



UPCOMING NOVEMBER/DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING “EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION TO CANADA AND THE U.S.”

By Ted Scull, Author, WSS-PONY Branch Member

Friday, December 1, 6:30 PM (Doors Open at 6 PM)

**In-Person and Live Streamed Via ZOOM from the National Opera Center Rehearsal Hall
330 7th Avenue at 29th Street, 7th Floor, Manhattan**

With increasingly large numbers of Europeans desiring passage to Canada and the United States in the 19th century, many shipping lines built larger and faster ships to meet the demands right up to WWI. It was the souls who sailed steerage that filled these ships and created the profits rather than those in first class. We will monitor how the trade fluctuated, and how the new ships were built right into the 1960s.



BERLIN seen on her last sailing from New York.
She regularly carried immigrants from Europe to America. (Ted Scull)

ADDITIONAL UPCOMING MEMBER EVENTS

NEW: Saturday, December 16, 10 – 11 AM, ENCORE presentation via ZOOM
“Death by Fire and Ice, The Steamboat Lexington Calamity” by Brian E. O’Connor

**SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, January 7, 2024, 2 – 5 PM, WSS-PONY BRANCH HOLIDAY
2023 PARTY, The Churchill Tavern, 45 East 28th Street. New York, NY 10016**



SAVE THE DATE: November 11-15, 2024, CARNIVAL RADIANCE 4-Night SSHSA Cruise
Long Beach, CA – Catalina Island, CA – Ensenada, MX
plus, Queen Mary Hotel Pre-Cruise Special Rates and Activities

MEMBER PHOTOS



SEABORN QUEST outbound New York Harbor

(Justin Zizes)



SPIRIT OF DISCOVERY departing New York Harbor

(Stuart Gewirtzman)



AMERICAN STAR during a dramatic sunset, New York Harbor

(Justin Zizes)



THE WORLD enters New York Harbor

(Stuart Gewirtzman)

SHIP'S LOG: A REVIEW OF BRIAN O'CONNOR'S "DEATH BY FIRE AND ICE, THE STEAMBOAT LEXINGTON CALAMITY"

By Pat Dacey

On Friday, October 27, the WSS – PONY Branch welcomed attorney, Brian E. O'Connor, historian, and author to the National Opera Center for an in-person and live-streamed presentation of *Death by Fire and Ice: The Steamboat Lexington Calamity*. The Lexington explosion occurred on January 13, 1840, as the steamboat was enroute to Stonington, CT from New York City and to this day remains the worst maritime disaster in the history of Long Island Sound.

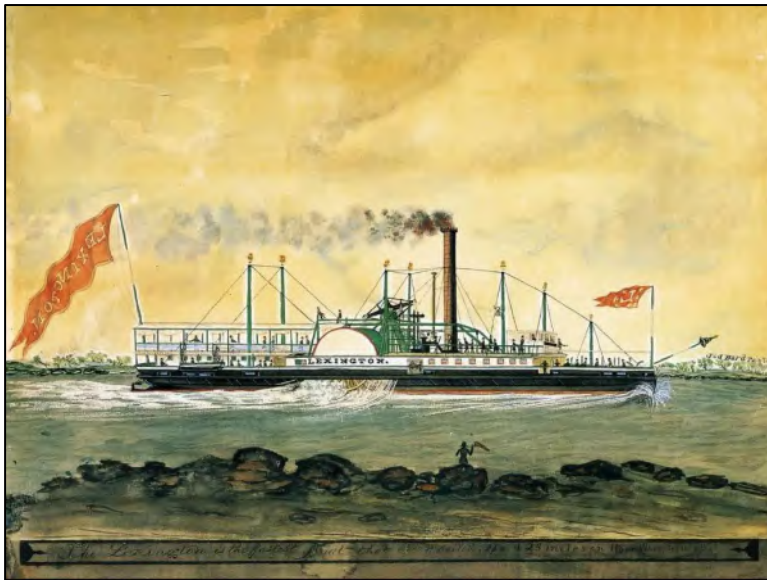
Brian started his presentation by providing an insightful review of the history of steamboats with particular emphasis on the evolution of the steam engine and subsequent dangers associated with them. This insight would prove useful later in the presentation to understanding some of the factors that contributed to the disaster. Brian then set the stage that led up to the disaster by detailing the competition between the steamboat companies including the initial "New York (steamboat) Monopoly" that guaranteed Robert Fulton and Robert Livingston sole right to operate on the Hudson River and its contiguous tributaries granted by the New York State Legislature.

