

Mr. John Cushing
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Fortunately from the museum's standpoint, we are entirely above reproach in so painting the ship because that's how she looked when she first visited the Bay in the 1880's -- it'll be done exactly in accordance with photographs of her at that time.

Now, you can picture the comments in the San Francisco shipping world and generally in the Bay area, if we were to paint the name "Star of Alaska" on the bows of a ship so decorated. It would be to the effect that the museum means well but doesn't know quite what it's about in painting an Alaska Packer's ship with a row of gun ports. (It would be like recalling the "Lurline" thirty years from now and her "familiar green hull.") No one has been able to level that kind of criticism at us yet, because of some pretty painstaking research behind everything that we have put on display down here. I think the respect and financial support that we have enjoyed from the maritime industry have been due to the accurate caliber of our displays. (Old Tom Crowley has been able to call our attention to only one mistake; Charles Page thought he had us off base on an early steam schooner, but it turned out he was wrong).

Then, let's say we forego the gun ports and give her the familiar black topsides of the Alaska Packer's fleet. First of all, we're going to lose some money because the ship will lack wallop (and the look of antiquity that is a sure-fire come-on) as viewed from the restaurant area. There are swarms of people there, but we have to make them walk that critical city block. Secondly, that predicates her restoration to an Alaska Packer's ship if we're going to maintain any sort of museum standards. That means that we should pour tar on her decks, paint the deck houses an ugly brown, bolt a miscellany of iron tanks and similar modern paraphernalia around the decks, feature electric light illumination in all the quarters, forego the picturesque under-the-fo'c'slehead crew's quarters, paint over all brasswork, and feature the standards of seamanship that would go with a vessel that was laid up or moored nine months out of every year for twenty-six years. Obviously, again we would be losing money, and performing a doubtful historical service. The marine artist, Gordon Grant, when he made an Alaska Packer voyage in this very ship in 1925, commented on the sloppy seamanship that the old vessel had fallen upon since the days of her youth.

By great coincidence, we own a vessel not built for the Calcutta trade, like many of her contemporaries, or for the run to Australia, but for trade with San Francisco. She was in every sense dedicated to this city by her Scottish builders. It is hardly a museum's -- of all organizations -- privileges to try to disguise the fact that Lola Montez was not San Francisco born, or that the Stevenson monument commemorates a product of Scotland. The point is that San Francisco is the kind of city that had

