

ON STATION

A detailed oil painting of a ship's deck. Three men in blue uniforms and white caps are the central figures. The man in the center is at the helm, looking forward. The man to his left is pointing towards the horizon. The man to the far left is partially visible, looking towards the center. The ship has large white sails and a red mast. The sea is blue and white with waves. The sky is a pale blue. The overall style is that of a classic maritime painting.

PROCESS OF A PAINTING



The New York Yacht Club and its library, W. 44th Street, Manhattan



BY RUSS KRAMER

This is the story of the process of developing my painting, "ON STATION: NEW YORK YACHT CLUB AMERICA'S CUP RACE COMMITTEE, 1930"

GETTING STARTED: RESEARCH

This was a commissioned painting done for a couple with extensive boating experience and an interest in historical race committee events. The 1930 America's Cup contest was chosen as a suitable subject through which to depict the up-close activities of the Committee members at the start of the race. First step: extensive research at both the New York Yacht Club and Mystic Seaport library collections, and online.



The summer yacht racing season of 1930 was covered extensively by all the New York newspapers, reporting in great detail, especially the highly anticipated America's Cup defense that September. The Club's collection includes scrapbooks of original clippings, from which I was able to learn much about the yachts, individual races, weather, courses, and committee activities.

RESEARCH

The 1930 America's Cup contest was between two of the huge, brand-new class of J-Boats, ENTERPRISE of the defending NYYC, and SHAMROCK V, Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht, representing the Royal Ulster Yacht Club. It would be Sir Thomas' final attempt to win back the Cup, having made unsuccessful campaigns in 1899, 1901, 1903, and 1920. I focused my research on the start of the fourth and final race in the best-of-five competition, held on September 18th, as the subject of the painting.

suit, but it was too late to do her much good.

Breeze Soon Freshens.

A light northwesterly breeze was blowing as the two yachts moved out to the starting line. The velocity of the breeze was estimated at between five and six miles an hour, but it seemed to be freshening.

The Shamrock was first away from her mooring in Newport Harbor, taking a tow from her tender Doodle at 9:30. The Enterprise soon followed, as on yesterday, hoisted her mainsail when clear of the harbor, for the run out to sea.

The breeze had picked up to an estimated eleven miles an hour at 10:30 and appeared to be growing stronger all the time. The sea was smooth, a point in the Shamrock's favor. The breeze continued to freshen as the two racing craft reached the starting line before 11 o'clock.

Both boats joggling the starting line. The Enterprise's jib and staysail were under main and it was much easier than the Shamrock's. The wind was picking up the tops of the waves, the Enterprise was riding easily.

The smallest spectators on hand to view the race were from the patrol boat of the great flotilla of the first race last year.

The postponement of the race due to the mishap to the Enterprise yesterday apparently had not diminished the interest of those that go down to the sea to see a race.

interest of those that go down to the sea to see a race.

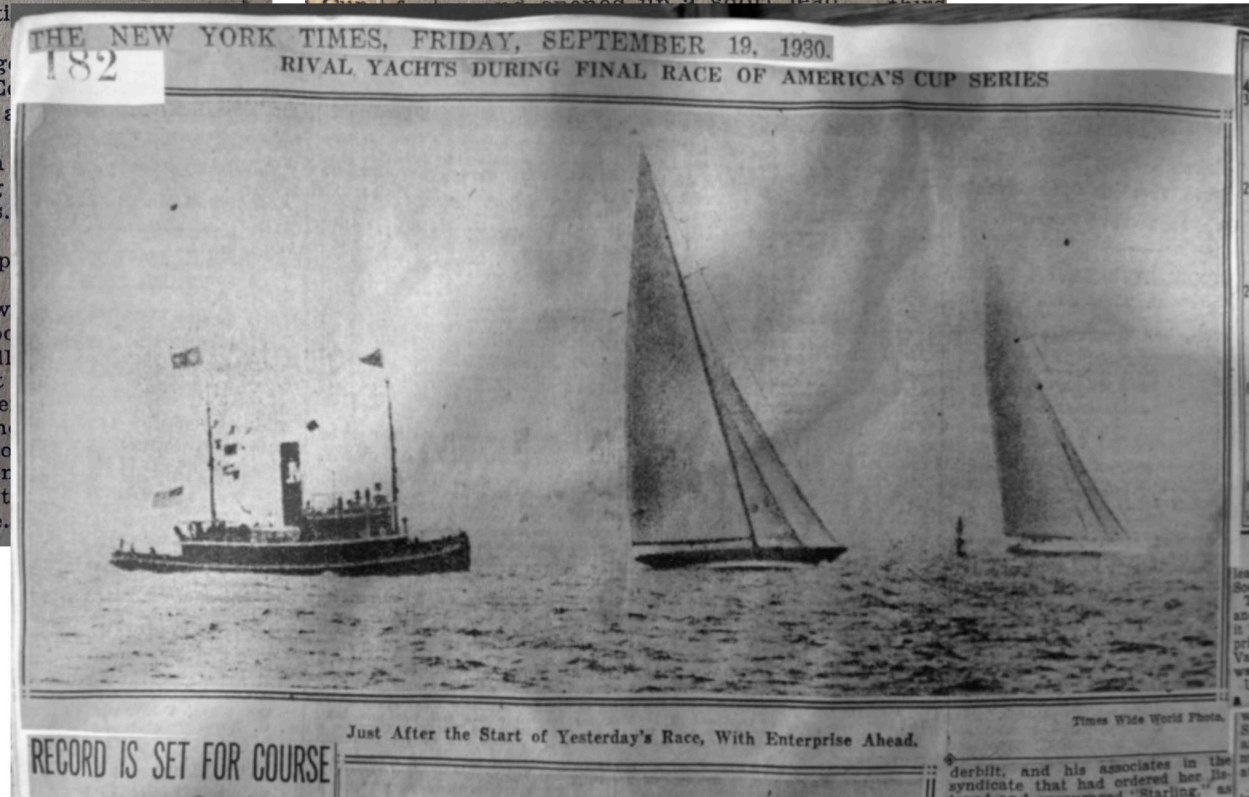
Over Triangular Course.

Today's race was over a thirty mile triangular course, three legs of ten miles each. The committee ordered the boats to proceed west-northwest, a beat to windward, for the first leg. If the breeze holds steady that course would make the second ten miles a run before the wind south by east with a ten mile reach home northeast a half east.

The first ten mile leg would carry the boats close in to the Narragansett shore where the water is smoother than it is further out to sea, an advantage to the Shamrock.

The starting signal was given at 10:30 and promptly at 10:40 the rival yachts went over the line.

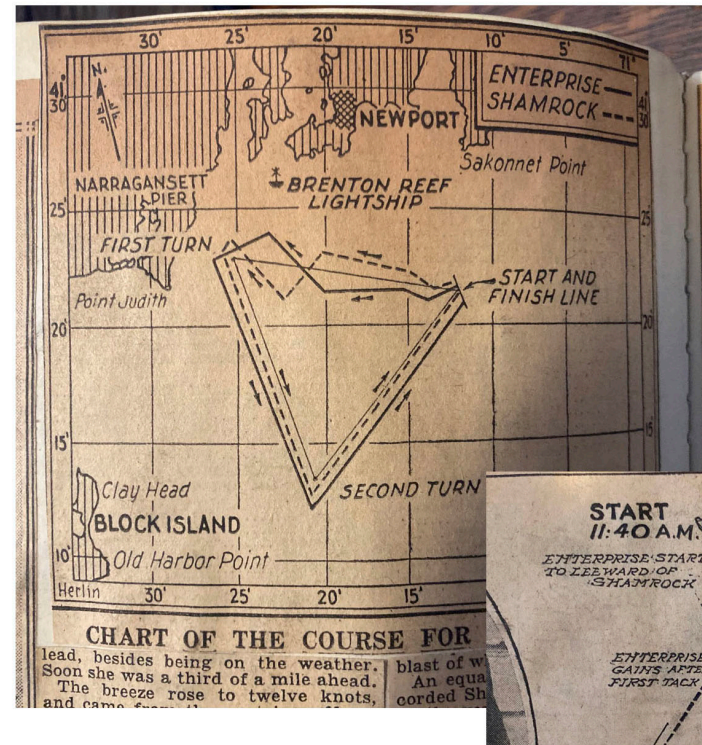
The Shamrock again had the weather berth as the two sloops crossed the line, but the Enterprise, the American defender, was footing the lead.



