

Maritime History Center - Volunteer Training

Spirit Room

What is a privateer?

- Privateer is a ship with letter of marque which allows them to attack merchant ships of an enemy nation
- A letter of marque is an official document given to privateering captains

What does a privateer do?

- By attacking merchant ships, a privateer can stop the flow of supplies to their enemy and use those supplies for their own war effort
- The United States had no Navy, and so relied on privateers to stop British shipping and capture their supplies
- Almost 800 vessels sailed as privateers, destroying around 600 British ships and \$18 million in cargo (\$302 million in modern terms)

The glass case shows weapons used by privateers. There is a sea service pistol, cutlasses, dagger, and a boarding axe. The boarding axe was actually the more common weapon, as crew would use it as a tool outside of combat. Cutlasses were usually reserved for officers.

Reference for Privateers:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/privateers-in-the-american-revolution.htm#:~:text=Nearly%20800%20vessels%20were%20commissioned,gun%20ship%20Caesar%20of%20Boston.>

History of *Spirit of Dana Point*

- Dennis Holland is the man who constructed the *Spirit of Dana Point*, originally named "*Pilgrim of Newport*"
- He started construction to celebrate the Bicentennial of the United States, as ships like the *Spirit* were popular as privateering ships.
- He started in 1970, at 24 years old, using blueprints he purchased from the Smithsonian. He predicted it would only take 4 years to complete.
- While a carpenter, he had no prior shipbuilding experience and built the hull of the ship in his front yard.
- It took him 13 years to complete the ship, and during construction he moved himself and his pregnant wife onboard. Three of his four children were born on the ship.

- In order to move the ship into the water, he demolished his house and lifted it onto flatbed trucks. Not wanting to pay for the permits to move power lines, he had a team of volunteers begin moving the ship at 4 am. After driving down PCH and main street Newport, he launched the ship in Newport Harbor.
- After sailing as a private charter, he sold the ship to the Hall family. They would rent to Ocean Institute for school programs, and in 2001 the Hall family sold *Pilgrim of Newport* to Ocean Institute, where it was christened as *Spirit of Dana Point*.
- Today it is used as a floating classroom, and on Saturdays goes out on a public sail. It is also available for private charters, events, and birthdays.

References for Spirit of Dana Point

<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=CJ19990421.2.46&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN----->

<https://oceaninstitute.org/spirit-of-dana-point-restoration-project/>

Sailors' Life

The purpose of this room is to show what it is like to be a sailor on a traditional sailing ship

Points of interest include the hammock, the barrel of salt pork, and the navigation area.

- The hammock was the sailors' sleeping area. It was much more stable and comfortable than a bunk. Hammocks would be hung close together, usually with only about 14 inches of space between them.
- The salt pork is to show how all food on traditional ships had to be preserved. Meats were kept in salt, as it draws moisture out and prevents bacterial growth. Other common foods were dried beans, peas, and ship biscuits, aka hardtack
- The navigation table shows the tools needed to navigate. Navigators needed a chart, compass, calipers, and a pen or pencil. The map on the wall shows popular trade routes and the prevailing winds, while the spool of line is a chip log used to measure speed

Pilgrim Room

Pilgrim room is dedicated to the life of Richard Henry Dana Jr. and Ocean Institute's ship *The Pilgrim*.

- Richard Henry Dana Jr. was a student at Harvard who, at 19, went to sea at his doctor's recommendation. He left Boston harbor at 19 and spent two years traveling to and from California to collect 15,000 cow hides. After returning to Boston in 1836, he received a law degree and wrote a book based on his journey titled *Two Years Before the Mast*. He went on to represent sailors in court where he earned them more rights and helped

pass several new maritime laws. Dana Point is named after Richard Henry Dana Jr. due to him writing about the beauty of the headlands and the cliffs.

- Ocean Institute's *Pilgrim* started life as a Danish three-masted schooner sailing in the Baltic Sea before it was brought to Lisbon in 1975 and converted into the brig *Pilgrim*
- *Pilgrim* served as a floating classroom for Ocean Institute from 1981 to 2020. In 2020, she succumbed to old age and sank in her slip.
- Several artifacts from *Pilgrim* are in the room including the wheel, the binnacle where the compass is stored, and the spanker boom seen hanging from the ceiling. Guests are welcome to touch the wheel and take a picture at the helm. There is also a tv playing footage taken by crew aboard the *Pilgrim*.

Gold Panning

California remained a relatively quiet state until gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in 1848. From 1848 to 1855, 300,000 people traveled to California to try and strike it rich. The influx of people and the reinvigoration of the economy led to California becoming a state in 1850.

The man responsible for the gold rush and the first millionaire in California was named Samuel Brannan. A newspaper publisher, he broke news of the discovery of gold after first buying all the mining and camping equipment in California. He would sell this equipment to incoming "forty-niners" at a massive markup.

Ocean Institute has a "stream" where guests can try to strike it rich and learn the techniques needed to pan for gold. There is also the "Sam'S Store", a tribute to Sam Brannan and a place where guests can buy souvenirs and admission.

Barn

The barn houses a rotating exhibit featuring hands-on activities for guests. Such activities include knot tying, gunnery, or going on the yard.

The yard is the large wooden beam that hangs in the barn. It is a model of what a yard would look like on a ship, and shows how sailors would have to climb along a rope to raise and lower the sails. Children are allowed to climb out on the yard and see how it felt to be a sailor 60 feet aloft.