and then had the audacity to ask for his position. The indignant navigator responded warmly: "Drink less rum and buy a chronometer, damn you," and sailed serenely on his course.

There are some illusions that veterans of the shipmasters Club shatter about the pristine glories of the old packets and clippers, just before and after the civil war. Ships with stunners and kay sails and even moonballs bellying on toothpick poles, adorn the walls of the club and suggest the fear-some perils of making and furling sail in the old days.

Liner Could Carry One. Those gallant square riggers were too big as ships go nowadays; for instance, the New York clipper Dreadnought, celebrated in sea song, with a record of 9 days and 17 hours to Vancoutown from Sandy Hook, might be shoved away on the deck of a modern man-of-war twin screw or quadruple screw turbine. The old skippers will tell you that she transported to Liverpool what were considered great cargoes in her day, but the younger ones will tell you that that day, with its traditions more or less fanciful, has vanished never to return, and that those cargoes were about one-tenth, or less, than the quantity of goods borne by a modern colossus that spans the same sea space with the regularity of the express of a well managed railroad. Both the old fellows and the young, many of whom are employed by the

Shipping Board, write in the hope that the American talent on the job of expanding our post war merchant marine will make it worth while comparing in efficiency with the old packet and clipper fleets that had no equals in the mercantile argosies of other peoples, although in the near future these fleets may be put in the category of toy ships.

According to Capt. James Moorhead, who has the distinction of coming to this country first as a boy stowaway aboard the Black Ball packet Daniel Webster in 1823, and being promptly sent back again, to reappear as one of the crew of a British clipper, the part of the American sailorman has been painted in colors too rosy. Maybe some of the silk hatted men of the quarter may be responsible for some of this tinting. The facts of the case are that quarters of the crews were frequently badly ventilated, when ventilated at all; badly lighted and cramped, and the crews were, by any means all American; in fact, only about 10 per cent. were native, barring the officers, and sometimes much less than that.

Packets Every Five Days. In the era preceding the civil war packets—meaning ships carrying passengers—sailed every five days from the port of New York, commanded by men from the finest families on the coast, but nearly always with crews of mixed nationalities, many of whom were frequently shanghaied and often swindled of all their wages for the voyage by boarding men.

The Daniel Webster, Capt. Moorhead says, had to take from boarding masters what the skippers and officers called "packet rats," who went over the rail the moment the ship docked at Liverpool or New York, and came back into the grip of the shipping masters again. Some of them were ugly. Capt. Moorhead recalls that a gang of them, mostly Irish, got peevish at the mate, who was a Dutchman, and was trying to leave him over the rail when Capt. Moorhead, who was second mate, interfered.

The Daniel Webster, which Capt. Moorhead had painted by an old marine artist from description adorns the wall of the skipper's office in Dun & Co.'s Building, 200 Broadway. She was bluff bowled and not a flier, but she made trips between New York and Liverpool at an average of about thirty days each way. She had a mixed crew, chiefly foreign born, who subsisted on salt horse and hard tack, and her passenger accommodations, while regarded as quite good in their time, would be considered worse than the stowage of the best of the modern steamships. She carried about 200 passengers in wooden bunks and in rough weather they had a pretty tough time of it.

"The sailors of to-day," said Capt. Moorhead, "are better treated than the officers of the past were."

Believer in the Chantey. Capt. Moorhead is a great believer in the chantey and can sing the best and the worst of them, as he used to in the days when he shipped before the mast and later when he was second mate and mate of the American ship Southampton. His crew, he says, were never on the ropes without a song, which helped them wonderfully. They sang "Ethenoah" with the windlass and when hauling on the braces had "Hail away, Joe." The only excuse they would take from a man who did not care to sing was the lack of teeth. The singing of the chantey was mandatory.

The ship that Capt. Moorhead likes the best in his nautical art gallery is the Daniel Webster. He quotes from the old Harkigan song when he tells of his first visit to New York: "I came here when small from Donegal, in the Daniel Webster I crossed the sea." But it was really Liverpool that he came from, so this is merely poetic license.

much more readily handled than a square rigger, or as some of the skippers say, a "real ship."

