

## FROM THE PILOTHOUSE



### Catching Up

After being away twice, for a cumulative 36 of the past 60 days, I still have not caught up with the accumulated mail, organizing of photos, and other things that demand to be done. Not complaining; the pleasures of Europe and family were worth the ensuing pain! But I have not had much time to think about ship modeling or HRSMS, so this will be shorter than what I had intended.

First, congratulations to Jack Bobbitt are in order, for his cover and article on *Metunga* of Hampton in the current issue of *Seaways' Ships in Scale*. The cover photo looks great, even though *Metunga's* tail had to be cropped. I have yet to read it all, but the opening pages include some fine points of deadrise construction, very clearly expressed. My only minor disagreement is that it is not that hard to carve a deadrise hull from a solid or glued-up block; I've done them both ways for The Mariners' Museum, and the carving was far faster and simpler than the built-up version. But there was also less fun and satisfaction in the doing.

Second, thanks to Scottie Dayton for her kind comments, in the same issue of *SIS*, concerning my essay on dimensional tolerances that occupied this column in the April *Logbook*. And also for prominent mention and listing of the club's Web site.

Finally, I believe I have not formally thanked Greg Harrington for his production and maintenance of the site. So consider it done.

—Alan Frazer

## SEPTEMBER PRESENTATION

The September presentation will be  
"Maritime Art"

Speaker: Dick Moore

## Mystery Photo



Welcome to Mystery Photo, *Logbook* No. 158! I'm quite intrigued by all the current interest with ships and shipping in Scandinavia. In last month's *Logbook*, we were treated to an excellent article highlighting one club member's recent sight-seeing tour--Alan Frazer recounted the nautical portion of the ferry and rail excursion He and Jane enjoyed from Flensburg, Germany to Stockholm, Sweden. Coincident with this trip, I read a captivating article about Sweden's Gota Canal Steamship Company published in the current issue of *Steamboat Bill*, No. 228, Pg. 257-286. Now, with the current Mystery Photo I spy one of the absolute best photographic reproductions ever to appear in the *Logbook*. OK, you ask; where is Cheevers going with all of this? Well, I assure you; as the story behind this Mystery Photo unfolds, you will see a Scandinavian tie-in.

This mystery photo shows a young naval officer at the wheel of his first command. Recently declassified, the photo comes from the file of one Joseph R. McCleary, Capt. USN. The other sailor, assigned the very demanding and dangerous duty of steadying the mast, might be Bob Comet. Judging from the white-knuckle grip he has on the mast; I wonder: "Can he say, Shanghai?" Those of you who know Joe well, know that he served in probably the most safety conscious branch of the Navy. Nowhere is this more evident than in this Mystery Photograph where we see that young officer McCleary has installed the latest in safety devices. Joe, I have two questions, "How does the boat continue to hang from the falls after you submerge, and how do you deploy it from the bottom of the lake?" Don't say, "There is only one way."

Actually, Bill presents quite an interesting mystery photo that seems to date from some time in the late 19th century. We see a small, cigar shaped steam powered vessel with a retractable funnel. Other unusual features include the life boat and davits, the mast with two stays and three guys, the external, unsheltered steering station, two barrel-like structures on the deck, and a length of chain that disappears forward into the water. One of the lapped shell seams is evident by the shadow line that runs the length of the hull. This eclectic group of unique and interesting features is enough to help muddy any attempt at identification. The blurred flag flying from the truck doesn't help much, but what about the script Bill has

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attempted to hide? The sailors' uniforms complete with neckerchief appear to be foreign, possibly German, but could date from the post Civil War US Navy.

The identification of this vessel proved to be harder than usual and took us through several ship types. Bob Comet was the first to respond, identifying our vessel as the Confederate States Navy (CSN) torpedo boat *David*. He writes: "The photo shows her with what I believe is the second Confederate flag (White flag with the stars and bars in the corner field.) Fitted with tanks like those of a submarine, they were used to lower the vessel's profile so that only about 10-feet of the hull's length showed." Bob continues with a narrative of *David's* war service that, in the interest of space, I'll not repeat here. The Confederates constructed some sixteen *David*-like vessels resembling submarines in appearance and operation. They called them spar torpedo boats (STB). STBs operated by carrying a torpedo (mine) at the end of a long spar attached to the bow that exploded upon contact with the enemy vessel's hull. The danger in this device was obvious in that the attacker usually suffered from the effects of the blast, too. They would have been more correct had they referred to them as semi-submersibles.

