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Rough Waters: Life at Sea in the 19th Century

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Rough Waters: Life at Sea in the 19th Century

Steven H. Park

South Street Seaport

Working the Port

1 October 1995

The transformation of the 19th-century mutiny into the 20th-century strike, and the relationship that developed between 19th-century Maritime missions and the budding seamen's labor movement.

Those of you who came to this talk expecting to hear about 19th-century seamen's missions will indeed - but Irene has asked be to discuss it in broader terms tying it in with violent and non-violent labor protest.

If you would allow me to make a few preliminary remarks about the study of maritime missions before we delve into today's topic in more detail.

By the nature of the discipline of history, almost all historians have to be generalists. Curriculums require historians to have a broad, general knowledge so that they are qualified to teach a variety of survey and introductory courses. But also, historians have a specialty or two. Maritime historians almost always have to have another specialty that “intersects” with seafaring life.

Traditionally, maritime historians have been economic historians, or specialist on marine technology or warfare. With the rise of social history, the doors have been flung wide open for a variety of cross-specialties. One can even find those who study the history of food and the sea! My other specialty is

American religious history, with intersects with maritime history in the sub-field of maritime missions.

In the last 30 years or so, the rise of social and cultural history have given new life to the study of the religious elements of America's past. Allow me to give a brief anecdote to illustrate this point, Robert Albion's classic book, *The Rise of the New York Port*, which came out in 1939, mentioned Seamen's Bethels only twice in 386 pages; while Briton Busch's new book, *Whaling with Never Do For Me*, devoted an entire chapter to the subject of the religious life and beliefs of whalers. This is not to belittle Albion's scholarship, but merely to highlight the changes in the profession in the last generation. Traditionally the realm of denominational historians and church historians, now religious life is seen as an important element to

understanding the way the ordinary person lived life on a day to day basis.

But models that had been used in the past were borrowed from European scholarship and did not reflect the different way in which populist religion developed in the early national period following disestablishment. European models had always reflected a certain degree of social control exerted by religious elites upon common people. American scholars of religion have only recently started to emphasize the ways in which religion opened up leadership opportunities for blacks and women and gave them a public voice. Religion and reform movements are being tied in historical writings in ways that would have been unthinkable only thirty years ago. Even in our own time, the civil rights movement has been tied to religious leaders and

reformers in way that historians are just now starting to write about.

This talk consists of two parts - first part deals with what Jeffrey Bolster called “The Changing Nature of Maritime Insurrection” - and I will tie that into some research that I did on a New York clipper ship called the *Contest*. The second part of the talk will look at the rise of seafarer’s missions and that will tie Roald Kverndal’s magnum opus *Seamen’s Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth* into some research that I did on the earliest work done in New York among seafarers that pre-dated the American Seamen’s Friend Society.

On the eve of the Civil War, the clipper ship *Contest* left New York harbor for a Chinese trading voyage circumnavigating the globe. By the third day out, the ship was

facing strong winds and had started to leak. By the time the *Contest* reached St. Thomas, the crew had thrown overboard two hundred tons of cargo of lumber and coal and the ship was leaking at a rate of eighteen inches per hour and sinking. What had begun as a leak requiring eighty strokes per hour had grown to two thousand strokes employing twelve men at the pump. On 19 March 1861, the *Contest* anchored in St. Thomas harbor, and shipmaster Joseph Steele recorded in the log that she was a “ship without liberty.” The seamen did not enjoy any shore privileges but were retained to pump the bilge and discharge the remaining cargo as quickly as possible. When they did not receive the extra pay that was promised, they refused to do their duty. Twelve men were arrested and taken by the U.S. Consul to the fort in St. Thomas. Nine days later the sailors still refused to come out of the fort until they were paid \$15 for the 15 days that

they worked to discharge the cargo so that the leak could be found.ⁱ The U.S. Consul in St. Thomas called it a mutiny.

