A guide to the John W. Laine photograph collection, circa 1910-1950

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2013
A Guide to the John W. Laine photograph collection

P10-003

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service

2013, National Park Service

Title: John W. Laine photograph collection
Date: circa 1910-1950
Date (bulk): bulk 1930s-1940s
Identifier/Call Number: P10-003 (SAFR 23843)
Collector: Laine, John W.
Physical Description: 16 items.
Repository: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123
Abstract: The John W. Laine photograph collection, circa 1910-1950, bulk 1930s-1940s, (SAFR 23843, P10-003) is comprised mainly of photographs of American-Hawaiian Steamship Company ships and their crews, including John W. Laine, ship's Engineer. The collection has been processed to the Collection level and is open for use.
Physical Location: San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department
Language(s): In English.
Access
This collection is open for use unless otherwise noted.
Publication and Use Rights
Some material may be copyrighted or restricted. It is the researcher's obligation to determine and satisfy copyright or other case restrictions when publishing or otherwise distributing materials found in the collections.
Processing Note
Each photographic image has been assigned an Item number; in once instance, there are two physical forms of one image (two black-and-white photographic prints of Item 14). Information about numeric stamps on the back of the photographs has been included in the physical description notes, because in the early 20th century the stamp often signified the customer number. This might help to identify where certain photographs were taken.
Description Notes: Dates refer to when the original photograph was taken.
The descriptions in this collection guide were compiled using the best available sources of information. Such sources include the creator's annotations or descriptions, collection accession files, primary and secondary source material and subject matter experts. While every effort was made to provide accurate information, in the event that you find any errors in this guide please contact the reference staff in order for us to evaluate and make corrections to this guide.
Please cite the title and collection number in any correspondence with our staff.
Preferred Citation
[Item description], [Location within collection organization identified by Collection Number/Series Number/File Unit Number/Item Number], P10-003 (SAFR 23843), John W. Laine photograph collection, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Acquisition Information
SAFR-02095
SAFR-02095: In 2007, Mrs. Jackie Gallatin (niece of John Laine and aunt of Willis C. Merrill, who was a former purser for Matson Navigation Co., States Line and Grace Line) donated 16 photographic prints and 1 album containing a series of illustrated envelopes addressed to Laine's fiancee and later wife, Louise Merrill. They were formally accessioned on May 17, 2010. The 16 photographs have been cataloged in this collection (P10-003, SAFR 23843) and the album has been cataloged as SAFR 22675.
Historical or Biographical Note
John W. Laine (1894-1952) was a ship's Engineer for the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company for over 30 years. He served on the vessels AMERICAN (built 1900; freighter), AMERICAN (built 1916; freighter), CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter), DAKOTAN (built 1912; freighter), HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter), JOHN M. SCHOFIELD (built 1942; cargo vessel: Liberty ship) and MISSOURIAN (built 1922; freighter).

John Walter Laine was born on November 5, 1894, in Ashtabula, Ohio, to Frank O. Laine (circa 1875-) and Gustava Kaupanem Laine (1868-) who were both born in Finland. John had three younger siblings: Frank Casper Laine (November 23, 1896-), Ida G. Laine (Bundy) (October 20, 1901-April 12, 1987), and Charles Samuel Laine (October 24, 1903-February 17, 1941). The family lived in New York from at least 1903-1915.

John lived in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1917. He was working for American-Hawaiian Steamship Company at this time and served as an engineer on DAKOTAN (built 1912; freighter) in May 1917 (the only date able to be confirmed through passenger records). He worked on AMERICAN (built 1900; freighter) as 1st Assistant Engineer in May 1920. Laine worked on HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter) from at least August 1920-April 1922 and on MISSOURIAN (built 1922; freighter) from at least June 1924-April 1928 (these are the only dates able to be confirmed).

From at least November 1929 to February 1940, John was the Chief Engineer on CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter). During his time on CALIFORNIAN in the 1930s, John sent his fiancee Louise O. Merrill (1899-) letters with detailed color illustrations on the envelopes. In November 1933, the envelopes change from being addressed to Louise Merrill to Mrs. J. Laine, and it can be inferred that John married Louise Merrill in November 1933 (John Laine album). Louise was a registered nurse. John and Louise lived in Oakland, California, together, and then moved to Berkeley, California, in 1937.

Laine worked on AMERICAN (built 1916; freighter) as Chief Engineer in November-December 1941. According to his World War II Draft Registration Card, Laine worked for Moore Dry Dock in 1942 and he lived in Berkeley with his wife. In 1949, John was the Chief Engineer on the American-Hawaiian Steamship Co. vessel JOHN M. SCHOFIELD (built 1942; cargo vessel: Liberty ship).

Laine died at the age of 57 on May 1, 1952, in San Francisco, California.

