

BLOCK ISLAND COWHORN

70.763

A compilation of source material
pertaining to this type of craft.

Collected, assembled and summarized by
Anne and Maynard Bray
1971

RF 7

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Name: GLORY ANNA II
Type: Block Island cowhorn
Rig: Two-masted, gaff headed with lapping foresail
Dimensions: 22½' x 9'
Builder: L. Howard, Wickford, Rhode Island
Donor: MHA purchase funded by Mr. Thomas Wilcox

Notable Characteristics:

Double-ended lapstreak keel boat of heavy displacement. Undecked except for ends. Long straight keel with considerable drag. Considerable deadrise, flaring topsides and slack bilges. Posts are straight with considerable rake. Five thwarts with their knees give the hull much of its strength.

Other Information:

After considerable research, Mr. Paule Loring had this boat built with her hull duplicating that of the original GLORY ANNA, the last survivor of the once numerous type. He used her as a yacht, sailing her out of his hometown of Wickford, Rhode Island. With advancing age, he gradually cut down her rig, also adding a pilot house for protection from the weather. The boat was not used after his death in 1968 but was owned by Johnson's Boatyard from whom the Seaport purchased her. Mr. Loring was well known and loved for his "Dud Sinker" cartoons prepared each month for Maine Coast Fisherman.

History of Type:

The boats were used for handlining in Block Island Sound, being small enough to be hauled up on the beach at Old Harbor, should the need arise. They were common before the breakwater was built in 1873 after which larger boats (30'-40') of the same shape and rig replaced them. They have a very fine reputation for seaworthiness which would be expected in a hull of this type, properly sailed. Apparently most cowhorns were built on the mainland in boatbuilding towns like Newport, R.I. Masts are easily unstepped and as with all shore fishing craft, provision is made for rowing.

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I. Published Material

Cabot, David, "The New England Double Enders."
American Neptune, Vol. XII, 1952.

Chapelle, Howard I. American Small Sailing Craft;
Their Design, Development and Construction.
New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1951.

Chapelle, Howard I. The National Watercraft Collec-
tion. Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office,
1960.

Davis, Charles G. Ships of the Past. Salem, Mass.,
The Marine Research Society, 1929.

Morris, E.P. The Fore and Aft Rig in America. New Haven,
Yale University Press, 1927.

Nicholson, Paul C. The Block Island Double Ender.
Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, Oct.
1923.

Ritchie, Ethel Colt. Block Island Lore and Legends.
Block Island, R.I., F. Norman Associates, 1955.

Taylor, William H. "An Authentic Block Islander."
Yachting, Feb. 1949.

Thompson, Winfield M. "Roaring Bessie." The Rudder,
April 1912.

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II. Photos

- MHA #70-10-218: GLORY ANNA as she lay rotting on the shore at Block Island. Photo was probably taken in the early 1930's. Camp now (1972) owned by Mr. George P.P. Bonnell and called "Huddy Mansion" after its original builder/owner. Original loaned by Mrs. Paule Loring.
- MHA #70-10-242: Later (and larger) Block Island boats. From postcard loaned by Mrs. Paule Loring.
- MHA #70-10-240: Close-up of GLORY ANNA at Block Island as she lay rotting on the shore. Photo probably taken in early 1930's (same time as #70-10-218).
- MHA #70-10-226: Scene of Old Harbor at Block Island while small "cowhorns" were still in use. Probably taken shortly after 1873 when breakwater was built. Original loaned by Mrs. Paule Loring.
- MHA #70-10-233: Model of small "cowhorn" of about 1875 owned by Smithsonian and described in Chapelle's Watercraft Collection.
- MHA #70-10-232: Model of cowhorn - unidentified. From collection of Mrs. Paule Loring.
- MHA #70-10-238: Same as 240. This photo was largely the basis for interior arrangement of GLORY ANNA II as restored at Mystic Seaport 1970-71.

AMERICAN NEPTUNE, Vol. XII 1952

The New England Double Enders

BY DAVID CABOT

The Block Island boats are probably the oldest and one of the most unusual types on the New England coast, having been in use for over two hundred years. Their closest relative is probably the neighboring Noman's Land boat, but there are several marked differences which set them in a class by themselves. Contrary to popular opinion (if the opinion of the few people who even know they existed may be called popular) there are two types of Block Island boat between which it is necessary to distinguish, although they are very similar in type.

Block Island lies ten miles off the shore of Rhode Island, and after its exploration by the Dutchman, Adrian Block in 1614²⁰ during which he built a fort and a few houses, it remained in Indian hands until they massacred the crew of a ship which landed there, whereupon an expedition landed, wiped out the Indians and made it the property of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Shortly thereafter, in 1661,²¹ the first settlement was made by a group from the Colony who wished to establish a 'free State and Church which never sought to impose restrictions on others.' Naturally these settlers were dependent upon the sea for at least part of their livelihood as well as for their transport to the mainland. The Island, like Noman's Land, has no natural harbors, and its history is one of a long struggle against the elements to make and maintain artificial harbors.

