

## FROM THE PILOTHOUSE



### A Marryat Review

At a somewhat advanced age, I have finally been introduced, by a gift this year, to the novels of Frederick Marryat. As a long-ago fan of C.S. Forester's "Horatio Hornblower" novels—some of which I read as serials in the old *Saturday Evening Post*, whose downfall may have begun with publication of Hornblower's adultery—I don't know how Marryat evaded me for so long, but he was only a name until recent days when I read *Percival Keene*. Marryat and his fictional protagonists, including Keene, were officers of Britain's Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars, and thus contemporaries of Hornblower. They are worthy of equal attention.

Quite unlike Hornblower, Keene rarely felt any self-doubt. His mother was the comely daughter of the steward of a noble estate, and a frequent visitor and companion to the elderly spinster sister of the late Lord; his father a member of Parliament, captain of a frigate, and the second son of the late Lord. Percival's illegitimacy was avoided by an arranged marriage of his mother to Benjamin Keene, a handsome but dullard private in the Royal Marines and Captain Delmar's valet. Percival, of course, is long unaware of which is his true father.

From these roots, Marryat spins a complex and fast-moving yarn that carries us through about twenty-five years of Percival's life. The interest to naval buffs and modelers begins when he becomes, at about age 13, a midshipman in his unacknowledged father's ship. I'll not give away more of the plot (for those who have not read the book), beyond that thus begins a naval career involving travel—through parts of the world where Hornblower was sailing in the same era—combat, cleverness, deviousness, responsibility (master of a prize), piracy, dueling, captivity, suspense, shipwreck, conspiracy, coincidence, kindness, toughness, humor, impressment, escape, friendship, rescue, advancement (acting lieutenant and first formal command around eighteen; post-captain and command of a frigate a few years later) and love. In short, an absorbing tale, made the better by the fact that the author wrote, at least in part, from personal experience and knowledge.

Marryat's influence is apparent in both the Hornblower series

and the more recent works of Patrick O'Brian, but he omits the intricate naval detail of Forester and is yet farther from the insightful and fascinating digressions furnished by O'Brian. Perhaps Captain Marryat's readers, much closer in period to the actual experience, were presumed to know many of these facts and practices, or to have acquaintances who might explain them. In any event, Marryat uses naval terminology without explanation. For the novice naval buff or modeler, who has yet to develop such knowledge, the editors of this new edition add brief definitions of these terms, along with other archaic English, as footnotes. The series editor, and author of the foreword, is Dean King, author of *A Sea of Words: A Lexicon and Companion for Patrick O'Brian's Seafaring Tales*. Two earlier Marryat sea novels, *Peter Simple* and *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, have been published earlier in the new Heart of Oak Sea Classics series.

Frederick Marryat, *Percival Keene* (first published 1842). New York, Henry Holt and Company (Heart of Oak Sea Classics, An Owl Book), 1999. Paper, 342 pages.

—Alan Frazer

## NOTICE

The auction scheduled for the October meeting has been postpone until the December meeting.

Please contact Tom Saunders so he can compile a list of donated items for publication in following issues of the Logbook.

## SEPTEMBER PRESENTATION

The members who were not in attendance at the September meeting, missed an informative and entertaining presentation on "Maritime Art," by Dick Moore. His slide show demonstrated some of his approach for developing the composition of a painting He also talked about some of his techniques for applying watercolors and acrylics.

# Mystery Photo



Welcome to Mystery Photo, *Logbook* No. 159! In this edition, Bill once again challenges our nautical memory with another selection from the early Steel Navy--this time a monitor, our second! Clear, calm weather close-up photographs capturing our nautical history are a joy to behold and an excellent source of information for the model maker. Good photographs like these usually inspire the serious model maker to render in three-dimensional form that captured by the camera's lens. As proof, I offer the model of the gunboat *Nashville*, recently begun by Bob Comet and inspired by an earlier mystery photograph. Perhaps someone will bring the beginnings of this vessel to some future meeting.

