



THE VOYAGE ABSTRACT

Newsletter of the Maritime Industry Museum at Fort Schuyler

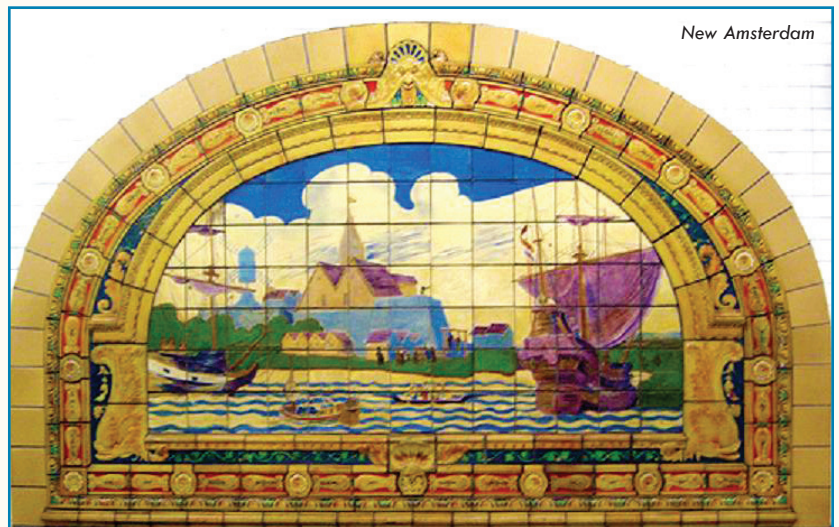
2014

THE MARINE GRILL MURALS

By Captain Roland R. Parent, '68

New York City has perhaps the greatest collection of marine art and maritime artifacts of any city in the world, with the possible exception of London. Eclectic collections available to the public can be viewed in museums throughout the city such as the Noble Collection in Staten Island, the Brooklyn Museum, Museum of the City of New York, U.S.S. Intrepid, South Street Seaport, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and our own Maritime Industry Museum with its Work Project Act paintings, Brooklyn Navy Yard diorama, and spectacular model collection. Private collections that exist in New York can occasionally be seen in restaurants, clubs, gallery openings, and at special museum events. Less well known, however, are some of the maritime memorials and art in public places that are ironically passed by thousands of people per day, but with little notice. Some examples are the Titanic Memorial at Fulton and Pearl Streets, the Merchant Marine Memorial in Battery Park, and General Slocum Memorial in Tompkins Square Park. Another important set of artifacts, origin unknown to most who view them, are six incomparable tile murals located in the subway station at Broadway and Fulton Street, commemorating the history of New York Harbor.

These six works of art, known as the *Marine Grill Murals*, 1913, were created in 1912 by an American Artist named Frederick Dana Marsh (1872-1961) for the installation in the new McAlpin Hotel opening in 1913 at Broadway and 34th Street. When built, the McAlpin was one of the largest hotels in New York and instantly became a fashionable meeting place for visitors and shoppers around Herald Square. The hotel



featured an elaborate basement restaurant that, when new, was named the Rathskeller but soon became more commonly known as the Marine Grill because of the twenty spectacular maritime murals, designed by Fred Marsh that graced its walls. In addition to the murals, the Marine Grill space was itself a profusion of arched tiled ceiling grottos separated within a forest of curved pillars all covered with tiles in various shades of terra cotta, brown, gold, red and green. It was indeed an architectural masterpiece with the murals as focal points.

The McAlpin Hotel went through four name changes over the years until finally, in 1989, when way past its glory days, it was converted to co-op apartments and the Marine Grill was demolished. Six of the tile murals were thankfully preserved. In a joint effort by the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Municipal Art Society, the New York Landmark Preservation Commission, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and an obscure group called the Friends of Terra Cotta,

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Visit us on the web at:
www.sunymaritime.edu/maritime_museum

Museum Hours

Monday-Saturday
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Admission and parking are free!

