

Preserving Historic Vessels

by Peter McCracken

The recent loss of Seattle's 1897 lumber schooner *Wawona* (*Sea History* 106:18), current concern for preservation of the 1936 Nantucket Lightship *LV-112* (*Sea History* 126:12), the risk of an impending sale of *SS United States* (see pages 10-11 of this issue and also *Sea History* 108:33), and the continuing "Historic Ships on a Lee Shore" (nearly every *Sea History* issue), show the challenges facing preservation for historic vessels. The internet is obviously an excellent way of sharing information about threatened vessels and for finding support from across the country and around the world, but it also contains a wealth of resources about such vessels themselves. Governments and historical societies have collected, and are now disseminating, much of this information.

In the US, the Historic American Buildings Survey and Historic American Engineering Record (known collectively as "HABS/HAER"), have been recording information about important buildings, vessels, architecture, and engineering technologies since the early 1930s. While definitely not limited to historic ships, the project has included many vessels and maritime technologies. The HABS/HAER collection, administered jointly by the National Park Service, the Library of Congress, and private sector members, now comprises more than half a million drawings, photographs, and written histories, for nearly 40,000 sites from across the country. More are added every year. While some of these historic sites have been lost since they were documented, the records have not, and many of them are now available online through the Library of Congress's American Memory site under the name "Built in America," at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/.

If you browse the collection by "subject" ("place" is another option), you will find many maritime options, from "row-boats" or "yawl boats" to "lightships" or "sailing ships" or even "gantry cranes" or "sea walls." Items may have technical drawings, photographs, data pages, or more. Some have incredibly

detailed drawings (see the collection for the *C. A. Thayer*), and others have fascinating photographs, such as those from the Percy & Small Shipyard in Bath, Maine (now the core of the Maine Maritime Museum).

At http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_museum_ships one can find Wikipedia's "list of museum ships," which identifies museum ships around the world and includes their location, nationality, and other information. Most have a link to a Wikipedia entry with at least some additional information.

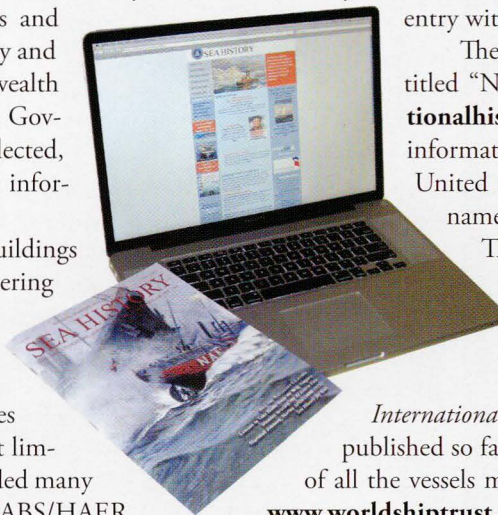
The UK has an impressive online database titled "National Historic Ships" at <http://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk>. This database contains information on over 1,200 extant vessels in the United Kingdom, with photos, histories, previous names, builders' information, and dimensions.

The amount of information varies from vessel to vessel, of course, but it's a useful place for identifying existing historic vessels, including those for sale!

The World Ship Trust publishes the *International Register of Historic Ships*, with three editions published so far. The most recent came out in 1999. A list of all the vessels mentioned in the *Register* appears at <http://www.worldshiptrust.org/register.html>.


Sea History and the National Maritime Historical Society maintains a site about ship preservation at <http://www.seahistory.org/html/aboutpreservation.htm>, but I have found few other web sites with comprehensive information on the status of specific vessels and preservation projects. Nevertheless, using a search engine to look for a ship name and the word "preservation" will return many results for any particular vessel currently at risk. The internet is an excellent way of sharing information about preservation projects and undoubtedly will continue to play this role for the foreseeable future.

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at shipindex@yahoo.com. See <http://www.shipindex.org> for a compilation of over 100,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ⚓



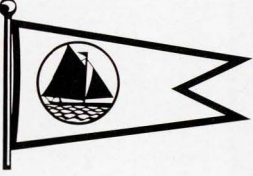
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