



# 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the National Maritime Historical Society 9 May 2020

## **I. A Virtual Welcome: RONALD L. OSWALD, Chairman**

Like for so many organizations throughout the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on the National Maritime Historical Society. As a long-established maritime organization with an institutional history that goes back nearly six decades, the Society has had its fair share of challenges. Once again, NMHS is adjusting its sails, making strategic changes to operations, and working together to weather these uncertain times. We are disappointed not to be in Philadelphia today with our friends at the Independence Seaport Museum, but look forward to holding our 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting there next year, and sharing with you today the Society's many exciting developments and activities.

As always, we welcome your questions and suggestions as we plan for the future – for the National Maritime Historical Society to flourish and grow, it is important that its leaders and members share ideas to chart the Society's course into the future. This support and interaction have kept us vital for more than half a century, and it is never more important than right now. We are especially grateful to Walter R. Brown, William J. Green and William H. White for their sponsorship of this year's Annual Meeting.

## **II. Minutes of the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting: JEAN WORT, Secretary**

The minutes of the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting held on 18 May 2019 at the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in New Bedford, Massachusetts can be found by [clicking here](#).

## **III. Chairman's Report: RONALD L. OSWALD, Chairman**

Like most organizations across the country, National Maritime Historical Society employees had to move out of our headquarters and relocate their offices at home last March. For the most part, the transition has been a successful one and the Society continues to meet its goals with collective hard work, talent, and some good fortune. Our website [www.seahistory.org](http://www.seahistory.org), now visited by over 8,000 people each month, is frequently updated with new resources, including every issue of *Sea History* from number 001, a hyperlinked index of over 35,000 search terms, and our new [Museums Online](#) page promoting the innovative ways maritime museums are sharing resources while their doors remain closed.



We continue to offer programs to students to get them involved in maritime history. One of our most successful has been encouraging students to research maritime topics for [National History Day](#). We continue to offer cash prizes in about 25 states, even as these contests have gone virtual. And our online *Sea History* for Kids has experienced a great jump in viewer participation as students (and parents!) work from home.

## SEA HISTORY for Kids

**ANIMALS »**

**Great Auks**

In the featured painting by John James Audubon and Robert Havell, Jr. from 1836, the two Great Auks show off their profiles by standing vigilantly on a rock and swimming...

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We have an ambitious year ahead of us, and we are prepared to be flexible as we weather the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to advocate for funding for the maritime heritage, and to highlight the plight of ships that must not disappear and be gone forever. And *Sea History* editor Deirdre O'Regan and her staff have worked tirelessly to make sure the magazine will be mailed to our membership on time and with an abundance of important and engaging features. What a harbinger of hope this is to museums' staffs and ships' crews whose facilities are closed, and what a welcome resource to armchair sailors everywhere.

#### **IV. *Treasurer's Financial Report: WILLIAM H. WHITE, Treasurer***

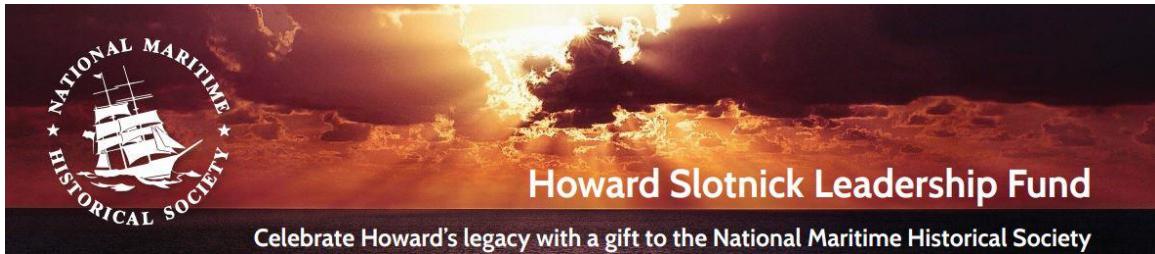
As the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc throughout the world, NMHS was also shaken by the loss of treasurer and chairman emeritus Howard Slotnick. He had been the elected treasurer of the Society for many, many terms, and represented the National Maritime Historical Society at events across the globe for decades. Under his stewardship, with his practical nature, his attention to the figures and his generosity, the Society's finances flourished. NMHS is honored and grateful that trustee and treasurer emeritus William H. White has agreed to take on this role for the Society.