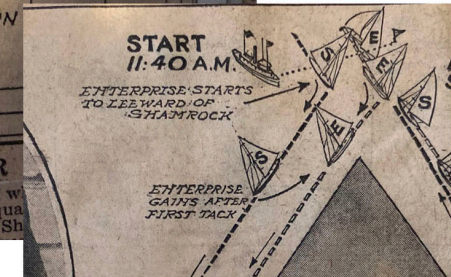
News coverage (above) describing the course and conditions of the race, and the position of the boats at the start. This photo (right) shows the Committee Boat SUSAN A. MORAN on station just after the yachts have crossed the starting line. I can see the three hoists carrying the course signals just aft of the funnel, and the red cylinder raised at the starting whistle, just forward.



The 1930 New York Yacht Club America's Cup Race Committee, (above) from left: Philip M. Mallory, Charman Edmund Lang, and Colgate Hoyt. This photo and the one at right were taken on the top deck of the MORAN. You can see onboard a temporarily installed compass binnacle and working desk and stool, details I can include that are critical to the accuracy of the painting.

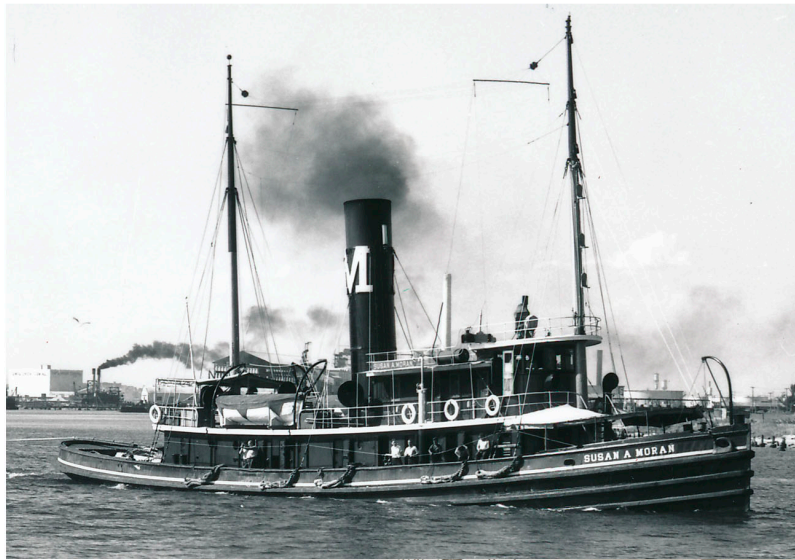


The triangular course of the fourth race and the boats' positions at the start



Race Committee

RESEARCH



Here are a couple of pages from my research notebook, revealing what I've learned about the conditions at the start of the race (right). I also managed to find several very good reference photos of the MORAN (above).

RACE COMMITTEE - ON STATION, 1930 AMERICAS CUP

• 4th AND DECISIVE RACE SEPTEMBER 18th 1930

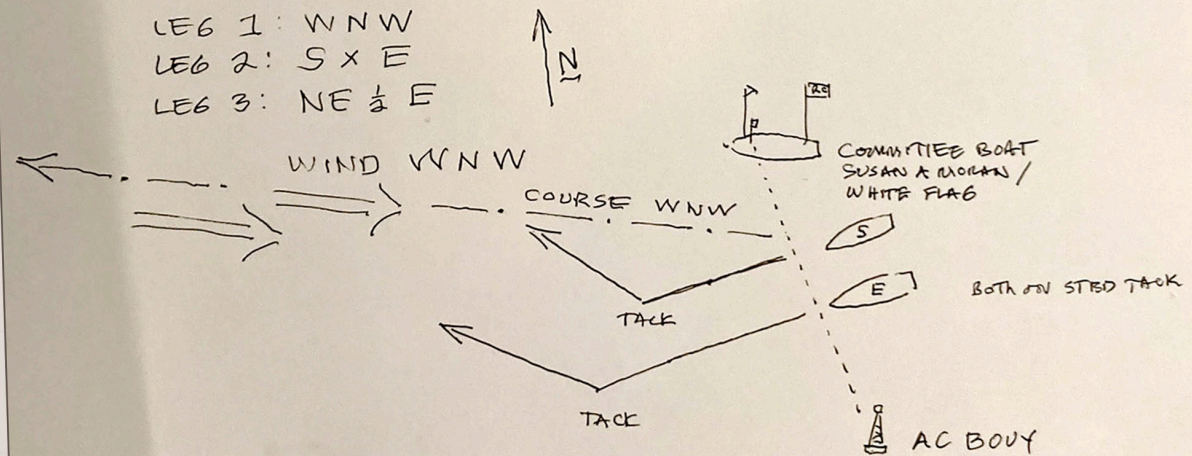
• COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

[REF IN FOLDER] — EDMUND LANG (CHAIR) LAID COURSES
 PHILIP MALLORY
 COLGATE HOYT

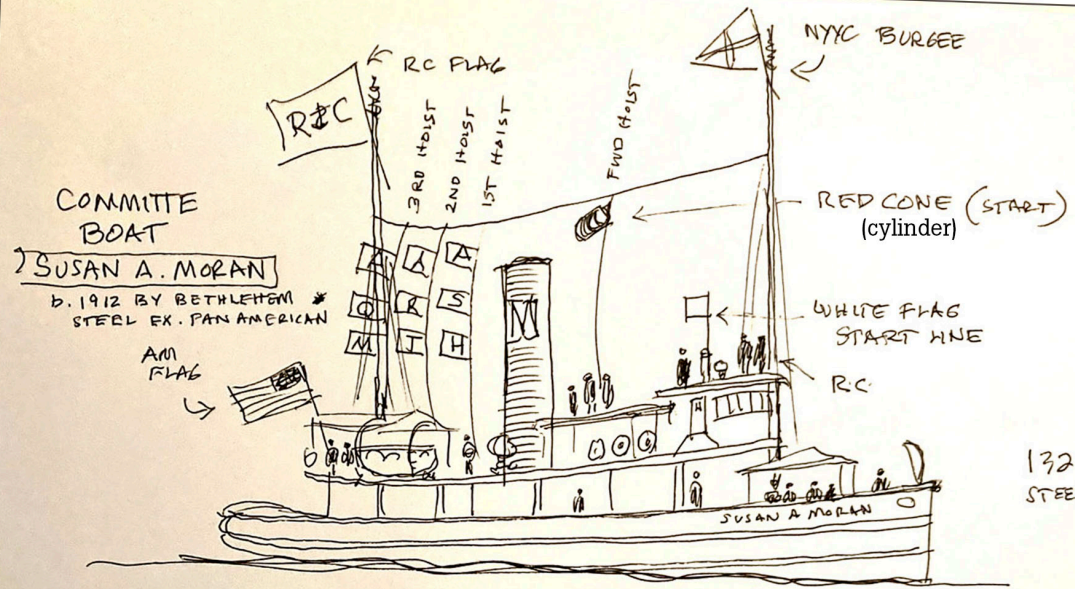
- WEATHER CLEAR
- FLOOD TIDE
- LIGHT SEAS
- SW GROUND SWELL
- WIND WNW 14 KNOTS

• TRIANGULAR COURSE - 10 MI./LEG

- LEG 1: WNW
- LEG 2: S x E
- LEG 3: NE ½ E



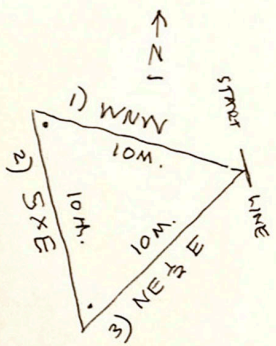
<u>TIME</u>	<u>TO START</u>	<u>SIGNAL</u>
11:25 AM	15:00 (APX.)	COURSE SIGNALS HOISTED
11:30	10:00	WARNING - <u>WHITE CONE</u>
11:35	5:00	PREPATORY - <u>BLUE AND WHITE CONE</u>
11:40	0:00	START - <u>RED CYLINDER</u>



