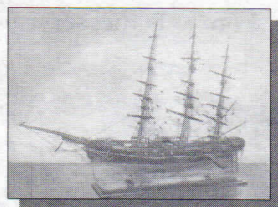




Highlighting the History of The Boston Seaman's Friend Society, Inc.

Soundings

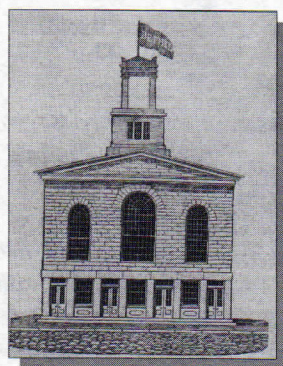
1816 The Reverend Ward Stafford's impassioned pleas on behalf of the urban poor to merchants and city fathers at **Boston's Old South Church** and **Park Street Church** challenge Bostonians to a public ministry with seafarers in the Port of Boston.



1818 The Bethel Flag is raised in Boston by the **Society for the Religious and Moral Instruction of the Poor**, when The Reverend William Jenks, D.D. begins preaching in a sail-cloth sanctuary under the observatory on Central Wharf. His "Seamen's Meeting" continues until 1825 when Reverend Jenks is called by the Green Street Church in Boston.

Setting Sail

1827 The **Boston Seaman's Friend Society** is founded in Revered Lyman Beecher's **Hanover Street Church**, by a small group of Christian laymen, to be an independent branch of **The American Seaman's Friend Society**. Two years later the Society is incorporated by the Massachusetts State Legislature.



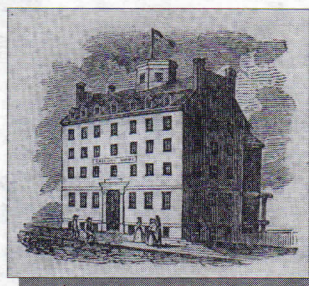
*Mariners' Church
1829-1852*

1830 The **Mariners' Church** is erected, on the easterly side of Fort Hill, and raises the Bethel Flag. Here seafarers of all denominations are welcomed and invited to participate in worship. Bibles and tracts are distributed in English, French, and Spanish. At **The Mariners' Church**, 3 services are held each Sunday. The evening meeting provides opportunity for ship masters and seamen to participate.

1833 A savings bank for seamen (the direct ancestor of the Suffolk Savings Bank) opens, sponsored jointly by **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society** and **The Boston Port Society**.

1836 **The Sailors' Home**, a "commodious wooden mansion" on Purchase Street, is purchased and opens as the first of many boarding houses for seafarers. In 1845, it is replaced by a brick building erected jointly by **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society** and **The Ladies' Seaman's Friend Society**. By 1850, the home averages more than 2,800 boarders annually.

1854 Fire destroys **The Sailor's Home**. It is quickly rebuilt as a 5-story building, containing 94 sleeping rooms, a library, and smoking and dining rooms, "to make Jack's stay on shore safe as well as comfortable, to elevate the man, to make him better as well as to care for his physical well-being." The Reverend Elijah Kellogg, of Harpswell, Maine, is called as pastor and chaplain. With the aid of Captain Andrew Bartlett, retired ship master of Plymouth, libraries are placed on merchant vessels.



The Sailor's Home, 1845-1852

"A few years have developed a wonderful interest in the welfare of the toiling slave. The Church has rolled out its majestic condemnation of the wrong... But how few the presses that have pleaded for three million sailors; how tardily is justice done when a sailor is beaten to death on shipboard..."

Daniel D. Eddy
1860 BSFS Annual Report

Rocks & Shoals

The American Civil War results in major shifts in merchant shipping: steam navigation rapidly replaces the American sailing vessel. A foreign merchant marine (led by the British) overtakes the American merchant trade. The result: American seafarers are out of work and American shipyards decline.

1867 **The Mariners' Church** unites with **Salem Street Church**, to form **The Salem & Mariners' Church**. Reverend J.M.N. Dow, **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society** Port Chaplain, becomes its pastor. **The Sailor's Home** is maintained and continues operations.

