

## From The Bridge



## Mystery Photo



July 4<sup>th</sup> marked 239 years since the United States declared it's independence from Great Britain, our country has overcome many obstacles to get where it is in the world today. We have fought several wars since then, and in those wars our Navy has produced many famous ships. Many of us model these ships because we may like its looks, or we had a family member or friend serve aboard it, or possibly because it was a great ship. Whatever the reason, I encourage you to choose the ship of your liking and build a model of it, but never forget the crew that served and fought to make your ship model famous.

As always I look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting, don't forget to bring your current project to show-n-tell.

Best Regards,  
Tim

**Presenters Needed**  
Program presenters are needed for 2015  
Contact Tony Clayton  
if you are willing to give a presentation.

## MEETING NOTICE

**Date:** Saturday July 11, 2015  
**Place:** Mariners' Museum  
**Time:** 1000 Hours

## Hampton Roads Ship Model Society Picnic

**Saturday September 12, 2014**  
**Newport News Park**

Mystery Photo #348: Change. Somehow, somewhere, sometime in your life you will be confronted with change. You have to accept change. You don't have to like it, you don't have to agree with it, but you have to finally learn to accept it. It's inevitable, it's how we move forward. It's funny, ironic really, but hindsight usually proves that the things that we seem the most resistant to accept as change are usually the things that we accept without question further on down the road. And that's one of the things that scares the heck out of me when I see some of the change that's happening.

This Mystery Photo could be regarded as change. And those of you who identified the vessel know what I mean, although you may not grasp the full meaning of what I mean. Do you know what I mean? I know what I mean....read on, you'll see what I mean.

The vessel travels from right to left this month. The rate of advance is minimal, the engine telegraph must be set to "dead slow". The waves show some evidence that either a turn to port has begun or, maybe, it's just ending. Very little if any smoke is visible coming from the stacks. An awning is rigged on the forecastle and it features two unique cutouts: one for the foremast and the other for the fore deck gun. The gun is interesting in that it sits on a raised platform. If the vessel carries other armament it is obscured by the quality of the image as well as the clutter. But armament provides the clue that we are searching for a naval vessel.

The hull features a straight vertical stem, a high fore-castle whose slab sides rise vertically from a prominent knuckle. The knuckle dies out fore and aft just after the first stack. The fore-castle deck continues aft to about the 3/5ths length. Her anchors and hawser castings sit very low at the bow and that offers another clue. A lot of boats and floats crowd the center mass of the superstructure. Ventilators, deck houses, masts, and cranes fill in the rest. On the stern, two white cylinders lie on their sides. I'm sure that once we identify the vessel, we'll understand their use.

When I look at the image I get sense that a stab at about 1920 would be a good time to place the vessel. Call it gut, call it experience; call it the vibe that the ship gives off. But I'm going to use that as my drop off point to begin my search. The ship is definitely naval, as I previously stated, but she is not a warship in the sense that you would classify her as a battleship

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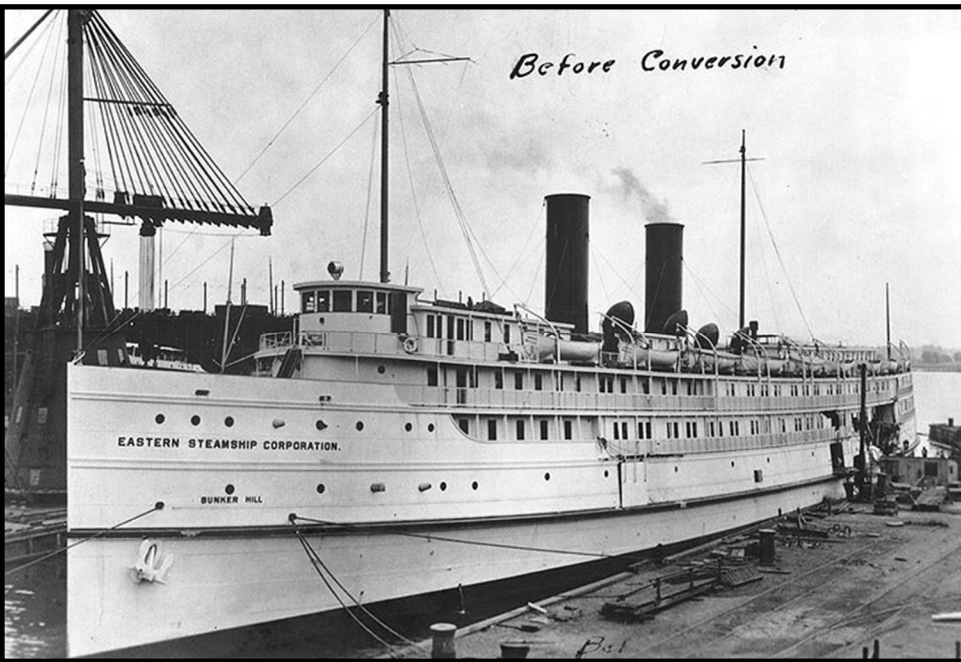
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or a cruiser. Her role lies more to the service side of the equation, what the US Navy calls the “Auxiliaries.” When you look at contemporary naval auxiliaries from around this time frame you quickly conclude that she is different than the rest of the pack. She’s the same in the sense that she has a bow and a stern, and some smoke stacks, and masts and all, but she is different. That sets her apart, and that suggests conversion (change) and a role in a prior configuration.