“Mutiny” implied collective action or a conspiracy.ⁱⁱ Legally, the word has implied the work of more than one person.

the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition noted that insubordination and disobedience by one individual do not constitute mutiny. Mutiny is a “revolt or insurrection by subordinates against a specific authority.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The aggravating affects of environmental factors do not make as good a yarn as conflicting personalities and psychological factors. Showing the despicable living conditions aboard a ship does not sell at the box office as well as showing a sadistic

captain. Hollywood would rather show a louse on the bridge than a louse in the foc's'le.

Those mutinies that have been celebrated in literature and on the “silver screen” frequently emphasized the failure of command as the primary cause of mutiny. Often a hardened old cynical captain or a sadistic first mate would compel an otherwise peaceful and compliant crew to violence and retaliation. While officers no doubt abused their authority on occasion, there is also evidence of premeditated mutiny in which the plotting began before the ship even sailed. Piratical mutinies were planned in advance by crew members who had previous knowledge about the value of the cargo. Foreign governments conspired to undermine the official voyages of other countries by infiltrating their crews with men ordered to mutiny. Several crew members, for instance, had been persuaded by the King of

Portugal to cause a mutiny on Magellan's voyage around the world. King Charles had given the great navigator the authority to use capital punishment if necessary. Two of the ringleaders were put in irons and the one named Cartegená was executed on the Colombian coast near the site of the city that still bears his name.^{iv}

The years 1820-1920 marked a remarkable change in society's perception of the gravity of a seaman's failure to obey an order. Jeffrey Bolster described the American ship in 1820 as a "medieval mercantile enterprise" and a "feudal fiefdom" with the captain as lord of the manor. In the late nineteenth century, some men in merchant service were able to rise through the ranks, showing that social mobility could take place. Class distinction was decreasing in importance and these new shipmasters were increasingly accepted by the industry.

Progressive reformers and labor organizers started speaking out for the rights of the working class during the last decade of the nineteenth century. During the early twentieth century, American merchants witnessed the breakdown of traditional class lines on board their trading vessels. According to a tradition inherited from the British, American ships had long had “commoners” or “laborers” in the forward compartment, while the “gentlemen” or “management” resided aft.^v By 1920, the American merchant fleet was “complex and regulated” and the men were no longer confined to the forward part of the ship and actually had chances for upward mobility. The latter part of this one hundred-year period marked an increasing toleration for minor disturbances. Disgruntled men were allowed to desert; flogging was outlawed and probably died out in practice by the 1870s.^{vi} In addition, a class-consciousness was emerging among

men in the fo'c'sle, resulting in a struggle for equal treatment under the law.

In the nineteenth century, most mutinies were not violent in nature and were easily quelled by the officers of the ship.

Seamen were frequently starved or flogged into submission.

This collective resistance by labor using non-violent means would now be termed merely a work-stoppage. Such group work-stoppages became so common in the nineteenth century that they were hardly mentioned in the captains' logbooks.^{vii}

Both Professor Briton Busch of Colgate University and Jeffrey Bolster examined mutinies aboard American whalers for the same time period, 1820-1920. Busch treated the subject of mutiny from a labor perspective and held that much that was labeled mutiny in the nineteenth century were actually work-stoppages. He combed more than three-thousand ships' logs looking for incidents in which three or more crew members took

collective action in refusal of duty or industrial sabotage.^{viii}

Busch thought it unlikely that work disruptions and insubordination would fail to merit a log entry, noting that these episodes loomed large in the minds of the leaders of the whaling industry. This claim is further substantiated by the fact that each incident recorded by a U.S. Consul was also recorded in the ship's log.^{ix}

Busch's statistics confirmed the likelihood of a work stoppage on the *Contest* on 8 April 1861. In his research he found that more than 80 percent of the time, duty was refused in port or sabotage was carried out lying "off and on" a port.^x The four principal reasons for dissatisfaction on American whalers were also the factors that aggravated the crew of the *Contest*. The men desired shore leave or "liberty," and they were probably frightened by the unseaworthiness of the vessel. They had performed an unusual amount of extra work pumping water

and discharging cargo, and the extra pay that was promised was not forthcoming. Although not one of the most frequent factors on whalers, refusal to work under a certain mate in the captain's absence was also one of the aggravating variables on the *Contest*.^{xi} The sources, of course, have a good probability of anti-crew bias. Busch noted that the captain's log was not the ideal source for finding a fo'c'sle perspective, and U.S. Consul records show that the consulate frequently failed to sympathize with the plight of the American seaman.^{xii}