Brian has a background as a Wall Street Law firm lawyer. He retired as a partner after a prestigious 38-year career where he specialized in complex commercial litigation. With this expertise, Brian was very well-suited to explain the U.S. Supreme Court landmark case, *Gibbons v. Ogden* of 1824. This case opened competition and significantly expanded the number of steamboats sailing. This case introduced Cornelius Vanderbilt as a major figure in the steamboat trade. As more steamboats were being built for greater speeds, the production of steam was transitioning from low to high pressure boilers and fuel was changing from wood to coal. Due to these factors, the number of accidents continued to grow forcing the United States Congress to finally create the Steamboat Act of 1838 requiring hull and boiler inspections by competent authorities.



Cornelius Vanderbilt (Source: Wikipedia)

In 1835, Cornelius Vanderbilt launched the LEXINGTON for service between New York City and Providence, Rhode Island under the command of his younger brother Jacob. The LEXINGTON successfully completed the 210-mile trip in 12 hours and 28 minutes with a top speed of 20 MPH. Even so, it was sold in 1839 to the Boston & NY Transportation Company. Soon after, it successfully completed inspections required by the Steamboat Act of 1838. On January 13, 1840, the LEXINGTON set sail from New York City with 113 passengers, 34 crew and 150 bales of cotton and a good sum of bank notes and silver and gold coins.



The Steamboat LEXINGTON (Brian E. O'Connor Image)

Shortly after entering Long Island Sound, just off Oyster Bay at approximately 7 PM and approaching Eaton's Neck the fire alarm sounded. After several efforts to put the fire out failed, the lifeboats were launched without success, killing the captain in the process. The pilot, in efforts to ground the vessel, headed towards Eaton Neck but the LEXINGTON, by this time, was fully engulfed, out of control, and drifted away from land. Due to the fire and contributing frigid weather 143 lives were lost. Only four survived.

This tragedy was only the beginning of the drama. Brian further detailed the subsequent New York City Coroner's Inquest followed by the jury's verdict which found that the fire could have been extinguished. Further, most, if not all, of the passengers could have survived. The officers' conduct was censured, and the steamboat inspectors were found ignorant or neglectful in their inspection. It was still a number of years before the revised Steamboat Act of 1871 was passed to address many of the deficiencies that were noted to contribute to the LEXINGTON disaster.



Awful Conflagration of the Steam Boat LEXINGTON in Long Island Sound
(Open-source image)

An excellent question-and-answer session followed Brian's presentation with additional discussion on this little-known tragedy of the sinking of the LEXINGTON. The worst maritime disaster in the history of Long Island sound would become one of the reasons for the much-needed enhancement of passenger safety on the nation's steamboats. The PONY Branch thanks Brian for his insightful presentation and looks forward to future programs.

BACK OUT TO SEA ON THE ZUIDERDAM FROM NEW ENGLAND TO CANADA

By Tim Dacey

It had been nearly six years since my wife, Lisa, and I had taken a cruise. Our last cruise was on the ROTTERDAM in 2018 which we enjoyed. Much has happened since then, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a huge effect on the cruise industry and travel in general. I have heard many comments about cruising since the pandemic, some of which were negative. People have discussed things like lower quality of main dining room meals, reduced housekeeping in cabins and public areas, lower entertainment budgets, higher prices onboard for drinks, etc. We were excited to finally be heading out to sea again but were somewhat worried about our possible experience.

We booked a Neptune Suite on the September 23, 2023 cruise on the ZUIDERDAM of Holland America Line. The ship was sailing from Boston to Quebec on a seven-night cruise calling at Bar Harbor, ME, Halifax, NS, Sydney, NS, and Charlottetown, PEI.



