

# THE COUNTRY DANCE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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Appointed by the National Council, for three-year terms. Members of the Executive Committee must reside in the Headquarters Area, in order to attend the monthly meetings in New York. They are:

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Mr. Benjamin Harrow, New York, N.Y., National Treasurer

Mrs. Mireille Backer, New York, N.Y., National Secretary

Miss May Gadd, New York, N.Y., National Director.

# THE COUNTRY DANCER



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## THE COUNTRY DANCER

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## NATIONAL C.D.S. DATES TO NOTE

Saturday, April 23, 1955 SPRING FESTIVAL - to be held at Barnard College New York, 8 to 12 p.m. List of dances to be done now available.

August 7 to 28, 1955 PINWOODS CAMP on Long Pond near Plymouth, Mass. Flyer now available, in quantity.

## INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL is holding its Third International Festival of Folk Dance and Song and its Eighth Annual Conference at Oslo, Norway from June 29th to July 5th, 1955. Countries from all parts of the world are being invited to send representative groups of dancers and singers. Only authentic folk music will be performed and as far as possible it will be executed by traditional dancers and singers.

All wishing to attend the Festival and Conference should write to The Secretary, International Folk Music Council, 12 Clorane Gardens London, N.W. 3, England, enclosing the equivalent of two pounds in English money for registration fee and membership in the Council. If already a member, send registration fee of one pound. State if you wish to have hotel accommodation reserved for you, the approximate amount that you are prepared to pay, and if you are willing to share a room. Other information about the Festival can be obtained from the New York office of the Country Dance Society of America.

## MEMBER ARTIST

Have you seen the book "Epics of Everest" by Leonard Wibberley? The illustrations are by Genevieve Shimer (under her former name of Genevieve Vaughan Jackson), member of the C.D.S. and Vice-Chairman of our national Executive Committee. The book was the October choice of the Junior Literary Guild in the section of books for older children. Congratulations to Genevieve - as well as to Mr. Wibberley. Publisher: Ariel Books. Price: \$3.25.

## WINTER RITUALS

During my childhood in England the Christmas holiday was usually spent at the house of a relative in Sussex and one of the events that I remember most clearly was the announcement that "The Tipteerers" were at the door asking if they could come in to act their play for our benefit. It was not until long afterwards that I understood that these village players - who get their name from "Old Tup", an animal Guiser - were carrying on the tradition of the Mummers' plays found in many other parts of England - and in other countries, too.

Our Society owns a film, made in England, of the Symondsburry Mummers Play, where we see St. George slay his antagonists, who are afterwards restored to life by the doctor. The cult of St. George only came to England at the time of the Crusades and the St. George plays are thought to derive from a tale by an Elizabethan writer, Richard Johnson, called "The Seven Heroes of Christendom". But when this play was taken into the villages by strolling players it was sufficiently like the ancient Plough Monday Folk Play to be adopted by the villagers as a novel variant. In time, winter play and the sword dance that used to be a part of it, became completely separated - the play continuing to exist without a dance and the sword dance continuing and developing as village entertainment with only a small remnant of the accompanying play.

In "England's Dances" Douglas Kennedy writes: of the play and dance that preceded the St. George play: "There emerge the central figure of the Fool or Medicine Man, and his group of assistants, who, disguised with black faces, form a secret society of which he himself is the head. His 'act' is to suffer death in order that the community shall survive. His 'sons' (the secret society) have to kill the head of the house their 'father'. While he acts this sacrifice he visits the underworld, taking with him all the accumulated evils, burdens and difficulties of the past year. When his task is done he returns, a revived leader, to resume his earthly responsibilities, fortified for another year."

In England this Folk Play has survived in its most uncorrupted form in the village of Revesby in Lincolnshire. It is no longer performed, but it was written down at the end of the 18th Century. The sword dance formed an integral part of the play and provided the mechanism for the mock death. The 'sons' are the dancers. As Mr. Kennedy points out, the remnants of the sword dance plays that have survived are more significant relics of early history than the Mummers' plays that superseded them. However the Mummers themselves have managed to preserve the impersonal manner of the more ancient ceremony, and some have even preserved the ritual costume, designed to act as a mask and a disguise. The Marshfield Paper Boys, who perform annually in their village in Gloucester -



shire derive their name from a peculiar head-dress of finely divided paper streamers which covers them from tip to toe, and through which they have to peer in order to see the other actors. Although their present dialogue is based on the Richard Johnson print, this group of village actors preserve a popular custom which leads right back to the observance of pagan times. The underlying motive is just as real for us today.