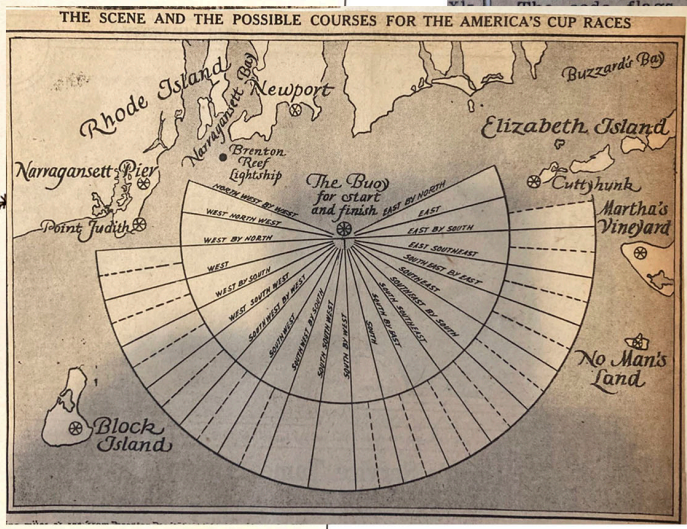
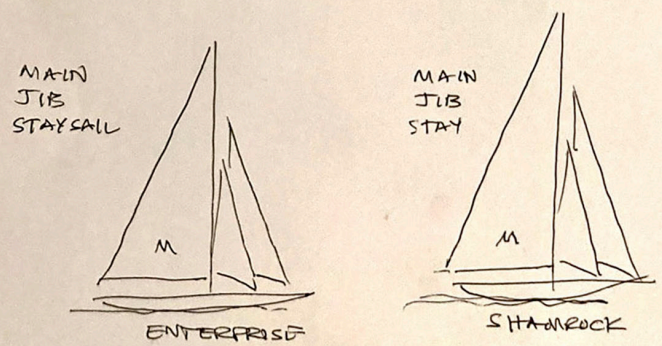
COMMITTEE
BOAT
SUSAN A. MORAN
b. 1912 BY BETHLEHEM *
STEEL EX. PAN AMERICAN

SIGNALS @ START
COURSE SIGNALS (HEADINGS)
FROM 1ST HOIST ORDER

LEG 1:	WNW	- ①	A	A	A
LEG 2:	SXE	- ②	Q	R	S
LEG 3:	NE 1/2 E	- ③	M	J	H
			(NE 1/2 E)	(SXE)	(WNW)



SAILS AT START



... it is
... getting
... npass,
... dward
... ngular
... t from
... o east
... ver a
... ing by
... ak-
... first,
... mark,
... ection
... hile

... come in. If it does not, peace con-
... tinues. If it does, races can be sailed.
... The southerly generally fades with the
... sun.
... The courses will be set from the com-
... mittee tug Susan Moran, and the in-
... ternational code signals will be used.
... For a windward and leeward course
... only the first leg will be indicated. For
... a triangular race, all three legs will be
... signaled, reading in order from the
... forward hoist.
... challenger, especially if any other big
... sloops are out under sail.
... The mainland then bends gradually
... away from the course, but approxi-
... mately east-northeast lies the Hen and

AQ
AQ
AQ
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AR
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AR
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Th

... face may appear.
... Always the ground swell is rolling in,
... usually a fairly long swell, harder on
... large boats than small ones. But when

Code and Signals.

The international code compass sig-
nals follow:

A Q D—North	A R L—South
A Q E—North 1/2 East	A R M—South 1/2 West
A Q F—North by East	A R N—South by West
A Q G—N by E 1/2 E	A R O—S by W 1/2 W
A Q H—Northnorth- east	A R P—Southsouth- west
A Q I—NNE 1/2 E	A R Q—SSW 1/2 W
A Q J—NE by N	A R S—SW by S
A Q K—NE 1/2 N	A R T—SW 1/2 S
A Q L—Northeast	A R U—Southwest
A Q M—NNE 1/2 E	A R V—SW 1/2 W
A Q N—NE by E	A R W—SW by W
A Q O—NE by E	A R X—S W by W 1/2 W
A Q P—ENE	A R Y—WSW
A Q R—ENE 1/2 E	A R Z—WSW 1/2 W
A Q S—E by N	A S B—W by S
A Q T—E 1/2 N	A S C—W 1/2 S
A Q U—East	A S D—West
A Q V—E 1/2 S	A S E—W 1/2 N
A Q W—E by S	A S F—W by N
A Q X—ESE 1/2 E	A S G—WNW 1/2 W
A Q Y—ESE	A S H—WNW
A Q Z—SE by E 1/2 E	A S I—NW by W 1/2 W
A R B—SE by E	A S J—NW by W
A R C—SE 1/2 E	A S K—NW 1/2 W
A R D—Southeast	A S L—Northwest
A R E—SE 1/2 S	A S M—NW 1/2 N
A R F—SE by S	A S N—NW by N
A R G—SSE 1/2 E	A S O—NNW 1/2 W
A R H—SSE	A S P—NNW
A R I—S by E 1/2 E	A S Q—N by W 1/2 N
A R J—S by E	A S R—N by W
A R K—S 1/2 E	A S T—N 1/2 W