There is a remarkable resemblance between our vessel and these Confederate ships. A photograph of *David* in Edward Horton's *The Illustrated History of the Submarine*, Pg. 24-25, shows her lying in the mud of Charleston harbor, revealing her wooden construction and a differing arrangement from our mystery ship.

Len Wine responded and said that he had no idea what this vessel was but, like Bob, thought that we were looking at a spar torpedo boat. He said that while most of our mystery ship's features matched that of the Union STB *Spuyten Duyvil*, she was not our vessel. A sketch of *Spuyten Duyvil* in Paul Silverstone's *Warships of the Civil War Navies*, Pg. 19, clearly shows a steering station and small ship's boat suspended from davits, but not our vessel's sharp ends. He then suggested that Norway had STBs but that he could not suggest a name because he lacked the photographic data to make a comparison.

Finally Joe McCleary responded with a unique and colorful reference to the central character from a certain Herman Melville novel. (Joe, 4-weeks R&R may not be long enough--JFC!) After that he suggested we might be looking at a submarine from the Russian (pre Soviet) navy in the first decade of the 20th century called *Delphine*. Joe was the only person to suggest we had a submarine on our hands. Does that mean he wins this month's identification? Read on...

Most of the pioneers of submarine design and construction used the same basic cigar-shaped hull form. The differences in these early designs revolved more around their differing power plants and method of ordnance delivery. Most of the first successful designs resembled the spar torpedo boats of a

generation earlier. If anyone had suggested a link to CSN *Hunley*, they would have been more correct. From the 1870's to about 1900 men like Garrett, Nordenfelt, Peral, and Holland labored to produce the modern submarine. Their greatest difficulty was finding a suitable power plant to propel the vessel while submerged. This difficulty was finally overcome by using the electric motor and storage batteries. Between the human powered *Hunley* and the electric motor, two men built examples of submersibles that used steam as their submerged motive power. The first, a 45-foot boat called *Resurgam*, was built at Liverpool, England by a Mr. Garrett. Its engine used the principle of Lamm's fire-less locomotive in which, steam is raised in a boiler not connected with the vessel. The latent heat obtained from it is stored on board in hot water tanks, giving the engine sufficient energy to work for several hours.

Garret's idea was expanded by Nordenfelt, the gun expert, who had a boat of 60-tons displacement and 64-feet in length, built at Stockholm, Sweden in 1885. This boat was also fitted with the hot water tanks but, unlike *Resurgam*, carried the boiler. The installation of the boiler resulted in the addition of a funnel, retractable in this case, to the design. This first Nordenfelt boat was sufficiently successful to induce the Greek government to buy it in 1886.

When I first saw this photo I knew I had seen it before, although I couldn't remember where. What I remembered was that this was a submarine--one of the early experimental types with steam propulsion. I have to admit though; I got lucky. I found the same photograph published along with a schematic drawing in Macintyre and Bathe's book *Man of War a History of the Combat Vessel*, Pg. 171. This was only the second reference I looked through. The schematic plan explains the use of several of the on-deck fittings. The photo shows Nordenfelt's first submersible during trials at Landskrona, Sweden. Photo credit goes to the National Maritime Museum--The Wasa Dockyard, Sweden.

In retrospect, Bill's "picking up" the gauntlet may have been a wise move--he almost stumped us. He confided to me that he was certain one person in particular would identify the vessel, and that maybe I would get it too, but he wasn't sure. Well, I received only three responses--though none was right--but, I was lucky and able to identify, not only the vessel, but credit the photograph, too. Through no fault of his own, he managed to keep with the Scandinavian theme and pick a photograph from the same geographical area that dominated my recent reading. For the moment, I suppose we'll leave the plank in place.

