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NATIONAL MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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KAIULANI -- highlights of her history

- 1899 On a cold December day, the 225-foot, three-masted bark was launched by Arthur Sewall & Company in Bath, Maine, just a few weeks before the dawn of a new century. Named in honor of the last heir apparent to the Hawaiian throne, Princess Kaiulani (Child of Heaven), who had died earlier that year at the age of twenty-four, the vessel was the only steel bark ever built in a country renowned for wooden ships.
- Her maiden voyage was from New York to San Francisco. From there she went to the profitable sugar trade between the U. S. and the recently annexed Hawaiian Islands. She plied between Honolulu and San Francisco on a two- to three-week run and in off season when the sugar harvest was over, the sturdy ship carried coal from New South Wales to California, running many a stirring race with the stakes both pride and money.
- 1909 Signaling the close of the golden age of sail, her owners acquired two steamers and sold Kaiulani, still in her prime, to the Alaska Salmon Packers' Association. Renamed the Star of Finland, she sailed to Alaska in the spring with a crew of fishermen, and returned in the fall with a cargo of canned salmon.
- 1914 Requisitioned back into the sugar run at the outbreak of World War I, she had one of her close calls when a sudden squall hit and took out 8 sails. The intrepid ship made port under a jury rig, and at the end of the war she resumed service in the Alaska trade.
- 1927 Her years of neglect begin. Except for a brief stint in a Gary Cooper movie "Souls at Sea" in the Thirties, she lay -- passed over by the scrap merchants -- in "rotten row" at Alameda, Calif.
- 1941 Having been pressed into service again at the outbreak of World War II, she carried lumber from Washington State to South Africa. Arriving at Durban, her main royals set, she moved through a mine field and made safe anchorage. She had survived again.
- Setting sail for Australia, she altered course for Tasmania when word was radioed of a Japanese attack on Sydney Harbor. Later that fall, she was stripped of her sails and masts, and the once proud ship was made to live out the war as a coal barge in New Guinea. In the late Forties, the U. S. Maritime Commission sold her to a Philippine ship owner.
- 1964 She was donated as a gift from the Philippine people to the American people, to be held in trust by the National Maritime Historical Society.
- 1971 Part of her story is recorded in a book to be published this fall by the Society. Written by Karl Kortum, director of the San Francisco Maritime Museum, the book is a photographic and narrative essay of his voyage on her in 1941. Of her symbolic meaning to America, he writes:
- "The crossroads where this country stands - the threshold of the all-science era - makes a look back sometimes as desirable as a look ahead.
- "We look for the 'last' remnants of our hand-wrought, simple country. This is a story about the last Yankee square-rigged sailing ship.
- "She survives today in Manila - finis to 17,000 merchant square-riggers built in this country. The procession is 30 years long and goes back to our first foothold on this continent.
- "Only one forlorn old barge is left to sum it all up."
- NATIONAL MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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