



## THE CONNECTICUT MARINE MODEL SOCIETY

☀ CMMS NEWSLETTER ☀ DECEMBER, 2016

Happy New Year! — and may you and yours enjoy good health and prosperity in 2017.

We start the new year with an exploration theme. A 15th century Chinese admiral, **Zheng He**, led fleets of sailing ships that were much bigger than anything the Europeans made during this era. His extensive and numerous voyages with these massive ships predated — by nearly a century — the European “Age of Discovery.” What does this have to do with us?

My immediate thought is that one should be aware of one’s own biases. My formal education in history was Euro-centric which I now understand excluded much from other cultures, particularly Asian ones. I learned that the Portuguese, the Spanish and the English were the most important world explorers. Then I read about **Zheng He**. Add to this, the Vikings — and even the Polynesians.

I think that our ancestors the world over were every bit as

intelligent as we are. Today’s technology is more advanced because we’ve built it *on top* of the discoveries of *all* these ancestors; it’s our cumulative and collective knowledge base. When we build our ship models, we are rediscovering earlier technologies and also exploring their achievements.

Therefore, research and faithful attention to accuracy make the best models. What do you think?

Keep building and above all, have fun — *Duff*



[www.ctshipmodels.org](http://www.ctshipmodels.org)



## Secretary's Report, December, 2016



After calling the meeting to order, Club President, **Duff Griffith**, introduced **Robert Kerson**, Fred's brother who attended as his guest. Robert has been a guest at several meetings in the past and it was good to welcome him back.

Since this meeting included our annual holiday luncheon, we proceeded directly to a brief Treasurer's report. **Pete Carlin** gave an update on the collection of annual dues that, he reminded everyone, are payable by January 1. Pete was pleased to announce that many members have already paid and he expected that most members will have paid their dues before the next meeting. He also expected that the few who haven't would pay their dues at the January meeting. Please remember that there are two levels of dues: regular dues are \$25 and include an electronic copy of our newsletter, and \$40 for those members who wish to have a printed

copy of the newsletter mailed to them.

The Secretary reported that in response to the fact that our club bylaws had not been revised since 1984, the club's officers and **Bob Siegler** were in the process of revising the bylaws to reflect our current practices. Revisions are in progress and a process for proceeding will be developed and discussed at the January meeting. We then proceeded directly to the voting for the *Jim Wiser Award*.

There were six outstanding models entered by members this year creating a very difficult choice for everyone. Ballots were available for those who did not bring a printed copy. Vice President **Bill Strachan**, counted the ballots submitted at the meeting and

also ballots submitted earlier by members who chose to vote by email, telephone or snail mail. The winner of the Wiser Award was **Phil Crombie** for his model of the *U.S.S. Essex*, an American warship, that he scratch-built (scale: 1:96).

Given the outstanding craftsmanship and artistry of each model entry, everyone found it particularly difficult to choose a winner this year. While we all congratulate Phil, we also need to recognize all of our model makers who entered this year.

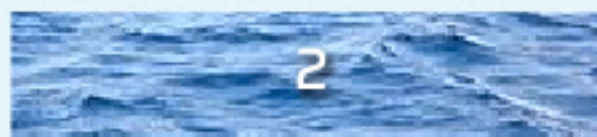
Our annual holiday luncheon was much enjoyed by everyone as was the "show and tell." By tradition, presentations at our December meeting included the eclectic interests of our

club members, in addition to ship models that are our normal fare. Our next meeting will be in our usual location on Saturday, **January 14th**.

Respectfully submitted,  
**Al Saubermann**  
Secretary CMMS



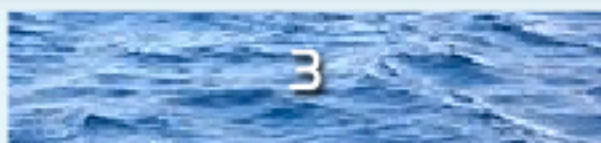
Member, **Phil Crombie**, was awarded the CMMS **Annual Wiser Award** for *Outstanding Artistry and Craftsmanship* for his model of the *U.S.S. Essex*. Congratulations, Phil! His name will be added to the others on the club's Award Plaque. A framed certificate will be given to Phil at the January, 2017 meeting.



Once again **Fred Kerson** treated us to a small handful of Civil War era relics from his extensive collection. December's meeting, as everyone knows, is one in which members are encouraged to share their other hobby items and interests.

Fred told us about his "show piece" — a soldier's cap from the *Grand Army of The Republic* (let's just call this the post-war victors' winner's hat, circa 1867). Items from both the earlier Indian Wars and the War of 1812 are displayed in specially constructed boxes.

