The Official Journal of the Organization

The Hoboken Historical Museum Newsletter

OF BY And FOR Museum Members.

DECEMBER 1988 Hoboken, N.J. No. 22

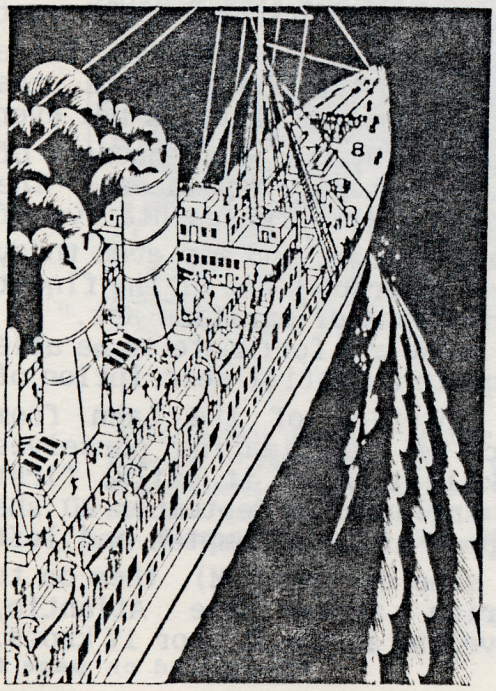
THRONGS JAM CITY HALL

FOR EXHIBIT'S MAIDEN VOYAGE

The third annual exhibition of the Hoboken Historical Museum, "The Great Ocean Liners of Hoboken," opened on November 18, with a festive opening night party from 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM, attended by a record-setting crowd of more than 500 visitors.

The exhibit, on view on the second floor of Hoboken's City Hall at Washington and First Streets, was the culmination of many months of research and hard work by co-curators Robert Foster and Jane Steuerwald.

They presented ocean liner history through the recollections of Hobokenites who remember when great vessels docked in their city, welcoming thousands aboard to travel in luxury we may never again see.



Opening night activities recalled those times by recreating the setting of an ocean liner deck, with dozens of signal flags, musicians, shuffleboard courts, deck chairs, and the aural background of the waterfront. A graphic backdrop permitted visitors to have their pictures taken of them at the wheel of the "Leviathan."

The exhibit also included original shipboard menus, flags and souvenirs, ocean liner posters, ship models, post cards and relics from the great fire of 1900 that devastated the Hoboken waterfront.

Big hit of the evening was a standing-room-only slide lecture on the great ocean liners conducted by author-historian Bill Miller, who teaches at Hoboken's Calabro School and has devoted his life to becoming one of the world's leading authorities on the vanished glories of the great transatlantic ocean liners. He has written more than 20 books on the subject.

As a reminder of the bygone elegance of pre-war transatlantic travel, music was performed on the harpsichord by Mary Nicholas, a Hoboken resident who is a frequent concert soloist in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area.

[Continued on next page.]

Refreshments ranging from caviar to cheese were donated by generous Hoboken restaurants and merchant including Arak's Dairy and Deli, Blimpie Base #1, East LA, Hoboken Gourmet, Joe's Prime Meats, Lisa's Deli, Ralph's Hoboken Produce, Sparrow's Liquors, Talbot's Restaurant, and Von Holland Deli, and energetic Museum members served and supervised the bountifully laden food tables. They included Jeanne Valentin, Betty DeMarco, Joyce Tatom, Beverly Hans, and Claire and John DePalma. Larry Von Holland and the sisters, Marie Valentino and Mildred Romano, donned aprons and prepared hors d'oeuvres all evening for guests, and Luke Faust provided vital transportation for food, supplies, and workers.

The Museum's financial officers rejoiced in the sale of every Museum T-shirt in stock plus a large quantity of souvenir posters.

ROMANCE ABOARD THE S.S. LAHN.

One of the many visitors to the opening night of our ocean liner exhibit was Ron Heuer of Long Island, who gave us a copy of a North German Lloyd passenger list from the steamship **Lahn**, dated September 19, 1888. Mr. Heuer told us that it was on this date that his grandfather, Frederich Heuer, left for America from Bremen, Germany on this great ship (and arrived in Hoboken on September 28*).

Ron told us that his grandparents met on the ship coming over and were married two years later in New York City.

We don't know how they met, but one can imagine how it must have been on board such a lush passenger liner as the **Lahn**, one of the most magnificently decorated ships of its time.