... may be recognized

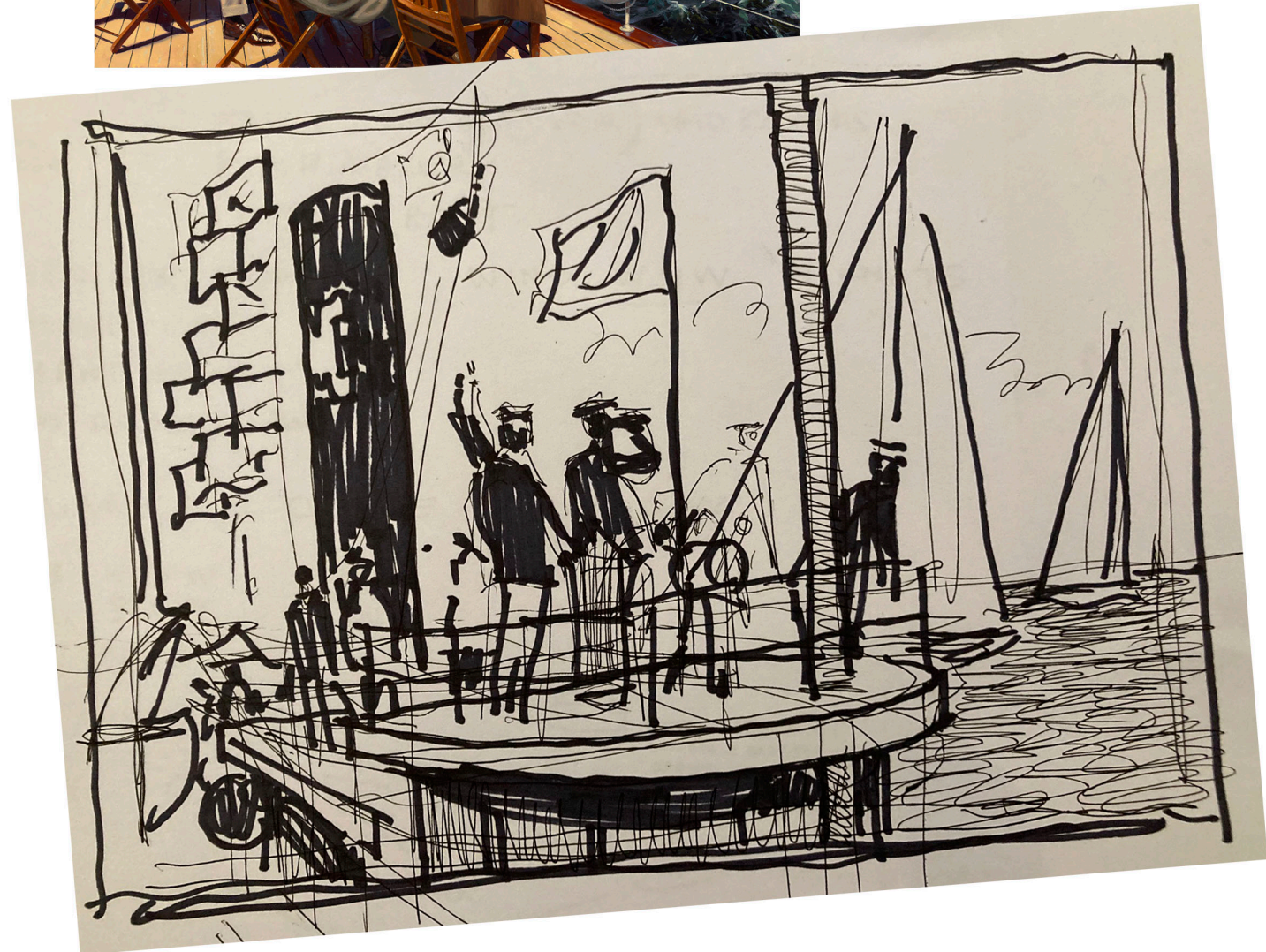
The international code flag signals hoisted to indicate the course chosen for the race - determined just 15 minutes before the start and based on wind direction and speed - will add interest and color to the scene. These news clippings, explaining the complicated system for signaling compass direction of each leg, were critical to depicting the correct flags flown.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

My clients were drawn to an earlier painting I had done of a race committee scene, which placed an emphasis on the figures, positioning them prominently in the foreground. Taking the same approach in this work would be a challenge, as widening the view to incorporate the MORAN's funnel and signal flags would surely make a more compelling overall scene, yet potentially diminish the figurative component. Finding just the right balance of foreground and background, and managing the complex perspective, will be explored through a series of sketches.

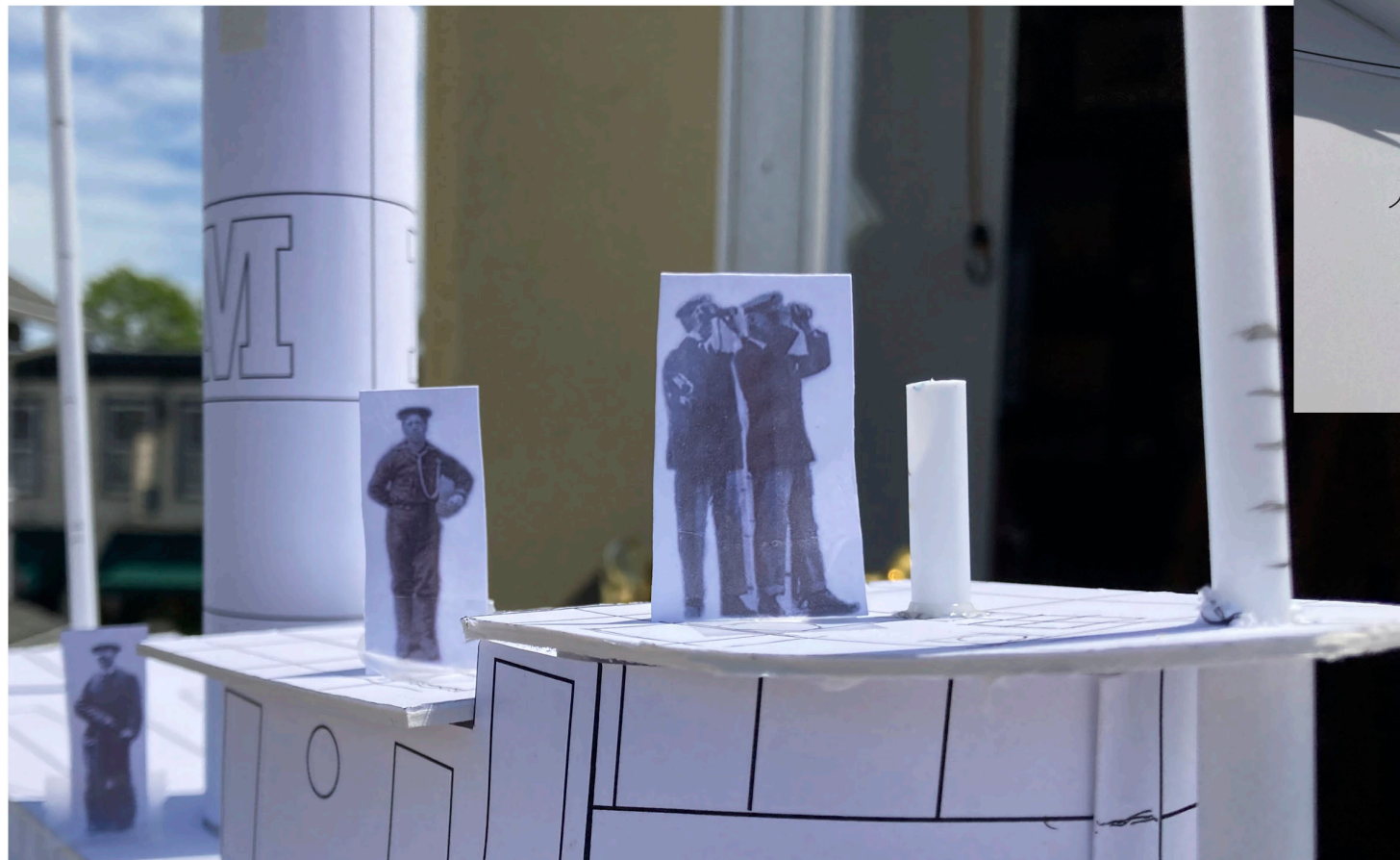
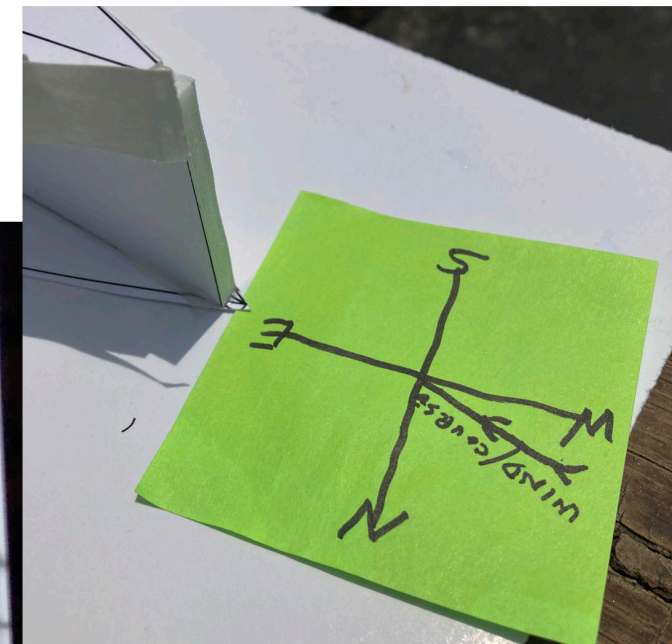


My earlier painting of "The Race Committee" and my first concept thumbnail sketch for "On Station."