The fore-and-aft master mariners are not regarded as the highest professional class of navigators by the bosses and ex-bosses of the square riggers, and they josh one another often. One skipper said the other day that it was easy enough for a captain who had run a square rigger to handle a fore-and-after.

He was disputed by another skipper, former commander of a three masted schooner, who said that when he was the second mate of a schooner

bound for the West Indies, with a captain and mate who had never sailed in a fore-and-after, they ran into a hurricane. The skipper was making a mess of trying to heave to, and called on the mate for help. The mate said he'd be jiggered if he knew anything about the trick with that sort of a blankety craft, and yelled down to the second mate, who came up and hoisted the vessel to a jiffy.

Still Eager to Go to Sea. The talk of the cronies in the club room is not all of the past. Even among the men of 60 and more there are many who are still at the helms of passenger and freight steamships in overseas and coastwise trade. They see vast possibilities for the new merchant marine, created and in process of creation, and some close to 70 express a desire to take a berth in the future should they be needed through the lack of quarter deck material.

One of the Down Easters who has contributed much to the building up of the club is Capt. Walter A. Pondleton, who left the sea for the insurance business, marine and other wise, twenty-five years ago. Capt. Pondleton was skipper of the clippers Martha Davis and Amy Turner, which after the civil war made mighty swift passages between this port and ports of the Pacific. He once went from Honolulu to Hong Kong in twenty-four days, and from New York to Honolulu in 109 days.

## Age Old Disputes Between Captains of Square Riggers and Fore-and-Afters Enliven Meetings

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# THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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THIS day, February 9, with one day less than five weeks elapsed since Theodore Roosevelt died, is formally set apart for memorial observance throughout the nation. To-day Congress does itself honor by meeting in a joint session dedicated to his memory. The Supreme Court and the Cabinet members in the United States are to attend. So would the President undoubtedly if he could be received from him.

## Judge Gary Warns Against Bolsheviki

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Anything which decreased the cumulative national impulse toward general national success would do individuals incalculable harm. Against whom would the weapons of the Bolsheviki be principally be aimed? Against the people of great wealth? By no means. Mostly they would target large intermediate class who occupy positions of responsibility but are not very rich, for the reason that their vocations—voluntarily and involuntarily and lovingly, snatched at their own free choice—are not productive of great pecuniary returns. This very wide and important classification in America includes all members of professions—doctors, judges, writers, newspaper men, clerical men, scientists of all sorts, thousands of our happiest, most useful, all persons conducting small and growing businesses, all clerical workers of whatever grade, all farmers.

This classification, to make the saddest conceivable analysis, includes every man and woman of ambition. In America the people of ambition form a majority so overwhelming that to talk of crushing it is to talk foolishness! The American majority—these very people—are people of high principle, fair minded, good ethical and moral character. They are the nation's dominating influence, theirs will be the richest business decisions with regard to Bolshevism. None need fear that they will not make it, none need fear that when they make it they will speak with empty words.

There is an important thought in this. Every common effort of employer and the labor union has resulted in the benefit of both. Here is an opportunity for great common effort and for real general gain. Let some one sound the bugle for a general attack on Bolshevism and employer and employed throughout America will obey the summons with alacrity.

employed are not here spoken of as master and servant; they are associates and both find the relationship in pleasant one. Each is obligated to consider and protect the rights and interests of those he works with. Interference is complete and perfectly unjustified. What is not a theory, it is a practice. Capital not only understands the honesty of this situation but its wisdom.

The majority, the vast majority, on both sides are not only fair minded but considerate; they love justice, liberty and peace; above all they love progress.

It may be that as opponents of Bolshevism may be spreading through the world from Russia, as the epidemic of influenza spread through the world from Spain, so we all must work against it and for the common good. It is not a matter of how many men and women recognize that in conditions following the war, the evils which may be dangerous, that every man and woman in his or her best way shall try to counteract their influence.