The Official Journal of the Organization

The Hoboken Historical Museum Newsletter

OF BY And FOR MuSeum MemberS.

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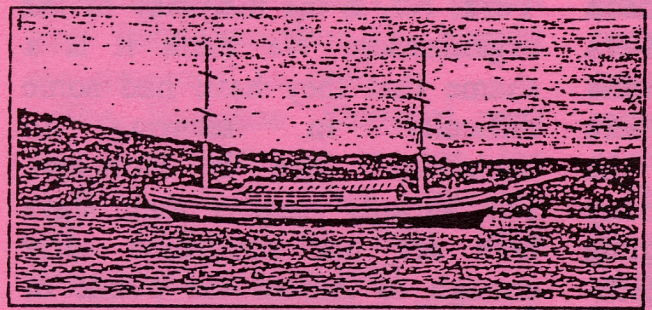
BACK AFTER A BUSY SUMMER

Once more the Museum Newsletter greets its many readers! Notwithstanding diverse vexations, we return from a busy absence of a month during which the first draft of Volume III of The History of Theatre, Vaudeville, and Movies in Hoboken has emerged from a sea of editorial labors.

Now, with good luck, this booklet of theatre history will speed forth, proclaiming all the grandeur that was Hoboken during those exciting years of the 1880s and 1890s. A period of theatrical activity in Hoboken when the old "variety" show was beginning to be replaced by a more refined "vaudeville." As matters now stand, we expect the completed volume to be available by next month. And we might add, the editors have reason to be more than satisfied with their work.

Showboats In Hoboken

Speaking of theatre, it was recently brought to our attention that as early as 1836 there were theatre boats on east coast waterways. In 1842 there was a floating theatre operating on the Hudson River called the Show Barge with an auditorium said to seat 1000. The troupe of entertainers for its 1842 season was composed mostly of local artists from nearby communities, according to a March 1896 Steamboat Centennial newsletter (No. 17) from Worthington, Ohio, sent to us by Anthony Peluso of Yonkers, NY (to whom we are most grateful). Moored in the Morris Canal Basin



Buccaneer Showboat 1933-40s

All Change Is Not Growth, As All Movement Is Not Forward.

at Jersey City after its 1842 season, the Show Barge did not tour again until 1845.

Another floating theatre was the Buccaneer which was docked in Hoboken at Pier 16 at the foot of 14th Street. From 1936 to 1940, the vessel served as a WPA Federal Theatre. Shown here is a copy of a copy of a photograph of the Buccaneer, from Gerald Mastropaolo, secretary of the Eastern Steamboat Preservation Society.

Originally the Buccaneer was a barkentine which had been modified amidship for the addition of a theatre facility in 1933. The Hudson River Day Line acquired a financial interest in the vessel, and arranged for the Buccaneer to be anchored near Dobbs Ferry about 20 miles up the Hudson from Hoboken. Day Line and other excursion boats would stop alongside the showboat and transfer passengers who sought an evening (as the ads indicated) of "rollicking entertainment." After the show, they reboarded their excursion boats.

Jerry Mastropaolo also conferred with Don Ringwald (an authority of Day Line and other steamboat history), and advised further that the Buccaneer was as of March 1986 serving as the bulkhead of the Hastings Yacht Club in Hastings-on-Hudson. The vessel's external appearance is much the same as when it was a showboat.

Showboat Centennial's address is 76 Glen Drive, Worthington, OH 43085 if you wish to pursue steamboat history further.

A Recent Theatre Barge In Hoboken

Many members of the Museum and the general public had the good fortune to witness excellent theatre right here in Hoboken on July 20 aboard the Hudson Waterfront Museum's 1914-era barge docked at Lackawanna Plaza, foot of Newark St., where the world's largest ship, the Leviathan moored for many years. A mini play and juggling mime performance were presented by a troupe titled "Serious Foolishness and Friends" with David Sharps and Karen Leslie who have been connected with the Waterfront Museum since its inception a few years ago.

David, who is from West New York, NJ, is the mainstay of the organization. We think it is a shame that they have had some difficulty in securing an anchorage here in Hoboken. For various reasons their stays here are not confirmed early enough to inform the public of their events, so we regret having to tell you about the shows only after they take place.

MAJOR EXHIBIT ON SHIPYARDS

Our fifth major exhibition, "Hoboken Shipyards Past and Present" at City Hall will open in November. We are looking for more Hoboken shipyard artifacts, pictures, periodicals clippings, and stories from or about people who worked at the yards.

The Todd yard in Hoboken was one of the largest shipyards in the metropolitan New York area. At its peak during World War II it employed more than 11,156 workmen. Formerly the Tietjen & Lang Dry Dock, it was on the stretch of the waterfront along Park Avenue at Weehawken Cove until it closed in 1965. (It merged with its New York operation at the Erie Basin in Brooklyn, which in turn closed in 1983.)

Todd's neighbors, the Bethlehem Steel Company's yard, fronting on the Hudson River between 12th and 15th Sts, was formerly occupied by the W. & A. Fletcher Co., which for a few years became United Dry Docks until Bethlehem Steel Co. bought the ship yard in 1938.

The Hoboken Shipyard was the last company to use the facilities there. They operated only from about 1983 until going bankrupt in 1987.

Now the Union Dry Dock & Repair Co., Inc., at the foot of 9th St., just south of the Maxwell House Coffee plant on River Road, is the only shipyard on the Hoboken waterfront. It is the last remaining dry dock facility in the State. Although relatively new to Hoboken, the company was incorporated 1908.

All these shipyards will be featured in the Hoboken Historical Museum's exhibit scheduled to open November 16.

THEATRE SEATS AVAILABLE. YOU SUPPLY THE THEATRE.

About 125 old-time theatre seats are looking for an organization that can use them. The seats are free, apart from transportation and the labor of removing them from a street-level auditorium in Hoboken. The sturdy, cushioned seats are all in good shape, are of iron and wood, with upholstered arm rests, linked by wood strips in groups of four or five. They seem to date from the 1920s or earlier.

These seats have been offered to us by a loving person who does not believe in waste. Time is limited, so please phone Jim Hans soon at (201) 653-7392 if you want them.

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THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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Lots of Scratch at the Flea Market

The Museum's first fund-raising flea market, June 24, organized and run by Bob Foster, was a great success, with more than 100 dealers ringing Church Square Park and thousands of shoppers flocking to the stalls.

A total of $1200 was earned by the Museum from sales and booth rental, at a cost of $200. Credit to those who helped, and full details will appear in the next issue.

MEETING NOTICE

The Museum will hold its monthly meeting at the Clam Broth House (in its small private dining room) on Tuesday, August 21 at 7:30 pm. All members are invited, and new members and guests are always welcome to sit in without obligation and marvel at the proceedings.

MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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