

BRIGANTINE, SCHOONER, HOUSEBOAT: JOURNEYS OF THE GALILEE

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ABSTRACT

The *GALILEE*, moored in the mudflats off Sausalito, has been the subject of archival and field study as a result of regulatory review by the Army Corps of Engineers. Built by Matthew Turner in 1891, the brigantine *GALILEE* first sailed the trade routes of the South Seas, was later chartered to make a magnetic survey of the Pacific Ocean and finished her career as a rerigged schooner used in the cod fishing trade of Alaska. In 1933, the *GALILEE* was laid up on the Sausalito shoreline and for many years provided shelter for local artists. Natural elements and unmitigated impacts have led to the vessel's deterioration; however, her intact hull can still be observed buried in the mud. This paper describes the unique aspects of the *GALILEE*'s design and construction and her interesting past, as well as a National Register evaluation of the archaeological remains.

The subject of my talk today is the 19th century wooden brigantine, *GALILEE*. I am going to present a chronological sketch – a historical vignette if you will – of the *GALILEE*'s history in the context of (1) San Francisco in the mid-to-late 1800s, (2) her Pacific and Bering Sea voyages through the 1920s and (3) a reconstruction of the events after she was beached along the shoreline of Richardson Bay in Sausalito, California. I'll also give you some insight into her builder and provide a discussion of the existing archaeological condition, the Corps' involvement with the ship and future ideas about preservation plans for the remains.

San Francisco quickly became a major seaport following the discovery of gold in 1848. The Gold Rush attracted hundreds of vessels of various sizes, rigs and registries to San Francisco Bay. One adventurous seaman, later to become the most prolific ship builder on the West coast of the United States, arrived from Ohio during this period to sail ships in the lumber and fishing trades. His name was Captain Matthew Turner, builder of the *GALILEE*. Captain Turner was the owner and master of several schooners and brigs. After several years of sailing the Pacific, Turner developed ideas as to the most suitable vessel for the region's sea and wind conditions. He decided to design his own brig, the *Nautilus*, which was built in 1868. As master of the *Nautilus* during the

earliest voyages, Turner was able to test her qualifications firsthand. Turner's design was innovative and helped gain him the reputation of a master craftsman. He made his models long and sharp forward and full aft, which was in contrast to the East coast models of having the broadest beam at two-fifths the length from the bow. This gave the stem more of a rake than usual. The masts were given a good slant as well, and the anchors, chains and weights were generally brought farther aft. Thus Turner introduced a class of stiff, fast vessels, which became popular with other shipbuilders and widely copied. It was primarily the success of the design of the *Nautilus* that encouraged him to go into shipbuilding himself. He started his shipbuilding in San Francisco around 1875 and had constructed 57 sailing vessels in the first eight years. In 1883, he moved his shipyard to Benicia on Suisun Bay. Turner's output of 228 vessels, which included many rather small boats, is believed to have "never been equaled by any other individual ship builder in North America" (Lyman 1943).

It was in Benicia that he built the *GALILEE* in 1891. The brigantine was two-masted, 132 feet in length and 33.5 feet in the beam, and with a registered tonnage of 354 tons. She was as sharp forward as the yachts of her day, but had the stability of a sea-boat. She had the reputation of being the smartest sailing vessel out of San

Francisco. Captain Turner was a partner in the Tahiti Packet Line Company that provided regular sailing-ship transportation between Tahiti and San Francisco. Because the return cargo – oranges, coconuts, cotton, copra, vanilla and other tropical products – was perishable and the passenger trade quite competitive, the desired passage either way was 35 days or less. The *GALILEE* was well known for her performance on this run, and considered one of the fastest sailing vessels of her size plying the Pacific seas. She made 21 passages from Tahiti to San Francisco from the time of her launching until 1896, averaging 28 and 1/2 days for the passage. On her maiden voyage the *GALILEE* set two records: the trip from San Francisco to Tahiti, by way of the Marquesas Islands, was made in 19 days, while the return trip back to San Francisco required 22 and 1/2 days. To give you an idea of the speed on such a trip, the *GALILEE*'s best record was 308 miles in one day with a full cargo.

