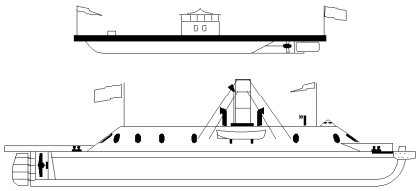
Hampton Roads Ship Model Society

Logbook



No. 148 http://members.xoom.com/HRSMS/ November, 1998

FROM THE PILOTHOUSE

Of Ships and Trains

Jane and I spent a few August days in east Tennessee and western North Carolina, where we saw more arts and crafts and antiques and fudge than ships. And more railroading. We enjoyed a steam train between Dillsboro and Bryson City, N.C., and a shorter ride, diesel-powered but meeting another steamer, on mostly industrial trackage leading to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga. Leaning at an open Dutch door as we rounded a curve and entered the Missionary Ridge Tunnel, I was vividly aware that I had last seen that portal by the sweeping beam of an oscillating headlight, hours before dawn at Christmastime in 1954, from a coach seat on Southern Railway's Washington-bound *Tennessean*, having boarded at the same Terminal Station that is now the Chattanooga Choo-Choo Holiday Inn.

This all calls to mind how much trains are, like ships, almost living, breathing creatures. And how many of us heed the siren appeal of both. The connection between trains and ships was strong in many other ways, mostly involving what happened when a railroad met a body of water where bridging is (or was) impractical. Large fleets of railroad-owned tugs, lighters, carfloats, freight boats, transfer boats, ferries, and even passenger steamers—many of which would make fine modeling subjects—have operated in the waters of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, San Francisco Bay, the Mississippi, the Great Lakes, Puget Sound, and, of course, Hampton Roads. Smaller operations have existed, and a few still do, in rural spots along inland rivers and isolated mountain lakes, even at the end of branch lines in the Adirondacks of New York State and in the Canadian Rockies.

This is the subject matter of a small but unique organization, the Rail-Marine Information Group, in whose start-up I am proud to have been involved. Its periodical, *Transfer*, deals informally with any such operation and its equipment, including plans. The current issue (*No. 23*) features old material on the giant, wooden Southern Pacific train ferries, *Solano* of 1879 and her even larger running mate, *Contra Costa* of 1914. *Solano* was powered by *two* walking-beam engines, each driving one paddlewheel for better control; the wheels were on separate shafts and not opposite each other! She was claimed, on the basis of eleven water-tight bulkheads, to be "absolutely secure from all dangers of sinking." Unlike *Titanic*, she lived up to the claim. What grand models *they* would make!

—Alan Frazer

Mystery Photo

Welcome to the fifteenth installment of "Mystery Photo," the column where Bill Clarke asks, "what ship is it?" Tell Bill what you can about the photograph. Can you identify the ship (s) or the scene? Can you date it as well? Send in your thoughts and ideas and together we can discover the story inside each photograph. Help solve the mystery!

With this installment of Mystery Photo, *Logbook* No. 148, is Bill finally paying homage to the classic ship model aficionado from the sticks and strings' crowd? Imagine, Masts and rigging...what was he thinking? Has he come down with a classic case of nail-sickness? Was Bill reborn by his recent crusade up the eastern corridor; culminating with his attendance of the 1998 Nautical Research Guild Conference in Morristown, New Jersey--sort of the nautical version of a pilgrimage to Mecca? Perhaps, at his age, Bill is becoming a renaissance man or, maybe, he is developing a severe list to port or just starting to hog. Is the photo a mistake in Bill's judgment or part of a larger plan to draw out the heretics in our midst? Has he given the editor too much power in selecting the photograph? What has come over Bill? No matter what possessed him, I hope we see more photographs from this niche. We'll have to wait and see what course Bill takes, but right now, I'm sure that there will be few complaints! Perhaps, we should salute Bill (*with a shot across the bow)* for entering this avenue of study. *(Right now, Bill is giddy because he thinks he can stump us all, or the sticks and strings' crowd, at least.)*

This month's photograph provides a unique view of navy life. The vessel is probably in a navy yard for routine maintenance. Physically, she is an interesting combination of the old mixed

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with the new--wooden hull, masts and rigging, steam power, single screw, modern cannon, plus a variety of ship's boats. What a ship modeler's delight! I can just see the modeling possibilities. Imagine what you could have by building a model of this vessel using the Harold Hahn method! My interest in modeling a vessel like this stems from the quirky appearance she presents, here, in her modified form. Looks like I need to make another trip to the National Archives.