John Cheevers

## SHIP'S BELLS

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At the July meeting, Skip Watson brought in a brass ship's bell that he had acquired. Skip had a good story to tell about how it had come into his possession but almost everyone had the same thought: midnight requisition. Skip brought the bell in to show the members in the hope that someone might come up with an idea as to the type of craft that might have carried the craft. The bell had a diameter around the rim of about 10 inches and stood about a foot high. Len Wine noticed a government inspector's proof mark on the boss of the bell which indicated that at least at one point it had been owned by the government. The bell was deeply engraved with the letters "US" further indicating government ownership, though the engraving was somewhat crude. A friend who served in the Army Quartermaster Corps told me that larger army vessels carried this type of bell and that they were marked with a plain "US". In Navy ships, the bell is usually engraved with the ship's name. It may surprise some people to learn that the Army owns more vessels than the Navy and more aircraft than the Air Force.

Skip's bell reminded me of some interesting facts about ship's bells that I thought might be interesting to share. Because bells are relative ancient and efficient noise making devices, they have been around since the dawn of metal making and have been carried on ships for almost as long. They were originally sounded to signal any sort of alarm, such as to call the crew to stations for battle or to act as a fire alarm, fire being the most feared threat at sea. As bugles, drums and the boat's call came to be the main means of signaling the crew to go to their stations for various evolutions, the rapid and continuous ringing of the bell became more and more reserved to signal the outbreak of fire.

The bell was also used as a time signal in a world where few people carried watches. Most ships divided the day into six watches of four hours duration and most of the crew served four hours on watch and four hours off. Watches were rotated at 12:00, 4:00 end and 8:00 (AM and PM). At the end of the first half hour of the watch, the bell would be struck once; at the end of the first hour it would be struck twice and so on until the end of the watch when it was struck eight times indicating it was time to rotate the watch. If this occurred at night, the men on duty got to go back to bed. The half hourly interval was measured by a thirty minute sand glass kept near the steering wheel and binnacle (compass box) where the officer of the watch could keep an eye on it. One of the ship's boys was responsible for keeping an eye on the glass and when the sand ran out, he was to turn it over and then run forward and strike the bell the requisite number of times. If the sand could be persuaded to run through the glass a little faster each half hour would pass more quickly and everyone could go back to bed sooner. One theory held that if the glass was slightly agitated or tapped gently, the sand would run through more quickly. This was called "flogging the glass" or

in more modern times, "flogging the clock" (i.e., wishing time would pass more quickly or starting some action before its appointed time). It was a known fact of physics by the early 19th century that when things got cold they shrank. So it was believed that the channel through which the sand flowed in a glass must shrink on a cold winter's night slowing the flow of sand and lengthening each half hour and therefore the total time of a watch. Therefore, the boy who kept an eye on the glass was frequently ordered to put it under his jacket and keep it warm so that the flow of sand would not slow down. This was known as "warming the glass" or in more modern times, "warming the bell" and had the same connotations as "flogging the clock". If there was a little larceny with the time who would tell? There were no incriminating witnesses; everyone in the watch got to go off duty a little sooner.

By tradition, the man who was assigned to polish the bell every day was the "Jack of the Dust". The formal title for this individual was the Purser's Steward. He was in charge of issuing rations from the store rooms to the crew for their daily meals. In issuing biscuit and flour from the bread room he became somewhat dusty thus earning his name. Quite why he was assigned to polish the bell remains obscure. Even today the man who issues rations in a ship is still known as the Jack of the Dust but since he is now a senior and responsible petty officer, the job of polishing the ship's bell falls to one of the junior mess cooks.

Even in modern times when bells are no longer used to signal the time of day, except for ceremonial purposes, they still have official uses. When a senior individual comes on board or departs from a warship the bell is struck to indicate the level of that person's seniority. The code is simple: one strike for each side boy that the person being honored would rate.

The ship's bell is also used for signaling in fog. If a ship is anchored in fog it is required by the Rules Of the Road For Preventing Collisions At Sea to ring its bell for about five seconds at not more than one minute intervals. If the ship is aground it is required to have the bell struck with three distinct times before and after the rapid ringing so as to not lure unsuspecting ships into shoal waters. If the ship is more than 100 meters in length, it is required to ring the bell in the fore part of the ship for five seconds once a minute and a gong for five seconds in the after part of the ship immediately after the ringing of the bell to give an indication of the size of the ship and how it tends. I was serving on a submarine at one time that was undergoing overhaul at Mare Island Naval Shipyard near San Francisco, California. Near the end of the overhaul, we took the submarine to sea for a few days for sea trials to find out what worked and what did not. In returning to port through San Francisco Bay we got stuck in fog and had to anchor. At that point it was discovered that the Navigator (not me) had decided not to bring the bell on board since the submarine was only going to be at sea for a few days (BS: he forgot it). So on this occasion a Navy vessel signaled that it was anchored in fog by the rapid ringing of a large soup

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pot for five seconds every minute.

