



Ladies of the Lakes

James Clary

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Jim Clary's unquestionable marine art talent is traced to his early days as a schoolboy. He remembers vividly having his ears boxed while drawing in his arithmetic. But his love for the sea and ships no doubt began during the years he lived near the Detroit River, fishing and playing amidst the sea gulls and the beckoning whistles of passing vessels. This he believes established his strong desire to paint ships. When the family moved to the rural town of Richmond, Michigan, Jim spent much of his time in nearby St. Clair, a small town along the St. Clair River, which deepened his interest in ships' lore, and led him to devote his full talents to painting ships and collecting bits and pieces on maritime history. Like most of the famous marine artists of the past, Clary is self-taught. His natural talent gradually came alive through the combined effort of drawing and the love and knowledge of ships. Thus having relied on extensive reading, research, and experience, he brings to his work the most accurate possible interpretation of each subject. During his endless search for data and detail he finds such hidden treasures as century-old newspaper accounts of sinkings or rescues that he might link with his paintings. Searching through libraries, museums, or private collections, he often comes across a detail that has been forgotten. Much of his knowledge comes from personal experience. Trips on Great Lakes ore carriers have provided him with the opportunity to witness, first-hand, the saga of today's behemoths and the chill of a November storm. His staging of a battle on Old Ironsides in which U.S. Navy men assisted in re-enacting a deck fighting scene gave his invaluable reference material for his painting of the only pictorial record of how it might have appeared on board the Constitution in the heat of battle. His "cracker barrel" conversations with old-timers have uncovered many fascinating anecdotes and his interviews with survivors of the Titanic or the Andrea Doria have often provided him inside information unattainable through normal sources.

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