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A TALL ORDER

Deal in place for Rhode Island to get its own Tall Ship

By James A. Johnson
Daily News staff

NEWPORT — Newport has taken a big step toward getting its own Tall Ship.

Tall Ships Rhode Island Inc., which has brought several fleets of Tall Ships to the City-by-the-Sea in the past, is set to buy the hull of a ship from a Canadian group that

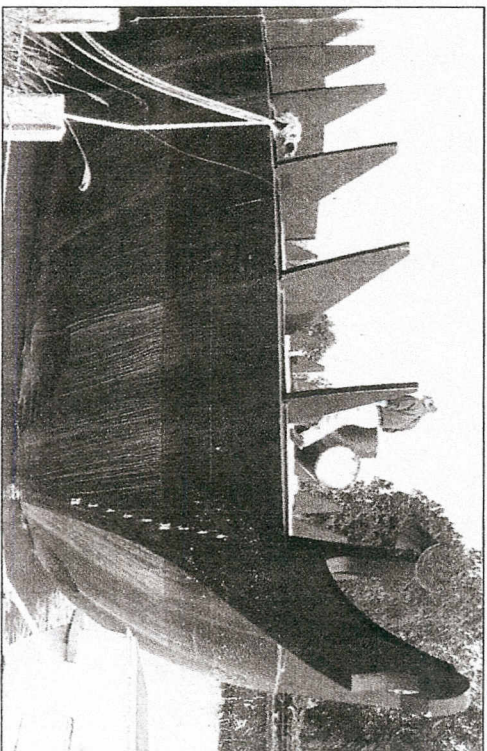
had planned to build a replica of the HMS Detroit, a Royal naval vessel that helped defend Lake Erie in the War of 1812.

After the hull was built, the Canadian project failed and Tall Ships Rhode Island negotiated to buy the hull for \$400,000. The group already has raised \$200,000 and expects to complete the sale in August. The hull will be

brought to Rhode Island, where construction of the vessel will be completed.

Tall Ships Rhode Island has set a completion date of 2010 for the Tall Ship, which will be named after Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the Newport naval hero who won the battle of Lake Erie

TALL A8



Tall Ships Rhode Island negotiated to buy this 207-foot hull from a group that had planned to build a replica of the HMS Detroit. The ship will be completed in the Ocean State and docked at Bowen's Wharf in Newport.

Capt. Richard Bailey
photo

Tall

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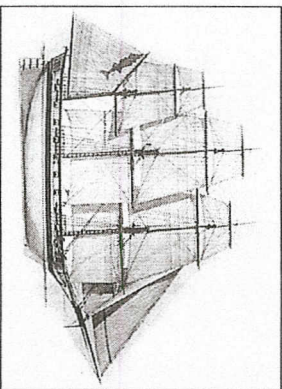
during the War of 1812.

The 207-foot, three-masted, full-rigged vessel will be berthed at Bowen's Wharf, as a representative of Newport and Rhode Island, said Bart Dunbar, chairman of Tall Ships Rhode Island.

"This is probably one of the best things that could happen to the city and the state," said retired Navy Adm. Thomas Weschler, former chairman of Tall Ships Rhode Island.

Besides boosting tourism, the ship will aid the local economy with the crew's payroll and the locating of the crew's families here, he said. Its construction also will provide jobs along the waterfront, Weschler added.

After the hull is bought in August, it will be towed from Canada through the Erie Canal and the Hudson River to Blount Marine in Warren, where its deck and interior will be finished, according



This rendering shows the planned design for a Tall Ship that will have a permanent home in Newport.

to Perry Lewis, vice chairman of Tall Ships Rhode Island.

It then will be moved to Newport Shipyard, where its spars, rigging and hardware will be configured and installed, Lewis said.

"Newport started as a maritime community and is still a maritime community," he said. "This will help connect the city with its maritime heritage."

Lewis said he envisions the Tall Ship organization cooperating with the International Yacht Restoration School so the two nonprofit organizations can help preserve that heritage.

To emphasize the magnitude of the project, Lewis said six to seven miles of rigging will be needed for the ship, which will stand 13 stories tall.

The cost of building the original HMS Detroit is estimated to have been \$2,800. Tall Ships Rhode Island projects it will spend close to \$4 million by the time the Oliver Hazard Perry is ready to sail.

The group will raise money during the next few years in order to complete the project. The purchase of the hull is a big step to completing the project. Building the hull could have cost \$1.5 million.

The Oliver Hazard Perry will be the largest privately owned Tall Ship in the United States, said Lewis, who has been involved with the American Sail Training Association for 35 years. The Coast Guard Barque Eagle is the largest Tall Ship in the country.

"The historic ties this ship has to Newport and the state is what gets the adrenalin flowing, but it's the long-range vision that is most important," Dunbar said.

When the new vessel is completed, it will not simply tie up at the dock at Bowen's Wharf, Dunbar said. It will be a working vessel with an annual budget of \$1 million. It will support itself with educational and training programs.

The vessel will ply New England waters and travel to Canada and the Great Lakes during the summer and will venture to the Caribbean during the winter. It is hoped that it will play a role in the country's celebration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812.

Evan Smith, president and CEO of the Newport County Convention & Visitors Bureau, said the ship's presence will enhance the view along the waterfront and noted that the tall mast and rigging will be a symbol of Newport's rich maritime history.

"In addition to its maritime training focus, the ship will serve as a floating ambassador, promoting tourism for our city and state in every port she visits," Smith said.

Serving as executive director of the project is Capt. Richard Bailey, former captain and director of the 178-foot HMS Rose when it was the largest active wooden Tall Ship in the world.

Commodore Perry, a native Newporter, captured the HMS Detroit in the famous Battle of Lake Erie in 1813. After his victory, Perry declared, "We have met the enemy and they are ours." The flag he flew into battle, emblazoned with "Don't Give Up the Ship," hangs at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md.

The commodore's younger brother, Matthew C. Perry, is credited with opening Japan to trade with the West in the 1850s. This is celebrated annually in Newport during the Black Ships Festival.

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