MAY GADD

## NEW FILM

The Country Dance Society has purchased a copy of the latest film made by the English Folk Dance and Song Society. This one was made in cooperation with George Pickow and Alan Lomax and was taken during the actual Mayday Hobby Horse ceremonial at Padstow in Cornwall.

It is a wonderful film with its color, its stirring song, the dancing of the Horse and its attendants and the life and death ceremony, and the movements of the villagers with the terrific rhythm that is built up.

The film can be rented from the national C.D.S. office for \$10 a showing plus mailing charges. The films of "Wake up and Dance", taken at the Stratford-up-Avon E.F.D.S. Festival and "Walk in St. George", made of the village Mummers at Symondsburry in Dorsetshire, are still available. All films are color and sound, 16 mm.

## BOOK NEWS FROM THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

### JEAN RITCHIE TELLS STORY OF HER SINGING FAMILY

"Even before I was old enough to take much part in anything else the grownups did, I was doing my share in singing the moon up on those soft summer nights", says Jean Ritchie in "Singing Family of the Cumberlands" which Oxford University Press will publish on February 17. It is a biography of a real family, a family of fourteen children, who grew up in a small village called Viper in the Cumberland mountains of Kentucky, almost cut off from the rest of the country. Here are Miss Ritchie's recollections and memories of childhood troubles, fall days, harvesting, stir-offs, marriages, births, and deaths.

To the Ritchies singing is as necessary as speaking and as each child learned to talk, he learned to sing. Over dishwashing, in the cornfield, on the front porch, the Ritchies sang hundreds of the Elizabethan ballads and songs brought to Kentucky by pioneers and kept alive through the generations. The melody lines and lyrics of 42 folk songs appear in the book.

After graduating from the University of Kentucky, Jean Ritchie came to New York to work as music counselor at the Henry Street Settlement. Soon demands for her voice and dulcimer came so frequently that she gave up her job and devoted her time to telling

her family stories and singing their songs wherever people asked to hear them. She has appeared at concerts in Town Hall, The Contemporary Music Festival at Columbia University, and the Royal Albert Hall in London. Her radio and television experience includes performances over WCBS, WNYC, WRCA, the Voice of America, and the BBC in London. She is the author of "The Swapping Song Book" and has made recordings of her family songs for HMV and Argo Record Companies in London and for Elektra Records in New York.

## THE TWELVE REEL

Formation: Four men, each with two partners, standing in a square.

Music: "Russian Cavalry" is suggested - or any Reel or Jig played twice through. For a record, Pinewoods Players "Sicilian" or "Circassian Circle" would be very suitable.

MEET AND TRADE Head men link arms with partners and the two "trios" advance and retire. Advance again and the ladies change places with opposite lady and fall back with the opposite man. Side "trios" do the same. Heads and sides repeat to places.

DANCE ROUND Head men take right hand partners and chassee round inside the set in a counter-clockwise direction and leave the lady in the left-hand lady's place, while this lady crosses over to the right hand lady's place (4 measures). Head men repeat with this other partner. Side men then dance in the same way with their partners.

BASKET SWING All "trios" form baskets and pivot swing in position (8 measures).

CIRCLE All join hands and circle left once around to places (8 measures) (polka step can be used).

### RUSSIAN CAVALRY





## FOLK DANCE ENTERS MODERN DANCE FIELD



Anne Rechter

Observers of the Modern Dance scene have no doubt noticed the growing use of folk and country dance patterns by many performers and teachers who have discovered their usefulness as a foundation for creative and choreographic efforts. This trend undoubtedly began in the late thirties when Catherine Littlefield's "Barn Dance" and Agnes de Mille's "Rodeo" made their appearance in the concert field. From that time up to the most recent example, Hanya Holm's "Golden Apple", folk patterns have become standard procedure in the choreography of musicals and folk operas using early American themes.