1872 The City of Boston begins to level Fort Hill. A year later the church is sold and **The Sailor's Home** is closed. A new church and Sailor's Home is erected on the site of the old **Salem & Mariners' Church** (Salem and North Bennet Streets). In 1878, **Salem and Mariners' Church** is dissolved, as is its relationship to **The American Seamen's Friend Society**. As a result **The Sailor's Home** closes its lodging facility.

1880 The **Boston Seaman's Friend Society** relocates to a leased hall at 175 Hanover Street, and the boarding-house feature of the ministry ends temporarily.

Steady As She Goes

1888 "The Sea Breeze," a journal for friends of the maritime cause is first issued, intended "to be a cheerful, spicy and steady breeze blowing helpfully for all craft heading toward the rising sun, while to all craft sailing in the opposite direction it will be constant head wind."

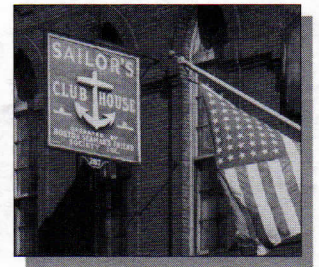
1889 On behalf of **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society**, Madison Edwards, of Falmouth, Massachusetts, initiates a new ministry on the island of Martha's Vineyard. Thousands of ships pass annually through the Vineyard Sound. Edwards holds services in vessels at Woods Holl (now known as Woods Hole) and opens an on-shore reading room.

"The month of October has been characterized by very severe gales along our coast...In the shipwreck there are hours of anxiety; the work to shorten sail; the gathering of the remnants of a mast blown to ribbons; the cutting away of a mast to relieve the ship, or possibly it is carried away by the fearful gale...Then come the long hours of heroic suffering in the open boat. Happy men, if a passing sail sight them and bring succor. It is this long struggle with danger, this facing disaster and danger and death for hours, which tests the bravery and mettle of men. Rescued men from such experiences often call at our rooms. They are often penniless, and have only what they stand in, and sadly need a little help to fit them to ship on another voyage...This is a practical charity to worthy men."

—Captain S.S. Nickerson, 1890

1893 The **Sailor's Club House** on Hanover Street, Boston (later known as **The Sailor's Rest and Chapel**) is dedicated in Boston. There the ministry continues to expand and house the Society, until its re-location in 1970. Because of its anchor sign, it becomes known as "**The Hook**."

In October 1893, a chapel and sailor's reading room are opened at the head of Steamboat Wharf on Martha's Vineyard, and the rooms soon become known to islanders and seafarers alike as **The Seaman's Bethel**. In the same year, the launch of the *Helen May* is dedicated, for use in bringing a personal welcome to seafarers and to "bring sailor lads of Vineyard Sound ashore to Bethel services."



"The Hook"
Sailor's Club House, 1893-1970
Hanover Street, Boston



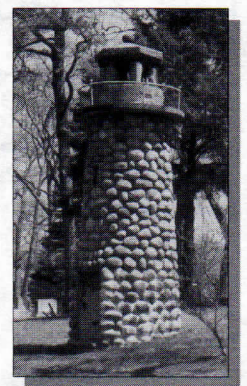
Sailor's Rest and Chapel
287 Hanover Street, Boston

"Early in September we began a school for seamen. Quite a number of young sailors have availed themselves of this opportunity. It is surprising how rapidly these men improve in writing, spelling, and reading. We hope that money may be given specifically to this branch of the Boston Seaman's Friend Society work, the outcome of which will be the better and safer navigation of the sea."

—Captain S.S. Nickerson,
November 1893

1895 The **Women's Boston Seaman's Friend Society** creates a "home away from home" for seafarers at **The Sailor's Rest**. Their special ministry includes assembling Comfort Bags (later known as **Ditty Bags**), sewing kits, and knitting watch caps, mittens, "helmets," and other items useful to seafarers. This Ditty Bag tradition continues today with donations from organizations throughout New England.