Eventually with the production of steamers, sailing ships such as the *GALILEE* which were engaged in the South Seas trade were crowded out of business. Thus Captain Turner sought other service and agreed to charter her to the Carnegie Institute in 1905 to conduct a magnetic survey of the north Pacific. It is of interest that the Institute did considerable advertising before the *GALILEE* was selected as being the best vessel for the work. The magnetic survey expedition required that changes be made: the principal ones were replacement of the wire rigging with hemp rigging and removal of iron parts in the vicinity of the observation towers to reduce the magnetic-deviation corrections. The *GALILEE*'s survey voyages continued until 1908 and the Institute noted that their decision had been a good one, for she logged nearly 64,000 nautical miles during the 3-year period with flying colors.

The year 1909 was marked by two inglorious events. While leaving San Francisco the *GALILEE* was nearly demolished on rocks outside the Golden Gate. My research failed to locate many details of this near loss, except that there was a dramatic rescue involving jammed anchor machinery and use of butter from the galley and castor oil from the medicine chest as lubricants. One must assume that the treacherous entrance to the Gate had been obscured by fog so well

known for the coastal region. Soon after Captain Turner's death in 1909, she was sold to the Union Fish Company, rerigged as a 3-masted schooner and sent to Alaska to work in the cod-fishing trade.

The cod-fishing voyages came to an end around 1927, followed by two years during which the *GALILEE* was one of a small fleet of vessels operating off Cape San Lucas in connection with the growing tuna industry. The *GALILEE*'s life as a sea-worthy vessel came to an unpleasant finish. In the early 1930s she started the final decline from a graceful brigantine to a fishy schooner kicked along by a coughing and smoking diesel. Ending up in the port of her birth, the *GALILEE* was bought in 1934 by a former British officer, Captain John Quinn, who beached her on the Sausalito shoreline. Captain Quinn and his wife converted the *GALILEE* to a houseboat, built a wharf out to the ship, strung old San Francisco gas lamps to illuminate the abode and placed potted plants on her deck. It was during the 1930s and 1940s that many of the outdated sailing ships were towed to Richardson Bay and sunk into the mud flats. One by one these vessels succumbed to the wood-devouring seaworms, their broken masts and beams littering the shoreline. Thanks to Captain Quinn, the *GALILEE* survived the ravages of time longer than any other vessel.

Unfortunately, Captain Quinn grew too old to continue living aboard the *GALILEE* and sold it to a photographer who, with his wife and children, lived on the ship until 1962. When the City of Sausalito condemned the *GALILEE* as being unfit for human habitation and ordered her to be abandoned and destroyed, a trustee of the San Francisco Maritime Museum purchased the vessel with the intention of making her a landmark. His plans were never realized due to his untimely death, leaving the *GALILEE* under the responsibility of the Maritime Museum. For reasons that I could not identify, the Maritime Museum was unable to implement the preservation plans. The deterioration of the *GALILEE* following the relocation of the stern was apparently quite rapid. Local rumor has it that squatters (so-called "hippies" and "artists") were responsible for much of the damage, including a fire that took its toll. In addition, there was an "accident" in the late 1960s from a dredging operation that left one side of the ship caved in. It

is not beyond one's imagination that members of the community who were interested in development along the shoreline may have had a hand in this latter action, as I was personally told that the dredging mishap (permitted by the Corps, of course) was a deliberate attempt to destroy what was left.

About this time, local concern about *GALILLE*'s fate resulted in an expedition by the Maritime Museum to assess the vessel's condition. The one preservation action taken by this group was removal of the stern to Fort Mason in San Francisco where it is on display today.