Studying the photograph from right to left, we actually see three vessels in the water. The first, a steam launch, has its canvass awning in place. The second, a rather unusual tug or service craft has its bow hidden behind the launch. The enclosed fantail gives the impression that this vessel may serve as a water taxi when not pushing ships and barges. Immediately behind the tug, and on the pier, is a king-post derrick with an enormous block hanging from its boom. Next, we encounter the bow sprit of our main subject--its dolphin striker poised, as if it's about to pierce the cabin top of the tug. This vessel has large head timbers with a fair amount of ornamental carving. The ship carries a bark rig but looks under-spared with only two visible yards per mast. Where are the topgallent and royal yards? The ensign flies from the end of the spanker gaff. One fat, relatively tall funnel sits just forward of the main mast. There are davits and ship's boats, four per side, with an additional set at the round transom. From forward to aft, I count one launch, one steam launch, either another launch or a barge, and then a gig. The stern boat might be a dingy. A boat boom is stowed below the forward boat. The hull planking is very visible at the bend of the rounded stern. Four of the six visible gun ports show the protruding muzzles of a modern armament, while the after two ports are glassed in. An unusual feature for sailing vessels is the row of port holes near the waterline; they really show off the sheer of the lower deck. Some form of carving decorates the stern; my copy is not clear enough for identification. In the water amidships below the main mast are the shadowy figures of two men in a small boat, possibly a punt. The film's exposure time has obscured them for eternity. The amidships accommodation steps reveal some tumblehome in the hull. Also, notice that the channels for the chain plates are not continuous and make space for gun ports. The vessel appears to be wearing a wartime gray coat in this photograph. Behind these vessels are two massive buildings connected with an, as yet, naval yard.

What are the strongest identifying features of this vessel? In my opinion, they are the wooden hull, the row of port holes near the waterline, the broken chain plates, the ensign flying from the spanker boom, the absence of quarter galleries, the modern appearance of the armament, the two men in the boat, and the hull color. I'll begin my identification with the flag. Obviously, by flying the ensign, this vessel is a unit of the United States Navy. I am able to estimate a hull length of between 150 and 200-feet by using the figures in the punt for scale. I know the length range is large, but it is sufficient to narrow the playing field. The wartime gray paint scheme and general appearance compel me to limit my search to wooden-hulled vessels in service during the Spanish-American war.

From the end of the Civil War, until the beginning of the "steel navy" in 1883, the United States Navy made do with an assortment of left-over sail and steam powered warships. As the material condition of this motley fleet slowly deteriorated, requests to fund new constructions were repeatedly denied. By 1890 only a handful of the older vessels remained in commission. In 1873, however, Congress finally recognized this sad state of affairs and authorized the construction of eight sloops of war. This acquisition consisted of five wooden -hulled ships of the *Enterprise* class and three iron-hulled ships of the *Alert* class. I immediately discounted the ships of the *Alert* class because of their iron hulls. Several of the remaining Civil War era vessels were dismissed, too, due to size or physical differences. This left several Civil War era ships, such as *Hartford*, and the five *Enterprise* class sloops as my prime suspects. A search of Conway's *All The World's Fighting Ships 1860-1905* gave me the names of the five *Enterprises* and their service dates but, alas, no photographs. Similarly, the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (DANFS)* provided vessel histories, but, again, there were no photographs. *Hartford was eliminated after a search through Donald L. Canney's book The Old Steam Navy, Vol. one.* In his book, Canney details the various classes of frigates and sloops that made up the post Civil War navy. Beginning on page 154, he discusses the *Enterprise* class. The five ships of the class were named: *Enterprise, Adams, Essex, Alliance, and Nipsic*. Many of the features of this class matched with those of the vessel in the photograph. Could one of these be our mystery vessel? Apparently so, because on page 155, in black and white, was the very same photograph as our mystery photo. Canney captions the photograph this way: "*Essex* during the Spanish-American War, armed with modern 4-inch breechloaders. (*National Historical Center*)."

