

MAY, 2016 VOLUME XXXIII, # 5

Friday, May 20, 2016 – 6:00 PM

The World Ship Society PONY Branch and the Lilac Preservation Project Present:

**LILAC: THE LAST LIVING STEAM-POWERED LIGHTHOUSE TENDER**

by Mary Habstritt

**Community Church Assembly Room, 40 East 35th Street, Manhattan**

Tied up at Pier 25 in Tribeca, the black-hulled LILAC is the last surviving steam-powered lighthouse tender in America, and the oldest of only three remaining American lighthouse tenders. Built in 1933 by Pusey & Jones Shipyard in Wilmington, Delaware, LILAC plied the coasts of Delaware Bay and the lower Delaware River bringing supplies to the lighthouse keepers—from food to kerosene for the lamps—until 1972. After a stint at the Seafarers International Union School in Piney Point, Maryland, LILAC sat on Virginia's James River from 1985 to 2003 before being brought to New York by the Tug Pegasus Preservation Project. In 2004 she was transferred to the Lilac Preservation Project which runs her today as a museum ship and cultural center.

Mary Habstritt, the Museum Director and President of the Lilac Preservation Project, will share the story of LILAC and her experiences preserving a historic ship along Manhattan's Hudson River waterfront. Long active in historic preservation, Mary is also the founder of the Historic Ships Coalition, which advocates for New York City's fleet of historic vessels, and previously served as president of the North River Historic Ship Society and as president of the Society for Industrial Archaeology.



The LILAC docked in New York, September 2006

(Stuart Gewirtzman)

**NEXT EVENTS:** Membership Meetings; Friday, 6/24 PONY group cruise on the QUEEN MARY 2, July 1-6

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## MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH



CARNIVAL LIBERTY at Miami, FL on January 26, 2013

(Bob Allen)

### MUSEUMS, LECTURES AND HARBOR CRUISES

#### **CONTACT THESE INSTITUTIONS BY EMAIL OR PHONE FOR CURRENT EVENTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM** [www.southstreetseaportmuseum.org](http://www.southstreetseaportmuseum.org) or 212-748-8600. Walking tours for May:

"The Secret Life of the Brooklyn Bridge," Thursdays, through May 26

"A Wicked Tour of the Fourth Ward," Fridays, through May 27

**MYSTIC SEAPORT** [www.mysticseaport.org](http://www.mysticseaport.org) or 860-572-0711.

**VANCOUVER WSS & VANCOUVER MARITIME MUSEUM** [www.worldshipsocietyvan.ca](http://www.worldshipsocietyvan.ca) for information or if you visit, contact Glenn Smith: 604-684-1240, email [glenn.smith@worldshipsocietyvan.ca](mailto:glenn.smith@worldshipsocietyvan.ca) Per their website, monthly meetings have been eliminated for the foreseeable future.

**NEW SOUTH WALES WSS:** Meetings are held at the Uniting Church Complex in Lord Street, Roseville. Contact the branch at PO Box 215, Strathfield, New South Wales 2135, Australia for additional information.

**THE NATIONAL LIBERTY SHIP MEMORIAL, INC.** [www.ssjeremiahobrien.org](http://www.ssjeremiahobrien.org) or [liberty@ssjeremiahobrien.org](mailto:liberty@ssjeremiahobrien.org) or 415-544-0100. 1275 Columbus Avenue, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94133-1315.

**PROJECT LIBERTY SHIP** [www.ssjohnwbrown.com](http://www.ssjohnwbrown.com) or 410-558-0646. New York City visit, celebrating the school ship years, with cruises and ship visits, September 8 – September 19, 2016.

**NEW YORK WATER TAXI**, [www.nywatertaxi.com](http://www.nywatertaxi.com) or 866-989-2542. Harbor cruises departing from both South Street Seaport Pier 17 and Pier 84 at West 44 Street. Hop on – hop off service throughout New York Harbor is offered as well. Contact via website or telephone for departure times and prices.

**CIRCLE LINE DOWNTOWN**, [www.circlelinedowntown.com](http://www.circlelinedowntown.com) or 866-989-2542. Harbor cruises on the ZEPHYR from April to December, and aboard New York Water Taxi from January to March, departing from Pier 17, South Street Seaport.

