



U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Heritage Society Newsletter

October, 2013

uscgsh heritage.org

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- Dave Peterson

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Finding the Coast Survey Steamer *Robert J. Walker*

One hundred and fifty three years after it was lost in a violent collision at sea, NOAA experts have identified the wreck of the *Robert J. Walker*, a steamer that served in the U.S. Coast Survey.

Twenty sailors died when the *Walker* sank in rough seas in the early morning hours of June 21, 1860, ten miles off Absecon Inlet on the New Jersey coast. The sinking was NOAA's largest loss of life in a single event.

The *Walker* was one of the first iron-hulled steamers built for the U.S. government in 1847, and was intended for the U.S. Revenue Service. Instead, *Walker* and some of its sister steamers were sent to the U.S. Coast Survey.

In 1860, the Coast Survey was conducting work that would prepare a nation for Civil War and had re-doubled efforts to produce surveys of harbors strategically important to the war effort along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. The *Walker* had finished its latest surveys in the Gulf of Mexico and was transiting to New York, when it was hit by a commercial schooner. The side-wheel steamer, carrying 66 crewmembers, sank within 30 minutes.

The *Walker* wreck site initially was discovered in the 1970s by a commercial fisherman. Regularly explored by wreck divers, its identity has been a mystery. Resting 85 feet underwater, the vessel's identity was confirmed in June. While in the area to conduct post-Hurricane Sandy hydrographic surveys for navigation safety, NOAA Ship *Thomas Jefferson* sailed to the wreck site and hydrographers searched likely locations. A NOAA Maritime Heritage diving team was able to positively identify the *Walker*.

See sanctuaries.noaa.gov/maritime/walker for more fascinating information.

A few words from the editor

I am honored to take over the task of assembling the newsletter for this great group! As the communications specialist for the Office of Coast Survey, I love discovering and sharing stories about the inspiring heritage of our agency. I look forward to discovering more, with you.

I will also strive to continue your "heritage" in making this newsletter a place where the USC&GS community can keep in touch with each other. Let us hear from you! Please forward your news and announcements to uscgsbuzzard@gmail.com. And check out our new website at uscgsh heritage.org.



Mark your calendars!

Annual meeting & luncheon: Friday, December 13

The annual meeting and luncheon will be held on Friday, December 13, at the NOAA Science Center on the NOAA Silver Spring campus, next to the NOAA Auditorium and behind the wavepool. The address is 1301 East-West Highway.

Members, guests, friends and prospective members are all welcome. Hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served starting at 11:30 am. Wine and beer will be served in addition to nonalcoholic beverages. Lunch will be served at 12:30. The cost is \$25 per person.

Your board of directors is planning a special presentation. We are hoping to highlight the recent collaborations of the Office of Coast Survey, NOAA Corps, and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries in the exploration of the USCS *Robert J. Walker*.

Following the luncheon, the Society's annual meeting will be a short business session, to elect board members. The board of directors includes nine elected directors, an appointed treasurer of the Society, and the president of the Northwest Chapter. Each elected director serves a 3-year term, and terms are arranged so that normally one-third of the directors are elected or re-elected annually. This year we have three 3-year slots to fill.

Our nominating committee has put forward the following nominees for the 3-year terms: **Lynne Mersfelder-Lewis, David Hall, and Lt. Cmdr. Matt Wingate**. Write-in nominations for other candidates will also be accepted. These positions are open to all members of the Society in good standing. Elected board members must be in a position to attend meetings in the Washington metro area at their own expense.

An absentee ballot and a return envelope are enclosed. **Please return by Friday, November 22.**

The NOAA Science Center is located in Silver Spring, Maryland, just off the Beltway at Colesville Road and East-West Highway. If you are driving, take the Colesville Road South exit. Proceed south until you pass under the Metro rail complex. Make a left onto East-West Highway. The NOAA complex is on your left. Parking is on the left at the top of the hill. Parking can be limited, but more spaces are available during the holidays. Parking is metered and you will need to use quarters.

Find additional county parking lots at www.silverspringdowntown.com/transportation/parking/parking-garages. Some on-street metered parking is just beyond the NOAA complex on Newell Street. Newell Street is on your left at the next light on East-West Highway and backs up to the Giant food store complex. DO NOT PARK at the Giant parking lot... You WILL BE TOWED.

