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The LOG of Mystic Seaport

WINTER 1974



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THE COVER: J. D. Driggs Shipsmith Shop is one of the many outstanding exhibits at Mystic Seaport.

The LOG of Mystic Seaport®

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REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

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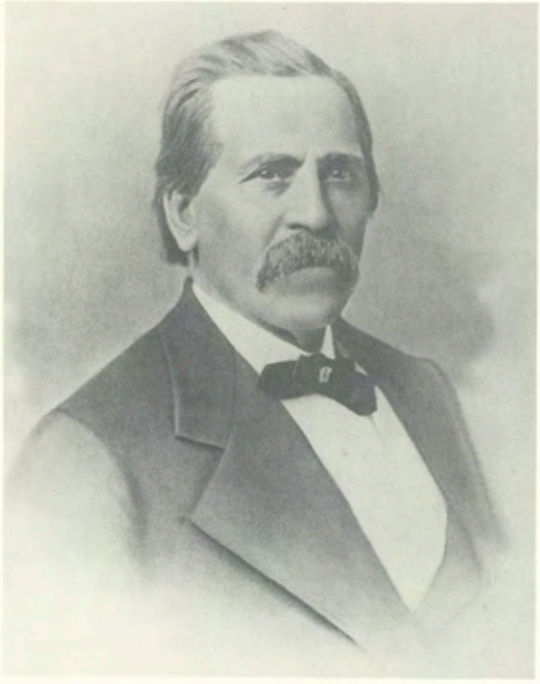
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JAMES D. DRIGGS SHIPSMITH SHOP

BY STUART M. FRANK, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE



Portrait of James D. Driggs (1820-1903), from the Mystic Seaport collection.

The shipsmith shop exhibited at Mystic Seaport is the only manufactory of ironware for the whaling industry known to have survived from the nineteenth century, and was probably the last to remain in business anywhere in the United States. The original proprietor was

James D. Driggs, who appears to have built the shop himself during the summer of 1885, when he was sixty-five years old. The shop was located at the head of Merrill's Wharf (now Homer's Wharf) in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Driggs served his apprenticeship during the 1840s in James Durfeè junior's company of blacksmiths, then the largest and most diversified enterprise of its kind in the city. New Bedford was not only the most important whaling center of the nineteenth century, but also supplied most of the whaling hardware to other ports, and developed an extensive commerce in iron goods of all sorts. While the sister city, Fall River, early excelled in the manufacture of cotton and woolen textiles, and the county seat (Taunton) was prominent in the manufacture of stoves and cast iron products, New Bedford also invested considerable energy in a variety of manufactures—particularly after the Civil War, when whaling suffered a general decline, and new economic avenues were sought in industrial development. The proliferation of factories, tradeshops, and whaling-related businesses necessitated a substantial population of ironsmiths, machinists, mechanics, and other metalworkers, to design, build, repair, and maintain the machinery and systems of a relatively large industrial complex. Some major firms had their own mechanics on the payroll, but others had to rely upon the services of independent jobbers. Hence, many of the blacksmithing operations were multi-faceted, catering to a variety of industrial needs. The Durfee company was the largest such outfit in town, having established a reputation not only in "whalecraft manufacture"—harpoons, cutting irons, ship fittings, etc.—but also in the production of machine parts and other mechanical devices.

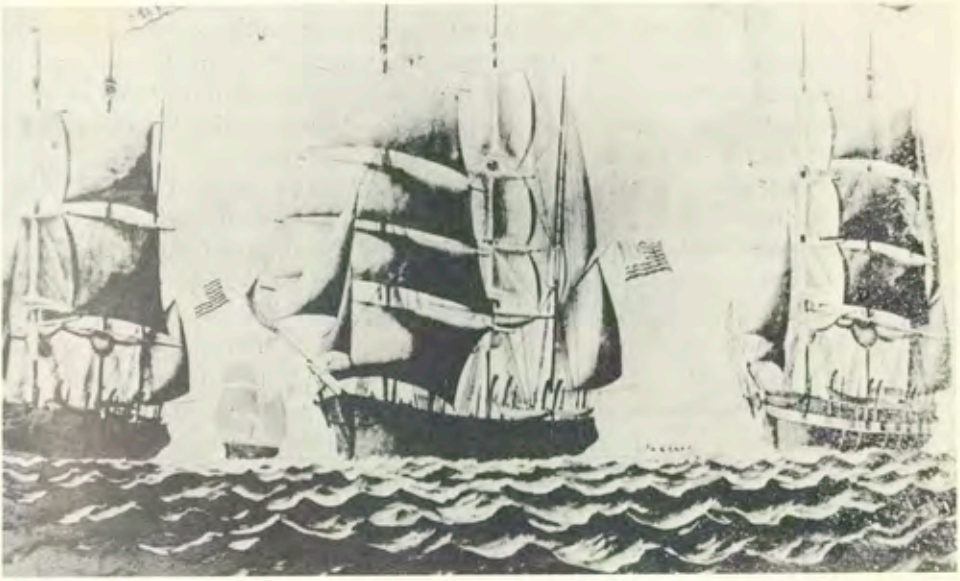
It may be presumed from the enormous quantity of whaling articles produced by the Durfee firm—and from the variety of entries in the company's ledger—that their services were much in demand. High standards were maintained, and the training provided was undoubtedly the best obtainable. Many former Durfee employees went on to establish themselves in successful ironsmithing practices of their own, but none ever equalled the great parent firm in volume or diversity of business.

There were, however, many blacksmithing enterprises operating principally within one area of specialty: the various Brownell and Ashley companies in the carriage-smithing line; Henry N. Deane in edge tool manufacture; Josiah Macy (later E.B. & F. Macy), Lewis Temple, and Snow & Purrington in shipsmithing; and many more, in these and other corners of ironsmithing. It was James Driggs' good fortune to enter the shipsmithing line at a time when an adequate living could be made there, and to establish a flourishing business that would persist long after most of New Bedford's maritime lustre had faded.