1899 Madison Edward's dream to create a burial site for the unfortunate sailors who die of disease or shipwreck is realized on Martha's Vineyard. Soon a stone lighthouse is erected on the site as a memorial to lost and otherwise forgotten seafarers.



Oak Grove Cemetery at
Vineyard Haven

1912 In one year alone 30,851 visit **The Sailors' Rest**. Fifty shipwrecked men are re-clothed for sea and sixty more are partially refitted. 391 destitute sailors are lodged and fed. 36 men (shipwrecked or hospitalized) are assisted by **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society** in returning to their homes.

1914 The "**Anchor Alliance**," a temperance union for seafarers, is formed by Mrs. Eleanor May Roulston (known affectionately as "Mother Roulston" to thousands of young seafarers). With her support, these proud bluejackets— marines, radio men, and merchant sailors pledge themselves to industrious, sober, and godly living. By 1920, the Alliance boasts a membership of more than 3,600. "**Hold Fast**," a seafarer's union similar in philosophy and approach is formed by Madison Edwards at **The Seaman's Bethel** on Martha's Vineyard.

In 1915 the Cape Cod Canal is opened, eliminating the dangerous passage around the Cape, and allowing westerly bound vessels to completely by-pass Martha's Vineyard.

1917 In response to a need for "good, inexpensive lodging accommodations," at the request of the Charlestown Navy Yard, and as a war duty, **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society** equips a dormitory room to accommodate blue jackets on shore leave.

1919 **The National Society of Congregational Churches** votes to "heartily endorse the work which our New England Congregational Churches have maintained for many years, through **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society**." There follow endorsements by each of the six **New England Congregational Conferences**, in turn, making **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society** an agent of the Conferences. "in the work of promoting the spiritual and temporal welfare of seamen."

Adjusting the Course

1922 **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society** re-incorporates under the laws of Massachusetts, and a new charter is granted. Affairs of the Society are placed in the hands of representatives appointed by the **New England Congregational Conferences**.

1926 Madison Edwards dies, having served as Port Chaplain in Vineyard Sound for 37 years. In 1930, a new launch, the **Madison Edwards**, is dedicated. Edwards is succeeded by his son-in-law **Austin Tower**.

The Great Depression affects American seafarers no less than any other class of workers, and, as the need to support out-of-work seafarers increases monthly, the strain on the resources of the Society also grows.

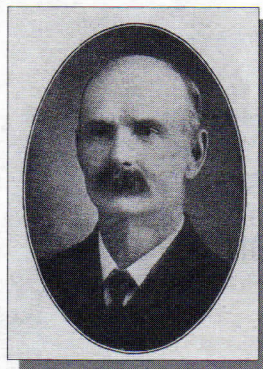
1932 **The Sailors' Rest** waives its rule that requires "a seamen to have papers showing he had been to sea within two months."

1936 During the seaman's strike, **The Sailors' Rest** handles the emergency of the "sitting down" of engineers, stewards, cooks, and able-bodied seamen, winning the confidence and good will of both strikers and the shipping companies. At that point, **The Sailors' Rest** shelters 18,215 seafarers, serves 38,803 meals, and visits seafarers aboard 747 ships.

1939 War breaks out in Europe. **The Sailors' Rest** becomes a haven for seamen, especially British and Norwegian, whose lives are in imminent peril from submarines. **The Women's Seamen's Friend Society** maintains "**The Hut**" at the Marine Hospital, where men can read, play games, and socialize.

1943 Victory Ships, lacking reading materials, are supplied by the Society and entertainment for merchant seafarers and Navy alike are given at **The Sailor's Rest**.