Google image was just too easy—read: change is easy! Just dragging and dropping the image into their search engine instantly produced the correct result. To see if it could be identified in another way, I took the hunch from the previous paragraph and I made a review of my 1931 Jane’s Fighting Ships. Under the section reserved for the US Navy there are profile sketches of the major ships of the fleet. And there I found a nice profile sketch of a vessel that matched our MP. It was the same result that Google image produced. With an “ID” in hand I quickly discovered that change was in the wind with this MP.

Prior to the Eisenhower Administration People traveled largely by train and boat. Aircraft and automobile travel was in its infancy at the time but would explode under his leadership. But that’s not what we’re here to discuss. In the first half of the



**Photo # NH66052 SS Bunker Hill**

**Nautical Term**  
Flemish (1) A general descriptive word relating to gear and procedures emanating from The Netherlands and Belgium, whence came many that were adopted by the British. (2) A short name for a Flemish coil, a flat ornamental coil of line;



Mystery Photo

20th century the majority of the population of the United States lived on the coasts or very near free bodies of water, and water-borne travel was commonplace. It was nothing for people to travel up and down the East Coast via passenger steamers and many steamship companies supported that need. A common pastime was to go down to the wharf or dock to see the steamboat land. One such company, The Eastern Steamship Company, competed for passenger traffic along with the rest.

The company was formed in 1901 when “Charles Wyman Morse merged together the Boston & Bangor Steamship Company, the Portland Steam Packet Company, the International Steamship Company, and several local lines on the Maine coast to form the Eastern Steamship Company.” Enjoying success in the trade the company contracted with the shipbuilder William Cramp and Sons Shipyard, Philadelphia, PA, around 1904, to build a pair of steamers to be named SS Massachusetts and SS Bunker Hill. They were both launched and completed in 1907.

All was not well in the business though. “Because of the financial dealings of Mr. Morse, and the competition Eastern gave the Fall River Line which was owned by the New Haven Railroad and backed by JP Morgan, a “bankers war” ensued between the two empire builders. Morse was eventually indicted in 1907 for conspiracy and the New Haven Railroad temporarily gained a controlling interest in Eastern, increasing its strength Eastern merged in 1911 with the Metropolitan Steamship Company and the Maine Steamship Company, but was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1914.”

This change in business fortune became a pivotal event for these two vessels. While it is not in the record, I will assume that our two steamers continued working their assigned routes following the bankruptcy. At least, that is, until 1917 when worldwide change forced the US Navy to come a knockin’ at their door. “[These ships were] inspected by the Navy on 2 November 1917 for possible use as a passenger and freight-carrying steamship[s].” Ten days later they were acquired “by the Navy from the Eastern Steamship Lines, of Boston [where] Bunker Hill was renamed Aroostook [and Massachusetts was renamed Shawmut.]” They were both “commissioned at the Boston Navy Yard on 7 December 1917.” A photograph, NH

102576 shows these vessels sharing a pier at the Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston in late 1917.