After several years in Durfee's employ, Driggs and another of Durfee's journeymen, Joseph G. Dean, entered a partnership and opened their own shop in 1846 (or 1847) as part of the Merrill's Wharf venture then being organized. This typical wharfing operation was a loosely cooperative conglomerate of independent businesses located in the immediate vicinity of the wharf, most of them leasing property from a single owner (Merrill), the corporate intention of which was to provide whaleships with a complete refitting and outfitting service at one location: dockage, maintenance and overhaul, loading and unloading, cartage, storage, and provisioning. The participating merchants included shipping agents, sailmaker, pump and block maker, sparmaker, cooper, chandlers, shipwrights, riggers teamsters, whale oil processors, and the shipsmithing firm of Dean & Driggs. (A cut stone edifice which housed shipping and administrative offices, sail loft, and counting rooms of assorted businesses, still stands on its original site at the head of the wharf. The wharf itself, now called Homer's Wharf, has become the center of activity for New Bedford's fish processing industry.)

Dean & Driggs achieved a reputation for whalecraft of superior quality in a partnership that endured for almost thirty years, until Dean's retirement in 1875. They shared the profits from the shipsmithing business, and also in such ancillary ventures as one-eighth ownership of at least one whaleship of local registry, and bark *Sea Fox*, 166 tons, out of nearby Westport, Massachusetts, one of three vessels built at Merrill's Wharf during the early fifties, just after Dean and Driggs opened their own business there. Over the years the *Sea Fox* turned in handsome profits in whale oil and baleen, a one-sixteenth interest in which added significantly to Driggs' income. (The 1875 transfer of ownership, whereby Dean sold out his interest to Driggs, is on file in the manuscript collection of the Seaport's G.W. Blunt White Library.)

The Dean & Driggs shop, located about one block west of (inland from) the wharf in an alley that came to be known as Driggs Lane, was equipped with five forges, and lineshafting machinery which was operated on power tapped from the neighboring Denison flour mill. From these facts, together with evidence assembled from schematic maps of the New Bedford waterfront in the last century, we may assume the original Dean & Driggs shop to have been considerably larger, and of greater production capability, than the present (1885) shop. There were as many as three journeymen and apprentices employed there at a time, one of whom was Lewis Temple, Jr., son of the black shipsmith who is credited with the invention of the practical toggle harpoon—a device that revolutionized whaling after its invention in 1848. Lewis Senior's Walnut Street shop was scarcely a block south of Merrill's Wharf, and both Driggs and Dean had probably known the



General Gam. An old painting of unknown date depicts (from left to right) whaling barks *Sea Fox, James Allen,* and *Commodore Morris* engaged in a "gam"—intervisitation among whaling crews at sea. Note the name pennant of *Sea Fox,* lack of false gunports on two of the vessels, and backwinded sails. *From a photograph in the Mystic Seaport collection.*

younger Temple for years before he came to work for them in the 1850s. However, Lewis Junior did not long remain in their employ. For most of his adult life he was the proprietor of a successful Union Street barber shop, and in that occupation, as the only son of the late inventor of the Temple toggle-iron, he became something of a local notable among the whaling cognoscenti.

After Joseph Dean's retirement in 1875, Driggs continued in the Driggs Lane shop for another ten years, probably at a reduced level of production. In 1885, with the whaling industry on the wane, Driggs himself having reached the age of sixty-five, the blacksmith determined to relocate onto the wharf (a move of only a few hundred feet). During the summer of 1885, with his grandson's help, he built a new, smaller shop on South Front Street at the head of Merrill's Wharf. At this address he continued as a specialist in whalecraft manufacture for the remaining seventeen years of his active career. Two forges afforded him less production capability than the five he had had in the old Driggs Lane shop; but, considering the proximity to the wharf that

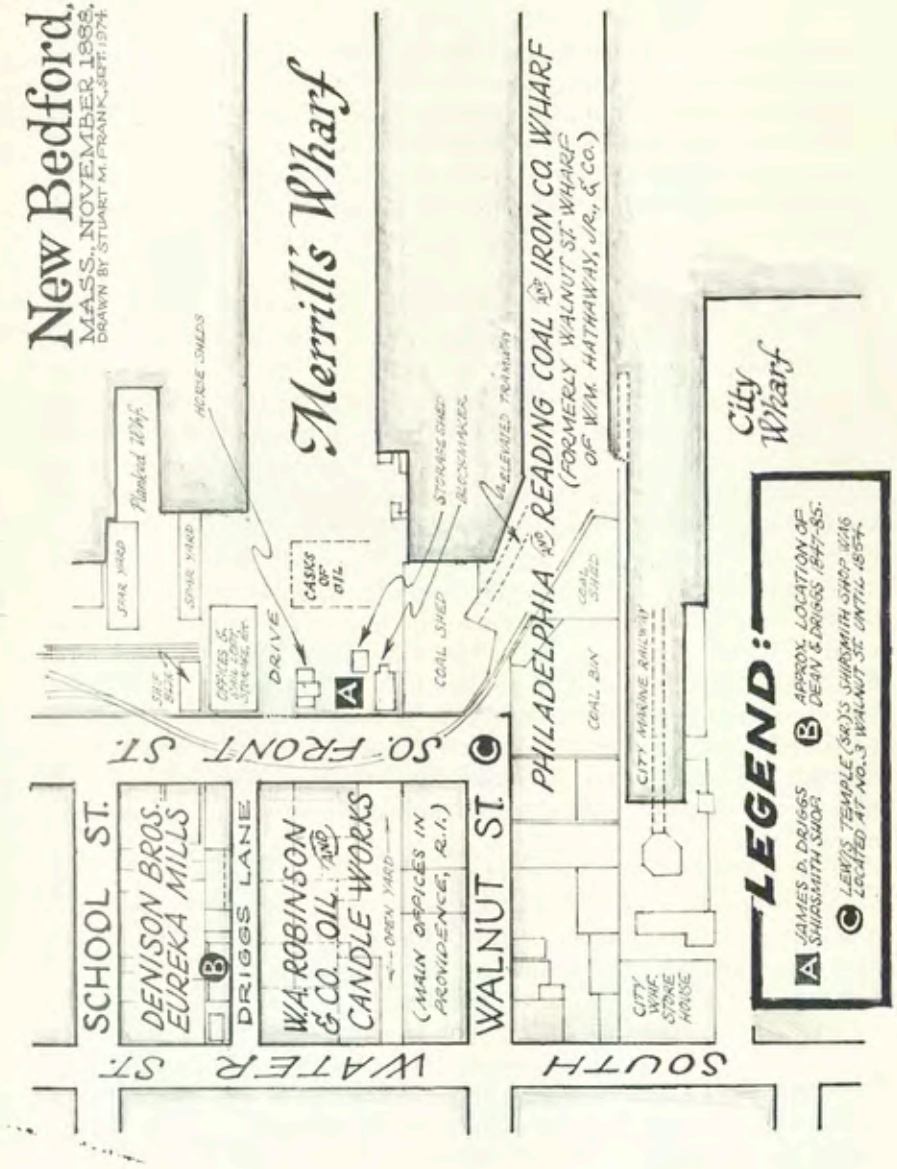
the move provided, the advanced age of the smith, and the extremely depressed state of whaling (after the damage done to the industry by the incursion of petroleum oil and the Civil War, much of what little remained was removed to San Francisco), the smaller facility was no doubt far better suited to conditions at the time.