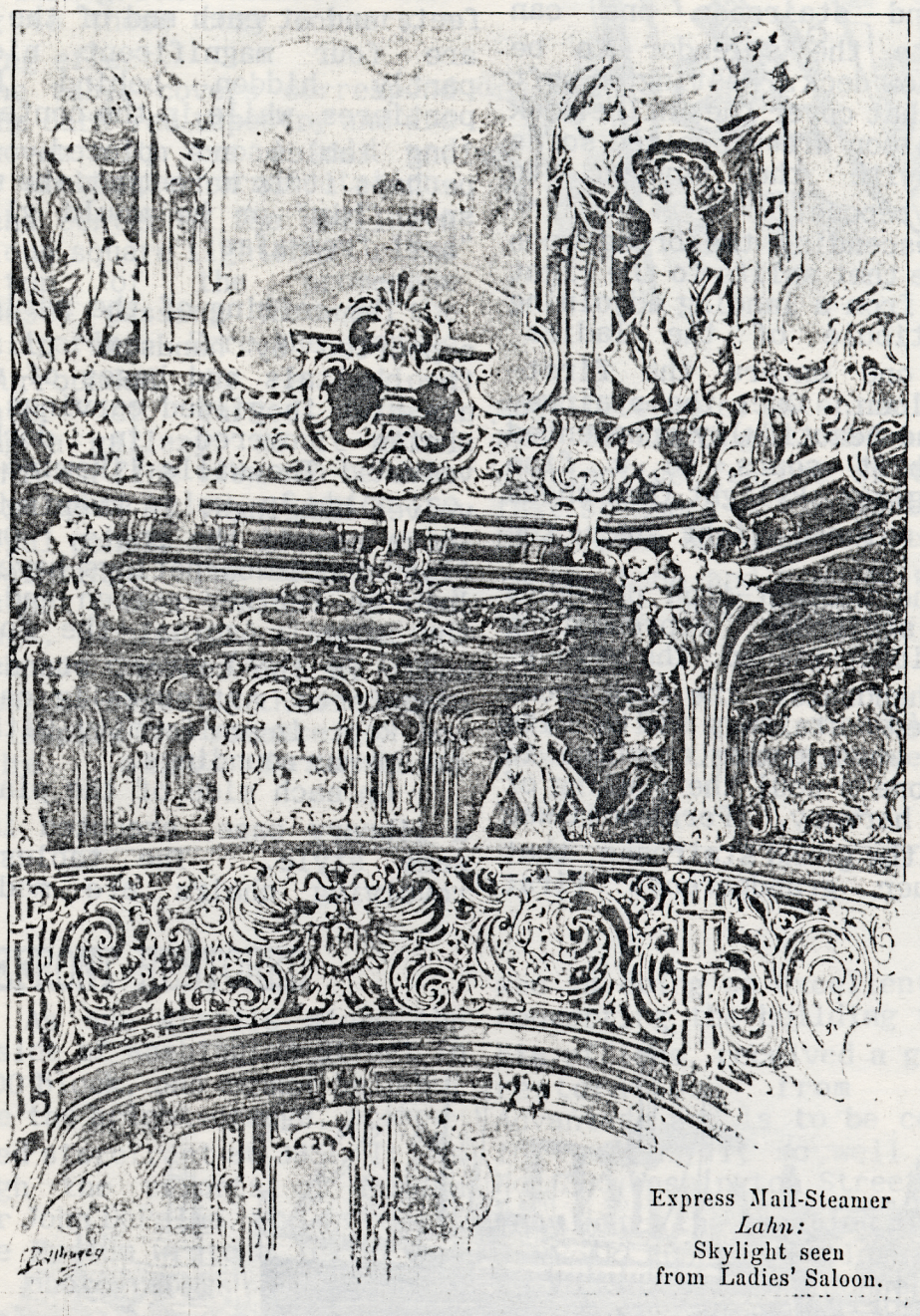
During the 1880s the styles of interior decoration of the North German Lloyd company's vessels were chiefly those of the late Renaissance, brought about by the public's demand for comfort and elegance. Characteristic of this style were the ships **Werra** and **Fulda**. A distinguishing feature at that time was the introduction of grand staircases which led directly into the large saloons, instead of partitioned off stairwells more typical of marine architecture.

According to a book published by the steamship line some years later (Norddeutscher LLoyd, ca. 1900) the unqualified approval which these steamers received from the American traveling public encouraged the company to go one step further in the next generation of vessels. "These offered to the public rooms, the magnificence of which is not even surpassed by the gorgeousness of the French royal palaces. The **Lahn** is a true representative of this richness, and may even today be considered as one of the finest productions of maritime art."