**Contact the Museum Office for
directions, group tour information,
and membership application
information at 718-409-7218**
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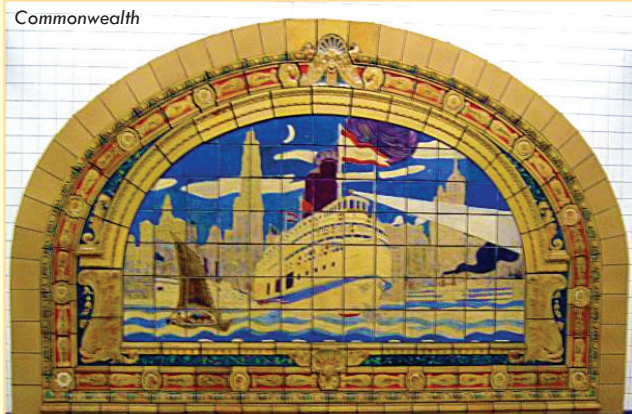
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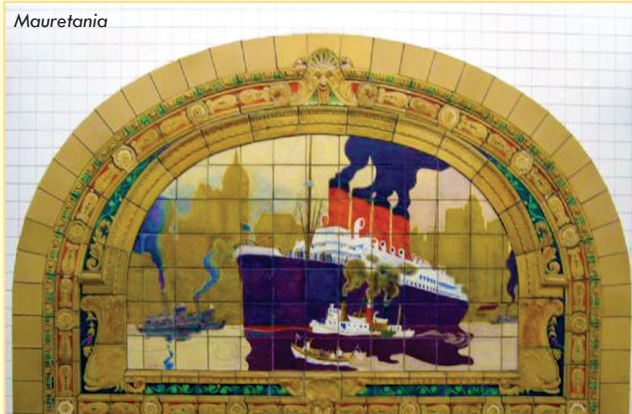
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Commonwealth



Mauretania



North River Steamboat



the shards of the Marsh murals were rescued from demolition and painstakingly reassembled much like giant jig saw puzzles by a group of art students. As part of the MTA's Arts-For-Transit program, the restored murals were reinstalled in the mezzanine level of the Fulton/Broadway subway station during 2000. In 2010 they were relocated to the William Street entrance to the station where they remain on display passed by thousands of people a day who know little of their origin.

The artist, Frederick Dana Marsh, while fairly well known in his day, has mostly faded from view, whereas his son, Reginald Marsh (1898-

1954), also a muralist, had risen in prominence and is now regarded as one of New York's most important artists of the twentieth century. The son's murals, larger and painted in oils, reflect much of his father's influence by depicting similar subject matter. His work can still be seen in the former U.S. Customs House, now the Museum of the American Indian, and the U.S. Post Office, both on lower Broadway.

The senior Marsh's murals, each semicircular about fifteen feet wide and ten feet tall, depict six historic views of the harbor and river in chronological order. The first image is of Native Americans rowing their canoes out to meet Henry Hudson's *Half Moon*. The second features two Dutch caravels anchored off New Amsterdam. The third depicts a British man-o-war apparently firing her guns at the city. The fourth is Robert Fulton's *North River Steamboat* more commonly known as the *Clermont*. The last two murals are twentieth century scenes. The *R.M.S. Mauretania*, at the time flagship of the Cunard Line, maneuvering with tugs alongside, and finally the Fall River Line Steamer *Commonwealth* departing Pier 14 at Fulton Street. The huge murals are much like giant mosaics, designed and painted by Marsh, fired and glazed at the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company in Staten Island, then installed at the McAlpin under Marsh's supervision.

While the Marine Grill and its glorious murals would have been out of reach or unknown to young maritime cadets living and studying aboard the Training Ship *Newport*, the imagery of the busy harbor was much like what attracted many young people to the sea in the first place. In fact, with a few exceptions and shipyard periods, the Steamer *Commonwealth's* normal route took her from New York up the East River, past the *Newport* at her East River pier, then past Fort Schuyler on the way to Fall River, every day for over thirty years. This certainly would have gotten the cadets' attention. Similarly, the *Mauretania* docked a short distance away at the Cunard Line terminal on the Hudson River every two weeks for almost thirty years. Though New York may no longer be the center of the maritime industry, it still features much of its glorious history in art form; one only needs to look around. History buffs, art lovers, maritime students and businessmen alike, should take the opportunity to stop in the Fulton Street Station to view the *Marine Grill Murals*, 1913, it's well worth the effort.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Celebrate and visit the Maritime Industry Museum at Historic Fort Schuyler. Immerse in its grandeur and embrace our mission. Thanks to the support of our membership, the Maritime Industry Museum moves forward every year with new displays and exhibits. Visit our newest ship model TSES VI, now a permanent exhibit in the Joe Gerson Training Ship Wing. The TSES VI has been finely crafted by CAPT Roland R. Parent '68, Master Model Builder. This now completes our Empire State Training Ship Collection. Upcoming events/exhibits include: LNG, TSES VI model dedication, and Homecoming Silent Auction.