It is this 1885 shop that is currently exhibited at Mystic Seaport, where the restoration of the Driggs establishment intends to take into account what this Elder Statesman of New Bedford shipsmiths must have required for his work during the latter years of his career.

Driggs finally retired in 1902 at the age of eighty-two, and sold the shop and business to Ambrose J. Peters of Fairhaven, Massachusetts. Driggs died very soon thereafter, on 27 February 1903, leaving the then-considerable estate of $38,590 in personal property (probate inventory of April 1903). The size of this legacy, not ordinarily associated with tradesmen of the last century, bespeaks the intelligence with which he must have managed his affairs, and the financial success he must have realized from the smithing business and other interests.

Little is known of the personal habits and family life of James D. Driggs. He was born at Woods Hole, near Falmouth, Massachusetts, in April of 1820; and was married on 28 August 1841 (about a month after the *Charles W. Morgan* was launched) to Margaret Bly of Fairhaven, by whom he had several children. He appears already to have been a blacksmith with the Durfee firm at the time of his marriage, boarding at 75 Middle Street in New Bedford. After their marriage, the couple took up rented quarters at 229 County Street; and by 1849, when Driggs was in partnership with Joseph Dean, Mr. and Mrs. Driggs owned their own home on Kempton Street. Driggs belonged to the Order of Free and Accepted Masons, and was a charter member of the Sutton Commandery of Knights Templars (founded 1864). Among other civic responsibilities in which most of the local merchants participated from time to time, Driggs was a member of his local volunteer fire brigade. A portrait of his mustachioed countenance in the Mystic Seaport collection suggests a strength of character that we may only suppose from what little we know of him.

During the young manhood of Ambrose J. Peters, the second proprietor of the Merrill's Wharf shipsmith shop, the whaling industry suffered a severe decline. Driggs had been one of the few smiths able to earn a living in whalecraft manufacture, and few men were being trained for what had become a dying trade. As a consequence, Peters did not have benefit of the specialized training in ironsmithing that Dean and Driggs had received a generation earlier. Rather, he seems to have worked at various jobs in the machine shops that served New Bedford's textile mills, and when he purchased the Driggs business in



Map of the Merrill's Wharf area of New Bedford in 1888, showing the James D. Driggs shipsmith shop built in 1885 (A), on the site of the former Dean & Driggs shop of 1847-85 (B), and approximate location of Lewis Temple's shop at No. 3 Walnut St. (C). The Philadelphia & Reading RR tracks follow Front St. past the Driggs shop. The Denison company was formerly listed as a flour mill, but by 1885 was producing feed grain. W.A. Robinson was Hetty Green's grandfather; the company was listed in 1871 as "W.A. Robinson & Co. Sperm & Whale Oil Works," and had its main offices in Rhode Island.

1902, he was by comparison with the former proprietor a gross amateur.

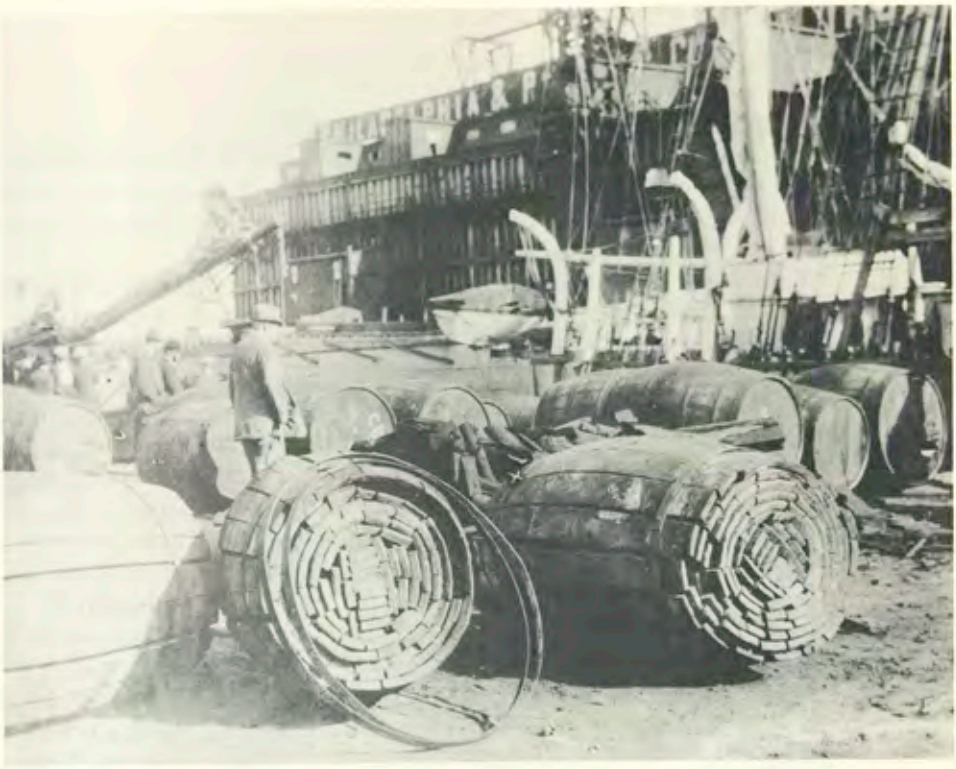
Peters himself was one of several brothers who had emigrated from their birthplace on Prince Edward Island (Canada) to Boston and, eventually, to New Bedford. After an early career that is still rather vague, but which must have provided him with an adequate mechanical education, he settled permanently in Fairhaven, just across the Acushnet River from New Bedford; and, in 1902, bought the Driggs shop on Merrill's Wharf, which he operated until his death in 1918. He was succeeded in the shop by his younger brother, Charles E. Peters, who was no more a master shipsmith than Ambrose had been.