We are fortunate to be able to quote a partial description of the interior of the **Lahn** from which we can imagine ourselves back in time as it sails, first for England (on September 20 she stopped at Southhampton and left the same day at 6 PM), then on to America across the Atlantic, traveling at about 16 or 17 knots,

Continued on page 4

*According to Morton Allan's Directory of European Passenger Steamship Arrivals



Express Mail-Steamer *Lahn:* Skylight seen from Ladies' Saloon.

Twin Screw Express Steamer Elegant interior of the transatlantic liner Lahn of the North German Lloyd S.S. Co., built at Glasgow, Scotland in 1888.

Notice the cupids on the support pillars above the railing. Painting and caption reproduced from a book published by the company.

making 410 miles a day. The voyage would take another eight days before ending in Hoboken at the foot of Third Street on the 28th.

Already at the entrance to the grand staircase one can anticipate the splendor to be found below deck. Resting on soft carpets that cover the entire deck of the saloon are brown-red sofas that invite the voyager to peaceful repose.

Descending the broad open staircase that splits to the right and left from a landing adjoining the vestibule of the ladies' parlor, one enters the first-cabin saloon. Over the stairway a wide and beautifully ornamented light shaft soars to a fine stained-glass skylight that sheds a multi-colored light over the whole.

The wrought-iron uprights of the staircase, representing vines, richly gilded, the velvet-covered handrails, the dark brown wainscoted stairway with its artistic woodcarving, combine to form in one's soul the feeling of absolute harmony. (Perhaps it was here, on the grand staircase, that the Heuer grandparents first met.)

But, let us enter the spacious saloon of the first cabin. The exquisite splendor hardly permits comparison. The length of the room occupies the entire width of the vessel, 80 feet, and at each end of the room are four magnificent niches, partly hidden behind heavy portieres, while in the center two long tables are placed. (Or perhaps it is here that she would spot "him" or he would glimpse "her" from afar.)

The ceiling of the parlor is supported by handsome pillars, the capitals and bases of which are rich in gilded carvings, the shafts covered in dark-red velvet. The walls likewise show velvet hangings, in keeping with those around the posts. On the floor double carpetings have been laid to further soften and ease the step. Against the forward wall, in the center, stands the pianoforte, artistically carved, and kept in uniformity with the entire surroundings.

On each side of the piano is a library case, executed in the same style. The tables and revolving chairs are made of ebony, the latter being masterpieces of style and finish. Soft-cushioned divans extend around the niches on the side walls, covered, like the chairs, with dark-green velvet, thus giving to these cozy corners a pleasing effect.

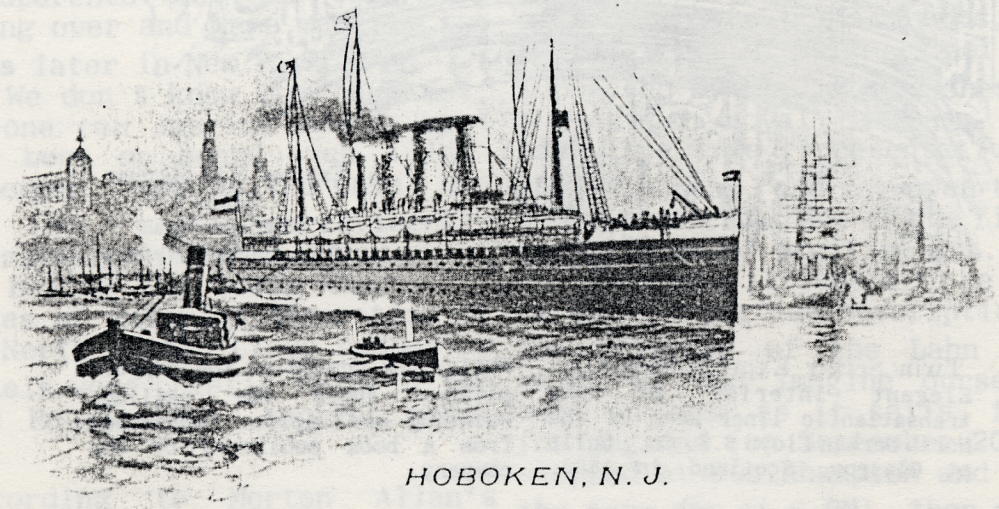
The table covers correspond with the dark-red tapestry and are interwoven with broad gold and green arabesque ornamentation. From the center of the ceiling a capacious square lightshaft rises the top of the promenade deckhouse, passing through the ladies' parlor. Here the opening is surrounded by a gilded bannister of carved vines, forming a gallery, as it were, from which a fine view can be had into the cabin below, of which the principal panels are adorned with fine paintings. The walls of the lightshaft bear rich gilded carvings, chiefly allegorical figures and cupids (Ah! At last, perhaps the sight of these cupids would inspire the romance.)