**CIRCLE LINE**, [www.circleline42.com](http://www.circleline42.com) or 877-731-0064. Circle Manhattan and other harbor cruises, departing from pier 84 at West 44 Street.

**NEW YORK WATERWAY**, [www.nywaterway.com](http://www.nywaterway.com) or 800-533-3779. Trans-Hudson ferry service and special-event cruises.

**THE NATIONAL LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM** [www.lighthousemuseum.org](http://www.lighthousemuseum.org) or 855-656-7469. Contact for schedule of cruises and events.

**THE WORKING HARBOR COMMITTEE** [www.workingharbor.com](http://www.workingharbor.com) or 212-757-1600. Cruises to both remote and well-travelled parts of New York Harbor - the Hudson River to view tugboat races, Gowanus Bay and Erie Basin in Brooklyn, and a circumnavigation of Staten Island.

**THE NOBLE MARITIME COLLECTION**, [www.noblemaritime.org](http://www.noblemaritime.org) or 718-447-6490. Maritime lectures and art exhibits at the Sailor's Snug Harbor Cultural Center on Staten Island, NY.

**LIBERTY SCIENCE CENTER** [www.lsc.org](http://www.lsc.org) or 201-200-1000. The Liberty Science Center, located at 222 Jersey City Boulevard in Jersey City, New Jersey, is presenting "Titanic, The Artifact Exhibition" until May 30. This exhibition contains over 100 authentic artifacts retrieved from the Titanic and has recreations of several cabins and other areas of the ship. It is open on Saturday and Sunday from 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM and on Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. It is closed on Mondays.

### ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

SHIP	FROM	TO	VOYAGE	PASSENGER(S)	DATE
CELEBRITY SUMMIT	San Juan	San Juan	Southern Caribbean	Carol Miles	04/16

## SHIP'S LOG – APRIL

In April we heard a story of triple misfortune – three ship disasters occurring in the same location, within the same decade, and with all three ship names starting with the same letter. Our teller of these tales, introduced by branch secretary Greg Fitzgerald, was shipwreck authority Jim Kalafus, who spoke to us recently about the LUSITANIA sinking. As in his previous talk, Mr. Kalafus showed archival photos and provided us with a wealth of interesting details.

The first victim was the Clyde-Mallory Line's MOHAWK, a small old ship that, unlike most coastal vessels, had interiors resembling those of trans-Atlantic liners, but smaller. This was a popular vessel with a loyal clientele and a well-organized crew. In January 1925, the MOHAWK caught fire while sailing through a severe storm. Reaching the lifeboats not being possible, the passengers, most if not all seasick, were moved into the lounge where the crew could tend to them and keep order until the ship sailed past the New Jersey coast and entered the Delaware breakwater. Once there, all passengers were saved, and the ship sank soon after in 40 feet of water. Mr. Kalafus painted a vivid verbal picture of conditions aboard, especially those seasick passengers.

Almost decade later, in September 1934, Ward line's MORRO CASTLE was caught in a similar situation, with not such good results. No doubt because this disaster is better known than the other two, Mr. Kalafus devoted most of his talk to it. To counteract the rumored addition of two Cunard vessels on the New York-Havana service (which didn't happen), Ward Line tried to create a one-big-party kind of atmosphere on its ships. Festive cruise souvenirs (a valuable marketing tool) included lots of printed matter such as invitations and booklets with passengers' names and (pre-written) descriptions of events. Open cars with drivers were available to whisk the passengers around Havana – and "whisk" is the word since the trips were so fast that the merrymakers actually did not see much of the city. In fact, the passengers were having such a great time that they might not even have noticed the general unrest and violence in Havana stemming from a revolt earlier in the year.

On this fateful September evening, much was happening as the MORRO CASTLE was passing the Delaware Breakwater and proceeding along the New Jersey coast bound for a morning arrival in New York. Besides multiple last-night-out parties, there was a fierce storm, and the ship's captain, Robert Wilmott, said to have been "not himself" during the cruise, was found dead in his bathroom. Finally, a fire broke out in the writing room storage locker, undetected for a considerable period of time.