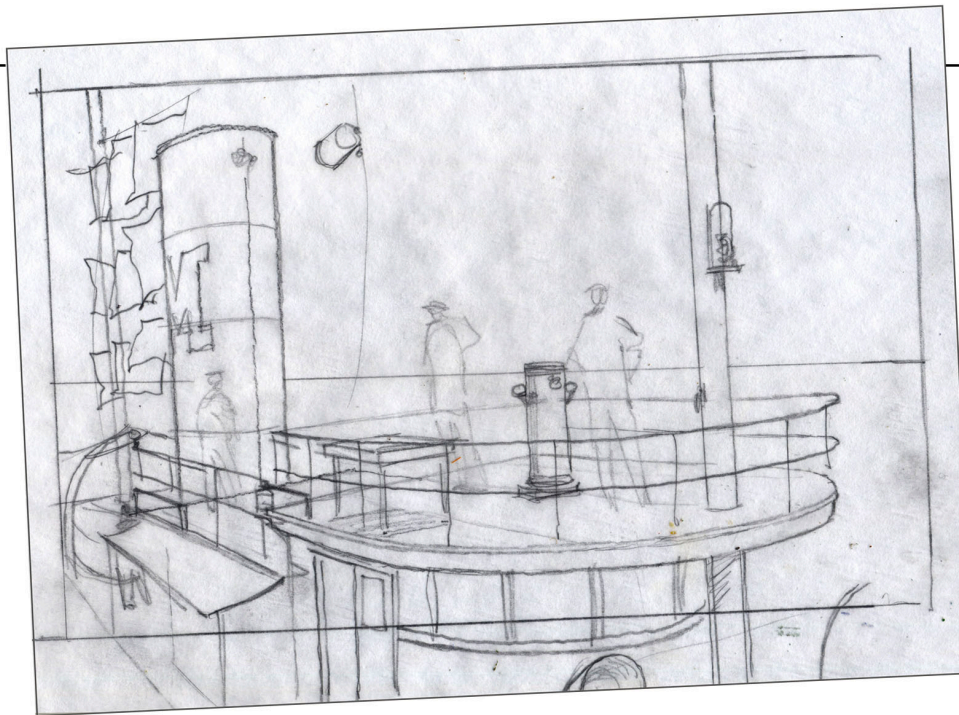


As I often do for my paintings, I start by building a simple model of the vessel I'll be depicting, drawn from the original ship's plans as I did here of the SUSAN A MORAN (left). These are simple and lack any detail, made of paper and cardboard, but allow me to "fly" around and observe the scene from different angles. With paper cutouts of crew in correct proportion to the ship, and knowing the direction of the wind and the sun, I can then pick just the right angle to photograph the model and begin my sketching process.

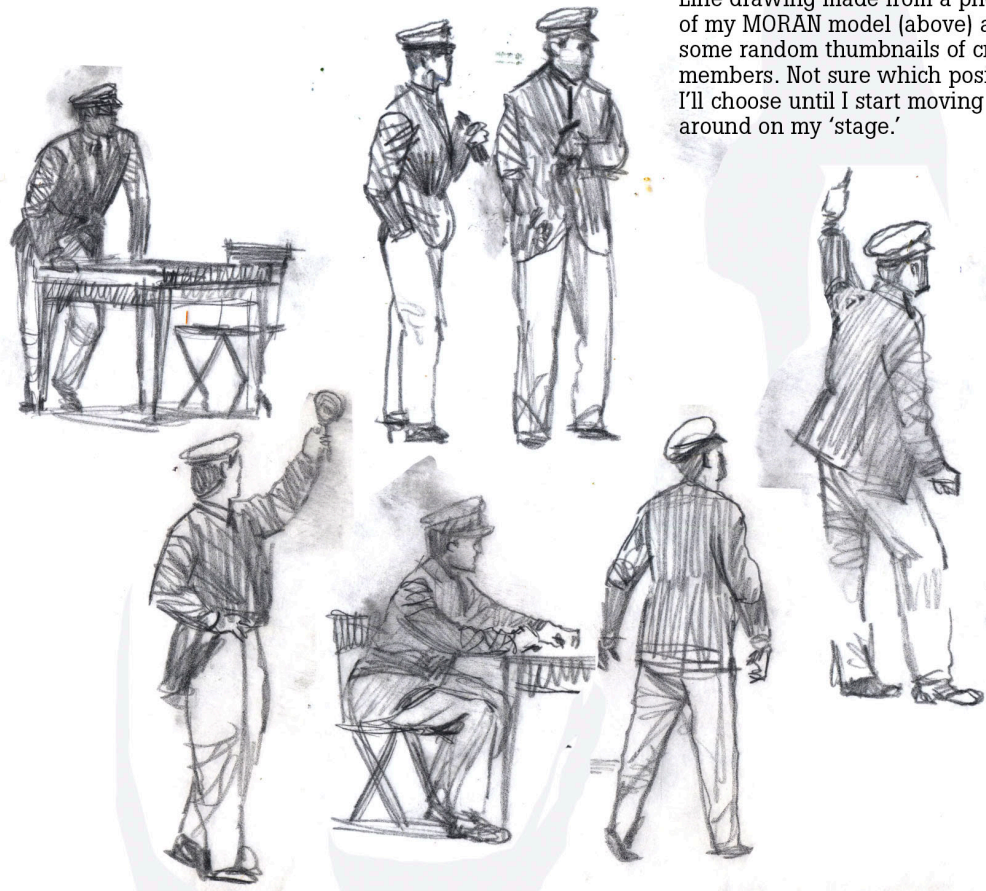


EARLY SKETCHES

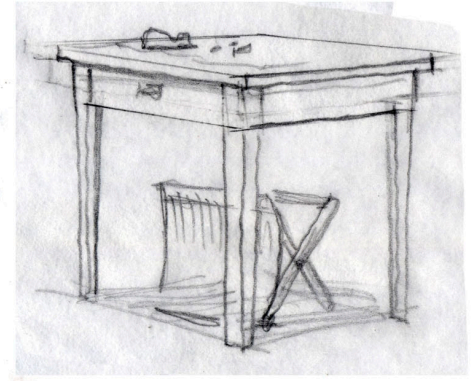
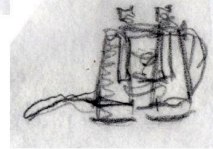
My sketching process begins by choosing one of the photos I have taken of the SUSAN A MORAN model, from just the right viewpoint I envision for the painting. This will be my 'stage' on which I will start to position my 'actors' – in this case, the three primary members of the race committee and several support crew and spectators. I'm not sure where or how to position them yet, but my goal is to create a dynamic composition of the figures interacting with their surroundings.

