

# *Niagara* Sail Training



An Overview for the Prospective Trainee

*Perhaps you are here because you have a deep interest in history, because for you, the Age of Sail is a living thing, and you knew Niagara's name, and you sought her out. Perhaps, though, you are here for reasons you can only dimly explain: you turned a dockside corner on a moonlit night, and there the ship was, ephemeral, a vision from another age. And you came closer to this creature of spectacle and majesty, her towering masts dancing slightly with the swell, as if in latent anticipation. And you spoke to some mariner there, who said he came here on this ship, and that he would soon go away upon it, that this was something that people did. That you could bag groceries, or peddle home insurance, you could take the cross-town bus every day, and provide adequate customer service by telephone or instant messenger. Or you could cut a wide blue swath across the wave-trammeled seas. You could practice an ageless craft in an unforgiving element.*



*"In any pre-industrial society, from the upper Paleolithic to the nineteenth century A.D., a boat or (later) a ship was the largest and most complex machine produced" -- Keith Muckleroy Maritime Archaeology*

*Niagara is a singularly complex machine. It represents one of the last and most refined expressions of a technology millennia in its evolution. Yet beneath this complexity lies a willful simplicity. A sailing ship is a fugue of simple ideas and simple machines, repeated in subtle and complex variation. And as magnificent as it is, the ship is simply a tool. The purpose of a ship is the practice of seamanship, the craft and the science of making a home and a living in a hostile element. While it is no longer necessary for us to take to the sea in wooden sailing ships for the practice of war or trade or exploration, it remains necessary for us to, from time to time, take the measure of ourselves against the wilderness.*

## Who are we?

The U.S. Brig *Niagara*, homeported in Erie, Pennsylvania, is the reconstructed relief flagship of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry. On September 10, 1813, nine small ships -- six of them, including *Niagara*, constructed at Erie -- defeated a British squadron of six vessels in the Battle of Lake Erie. A pivotal event in the War of 1812, it led to regaining Detroit, lost at the war's outset, and lifted the nation's morale.

The U.S. Brig *Niagara* is a two-masted, square-rigged sailing vessel. In 1813, she had a crew of 155 men and boys who manned her sails, 18 carronades and two long guns. The crew was organized into two watch sections (port and starboard) for routine duties while underway. More experienced sailors were stationed aloft, while others under the direction of petty officers manned the rigging which controlled the sails from deck. In battle, men also manned the guns and carronades. Boys carried the black powder charges from the magazine to the guns. Marines and soldiers were assigned to the fighting tops on the masts where they could fire their muskets on the enemy ships. Officers directed setting sails, firing cannon, and maneuvering the brig in response to orders from the captain.

Living conditions for the crew were very poor, leading to the rapid spread of sickness and disease. The berthing deck provided adequate space for all officers and midshipmen, but only minimal hammock space for less than half the enlisted crew. Many probably slept on the open deck. An iron galley stove was located on the berthing deck just aft of the foremast. Sanitary facilities were primitive. Fresh water for cooking, drinking and bathing was obtained by bucket directly from Lake Erie which was, and is, fresh water. After disease broke out in the fleet in 1813, Commodore Perry ordered all lake water to be boiled before use.

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1813, the British under Commodore Robert Heriot Barclay and the Americans under Perry met in battle near Put-in-Bay, Ohio. Perry's flagship, *Lawrence*, engaged the British ships *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, while the *Niagara*, for unknown reasons, did not close the enemy.

After the *Lawrence* was completely disabled, with most of her crew wounded or killed, Perry transferred by boat to the undamaged *Niagara*, hoisted his battle flag -- "DONT GIVE UP THE SHIP" -- sailed her into close action, broke the British battle line, and forced Barclay to surrender. In the aftermath, Commodore Perry wrote his famous report to General William Henry Harrison, "We have met the enemy and they are ours; two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop."

The current *Niagara*, the third reconstruction of the original vessel, was launched in Erie in 1988, the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie. *Niagara* sails the Great Lakes, preserving and interpreting the story of the Battle of Lake Erie, and acting as an ambassador in her capacity as the flagship of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As a Sailing School Vessel, her crew of professionals and trainees actively preserve the skills of square-rig seamanship.





### **What do we do?**

While underway, *Niagara* operates as a Sailing School Vessel. This means that we accept paying trainees, who are, both legally and practically, considered part of the crew. Trainees eat and live with the crew, onboard the ship. While sailing on *Niagara* does have a classroom component, most of our training is hands-on. By becoming an active part of the crew, trainees learn the skills of traditional square-rig seamanship, through sailing, maintaining, and living on the ship. The nineteenth-century maritime environment is far enough removed from our own lives that simply living on board the ship, and helping her make her way from place to place, is an education in and of itself.

We prefer that trainees stay on board for a minimum of three weeks. This is because it takes time to learn the fundamentals of square-rig seamanship: terminology, physical skills, familiarity with the vessel, and the social structure of shipboard life. By the end of three weeks, most trainees are comfortable operating in this new world, and can recognize that they have become a valued part of a close knit community.

