



MAINS'L HAUL



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A NAME WHICH GOES BACK IN HISTORY

Every now and then there are rumbles of discontent over the use of the term "Slop Chest" to describe the little shop in our 'tweendecks where nautical goodies are sold, the word "slops" apparently bringing up visions of someone dumping a bucket over the lee side. So to get the ungarbled word, it was decided to go right up to what might be termed the Supreme Court of nautical history — and off went a letter to our good friend Capt. Alan Villiers, in far away Oxford, England. Being a busy man, he replied by return Air Mail:

"... the slop chest is a real old institution. I have just checked with the well-known Admiral Smyth's *Sailor's Word Book* of 1867, for instance, and quote:

"'Slop Book: A register of the slop clothing, soap and tobacco, issued to the men: also of the religious books supplied.

"'Slop Room: The place appointed to keep the slops in for the ship's company: generally well aft and dry.

"'Slops: A name given to ready-made clothes and other furnishings for seamen, by Maydman, in the year 1691. In Chaucer's time, sloppe meant a kind of breeches. In an MS account of the wardrobe of Queen Elizabeth is an order to John Fortesque for delivery of some Naples fustian for 'sloppe for Jack Greene, our Foole'.

"In my time, the slops were run by the Captain for his profit and *could* be a racket. They were kept some place aft where they could easily be sealed away by the Customs, as they included the smokes. A good master always tried to stock good things and did not make a racket out of it. Yes, he might have soap too, although the chaps were really expected to lay in their own stocks of that. There used to be a racket with slops and shore tailors, who pretended to supply the men: this was used in S.F. particularly, and Puget Sound ports — but it was not to do with the slop chest as such. That was an ancient and proper institution . . ."

Bringing things further up to date, two members of our Board of Directors — Paul Kettenburg and Kenneth Baker — recently returned from a cruise in South American waters in the freighter *Gulf Farmer*, aboard which the Slop Chest was an accepted item; it was open late on Friday afternoons for the crew, and after the first half-hour the passengers could make purchases there also. No one called it "Ship's Service" or "Small Stores" — it was simply the Slop Chest.



THE SLOP CHEST

— FROM SAIL HO! BY GORDON GRANT

And as one further local instance, Capt. George Morrison of the bark *James Nesmith* wrote home from San Diego in 1898, telling of his plans following the sale of his ship. His letter states, in part, " . . . I think I have everything. Besides my trunk, there is a bundle of charts, one barrel of personal effects going as slow freight, and four shoe boxes of slops." At least, he would have a small start in stocking the slop chest in his next ship.

THE LIGHTHOUSE STORY

During his tour of duty at the Cabrillo National Monument on Point Loma, Francis Ross Holland, U.S. National Park Service historian, was a frequent visitor to the *Star of India*; being an old Navy hand, his interest in things nautical is natural. His historical research into Old Point Loma Light led to two things — a desire to help stamp out the historical fraud of "The Old Spanish Lighthouse" perpetuated by the tourist trade, and an interest in lighthouses in general.

After leaving here he pursued his study of lighthouses and now he has published an important addition to the history of the seacoast: *America's Lighthouses — Their Illustrated History Since 1716*. It runs to 230 pages and is profusely illustrated with photos, plans and sketches, and the local scene is well covered. It is available at the Slop Chest.

GETTING THEM ON TAPE

It is tragic that the tape recorder did not appear until after such local waterfronters as Itata Bill and Dutch Harry and Gus Larsen had passed on. Old Gus, for instance — he was custodian of the *Star of India* for some years — had gone through the searing hell of the Krakatoa eruption in 1883.

In an effort to gather up what still is left one of our members, Bob Wright, is hard at work interviewing old timers on tape, picking up nautical history for us, and non-nautical for the San Diego Historical Society. If any of you have information on local residents who are retired mariners, serving either in sail or the early steamers, please let us have their names and addresses. Navy, Revenue Cutter Service and Lighthouse Service (now Coast Guard) are desirable, as well as merchant mariners.

WELCOME ABOARD!

Although our membership roster now stands at 406, that is not enough — as Rev. Paul L. Robison, the active chairman of our membership committee, points out. He is determined to make it 500 by the end of the year — so bear a hand, mates, bear a hand! The latest additions to our growing family are the following:

Mr. Clark Allen
Mr. Augusto Angelucci
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"Mainsail Haul — An order in tacking ship bidding 'Swing the main yards.' To loot, steal, or 'acquire.'"

— John Masefield

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