One of the most violent and well-known mutinies that took place during the latter part of the nineteenth century on an American merchant vessel was the fateful voyage of the *Jefferson Borden*. On 5 March 1875, the three-masted schooner set sail from New Orleans for London with a cargo of cottonseed oil cake (hardly the cargo of a great pirate's tale).^{xiii}

Captain William M. Patterson took an undermanned, leaky sailing ship that was in need of repair in the rigging out into some stormy weather.^{xiv} The ship ran into foul weather immediately and the ship started leaking even more, requiring constant pumping from a small crew that was already overworked. The drinking water was contaminated with salt. Whether this was a result of improper storage during the storm or, as the sailors claimed later, it was taken too close to the mouth of the Mississippi River has not been revealed. Rough weather and pumping were the same elements that fatigued the seamen of the *Contest*.^{xv}

The crew of the *Jefferson Borden* also suffered from hazing by the officers. Patterson did little to stop this behavior, and the fact that the first and second mates were his brother and cousin probably did little to inspire him to check their excesses. The crewmen also complained about the poor quality of the food and

about the insects that lived in the fo’c’sle.^{xvi} On the eighth day out, the captain struck a crewman named Miller and put him in irons. The small, overworked crew resented any decrease in the labor supply on board the ship and believed that Miller was being treated unfairly. On 20 April, three crewmen moved to seize control of the ship. The first and second mates were killed and thrown overboard. They tricked the captain into coming up on deck after dark by claiming that someone had fallen and broken his leg. The captain’s wife suspected something was wrong and warned her husband not to go. He armed himself and was able to frighten the men into submission until daylight by firing shots toward the noises he heard in the darkness.^{xvii}

The captain had excellent luck and was able to injure enough crew members to cause them to retreat into the fo’c’sle. Clearly there had been a serious miscalculation on their part. The captain proceeded to lock them in the forward compartment

and shoot at them through portholes. He was so angry that he poured boiling water down into the hold until all three of the perpetrators were wounded and pleading for their lives.^{xviii} The captain then sailed the *Jefferson Borden* on to England with no officers, numerous injured crew members in irons, and a badly leaking ship. He managed to sail the ship short-handed, and he even persuaded his wife to take her turn at the helm.^{xix} Upon arrival in England, the three men were extradited to the United States for trial.

On 15 May 1875, their trial began amid an increasing public awareness of the difficult living and working conditions aboard American merchant vessels. Progressive New England politicians, clergy, and labor leaders rallied behind these three men. They were outraged that the men were not allowed to testify in their own defense because seamen, like children, were considered wards of the court. It came out in the trial that

Patterson was a hard man to work for and that this was not his first mutiny. Even those seamen who remained loyal to the captain testified at the trial that the vessel was not seaworthy and the water was not drinkable. Some concluded that the brackish water had driven the men crazy.^{xx} Even with the support of many prominent citizens, the men were sentenced to death.

On 15 December 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant reduced the convicted mutineers' sentence to life imprisonment.