I'd like to say that this was a slow month for responses, but I can't because it was worse than slow. The response was positively dismal and I think that's a shame. This should have been an easy nut to crack. If Joe was in town and played, I'd even give him better than even odds of getting it right. Ultimately, it took two weeks to receive the first and only guess. It arrived in two parts, from a slightly winded author seeking extra credit--I'll explain this later. He was successful in identifying the Mystery Photo. To his credit and Clarke's discredit he found another published photo.

For everyone else, let's see what clues the photograph contains. For starters, it's quite clear that this is a vessel of the US Navy--she flies the Stars and Stripes from the staff. What may be more obvious is that she is a monitor. Her design is straight-forward with one deck mounted twin turret at each end of a central superstructure block. A tall military mast with two fighting tops, a single tall stack, and wide bridge wings atop the chart house completes the arrangement. The central superstructure deck provides a platform for the secondary armament half shielded behind tall bulwarks. She carries the typical turn-of-the-century design elements, fittings, and gear of the US Navy, including elevated boat skids. The lack of decent freeboard would make for a very wet ride in any amount of sea. As seen here in protected water, she may be quite comfortable. After stating this, notice the large caliber gun barrels covered in protective wrapping. Also, the turret itself has a netting of some sort stretched around it. It is possible that the wrapped barrels and the netting securing deck cargo r bagged coal indicate an immanent, long sea voyage!

What does our lone respondent have to say? Bob Comet sent two letters trying to identify the mystery vessel. His first letter arrived, via E-mail on Tuesday, September 21 at 5:39 PM, and its tone suggested that Bob was out of breath from trying to beat my deadline. His first guess was the monitor *Monterey*, obviously a good guess when you look at a photograph of her on page 63 of Paul Silverstone's book *U. S. Warships of World War I*. Bob allowed that he remembered hearing that *Monterey* sailed to the Philippines. (*Bob, was that*

*a first hand report?*) His second letter, received at 10:06 PM, asked me to relay his first message. The vessel, he said, is the *Monadnock* that indeed went to the Philippines. Bob found the identical photograph, ID#: NH 70502, on the US Navy History web site. The photo, taken off the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, in June 1898, shows the ship as she prepares for departure on her voyage to the Philippines. A second photograph, ID#: NH 60659, on the same web site shows *Monadnock* at sea between San Francisco, California, and Manila, Philippine Islands, sometime during June-August, 1898. It's worth a look to see first hand the ride this vessel gave in the open ocean--three-quarters of the deck is awash! (*I'll have a copy of both photos at the next meeting.*)

Bob also identified a second monitor, just visible in the background behind the after turret, as *Camanche* and asked for extra credit for this identification. *Camanche* is one of the *Passaic*-class monitors built during the Civil War. Its history is unique and worth telling. One would wonder how a Civil War era monitor ended its days in sunny(?) California. *Camanche*, built in Jersey City, New Jersey, by Donohue, Ryan, and Secor, was disassembled and shipped to San Francisco, California on board *S.S. Aquila*. She subsequently sank with her cargo at pierside in November, 1863. The monitor's sections were salvaged and reassembled, and *Camanche* launched in November, 1864. She remained on the west coast until sold in 1899.