He also shared interesting information about the valuations of items prized by Civil War era collectors like himself. Of interest is the fact that Confederacy memorabilia are more highly valued owing principally to the much smaller numbers of items made. Some of the buttons, badges and even embroidery patches for uniforms can command pretty steep prices - depending upon provenance. Fred concluded that he isn't actively making a ship model at this time (but none of us will hold this against him). In response to mentions of valuations of Fred's memorabilia, someone shouted: "We're in the wrong hobby!"

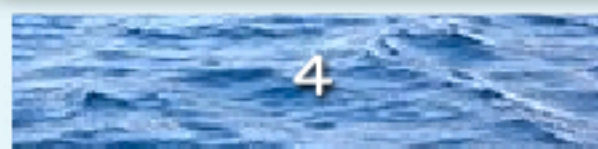


## Good Stuff From The Bench



This last meeting was Connecticut "Fleet Week" for member, **John Fisher**. He brought in a wide array of scratch-made, WWII-era miniature navy ships that he has dubbed his "BB Gun flotilla." John built these little gems when he was a youngster and amazingly, they were all designed to float so that he and his buddies could challenge one another to naval "battles." His fleet includes submarines and there wasn't any particular scale to any of them. He didn't explain the "Rules Of Engagement" but we could all easily imagine what a few boys with Daisy air rifles could negotiate in the backyard on a hot summer's day. He explained that the fabrication of the mini-battleships became quite sophisticated. For example, the hulls were built with metal compartments so that when one took a direct bb gun hit, it wouldn't immediately

sink. John also told us he lost many of his models in a tragic house fire a few years ago. For the record, John's last BB-gun flotilla battle was in 1970, in his basement. We must assume there has been a Peace Accord ever since.



## Good Stuff From The Bench

**Duff Griffith** - hefted a BIG, heavy box from kit maker, **Dumas**, to show us his latest commission build. The kit is a model of a 36' covered and motorized *United States Coast Guard lifeboat*, to be constructed mostly from balsa components. It's designed to be equipped with batteries and motors, however his client wants it to be a static model.

"didididahdahdididit"

....any sailors here recognize this Morse Code prosign?



**Dave Dinan** brought in a delicious deli luncheon meat platter for our holiday luncheon - and, oh yeah, his kool model of a WWII *PV-1 Ventura* anti-submarine aircraft. The model is a warplane that was credited with the sinking of the first German submarine off the coast of North America in 1943. The styrene model is a heavily-bashed kit from the company **Minicraft** in 1/72 scale.

Dave likes to place some of this models in diorama settings — like the one shown here — replete with the Navy plane's pilot, co-pilot and two gunners.

He displayed it for us with a magazine article about the plane and it's heroic crew.



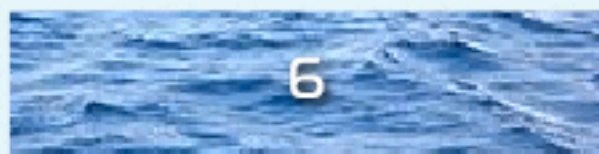
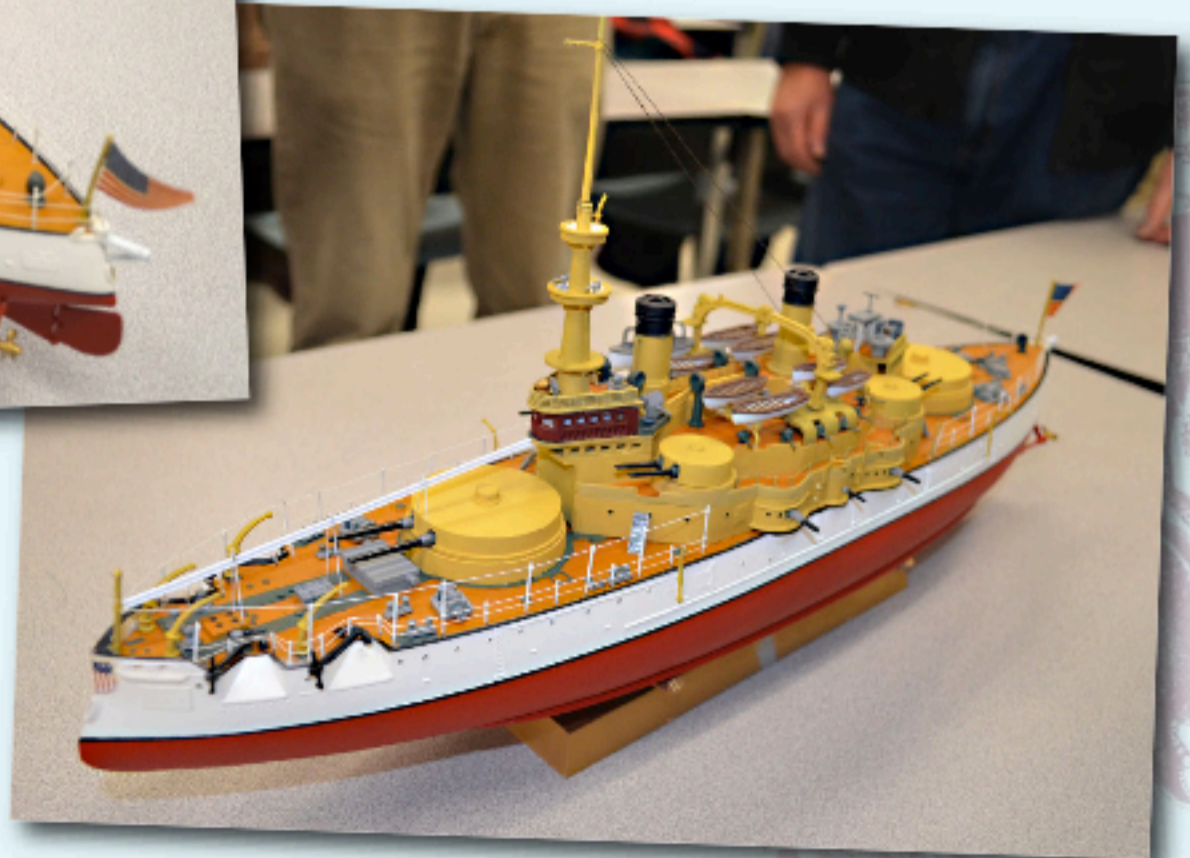
## Good Stuff From The Bench