The Mystery Photo is general in nature and offers nothing to help identify the vessel as either Aroostook or Shawmut. So anyone who played had a 50/50 chance of getting it right. Enter our sole odds maker for the month. “This is one of the quickest Mystery Photo IDs I’ve had in a long time. Truth be told, my certainty of ID was really close very quickly. And

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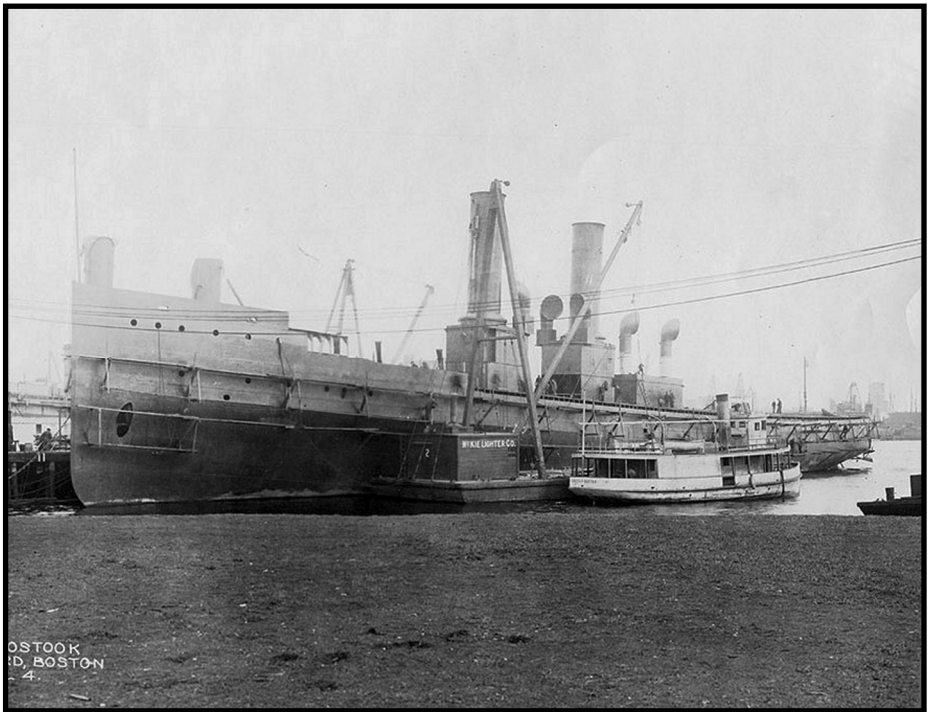


Mystery Photo

wrong. But it led to the right ID quickly anyway.” Or, so says John Wyld. He essentially backed into the identification the same way I did:

“First thing I noticed was the very high freeboard. The overall shape of the forward area and pilothouse cried out early 1900s. And as I thought about it, and saw the high transom stern immediately led me to conclude the MP was a converted ferry. I then quickly had the name OGLALA pop into my head. All of this took maybe ten seconds. After Googling USS OGLALA (which ended up sunk at Pearl Harbor, Dec 7th), I saw a couple of pictures with a single stack which gave me pause. Still, the general arrangement still looked almost perfect. Then I saw a couple of OGLALA pictures with the same two stacks and I knew I was home. Except, I couldn't match the actual MP photo. By the way, the USS OGLALA, CM-4, was a converted railroad car ferry, which explained the high transom stern - the railroad passenger cars were loaded onto the main deck over the stern. She was converted into a minelayer and was in that configuration when sunk.”

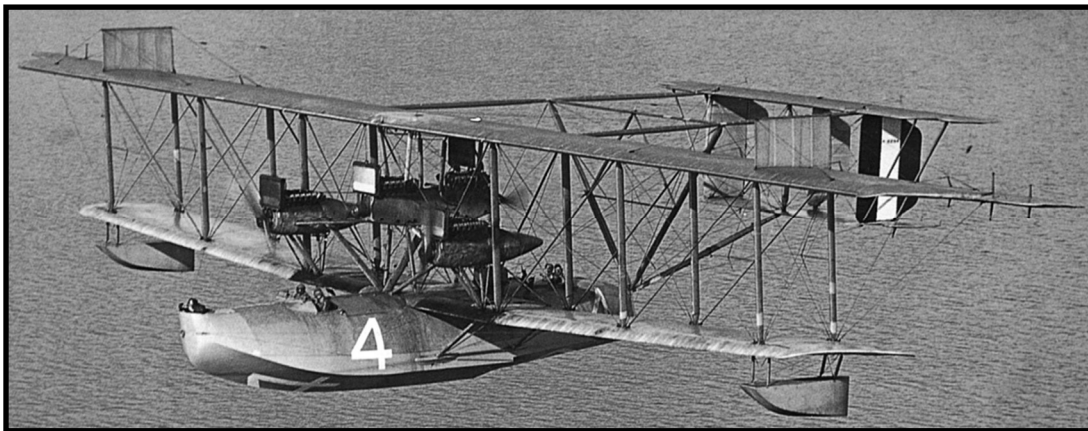
Had more people played, I imagine more would have chosen Shawmut/Oglala as the vessel in this MP only for the pedigree the vessel brings to the argument—you would choose the vessel that had the longer more colorful career. Haste makes waste, and documented photographic evidence doesn't lie....it's time to change your mind.