ZUIDERDAM, Bar Harbor, ME

(Tim Dacey)

Getting to Boston was very easy as we took Amtrak from the local New Jersey Metropark Station to Boston's South Station where we took a cab to our hotel in the Seaport District. Lisa and I were amazed at the number of apartments, hotels, and office buildings that have been developed in the Seaport District. It is like a city within a city. After breakfast in the hotel on sailing day we took a shuttle to the ship which was about ten minutes away. Boarding was very efficient. From arriving at the pier to getting to our suite took about fifteen minutes without ever waiting in a line. Very nicely, every cabin on the ZUIDERDAM was passenger-ready at the announced boarding time. There was no emergency drill, but all passengers had to watch a safety video on their cabin's TV before sailing time and then check in at their assigned muster station with their room key.

Holland America still has a tradition two sittings with assigned seats for dinner at 5 PM and 7:45 PM. These passengers are served on the upper deck of the dining room. Passengers can also choose unassigned open seating on the lower deck from 5 to 8:30 PM. We requested a table for two at 5:00 and were assigned a table for four next to a window with two great servers from Bali. While the ship had 1,800 passengers onboard, the main dining room never felt crowded. Lisa and I were very happy with the quality of the meals in the main dining room as well as with the service. The menu included a choice of six or seven entrees plus a daily special. One could also order a steak or lobster from the Pinnacle Grill for an additional \$20 surcharge. This was the first time that we ever had a drink package on a cruise, as it was part of the cruise fare. I found it to be an excellent value as I could order a pre-dinner cocktail and a glass of wine with dinner. Without the package, most drinks were about \$11, and a glass of wine was \$10. Comparing the quality of the food on this cruise to our 2018 ROTTERDAM cruise, we both agree that ZUIDERDAM was better, which was a pleasant surprise.

Onboard entertainment was very good. However, big stage productions with live band accompaniments were not offered. The main show room is called the World Stage and is located on Decks 2 and 3. The Step One Dance Company had six dancers and they performed three times during the week, all to pre-recorded music. The shows were at 7 and 9 PM and were well attended. Shows also included a comedian and an English singer who sang a variety of songs. The two shows we saw were both excellent. On Thursday, while we were

sailing the St. Lawrence River, passengers enjoyed a film that was made for Holland America's 150-year anniversary. It was well done, with lots of historical footage, and an interview with fellow WSS-PONY Branch member Bill Miller. Additional evening entertainment focused on the "Music Walk" on 2 Deck where there were three venues with live music. Billboard Onboard had two people playing pianos and singing together. Rolling Stone Lounge had an excellent band that mostly did rock music and R&B music. Third Avenue West had a jazz quartet. All venues had three performances a night and finished before midnight. Unlike all our other cruises on Holland America, the Crow's Nest, a lounge above the bridge, no longer has evening entertainment. The lounge now has the shore excursion office, the library, a games area, and a coffee bar. Named Explorations Central at the Crow's Nest, it is under-used considering its size and location.



World Stage

(Tim Dacey)

Beside the main dining room, dining options include Pinnacle Grill, Canaletto, and the Lido Market. Pinnacle Grill is a steak and seafood alternative restaurant that charges \$40 for dinner. It was usually busy, and the food and service were excellent. Attached to it is the Pinnacle Bar where patrons can have a before or after dinner drink. Neptune Suite passengers used Pinnacle Grill for breakfast at no additional charge. Canaletto is an alternative Italian dining area that is \$15 additional. Unlike Pinnacle Grill, it is not a separate dining room, but rather a corner portion of the Lido Market. Lisa and I went to eat there but chose not to because of the overly loud kitchen noises. Lido Market is open for all meals from 7:30 AM to 11:30 PM. The selections offered were all very good.

The ship was in excellent condition, especially considering she entered service in 2002. The decks were well maintained, and the carpets seem to have all been replaced since she came out of lay-up during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the passengers were in their 60's and 70's and from the west coast and middle America. We met passengers from Canada and Australia, but none from New York City or its suburbs. Overall, we really enjoyed sailing on ZUIDERDAM and were pleasantly surprised at the overall quality of the experience that it offered. We are looking forward to our next adventure at sea, a cruise next May on Seabourn OVATION from Lisbon to Dover.



