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TALL SHIP ORDER

Tall Ships Rhode Island welcomes a steel hull to Newport, the first piece in a \$3-million effort to build a self-sustaining educational square-rigger.

BY MARK REYNOLDS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

NEWPORT — A 132-foot hull, a key acquisition for the group that wants to equip Rhode Island with its own tall ship, arrived in Narragansett Bay yesterday morning, completing an 800-mile trip from Ontario under tow by a tugboat.

The hull was welcomed at Bowen's Wharf by fundraisers and sailing enthusiasts who hope to turn it into a towering square-rigger and name it after a Rhode Island naval hero from the War of the 1812.

If the project succeeds, they say, the Oliver Hazard Perry would serve as a training ship, drawing attention to the local waterfront and logging 30 to 40 weeks at sea each year. With a self-supporting budget of \$1 million a year, the vessel's educational programs would offer many young people a taste of ocean voyaging.

Capable of carrying 140 passengers and boarding 55 people overnight, the ship is expected to ply the waters of New England, Canada and the Great Lakes during the summer. In winter, it will travel to the Caribbean.

"This is going to be a school ship," said Bartlett Dunbar, vice chairman of Tall Ships Rhode Island and owner of Bowen's Wharf.

Dunbar had joined reporters and photographers aboard a sightseeing vessel that circled the odd-looking hull as a tug eased it toward the downtown quay around 9:30 a.m. yesterday.

The hull, purchased by Tall Ships for \$339,000, is a steel version of the real thing from the 19th century.

It has graceful lines, a fantail and a row of triangular steel stanchions poking up from the deck.

The boat's new owners hope to raise about \$3 million to outfit the boat over the next two years.

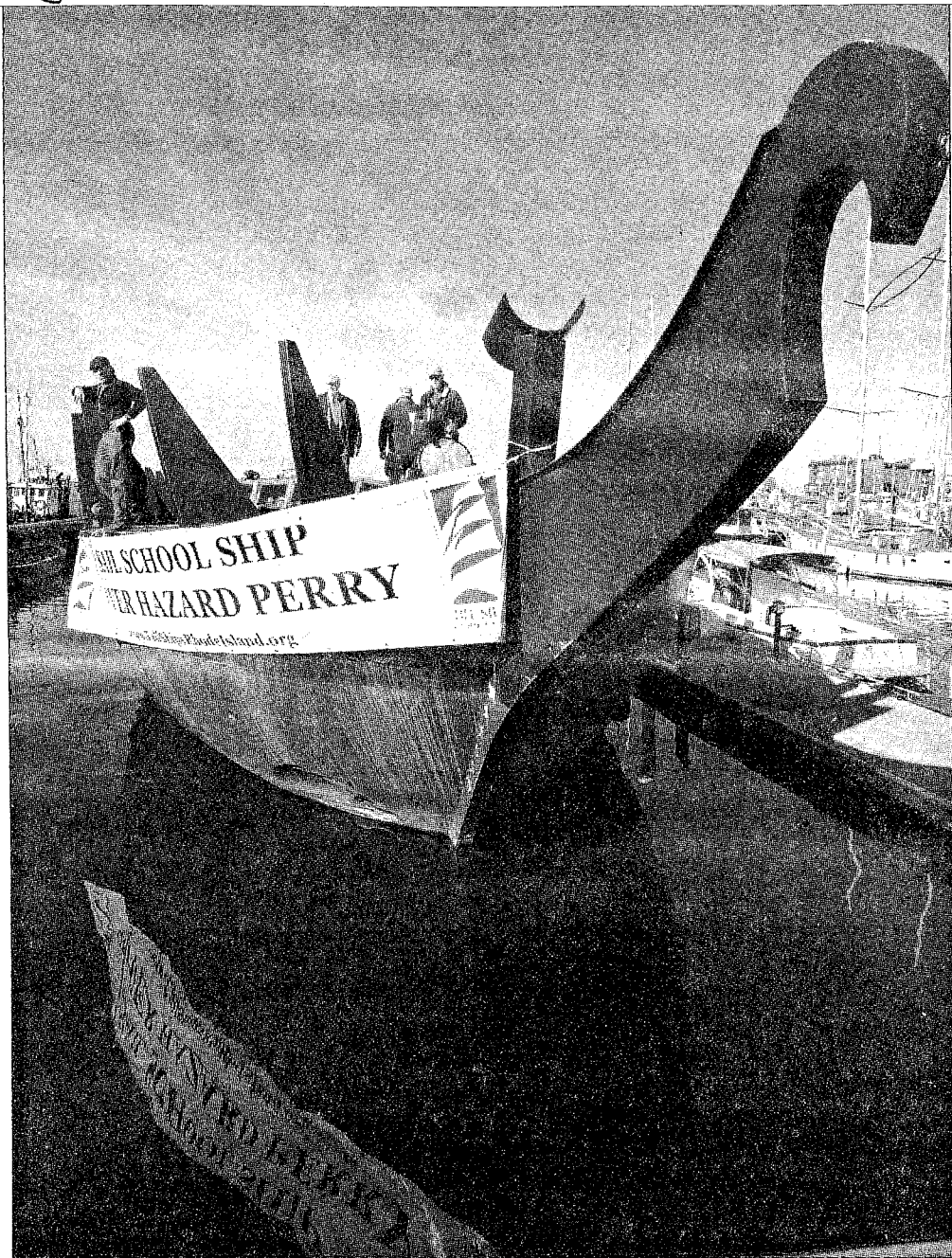
Their plan calls for adding another deck, building quarters, and rigging the ship with three masts, spars and other equipment, including twin engines.

The outfitting would bring the length of the Oliver Hazard Perry to 207 feet and make it one of the country's largest sailing training ships, second only to the Coast Guard's Eagle.

The Tall Ships group plans to showcase and support Rhode Island's marine trades as it readies the ship for a maiden voyage under sail in 2010.

The hull's previous owners, a group of tall ships enthusiasts in historic Amherstburg, Ontario, spent \$1.5 million on the boat before their project lost political support. Many feared the ship would not be

SEE HULL, A4



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / MARY MURPHY

The hull of the unfinished tall ship Oliver Hazard Perry is docked at Bowen's Wharf in Newport yesterday, completing its journey from Canada. Its owner, Tall Ships Rhode Island, plans to transform it into a 207-foot training ship.

Hull

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able to pay for its costs if it was used as a museum piece.

The situation presented a tempting opportunity for the Rhode Island group. The boon was financial — and historical.

The Canadians had crafted

the hull to replicate the HMS Detroit.

Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry — a Rhode Islander — had captured the Detroit, a British ship with the rest of the royal fleet, during the War of 1812.

"We have met the enemy and they are ours," Perry declared.

Almost two centuries later, a huge portrait of Perry hangs in Governor Carcieri's office at the

State House.

"From Colonial times to the present, Rhode Island has been a leader in our nation's naval and maritime affairs," Governor Carcieri said in a news release that came out yesterday morning as the hull reached the dock.

"She is truly worthy of our endorsement," he added.

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