USS Aroostook (ID-1256) on 4 April during conversion

AROOSTOOK. The navsource.org page for her did include photograph NH99618 from the National Archives which indicated the picture was taken in 1927.”

“...the steamer BUNKER HILL, the MP ship was then bought by the Navy in 1917 to be converted into a minelayer. To put the 'dipity' into serendipity, at no point in her career was the BUNKER HILL / AROOSTOOK ever a ferry. She had a much lower freeboard as originally built.



Curtis NC-4 Flying Boat

John continues with his remarks and offers a bit of clarification and correction: “The photos of two-stacked OGLALA looked like a really good match, though there were a couple of discrepancies. I began to think it could be a sister ship. What I presumed to be that sister ship, CM-3, turned out not to be the sister ship at all, but did turn out to be the MP: USS

During her Navy career, she layed in excess of 2,000 mines in European waters in support of the Allies. After the war, while still classified as a minelayer, she achieved what was arguably her greatest fame. She had been modified to support seaplanes right after the war (since the minesweeping business had fallen on hard times presumably). In May, 1919, in that configuration, she was stationed in Trepassey Bay, Newfoundland, to support the attempted trans-Atlantic flight of the four US Navy seaplanes NC-1 through -4.

USS AROOSTOOK, CM-4, continued in service as a minelayer until withdrawn from service in 1931. After WWII began, the desperate need for shipping hulls of any kind led to the War

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Shipping Administration looking to modify her and return her to service as a cargo ship, designated AK-44 [and renamed Bunker Hill]. Alas, her bones were weary, and reactivation never occurred. She was taken behind the barn and put down in October, 1947.”



Photo # NH 19-N-24272 USS Aroostook, 18 June 1941

Put down...NEVER! John, your shovel is not long enough to dig out the really good dirt. It seems this old horse wouldn't die. "Cat" might be a better moniker as this King-of-Change seemed to have 9 lives. Back in the day—1947 will do—there was a no legal restriction forbidding gambling from vessels as long as they were outside the 3-mile limit from shore putting them in international waters. A similar law governs the cruise industry today, I just don't know if the limit line is still the same.

In 1938 a character named Anthony Cornero Stralla decided "to open a shipboard gaming operation in international waters off the Southern California coast." Better known as



called Tony Cornero, this figure who also went by the monikers "The Admiral" and "Tony the Hat", was an organized crime figure in Southern California and Las Vegas, Nevada from the 1920s through the 1950s. At the time he controlled most of the illegal activity west of the Rockies. He began his floating casino business with two converted vessels which he named Rex and Tango. Almost from the start he danced with state and federal gaming officials, the FBI, the ATF, and local law enforcement all trying to find ways of proving him illegal and shutting him down. His chief adversary was the California State Attorney General Earl Warren (Yes, the future Chief Justice of the Supreme Court) who "proposed a new legal argument against offshore gambling ships. He called them "a great nuisance" because they drew millions of dollars from legitimate purposes and would inevitably lead to the appearance of floating narcotics dens and houses of prostitution. He reasoned that states had the power to abate a nuisance even if it lies outside state jurisdiction." Meanwhile high rollers and a slew of middle-class folks regularly took the water taxi out to his boats to have some fun and empty their pockets.

In 1947 "The Admiral" added to his fleet when he purchased Bunker Hill, had it transferred from "the National Defense Reserve Fleet, Suisun Bay, Benecia, CA" where she lay since 1943, to Long Beach, CA. There she was converted to a floating casino and had the letters "LUX" prominently painted on her side. The name Bunker Hill was proudly painted across her stern as well. An unusual feature of her conversion was the complete removal of her engines and remaining superstructure. "As usual, [The Admiral] complied with all the laws he could find. He carefully incorporated his enterprise under Nevada statutes as the Sevenses Trading & Steamship Co. In deference to sound sanitation practices he had 150 gleaming new toilets installed aboard the ship. Finally he had the white, neon-decorated floating casino towed 7.8 miles to sea—well past anybody's three-mile limit."