Little is known about the specific nature of the work produced by either of the Peters brothers, nor to what extent they may have been forced to abandon the shipsmithing specialty for a more general practice. A few harpoons and other whaling implements with the Peters marks have come down to us (there are several in the Mystic Seaport collection), from which we may surmise that they conducted at least some of their business in whalecraft manufacture. But there seems not to have been enough commerce in whale oil to have supported a smithing operation designed exclusively around such a specialty. Even with the return of some of the vessels formerly engaged in the California whale fishery,* there were only a handful of New Bedford whaleships in active service by the time of the First World War, and most other smiths in the area had long since been obliged to look elsewhere than whaling for a livelihood. Many of them turned their efforts to supplying the increasingly industrialized cities of New Bedford and Fall River with machine components, carriage fixtures, and even automobile parts.

From the fact that Ambrose Peters added a large storage ell to the rear of the Driggs shop, and occasionally employed Charles as an assistant, it is apparent that the elder brother, at least, was confident of his ability to generate sufficient business to survive—even if the full particulars have not remained for us to examine.

Regardless of the degree to which whalecraft manufacture may or may not have been crucial to the success of the Peters shop, it is significant that both Ambrose and Charles continued in this line of work when only a very few whaleships (the *Charles W. Morgan* among them) were left in service. In fact, the shop was still in business for three years after the *Morgan* was retired—and during the last few

*The San Francisco whale fishery died out by 1908, and the whaleships of that port were put to other uses, destroyed, or returned to New Bedford registry. The *Charles W. Morgan* returned to New Bedford in 1906, after an absence of eighteen years, and thereafter probably spent most of her in-port time at Merrill's Wharf.



View of Merrill's Wharf ca. 1918, showing barrel shooks, full barrels of oil, whaling bark *Greyhound* (right) and schooner *Nourmahal* (not a whaler, partially visible at left). The Philadelphia & Reading Coal & Iron Company Wharf, with coal bins and elevated tramway, appears in the background. The photograph was taken from a point almost directly behind the Driggs (1885) shop. *Courtesy The New Bedford Whaling Museum, Old Dartmouth Historical Society.*

months of active whaling. Merrill's Wharf was the last outpost of Yankee whaling, after all the other wharves had been converted to other uses, and Charles E. Peters may well have been the last active whalecraft manufacturer in America.

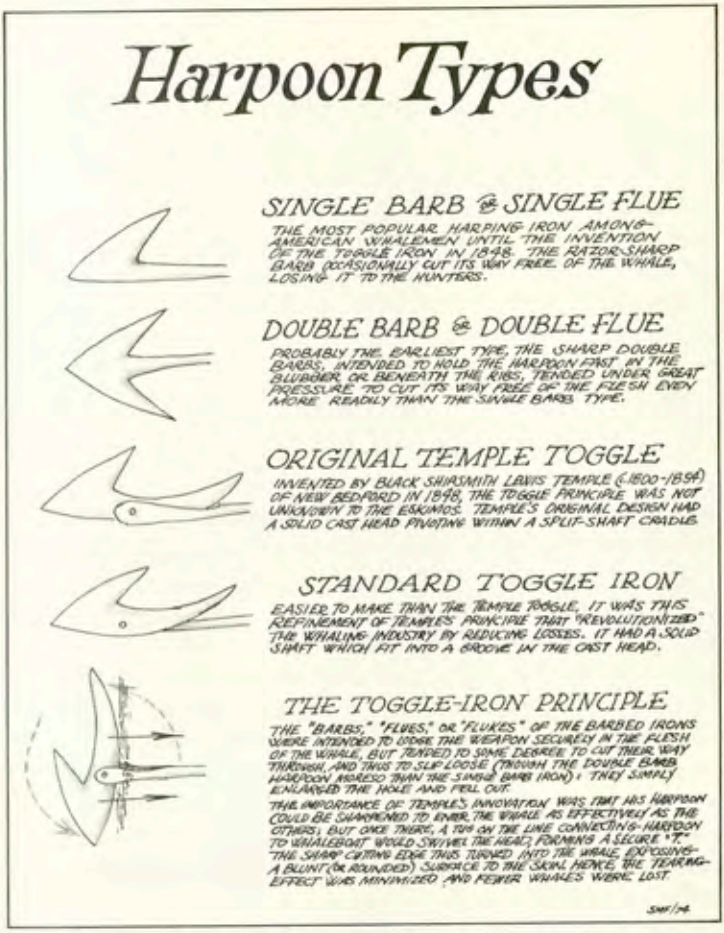
After Charles Peters' death in 1925, the shop and its contents were sold to Colonel Edward Howland Robinson Green, son of Hetty Green, the "Witch of Wall Street." Green's interests were impulsive and short-lived, but from them, nevertheless, several results of lasting benefit accrued, among them the preservation of the *Charles W. Morgan* and the Driggs shipsmith shop. His "palace," built on the Round Hills property in South Dartmouth (near New Bedford) that had been in his mother's family for generations, became a three-ring circus of incongrous activities, including a research station operated by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a fine beach which Green opened to the public (much to the neighbors' chagrin), and a disconnected array of whaling-related exhibits. Col. Green's Howland ancestors had been among the barons of New Bedford whaling in its

heyday, and had been part owners of the *Charles W. Morgan*, and this interested him in the ship sufficiently to permit the owners (an organization called Whaling Enshrined, Inc.) to exhibit her at Round Hills, at the Colonel's expense.