Employers warned Grant of anarchy by foreign seamen on American vessels (one *Borden* mutineer was an Englishman and another a Russian Finn). On the other hand, the Sunday School Union and the YMCA petitioned for clemency. The *Borden* case was reviewed by five presidents over a twenty-eight-year period while the Seaman's Union and Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, continued to petition on behalf of the sailors.^{xxi} Miller died in prison in 1894,

while Clark (one of the other mutineers) was released by Theodore Roosevelt in 1903.^{xxii}

Gompers taught Andrew Furuseth, president of the Seaman's Union, a great deal about labor organization while they were pushing for the release of the *Borden* crew. Furuseth later succeeded in persuading progressive politician Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin to support the Seaman's Act, which President Woodrow Wilson signed into law in 1915. This "emancipation proclamation" for seamen made it possible for them to get out from under their contractual agreements with employers. Seamen began working for regular wages rather than a portion of the ship's profit (which some of them would never see). The Seaman's Act attempted to address many of the nineteenth-century grievances that led to work stoppages. The working hours of the crews were regulated and vessels,

provisions, water, sanitary facilities, and living accommodations were inspected for cleanliness and safety.^{xxiii}

A more likely scenario for the *Contest* is based on evidence claiming that many clipper ships that were built in the early 1850s were in need of repair by the early 1860s. The *Contest* was nine years old in 1861:

The great majority of the extreme clippers were from seven to ten years old . . . Wooden ships could not be built to carry the tremendous leverage of the extreme clipper rig more than five or six voyages without being rebuilt. Few merchants in 1860 could afford to rebuild their ships, and none could operate them to advantage if they had been rebuilt. The only alternative was to recalk [sic] . . .^{xxiv}

The clippers of the 1850s carried so much sail area that the tremendous leverage carried by the mast was translated to the keel using the deck as a fulcrum. The mast pulled away from the keel under this pressure, causing massive leaks in many of these vessels after only a few years of service. Surely the inclement weather aggravated the leak along the keel of the *Contest*, but if Cutler is correct, wooden clipper ships carried so much sail that leaks of this kind were not uncommon after a few years of service, and the seamen were probably aware of this danger.

Technology and legislation played an important role in improving living and working conditions aboard ship. Violent and non-violent protests took place concurrently, bringing up the question; Why did some crews resort to violence and others

refrain? The nineteenth century was not marked by linear progress toward peaceful protest.

While the *Contest* is included among the thirty-one fastest clippers in the decade before the American Civil War, she is usually remembered for meeting her final fate at the hands of Captain Semis and the *CSS Alabama* in 1863. The *Contest* was returning to New York from Yokohama, Japan, passing through the Straits of Sunda, an area that was supposed to be patrolled by a U.S. warship. The *U.S.S. Wyoming* was reported to be having engine problems and was last seen at anchor. When first sighted, the *Alabama* flew an American flag, but the *Contest* kept her distance. When the *Contest* was four miles off, the *Alabama* raised a Confederate flag and the *Contest* flew every inch of sailcloth on board. Under a freshening breeze, it appeared that the *Contest* might escape, but then the wind died

down and the auxiliary steam power on board the *Alabama* decided the day. Semmes condemned the cargo and the ship and burned her to the waterline. The crew of the *Contest* was later transferred to a British ship to be returned to the United States.^{xxv} William Low, the owner, was later paid for the loss in Alabama claims court.^{xxvi} The *Contest* was not alone in meeting her fate this way; the *Winged Racer* was also destroyed by the *Alabama* off the coast of Java that same year. Many other Northern merchants sought to avoid this disruption to Union shipping by trading under another flag during the War Between the States.^{xxvii} The United States merchant fleet never fully recovered from this “flight from the flag.”

By the latter part of the 19th century we see examples of religious reformers, labor leaders, and even politicians speaking out on behalf of jailed mutinous crew members. The Sunday

School Union and the YMCA argued for clemency for the *Jefferson Borden* mutineers. But during the first half the 19th century religious reformers probably did very little to help the actually living conditions of sailors at sea. The hierarchical nature of English and American society put the seafarer at the very bottom, legally and socially. In the early decades of the nineteenth century efforts were made to reach the mariner with the Christian gospel, even though many could not read their magazines, tracts, or Bibles. While these gentleman and gentlewoman reformers showed concern for these vulnerable people on the outskirts of society, they saw life as brutal for working people and did not see it as their responsibility to change it. But, although many did not consciously work to improve the conditions of those at sea. The institutions that they set up in the early decades on the 19th century evolved and gave shape to other institutions that gave the seafarers the tools they

needed to liberate themselves and achieve equality under the law.

