A guide to the Restoration of the C.A. Thayer (built 1895; schooner, 3m) records, 1983-1984

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deck, with the remaining lumber stacked ten feet high on deck. In port, her small crew of eight or nine men were also responsible for loading and unloading the ship. Unloading 75,000 to 80,000 board feet was an average day’s work.

With the increase in the use of steam power for the lumber trade, and after sustaining serious damage during a gale, the C.A. THAYER (built 1895; schooner, 3m) was retired from the lumber trade in 1912, and converted for use in the Alaskan salmon fishery.

Early each April from 1912 to 1924, C.A. THAYER (built 1895; schooner, 3m) sailed from San Francisco for Western Alaska. On board she carried 28-foot gillnet boats, bundles of barrel staves, tons of salt, and a crew of fishermen and cannery workers. She then spent the summer anchored at a fishery camp such as Squaw Creek or Koggiung. Whilst there, the fishermen worked their nets and the cannery workers packed the catch on shore. The C.A. THAYER (built 1895; schooner, 3m) returned to San Francisco each September, carrying barrels of salted salmon.

Vessels in the salt-salmon trade usually laid up during the winter months, but when World War I inflated freight rates, C.A. THAYER (built 1895; schooner, 3m) carried Northwest fir and Mendocino redwood to Australia. These off-season voyages took about two months each way. Her return cargo was usually coal, but sometimes hardwood or copra.

Between 1925 and 1930, the C.A. THAYER (built 1895; schooner, 3m) made yearly voyages from Poulsbo, Washington, to Alaska’s Bering Sea cod fishing waters. In addition to supplies, she carried upwards of thirty men north, including fourteen fishermen and twelve "dressers" (the men who cleaned and cured the catch.) At about 4:30am each day, the fishermen launched their Grand Banks dories over the rails, and then fished standing up, with handlines dropped over both sides of their small boats. When the fishing was good, a man might catch 300-350 cod in a five-hour period.

After a decade-long, Depression-era lay-up in Lake Union, the U.S. Army purchased the ship from J.E. Shields for use in the war effort. In 1942, the Army removed her masts and used her as an ammunition barge in British Columbia. After World War II, Shields bought his ship back from the Army, fitted her with masts once again, and returned her to codfishing. Her final voyage was in 1950.

The State of California purchased the C.A. THAYER (built 1895; schooner, 3m) in 1957. After preliminary restoration in Seattle, Washington, a volunteer crew sailed her down the coast to San Francisco. The San Francisco Maritime Museum performed more extensive repairs and refitting, and opened her to the public in 1963. The vessel was transferred to the National Park Service in 1978, and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1984.

After 40 years as a museum ship, the C.A. THAYER (built 1895; schooner, 3m) was again restored, a restoration which took three years from 2004, and which resulted in her temporary removal from her berth at the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. Approximately 80 percent of the ship’s timbers were replaced with new timbers matching the original wood. The ship sailed back to the Hyde Street Pier on April 12, 2007 where restoration work continues.

Collection Scope and Content

Restoration of the C.A. Thayer (built 1895; schooner, 3m) records, 1983-1984 (SAFR 23383, HDC 1640) were created by Stephen W. Hastings, former Marine Maintenance Foreman at the National Maritime Museum, to chronicle the 1983-1984 restoration of the lumber schooner.

Included in this collection are two sheets of correspondence regarding the search for antique shipwright tools, an 8 page report entitled "Restoration of the C.A. Thayer, 1983," and 15 photographs taped to sheets of paper with captions. The collection has been processed to the item level and is open for use without restrictions.

Collection Arrangement

Items are housed in one folder.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

C. A. Thayer (Schooner)
Hastings, Stephen W.
National Maritime Museum (U.S.)
San Francisco (Calif.)
Correspondence
Gelatin silver prints
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Ships–Maintenance and repair
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