As might be expected, the trend spread into the teaching field, with more and more teachers discovering that folk patterns served the goals of Modern Dance to a surprising degree, one of the most important being their use as a framework for improvisation. For instance, a beginning student who has a Troika or a Kolo under her belt has insight into form, rhythm, and basic movement, as well as a feeling of accomplishment which inspires her to go ahead to create an "horse" dance based on her Troika, adding perhaps a few gallops and prances accompanied by tossing movements of the head.

In her book, "Dance in Elementary Education", Ruth Lovell Murray describes how a class can compose dances to a folk song from a country whose traditional dances they may have recently mastered. Or, they might combine several patterns as a study in composition, such as arranging two or three polka sequences to the music of "Jingle Bells" as a Christmas project. Miss Murray has included several pages of suggested dances for various ages, complete with derivation, accompaniment, and classified according to basic step.

When selecting dances, teachers keep specific objectives in mind, such as perfecting certain locomotor movements or rhythms.

Then, performing "Greensleeves" or some of the other slow-paced English dances in the role of a prince or princess can provide an opportunity for achieving a poised, erect carriage, while a roll-licking Kohanochka at a make-believe peasant wedding produces admirable freedom of movement in a very short time.

Teachers outside the school systems have, as a rule, been successful in avoiding material already covered. Carolyn Bilderback, at the North Shore Community Art Center uses what her pupils have learned for her own objectives. A Virginia Reel, for instance, serves as a basis for pantomime by having each child assume the role of a type of person who might be found dancing at a country fair - a bashful child, perhaps, or an awkward country bumpkin. Many teachers use the reel formation as a means for teaching basic polka or schottische steps, then manipulating these into more complicated choreography.

Concert performers are still discovering new ways of using folk material to accomplish their purposes. Kathleen Hinni, head of the dance department at the Chapin School in New York, gave a performance with a group at a settlement house for an audience to whom Modern Dance was a totally new experience. Nationality dances at the beginning of her program helped bridge the gap of understanding between audience and performers, and paved the way for the more abstract choreography which followed.

As a means of creating more interest among the small fry, "The Merry-Go-Rounders", at the 92nd St. "Y", use folk dances as a part of their audience participation programs for children. A magic plane takes them to various countries such as Mexico, where they clap and snap their fingers to the "Mexican Waltz", then to India, where they become acquainted with the lovely "gesture language". As a finale, they offer compositions based on folk themes, such as "Holiday in Israel", incorporating the Israeli circle dances, and "Tyrolean Wedding", based on Swiss and Austrian dances. Beautifully performed, these ballets bring to the on-looker the realization that, be it traditional, modern, or ethnic, each phase of dance enriches the other to the betterment of the entire dance picture.

ANNE RECHTER

(Editor's Note: Anne Rechter's early dance training consisted of ballet, tap and acrobatics. She became a ballerina at the age of sixteen with Catherine Littlefield's Philadelphia Ballet company - one of the first to use American folk themes.

Forced to retire because of a back injury, she taught ballroom dancing for several years, during which time she met and married Joseph Rechter, then a fellow ballroom teacher, now a folk leader and square dance caller.

Intensive study of body mechanics and then Modern Dance improved her back to the point where she was able to resume teaching ballet - thus completing the cycle. She now teaches at St. John's Church, Huntington, Long Island, as well as continuing her dance studies, and assisting her husband in his folk and square dance activities.)



## CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL



G.S.

### *of the Ampleforth Sword Dance Play*

New York led off early in the season with its Christmas Festival on December 11th. A lively gathering of over four hundred and fifty seemed to justify the date-and this with a Burl Ives recital at Town Hall as a counter attraction.

Much could be said about the enthusiasm of the crowd, the spirited dancing, the immediate feeling of Christmas as one entered the Hall, produced by the gay decorations arranged by Genevieve Shimer and her committee-we could have a whole section on how to transform a gymnasium, basket ball rings and all, into a Christmas Palace with Snowmen dancers, Choirboy singers, Angels, Stars, Christmas Trees and gaily wrapped Gift boxes. Of course you need an artist to head your committee.