2019 was a year of great accomplishments for NMHS, yet the Society entered 2020 with significant financial challenges to face as well. While we still await the completion of our 2019 audit, we note that overall membership, development and special event income held relatively steady over the last year. Initiatives for general support, appeals, education program funding and leadership support had seen much success. Overall operating income had not kept pace with expenses however. And then, like all organizations everywhere, we were struck with the ramifications of COVID-19. Social distancing requirements led to the cancellation of at least two major fundraising events for the year and the slashing of special event income. We also expect that volatility in the stock market and high unemployment will impact funding from donors.

Uncertainty regarding the economic impact of the pandemic led the Society to promptly apply for federal Paycheck Protection Program assistance, resulting in a loan that we are working to ensure will be forgiven as a grant. Work-at-home requirements, staff changes and the closure of key vendors have forced the Society to make strategic adjustments to operations and communications with members and donors. These are changes that have enabled greater efficiencies and a decrease in costs. We realize that in these unprecedented times we must be innovative and frugal to succeed, and our newly adopted budget has cut expenses by over 20%. And the Howard Slotnick Leadership Fund, a trustee-restricted fund under the leadership of trustee ADM Robert J. Papp Jr., USCG (Ret.), has been created. Contributions to the fund in Howard's honor have shown us that his maritime legacy is as bright as ever.

#### **V. *President's Report: BURCHENAL GREEN, President***

I echo the sentiments of our chairman Ronald Oswald in my appreciation of the talent and dedication of our staff, trustees, advisors and overseers, and my enthusiasm for the opportunities that lie ahead. It has been a challenging time however, and not without its sorrow. As we announced last month, our beloved chairman emeritus and treasurer Howard Slotnick passed away at the end of March. His maritime legacy really is as bright as ever though, and we continue to fulfill our mission through the support of the [Howard Slotnick Leadership Fund](#). You can read more about Howard and the Leadership Fund on our website and in the upcoming issue of *Sea History* magazine.



We are not alone among organizations the world over who have been forced to cancel or postpone programs and events and to pivot operations as we create work spaces at home. With our headquarters in New York, it's still too early to say when we can return to our offices and hold the events that are so important not just to the maritime heritage, but to our financial condition. We are learning to be flexible and to adjust our plans often as circumstances warrant, however the challenges we were facing before the pandemic remain, including relocating our headquarters after decades on the waterfront in Peekskill, finding new financial resources, and growing our membership.

We are pleased to report that our landlord has extended our lease through the end of this year, and in the meantime we are working with local municipalities on finding a more permanent location. In February, the Society raised regular and student/retired membership dues by \$10/year after over two decades without an increase, and reduced the print run of *Sea History* magazine to cut expenses. We have been awarded a federal Paycheck Protection Program loan, and will be making strategic decisions to maximize our loan forgiveness. Despite our current challenges, we look forward to a successful year ahead.

#### ***VI. Membership & Development Report: WILLIAM H. WHITE and DAVID S. FOWLER, Membership & Development Co-Chairmen***

In response to stay-at-home orders in mid-March, the National Maritime Historical Society relocated all its operations and has converted much of its fundraising and membership communications into cost-effective and attractive online and digital formats. (You can help the Society by making sure we have your current email address at [www.seahistory.org/signup](http://www.seahistory.org/signup) and by saving us the expense of printing notices by renewing online at [www.seahistory.org/renew](http://www.seahistory.org/renew).) Membership dues, which had not been increased since 1996, were raised \$10 per year. We are pleased to report that our stalwart members have continued their support. Despite economic uncertainty and the dues increase, membership levels have remained fairly steady, fluctuating between approximately 7,000 and 8,000 members over the last few years, but is on a slow decline. To address this we offer discounted bulk memberships to maritime organizations, and we distribute about 5,000 copies of each issue to sell in bookstores. *Sea History* 171 however will be sent only to members, since bookstores are closed and so many events (where we would normally distribute the magazine) are cancelled.

There is still much uncertainty about the lasting economic impact of the pandemic, but NMHS is staying the course. We are immensely grateful for the support of our trustees, overseers and advisors, without whom we could not do what we do. And the support of our membership, which is the heart of all we do and why we do it, is as important as ever. Improvements to our website have made it faster and easier than ever to [donate online](#).