Green's prior connection with the shipsmith shop was twofold. First, the W.A. Robinson & Co. (oil processors) of Providence, Rhode Island, in which Hetty Green's father, grandfather, and uncles had been partners, operated its local New Bedford facility in the block described by South Water Street, South Front Street, and Driggs Lane. Hence, until 1885, the Robinson oil company works were Driggs' immediate neighbors to the south, across Driggs Lane. The second (1885) shop was located on Merrill's Wharf immediately to the east of, and directly across South Front Street from, the Robinson plant. The original view from the Driggs and Peters forges was into the main yard of the refinery; and the best-known photograph of the Robinson factory complex (appearing in the *New Bedford Semi-Centennial Souvenir* of 1897) must have been taken from the big double doors at the front of the Driggs shop. Hetty Green herself was said to have "grown up along the New Bedford wharves," and maintained her New Bedford offices at only a stone's throw distance from Merrill's Wharf. Thus the Driggs shop was certainly a tangible relic of the Colonel's family heritage.

In addition, it is reported that Col. Green had his yacht (which was then one of the most costly ever built, and which the multi-millionaire was loath to use by reason of chronic seasickness and pain from the stub of an amputated leg) refitted and outfitted at Merrill's Wharf at least once. If this be the case, he may have been personally acquainted with the shop in a business capacity, and may well have known either or both of the Peters brothers. Nevertheless, the price for which he purchased the shop from the widow Peters in 1925 must have been a paltry sum. The probate inventory of C.E. Peters' estate (with a total valuation of under $900) lists a "blacksmith shop on leased land" at $100, and "tools" at $150.

When E.H.R. Green died about ten years later, it was discovered that he had made no provision in the disposition of his estate for the maintenance of the *Morgan* or the shipsmith shop—or for the perpetuation of any of his philanthropies. The laboratory and public beach were closed, and a group of citizens undertook to generate public funds to restore the *Morgan* to the City of New Bedford. When this effort (which might also have saved the shop) failed, the future of the two whaling relics looked bleak. The foresight and generosity of donors saved the old whaleship from oblivion, bringing her to Mystic in 1941. Three years later, the shipsmith shop was purchased from Whaling Enshrined, Inc., for a token $50, and was disassembled and brought piecemeal to Mystic to rejoin the last surviving wooden whaleship in



Typology of harpoons, illustrating the Temple toggle iron and subsequent variation. There is a very fine toggle harpoon of the original Temple design made by James D. Driggs and bearing his mark, on exhibit in the Melville Room of the New Bedford Free Public Library.

America. The shop was reassembled from some of the original structural timbers, with "new" sheathing made from old boards obtained locally, on a site immediately to the east of the present Chubb's Wharf, and in 1948 was moved to its permanent site on Seaport Street.

A more recent research and restoration effort during the past two years has endeavored to bring the shop into conformity with evidence and supposition concerning Driggs' business during the 1885-1902 period. Criteria for this project include not only the greatest degree of historical accuracy that documentation will warrant, but also the structural integrity of the building itself, so that it may be preserved indefinitely, and the production requirements of a working blacksmith shop that has become an integral part of the museum's ship and boat restoration program.

As refinement of the shipsmith shop exhibit, the search for tools, and development of the crafts program continue, Seaport staff are acutely aware that careful planning will insure that the Driggs shop will remain an educationally viable, productive, and worthwhile exhibit, representative of an era in handcraft technology, during the "November" of the American whale fishery, when sophisticated tools and power machinery were increasingly available; when the economy and importance of New Bedford were turning more and more to textiles, and away from the sea, and when the nation was on the brink of an era of industrialization, impersonalization, and mass production.

Special thanks are due to William C.L. Weinraub, journeyman blacksmith at Mystic Seaport, without whose technical competence in ironsmithing and perceptive aid in research neither this article, nor much of our knowledge of the Driggs shop that we have applied to the restoration, would have been possible.

As research for the shipsmith shop project was conducted primarily from unpublished manuscripts in possession of various libraries and museums, and from matters of public record on file in the archives of several government agencies, a conventional bibliography is not possible for the purposes of this article. However, grateful acknowledgment should be made at this time to those individuals and institutions who assisted in locating the materials needed to bring our inquiry to successful completion:

To Philip F. Purrington, descendant of shipsmith Nathaniel S. Purrington and Curator of the Whaling Museum of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society in New Bedford, who was kind enough to make available to us unpublished manuscripts from the collection of that excellent institution; to Robert Ellis of the Kendall Whaling Museum in Sharon, Massachusetts, for his assistance in locating photographic documentation for the shop; to the staff of the New Bedford Free Public Library, who were especially helpful in locating cartographic and genealogical sources; to the staff of the New Bedford *Standard-Times*, from whose files came a newspaper interview with James D. Driggs Comey, grandson of the shipsmith, published in 1944; and to the staffs of the several agencies of the City of New Bedford and Bristol County, Massachusetts, from whom invaluable historical materials were obtained: Office of the City Engineer, City of New Bedford; Office of the Building Inspector, City of New Bedford; Wiring Department Office, City of New Bedford; Register of Deeds, South District, Bristol County (records located in New Bedford); Probate Records, Bristol County (records located in Taunton).

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ICEBERG

BY JOANNE FUERST



View of the *Panther* from the Wimpfheimer photographs

A museum is many things, and not unlike an iceberg. Beneath craft interpretation, audio-visual education devices, and meaningful exhibits, is the collection. Without that assemblage of artifacts, 80 percent of which is in storage at any given time, the museum is only an ice floe. The collection, not the presentation, is the museum. It might be less of an iceberg without the visible part, but it would still be a museum. The reverse is not true.

Mystic Seaport is a viable maritime museum. It has a responsibility to those who come here from across America and foreign countries. It must make retrievable, to students and scholars, the artistic and historical data relevant to our artifacts. This basic, everyday task is carried on primarily by two groups: G.W. Blunt White Library and curatorial department researchers.