And it's there that the track goes cold. We know from history that the feds were successful in shutting down his floating crap game—pun intended. We also know that "The Admiral" died in 1955 in Las Vegas while gambling at the Desert Inn. His death came a short two weeks prior to the opening of his new casino the (in)famous Stardust. The official ruling is he died of a massive heart attack, but many say it was brought on by a poisoned cocktail. What we don't know is the final disposition of Bunker Hill. I could not find where or when she met her end. For nearly 50 years she served three masters in at least five roles. She would be about 110 years old today, perhaps she's still around using another of her nine lives.

Hopefully, we have an adequately documented the change surrounding this vessel. Hopefully, you've adequately accepted it.

John Cheevers

- Specifications:
- Displacement 3,800 t.
- Length 395'
- Length between perpendiculars 375'

(Continued on page 8)

# AMERICAN NAVAL HISTORY



## 1777 Part II

September 14: The brig Reprisal, 18, with Captain Lambert Wickes in command, sails for home from France. The ship is lost off the coast of Newfoundland in a gale with all hands except the ship's cook. The death of Wickes deprives the Continental Navy of one of its most aggressive officers.

September 20: The Continental brig Lexington, 16, is captured off Ushant, France, by the British cutter Alert, 10, during which Lexington runs out of ammunition.

September 26: Philadelphia falls. Major General Sir William Howe, with 18,500 men, leaves New York on July 23, lands at the head of the Chesapeake Bay on August 25 and defeats Washington's 10,500 men at the Battle of Brandywine on September 11. For Howe to hold Philadelphia, he must gain control of the Delaware River. The river is defended by a system of forts and obstructions plus a sizable force of Continental and Pennsylvania state vessels. These vessels are under the command of Commodore J. Hazlewood of the Pennsylvania State Marine.

September 27: The frigate Delaware, 24, under Captain Charles Alexander, the most powerful Continental vessel in the Delaware, runs aground and surrenders while engaging British shore batteries.

October 1- November 22: River communications between Howe's army at Philadelphia and the sea, a task force commanded by

Admiral Richard Howe, push up the Delaware against obstinate American resistance. The American Augusta and Merlin ground on obstructions and are attacked and burned on October 22. Eventually the British break through and overcoming Forts Mifflin and Mercer, forcing the Americans to destroy their ships keeping them from capture. Lost are Andrew Doria, Hornet, Racehorse, Wasp, Fly and the entire Pennsylvania navy.

October 6: The frigates Congress and Montgomery are burned to prevent their capture. These are 2 of the 13 frigates authorized by Congress in December 1775.