**Rick Abramson** dared to wear a model train/railroading sweatshirt to the meeting. How cheeky. After getting over the shock and settling down, we heard Rick tell us about his *U.S.S. Oregon*, an ITC plastic model that he built in 1978. It was originally released in 1959 in "box scale" (*remember this term from a previous Newsletter?*). He recalls paying \$2.98 for the kit which he estimates is in 1/232 scale. The Navy battleship was a fleet ship in the Spanish American War in the late 19th century (1895). She fought in the battle of Santiago Bay, Cuba and wasn't scrapped until after WWII.

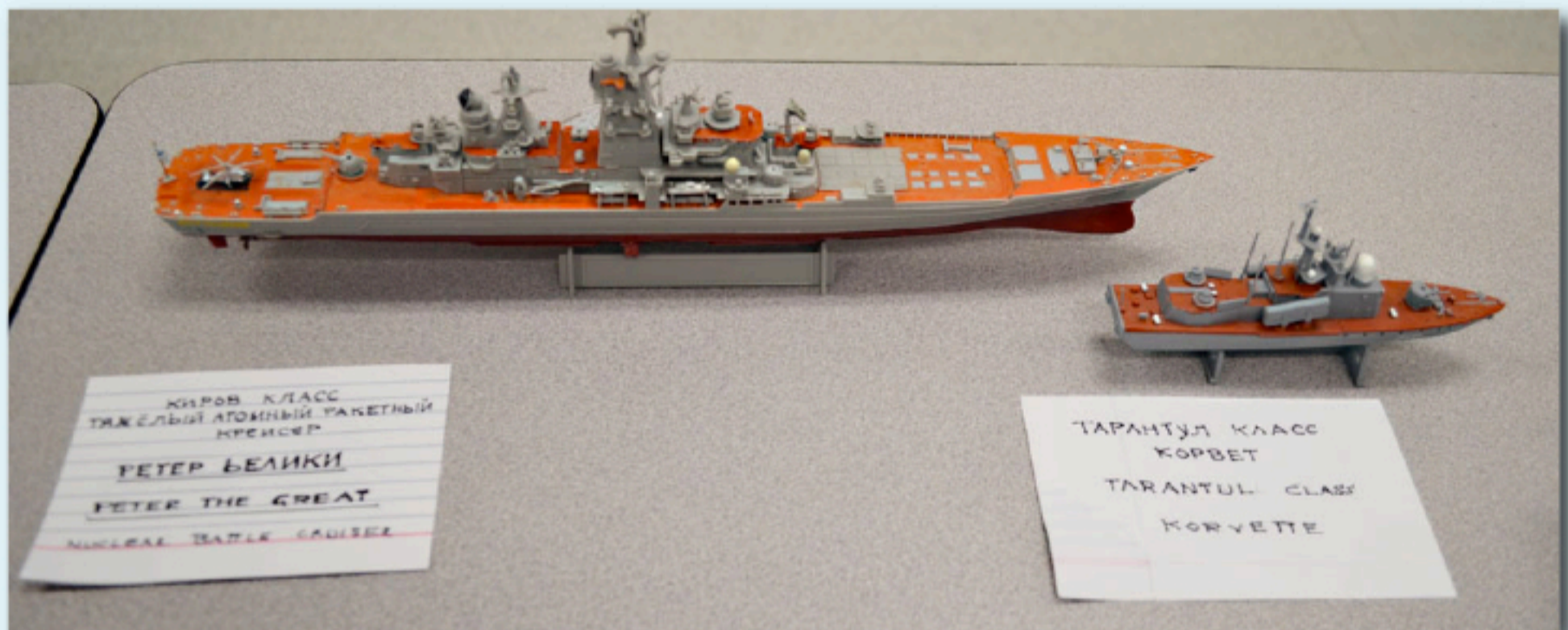
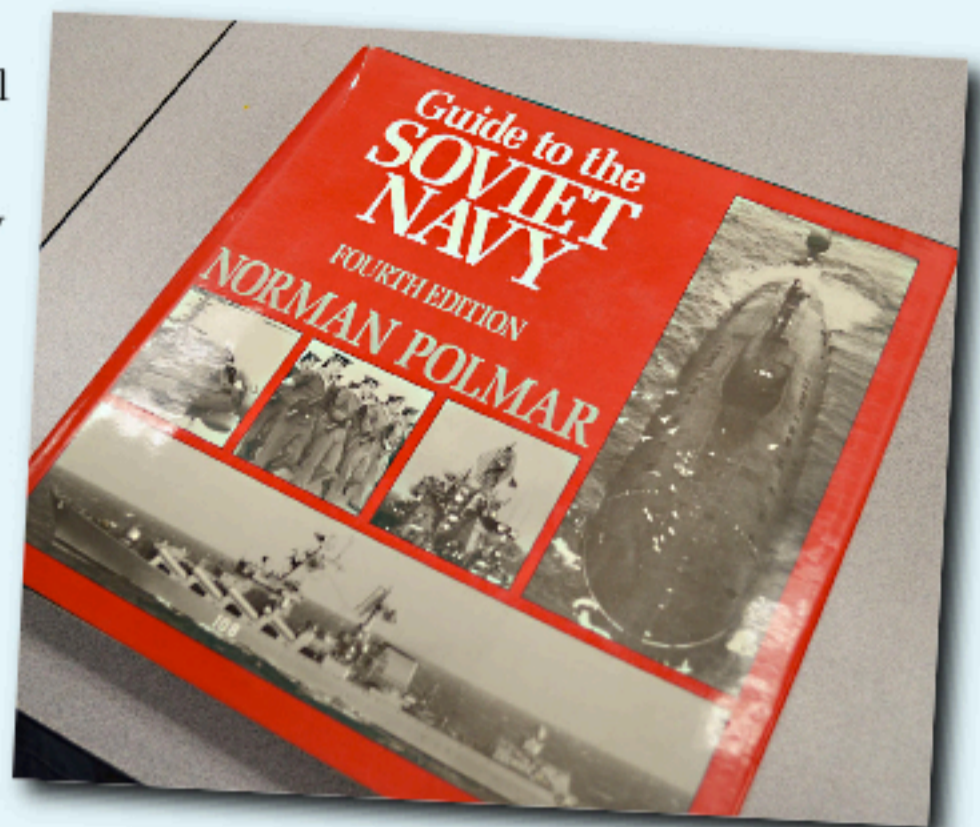
Like all of Rick's models, he's detailed it superbly and conformed his painting to accurate color treatments. He added miniature railings as well as other details. He also referred members who are interested in this maritime period to a book entitled: **The American Steel Navy** which he says is a great (and apparently the only) accurate reference for this period of U.S. naval history.

We're always impressed with Rick's Schtick (*as well as encyclopedic steel navy knowledge*).



## Good Stuff From The Bench

Howard Williams has had an interest in models of Russian ships as well as the history of the Russian steel navy. He brought in a reference book on the subject with two models he's built from *Trumpeter* kits: a Kirov Class, nuclear-powered battle cruiser "Peter The Great" and a smaller Tarantul Class Corvette. He purchased both for \$25. The scale is 1/700, which is one of the standards for these small scale kits. Howard told us that while he was in the service (Navy), he did see actual Russian warships — from a distance. When asked if he had any interest in learning to speak Russian, I overheard him say: "Nyet!"



Here is a replica of the first Russian "submarine" currently on display in St. Petersburg, Russia. This odd-looking ship (?) — or boat — is from the late 17th century and was commissioned by Peter The Great. Note the propulsion system, the quaint leaded glass window, the large rudder and bell-shaped ballast weights. It wasn't fully submersible but the designers were on to something interesting. On land it was a really kool place to drink vodka, hide from officers and share heroic sea stories.