The crew, however, were not well trained to deal with such an emergency. The steward who discovered the fire left the locker door open, allowing the flames to spread rapidly through the ship's beautiful wood-lined public rooms. Some crewmembers were helpful to the passengers, while others lowered lifeboats – for themselves. As in his previous presentation, Mr. Kalafus showed us pictures of several passengers, and described their fates in detail. The final tally: only four died directly from the fire, while many were overcome by the smoke. The majority of those lost perished from exposure and hypothermia after plunging in to the Atlantic Ocean – 134 deaths in all.

Other ships in the area eventually rescued hundreds, but communication between the rescuers was poor. It only became clear that many jumped overboard when bodies began washing up on the shore of nearby Asbury Park, NJ. The MORRO CASTLE herself became the final victim to make that unhappy landfall.

A second MOHAWK, bigger and plainer than her predecessor, was chartered by the Ward Line to replace the ill-fated MORRO CASTLE. To complete the trio of trouble, she sailed with 118 passengers on her maiden voyage – directly into the season's biggest blizzard – in January 1935. Not long after the passengers had braved the weather to go out on deck to see the beached wreck of the MORRO CASTLE, the MOHAWK lost her steering capability and collided with a freighter. Once again, chaos ensued due to a disorganized crew, and over 30 lives were lost. The vessel sank in 40 minutes, but her story faded away, and so did the Ward Line name.

To end the evening, Mr. Kalafus treated us to a prequel: A German ship sank in the very same stretch of New Jersey coast in the 1850's. (Reporter's note: Do we have a northern Bermuda Triangle here?)

Our thanks to Jim Kalafus for his most interesting presentation.

Marge Dovman



A rare photo of the tragic Ward Liner MORRO CASTLE in the early 1930's

(Jim Kalafus collection)

## SHIP'S MAIL

To the Editor of The Porthole:

We sailed on Holland America Line's new ms KONINGS DAM on her premiere voyage, Rome to Rome, April 8 – 125, 2016. We were both pleased and displeased.

KONINGS DAM is one of the most beautiful and innovative cruise ships afloat with contemporary design that is creative and thoughtful. Contemporary mixed with traditional. Stylish. Even elegant. A reminder in places of sailing on QUEEN MARY 2.

We had the finest Asian food we ever had in the gorgeously decorated Tamarind Restaurant. The main dining room is bright and cheery, the décor something from the twenty-second century. The Grand Dutch Café with its Delft décor and the New York Deli with its free sandwiches and delicious pizza are good additions. The World Stage provides entertainment in the round with excellent sightlines.

The indoor/outdoor Lido Pool converts into an old-time movie palace complete with free popcorn! Lots of great music from the Music Walk with separate venues for Lincoln Center Stage, B.B. King's Blues Club, and the Queen's Lounge. Excellent food. Excellent service. The best cabin shower afloat!

Hygiene is at the highest level. Passengers are not allowed to serve themselves!

Now for the downside:

KONINGS DAM is a noisy ship, with all that loud music piped in all over the ship.

How strange that there was no music of Naples when the ship was in Naples, music of Greece when the ship was in Corfu and Katakolon, or music of Croatia when the ship was in Dubrovnik.

Gone is the old idea that a cruise is a complete package. An unfortunate trend in the cruise industry nowadays. In the old days passengers ate all their meals in the dining room and could order whatever they wanted whether or not on the menu. KONINGS DAM egregiously has done away with this by creating various dining venues that require the passenger to make additional payments.

Sel de Mer, the French restaurant, is strictly a la carte and expensive. Tamarind, Culinary Arts Center, Pinnacle Restaurant and Canaletto Restaurant charge. Blend by Chateau Ste. Michelle steeply charges. There are charges for some items in the Grand Dutch Café. And there seems to be a bar at every turn!

Drinks are boldly pushed even at breakfast time!

The Market, which is Holland America's iteration of the Lido Deck cafeteria almost requires sunglasses because of the glaringly bright neon lights. Worse yet is the difficulty in finding what we wanted to eat. There are various stations, but hardboiled eggs are not served at the station where omelets are made, nor are all meat dishes together in one place! We had to walk practically the length of the ship to go to the other side of The Market in order to find the food we wanted. Tables are squeezed together.