Crow's Nest

(Tim Dacey photo)



Pinnacle Grill

(Tim Dacey photo)

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SHIPS IN PORT: THE NORTH GERMAN LLOYD & MIDNIGHT SAILINGS

By Bill Miller

Growing-up in northern New Jersey, young Dieter Killinger was inspired by his teachers, but especially by those teachers who traveled. More than one predicted that Dieter would be bitten by the travel bug as well. They were so right – Dieter spent over forty years in the passenger ship, travel, and tour industries. Since he was a top student at Columbia University, graduating with a degree in German, his professors wanted him to teach. That was not in Dieter's life itinerary! Just after graduation in 1962, he marched into the 666 Fifth Avenue headquarters of the North German Lloyd. He was hired on the spot for \$85 a week and assigned to the reservations department.



The maiden arrival of the BREMEN coincided with a departure of the BERLIN in this view dated Jul 1959. *(Bill Miller Collection)*

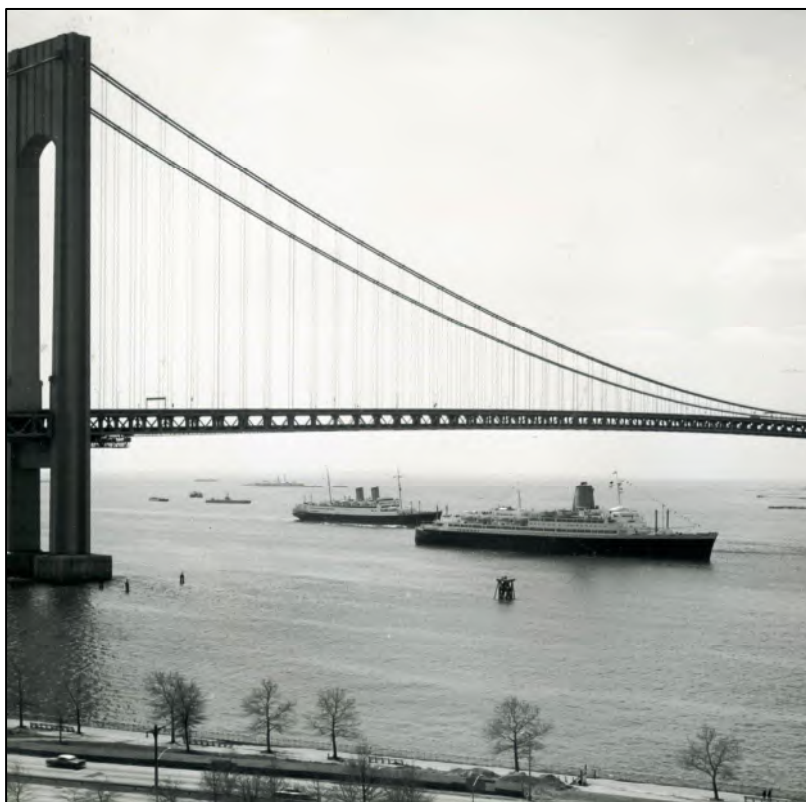


In a photo dated Jan 1960, the BERLIN is at the bottom, berthed at Pier 88 -- and above: the HOMERIC (just departing), GRIPSHOLM, OCEAN MONARCH, ITALIA, QUEEN ELIZABETH, and MAURETANIA. *(Bill Miller Collection)*

"I booked the Company's two liners, the BREMEN and BERLIN," he recalled over a long lunch in a midtown Manhattan restaurant. Dieter has also been a longtime member of the PONY Branch of the World Ship Society. "Part of my job was to attend to the BREMEN's midnight sailings at Pier 88. This meant going home to New Jersey on a very late bus, but I was still expected to be back in the office by 9 the next morning. Otherwise, the BERLIN stayed overnight in New York, and we'd sometimes spend the night onboard, moored at Pier 88. We were given a big first-class cabin, a big German breakfast in the morning and then went ashore to check in the departing passengers."



The 699-ft long BREMEN, converted from the French PASTEUR, is seen outbound in the Lower Bay.
(John Gillespie Collection)



A midday rendezvous in Apr 1965 -- the BERLIN follows the BREMEN into New York harbor.
(Port Authority of New York & New Jersey)



Left: Having been the KUNGSHOLM, the same ship arrives in New York for the first time as the EUROPA in Jan 1966. Right: When North German Lloyd ended trans-Atlantic crossings in 1971, the Company turned to fulltime cruising. The EUROPA is seen at Pier 92. (Bill Miller Collection)

Several years later, in 1964, Dieter left North German Lloyd, then embarked on a six-month tour of Europe and returned on the BREMEN. "I was completely bitten by the travel bug," he recalled.