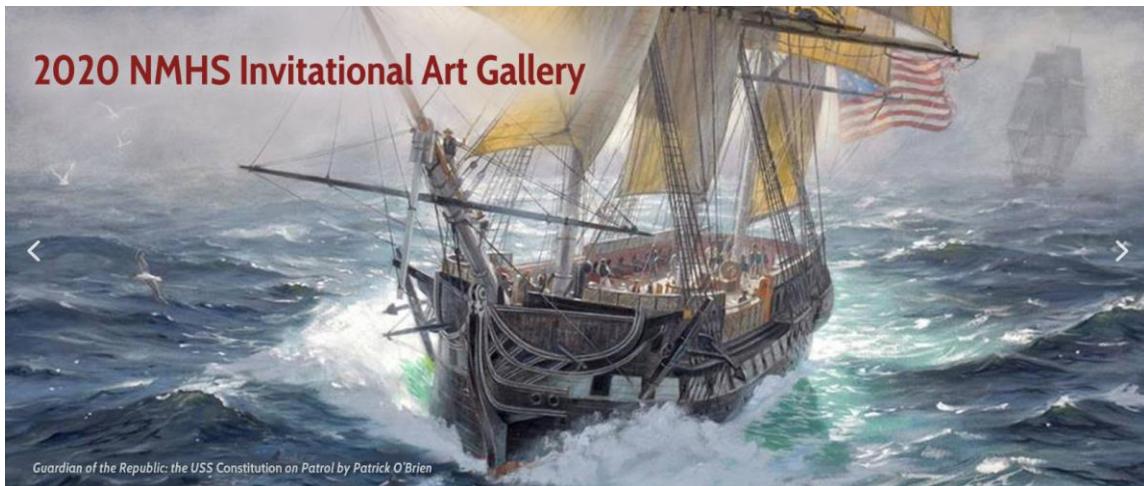


## VII. Program Report: WALTER R. BROWN, Program Chairman

Following CDC guidelines and prohibitions on large gatherings, the [National Maritime Awards Dinner](#) scheduled for 23 April in Washington, DC and the [57th Annual Meeting](#) weekend scheduled in Philadelphia have been postponed. It's a challenging time for public programs, but we are working proactively to evaluate events and reschedule them with the safety and enjoyment of attendees at the forefront. NMHS events help to promote the importance of America's maritime heritage by honoring those whose work in the field is exemplary and by bringing together those who support the heritage – it is that camaraderie that helps to build future work. Once again there will be maritime events for the world to explore and submit; for now, maritime museums can email [nmhs@seahistory.org](mailto:nmhs@seahistory.org) to have their online resources added to our [Online Museums](#) page.



The 2020 [NMHS Invitational Art Gallery](#) has gone virtual and is now online. We look forward to hopefully hosting our 2020 Annual Awards Dinner at the New York Yacht Club on 22 October, and to recommencing our monthly [NMHS Seminar Series](#). We will hold our 10<sup>th</sup> National Maritime Awards Dinner in Washington DC in April 2021 to honor the American Merchant Marine, United States Naval Academy and Coast Guard Aviation Association. We look forward to our 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Philadelphia next May, and to participating in other outreach events that have been postponed in the maritime world, including the Council of American Maritime Museums Annual Conference.