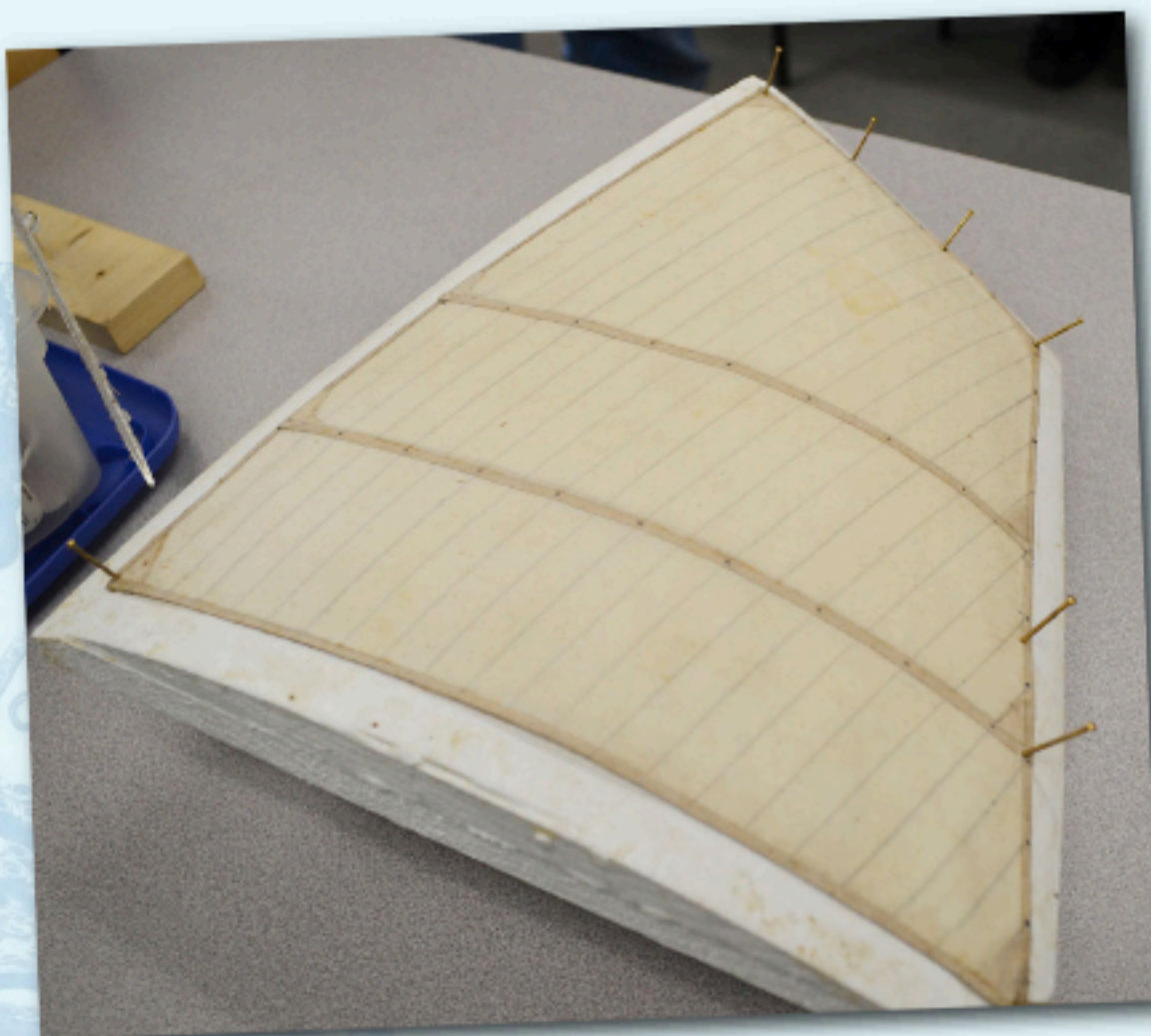
## Good Stuff From The Bench



**Jack Dillon** has been trying out some new sail making techniques lately. At the last meeting (see November's Newsletter), Jack talked about how he fabricates his sails. Once his sails are ready to catch some wind, he affixes each to a carved wooden profile form (these sails will be for his 1/4" - scale model of the