A ship's bell can also be used for religious ceremonies. It used to be a tradition in our Navy before WW II and it still is so in the Royal Navy to baptize children born to officers or members of the crew on board their ship. On such occasions, the ship's bell is taken down from its permanent mount, and turned over to become the baptismal font. To mark the occasion, the child's name and the date of the baptism are engraved inside the inside rim of the bell where the engraving is protected from the weather and continual polishing, but is low enough down so as not to be defaced by the clapper when the bell is struck. If you happen to see an old Navy bell, check inside the rim to see if it ever was used as a baptismal font. Why this tradition has faded in our Navy is difficult to say. Some chaplains say that it is because using a ship's bell for a religious ceremony seems vaguely sacrilegious. Frankly, I think the chaplains are getting lazy.

So there are a few traditions and sea stories about the ship's bell. Anyone have any more to add?

Joe McCleary

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## MINUTES



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The meeting was called to order by the First Mate at 2011 hours. The minutes were approved as published. No guests were present

Old Business: The flier to be distributed at the 99 NRG Conference was shown by Len Wine. Several changes were discussed, but the content and format were well received. Joe McCleary said the 2000 model competition, at the Mariners Museum, will begin in June outside the Great Hall. A kiosk will hold fliers for both the NRG Conference and the HRSMS. Mementos were again discussed (again). Book bags are out. Several items (pens, writing tablets, coffee mugs) were debated. Further discussion and selection will be left to Conference Committee. Joe said all conference plans should be complete by June. Clarke said that plans should be complete by December so there would be smooth sailing through the spring and plans could be implemented. A suggestion was made, by Clarke, to have a stand-by speaker available. He suggested that they be a member of the HRSMS willing to present a topic in case there is a last minute problem with one of the scheduled presenters. A motion was made and carried, to formalize the NRG

Committee with the members consisting of Bobbitt, Cheevers, Clarke, McCleary and Wine. Tom Saunders said he made contact with the Blue Skies Gallery and that they were very receptive to work with the HRSMS as other nautical events were being held next year. He asked that Committee members to contact the gallery and see what accommodation they would make for the conference. Joe reminded the members of the auction scheduled to be held at the October meeting. He asked for a show of hands of those members who intended to participate. The show of hands indicated that there would be sufficient participation.

New Business: Len Wine had an article from the *Virginia Gazette* by a local high school girl on the "Most Important Event for the US Navy Between 1900 and 1999." The event she chose was the battle of Guadal Canal. He said that he would bring copies to the September meeting. For the discovery that a member had been very tight lipped about a tremendous source of information, a motion was made and passed to present the 1<sup>st</sup> annual "One Way Award" to John Cheevers. We were also presented a biographical sketch of "The Sliver Tongued Devil", Joe McCleary. Jack Bobbitt talked about restoration techniques used on his model of the *Elisa Simpson*. Bill Altice had a picture of his pilot schooner *Virginia*. Joe McCleary showed details of diagonal strapping on his *Pawnee*.

The meeting was adjourned.