²⁰ R. Dodge, *Tristram Dodge and Descendants* (J. J. Little Co., New York, 1886), pp. 198-201.

²¹ Rev. S. T. Livermore, A.M., *A History of Block Island* (Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., Hartford, 1877).

On the west side of the island lies Great Salt Pond, separated from the ocean by a narrow strip of beach and 'large and deep enough to hold the entire British Navy.' It was here that the first attempt at a harbor was made in 1680 by the cutting of a breachway across the narrowest part of the sandspit. This quickly filled in, despite all their efforts, and the project was abandoned in 1705. The next solution was the building of a breakwater known as 'The Pier' in the bight on the east side of the island. The boats could only lie here in calm weather, however. The Pier was finally broken down by a storm after twelve years' service. In 1773 another attempt was made at the Salt Pond, only to be abandoned in 1735 in favor of building an addition to the old pier or a new one near it. In 1736 both of these were done, but the result was not too successful. During subsequent years there was much agitation for a harbor of some sort. The Revolution put off the execution of another cut into the Salt Pond. In 1816 some unknown soul started the 'Pole Harbor' on the east by sinking a few oak spiles into the sand at right angles to the breakwater, to tie his boat to. Others soon followed suit and eventually there were over 1000 spiles, with short stone piers built out between the rows. The blackened remnants of some of these stakes are still visible at low water. This was still only a calm weather measure, however. In 1870 the government began construction of two breakwaters which now form the 'Old Harbor.' At the beginning of the present century the breach was again opened into the Salt Pond and protected by a stone groin on its south side so that there are now two harbors on the Island.

The result of all this vacillation was that until 1870 the Islanders had no place where their boats could be secure in foul weather, and they had to resort to the same tactics as the Noman's Landers, hauling their boats up on the beach, and although they used greased planks instead of ladders, the motive power was a similar team of stunted oxen. Also the boats had to be weatherly and able because the greatest traffic was with Newport, and the stretch of water including Point Judith, and the channel into Newport can become the nastiest on the Atlantic coast. The 'cow-horns,' as the boats developed for this usage were called, were not over 122 feet overall, 19 feet waterline, 9 feet beam, 4 feet 2 inches draft. They were lapstreaked, with straight raking stem and stern posts, and their sections showed the pronounced V with only a little rounding off above the water which is one of their most unusual features. As a result, despite their immense beam of a little under half their length, they were actually rather fine at the waterline and this effect was retained even when they heeled. Some of the better boats had the S sections aft whose advantages

have already been noted. They could carry a prodigious load of fish or other cargo for their size at the water because they increased their buoyancy so fast when loaded. Their rig, which has been thought by the best authorities to be that of a cat schooner with tall masts of equal height (twenty-seven feet) set perpendicular to the keel, has recently been thrown in doubt. There is a model in the National Museum which shows them to be cat ketches with the mizenmast about three-quarters as high as the main. This model has been largely discounted by the experts, since it is grossly inaccurate in hull form. However, Goode gives evidence to substantiate the ketch rig and Paule S. Loring, whose *Glory Anna II* was built to a set of lines as closely approximating an old cowhorn as he could get by taking the lines from an old wreck on Block Island, says that he very often sails with a reef in the mizzen (or main, if you wish) because she balances better.²² With this evidence then, it seems more probable that the cat ketch is the true rig of the cowhorn. The sails were loose footed, the foresail overlapping, and were suspended from extremely short gaffs hoisted with a single halliard, reminiscent of Dutch practice, except for being straight instead of curved. There has been a good deal of talk about this 'Dutch influence' and mention of 'early Dutch settlers' is accompanied by wise nodding of heads, but the fact is that the Dutch did not have a great deal to do with the Island after the initial discovery, and the idea of short gaffs must have come through the English who used this rig from 1600-1700. The boats were fully as well built as their counterparts on Noman's Land, the same construction of copper-fastened cedar over oak being used. While little or nothing is known about the builders of the Noman's Land boats, on Block Island an early builder in Revolutionary times was John Rose and he was succeeded by Lemuel Rose. In later times Deacon Sylvester D. Mitchell was the builder and it is recorded that he would cut his timber on the mainland and bring it back (in a cowhorn) to build with. The cowhorns were ballasted with cobble stones from the beach which were tossed overboard as the boats were loaded or when they were to be hauled out. They were completely open, being crossed by three or four thwart securely kneed in place. Their method of fishing was unique as far as I know. Having reached the grounds they would drop the foresail, let the mainsheet run, and let her drift off to leeward as pretty as you please, while they fished over the weather side.