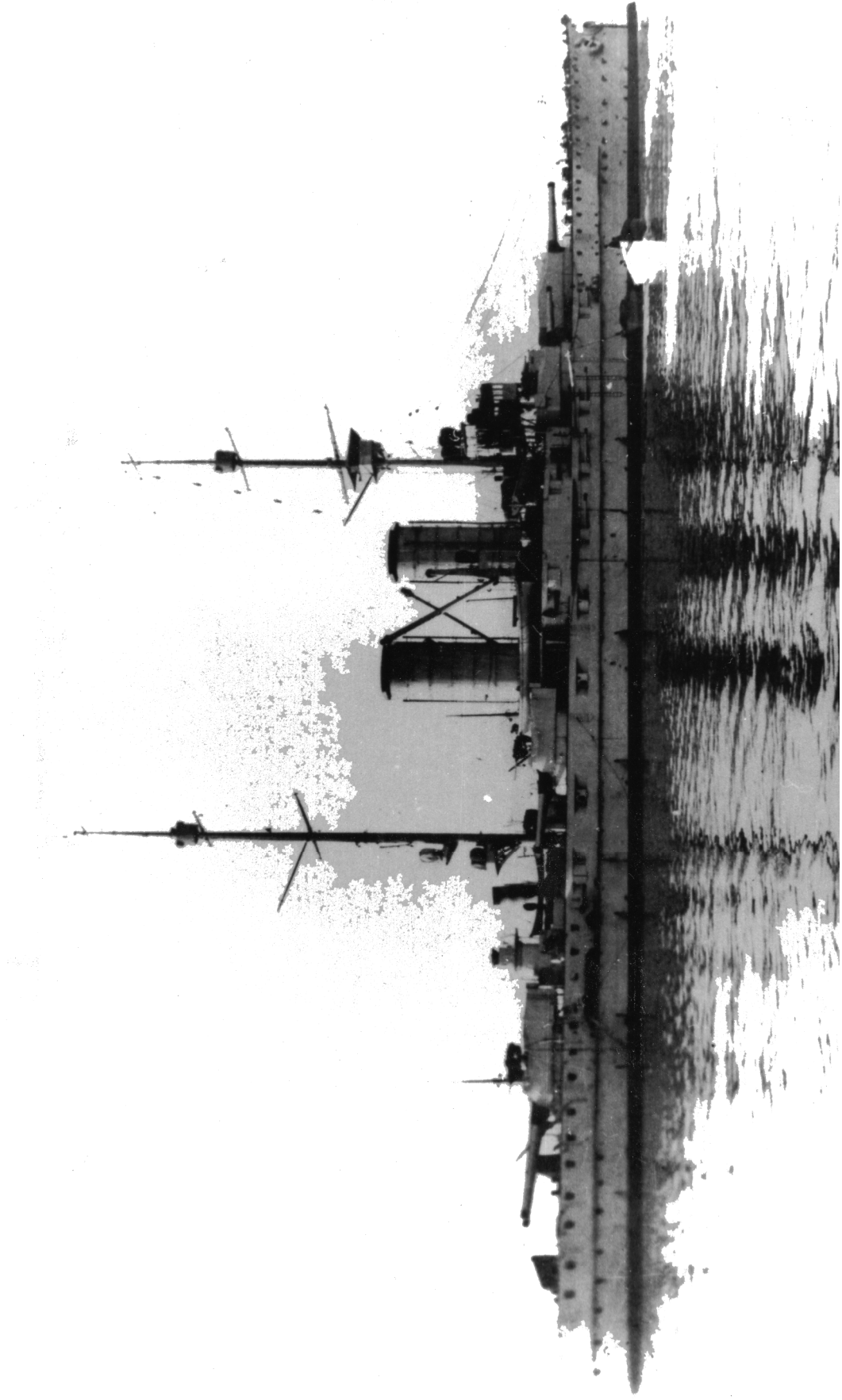
*Monadnock* is one of four loosely grouped sisters of the *Amphitrite*-class that along with the *Puritan* have a convoluted history. They exist only through the slight-of-hand employed to insure their construction. Following the Civil War, Congress would not appropriate funds for new construction. Congress would, however, pay to have existing ships repaired. In 1874-75, Congress appropriated money to repair the rotting hulls of five old monitors, one bearing the same name as our monitor. Construction started immediately but twenty years would elapse before these ships were "repaired" and placed into service. The new hulls were built of iron but each carried a hodgepodge of machinery, armor, and equipment. When finished, only the names remained of the original ships. The protracted construction period insured the Navy a force of five hopelessly obsolete monitors. Shortly after their (re?)commissioning, they proved their unsuitability by use during the Spanish American War. Except for the cross-Pacific voyage of *Monadnock* and *Monterey*, their careers were uneventful. They were primarily used for training. During World War I they proved to be ideal submarine tenders due to their low freeboard. All were sold out of service in the early 1920's.

