

Finding Useful—and Licensable—Maritime Images

Searching for images that one can license to use in books, magazines, websites, and more can often be quite tricky. For commercial works, regardless of the format, one must be careful to ensure that appropriate reproduction rights have been obtained from the correct rights holder. One excellent way of doing that—and one that supports maritime organizations—is to license them from the maritime museums and collections that own the images and the associated rights. Below is a selection of great, but disparate, collections of maritime images that are worth investigating. Licensing costs vary dramatically from institution to institution, and on the intended use.

The **Penobscot Marine Museum**, in Searsport, Maine, has a collection of over 140,000 images, and recently they have made them available online for purchase or licensing (<http://penobscotmarinemuseum.org/museum-collections-database/>). Click on “Search The Database,” then enter a vessel name, a vessel type, or any other sort of keyword. You can limit your results to “Only records with images” on the right-hand side. “Object records” describe items in the museum’s collections but don’t necessarily have images digitized...yet. “Photo records” show images, though each one has a museum watermark on it. Watermark-free images can be licensed for personal or commercial use by contacting the institution.

The UK’s **National Maritime Museum** offers more than 30,000 watermark-free images available for licensing at <http://images.rmc.co.uk>, and includes a useful lightbox tool where one can organize, sort, and manage selected images.

In South Africa, the **John H. March Maritime Research Centre at Iziko Maritime Centre** has over 18,000 images of about 9,200 ships in South Africa, from 1921 to 1953. The images themselves aren’t shown online, but the Centre does list the names of included ships, at <http://rapidtp.co.za/museum/jmmrc.html>.

The **Australian National Maritime Museum** has uploaded 2,800 images from their image collection to **Flickr**, at http://www.flickr.com/photos/anmm_thecommons/. Though the

images can be easily downloaded from Flickr, and Flickr indicates “no known copyright restrictions,” the museum does clearly state in the image description that they require that permission be granted before images are used commercially.

The **Great Lakes Maritime Database**, hosted by the University of Michigan at http://quod.lib.umich.edu/t/tb_nmslic and built by the Alpena County (MI) Library and the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, has about 22,000 images in it. Not all are pictures of ships; a number are images of enrollment certificates and others are pictures of newspaper mentions, but the watermarked images do allow one to zoom in very closely.

The **Maritime History Archive**, at Memorial University, Newfoundland, has around half of their images available online, at <http://www.mun.ca/mha/publicphotos.php>. A search in the “Title” field for words like “ship” or “schooner” will return many different examples; one can of course also search in the title or keyword field for a ship’s name.


Of course, there are free options out there, as well. The **Wikimedia Commons** at <http://commons.wikimedia.org> (previously mentioned, along with several other general websites, in *Sea History* 137) now contains 20 million files. Each file is marked with its **Creative Commons** license (<http://creativecommons.org>), which is assigned by the file’s uploader. These vary, according to the intent of the image’s owner. Of the six main licenses, “CC BY” licenses allow unlimited reuse of the image, as long as credit is given for the original creation. “CC BY-SA” allows reuse, including in a commercial setting, as long as the new work carries the same license. Remember, individuals have the ability to upload images they do not own and might claim no copyright restrictions exist, though the actual owner has expressed limitations. It makes for a challenging arena, and one where individuals must tread carefully.

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at peter@shipindex.org. See <http://shipindex.org> for a free compilation of over 140,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ⚓

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