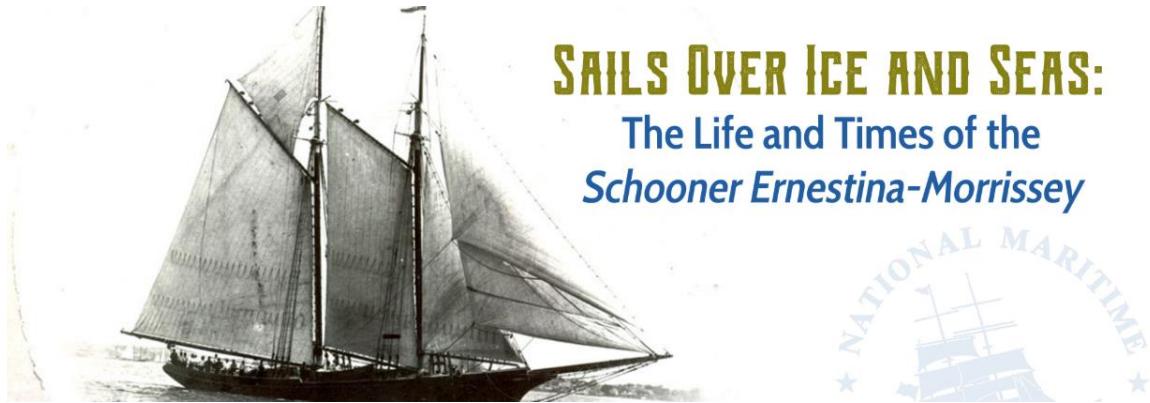


#### **VIII. Education Report: WILLIAM J. GREEN, Education Chairman**

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced NMHS to trim its sails with respect to the education initiatives originally planned for 2020. With a record number of people going online for information and entertainment, the National Maritime Historical website at [www.seahistory.org](#) has become an increasingly valuable resource for students and scholars of all ages. Every issue of the magazine is accessible on our [Sea History](#) page. In addition to the fully hyperlinked [Sea History index](#), there are links to hundreds of useful websites for researchers on our [Maritime History on the Internet](#) page, digital photo collection sites on our [Maritime Images](#) page, more than 200 maritime museums and historic sites on our [Museums, Programs & Historic Sites](#) page, our collection of [Sea History for Kids](#) features, our gathering of [Museums Online](#) resources, and a new archive page for our [Sea History Today](#) email series.

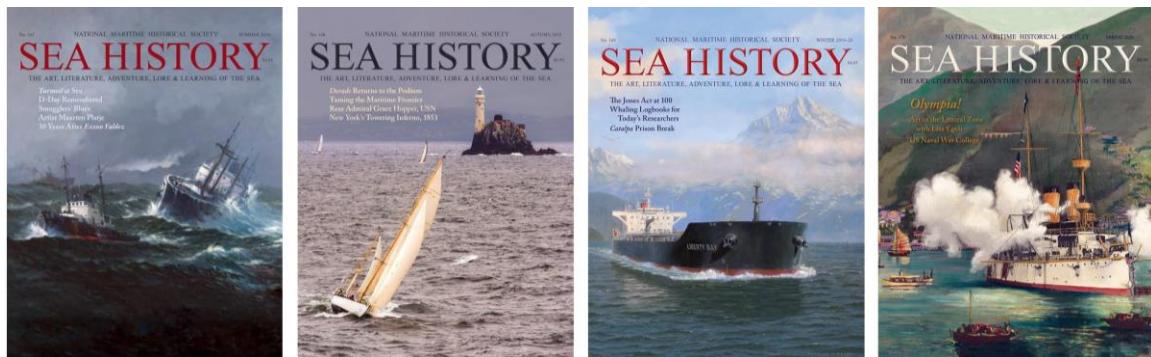


We continue to offer programs to students to get them interested in maritime history. One of our most successful has been involving students in research on maritime topics for [National History Day](#). We continue to offer cash prizes in about 25 states, even as these contests have gone virtual. And while our Maritime Heritage Grant project for our [Maritime Library and Archives](#) is currently on hold while our headquarters is closed, we've been granted an extension from the National Park Service and look forward to resuming this project soon. Progress also continues on the *Ernestina-Morrissey* documentary series *Sails Over Ice and Seas* produced by our vice chairman Richardo Lopes and Voyage Digital Media. You can see a [trailer of the film here](#).



## **IX. Sea History Report: DEIRDRE O'REGAN, Sea History Editor & DR. WILLIAM S. DUDLEY, Board Liaison to Sea History**

The [first issue of \*Sea History\*](#) in 1972 was a small black and white pamphlet, and it came out once a year. It still included a plethora of information. The Society was ecstatic in 2003 when Dr. Timothy Runyan suggested a former student of his to be the new editor. Deirdre O'Regan was a graduate of East Carolina's Master's Program in Maritime History and Nautical Archeology. She had done her thesis on sail making in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was an instructor in the SEAmester program, had sailed on tall ships and had done underwater exploration of shipwrecks. She has been an amazing editor of *Sea History*, which members and leaders throughout the maritime heritage continue to praise.



The forthcoming issue of *Sea History*, our 171st, has several noteworthy articles, one by Jerry Roberts concerning the 400th anniversary of the *Mayflower*'s voyage and the passengers who made it, another by Sal Mercogliano on the history of U.S. naval hospital ships as background to the roles of USNS *Comfort* and *Mercy*, and Kevin Foster's on the first steel-hull blockade runner *Banshee*. The focus of Ship Notes is how maritime museums and historic ship organizations are coping with the effects of social distancing, business shut downs, and lack of visitors, hence lack of income for many maritime nonprofits. These are very timely articles and important information pieces. In addition, instead of a non-member wrapper and bind-in card, there will be a bind-in envelope for donors to mail in contributions.

You can access every issue of *Sea History* magazine on our website at [www.seahistory.org/magazine](http://www.seahistory.org/magazine), and our [hyperlinked index](#) takes you straight to the page in every online issue. It's a wonderful resource for students and scholars alike.