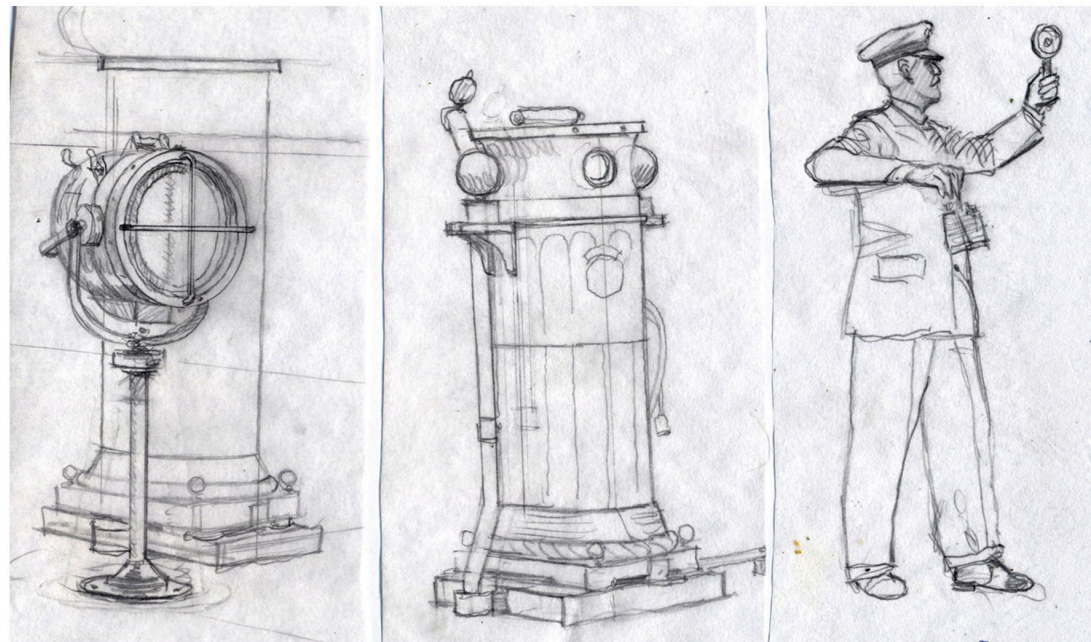
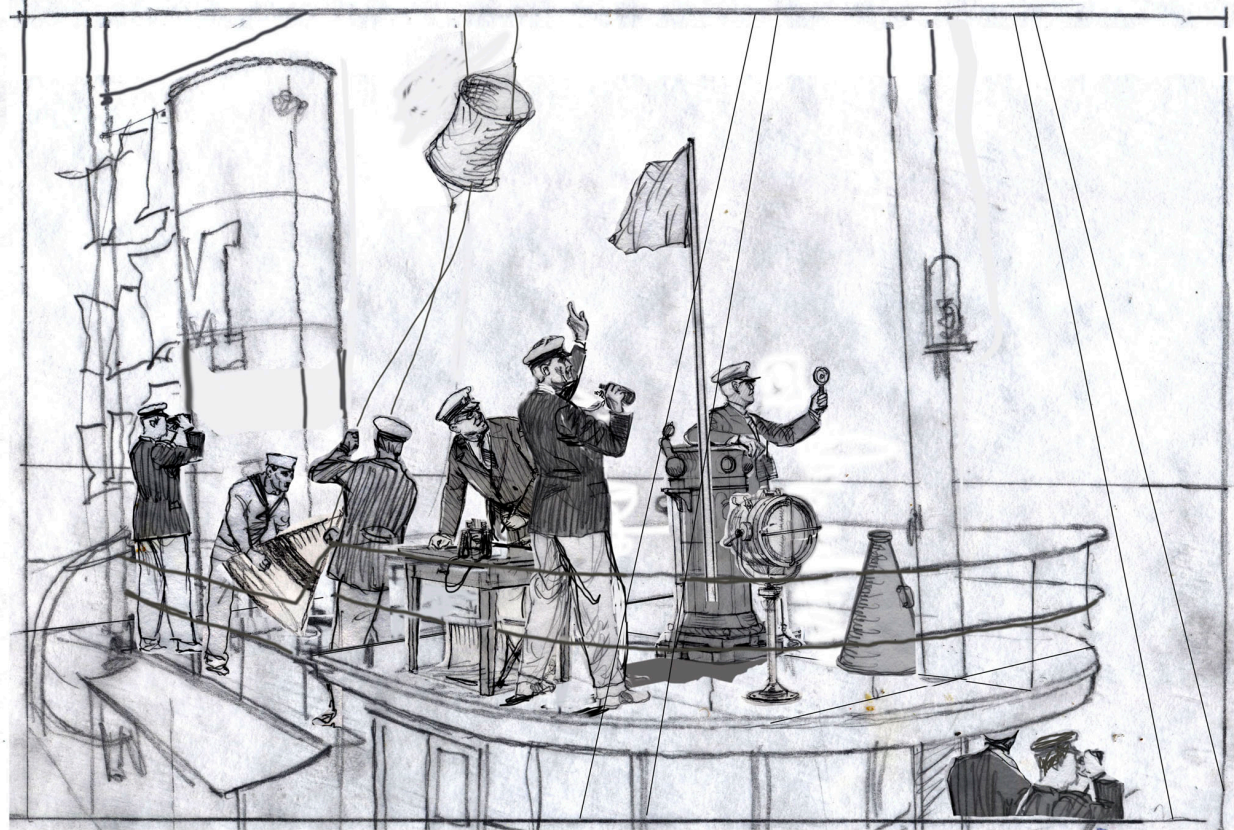


Line drawing made from a photo of my MORAN model (above) and some random thumbnails of crew members. Not sure which positions I'll choose until I start moving them around on my 'stage.'



Philip Mallory





In this sketch (above) I've started to experiment with positioning my crew onboard the MORAN's top deck, emphasizing the three Committee principals. I envision the Chairman, Edmund Lang, signalling a clean start of the race with an upraised arm to add dynamism to his pose. Philip Mallory, leaning over the chart desk, will be watching too, and I want his posture to add compositional interest and tension to the scene as well. Colgate Hoyt is shown holding up a wind speed indicator while resting his arm on the binnacle. The background crew is hoisting the red cylinder indicating the start at precisely 11:40 am.

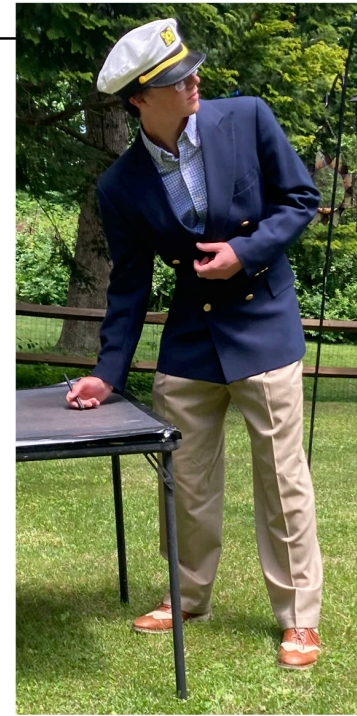
POSING HUMAN MODELS

Once I have a pretty good idea of where all my 'actors' will be positioned, I move on to the next step – posing friends and family members to stand in for the crew on board, using my figurative sketches as a guide. I'll dress them as closely as I can to the period, and photograph them in the positions I want, making sure the sun is in the proper place in the sky. I can never get exactly what I need, just close enough to render folds in clothes and falling shadows that are hard to do convincingly without good reference.

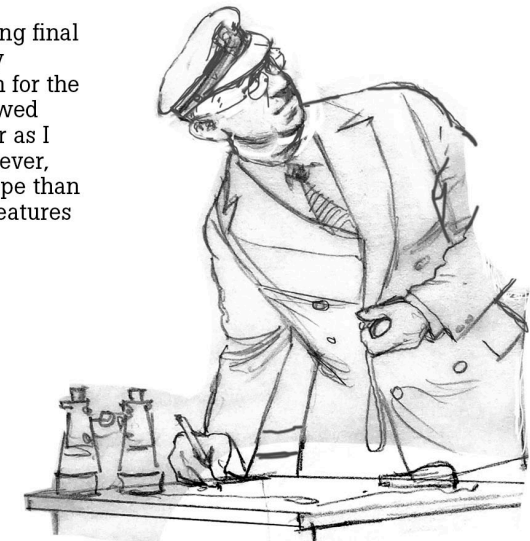


Here's a sequence (above) of developing final reference for the Edmund Lang character. Using my rough thumbnail as a guide, I first posed my 18-year-old son Jack as a stand-in (he's a bit skinnier than a middle-aged, well-fed NYIC member, but it's a good starting point). Later, I recruited a friend of mine for a re-shoot; he's got a square jaw as Lang did and is about the same age. In the end, I chose to combine the two photos, using the waist-down portion from one and waist-up from the other (opposite page). The last sketch, based on this composite, is the one I'll use for the final master drawing. Jack posing for other figures (below).