My work is done.

With the identification made, I thought about some of the features found in our subject vessel and decided to try and match them to the vessel's mission. This seemed like a fair and reasonable thing to do, especially if a model is in the offing. *DANFS* states that the vessel, placed out of regular service in 1889, served as an apprentice training vessel from 1894 until 1903. At first, I thought this explained the row of port holes at the waterline. I reasoned that they were added, at this time, for the benefit of the larger apprentice crew. It was not until later that I realized that this was a design feature of the *Enterprise* and *Alert* classes. This obviously was a welcomed addition to the habitability of the vessels and, quite possibly, well liked by the crews. The broken channels serve to reveal a design compromise the builders reached as they attempted to provide regular spacing for the original broadside armament. By the time *Essex* served as a training vessel, her reduced numbers of modern 4-inch rifles permitted use of more widely gun ports. The permanently glassed in after gun ports reveal a measure of comfort not usually seen

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in sailing warships. This may be a result of its new mission and changing times. The large numbers of ship's boats are intended to serve the regular crew as well as the apprentice sailors. The reduced rig is somewhat of a mystery. Was this the normal appearance for this type of rig while in port or does it indicate the fact that she did not intend to rely on the sailing rig as a means of propulsion? Frank M. Bennet in *The Steam Navy* states, on page 643, that Congress' approval of the special act that authorized their construction, called for steam powered vessels with auxiliary sail power. But, to be sure, the rig looks strange without the upper yards. An even more radical appearance of *Essex* can be found in photograph (PN346-C2) in the collection of The Mariner's Museum Library. This photograph, taken very late in her career, shows *Essex* belching smoke, with all vestiges of sail power gone. The original three masts have been replaced by two tall pole masts that support radio antenna only.

Until next time...

John Cheevers

Addendum

The following unsolicited editorial on Mystery Photo, *Logbook* No. 147, proves that Bill Altice is truely the master. I would like to thank him for submitting such a carefully researched and thought provoking treatise on last month's photograph. This letter arrived, via fax, after several day's wait, too late for inclusion in the regular column. What follows is the text, in its entirety, of the letter for all to enjoy:

Dear John,
I was surprised to learn during our phone conversation the other evening that the know-it-alls in the HRSMS came up dry on the last mystery photo. Well it is no wonder, most of the members are either transplants or closet model railroaders and know nothing of local historical facts or marine celebrities.

The photo actually shows two inventions attached to the hull of the ship pictured in the photo. The two devices are the Phloat Dry Dock Jack and the Schtoppit Gill Brake. Both Appliances are of great significance to shipping. I will explain the Phloat Dry Dock Jack later but first let me explain the Schtoppit Gill, since it is the most widely known of the two devices.

Living near the ocean and being somewhat aware of ships, you may have heard that ships have no method of curtailing forward motion. I can tell you on the very best authority that this is true. Once I came upon a small ship on display in a parking lot in Newport News. After a careful and thorough survey I have satisfied myself and all others to the fact that ships have no brakes.

Consider then, as did Mr. Schtoppit, the plight of seafarers trying to get home in heavy rush hour harbor traffic without brakes on their vessels. Imagine, if you will, how it would be if after sucessfully vying for a position in the express lane to have some SOB (ship out bound) cut you off and you have no means of stopping your ship. A potentially embarrassing episode couls ensue!

Hoping to correct this oversight on the part of ship designers, Mr. Kant Schtoppit, inventor and brother-in-law to renowned shipbuilder Willet Phloat of the influentail Phoebus Phloats, set his inventive genius to solving the problem. And solve it he did. Just as the idea for the Colt revolver came to the inventor after watching a ship's wheel turn, the idea for Mr. Schtoppit's apparatus came from an unlikely sourse also.