Marine societies were among the first voluntary associations in colonial America. While fellowship and social connectedness were certainly functions of these pre-Revolution societies, their primary goal was business-related: they served as a form of financial protection for their members. After the War of 1812, during the early years of what we now call the “Second Great Awakening,” a new kind of marine society began to appear in the cities of the Northeast. The function of these societies was not financial, but rather spiritual. They reached out to those who were considered the “deserving” or “worthy” poor. Up until this century, with the rise of “scientific” social work, it was not unusual for those in charitable work to make a distinction between those who were “lazy, shiftless, or idle,” and

the working poor who had fallen on hard times or had difficulty making ends meet.

Early Marine Societies

The Marine Society in New York was founded in 1769 by thirty-two people who banded together for the charitable purpose of “the relief of distressed shipmasters or their widows and children, and also for the promotion of maritime knowledge.”¹ The society petitioned for the erection of lighthouses and buoys, and is perhaps best remembered for its work with establishing Sailor’s Snug Harbor. While the goals of this and similar societies were charitable, they were also self-serving: the elites of the maritime trades were merely taking care of their own. Although the dues seemed modest (\$2.00 per year), some could not afford this amount and were warned that

¹*The Marine Society of the City of New York, in the State of New York*, 1933, 5.

under the constitution of the society, they would not receive benefits.

Many pre-Revolution marine societies, like the Marine Society in New York, were decidedly secular in their approach; many boasted that they instituted no religious test for membership. In fact, one of the most divisive issues ever to face the Board of Directors of the Salem Marine Society was the use of money they received from an estate, money which had been earmarked for the construction of a Seamen's Bethel. This was hotly debated by the members of the society, with some strongly opposed to its construction. After the Bethel was dedicated in July of 1890, most sailors did not even attend its services and it had to be turned over to the YMCA.²

The voluntary associations that emerged from the revivals of the Second Great Awakening to evangelize seamen differed

²Philip C.F. Smith, "The Salem Marine Society, 1766-1966," *The American Neptune* (1966): 278.

sharply from the marine societies that preceded them. They were unapologetically evangelical and intentionally non-denominational. While the secular marine societies served a very tangible economic function for their elite members, evangelical societies repeatedly tried to convince merchants that their businesses would benefit if they helped improve the morals of the working-class sailors. Hugh Davis, in an article on the American Seamen's Friend Society (ASFS), described the organizations that preceded the ASFS (pre-1825) as "marginal in terms of their public support and scope of operations."³

The early efforts to reach the American seaman with the Christian gospel were made by those who moved not in the elite circles of the marine societies, but among the poor. A gentleman from England who became a life member of a marine society with a \$50 donation noted that in his country the

³Hugh H. Davis, "The American Seamen's Friend Society and the American Sailor 1828-1838," *The American*

“middling class of society” kept the seamen’s movement out of debt because so few of the wealthy did anything to benefit mariners.⁴ A new urban middle class was beginning to take shape in America, as the early signs of industrialization appeared on the horizon. But even as the boards of the various Marine Bible Societies struggled to turn the movement over to the seamen themselves, financial difficulties remained because “poor Jack” did not hold on to his earnings for long. This was one of the social problems the evangelical front was trying to address by institutionalizing the enthusiasm of the revivals of the 1820s and 1830s into voluntary associations.

In the early 1820s, the Marine Society of the City and State of New York was able to distribute more than \$2,000 per year to the widows and fatherless children of its deceased members. These monies had been earned as interest income

Neptune (1979): 46.

from the society's principal fund. While this society prospered, one of the newer sort of marine societies, the Society for Promoting the Gospel among Seamen in the Port of New York, could not meet its annual expenses of approximately \$2,000.⁵

The latter organization was left deeply in debt from the expenses incurred from building the Mariner's Church, and they could not afford to retain a "settled preacher." In their Annual Report in 1821, the board claimed that "the Society has become embarrassed by a heavy debt."⁶ The society owed \$7,000 and could not boast that it retained even a dozen annual subscribers. The board had to borrow money to pay the interest on the debt for the construction of the Mariner's Church, and the collections at the church were not sufficient to cover even normal operating