The library and curatorial people are constant helpmates in the heart of the iceberg. Not a day goes by at the museum that staff from the two areas are not in contact, either in person or by telephone. The two often handle correspondence jointly, and some inquiries require lengthy responses from both. All the artifacts accessioned are researched by curatorial staff, usually at the library, or by borrowing library materials, and the assistance rendered by that staff is always pleasant and



View of the *Panther* from the Tripp photographs

helpful. Sometimes research results in discovery of exciting correlations, enabling both departments to more fully document their holdings. Often such mutually relevant material is uncovered in a single day; sometimes, years pass before the connection is made. A significant example is the work recently done on three interesting photograph collections, each concerned to some degree with the Arctic regions.

In November 1954, Clarence Wimpfheimer purchased for Mystic Seaport an unique set of twenty-two photographs. They were all approximately 12″ x 16″ and matted on cardboard 17″ x 21″. The wonderfully scenic and professionally clear photographs depicted the Arctic. A rare treat, there were even captions, penned in a nineteenth-century script on the mat below each picture. From this information it was determined that the place was Greenland and the ship, *Panther*. The records of the day carried no more data than the captions provided... they seemed merely beautiful pictures.

In May 1974, the Wimpfheimer Collection was in the registrar's office for periodic updating. All artifacts cycle through this office to note changes of condition or location, and to revise old records. These fine old photographs were now admired by staff who had not seen them twenty years earlier.

By an incredibly fortunate circumstance a book, *The Land of Desolation,* was found in the library which seemed to be precisely about that voyage of the *Panther* to Greenland. The library was not aware of the *Panther*'s significance to curatorial records. Further research showed the book and the photographs to be totally corroborative. The book states in its preface:

> The following pages are a record of a visit to Greenland, made in the summer of 1869, with a small party of friends, in the steam-yacht of Mr.



This photograph from the Wimpfheimer Collection bears the hand-written caption "An Esquimaux Igloo or winter hut with its occupants..."



ESAG'S HUT.

This is the illustration from Dr. Hayes' book, depicting a typical Greenland Eskimo hut. From the cracks in the window panes to the overturned tub in the right foreground, compare this scene with the accessioned photograph.

> William Bradford, whose widely-celebrated pictures of Arctic scenery have received such deserved commendation...[1]

Bradford! Recently we had come upon a half-page advertisement in *Antiques Magazine* for an oil painting by Bradford entitled, "The *Panther* Trapped In An Arctic Ice Flow [sic]."[2] It bore an uncanny resemblance to one of the photographs captioned "The *Panther* surrounded by the hummocks and rafted ice in Melville Bay in August the 15th."[3] And the initials "WB" were also found in the series of photographs.

The book proved invaluable. Written by a member of the party, it actually delineates the moment when the photographer took some of the pictures. In addition, the illustrations in the book are so similar to many of the photographs that there can be no doubt that it is the same scene. The narrative supports the captions. Note the many common details in the book illustration and Bradford's photograph of the native hut.[4]

The library provided further assistance, and the research eventually led to the identification of a vessel pictured in another photograph collection, the Tripp Collection, as the *Panther*. The iceberg in that photograph was identical to one identified in the text, illustrations and photographs of the *Panther* material as "The Castle" berg.

During the summer of 1974 another related collection was researched and, again with library and curatorial interaction, the three puzzle pieces interlocked. *The Log* reported in 1964:

> Within a few weeks we have acquired a collection of both local and continental importance, to be known as the Captain George Comer Collection. It consists of some two hundred glass negatives, most of which are 4 x 5 inches in size, which were made aboard the whaling schooner *Era* in the upper regions of Hudson Bay during the years 1897 through 1905 by the veteran whaleman Captain George Comer of East Haddam, Connecticut.[5]

The prints made from the now-deteriorating negatives were fascinating. They were instantly recalled when, this past summer, copy photographs of Eskimo scenes and the *Era* were come upon in a collection being accessioned. The Tripp Collection was found to have much *Era* material. The library again provided the *coup de researche:* Manuscript Collection 102, George Comer's papers and several journals.

The Comer journals cover the years of his stay in Hudson Bay on *Era*,

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1. Isaac I. Hayes, M.D., *The Land of Desolation, Being a Personal Narrative of Observation and Adventure in Greenland,* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1872), preface page.
2. *Antiques Magazine*, April 1966, p. 462.
3. Photograph, accession number 54.1461.
4. Hayes, p. 233 and Photograph accession number 54.1452.
5. *The Log of Mystic Seaport*, Vol. 16, No. 1, January 1964.





Left: This photograph of *Panther* in the ice closely resembles an oil painting by the noted Arctic artist William Bradford. Recent discoveries suggest that he also made the photograph, taken in 1869.

Right: In this photograph the *Era* is being readied for her long Arctic winter. The scene depicted is documented in Comer's 1897 journal. The original is found in the Comer glass negative collection, and copies were discovered in the Tripp photograph collection.

and greatly enhance the photograph collection. There are countless examples of journal text and photograph corresponding, enough to accession the latter with accurate detail. The following excerpts are from Acc.2.11 (Coll. 102), Comer's 1897 journal. See accompanying photographs.[6]

Sunday Oct 10 1897/

...have been at work building the House over the after part of the Vessel

Monday Oct 18 1897/

...we have got the House finished though there are small affairs to be looked after the roof of the House is covered with old sails which is a great help...

Monday Dec 20 (1897)/

...the snow hase [sic] drifted around us a little so that we are now able to bank up around the Vessel temp 5 below...

Thursday Oct 27 (1898)/

...have taken some Photographs and Developed them they look quite well...

6. Photographs common to Tripp and Comer Collections, accession numbers 73.899.88, 73.899.90, 73.899.92.



Winter quarters before the first "real" snowfall. Barely visible is the sail roof of the "House" rigged aft on the *Era*, and described in the journal.

The Wimpfheimer, Comer, and Tripp Collections are still being studied, but in the light of this research, documentation will surely be facilitated.

With the logs, journals, narratives, photographs, and the original negatives the museum can proudly offer Arctic scholars primary and secondary research material. Photographs become alive, invigorated by first-person reporting. Most important, the library files, curatorial records, and the entire museum benefit.