------ Biographical information about Louise Merrill Laine: Louise O. Merrill (1899-) was the daughter of Eugene H. Merrill (born in Maine circa 1861, died before 1920) and Ida M. Willard Merrill (born in Kansas in 1875). Louise had a brother named Willie Horatio Merrill (September 10, 1895-June 15, 1959) who worked as an accountant for Pacific Coast Shipping Co. in June 1917 and as a ship fitter at Bethlehem Steel in 1942. Willie's son Willis C. Merrill was later a purser for Matson Navigation Co., States Line and Grace Line. According to the envelopes in the John Laine album, Louise lived at 69 Glen Ave, Oakland, California, from at least May 18, 1933-April 1937. John and Louise lived on 89 Franciscan Way in Berkeley, California, from June 1937 to at least 1942 (information on envelopes in SAFR 22675; California, Voter Registrations, Contra Costa County, Kensington Precinct No. 4, 1942).

Sources:
Collection Scope and Content

The John W. Laine photograph collection, circa 1910-1950, bulk 1930s-1940s, (SAFR 23843, P10-003) is comprised mainly of photographs of American-Hawaiian Steamship Company ships and their crews, including John W. Laine, ship's Engineer. The collection has been processed to the Collection level and is open for use.

Contains photographs of the vessels CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter), EMPIRE SWAN (built 1922; freighter), HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter), HAWAIIAN FORESTER (built 1944; freighter), unidentified vessels, John W. Laine and other crew members, circa 1910-1950, bulk 1930s-1940s. There are 15 unique photographic images, in 16 physical forms (16 black-and-white photographic prints).

Item List: Item 01: Portrait of eleven men on board CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter), circa 1930s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8 x 10 in. "Western Pictorial News Service, 202 Studio Building, Portland, Oregon, Phone BE 6178, [Photograph] No. 329" printed on front bottom edge of the print. The Captain (nicknamed "Blubber") is in the back on the left. John W. Laine is in the back, third from the left. The men in the front row are kneeling behind the vessel’s life saving ring.

Item 02: Portrait of thirteen men on board CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter), on the occasion of raising the U.S. Naval Reserve flag, circa 1930s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8 x 9.88 in. "Morton Photographs, Morton & Co. Commercial Photography, 515 Market St., San Francisco, Telephone Garfield 4320" and photograph number "33427 1" stamped on the back of the print.

Back row, from left to right: Third Mate Oscar; Second Mate "Izzy"; First Mate Arthur; Skipper [Captain] "Blubber"; American-Hawaiian Steamship Co. president Roger D. Lapham; John W. Laine; First Engineer Wally; Second Engineer Knouff "Nuff"; Fourth Mate Woodrow Wilson "Willy". Bottom row, left to right: Wireless - "Sparks"; Electrician "Billy"; Fourth Engineer "Joe"; Third Engineer "Eddie" or "Ralph". The men in the front row are holding the U.S. Naval Reserve flag.

Item 03: Portrait of eighteen men on board CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter), on the occasion of raising the U.S. Naval Reserve flag, circa 1930s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8 x 9.88 in. "Morton Photographs, Morton & Co. Commercial Photography, 515 Market St., San Francisco, Telephone Garfield 4320" and photograph number "33427 2" stamped on the back of the print. "I thought I was taking a swell picture when I stood between the mates - I got all these [giants]. Blubber just bought that Hi-pressure hat only a moment ago" written on the back of the print. On the back of Item 02, the Captain is referred to by the nickname "Blubber." John Laine is in the back row on the left wearing street clothes. The Captain is third from the left in the front row, holding the Naval Warrant with Commodore George W. Bauer (fourth from the left).

Item 04: Portrait of twenty two men on board CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter), on the occasion of raising the U.S. Naval Reserve flag, circa 1930s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8 x 9.88 in. "Morton Photographs, Morton & Co. Commercial Photography, 515 Market St., San Francisco, Telephone Garfield 4320" and photograph number "33427 3" stamped on the back of the print. John Laine is in the back row on the left wearing street clothes. Front row, left to right: two men holding the Naval Reserve flag; the Captain holding the Naval Warrant; Commodore George W. Bauer.

Item 05: CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter) underway, port broadside view, 1922-1940. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 6.88 x 9 in.

Item 06: EMPIRE SWAN (built 1922; freighter) underway, starboard broadside view, approximately 1940. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 5 x 7 in. EMPIRE SWAN was previously named MISSOURIAN, and John Laine sailed on this vessel when she was named MISSOURIAN, from at least June 1924-April 1928.

