



July 2009

Dear Friends of the Maritime Museum of San Diego:

Whether or not we are always aware of it, we are watching as the end of an era unfolds before our eyes. For four generations our community has preserved and protected one of the few remaining ships from the great age of sail. *Star of India* is the only sailing ship extant that participated in the oceanic migrations of humanity—arguably the most significant episode in human history—and the only such ship, original in material, pure in form, and still able to go to sea. We are now at an historic and decisive moment as *Star* and her few remaining peers, all masterpieces of human achievement, prepare to make their last stand. Fortunately, we are not powerless to affect the outcome, at least for *Star*.

At the Maritime Museum of San Diego, an extraordinary period of growth is also unfolding. Despite the challenging economic circumstances, it is now more important than ever that the planned growth go forward both to support the Museum's operational mission and to ensure the long-term survival of *Star of India*. By developing new assets and reorganizing existing assets, we are building the frame work and historical context via which *Star's* value to the wider community can be permanently secured. A key aspect of the strategy is that *Star* must continue to be a living and most importantly an active ship, capable of bringing immediacy and intensity to the story of the community's historical relationship with the sea. Why? The simple truth is that ships that are allowed to become static exhibits are typically doomed to evaporate from experience and personal memory. If we succeed in our goal, *Star* is more likely to survive.

Roll Call of Age of Sail Vessels

These vessels, while fortunate to have enjoyed years of extended life as museum exhibits, are nonetheless vanishing one by one.

- *Wawona* has taken her final voyage to be broken up.
- *HMS Carrick (City of Adelaide)* is destined to follow the same route.
- *Falls of Clyde* has been given a reprieve from her own museum's plans to scuttle her, but her future is still much in doubt.
- *Cutty Sark* is being slowly reassembled after an extensive conservation process and a catastrophic fire, but she is never to sail again.
- *Great Britain* has been permanently and atmospherically sealed into her dry-dock to conserve what remains of her hull plating.
- *C.A. Thayer* emerged from her rebuild with no funds or definite plans to restore her deckhouses, rudder, or rig.
- *Peking*, *Wavertree*, and *Balclutha* each year grow more dormant and removed from what they resembled and stood for as living ships.



Star of India
Photo by Jamie Steidl

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We know that the single most important aspect of historic ship preservation is hull maintenance. And fortunately, we have available to us an option that is effective, within our reach, and that will give *Star* another half century or even more in operating condition.


Several years ago, the Maritime Museum pioneered use of an industrial technology for historic ship preservation purposes. We applied an epoxy/ceramic material to *Berkeley's* hull in 2003 in an attempt to preserve her indefinitely, but it was also an experiment, that if successful, we hoped would also save one of the greatest remaining maritime treasures, *Star*. Since then, *Berkeley's* hull has indeed been stabilized and corrosion has been virtually eliminated, and, subsequently, the process has been adopted as an accepted treatment for the preservation of metal-hulled historic ships at other organizations.

The time is now right to use the process on *Star*. She must be hauled out in the coming weeks for the mandated U.S. Coast Guard inspection, without which she will be unable to continue sailing. Neither the haul out nor the additional cost of the coating is inexpensive, despite generous relief from suppliers and vendors. Nor is it helpful that this moment happens to coincide with an economic crisis, reminiscent in scale to what *Star of India* faced and barely survived almost eighty years ago. Nonetheless, the dry-docking is essential and the epoxy/ceramic coating is the most prudent way to proceed as it will reduce future repair costs.


We are calling upon your generosity, and this is an all hands call, to save the *Star of India*, to save the otherwise vanished world she represents, and ultimately to save the part of ourselves that could not bear to see the last living example of her kind slip away forever.

Thank you for your support of our ship in an hour of need.

Sincerely,



James A. Lonergan
Chairman, Board of Trustees



Gregory V. Gushaw
Trustee, Maintenance/Sail Crew, Docent