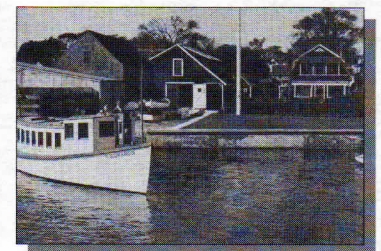
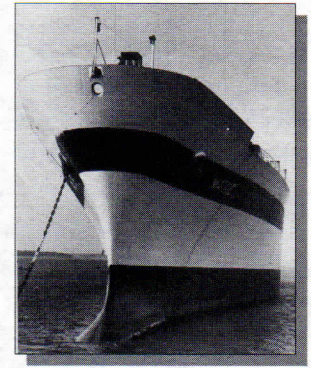
"Everything possible was done to keep the atmosphere and mood of the Rest jolly and hopeful, but because of the terrible toll from torpedoes, the response of seamen leaving the Rest changed from "When I see you again" to "If..."



Madison Edwards
Chaplain, Vineyard Haven
1888-1926

1947 **The Scandinavian Sailor's Mission** moves into the Hanover Street club house. The mission, founded about 1880, came under the **Swedish Mission Church** whose own Sailor's Home had burned in 1935. Its chaplain is **The Reverend J. Waldemar Harald**.

1958 On August 7, the oil tankers S.S. *Gulfoil* and the S.E. *Graham* collide off the coast of Newport, Rhode Island, resulting in the greatest marine disaster in New England since the sinking of the liner *Andrea Doria*. Clothing, supplies, and encouragement are distributed to many of the 34 surviving crewmen at both **The Marine Hospital** and at **The Sailors' Club House**.



*The Seaman's Bethel,
Vineyard Haven*

1970 **Seaman's House** relocates to Park Square, Boston, and (because of the development of Park Square), re-locates again in 1978 to 45 Church Street in Boston's historic Bay Village neighborhood.

1973 **The Seaman's Bethel** property at Vineyard Haven is taken by the Nantucket Steamship Authority, and **The Bethel** relocates.



Full Steam Ahead

1994 **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society, Inc.** opens a regional office in Portland, Maine. Ship visits by Port Chaplains and Volunteers begin in the busy Ports of Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Portland, Maine.

1997 The Society re-focuses its programs on the Martha's Vineyard branch. A scholarship program for children of families whose livelihoods are related to seafaring is supported and expanded through bequests from Harriet N. Goldberg and Mary P. Marsh.

The four Boston-based maritime ministries (**Seafarer's Friend**, the **Boston Port & Seaman's Aid Society**, **Apostleship of the Sea**, and the **New England Seafarer's Mission**) meet to form the **New England Maritime Ministries Association**, launching cooperative efforts to meet the modern needs of seafarers in the Port of Boston

1998 **The New Hampshire Public Service Company** provides spaces for a Visitors Center and office in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

On March 20, **The Boston Seaman's Friend Society, Inc.** announces that it will operate with the new name **Seafarer's Friend**, and adopts its new logo.

2000 The Board of Governors votes to sell the **Seaman's House** building on Church Street after determining that closing the lodging operation and focusing on ship visiting represented the "best stewardship of our resources for the continuing ministry of **Seafarer's Friend**."

The number of ship visits in the Ports of Portland, Portsmouth, and Boston reaches a historic record of 914.

Compiled by The Reverend Mr. Douglas W. Cruger



Seafarer's Friend Extends the Ministry of the Churches To meet the *unmet* Spiritual, Social, Emotional, and Physical Needs In the New England Maritime Community

Hospitality

*We **engage** seafarers,
their families, and community
by visiting aboard ships,
welcoming and hosting seafarers ashore,
and being attentive to their needs,
including
ways to contact home, a clean and safe place to rest,
transportation to shopping centers,
as well as social, educational, and recreational activities.*

Pastoral Care

*We **encourage** seafarers,
their families, and community
in the nurture of faith
By making available Bibles and support literature,
chaplaincy services and connections to local communities of faith,
and by providing counseling for troubled seafarers.*

Information/ Referral

*We **equip** seafarers,
their families, and community
to make informed decisions about their
lives and work,
by connecting seafarers with a supporting network of human services:
including retirement, financial, and medical services,
as well as translators and job retraining.*

Advocacy

*We **empower** seafarers,
their families, and community
to address concerns of health, safety, and
working/living conditions aboard ship
through mediation and through an international network
whose only concern is the well-being of seafarers.*