The Market completely shuts down after lunch and dinner! Quite a hardship for passengers coming off tours, or for passengers who simply want something to eat in the late afternoon.

There is no library, other than a small alcove with travel books! Apparently, Holland America Line – and it is not alone in this – does not want its passengers to read, but rather to spend money!

There is no classic Promenade deck for sitting and looking out to sea! There are no deckchairs anywhere!

The most serious fault is the inadequacies of the mandatory passenger muster drill. We assembled in the dining room along with hundreds of other passengers because the Promenade Deck is too narrow for passengers to assemble! We were not told where our lifeboat was located, or where to go if the dining room was unusable because of smoke or fire! Or what to do if the ship went dark or the public address system no longer worked because of a power failure. We never got answers from different crewmembers we asked, and some seemed annoyed when we asked!

The captains told us at a question and answer program that he wanted the passengers to be comfortable and wait to be told where their lifeboat is located. But there are emergencies where passengers are immediately ordered to abandon ship. The mandatory passenger muster drill on KONINGS DAM is treated as an annoyance, an inconvenience, and not the very, very serious matter it is! A dangerous trend in modern-day cruising, where the central value is "fun"!

Standing silently at attention on the outside deck quickly makes clear the seriousness of the muster drill! Sitting in the dining room with tables set for meals is not exactly a call to urgent seriousness!

Anyone wanting a soothing ship would do well to avoid KONINGS DAM.

Anyone expecting the art museum of the other Holland America Line cruise ships will be sorely disappointed aboard KONINGS DAM.

Anyone who knows about sailing on the ILE DE FRANCE or the other ships of the Golden Age of Luxury Liners will not want to book passage on KONINGS DAM or, for that matter, any other modern cruise ship!

Of course, the kinks must be worked out on any new ship, but Holland America Line is full steam ahead in creating as many opportunities as possible to take the passenger's money, all under the guise of "fun, fun, fun"! Welcome to this new age of cruising.

We do not, however, want it to discourage the reader from sailing in this splendidly innovative cruise ship.

Very truly yours,

Dr. and Mrs Stephen and Joyanne L. Schoeman  
Westfield, NJ, April 17, 2016



Frequent cruisers Dr. Stephen and Mrs. Joyanne Schoeman were on the maiden cruise of Holland America Line's KONINGS DAM. Their decidedly mixed review is in this month's Ship's Mail. (Holland America Line)

### **2016 PONY BRANCH CRUISE – JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> WEEKEND ON THE NEWLY RENOVATED QUEEN MARY 2**

Join us on Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup> for a five-night holiday weekend cruise to Halifax and Boston aboard Cunard Line's flagship QUEEN MARY 2. The QUEEN MARY 2 is the largest transatlantic liner ever to sail and many regard her as the grandest of all time. Cunard's service and cuisine are legendary. This will be the first voyage from New York following the extensive refit of the ship's Deck 7 dining venues and lounges, the replacement of the Todd English restaurant with the Verandah, the addition of new balcony cabins on Deck 13, and new single occupancy cabins on Decks 2 and 3.

Halifax is a favorite port of call for maritime historians and enthusiasts. Samuel Cunard was born here and Cunard Line has always been an integral part of the city. You can explore the city on your own, visit the acclaimed Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, or join one of several shore excursions to places such as Peggy's Cove and Grand Pre National Historic Site. Boston's Freedom Trail, Public Gardens, and nearby Revolutionary War sites beckon and we'll be in port for the spectacular July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks display. There will be a party for members on board. Watch for news about a special program.

To reserve your cabin or for more information, please contact  
**Brad Hatry at Pisa Brothers Travel** at 212.265.8420 ext. 222; 800.729.7472 ext. 222; fax 212.265.8753,  
or email: [brad@pisabrothers.com](mailto:brad@pisabrothers.com)

### **SHIP NEWS**

Ship News will return in the June issue of The Porthole.

# Morro Castle, Mohawk and the end of the Ward line

by JIM KALAFUS



Jim Kalafus is an expert on the history of the glamorous but tragic MORRO CASTLE.

(Jim Kalafus collection)

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