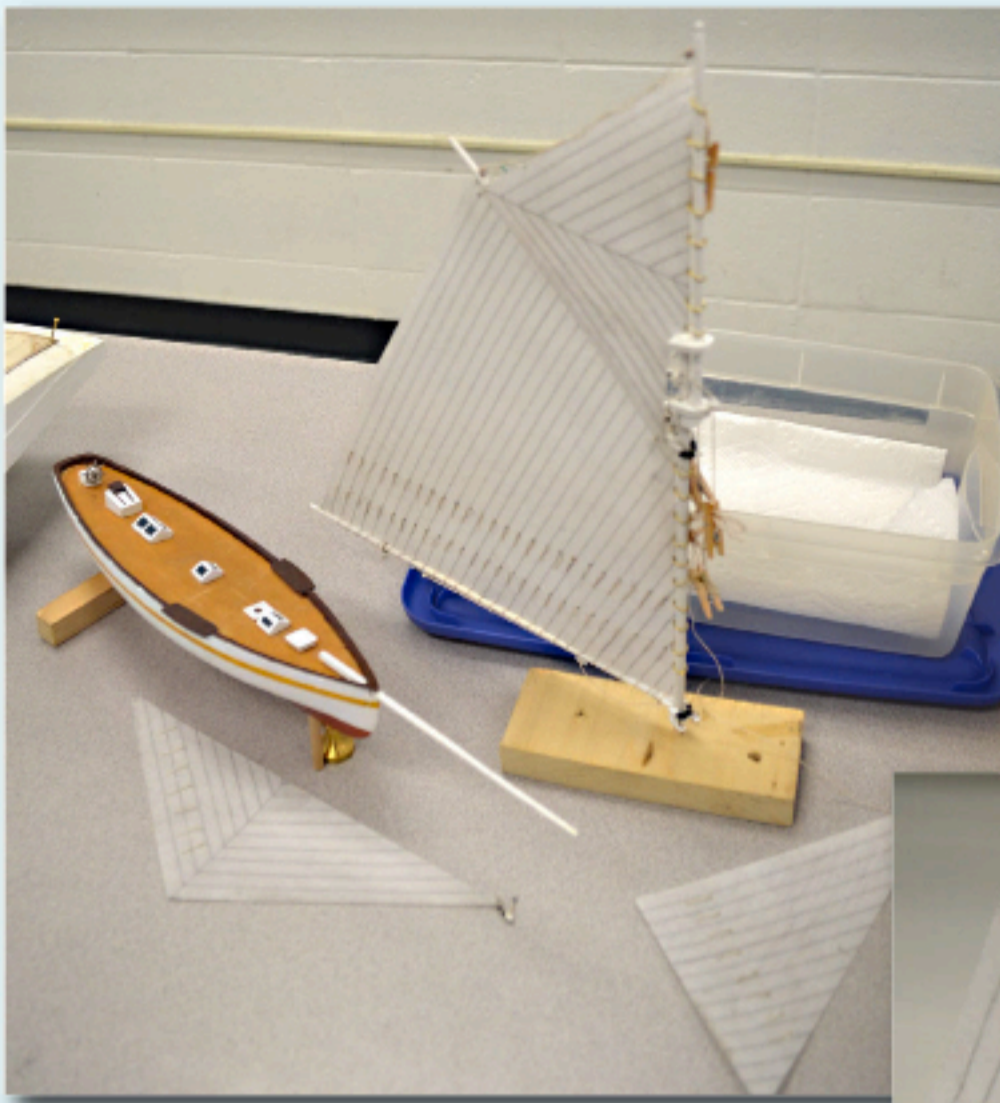
Armed Virginia Sloop, *Providence*). Before being pinned to its matching form, each near-completed fabric sail is soaked in a fabric stiffening solution and then is left to dry. To make the removal easier, he coats the painted forms with beeswax.

Once the sails are dry and carefully removed from the forms, Jack will add bolt ropes (and cringles) along the appropriate edges of each sail. His *Providence* will sport a large mainsail, a topsail, a driver, a staysail and two jibs. And a partridge in a pear... (Oh, sorry, I'm still in a holiday mood). When all the sails are mounted with the ship's rigging, this is going to be one impressive and realistic-looking model!