But we thought you might be especially interested in the practical details of program building for such an event. Occasions of this kind have three groups to take into consideration when planning the program - both experienced and inexperienced dancers and spectators. Most of the dances must be chosen with the purpose of enabling all to take part with the minimum of teaching, and then there should be a few dances for the more experienced only. Entertainment interludes are included both for the spectator visitors, and to give the dancers an opportunity of participating-as actor, dancer, or audience, in some of the ritual dances or customs of the Winter season.

For three Christmas Festivals we have presented the St. George and Dragon Mummers' Play, so this year we chose a condensed version of the Ampleforth Play with its beautiful and intricate sword dance. Our actors and dancers carried it off with a great sense of drama. Clown, King, Man-Woman, Doctor, Dancers and Victim put on their magic most convincingly, and special mention must be made of the Doctor's horse - rather a Thurber horse.

We opened with the Horn Dance of Abbots Bromley, properly a dance of the Winter solstice although it is now danced at Abbots Bromley in September. The first Interlude was the Bringing in of the Boar's Head with the Processional dancers entering to the Cloucestershire Wassail Carol. Then the Morris dancers danced the Bledington version of Shepherd's Hey Jig, the special Carol was sung while the processional dancers wove simple patterns and then everybody danced Cicassian Circle in concentric circles around the Boar's Head.

Of course there was Carol singing Interludes. It was a delight to have Jean Ritchie singing for us again; Roland Jones induced enthusiastic participation in the First Nowell and Deck the Halls and was a dramatic singer of the Boar's Head and the Wassail Carols, as well as the Clown's part in the Ampleforth Play.

The program timed beautifully. We started at 8 p.m. with extras-Fandango and Couple Dances to records - dimmed the lights at 8.15 while the Horn Dancers did their magic. As they disappeared the lights went up, the orchestra struck up The Washington Quickstep and we finished at 12 p.m. with the program just completed.

May Gadd was Program Director, Phil Merrill Orchestra Director, and Bob Hider M.C. This was the program (perhaps you will find some suggestions in it for your 1955 Christmas Party):



Opening  
THE HORN DANCE OF ABBOTS BROMLEY

WASHINGTON QUICKSTEP  
\*PICKING UP STICKS  
AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE  
GAY GORDONS

Interlude 1

CHRISTMAS CAROLS FOR ALL  
BRINGING IN THE BOAR'S HEAD  
SHEPHERD'S HEY JIG  
BOAR'S HEAD CAROL  
Roland Jones  
CIRCASSIAN CIRCLE

FIREMAN'S DANCE  
HUNSDON HOUSE  
\*PARSON'S FAREWELL  
ST. BERNARD'S WALTZ

Interlude 2

CHRISTMAS CAROLS  
Jean Ritchie  
AMPLEFORTH SWORD DANCE PLAY

ALL THE WAY TO GALWAY  
LA RUSSE QUADRILLE  
\*NONESUCH  
AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE  
NEWCASTLE  
WALTZ COUNTRY DANCE

\* All except starred dances will be called

PROGRAM NOTES: THE HORN DANCE, like the Deer Dance of Taos, is a winter Solstice dance and is a descendant of a sympathetic magic rite designed to bring the deer within reach of the Hunters' arrows and so provide the needed winter food. An element of contest - life against death, light against darkness - is also present in the dance and the deer men are supported in their purpose by the ritual characters of Clown, Man-Woman and Hobby Horse. The Boy represents the Hunter.

THE SWORD DANCE PLAY from Ampleforth, Yorkshire, is a Winter ceremony of great antiquity, danced and acted with the belief that a symbolical rerepresentation of the desired end will bring it about. After weaving their magic patterns the dancers slay a victim, who dies for the good of the people. With his death, darkness, coldness and evil are defeated, and when the Clown magically brings him back to life, the return of new life to the world in the Spring is ensured.

These old dances and tunes are so strong and vital that each generation adapts them to its own purpose. To-night's dancers use them as a present day city recreation. You are invited to come and dance with us throughout the year.