The stated goals of the Flagship Niagara League and the Erie Maritime Museum include preserving and presenting Erie's maritime history, and one of the ways this is accomplished is by sailing *Niagara* to various ports. By doing this, we broadcast our message to thousands of people every year. At our port stops, as many as eight thousand visitors a day can board the ship and get a glimpse of a world two centuries passed. Our Sailing School Program helps foster a deeper understanding of the same world.

Preserving the ship as an artifact is important, but it is just as important to preserve the skills and technical understanding which make it work. At the end of the day, the ship is just a tool. The knowledge and practice of seamanship are the works for which it was built, and are the greater human accomplishment.

Trainees participate fully in all aspects of the life and work of the crew. This work includes both the romantic and the commonplace: making and striking sail, washing dishes, painting and varnishing, giving deck tours, steering by compass in the gathering dawn, and charging along under a quartering breeze. *Niagara* does not take passengers – she makes mariners.

A trainee berth includes room and board, whether the ship is underway or in port. Life on board is somewhat spartan, but no more so than a camping trip. Trainees sleep in hammocks and stow all their gear in a seabag each. The galley provides three meals a day, all cooked on a wood-burning stove.

Niagara's seamanship program is intended for healthy adults, ages 16 and up, who are citizens or legal residents of USA, Canada, or of member states of the European Union. Anyone sailing on Niagara in live-aboard programs who does not legally reside in the USA or Canada must present to the Captain upon arrival, a valid Passport and B-2 Tourist Visa (as required by the Department of Homeland Security, US Customs & Immigration).



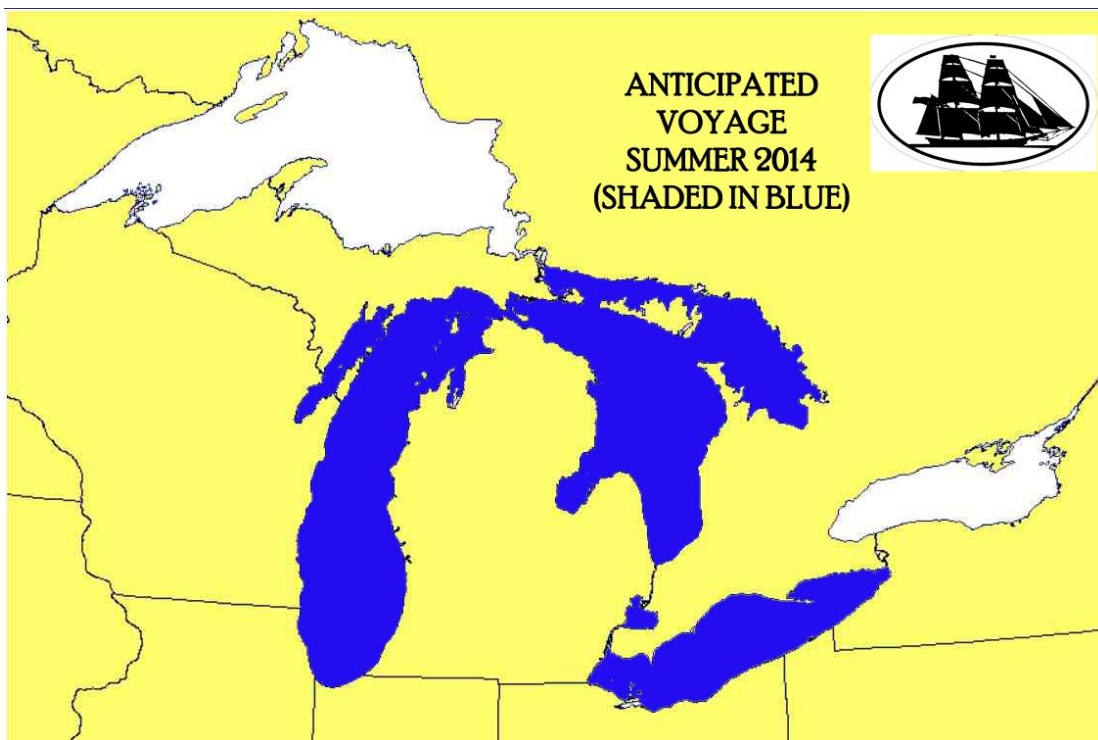
## What is our schedule?

In overview, *Niagara's* year consists of four unequal seasons, varying in length from year to year. In the summer, *Niagara* sails throughout the Great Lakes, as well as spending time in and around Erie. In the fall, the majority of *Niagara's* rig is removed, using methods and technology largely unchanged in the last two centuries, and the ship is covered with a canvas superstructure to protect against the harsh Lake Erie winter. In the spring, the ship is reassembled, or up-rigged, again, using traditional technology.

While planning for the 2014 sailing season is still ongoing, we anticipate a varied schedule, including between six and eight port stops in Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan, as well as a number of day sails and events in Erie.

A full schedule will be posted as soon as it is available. Provisionally, we expect to be signing up individual trainees for July, August, and September. If you are interested in sailing with us, please contact the Marine Operations Coordinator at (814) 452-2744 ext. 214 or [marineops@flagshipniagara.org](mailto:marineops@flagshipniagara.org), or send in an application.