⁴*The Christian Herald and Seaman's Magazine*, vol. X, no 1,

⁵See the report of the Fifty-third Annual Meeting of the Marine Society of the City and State of New York, 18 January 1823 reprinted in *The Christian Herald and Seaman's Magazine* vol. IX no. XIX p. 604. They were able to sustain a dividend of approximately \$2,400 throughout the decade. See a small book titled *The Marine Society of the City of New York, in the State of New York*, published by the same in 1933, p. 11.

⁶*The Christian Herald and Seaman's Magazine*, vol. VIII, no V, 21 July 1821 page misnumbered, should read 156, not 146

expenses. The solution of the Board of Directors was to hire a permanent minister (with money that they did not have) and send him to the principal seaports of New England, founding more societies and taking up a collection for the seaman's cause in New York.⁷

This new debt-ridden society marked a break with the older marine societies that had been founded before the American Revolution. The older marine societies served a function similar to a life insurance policy or workers' compensation. Members (mostly shipmasters, although merchants were admitted as honorary members) paid yearly dues to the society in exchange for a pledge that their widows and fatherless children would be cared for in the event of their death. Since the primary function of the older societies was to provide financial stability to the families of shipmasters, the kind of debt carried by the Society

⁷Ibid. Vol. VIII, no. XVII, 544.

for Promoting the Gospel among Seamen would have been considered unacceptable in colonial times, and the society would have been quickly discredited. But in the newer organizations, the goal was to help the poor, especially New York's deserving merchant seamen. Thus, a debt was considered an acceptable risk to get a movement started. But without an advocate in the printed media, this debt could have crushed the fledgling movement.

Two years before the addition of *The Seaman's Magazine* to *The Christian Herald* in 1821, articles appeared frequently to report the progress on the construction of the Mariners' Church and the urgent need for funds. The first report of the Port of New York Society printed in the *Herald* explained their purpose as stated in the second article of their constitution: "To supply seamen with the means of intellectual and religious

instruction.”⁸ A temporary place of worship had been secured on Cherry-Street in December of 1818 that could accommodate several hundred seamen. Reverend Ward Stafford, the church’s first paid minister, was preaching there regularly on the Sabbath and at other times. The number of seamen attending these services surpassed even the most optimistic hopes of the Society, and on Sunday evenings some people had been turned away due to lack of space. One hundred families of seamen had indicated a desire to join the church only one year after the founding of the society. Already by this time, 600 Bibles and 5000 religious tracts had been distributed. Shipmasters and owners noted a great reduction in absenteeism and improvement in morals. Encouraged by this enthusiasm, the society located a piece of real estate on Roosevelt Street but claimed that the \$5,000 they had raised so far for a Mariners’ Church would not

⁸Ibid. 121.

even pay for the land to build it on. By October of that year, however, they were holding ceremonies celebrating the laying of the foundation for the first church of its kind in the world, even though they had to borrow the necessary funds.⁹ The Mariners' Church opened on 4 June 1820 with a seating capacity of 1000 people.

Rev. Ward Stafford had not been a mariner as had Rev. George C. Smith, the great advocate of the seaman's cause in the United Kingdom. Smith was initially surprised to hear of the work being done in New York City. But the idea for a seaman's magazine can be traced to Smith. At a meeting of the Bethel Seamen's Union, British and Foreign, on 12 November 1819, Smith stated that the publication of a sailors' magazine was one

⁹Ibid. Vol. VI, No. XIII, 16 October 1819, 416.