DANCERS AT CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL IN NEW YORK  
PHOTO BY GLORIA DEAN

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Michael Herman, Director



## NEW CENTER

A warm welcome to the NORTH TEXAS FROLIC AND DANCE CLUB which has affiliated as a Center of the Country Dance Society of America. The Club is located at Telephone, Texas, and meets every Saturday night to dance American dances. Duke Sangster is the President, Dr. M. L. Felts the Secretary while Mrs. Duke Sangster, Irene Sangster and Neda Sangster function as Treasurer, Assistant Secretary and Junior Assistant respectively. Dr. Felts writes as follows:

"We enjoy being affiliated with such a well-known organization as the Country Dance Society of America, New York City and look forward to attending a convention soon."

We shall hope to welcome some of the Club members at Pinewoods this August, and to hear more about their dance activities in Texas.

## FOLK DANCE PROGRAM AT STUART ROBINSON

The program of folk dancing at Stuart Robinson this year includes two participating groups. One is composed of the students taking folk games as a course in Physical Education. These classes meet two and three times each week and are under the leadership of competent teachers who have taken courses in folk dancing. In order to provide an evening of wholesome recreation at the request of the boys and girls, a folk festival is held in the gymnasium once each six weeks. Dates for this year: September 25, October 30, December 11, February 5, March 19, and April 30. Most of the dances done at these festivals are familiar to everyone taking folk games, and therefore all can participate. There are, however, a few special dances done in which only the advanced dancers can take part. School buses afford transportation, and these festivals are well attended by both students and parents. A small admission fee is charged to cover maintenance cost of equipment.

The second group participating in folk dances at Stuart Robinson is an adult group which meets in the social room of the gymnasium every Thursday evening. This is made up mostly of young couples in the community, on the campus, and some from communities as far distant as thirty-six miles. W.L. Cooper is the leader of this group, and his services in this capacity are greatly appreciated by those who attend. Stuart Robinson is situated in a small rural community, and this is the only form of recreation for young adults. Approximately twenty members attend each week, and in previous years some have been able to attend the Adult Festivals. A nominal sum is paid by the members of the group in order that they may enjoy light refreshments together at the close of the evening.

From the first group mentioned there is chosen each year what is known as the Special Folk Dance Team. The members of this team

under the leadership of Mr. Cooper enjoy trips to a number of places during the school year and occasionally during the summer. In March of each year these boys and girls go to North Carolina, where they give programs at churches and schools or colleges. This year March 21-26, they plan to visit the following places: Montreat College, Montreat, N.C.; Presbyterian churches at Newton and Hickory; the Myers Park and Steele Creek churches at Charlotte, and the Hawfields church near Mebane, N.C.

For these trips the girls make their own costumes under the supervision of Mrs. Patrick Napier, the home economics teacher. They consist of a peasant skirt with handmade design around the hem and a white blouse. The skirts are of different pastel colors with peasant pattern in dark thread designed by the girls themselves.

This fall, some of the members of this special team danced for the teachers at the meeting of their district education association at Hazard, Ky., on October 14. The boys did "Lads A Bunchum" and the girls did two figures of the North Skelton sword dance, after which both boys and girls danced "The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh".

For the past three summers Mr. Cooper has been asked to bring a group of his folk dancers to Montreat College to assist in the recreation at the Church Extension Conference of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

Besides the spring tour in March, future plans include attendance at the Mountain Folk Festival in Berea, and the Kentucky Folk Festival in Lexington. Whenever possible both of these festivals are included in the program each year.

MRS. ANITA CAMPBELL

## THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR GIFT FUND

The Fund has reached \$507, with contributions ranging from \$1.00 to \$100.00. Need we say that all contributions are equally welcome. Our grateful thanks go to all who contributed. It was very nice to hear how many people liked the Christmas card, designed by C.D.S. member Beatrice Burke. Our very warm thanks to her as well as to Beatrice Bowman, who designed our Christmas Festival Poster, and to Genevieve Shimer whose drawing "Impressions of the Ampleforth Sword Dance Play" appears in this issue.

## GIFT FROM CENTERS

The Lexington and New Haven Centers both thought of the national C.D.S. at Christmas time and sent along a donation to the Christmas Gift Fund. We thank them very much.