For the next 20 years there was little coverage of the *GALILEE*'s plight in the local press; however, the piecemeal deterioration continued. In 1985 I was introduced to the *GALILEE* during the review of an application for a Corps of Engineers permit under the Clean Water Act and Rivers and Harbors Act. The Corps was asked to issue a permit to develop a new marina on the shoreline of Sausalito in Richardson Bay, including a public trail passing by the *GALILEE*. The project area was actually adjacent to the *GALILEE* and, therefore, not likely to be damaged by the marina construction. Being the responsible regulator that I was, I looked for a way to extend the Corps' jurisdiction – that is, I applied the Advisory Council's criteria to determine whether the remains lay within the Area of Potential Effect. It was a stretch, but considering the damage already wrought by the "public," my preliminary position was that the increase in pedestrian and boat traffic would lead people to the *GALILEE* who otherwise would not be in the area, and this would increase the potential for relic hunting and vandalism. Of course, I found support for this position among local maritime historians who shared my desire to protect what was left of the *GALILEE*. Thus I launched an effort to determine whether the *GALILEE* might be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Jim Delgado, a maritime archaeologist who at the time was employed by the National Park Service, provided his expert opinion regarding the *GALILEE*'s significance (Delgado 1985). Citing some of the information that I've discussed in this paper, Delgado felt that she met all four of the National Register criteria: Criterion A, for her association with the South Seas trade; Criterion B,

because of her association with Matthew Turner; Criterion C, since she was an extraordinary example of Turner's work; and Criterion D, because of the potential that her remains have to yield information important to the actual shipbuilding techniques and particulars of the vessel.

My view on the eligibility issue was that Criterion D was the likely qualifying factor since the remaining portion of the vessel buried in the bay mud could provide details about the design and construction techniques, including information about modifications made when the third mast was added. It was my understanding that a vessel must have architectural integrity (like a standing structure) to qualify under the other three criteria. Related to this question of the actual design and construction particulars is the fact that Turner's original line drawings, at one time in the possession of local historians, had been destroyed in a fire. This left the mud-locked hulk as the only source of the specific construction methods. Formal consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the National Register eligibility was not completed, however, because the Corps' District Engineer decided not to initiate the Section 106 process. He had made a visit to the project site on his own, i.e., without my assistance and or any other technical staff. To summarize his reaction, he challenged the idea to include the remains within the permit area, primarily based upon the paucity of materials available for relic hunters even if access to the location were made easier with the new shoreline trail and marina. Being overruled, I turned to other projects but was convinced that the *GALILEE* was a valuable resource that deserved preservation.

Shortly after the permit file was placed in the inactive category, the *GALILEE* was in the news again. A maritime park had been established in Benicia, named the Matthew Turner Shipyard Park, and a local historian assembled a group of volunteers and arranged all the necessary approvals to remove the bow to the park. A 16-foot section was cut off and transported by sea on a barge. Hence the cry: "the *GALILEE* sails again." The idea was to restore the bow, with the public observing the process, and display it once restored. Alas, the plans fizzled and the bow was

moved to a private museum where it resides today. It is said that the *GALILEE* was the longest ship ever built: the stern is in San Francisco, its bow in Benicia.

A few years ago, I was once again drawn to the *GALILEE*. Yet another Corps permit was requested, for yet another marina. The initial project design to dredge the *GALILEE* area was revised so as to not impact the remains in accordance with the wishes of the future marina association who wanted to preserve the site and avoid potential costly recovery operations. Consultation with the SHPO was not required, as there would not be an effect. Communication with the OHP staff did establish that the surviving archaeological features buried in the mud, if well preserved, would constitute integrity of design and materials. To answer the question whether such elements have integrity, one must obviously

excavate into the mud to expose a section of the hulk. This type of project is still in the planning stages, and it is one that I will continue to pursue. Interest has been expressed by the owners as well as by the local historical society to participate in such an endeavor. My future plan is to involve as many private and public entities as possible in writing grant proposals so that the significance of the *GALILEE*'s remains can be realized.

I'd like to leave you with this quote from *The Rudder* published in 1899. "To see her sweeping through the blue Pacific seas with her pyramid of snowy cotton, round and hard with the blasts of the trade winds, to see her hull shearing through the seas with its sharp stem and gently rolling with a stately, graceful sweep of her spars, is enough to make any sailor or lover of nautical sights long for the days of sailing packets to come again."

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