If you use Metro, the Red Line deposits you right at the NOAA complex. Walk up East-West Highway – up the hill – to the last set of NOAA buildings. Walk past the “hand” statue, and go behind the wavepond into the atrium of the NOAA Science Center and Auditorium. As you are aware, this is a federal facility so you need to bring a picture ID for access to the building. If you have any questions, feel free to call Cheryl Oliver prior to the day of the event, at 301-713-7258.

Please sign up for the meeting and luncheon by completing the reservation slip on page 4 in this newsletter and mail, with payment, with your ballot.

Society scholarships applications due soon

Applications for the Clem Arens and Gerald Short Scholarship Awards are due Friday, November 15. Scholarships are open to all members and their families, and two \$1,000 awards are made each year.

Application forms and instructions for the scholarships are on the Society's webpage at www.uscgsheritage.org. Send completed scholarship applications to: Cheryl Oliver, 11012 Hemingway Court, Silver Spring, Maryland 20902.

Scholarship recipients will be announced during the annual meeting on December 13.

Don't forget this 200th anniversary resource

By George Leigh

It may be six years since NOAA's 200th Anniversary in 2007, but historic resources are still on the NOAA website for your exploration and enjoyment. "NOAA Celebrates 200 Years of Science, Service, and Stewardship" contains many articles about USC&GS charting, geodesy, tides, etc. Some articles that might be of special interest include:

- Ferdinand Rudolph Hassler: Founder of the United States Coast Survey
<http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/historymakers/hassler/welcome.html>
- Alexander Dallas Bache: Leader of American Science and Second Superintendent of the United States Coast Survey
<http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/historymakers/bache/welcome.html>
- The Story of the Tide Observer
http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/magazine/tide_observer/welcome.html
- The Coast and Geodetic Survey Disney Eagle
http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/magazine/disney_eagle/welcome.html
- Signals: Flags, Banners, Cones, and Lights Help Direct Surveys
<http://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/magazine/signals/welcome.html>
- And let's not forget the thousands of images in the Historical Map and Chart Collection
<http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/history>

News from OMAO



On Sept. 21, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) hosted a special ceremony to officially welcome NOAA Ship *Ferdinand R. Hassler* to her new homeport in New Castle, N.H. Pictured here from left to right: RDML David Score (OMAO Deputy Director for Operations and Deputy Director, NOAA Corps), Mica Stark (UNH Government Relations), Lisa MacFarlane (Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, UNH), U.S. Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, Jan Nisbet (Sr. Vice Provost for Research, UNH), RDML Gerd Glang (Director, NOAA Office of Coast Survey), and LCDR Ben Evans (Commanding Officer, NOAA Ship *Ferdinand R. Hassler*). Photo: David Hall



Help save resources

Society moving from paper copy to PDF newsletters!

With costs of printing and mailing going up, we are changing the *Buzzard* to electronic copy by email. You'll get it faster, you'll get it in color, you can read it in whatever size you want, and you can save it on your hard drive forever.

And you'll help save a tree!

Send a note to uscgsbuzzard@gmail.com and tell us you want the

Buzzard by email.

In Memorium



Theda L. Cator
 Don Denion
 Natalie Ferrara
 Raymond (Dick) Lumpkin
 Lillian O'Donnell
 Richard Perry
 Captain William Randall
 Mary C. Roberts
 Carrie Shearouse
 Annette Short
 Beverly Thompson
 Wheatley E. Ward
 Clara B. White
 Richard Wolford
 Captain David W. Yeager



We send our heartfelt thoughts to all of our Society families who have lost loved ones over the past year.

(Please email the Buzzard editor at uscgsbuzzard@gmail.com to let us know about members who have passed.)



THE NATION'S CHARTMAKER SINCE 1807

You Are Invited!

Coast & Geodetic Survey Heritage Society's Annual Meeting & Luncheon

Friday, December 13

NOAA Science Center
 NOAA Silver Spring Campus
 1301 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland

Social starts at 11:30 a.m.
 Hors d'oeuvres, beer, wine & soda

Luncheon buffet served at 12:30 p.m.

Taste of the Grecian Islands

Greek salad, roasted chicken, pastitsio (Greek lasagna), pita bread, string beans, roasted potatoes, baklava, coffee and tea

Cost - \$25

RSVP by November 22

Complete the slip below, making checks payable to the C&GS Heritage Society and mail (with your ballot) to:

Cheryl Oliver
 11012 Hemingway Court
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20902
 Telephone: 301-713-7258 email: Cheryl.Oliver@noaa.gov

Luncheon Reservation Slip

(cut and return in envelope)

Name(s) _____

Phone # _____ Email _____

of Reservations _____ x \$25.00 = total amount _____