The above-described



magnificence of interior fittings and furnishings, which was a distinctive feature of the new, fast steamers of the North German Lloyd Line had reached its climax in the Lahn and a point where it could not be surpassed.

[More on the great ocean liners of Hoboken in the next issue.]



HOBOKEN, N. J.

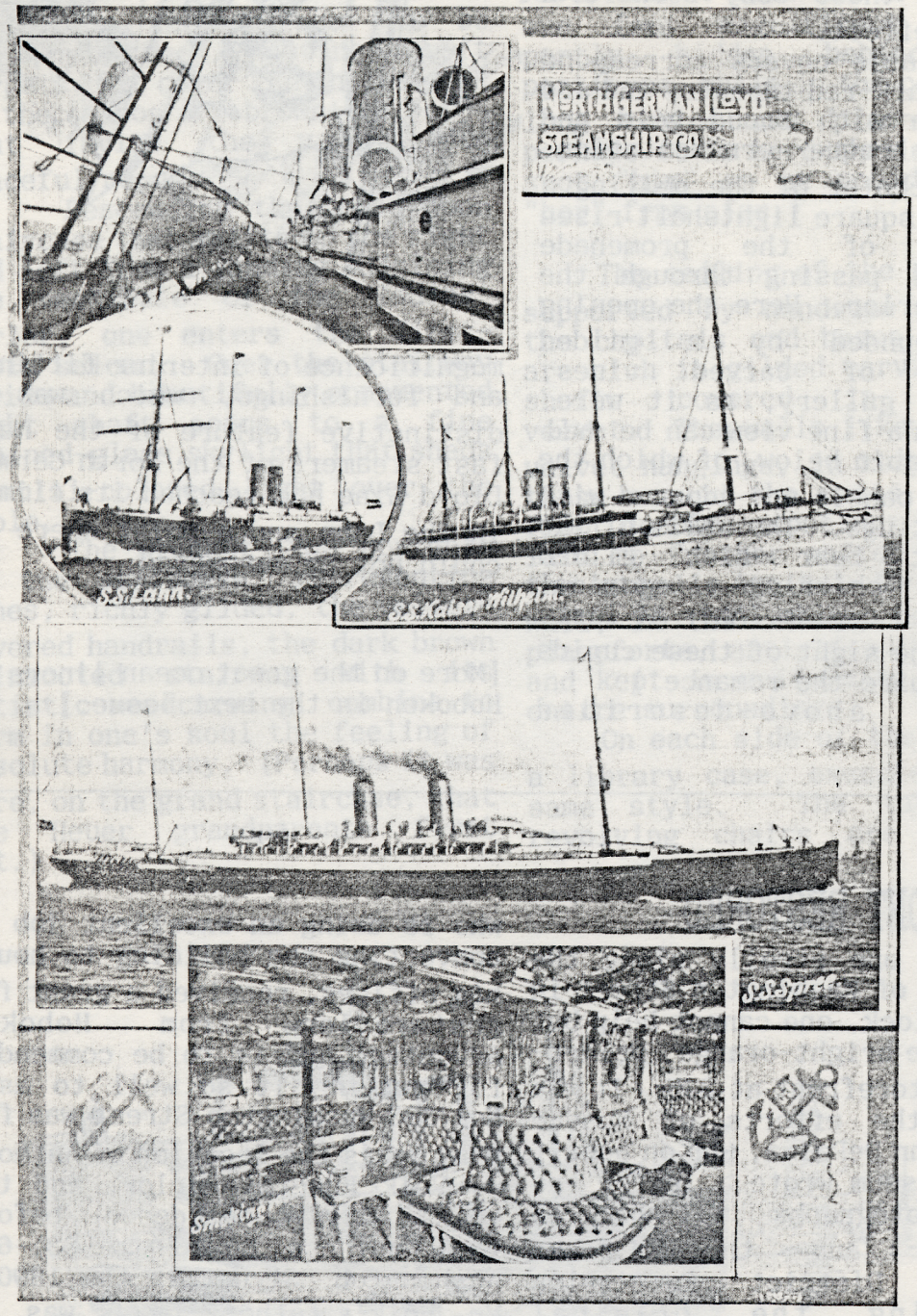
No. 20—Outgoing Steamer.