Our 4th Annual Silent Auction is scheduled to be held on Saturday, October 25th during Homecoming so...bring your friends, checkbooks, and cash! Support your museum and bid up and onward! Vacation homes, dinner/excursion cruises, and maritime artifacts abound awaiting new destinations....support your museum!

We welcome the new College President and President of the Museum, RADM Michael Alfultis, the new College Provost and Vice President of the Museum, Dr. Timothy G. Lynch, and new Museum Board Members, LCDR Cecil S. Ashdown, Matthew Bonvento '01, CAPT Tim Ferrie '78, Andrew Genn, Justice John Ingram '64, and Carleen Lyden-Kluss. Please let them know how much you appreciate their volunteer efforts to make this museum the

finest maritime museum on the East Coast. Sadly, our Museum Board has lost two charter members, CAPT Harold A. (Hap) Parnham '48, and Alvin Golden 'Oct 46. Hap and Al were dear friends to all and great supporters of the Maritime Industry Museum. Our prayers are with their families. We are very grateful to have had such outstanding giving men as Hap and Al in our lives, and in our hearts. God Bless Hap and Al.

For over 25 years we have provided free access for school children, senior citizens, dignitaries, and special guests, which would not be possible without our loyal and generous Corporate and Individual Supporters, wonderful Museum Board and Staff, and SUNY Maritime College. Visit our Museum and see the great progress as we sail onward, all for the original price set by our founders.....Free of Charge!



Good Cheap Treasures!

Seek your treasure at the Fourth Annual Maritime Industry Museum Silent Auction at Homecoming! Bargain-bid for a relaxing vacation, sailing cruises, dinners, and exquisite maritime artifacts for your dream booty.

WHEN: Homecoming, Saturday, October 25th, 10:00am until Half-time Football horn

WHERE: Vander Clute Hall

Generous donors have donated their treasures in support of our beloved museum, so please do your part and remember the ole Sally Port saying **"BID EARLY AND OFTEN"**.

CURATOR'S REPORT

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our spring/summer intern Genesis Agosto, for her service to the Museum. Genesis is an International Transportation major at Maritime College and anticipates graduating this winter. She assisted with cataloging new accessions, general office work, learning to be a tour guide, upgrading several display cases with new LED lighting, and also spearheaded the development of a new exhibit on the Nuclear Ship *Savannah*, using existing and new accessions from our membership.

The Museum is ready to move forward with installing new TV's in the Training Ship wing to display pictures and movies of both the ship and student life aboard. The project funding has been supplied by SUNY Maritime College class of October 1946, but to be truly successful, we need pictures and home movies from all alumni. Please send copies of pictures and movies to the museum office so that they can be incorporated into the new displays.

The Museum has finally taken possession of the final Training Ship model (at least until TSES VII is acquired) by taking delivery from the builder, CAPT Roland R. Parent '68, the current Training Ship *Empire State VI*. The model will be formally dedicated on October 25, 2014 during this year's Homecoming festivities.

A new bulk ship was recently christened and named for Fort Schuyler by the Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) Company. She is named *Schuyler Trader*. ADM had a model made and shipped to the Museum to display in Fort Schuyler. Sadly, the deck house of the model broke loose during shipping and caused extensive damage to the aft section of the model. I am currently working on restoring the model to the best of my abilities to display condition. I do not want to show pictures of the damaged model and hope to post repaired photos in the future, but want to say thank you to ADM for the honor of having a ship named after our school and supplying us with a model of her.



The Nuclear Ship *Savannah* exhibit is located outside of classroom A 4 on the upper deck.