Together, library and curatorial staff people work to make the museum more than a mere repository for historically significant artifacts. Daily, they try to make the data in the collections retrievable and cohesive, to preserve the artifacts *and* their story. Thus, the Seaport can keep its collections available to the visiting public and serious researcher alike. When authors, students, historians, publishing houses, and researchers appeal to the museum for assistance, the folks in the heart of the iceberg answer that call.

NEW ACQUISITIONS



The G.W. Blunt White Library's ship's plans collection has recently been enriched through the acquisition of the Cox & Stevens records. This well-known naval architectural firm was founded not long after the turn of the century and continued its operations to the post WW II era. Perhaps they were most famous for their designs of large yachts, but in reality their work covered the entire spectrum from dinghies to ocean-going cargo vessels.

In extent we have to depend upon some very rough calculations. As might be expected the work completed under government contract produced the greater amount of detailed blueprints; however, in the 373 design numbers listed we estimate there are between 20,000 and 25,000 sheets of ship's plans. To say the least a major effort will be required to place this material in condition to be readily used by buffs and scholars alike.

Once our staff has been afforded the opportunity to prepare and catalog this collection, a more comprehensive and detailed description can be written. In the interim we will mine this outstanding material with great care and point out the fact this collection was placed in our library through the generous efforts of Mr. P.H. Rhodes of Cold Spring Harbor, New York.

BOOK REVIEWS

Steamers, Schooners, Cutters and Sloops: Marine Photographs of N.L. Stebbins taken 1884 to 1907. Selected and annotated by W.H. Bunting. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974. 124 pp. Photographs and bibliography. $10.00)

During the past couple of decades, there seems to have been a flood of maritime picture books pouring into publishing company hands. Many of these works have come out in oversize covers with imposing dust jackets, some fine illustrations and some that seem to have found a place in every maritime history book printed since the fifteenth century. Those knowledgeable in the periods covered are apt to cast a jaundiced eye on such offerings and scan them critically for repetitive text, plagiarism, poor photographic reproduction or incomplete and sloppy research. *Steamers, Schooners, Cutters and Sloops* is a work that should attract only praise.

In his first book, *Portrait of a Port: Boston, 1852-1914,* William H. Bunting founded a reputation as an alert author who combines a talent for honest research with an ability to bring the reader personally into each picture he describes, and one turns from one page to another with a sense that he, too, has known the ship, the persons, or the events described.

Steamers, Schooners, Cutters and Sloops comprises a choice selection of the photographs of Nathaniel L. Stebbins from 1884 to 1907. In an era when grace and beauty were still deemed to contribute to speed, sea kindliness, and efficient handling of sailing craft, and at a time when photography was emerging from infancy to art, Nathanial L. Stebbins, a commercial photographer, came on the scene. His great interest centered on the yachts of his time. From catboat to cup defender, Stebbins recorded the era of gaff rig. Though yachting seems to have been his first love (perhaps because it paid well) he also photographed the more mundane schooners, square-riggers, tugs, pilot boats, coastwise steamers, and ocean liners that came his way. In an age when the camera was a bulky piece of equipment and glass plate negatives both heavy and delicate, Mr. Stebbins brought life to his photographs that seems unbelievable in these days of fast film and fast shutter.

Each photograph in this splendid book is complemented by a page of commentary by Mr. Bunting. One must read this book as he scans each picture, to live in vicarious nostalgia the day to which he finds himself transported. As one leaves the sloop *Hiawatha* on page 123, he is apt

to feel that it is unfair that this book must end. Mr. Bunting is presently engaged on a new work and I am certain each reader of *Steamers, Schooners, Cutters and Sloops* will look forward to future enjoyment of work well done.

Francis E. Bowker

Guide-Boat Days and Ways. Edited by Kenneth Durant, with sketches by Frederick B. Allen. (Blue Mountain: Adirondack Museum, 1963. xv + 262 pp. Illustrations and epilogue. $5.25)

The guide-boat was the woodsman's boat; he used and perfected it. It was the highest expression of an American folk art. It was a common workboat in perfect concinnity with its environment of lakes, rivers, and forests; it fitted its guide or woodsman so closely as to be an extension of the man, and the hand of the boatbuilder never devised anything finer. In 1901 William Boardman described the boat:

> A fourteen-foot ship that weighs only sixty pounds and carries a thousand pounds of load over a rough water; which is safe; which travels easier faster than four miles an hour; which never leaks; and which lasts, with ordinary good care, for twenty years,—needs to be made by a man who knows how, and who is passionately fond of being honest. [p. 213]

In his book, *Guide-Boat Days and Ways*, the late Kenneth Durant has put together a collection of contemporary writings on the Adirondack guide-boat. These are the writings of a colorful, myriad of people —"sports," tourists, land surveyors, men of the cloth, artists, and the boatbuilders themselves. In Durant's own words, from the preface of his book:

> The narratives here collected are by those who made the boat, by those who rowed and paddled and carried it on their shoulders, and those who went in it from lake to lake on their several occasions. The aim has been to portray a unique American artifact and to impart a share in the subtle pleasure of its use. To understand what follows, the reader must imagine a region and a time without roads where all travel went by water.

These short pieces are arranged topically. Skillfully, Mr. Durant has written a concise, informative introduction for each piece, sketching in the necessary background for today's reader. The feeling one gets from the book is one of the out-of-doors, of freshness and vigor. People speak out of their time, so much different than ours, and would draw us back into it and its pristine straightforwardness. Today's occupa-

tions and pastimes pale next to these. The writings, vivid and clear, reflect the physical robustness of the people who put them down.

The contents of the book are indeed varied. Paulina Brandreth handles her boat skillfully on a galeswept lake as she brings in a fighting salmon. Lewis Grant recalls his father's life and how he built his boats. And for thrills, that is to say real thrills, Moses Brown risks his life in a perilous dash down the rapids of the Saint Lawrence River. The volume is illuminated by seven delicate sketches by Frederick B. Allen.

The book is best read from beginning to end, for it is one story. The pieces compose a whole painting—more than just a picture of a boat type, it is a sparkling watercolor of a part of the American land and the people who inhabited it.