of the four main objectives of the society.¹⁰ One year later, Ward Stafford sent letters that he had received from two of the secretaries of the Bethel Seamen's Union to the editor of *The Christian Herald* with permission for them to appear in print (which they did four days later, taking up almost five pages of the *Herald*). The letters urged Stafford to use some of the same methods that had proved effective in England. The secretaries recommended meeting on board ship, in the sailors' element. They suggested the provision of alternatives to boarding houses and the formation of auxiliaries in different seaport towns. They later sent on a Bethel flag that could be replicated. Stafford also forwarded the first seven issues of the "Sailor's Magazine and Naval Miscellany" to the editor. The editor not only read the issues, but published many of the articles over the next few months. Stafford proposed to the *Herald* that "a portion of each

¹⁰Ibid. Vol. VI, No. XX, 19 February 1820, 631.

number of your very useful publication might not be profitably devoted to the interests of our seafaring brethren.”¹¹

Although signs were good for the seaman’s cause in New York, the Marine Bible Society showed some frustration in trying to get the sailors to take more ownership of the movement. After five years of work in the city, the Board was hoping that more Bible distribution would take place from sailor to sailor. The Marine Bible Society was to be made up **of** seamen, not sustained merely **for** seamen.¹²

The Christian Herald and Seaman’s Magazine was instrumental in the beginnings of seamen’s missions in the United States. In his little booklet *The Seaman’s Cause*, Israel P. Warren, secretary of the American Seamen’s Friend Society,

¹¹Ibid. Vol. VII, No. XIII, 4 November 1820, 401.

acknowledged *The Christian Herald* and its role leading up to the publication of *The Mariner's Magazine* and ultimately *The Sailor's Magazine*.¹³ A longer and more comprehensive history of the American Seamen's Friend Society was written in 1932 by its secretary, George Sidney Webster, but he failed to mention *The Christian Herald*. In Webster's opening chapter, entitled "Tributaries," he noted *The Mariner's Magazine* but counted no debt by the society to *The Christian Herald*.¹⁴ More recently, *The American Neptune* published an article by Eugene Jackman on efforts made on behalf of seamen before 1825, and he frequently cited *The Christian Herald and Seaman's Magazine* as one of his primary sources.¹⁵ Roald Kverndal, in his seminal book *Seamen's Missions*, documented the start of

¹²Ibid. Vol. III, No. II, 2 June 1821.

¹³Israel P. Warren, *The Seamen's Cause; embracing the History, Results, and Present Condition, of the Efforts for the Moral Improvement of Seamen* (New York: S. Hallet, Printer, 1858?), 12.

¹⁴George Sidney Webster, *The Seamen's Friend, A Sketch of The American Seamen's Friend Society* (New York, 1932), 10.

¹⁵Eugene T. Jackman, "Efforts Made before 1825 to Ameliorate the Lot of the American Seaman: With Emphasis on Moral Regeneration," *The American Neptune* (1964): 109-118.

The Seaman's Magazine in *The Christian Herald* by Ward

Stafford. Kverndal described how the impulse for a magazine came from G. C. Smith in Great Britain, but the idea of seamen's missions seems to have developed independently on both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁶ The now classic book, *The Rise of New York Port*, by Robert Albion, has only two brief references to any bethels in New York. Albion merely noted their failure to curb the evils of crimps and harlots as they preyed upon the seamen of the port.¹⁷

The pre-Revolution marine societies sought to protect their members from maritime disasters through the storing up of treasures on earth. By contrast, *The Christian Herald* and *Seaman's Magazine* helped mariners to store up treasures in

¹⁶Roald Kverndal, *Seamen's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1986), 427.

¹⁷Robert G. Albion, *The Rise of New York Port* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1939), 234.

heaven by giving them a written witness that they could carry out to sea.

Slide 1 The Contest

Slide 2 Commodore Richard Dale, Marine Bible Society, concerned that ships were sailing without a single Bible on board sought contributions from naval officers and shipmasters to provisions outgoing vessels with the Scriptures. 1816 was same year the American Bible Society was founded

Slide 3 Things really took off in Maritime Mission right after the War of 1812 (which ended in 1815) Presbyterian Brick was located on Beekman Street (by Nassua) not far from the present City Hall. It was saved from a fire by a brave seafarer in 1811 and 5 years later they started their prayer meetings for seamen in the summer of 1816.