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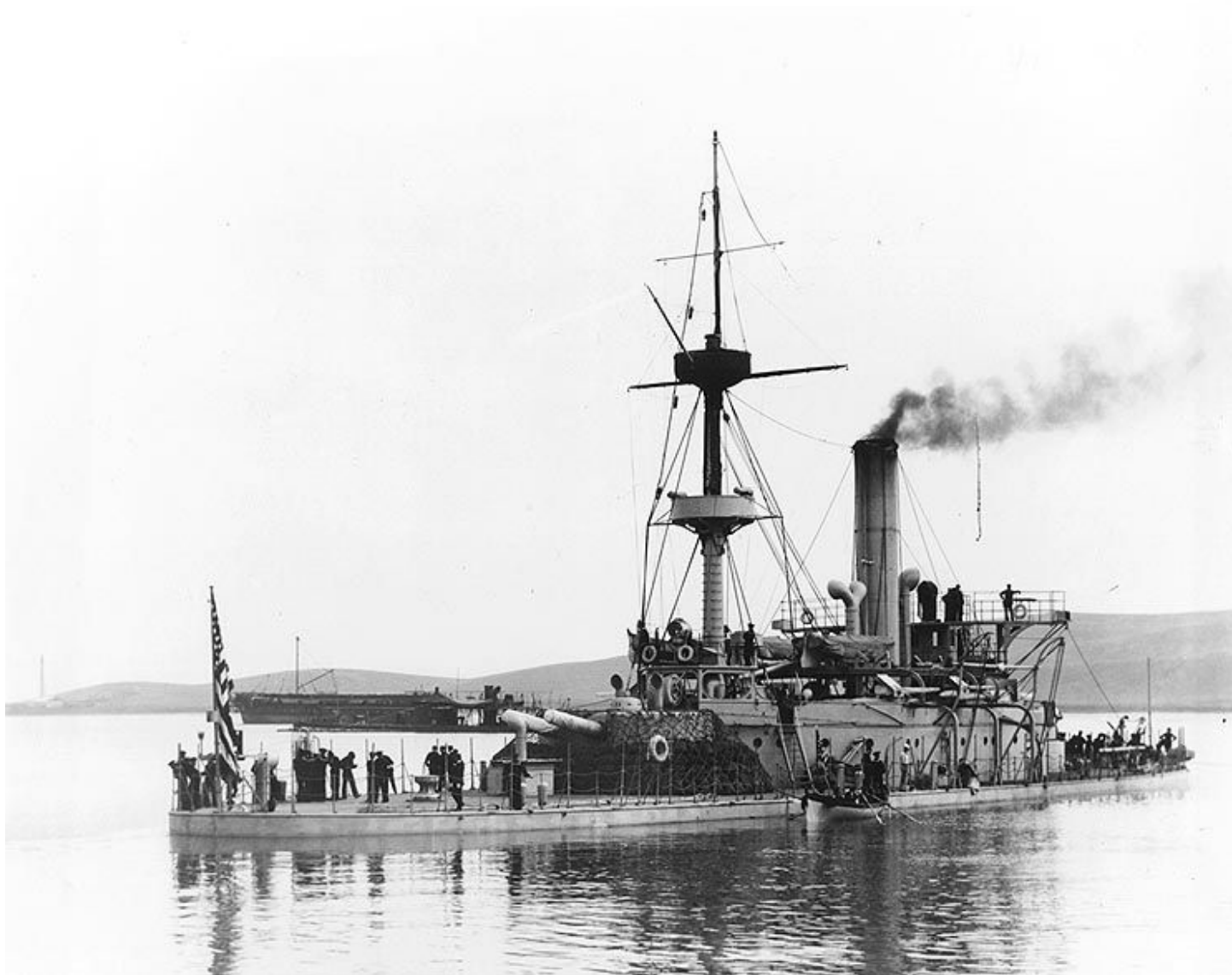
From: *Dictionary of American Fighting Ships*  
**Virginia**

The first English colony in America and one of the original 13 states. Virginia ratified the constitution on 26 June 1788 to become the 10th state to enter the Union.

(Sch.: t. 187; l. 60' on keel; b. 18'10"; dph. 8'6"; cpl. 70; a. 6 6-pdrs., 8 4-pdrs.)

The second *Virginia*-a schooner built in 1797 for the United States Revenue Cutter Service at Portsmouth Va.-was transferred to the Navy for use in the undeclared naval war against France in the early summer of 1798; and was commissioned on 25 June, Capt. Francis Bright in command

In August 1798, *Virginia* received orders to join the frigate *Constitution* off the eastern seaboard of the United States for operations against suspected French warships and merchantmen. She remained on this station until December, when she was assigned identical duty in the West Indies between St. Christopher Island and Puerto Rico as part of the squadron commanded by Commodore Thomas Truxtun. While helping to defend American interests in the Caribbean, *Virginia*, assisted by *Richmond* and *Eagle*, captured the armed French schooner *Louis* and her cargo on 26 April 1799. Despite this success, in the following June, the fragile vessel was declared unfit for further naval service and was returned to the Revenue Cutter Service.