Barry Thomas

BOOK ANNOTATIONS

LOG OF THE CENTURION. By Leo Heaps. *(New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974.) 264 pp. Illustrations, glossary, and selected bibliography. $8.95.*

The papers and journals of Philip Saumarez, first lieutenant on board Lord Anson's flagship during the circumnavigation voyage of 1740-1744, are keenly edited and handsomely presented. This volume is a must for anglophiles and scholars alike, whose interests encompass the maritime activities of the turbulent mid-Georgian era. As a companion piece this material suggests itself to be in the same relationship as John Ledyard's journal is to the official printing of Cook's third voyage of 1776-1779.

YACHTS UNDER SAIL. By Alfred F. Loomis. *(Tuckahoe: John de Graff, Inc., 1974.) 123 pp. Photographs and index to photographers. $10.00.*

Reissue of a volume originally published in 1933, with a new introduction by John Rousmaniere, associate editor of *Yachting* magazine. A nostalgic trip focused on ocean racing of yesteryear. The old saying of a picture being equal to a thousand words is somewhat compromised by Loomis' captions, whose words enhance these photographs a thousandfold.

NANTUCKET, A GUIDE WITH TOURS. By Polly Burroughs *with illustrations by George Buctel. (Chester: The Pequot Press, 1974.) 64 pp. Photographs, illustrations, and maps. $3.50.*

"Coof" or "no coof," this is a very handy paperback for the intended first-time visitor, or those who wish to recall in detail some interesting points of a fascinating island. Included is a very compact history with photographs and illustrations to show you how it was, and descriptive material to tell you how it is now.

SUCCESSFUL BLUEFISHING. By Henry Lyman. *(Camden: International Marine Publishing Co., 1974.) x + 112 pp. Photo credits, photographs, illustrations, and index. $10.00.*

From Nantucket to Florida the bluefish is sought after by the enthusiast along its migratory path. Thus these game fishermen could gain proportionally in their exposure to this apocalyptic volume. It reveals all.

SUCCESSFUL STRIPED BASS FISHING. By Frank T. Moss. *(Camden: International Marine Publishing Co., 1974.) xii + 195 pp. Photographs, charts, tables, diagrams, glossary, and index. $12.50.*

A wet line does not a fisherman make! If your "fever" leans toward this subject of game fishing, by all means read and study this volume. Armed with these facts and the necessities of time, means and desire, the worst that can happen is success, for then you will be "hooked" for life.

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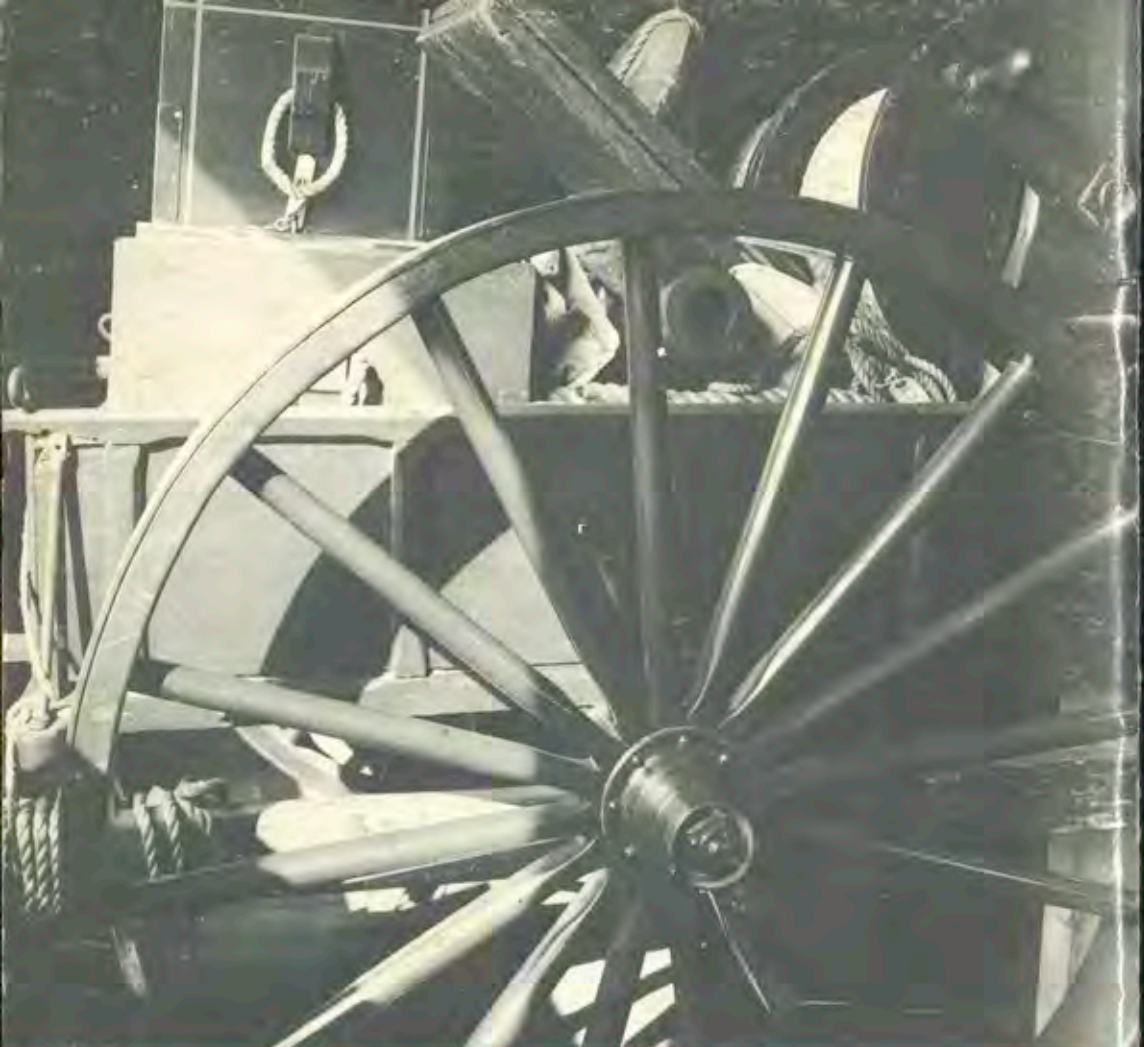
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