Empire State VI Exhibit on display in the training ship wing

William M Sokol Jr.

William M Sokol Jr. '94
Curator

The Woman behind the Name of the Liberty Ship, Janet Lord Roper

By Robert McLaren

John Corley Bunker's book, *Liberty Ships The Ugly Ducklings of World War II* states that 114 Liberty's were named for women. The first, *Amelia Earhart*, was named for the woman pilot lost on flight over the Pacific in 1937. Other familiar names were *Carole Lombard*, *Molly Pitcher*, *Virginia Dare*, *Barbara Fritchie*, *Annie Oakley*, and *Pocahontas*. The *Mary Cullom Kimbro* was named for the first woman member of the U.S. Merchant Marine who was killed at sea when the *City of Birmingham* was torpedoed on June 30, 1942. Names of other ships included women writers, artists, and those in American history. One woman who might be known by seamen who spent time between ships at the Seamen's Church Institute in New York City before her passing on April 6, 1943, was *Janet Lord Roper*.

The Liberty Ship, *S.S. Janet Lord Roper* was named for her. The ship was built at Bethlehem Fairfield Shipyard Inc. (#2157) in Baltimore, Maryland. She was launched on June 26, 1943, nine months and nine days after the *S.S. John W. Brown* from the same shipyard. She was delivered



to the International Freighting Company on July 7, 1943, as operating agents for the War Shipping Administration.

Janet would often tell about her mother searching the docks in Newfoundland, asking any and all sailors if they had seen her brother Jimmy, with Janet in tow. Jimmy had gone to sea and had not been heard from since. A letter did arrive some time later from a woman in Calcutta who had nursed Jimmy in his final days. The trips to the docks talking to sailors ended. The family moved to Boston and as a teenager, Janet found herself mesmerized by the clergymen who spoke at her church from the Boston Seamen's Friend Society. She asked to help, thinking of her Uncle Jimmy. She started out as a Bible teacher. By the time she was nineteen, Janet was visiting deep water boarding houses, ships and

shipping offices, speaking and listening to seamen to try to help with their problems and concerns.

Janet married the Reverend Harry Roper on August 1, 1894, and moved to Westford Village, Massachusetts. They then moved to St. John, New Brunswick, where Reverend Roper held the post of Chaplain at the Seamen's Institute. While at the post, is when Janet was first called "Mother Roper" by the cadets at the training school. In 1906, Harry Roper and his wife were called to Portland, Oregon. Reverend Roper died in March of 1915, and in July of the same year, Janet moved to 25 South Street in New York City, to fill the newly created post of House Mother.

In September 1919, Mother Roper and her co-workers established a *Missing Men* department. The goal was to "encircle the world with a band of men and women who care enough for seamen to help keep in touch with their families and friends". A weekly newsletter *The Missing Seamen Bulletin* was mailed to hundreds of institutes, missions, union halls, marine hospitals, consulates, and shipping commissioners around the world. From the short period of September 29th to December 31st, 1919, 176 inquires were made regarding missing seamen, and as a result, 93 were found. At the time of Mother Roper's death, the department she set up had helped to locate more the 6,500 mariners given up for lost.

The Liberty Ship, *S.S. Janet Lord Roper* carried cargo for the remaining part of World War II. On June 30, 1946, the ship was laid up at the James River Reserve Fleet in Virginia. On March 4, 1948, the P.W. Sprague Company purchased the ship and renamed her *P.W. Sprague*. The ship was shortened 30 feet at the stern and was converted to a self-unloading coal collier at a Boston shipyard. In 1956, she was sold to Pence Products Incorporated and was converted again to a cement bulk carrier under the name *Florida State*. She sailed with Pence until 1961, when she was



sold to Everglades Steamship Company in Tampa, Florida, and had more conversion work performed. She sailed for Everglades until 1971, then sold to Galeana S.A. of Athens, Greece and registered under the Panamanian Flag. In 1977, the ship was converted to a non-propelled storage barge in Venezuela. Of the one hundred fourteen Liberty Ships named for women, ten were lost through enemy action.

Mother Roper is interred at the Moravian Cemetery on Staten Island, New York. Sadly, there is no headstone marking her grave site.

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