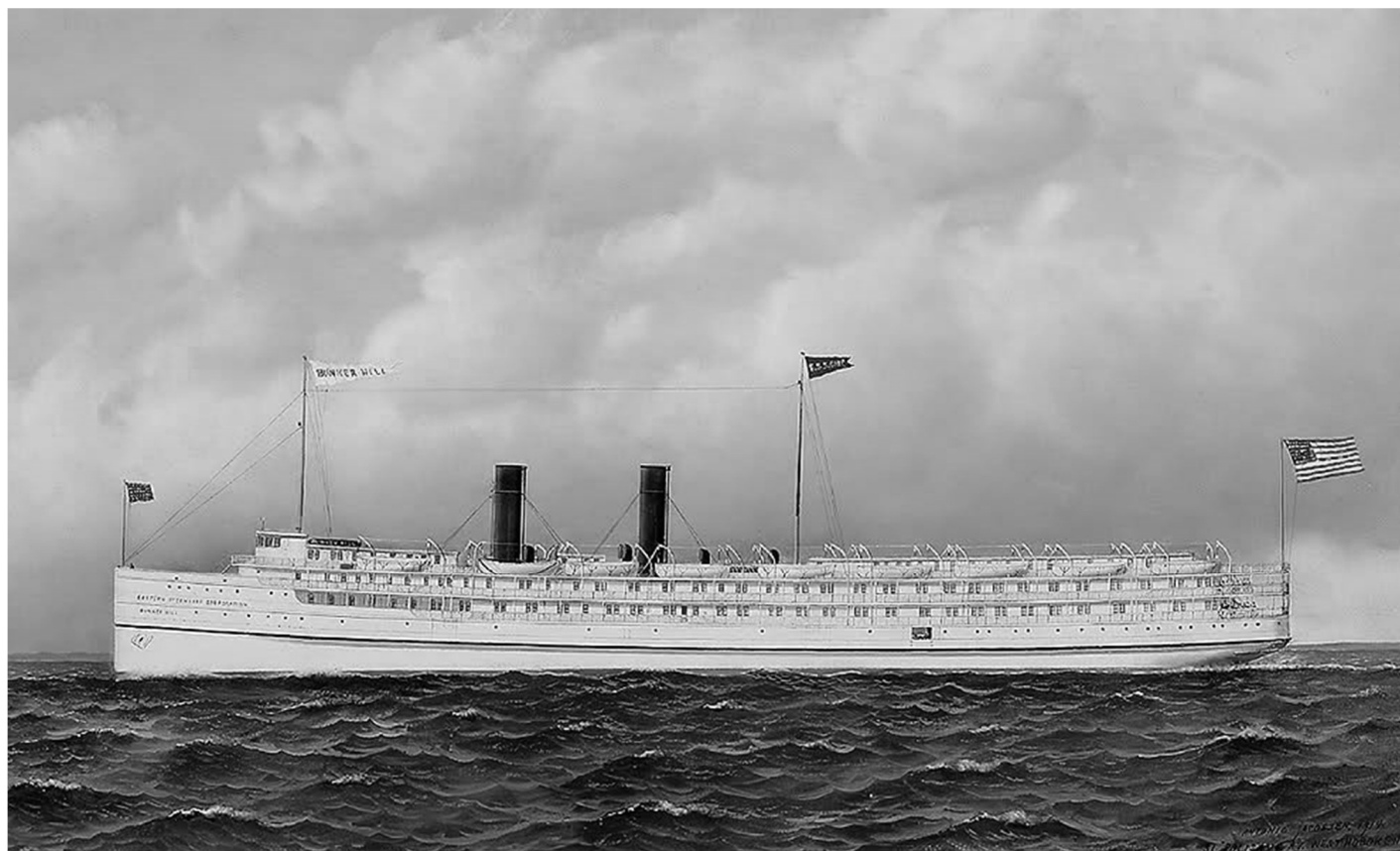
October 17: A British army under Major General John Burgoyne at 7,500 men, renew the offensive down the Hudson Valley highway that has been blocked by Arnold's defense of Lake Champlain in 1776. Burgoyne is compelled to surrender to the Continental army of Major General Horatio Gates at Saratoga in upper New York state. This is the turning point of the Revolution which gives Benjamin Franklin the leverage to persuade the French government to join in the conflict.

November 1: John Paul Jones sails from Portsmouth, New Hampshire for France. He is in command of the ship sloop Ranger, 18, taking two prizes, the brigs George and Mary. He arrives at Nantes on December 2.

December 31: American ships have captured a total of 464 British vessels in the course of the past year.

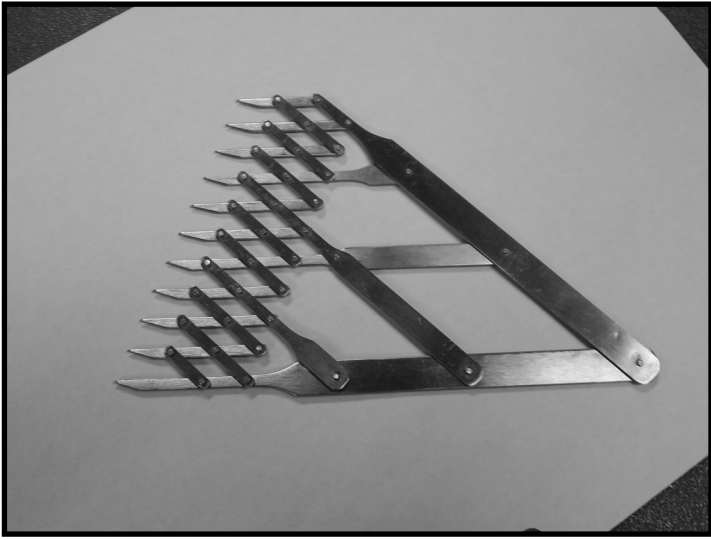
1777 Ends with no further actions.