Trappet for hours in traffic on the bridges leading to and from the tunnels between Willoughby Spit and Warwick, Mr. Schtoppit observed that the fish swimming by would, in an emergency, deploy their gills to the full open position to prevent colliding with their fellows. It was from watching this activity that the idea for the Kant Schtoppit Gill Brake sprang. When a ship needed to stop, the Gill was simply opened like a door using the complicated system of pulleys and ropes seen in the photo. The larger the ship, the larger the Gill had to be. However the drag created was always enough to cause a ship to stop. The rest is histroy and I need not burden you with failure of the Schtoppit Gill due to the lack of favorable political connections or the unfounded rumers started by a jealous, rival ship yard.

The other item mentioned earlier, the Phloat Dry Dock Jack, is the hallmark of the many inventions born on the ways of the Phloat ship yard. The Phloat Dry Dock Jack is the fin like projection attached to the hull at the turn of the bilge and seen in the photo at the edge of the platform.

The purpose of the Phloat Jacks is simple, it is to prevent a ship in dry dock from tipping over and falling off of the graving blocks. The Phloat Jacks keep the ship balanced in an upright position while repairs are being made and since the tipping action cannot occur, discouraging dialogue and finger pointing from supervisors of the ship yard is not necessary.

It is also said of the Phloat Jack that a steadying effect is provided and the roll of a ship is slowed when running in a sea. I believe any such limiting action would be minimal and I for one tend to discount any such claims to the contrary.

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So, there you have it. The mystery photo is solved and the rumers about the Phloat Jack and the Schtoppit Gill are dispelled as well. I believe, and I am sure you agree, that Tidewater, Virginia and particularly the fine folks of Phoebus can be justly proud of these two outstanding inventors.

In a later installment I will report on the ship in the photo which, interestingly enough, is one of the Willet Phloat ships, the *Ima T. Square*.
She is named for a well endowed lady of impeccable background and a close relative of the squares of Back Bay Poquoson (pronounced poke-a-son by natives).
The "Big Ima", as she was called, served for many years in the lucrative sand trade between Kynnhaven and Virginia Beach and many interesting stories can be told of her exploits.

Jerking your chain has been more fun than watching glue dry, but I am done. I am off on an exploratory mission to my wife's sewing box. I need some thread to string my latest model.

Bill Altice

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 20 16 hours.
Guests: None
Corrections To The Minutes: None
Treasurer's Report: None (The Purser dutifully forwarded the report to the Clerk. The Clerk, in his haste to get to the meeting, left his briefcase sitting on the dock.)
Old Business: None
New Business:
Joe McCleary said the NRG-Mariners Museum Symposium is scheduled for April 23-25, 1999. There will be a reception on Friday and 1 ¾ days of tech sessions with small group activities. Notices will be sent at the end of the year. Graham Horne said that he availed himself of the NRG's ship model review service while at the Mid-Atlantic Maritime Festival and was quite pleased with the service. Graham then showed some wood inlay strips he procured at Woodcrafters. Joe McCleary suggested to Graham that he do some research on his old "duckers " for the next NRG essay contest. Joe then informed the members that Len Wine was returning to the area. The members discussed the HRSMS homepage. (The address can be found under the Logbook logo.) Tom Saunders asked that the membership consider a subscription rate for the Logbook. Joe McCleary made a motion for a subscription rate of $6.00 per year. After some discussion as to costs, Graham Horne asked that the rate be amended to $8.00. The amended motion was second by Henry Schekulin and passed by a show of hands. Henry Schekulin gave a report on his recent trip to Germany. Alan Frazer noted there is an exhibit of E. Armitage McCan's works at the USNA Museum.
Show & Tell:
Nick Rumsey showed his Blue Jacket model of the tug *Lackawanna* and described the tribulations of painting with an air brush. Graham Horne showed his homebuilt inverted router table. Joe McCleary presented an assortment of catalogs and magazines for the members perusal.

The meeting was adjourned at 2150 hours.