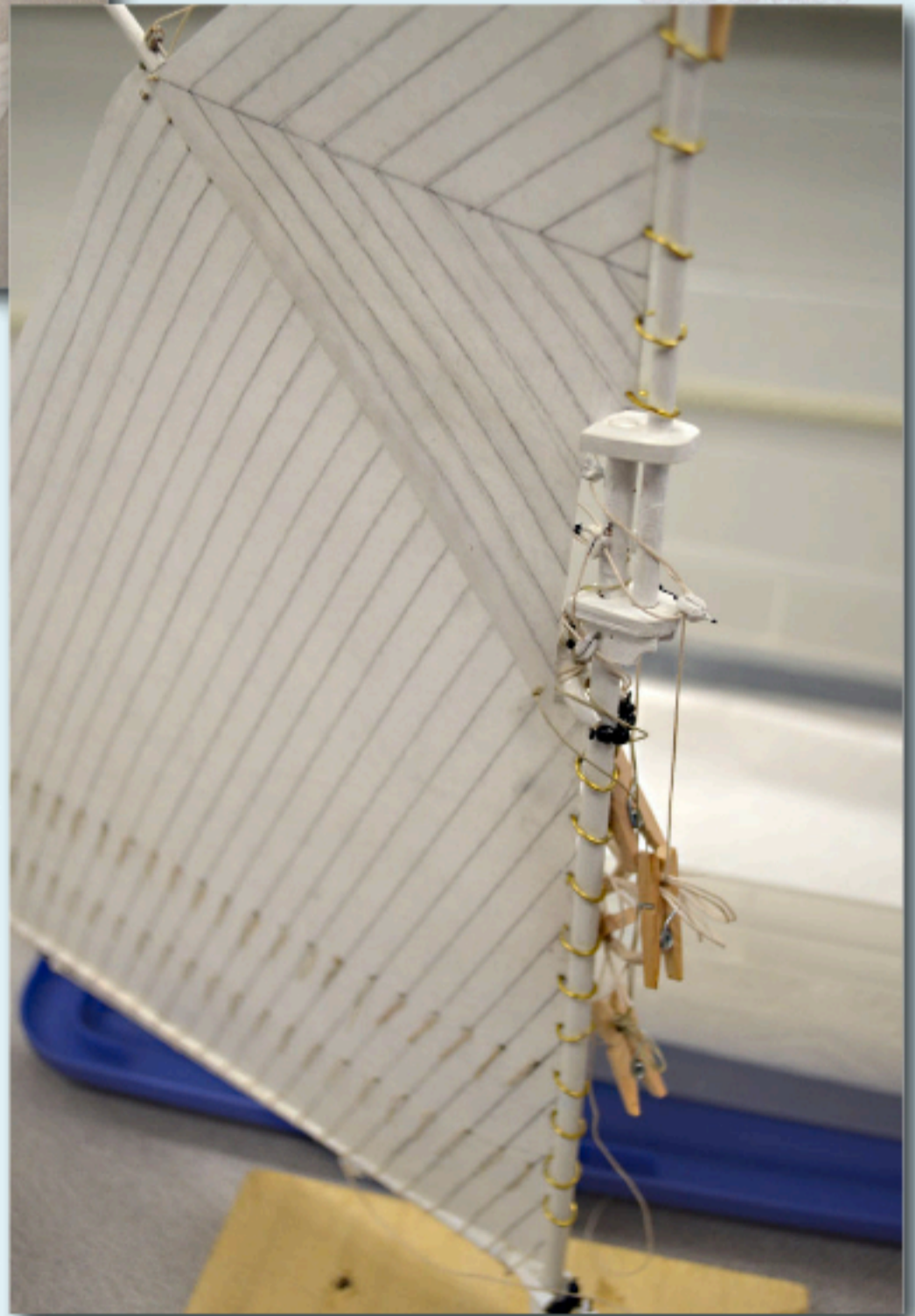
## Good Stuff From The Bench



**Tom Kane** - has picked-up another interesting restoration commission. The model shown here is of an Irish racing yacht that beat the English in 1885. On specifics, his client requested that he use no paint on the hull, or furnish a protective case when completed. The client is always wrong- er, right, I mean.

Tom has employed the same materials and techniques he relies upon for fabricating his very realistic looking sails.

Tom contacted club member, **Nic Damuck**, for a set of plans since his client had no reference details about the model, originally a 1/8" scale *Bluejacket* kit. Most members know that Nic was an active member and President of CMMS until he became the owner of model manufacturer, *Bluejacket Shipcrafters Inc.*, which is located in Searsport, Maine.



# THE ZHENG HE VOYAGES, 1405-1433



In Chinese history, there were seven Ming-era maritime "treasure fleet" voyages between 1405 and 1433. The Ming Emperor initiated the construction of the naval fleet in 1403. The immense project resulted in the far-reaching ocean voyages to the coastal territories and islands in and around the *South China Sea*, the *Indian Ocean*, and beyond. Admiral **Zheng He** was commissioned to command the treasure fleet for the expeditions. The first three voyages reached up to Calcutta on India's southwestern coast, while the fourth voyage went as far as Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. The fifth, sixth and last voyages were farther away to the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa.

These Chinese "expeditionary fleets" were heavily militarized and carried great amounts of trade goods, which served to project Chinese power and wealth. The voyages brought back many foreign ambassadors whose kings and rulers were willing to declare them-



Chinese Admiral  
Zheng He

selves tributaries of China. During the course of the voyages, they destroyed Chen Zuyi's pirate fleet at Palembang, conquered the Sinhalese Kotte kingdom of King Alekeshvara, and defeated the forces of the Semudera pretender Sekandar in northern Sumatra. The Chinese maritime exploits had brought many foreign countries into the nation's tributary system and sphere of influence through both military and political supremacy, thus incorporating the states into the greater Chinese world order under Ming suzerainty.

The treasure voyages were commanded and overseen by the eunuch establishment whose political influence was heavily dependent on imperial favor (Zheng He was a eunuch). Around the end of these maritime voyages, civil government gained the upper hand within the state bureaucracy, while the eunuchs gradually fell out of favor after the death of the Yongle (Ming) Emperor.



# THE ZHENG HE VOYAGES, 1405-1433

A full-size replica Zheng He "Treasure Ship" is a modern Chinese tourist attraction.



to 1407 contained 317 vessels with a staff of 70 eunuchs, 180 medical personnel, 5 astrologers, and 300 military officers commanding a total estimated force of 26,800 men.

The enormous missions were discontinued after the death of Zheng He, yet his death was only one of many culminating factors that brought the missions to an end.