The second American-Hawaiian vessel named MISSOURIAN was built in 1922 by Merchant Shipbuilding Corp. in Chester, Pennsylvania. She was launched on Wednesday, December 14, 1921, and completed in July 1922. In 1940, MISSOURIAN was sold to Runciman Ltds., London, England. The back of the print says that the vessel is “sailing from New York bound for London, England” which likely indicates that the photograph was taken in 1940. "[?]274" stamped on the back of the print. Associated material: there is another copy of this print in the Roger D. Lapham photograph collection (SAFR 23379, P79-092a, Item 465).

Item 07: Group portrait of seven crew members on board HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter), approximately 1920-1922. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 4.88 x 6.75 in. John Laine is second from the right. Several men are standing behind a HAWAIIAN life saving ring. Laine worked on HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter) from at least August 1920-April 1922.

Items 08-10: HAWAIIAN FORESTER (built 1944; freighter) docked in an unidentified location, aerial view, approximately late 1940s. 3 black-and-white photographic prints, 8 x 10 in. The edges of all three prints are curled and one print is stained with something brown on the back. In Item 10, the vessel is docked near a C and H Pure Cane Sugar factory. A shoreline with trees and buildings can be seen in the background of all three photographs. HAWAIIAN FORESTER (built 1944; freighter) was a 7240 ton Liberty freighter built in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1944 as GEORGE F. WALDO. She was purchased by Matson Navigation Company in 1947 and renamed HAWAIIAN FORESTER at this time. In 1955, the vessel was sold to...
Item 11: Unidentified freighter underway on the Willamette River, starboard broadside view, passing underneath St. Johns Bridge, Portland, Oregon, early 1930s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 6.38 x 8.5 in. "Harold M. Brown, Photos, Logging, Lumbering & Marine" stamped on the back of the print. The photograph was taken from the shoreline looking through some trees. The vessel is partially underneath the suspension bridge and is likely CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter) but the name on the starboard bow is illegible. This photograph was taken by Harold M. Brown, a Portland, Oregon, photographer active in 1923-early 1930s; since the bridge was completed in 1931, this likely indicates that this photograph was taken in the early 1930s. Associated material: there is a photograph taken from the same vantage point (but of a different vessel) in the Roger D. Lapham photograph collection (SAFR 23379, P79-092a, Item 548).

Item 12: Unidentified freighter underway, view off port bow, circa 1910s-1930s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 3.13 x 5.25 in.

Item 13: Unidentified vessel at dock?, circa 1940s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 3.38 x 5.13 in. Printed on Velox paper. "618T" stamped on the back of the print.

Item 14: Portrait of John W. Laine and five other men in the engine room of an unidentified vessel, circa 1930s-1940s. 2 black-and-white photographic prints, 8 x 9.88 in. Three men are standing in the back (including Laine on the far left) and three men are kneeling in the front. They are likely on board CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter) based on when the photograph was taken. "[Photograph] No. 629, Phone BE 6178, Western Pictorial News Service, 202 Studio Building, Portland, Oregon" printed on front bottom edge of both prints.

Item 15: Portrait of John W. Laine, circa 1930s-1940s. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 6.88 x 9 in. Laine is wearing a suit and tie.

Collection Arrangement
The photographs were in no discernible order; they have been placed in alphabetical order by vessel name, with unidentified vessels and portraits of people in unidentified locations placed at the end.

Related Materials
Related photograph collections: Roger D. Lapham photograph collection, 1892-1956, bulk 1915-1945. SFMNHP, (SAFR 23379, P79-092a). There are other photographs of CALIFORNIAN (built 1922; freighter), EMPIRE SWAN (built 1922; freighter), and HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter) in this collection.

The Alexander Ryan photographs, circa 1895-1926, bulk 1900-1920. SFMNHP, (SAFR 23353, P77-003). There are a few photographs of HAWAIIAN (built 1900; freighter) in this collection.

Related object collection: John Laine album, 1933-1937. SFMNHP, (SAFR 22675). The album holds a total of 99 envelopes illustrated by John Laine and sent to his fiancee/wife, Louise Merrill Laine in Oakland and Berkeley, California, between May 18, 1933 and June 28, 1937. The illustrations are humorous cartoons or caricatures and many of them incorporate the recipient’s address into the image.

Researchers should note that there are other books and collections with materials related to the vessels in this collection in the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. They can search the Park’s web catalog for more information.

This material is located at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Marine photography
Shipping--Pacific Coast (North America)--History--Pictorial works
Costwise shipping--Pacific Coast (U.S.)
Merchant ships--United States--History--20th century
Cargo ships
Merchant ships
Liberty ships
Ships--California--San Francisco--Pictorial works
Laine, John W.
Lapham, Roger D. (Roger Dearborn), 1883-1966
Californian (built 1922; freighter)
Empire Swan (built 1922; freighter)
Hawaiian (built 1900; freighter)
Hawaiian Forester (built 1944; freighter)
Portland (Or.)
Pacific Coast (U.S.)
Black-and-white prints (photographs)
Gelatin silver prints