Bob Moritz





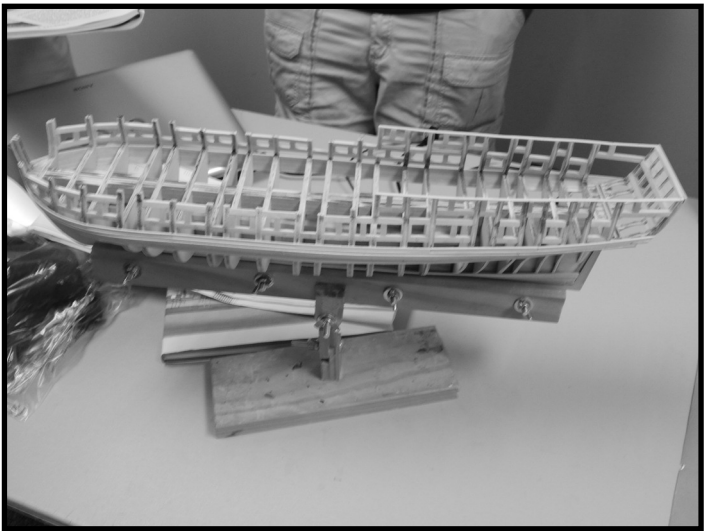
Henry Clapp's Pinkey



Gene Berger's equal spacing divider



Sean Maloon's West Virginia hull plug



Two Views of Stewart Winn's Essex

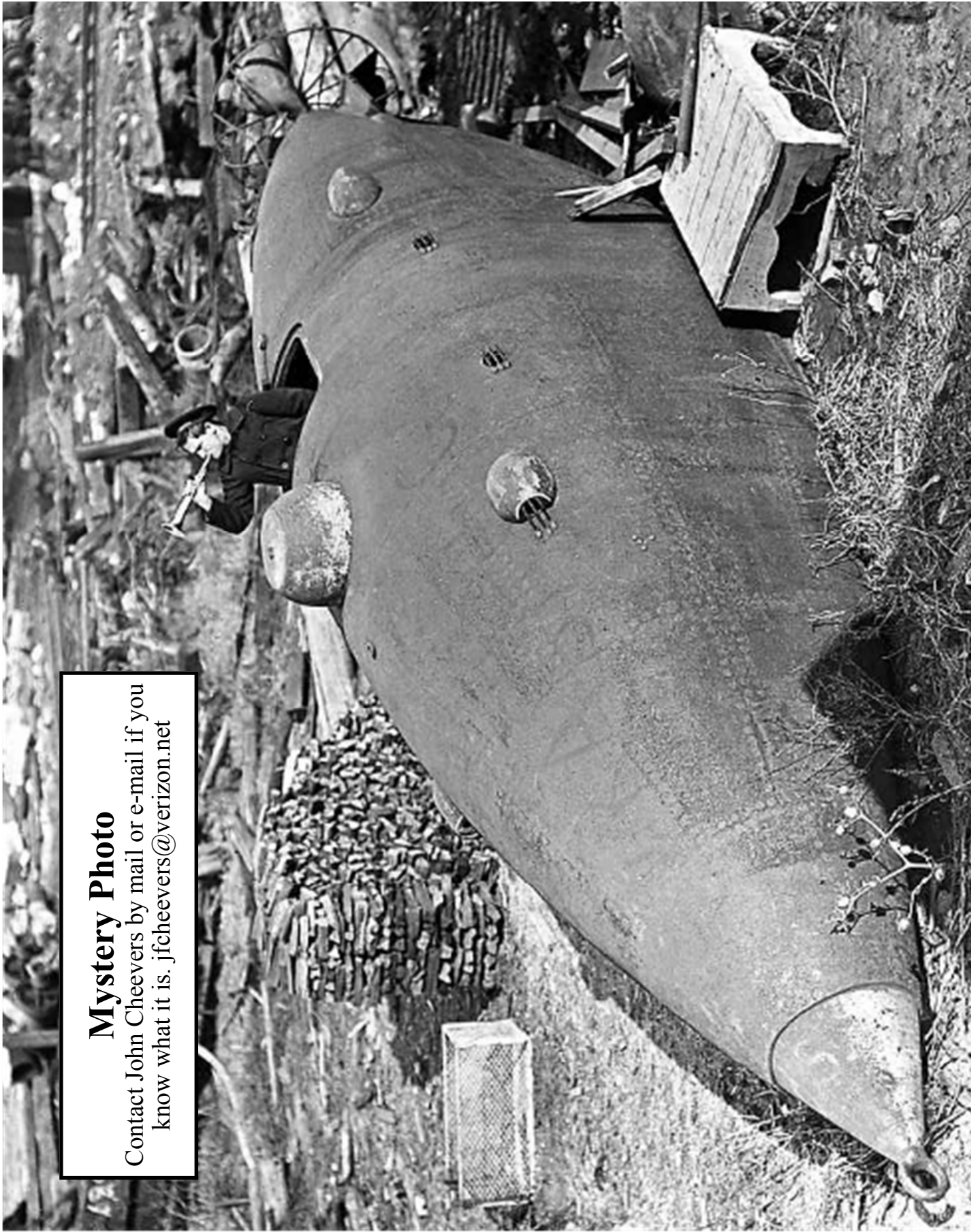


Ron Lewis' restoration of the Gertrude L Thebaud



## Mystery Photo

Contact John Cheevers by mail or e-mail if you know what it is. [jfcheevers@verizon.net](mailto:jfcheevers@verizon.net)



# NOTABLE EVENTS

## JULY

- 11 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation: "Lady in Waiting", Tim Wood

## AUGUST

- 8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation: Tim Wood

## SEPTEMBER

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting, Picnic, Newport News Park  
19 Talk Like a Pirate Day

## OCTOBER

- 10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation: Tony Clayton

22-24 NRG Conference Mystic Ct.

## NOVEMBER

- 14 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation: Ryland Craze

## DECEMBER

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation, Ron Lewis

## JANUARY

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Nomination of officers,

## FEBRUARY

- 13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Election of officers

## MARCH

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting:

## APRIL

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation:

## MAY

- 14 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation:

## JUNE

- 11 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation:

# MINUTES



Hampton Roads Ship Model Society  
Monthly Meeting  
Mariners' Museum  
June 13, 2015

Ryland Craze stood in for the absent Skipper and Mate to conduct the June meeting. There were no guests present. There was no correction to the minutes as published. Eric Harfst gave the Purser's report.

Old Business: Tim Wood sent the message that the workshop that he wanted to have at his house this summer would have to be postponed.