STOREFRONT RESTORED

As one strolls along the east side of Washington Street in the 300 block, one cannot help but notice the bright-orange, primer-painted storefront at 335. It was through the efforts of Museum member John DePalma, who on behalf of the Museum wrote a letter and sent photographs to Hoboken Advantage and the Hoboken Historic District Commission concerning the original storefront, that much of its original etched glass and handiwork has survived.

The new owner of the property, Ed Carcich of Hoboken, who is doing an excellent job of converting the building to house his offices, received a grant for restoration from Hoboken Advantage and is to be commended for putting it so well to use. No. 335 Washington Street was for many years the location of Anthony J. Volk Funeral Parlor, and the Volk family's residence, before the business moved to 631-633 Washington Street in the 1890s. Mr. Volk's father, Jacob, was, at the time of his death in 1874, one of the oldest undertakers in Hoboken. The storefront is one of the last survivors of its kind in the city.

KING'S HANDBOOK OF NEW YORK 1893



NORTH GERMAN LLOYD STEAMSHIP COMPANY.
PIERS AT HOBOKEN. OFFICES AT 2 BOWLING GREEN, NEW YORK

FROM THE EDITOR

Hoboken Firsts

We recently received a nice letter from one of our charter members, Dr. Nathaniel Coyne, who has offices on Washington Street. He reminds us that Hoboken is prominently listed in the Miniguide to New Jersey, a brochure published by the Deartment of Commerce and Economic Development and the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism. It presents interesting facts about our state and our city.

Dr Coyne makes a keen observation: of the 50 "firsts" mentioned for New Jersey, Hoboken has six, or better than 10 percent!

However, in citing Hoboken as the location of so many New Jersey "firsts", some errors were made and we take this opportunity to correct them.

The first yacht club in America was founded by John Cox Stevens in 1854 (not 1884). The first clubhouse was built in Hoboken. Also, Hoboken did not have the "First Ferry Service," but rather, the first steampowered ferry service in the world, which operated between Hoboken and Manhattan in 1811. It is interesting to note that the original Hoboken ferry service began in 1775 and for many years enjoyed the distinction of being the world's oldest ferry in continuous operation.

Although six Hoboken "firsts" are listed in the brochure, there are, as you might expect, many more than that. At last count, after a number of years of collecting Hoboken "firsts", I have compiled over 30!

A comprehensive book on the subject is in the works, if I can find the time and the publisher to bring to print a narrative of so many accomplishments of a small mile-square community such as ours.

TO OUR NEW READERS

Welcome to the Museum Newsletter. We mail a number of complimentary copies each month to introduce our young and growing non-profit organization to those who might be interested in the fascinating history of Hoboken, a very special place, as you may know, or will so discover more and more as time goes on. The Museum now has more than 200 paid members. If you would like to be one, we enclose a membership form for your convenience. If you are already a member of the Hoboken Historical Museum and received a membership application form with this issue, please pass it on to a friend.

PRODUCING THE NEWSLETTER

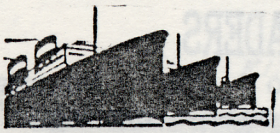
Beside the monthly task of writing, editing, and laying out the Newsletter, there is also the time-consuming chore of preparing it for distribution, to which a few people each month contribute many hours. (A thousand copies of this issue were printed.) A big help in doing our folding, since we changed over to our new format, has been Alan Nelson's Counter-Fit Quick Printing, on Washington Street, We thank them for their help. Also making the publishing of the Newsletter possible are the nimble fingers of Museum Trustee Paul Lippman, who sets each issue in type on his computer and tidies up your editor's creative spelling.

NOTICE TO MUSICIANS

Musicians who would like to participate in the Museum's 2nd musical benefit,to take place in late January or early February, please contact Perry Robinson at 795-9081. Names will be announced.

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THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

CITY HALL

WASHINGTON AND FIRST STS. HOBOKEN, N.J.

MUSEUM HOURS 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. WEEKDAYS

NOTICE

Our next membership meeting is Tuesday, December 13 at 7:30PM in the Clam Broth House on Newark Street in Hoboken All members are invited, and potential members and guests are always welcome to sit in without obligation.

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