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## NOTABLE EVENTS

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### SEPTEMBER

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

### OCTOBER

9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Ulrich Guenther

### NOVEMBER

12 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Heinz Schiller

### DECEMBER

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

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From: *DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN NAVAL FIGHTING SHIPS*, Vol. V, pp. 360-61.

#### **Portsmouth**

(Ship: t. 593; cpl. 220; a. 24 guns)

The first *Portsmouth* was a small warship built for the new United States Navy in 1798 by James K. Hackett, Portsmouth, N.H., with funds contributed by the citizens of Portsmouth. Commanded by Capt. Daniel McNeil, *Portsmouth* operated in the West Indies during the Naval War with France in the squadron commanded by Commodore John Barry.

In 1800, she sailed to France to bring back the United States envoys who had concluded peace negotiations with France. After a second cruise in the Caribbean, *Portsmouth* was sold at Baltimore in 1801.

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**Dead Wood** in shipbuilding. Blocks of timber laid on the ship's keel. This is no part of the ship, but it serves to make the keel more rigid.

THE DICTIONARY OF PHRASE AND FABLE  
BY E. COBHAM BREWER

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## Thanks

The members would like to thank the Willamsburg AARP for hosting the August meeting.

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## WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL



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Skipper:	Alan Frazer	(757) 865-7300
1 <sup>st</sup> Mate:	Joe McCleary	(757) 253-1802
Purser:	Bob Comet	(757) 934-1279
Clerk:	Tom Saunders	(757) 850-0580
Historian:	Len Wine	(757) 566-8597
Editors:	John Cheevers	(757) 591-8955
	Bill Clarke	(757) 868-6809
	Tom Saunders	(757)-850-0580

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## Next Meeting

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The next meeting will be hosted by Dean Sword on September 10, 1999 at 2000 hours.

2 Lynn Dr.  
Portsmouth, Virginia  
Telephone (757) 399-5415

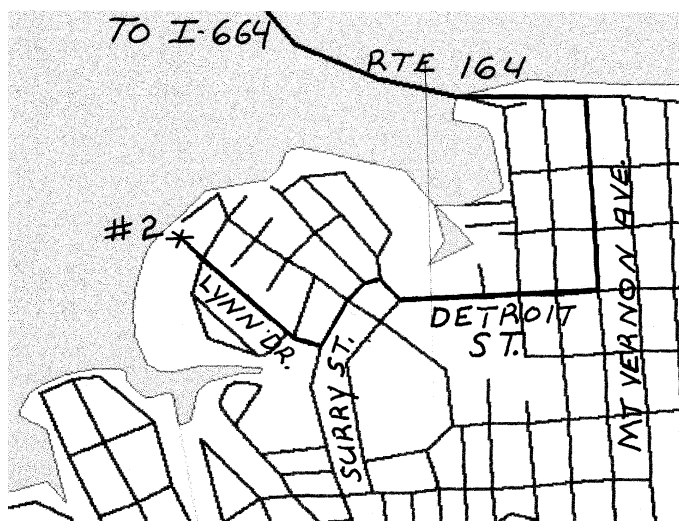
From north:

I-64 to I-664 south. Cross the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge and take Exit marked Portsmouth Rte 164. Follow Rte 164 to the end (this is an interstate highway type road and after you cross the bridge over the Elizabeth River you are suddenly on a residential type street). At the first stop light turn right (Mt. Vernon Ave.) and proceed to the next stop light (Detroit St.) and turn right. See map below for the rest.

From south:

This greatly depends on from whence you come and I suggest that you call for directions. 399-5415

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**Flotsam and Jetson** Waifs found in the sea or on the shore. "Flotsam," goods found *floating* on the sea after a wreck. "Jetson," or Jetsam, things thrown out of a ship to lighten it. (Anglo-Saxon, *flotan*, to float; French, *jeter*, to throw out.)

THE DICTIONARY OF PHRASE AND FABLE  
BY E. COBHAM BREWER

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