"I especially loved the German pastries and breads on the BREMEN -- and the chance to practice my German," he noted. "She was a pleasant and comfortable ship, but not an especially beloved ship. She was not particularly beautiful or remarkable on the inside. In fact, the BERLIN was an 'antique' by the early Sixties. She'd been the GRIPSHOLM, built in 1925, and not much changed since then. She had, amongst other features, an open cage, iron elevator. The BERLIN also had huge cabins in her small first class (98 berths) and each seemed to be more like a suite. There were huge tubs in the bathrooms, and these had big, old-fashioned knobs. I also remember the heavily starched German linens. They were so crisp, but the BERLIN was quite dumpy down in tourist class (875 passengers). I remember it was \$189 one-way on the BERLIN, for 9 days from New York to Bremerhaven in 1962. Both the BERLIN and the BREMEN were always sell-outs in both classes. We had lots of passengers from Manhattan's Germantown, and we had the full backing of the German travel agents."



North German Lloyd brochure art.

(Bill Miller Collection)



2024 Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your annual membership in the World Ship Society - Port of New York Branch!!

Don't miss out on the interesting programs, special activities and issues of *The Porthole* newsletter that are in the works for the coming year. The deadline for 2024 membership renewal is **December 31, 2023**.

Please renew now via our website at <https://worldshipny.com/> by clicking the "Become a Member" button and then select "Membership Renewal" from the drop-down menu. Payment via the PayPal website can be made using a debit card, credit card or PayPal account. **You can also send the completed membership form shown below to: World Ship Society - Port of New York Branch, Attn: 2024 Membership, P.O. Box 384, New York, New York 10185-0384.**

As in the past, Family membership at both the Regular and Patron levels includes one additional person in the same household. Members renewing at the Patron level will have priority access to special events with capacity limitations. Our member dues and printing fees have not increased for the 2024 membership year.

Communications from the PONY Branch, including issues of *The Porthole*, are sent via email. Make sure that we can reach you by providing your email address. If you do not have an email address, correspondence can be sent to members via U.S. Mail for an additional \$15 fee to offset printing and postage.

If you would like to additionally renew or apply for membership in our parent U.K. organization: the **British World Ship Society** and receive its monthly *Marine News*, please go to <https://www.worldshipsociety.org/> for details.

Thank you for your continued membership in the World Ship Society - Port of New York Branch.

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For U.S Postal Service membership members and for those renewing by mail:

Member Name _____

Additional Name (Family Membership) _____

Address _____

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We will not disclose or otherwise disseminate anyone's email address or personal information to any other person, group, organization, or agency, except as required by law.

☐ Regular Single (\$45)

☐ Patron Single (\$65)

☐ Regular Family (\$70)

☐ Patron Family (\$90)

***The Porthole newsletters and other PONY Branch correspondence are sent via email.**

☐ **+\$15 for printing and USPS mailing costs if you don't have an email address.**

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

SHIP NEWS



Nuclear Ship SAVANNAH photographed at 44th St Pier on North River, April 6, 1968
(Braun Brothers Collections, SSHSA Archives)

The Nuclear Ship SAVANNAH, SSHSA's 2012 Ship of the Year and a National Historic Landmark, is searching for a new steward.

The Maritime Administration very recently posted a Notice of Availability / Request for Information for the SAVANNAH in the Federal Register. The purpose is to determine preservation interest from entities that may wish to acquire the ship. MARAD will consider a donation, a charter or lease, cooperative agreements or even partnering with another entity to maintain and operate the SAVANNAH.

Built in 1959, the SAVANNAH is the world's first nuclear-powered merchant ship and served as a signature element of President Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program. While in service, the SAVANNAH demonstrated the peaceful use of atomic power and explored the feasibility of nuclear-powered merchant vessels. She was retired from active service in 1970.

Courtesy of Steamship Historical Society of America
<https://www.sshsa.org/home.html>

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