Web Notes

The web site is now accessible through a number of web search engines and individual sites. Now that the word is out, the number of hits is climbing fast. We had 6 hits for all of September and 294 in October. Two local people have inquired about the club and we may see them at a meeting soon. The main reasons for the growth are the links added to www.hamptonroads.com, www.hamptonroads.digitalcity.com, and www.greaterhamptonroads.com. These sites are the best way for locals to find us. Also, they are tied into a network of other sites, automatically increasing the number of ways people can find us. Some of the 300 hits we've had are certainly the result of automatic searches run by computers, but there are plenty of individuals out there watching, and we've already heard from two! I'm hoping that trend will continue.

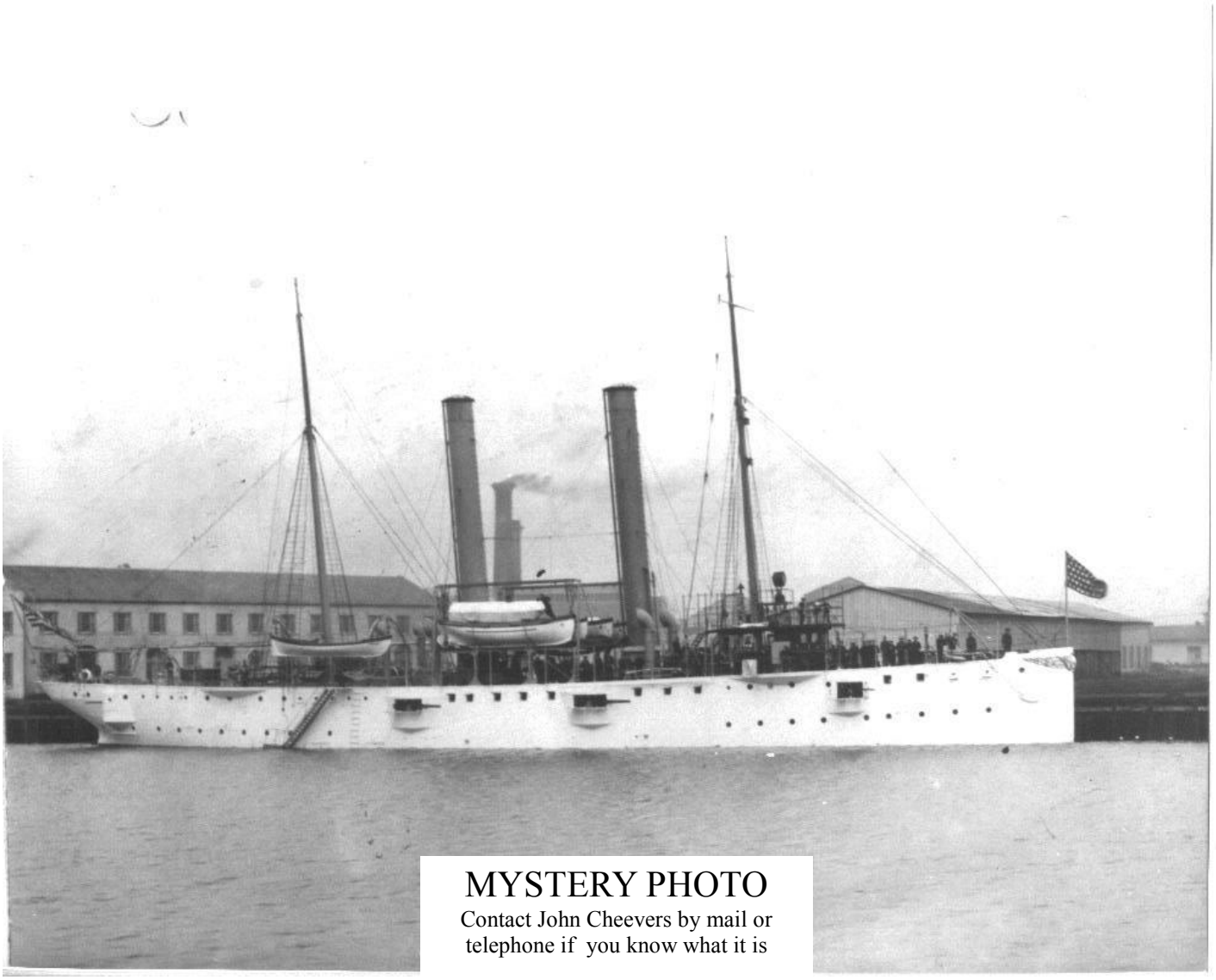
Again, if you have any photos, tips, etc. you'd like to contribute, we have plenty of space (computer memory) left on our site.