The Ming Empire had conquered and annexed Vietnam in 1407, but Ming troops were pushed out in 1428 with significant reductions to the Ming treasury. But it was the threat and revival of Mongol power on the northern steppe which drew the state's attention away from naval expansion and territorial acquisitions. The Ming Emperor also launched enormous land invasions deep into

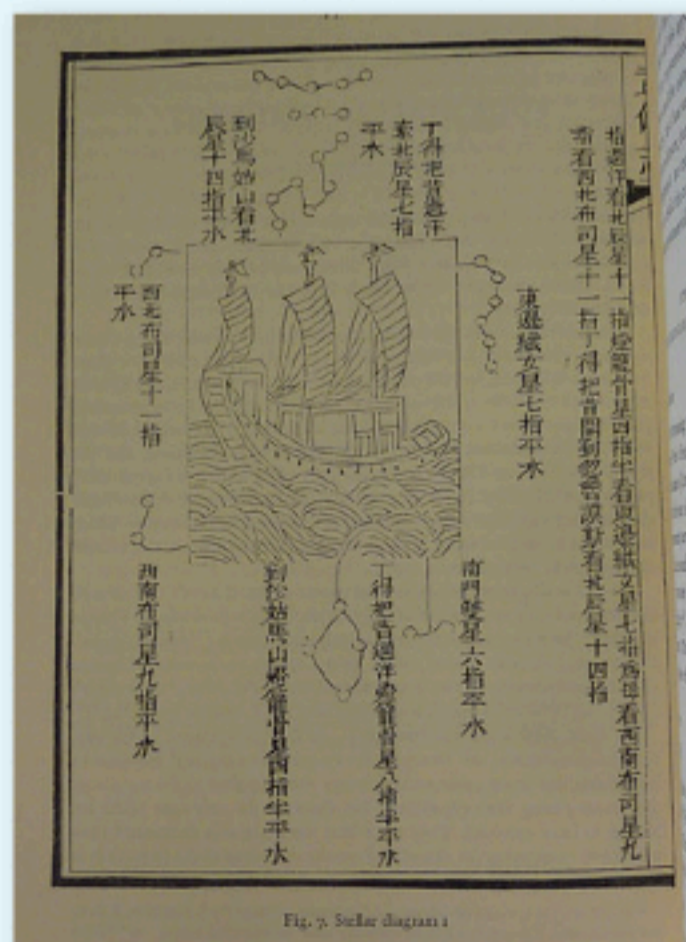
Mongol territory, competing with Korea for lands in Manchuria as well.

To face an increasing Mongol threat to the north, massive amounts of money were diverted from the naval investments to build the Great Wall after 1474. The Chinese capital also moved from Nanjing to Beijing (in the North) in response to the court's need to

keep a closer eye on the Mongol threat.

century, Ming China had become the pre-eminent naval power by projecting its sea-power further to the south and west. There is still much debate to this day about the actual purpose of the voyages, the size of the ships, the magnitude of the fleet, the routes taken, the nautical charts employed, the countries visited, and the cargo carried.

The Chinese had sent diplomatic missions over land and west since the Han dynasty (202 BC–220 AD) and had been engaged in private overseas trade leading all the way to East Africa for centuries — culminating in the Song and Yuan dynasties — but no government-sponsored "conquering" mission of this size had ever been assembled before. To service seven different exploits abroad, the Nanjing shipyards constructed **two thousand vessels** from 1403 to 1419, which included the large Chinese ships that measured as much as 450 ft in length and 180 ft in width. The first voyage from 1405



A Chinese "Stellar" navigation map. As seen in the cover photo, the large ships had as many as 9 masts which were staggered and vertically offset in order to capture more wind — a clever design which was necessary to move the immense, keel-less ships through the ocean. To this day, Chinese rigging systems feature sails with longitudinal battens that can be easily hauled from deck positions. These 700 year-old ships are the antecedents of the typical "Chinese Junk" seen in the modern era.





**Next Meeting:  
January 14, 2017**

**CMMS MEETINGS ARE THE  
SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH  
SEPTEMBER THRU JUNE  
† 10:00 AM TO NOON  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN  
300 ORANGE AVENUE † WEST HAVEN  
CONNECTICUT 06531  
KAPLAN HALL**

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**Front:** Model exhibit in Nanjing, China of a **Zheng He** "Treasure Ship" shown alongside a same-scale model of **Columbus'** 1492 flagship, **Santa Maria**. Some 15th century Chinese fleet vessels were as large as 450 feet long and 180 feet wide.

**Rear:** A photo of a Spanish reproduction of the **Santa Maria** taken in 1892. The ship's length was approximately 58 ft. long with a beam of 18 ft.

*The Connecticut Marine Model Society is a member of the IPMS, Connecticut Chapter*



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Zheng He, China and the Oceans in the Ming  
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and Wikipedia.org

[www.ctshipmodels.org](http://www.ctshipmodels.org)