This sequence shows developing final reference for the Philip Mallory character. I posed my son again for the posture and shot my square-jawed friend looking over his shoulder as I want Mallory to be doing. However, his face is a much different shape than Mallory's was, so I softened his features to get closer to a likeness.



COLOR AND VALUE STUDIES

At different stages in the drawing development, I'll experiment with values – the range of blacks, grays and whites – in the composition which play an important part in the design of the painting and the large shapes within. At the very end of the preparation process, I'll also do a small oil painting in the form of a color study. This will be a useful tool for manipulating colors and values on my computer to come close to what I want in the final painting. Experimenting and making decisions on this small scale is a lot easier than making them later on the actual canvas.



Here's a couple of value studies made at different times in the sketching process. The background set of lines, angles and shapes into an already complex composition. All this has to be considered before I commit to a master drawing to transfer to the canvas.



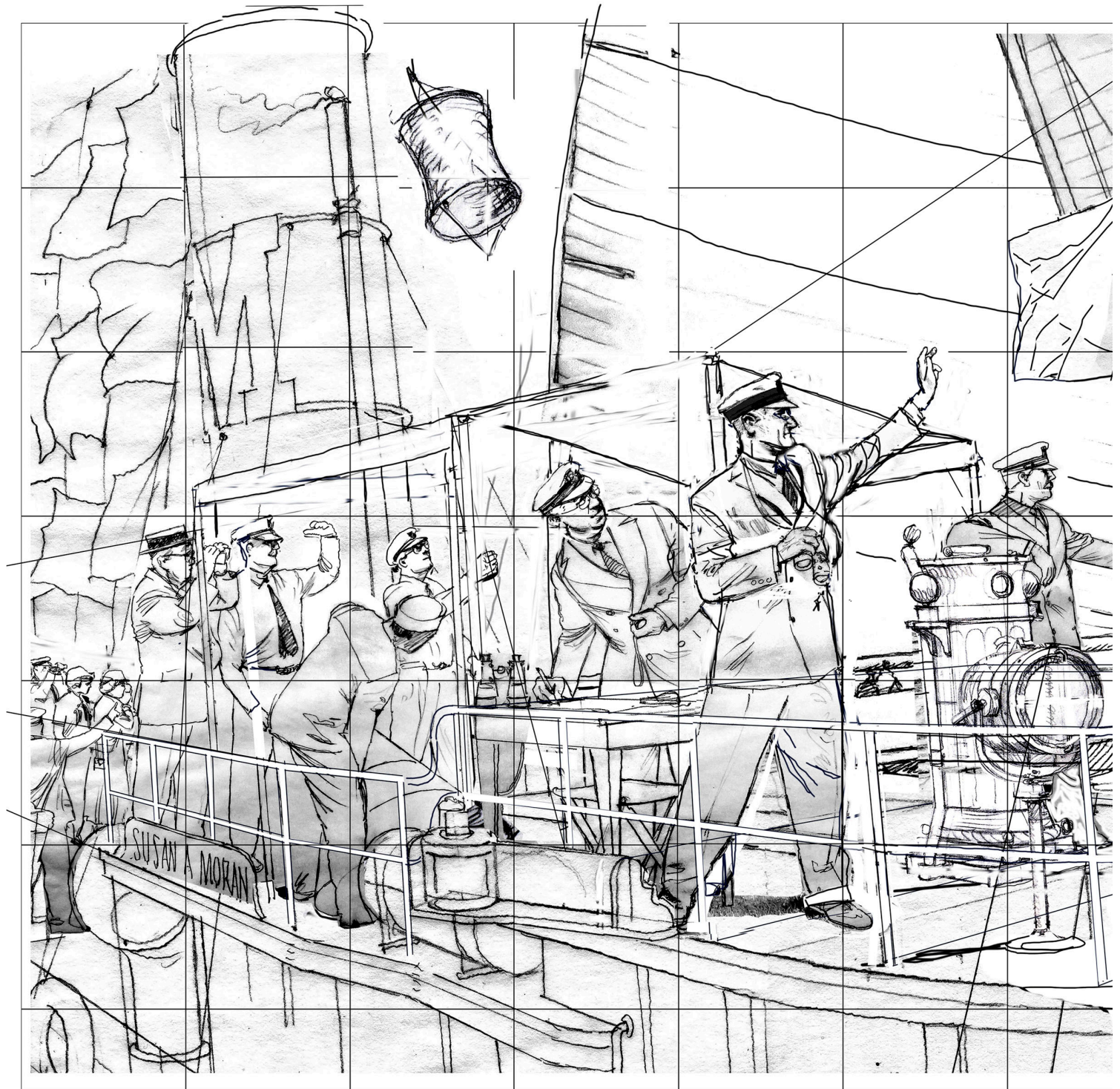


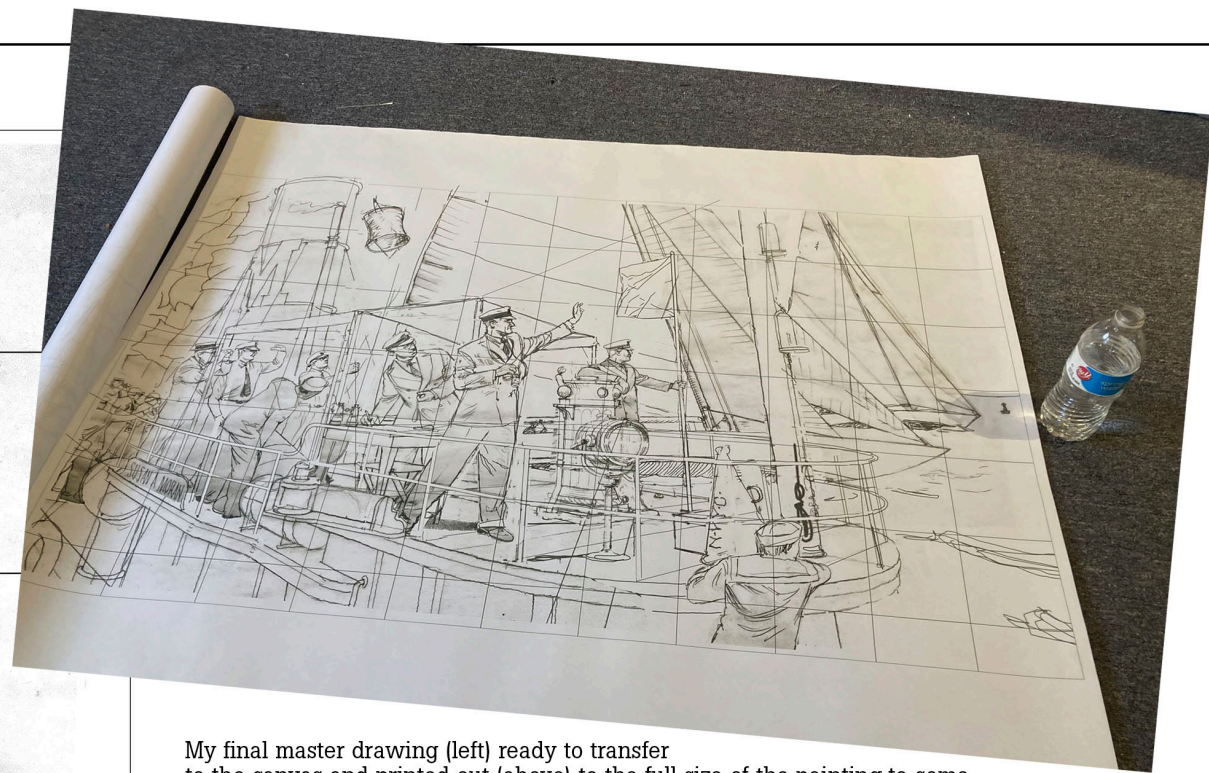
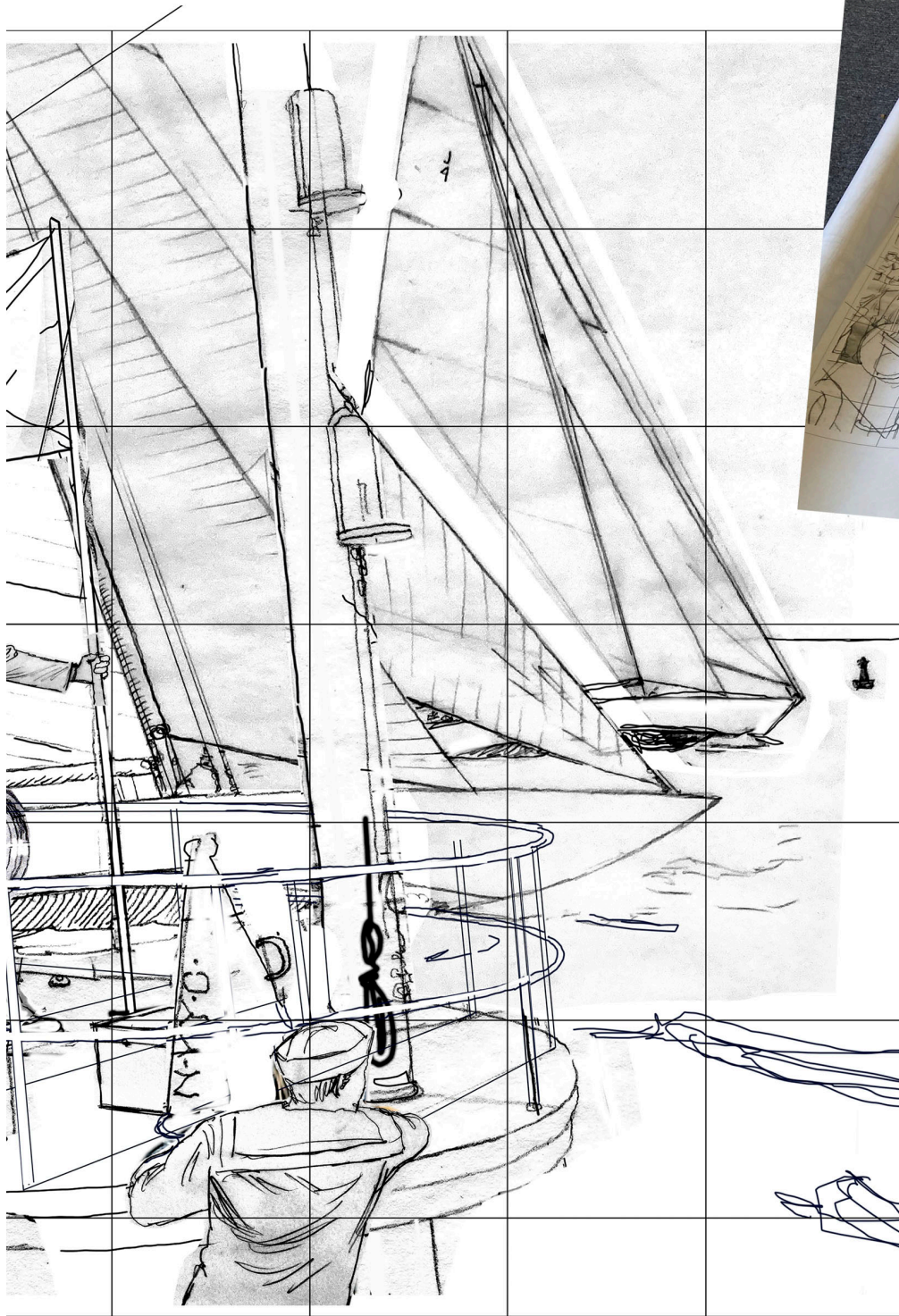
Above is the raw, small (7" x 11") color study I did in preparation for the final. I'm not trying to nail just the right colors; instead I'll scan it into my computer and manipulate them in Photoshop until I get something close to what I'm looking for (left). This is also useful for my clients to get an idea of what the final painting may look like.



FINAL MASTER DRAWING AND PAINTING SEQUENCE

After weeks of research, conceptualizing, sketching, building a model, posing people in dress, more sketching and value and color studies, I'm finally ready to paint. First step: prepare my final, full-sized master drawing for transfer to the canvas.





My final master drawing (left) ready to transfer to the canvas and printed out (above) to the full size of the painting to come. Below is the drawing transferred in colored pencil to my canvas – actually, it's the best quality Claessens Belgian portrait linen laminated to a rigid 1/4" pressboard panel, almost 4 feet wide.





STEP 1 On the canvas I've reinforced my master drawing with a stronger painted outline. Hopefully I don't have to make any major changes to the basic structure of the scene.



STEP 2 First I want to cover the canvas with a loose underpainting, just trying to establish a basis for several sessions of overpainting and refinement.



STEP 5 The background sky, funnel, signal flags and racing yachts are pretty much done. Painting all the seams in SHAMROCK's and ENTERPRISE's sails can get a bit tedious.



STEP 6 Still working from background into the foreground, I've now completed my main characters and much of the top deck of the MORAN.