Trainees can join or leave in almost any scheduled port stop. The only exception is that, in order to comply with Canadian passenger trade regulations, we cannot take on or discharge trainees in Canadian ports – we must arrive and leave with the same people.





### **How much does it cost?**

Tuition for the Niagara Seamanship Training Program is \$1,500.00 for two to four weeks, per individual student. Tuition for students enrolled in group programs, such as with partner institutions, may vary. This covers room and board on the ship, but does not include travel to and from the vessel.

Trainees who wish to remain onboard after the end of their scheduled term in the Niagara Seamanship Training Program may do so only with the Captain's approval, and on a space available basis. An additional fee of \$300 per week will be charged for any time on board beyond the first four weeks.

Returning trainees (who do not enroll in the Apprentice Seaman Program) will receive a 15% discount on tuition during their 2<sup>nd</sup> season, and a 25% discount if they return as a trainee during any summer sailing season thereafter.

The Flagship Niagara League strives to make our Seamanship Training Program as affordable as possible. To this end, we use our port appearances and other programs to, effectively, subsidize sail training. Scholarships may be available. Check our website, or call for details.



## How do I apply?

**Step 1. Obtaining the Application:** The trainee downloads and prints via our website, [www.flagshipniagara.org](http://www.flagshipniagara.org), an SSV Niagara Trainee Application, which includes a General Information Packet. Applicants who do not have access to the internet may contact the Marine Operations Coordinator at (814) 452-2744, Ext. 214 to request a hard copy be sent by mail.

**Step 2. Submit Application and Application Fee:** The trainee must complete the Trainee Application, Medical History and Examination Form (Student Medical Record), and the Student Contract. He/she must then submit them to the Marine Operations Coordinator at the Flagship Niagara League office for review with an enclosed check, money order, or credit card payment form for the non-refundable application fee of \$75.00. This fee covers the \$40 medical review, a security background check of any adults, and the processing of the application.

**Step 3. Physical Examination and Submission of Medical Forms:** As soon as possible, but at least by 30 days prior to joining the ship, the trainee must submit to a physical examination and return the Medical History and Physical Examination form to the FNL Office for review. This form must be completed by a Physician, certified Physician Assistant, or certified Nurse Practitioner. The trainee will submit this form to the Marine Operations Coordinator, who will forward them to the Medical Review Officer for his/her review and acceptance or denial. The Medical Review Office will reply within 2 weeks of receiving the form.

**Step 4. Medical Review Process and Acceptance into the Sailing Program:** The Medical Review Officer will return the medical files to the Marine Operations Coordinator with an assessment of whether the applicant is medically fit for the Niagara Sailing Program or not. Any applicants that are denied acceptance into the Sailing Program will receive a letter stating why their application was denied. This letter will be generated by the Marine Operations Coordinator. Any applicants accepted by the Medical Review Officer will receive a letter from the Marine Operations Coordinator notifying them of their acceptance and including an invoice for a non-refundable deposit of \$300 or amount to equal 20% of tuition.

**Refund and Cancellation Policies:** These policies are clearly defined in the Student Contract.





### **Flagship Niagara General Policies:**

The following policies are observed on *Niagara* and at all related functions.

**Student Code of Conduct:** One of FNL's goals is to encourage all students to live, learn and work together as responsible members of the *Niagara* shipboard community. By signing this Contract, you are acknowledging that you understand this and agree to be a respectful member of the *Niagara* community. You are also agreeing to abide by FNL's Code of Conduct and to authorizing FNL to inform your home institution and your parent/guardian about any Code of Conduct infractions.

**Drug and Alcohol Policy:** FNL prohibits the use, transfer or possession of any controlled drugs or drug paraphernalia. FNL also prohibits anyone under the age of 21 from possessing or drinking alcohol onboard. Use or possession of alcohol on board *Niagara* is at the discretion of the Captain, in compliance with U.S. Coast Guard Regulations. By signing this Contract, you are agreeing to FNL's right to dismiss you for violations of FNL's Drug and Alcohol Policy, including, but not limited to, your refusal to comply with any requested test.

**Smoking:** Students under the age of 18 are not allowed to smoke while participating in any FNL/Niagara's high school programs or other programs intended specifically for minors without the express permission of the parent. This policy extends throughout the duration of the program.

**Sexual Harassment and Discrimination** of any type, by anyone in the FNL/*Niagara* community, including employees, students or visitors, is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated at any work or learning location. FNL is committed to providing a work and educational environment free of sexual harassment, sexual violence/assault and harassment based on gender or sexual orientation. Infraction will result in dismissal.

**Sexual Activity** is prohibited onboard the ship. Minors, from the time of arrival onboard to the time of departure, are prohibited from engaging in sexual activity while ashore as well. Any adults engaging in sexual activities with minors onboard or with minors elsewhere who are participating in FNL/*Niagara* programs will be reported to appropriate authorities as prescribed by local, state, and federal law.

**Safe, Ethical, and Appropriate Behavior** is expected of everyone participating in FNL/*Niagara* programs. You will be removed from the vessel and sent home if you exhibit behavior that is defiant, harassing, or poses a danger, through misconduct or unsafe practices, to yourself or others.

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