Slide 4 Dr. Spring was the pastor of Presbyterian Brick and a pioneer in seamen's missions - being near the wharves, they were more acutely aware of the shipping population of the city. He met Ward Stafford the summer of 1816 preaching down in the ship yard and the idea of a land-based mariner's church was conceived. Mariner's had not been previously welcomed in the city's churches.

Slide 5 - The original New York Mariner's Church on Roosevelt Street opened in 1820.

Slide 6 - *The Christian Herald and Seamen's Magazine* in 1823 became the *American Sailor's Magazine* in 1824

Slide 7 - some of the reports were encouraged that shipmasters and crews were soliciting the services of ministers and missionary societies - others reported frustration that the sailors were not taking more personal initiative sooner. The Bethel flag

would indicate services or a prayer meeting on board by day and a lantern by night.

Slide 8 - The British sent a Bethel flag to America with permission to make copies or alter it slightly to suit their needs

Slide 9 - The American Seamen's Friend Society was founded in January of 1826 with vice-presidents from Maine to New Orleans, being a truly national institution. But recognized New York's pioneering and dominant role in the movement, Smith Thompson was named its first president. While I stated earlier that not much was accomplished to improve conditions of life at sea in the first part of the century; the society had earthly as well as spiritual goals right from the start. But many of the earthly concerns had to do with waterfront improvements, libraries, boarding-houses, and seamen's savings banks.

Slide 10 - New York's waterfront in 1828

Slide 11 - ASFS - 1830

Slide 12 - New York Mariner's Church - 1855

Slide 13 - The Methodist Bethel Ship *John Wesley*

Slide 14 - Bethel Ship John Wesley II

ⁱOctavius T. Howe and Frederick C. Matthews, *American Clipper Ships: 1833-1858*, (Salem, MA: Marine Research Society, 1926), 1:106.

ⁱⁱLeonard F. Guttridge, *Mutiny: A History of Naval Insurrection* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 1.

ⁱⁱⁱEdmund Fuller, ed., *Mutiny!* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1953), ix.

^{iv}Fuller, *Mutiny!*, 10.

^vWm. Jeffrey Bolster, "The Changing Nature of Maritime Insurrection," *Log of Mystic Seaport* 31:1 (Spring 1979): 14.

^{vi}*Ibid.*, 15.

^{vii}*Ibid.*, 14.

^{viii}Briton C. Busch, *Whaling Will Never Do for Me* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1994) 19.

^{ix}Briton C. Busch, "'Brace and Be Dam'd': Work Stoppages on American Whale Ships, 1820-1920," *International Journal of Maritime History* 3 (December 1991): 96.

^x*Ibid.*, 99.

^{xi}*Ibid.*, 101.

^{xii}*Ibid.*, 107.

^{xiii}Robert R. Newell, "Murder and Mutiny Aboard the *Jefferson Borden*." *Down East* (April 1971):34.

^{xiv}Jay M. Pawa, "The *Jefferson Borden* Pirates and Samuel Gompers: Aftermath of a Mutiny," *American Neptune* 27 (January 1967) 47.

^{xv}Hadfield, *Mutiny at Sea*, 208.

^{xvi}Ibid., 211.

^{xvii}Ibid., 213.

^{xviii}Pawa, *Jefferson Borden*, 48.

^{xix}Newell, *Jefferson Borden*, 35.

^{xx}Pawa, *Jefferson Borden*, 49.

^{xxi}Ibid., 47.

^{xxii}Ibid., 59.

^{xxiii}Bolster, "Changing Nature," 16.

^{xxiv}Cutler, *Greyhounds of the Sea*, 372.

^{xxv}Raphael Semmes, *The Confederate Raider "Alabama": Selections from Memoirs of Service Afloat during the War Between the States*, ed. Philip Van Doren Stern (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962), 311,314.

^{xxvi}Low, *Fleet of Clipper Ships*. n.p.

^{xxvii}Clark, *The Clipper Ship Era*, 344.