STEP 3 Underpainting continues by filling in the broad shapes with loose paint. I'm paying no attention to detail, just making an effort to establish the right range of values.



STEP 4 The canvas is now completely covered and I'm ready to start overpainting with the next layer of finish, generally working from background to foreground.



STEP 7 Almost finished; missing only the mast stays and other rigging, small details and final touches. See next page for the end result.



My studio in Mystic, CT.





“ON STATION: New York Yacht Club America’s Cup Race Committee, 1930”

26” x 44” Oil on Linen by Russ Kramer, 2022

Chairman Edmund Lang signals a clean start of the fourth and decisive race of the New York Yacht Club’s defense of the America’s Cup off Newport, RI, 11:40 am, September 18th, 1930. The Club has chartered the New York Harbor tugboat SUSAN A MORAN to act as a Committee Boat for the summer trials and final competition between the two new J-Boats, Harold Vanderbilt’s ENTERPRISE and Sir Thomas Lipton’s green-hulled SHAMROCK V. The day’s 30-mile triangular course has been determined just fifteen minutes prior, and is signalled to the boats with flags on three hoists just aft of the MORAN’s funnel. Reading from fore to aft: A-S-H (first leg, west northwest); A-R-J (second leg, south by east) and finally A-Q-M (northeast by half east). Crew is stowing the blue and white cone preparatory five-minute signal which has just been replaced with the now-hoisted red start cylinder, and with the ship’s steam whistle, announces the start. The starting line is drawn between the white flag displayed onboard the MORAN and the America’s Cup bouy seen in the distance. Committee members Philip Mallory, leaning over the chart table holding a stopwatch, and Colgate Hoyt, bracing the start signal and with wind speed indicator in hand, pay close attention. Already up two in the best-of-five contest, ENTERPRISE will cross the finish line at 2:30 pm, five minutes ahead of SHAMROCK V, and retain the cup for the Americans, first captured from the Brits in 1851.

*T*oday, Russ Kramer is widely regarded to be among America's leading marine artists. His large-scale studio paintings create 'first-hand' experiences for the viewer, putting you right on board during some of history's greatest yacht races or turn-of-the-century luxury vessels. A sense of the dramatic moment, combined with meticulous research and attention to detail, have found considerable appeal and sell quickly into private and corporate collections. His works are unique and immediately recognizable, combining narrative, historical, figurative and maritime disciplines. Russ is past President of the 500-member American Society of Marine Artists and a member of the New York Yacht Club. He lives and works in Mystic, Connecticut..