This month the column is about grades. For starters, I failed to note that this vessel's stern is aimed at the camera. For three weeks I thought the vessel pointed her bow to the camera. I caught my mistake during my proofread, which caused considerable rewriting. For this I get an "F"! We'll give Bill an "A" for selecting such a good photograph and a "D" for picking one so easy to identify. His final score, "B-"! Bob

(Continued on page 4)

# MYSTERY PHOTO

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



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## NOTABLE EVENTS

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### 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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## MINUTES



September 10, 1999

Host: Dean Sword

The Meeting was called to order by the Skipper at 20:24 hours.

### Corrections and Cannonballs:

There were no corrections to the minutes. There were several blue-pencil shots fired across the bow of the log book editor (s) concerning various literary gaffes that will not be enumerated. One guest (J. J. Reed) was present this was his first meeting and he expressed an interest in becoming a member. Bob Comet sent a purser's report.

Old Business: Len Wine Talked about the winning essay of the Navy League's "Samuel Eliot Morison Essay Contest," *The Naval Battle of Guadacanal [sic] November 13-15, 1942*, by Whitney Blake Price of Maury High School, Norfolk Virginia. He was very complimentary of this essay by a local writer. The essay may be viewed at the Internet address:

[http://www.navyleague.org/youth/price\\_essay.htm](http://www.navyleague.org/youth/price_essay.htm).

Bill Clarke reiterated the need for a back-up speaker for the 2000 NRG Conference. He also said that he would get with Tom Saunders and contact the Blue Skies Gallery about participation in the conference.

New Business: None.

The business meeting was adjourned. Following the meeting there was a presentation on Maritime Art by Dick Moore.

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*(Continued from page 2)*

gets an "A" for responding, a "D" for mis-identifying the vessel at first, an "A" for getting it right in his make-up message, and "Extra Credit" for noticing the second monitor and identifying it. His final score, "B+!" Yes, Bob, you got the extra credit. Good job and good night!

John Cheevers

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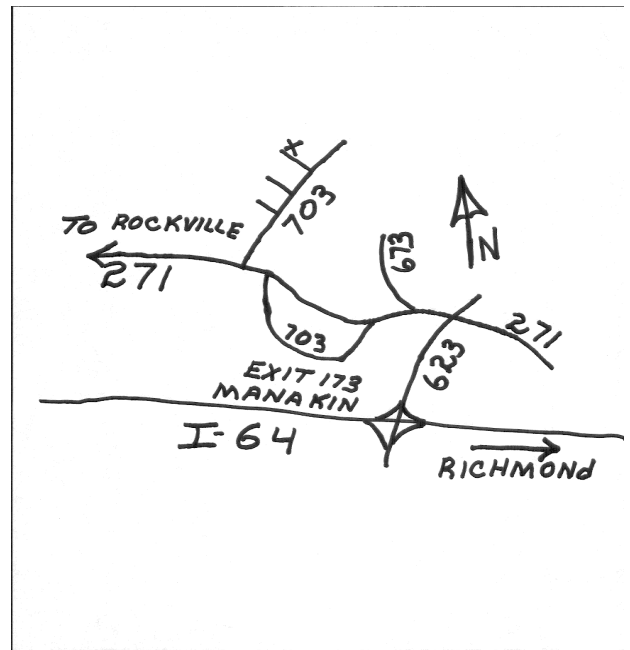
## Next Meeting

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The next meeting will be hosted by Graham Horne on October 8, 1999 at 2000 hours. The meeting will be held at 12188 Loblolly Lane, Rockville Va. Please call if you will be attending (804) 749-4719.

Take I-64 west past Richmond to the Manakin exit. Proceed north on Rte.623 to Rte. 271. Turn left on Rte. 271 to Rte. 703. Turn right on Rte. 703 to Loblolly Lane. Loblolly Lane is on the left.

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## Thanks

The members would like to thank Dean Sword for hosting the September meeting.

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## WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL



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