Cheers,

Greg Harrington

News from Other Clubs:

Rocky Mountain Shipwrights report their membership has grown to 46 members.



MYSTERY PHOTO

Contact John Cheevers by mail or telephone if you know what it is

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U.S.S. Newark, boat drill in Hampton Roads
Hart, Edward H., photographer.
CREATED/PUBLISHED
[between 1891 and 1901

From American Memories Collection
Library of Congress

NOTABLE EVENTS

NOVEMBER
13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Heinz Schiller

DECEMBER
11 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Jack Bobbitt

JANUARY
8 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

FEBRUARY
12 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

MARCH
12 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

APRIL
9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

MAY
14 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Bill Clarke

JUNE
11 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

JULY
9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

AUGUST
13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Williamsburg AARP (Hinrichs, McCleary, Sanderson)

SEPTEMBER
10 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host Dean Sword

OCTOBER
9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

Thanks

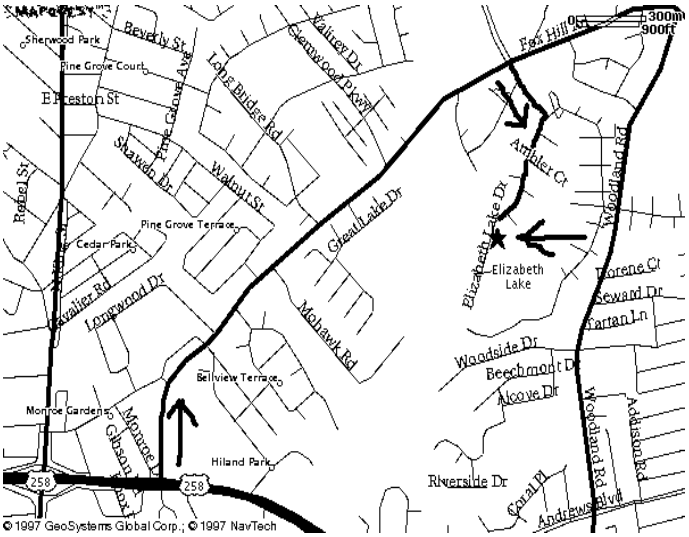
The members would like to thank Graham Horne and his wife Moria for hosting the October meeting.

WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL

Skipper:	Alan Frazer	(757) 865-7300
1st Mate:	Joe McCleary	(757) 253-1802
Purser:	Bob Comet	(757) 934-1279
Clerk:	Tom Saunders	(757) 850-0580
Historian:	Jim McCurdy	(757) 482-2846
Editors:	John Cheevers	(757) 591-8955
	Bill Clarke	(757) 868-6809
	Tom Saunders	(757)-850-0580

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by Heinz Schiller, 337 Green Springs Court, Hampton,Va. on November 14 at 2000 hours. Please call if you are attending, (757) 851-7387. From I64 take Mercury Blvd. north (2.9 mi.) to Fox Hill Road, turn left on Fox Hill Rd. Follow Fox Hill (1.4 mi.) to the far end of Willow Oaks Shopping Center. Turn right on Bromley Dr. and right again on Elizabeth Lake Drive. Green Springs Court is the 5th cul-de-sac on the left.



EDITORS NOTE

The editors encourage participation in the Logbook by the membership. Articles, tips, sources, plans, photos and news are welcome. Submissions should be received 15 days prior to the next meeting. Items may submitted by mail to:

Thomas E. Saunders
11 Eldorado Ct.
Hampton, Va. 23669
E-mail: t.e.saunders@worldnet.att.net
FAX (prior arrangements required)