

PRESS CONFERENCE: SCHOONER WAWONA

SOS invites you to attend a sea going press conference to be held on Thursday, January 16, 1964, at 10:30 A.M., aboard the schooner WAWONA. Suitable refreshments will be provided. Ladies of the Press are advised to wear slacks and all attending are advised to wear rubber-soled shoes.

The ship is berthed at Vallentyne's Marine Repair, which is located at 1123 Fairview Avenue North, behind St. Vincent DePaul, Seattle, Washington.

At the conference, in addition to the press release, a copy of which is herewith enclosed, you will receive additional historical and background information about the WAWONA. You will also have the opportunity to talk to members of SOS, take photographs and share our enthusiasm for this grand old ship. In the event that you will be unable to attend the conference, but would like a copy of the material, kindly advise the office and we will forward it to you.

Save Our Ships
Pier 70
Seattle, Washington
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PRESS RELEASE

Plans to save the last remaining sailing ship available as a living maritime museum for Seattleites and Pacific Northwest visitors were announced today by members of Save Our Ships.

At a press conference today aboard the three-masted sailing schooner WAWONA, moored on Lake Union, members of SOS revealed that the ship is available for the floating project, but that it will take a community-wide effort to acquire the vessel and to restore her to the full glory of the days when she plied the waters of the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, California and the South Seas.

SOS was formed some six months ago and has been working quietly to acquire the WAWONA from her owner, William Studdert of Anaconda, Montana. Studdert bought the WAWONA some years ago for possible use as a trading vessel to carry cattle between the Pacific Coast and Kamchatka. Plans failed to materialize and for the past several years the famous ship has been idling at her lonely berth in the heart of Seattle.

In the meantime, while Seattle slept, far-sighted port cities like San Francisco and Astoria have quietly purchased and removed, with intense publicity, such famous vessels as the Lightship COLUMBIA, the C. A. THAYER and the WAPAMA. By mid-summer of 1963, only sailing vessels remained -- THE FALLS OF CLYDE and the WAWONA.

But still Seattle dozed. The FALLS OF CLYDE was all but on her way to an ignominious end as a sunken breakwater when Captain Adrian Raynaud interrupted a Museum Directors' national convention, alerted the Director of Honolulu's Bishop Museum to the impending fate of the FALLS OF CLYDE and thereby touched off a chain-lightning fund-raising drive. In five weeks, sufficient money was raised to purchase the ship for Honolulu.

In mid-October, Seattleites who happened to be at the Locks were amazed and saddened to see another phantom of a glorious past head westward, for restoration in a distant city. Despite press releases describing the FALLS' departure, Seattle continued to doze.

With the departure of the FALLS OF CLYDE, SOS redoubled its efforts to save the WAWONA. Its members knew she represented the last opportunity to establish a museum to preserve the Pacific Northwest's maritime heritage.

Chaired by Councilman Wing Luke, the SOS officers are: John Haydon, Publisher of the Marine Digest and President of the Port Commission of The Port of Seattle -- Vice Chairman. John H. Ross, attorney and school teacher -- Director. Eric Wall, Manager of the University Branch of Seattle Trust and Savings Bank -- Treasurer. Mrs. Anne A. Wagner, daughter of the late Capt. Donald T. Adams, U.S.C.G. -- Secretary.

In addition, there are 15 other members of the SOS Committee, all of whom are vitally interested in Puget Sound's maritime history and the WAWONA.

A former New England attorney and school teacher, John H. Ross, who recently moved to the Pacific Northwest because of his interest in Puget Sound and its maritime tradition, was named Director of Save Our Ships. He carried on negotiations with Studdert in Montana for several months, and secured the WAWONA by personally borrowing the necessary funds.

Although Ross has been approached by several groups outside Seattle who wish to acquire the vessel, he has offered the ship at his purchase price to SOS and the community, if they can put together an acquisition program within a reasonable length of time.

SOS is now considering methods of financing the purchase of the ship for restoration and moorage for exhibit in Seattle. Plans to achieve these objectives and methods by which the people of Seattle can participate are being explored and will soon be announced.

The WAWONA, built in Fairhaven, California in 1897, is 165 feet overall, and is reputed to be the largest three-masted fore-and-aft rigged sailing vessel built in North America. She was a model for the ships chronicled in Peter B. Kyne's "Cappy Ricks" stories. Her first captain, "Matt" Peasley, lent his personality to a character in the tales. By great good fortune Harry Dring, of San Francisco's State Maritime Monument, purchased Capt. Peasley's own telescope, and has most generously passed it on to Ross so that it may become a part of WAWONA'S growing collection of historic "gear".

The WAWONA had two lives -- first, as a lumber carrier in Pacific waters, then as a codfisherman in the Bering Sea. She had brief interludes as a trader in the Pacific Islands, and in the salmon cannery business.

Speaking of the WAWONA, which he pointed out is the last fore-and-aft sailing ship available anywhere, Councilman Wing Luke, Chairman of SOS said, "We now have real enthusiasm. Preservation of this ship -- will soon be a practical reality. This project will perpetuate knowledge of these old ships and their operation not only for ourselves but for future generations. We invite all persons interested in the welfare and heritage of our community to join us in this exciting and historic venture."