New Business: Ron Lewis said that the October may have to be held in the Huntington Room due to a scheduling conflict.

Show & Tell: Ryland Craze showed a book in the Images of America Series titled, Maritime Richmond. The book has 200 images of Richmond's maritime history. Stewart Winn showed the current issue of Sea History Magazine with a photo of the *Hermione* on the cover. Stewart also showed his work on Model Shipway's the *Essex* showing the framework. Ron Lewis showed a model J80 yacht from Abordage Models that he was doing some restoration work. Ron also some restoration work on a model of the *Gertrude L. Thebaud*. Henry Clapp showed the progress on his *Pinkey* with the addition of the rails. Sean Maloon showed the progress on the carved plug for his *West Virginia*. Gene Berger showed an equal spacing divider. John Proudley made some comments on the quality of woodwork and rigging on the *Hermione*.

The meeting was adjourned to the presentation "Aircraft Carriers Before Mav and Goose", by John Wyld.

(Continued from page 4)

Beam 52' 2'  
Draft 16'  
Depth of hold 31' 7"  
Speed 20 kts.  
Complement 313  
1921 - 346

Armament: One 5"/51 mount, two 3"/50 mounts and two .30 cal. Colt machine guns  
1921 - One 3"/50 dual purpose mount and two machine guns  
Propulsion: Eight single ended cylindrical boilers, two 3,500ihp vertical triple-expansion steam engines, two shafts.

WATCH, QUARTER  
AND  
STATION BILL



Skipper: Tim Wood (757) 481-6018  
Mate: Bob Moritz (804) 779-3365  
Purser: Eric Harfst (757) 221-8181  
Clerk: Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580  
Historian: Bill Dangler (757) 245-4142  
Editors: John Cheevers (757) 591-8955  
Bill Clarke (757) 868-6809  
Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580  
Webmaster: Greg Harrington (757) 930-4615

## THE ANSWER

USS Aroostook  
February, 1929  
Photo #NH 99618