"Sea Canary," [158:38–40](#)  
 sea chanteys, [4:42](#), [5:34](#), [29:20](#), [48:39](#), [51:33](#), [88:46–47](#), [145:34](#), [152:31](#)

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 "Golden Vanity," [77:10–2](#), [78:2–3](#)

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sea clocks, [153:13–14](#), [153:13–14](#)

*Sea Cloud* (cruise ship), [50:34](#), [59:3](#)

*Sea Cloud II*, [155:6](#)

*Sea Cloud* (square-rigger), [28:4](#), [53:4](#)

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*Sea Cloud* (yacht) (ex-*Hussar V*; ex-*F*)  
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"*Sea Cloud*'s Nine Lives," [131:16–20](#)

*Sea Comber* (trawler), [57:30](#)

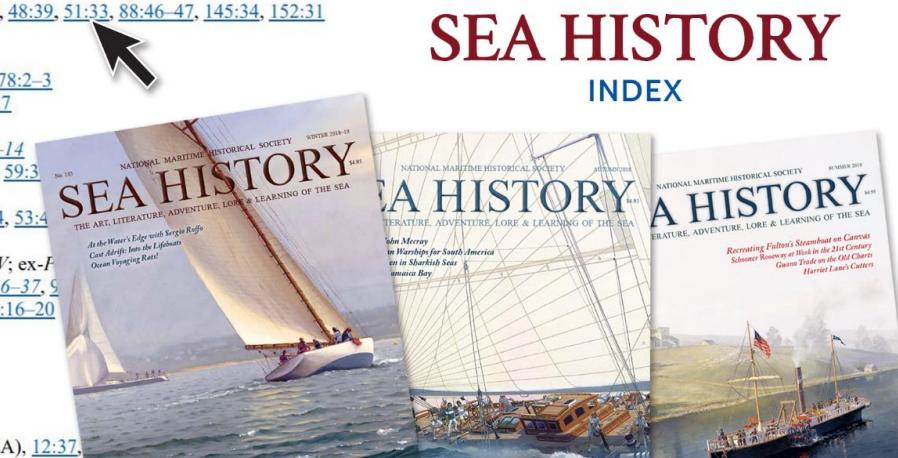
sea cows, [140:34–35](#)

sea crawfish, [134:38–39](#)

sea cucumbers, [117:33](#)

Sea Day, [4:42](#)

Sea Education Association (SEA), [12:37](#)



## X. Advocacy Report: Dr. TIMOTHY J. RUNYAN, Advocacy Chairman

The Society [announced in the last issue of \*Sea History\* \(170\)](#) that the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which allocates national defense funding for fiscal year 2020, was signed into law. A provision authorizing up to \$5 million for the National Maritime Heritage Grant Program was included in the bill, which was subsequently approved by the US House of Representatives and Senate. This is the first time *direct* federal funding for the National Maritime Heritage Grant Program has been authorized, and it is a huge victory for the maritime heritage community. Although there wasn't enough time to include the \$5 million in the 2020 Appropriations bill, the 2021 Authorization and Appropriation bills are being drafted now, albeit delayed because of COVID-19. We thank all members for their support, especially those who responded to requests to contact their representatives and senators. It worked! But the fight continues as we work through the process of authorization and appropriation in the coming months. Keep the letters to your Congressional representatives coming. They make a difference.

**XI.     *Election of Trustees to the Class of 2023: CAPTAIN CESARE SORIO, Nominations Chairman***

We are pleased to report that all Trustees standing for election and re-election to the National Maritime Historical Society Class of 2023 were elected unanimously, including:

Trustees standing for re-election to the Class of 2023: Charles B. Anderson; William J. Green; Karen Helmerson; CAPT Sally Chin McElwreath, USN (Ret.); ADM Robert J. Papp Jr., USCG (Ret.); Dr. Timothy J. Runyan; Richard Scarano; and Margaret Jean Wort; and Trustee standing for election to the Class of 2023: Captain Jeffrey McAllister.

**XII.    *Closing: RONALD L. OSWALD, Chairman***

Our mission, as the national voice of the maritime heritage, is to preserve America's rich maritime history and engage Americans in the commitment we owe to our seafaring past, which has been such a significant force in shaping our future. *Sea History* magazine and the Society's website, both rich in resources, information and appeal, offer a harbinger of hope in these difficult times. The support of our membership is crucial to all our success – you are the heart and soul and essence of all we do and why we do it, and we are inspired when you stand with us.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and for making our work possible. We look forward to the challenges and successes of the year ahead, and to joining you next year at the Independence Seaport Museum for the National Maritime Historical Society 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.



**Thank you for making  
our work possible**