## GIFT OF RECORDS

The Society has received a wonderful gift of eighty dance records - American, English and other nationalities, from Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Nordsiek of New York. May thanks to the Nordsieks for their generosity and for thinking of us.



## ENGLISH DANCES

### IN GERMANY

#### Dancing the Circassian Circle in a meadow in Germany



Dear May Gadd: It seems to me as if it is a long time ago when I last was dancing with you. But I still love the dances and the tunes and I am not the only one here in Germany who does.

I had just been home for two weeks to see my parents in Hanover, then the folk school - I mean the German one - asked me whether I could come out to help them with some recreation.

Well, here I went. With my two country dance books - the little green one and the blue one - and my few records, and I made them dance the English way.

Did they like it!

The day after I had done some easy ones with them (Circassian Circle and Sicilian Circle) we went out for a little hike in the nice country. And when we came to a nice meadow and the sun was shining and we had a wonderful view of the hills, somebody started whistling the Good Humor tune and all of a sudden the group was dancing the Circassian Circle, whistling at the same time. It was lots of fun. I took a picture of this scene and I think you will like it.

Next week I will start dancing with young working people who are living in boarding houses here in Muenchen. Most of them lost their parents during the war or they cannot live with them because in smaller places it is very difficult for them to find a job. I had done this kind of recreational work before I came over to the States and it looks as if I will get involved even more now.

So far everything seems to go along fine. Except when I came from Hannover to Muenchen, my record with the Circassian and the Sicilian Circle on it broke. It is still working, but it is getting worse and I cannot use it very often, because it will ruin my needle. It is quite a blow for me, because I have only a few records.

How is your work getting along? And how was the camp at Long Pond? Would you please tell Philip "Hello" for me? With all good wishes, sincerely yours, DIETER HEMPEL, Muenchen-Neuaubing.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

Editors' note: This department will appear in the Country Dancer from time to time. Questions are invited, and they will be answered in this department if of general interest, and whenever space permits.

INSTRUCTION BOOKS: "My Morris set is complete now except for one Part--out of print since before the war. When will it be possible to get any and all of them?"

ANSWER: The C.D.S. was notified this summer that all the Novello editions--instructions books and tunes, for English country, morris and sword--are again back in print. They are now all in stock in our sales department.

FAMOUS COLLECTION: "Just what is the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, and does it contain any country dances?"

ANSWER: This is a small mss., or folio, of 220 leaves, preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, England. It has also been known as "Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book" and the "Good Queen Bess Book", but both are considered misnomers because some of the tunes were composed after Elizabeth's reign. The dates for the book are 1550-1620, and it has been called the best collection of harmonized airs of Shakespeare's period. The only country dance is Sellenger's Round, arranged by William Byrd--or Byrde, as it was then spelled.

"WHY VIRGINAL?"

ANSWER: The airs were arranged for the virginal by famous composers of that day. The virginal was a small oblong spinet called a virginal, it's thought likely, because used by nuns and young girls. There were usually 38 notes, with keys like a pianoforte, but the strings were plucked, not struck. The first music for the virginal was known as Parthenua, from the Greek work Parthenos, meaning unmarried woman, or virgin.

PLAYFORD OR TRADITIONAL: "Are Cecil Sharp's Country Dance Books all devoted to Playford dances?"

ANSWER: No, Part I consists of eighteen traditional dances and Part V is given over to the Running Set which Cecil Sharp saw and collected in Kentucky. The others--Parts II, III, IV and VI--are dances from Playford's English Dancing Master.

WHENCE THE NAME: "How did the dance Hull's Victory get its name?"

ANSWER: This is an American dance, of course, and one explanation for the name is that it honors the American sailor Isaac Hull. He was captain of the U.S.S. Constitution, or "Old Ironsides". Captain Hull helped defeat the Barbary pirates who were demanding tribute from American ships off the coast of Africa at the end of the 18th century. It was in 1830, by the way, that Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem helped to prevent the scrapping of "Old Ironsides", now stored in the Boston navy yards and again in danger of destruction--this time from the wear and tear of time.