With the building of the government harbor in 1870 came the end of the necessity of hauling the boats for every storm, and thus the limita-

²² Goode, op. cit., Atlas, Plate 46.

tion on size was removed. They probably had been needing bigger boats for some time, as everything that came to the Island had been brought in the cowhorns, and so the size of the boats after this time increased to a maximum of around forty feet, and this is the Block Island boat about which the greater part of the existing literature has been written. They represented only a minor part of the total number, however, for while there were about a dozen of the later type, there were five times as many of the cowhorns. The later boats, of which *Lena M.* and *Island Belle* were examples, resembled the cowhorns in general appearance, but were narrower in proportion.²³ Also, since they were not hauled out, at least part of their ballast was permanent, and it is reported that they would cover over the rocks with sand and then sow beach grass to tie the sand together and keep the ballast from shifting. Construction was, on the whole, heavier than that of the cowhorns, and with the event of the gasoline engine some of the boats had a large cuddy forward, separated from a galley amidships by a space of deck.

There have been two replicas of the Block Island boats built thus far: *Roaring Bessie*, a carvel planked boat to the lines of *Lena M.* by Martin C. Erismann, and *Glory Anna II*, the replica of a cowhorn. I am much indebted to Mr. Loring for his assistance in gathering material on these boats. Several of his stories are quite informative as well as amusing. It seems that there was a rumor going around that two brothers who owned one of the last Block Island boats could not agree as to who was the rightful owner and so they sawed her in two, each taking half. Mr. Loring dispelled this rumor when he discovered that there was truly one of the boats which had been sawed in two, but that it was only because she leaked too badly to be any good, so her owner cut her in two, set her bow on a stone wall and built a foundation under it to make a chicken house, while the stern was set off in a field to be used as an icehouse. He also relates of the time he was overboard while at anchor cutting away a line which had fouled in *Glory's* propeller and, after doubtfully eyeing her lofty topsides was wondering 'just how the hell the old boy like me was going to get back aboard.' He was swimming round the boat a bit hopelessly when he noticed that the notch in the afterside of the rudder, which he had previously considered only an ornamentation, was ideally placed for a step, the mainsheet horse forming a convenient handhold, where-with he clambered back aboard, rejoicing not only at being saved the in-

²³ W. M. Thompson, 'Roaring Bessie,' *Yachting* (April 1912), p. 261; P. S. Loring & K. Littlefield, 'Old Glamor Girls of the Bay,' *Providence Journal*, Feb. 1948.

convenience of drowning, but also at having discovered one more useful 'kink' devised by the resourceful Islanders.

There are several similarities which mark the New England double enders as a group. As a rule they all have a sweeping sheer with high ends and a low midsection. Many have raking stem and sternpost, and practically all have the S section aft which, though harder to build, makes a great difference in the sailing qualities. The schooner rig takes preference, with cat rigs of all kinds being popular. There is a noticeable simplicity in rig, saving needless labor and expense, and lapstreak construction is used more than carvel, mainly for the boats where lightness is an important factor. There tends to be a good deal of similarity between the various types to the east of Cape Cod, and the jumble of names and slight modifications make the subject a hard one to unravel. In the light of past experience I have no doubt but that I will find other types that I have overlooked. A topic such as this is subject to constant revision.

Finally, it seems to me that a yachtsman desirous of a rough, inexpensive boat which will take him to sea in all weathers can find something among the multiplicity of craft developed on this coast that will suit him far better than a type imported from abroad. The proof of the question lies in the satisfaction of those who have already tried it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Besides my sincere thanks to Mr. Paule S. Loring for giving so freely of a wealth of information on Block Island boats and for lending me the lines of several types, as well as for his fine illustrations which say more than pages of my prose, I wish to thank Mr. Llewellyn Howland of South Dartmouth, Mass., and Mr. L. Francis Herreshoff of Marblehead, Mass., for their invaluable aid in tracking down little-known boats. Mr. Alfred Brownell of Providence, R. I., who is making a series of excellent models for the Providence Public Library depicting New England fishing boats, was kind enough to lend me two photographs of his work. I also thank Mr. Chapelle for the information obtained from his letters to Mr. Loring and refer the reader to his new book, soon to be published, on New England fishing craft.

David Cabot, who lives in Westerly, Rhode Island, is an undergraduate student at Harvard College. His main interest is boats and sailing. He has been sailing since the age of three and has cruised the New England Coast from Long Island Sound to the Bay of Fundy.

Perhaps the best known of all American beach boats was the Block Island boat, or cowhorn. A number of drawings of these boats have been published: the *Lena M*, in *Rudder* magazine April, 1912; the *Daintless*, in *Forest & Stream* magazine, February 9, 1907 (both by the late Martin Coryell Erismann); and the *Island Belle* in Dixon Kemp's *Manual of Yacht and Boat Sailing*, 4th edition, 1884 (taken off by J. Hyslop). In other sources, extensive descriptions of the boats supplement the published plans. However, the boats represented in these plans and in most of the other sources are the larger ones, so it is desirable to show what the small boats of this type were like.

The cowhorns have had a very fine reputation for safety and, according to local records, only one has ever "gone missing." The name of the type apparently came from a fancied resemblance of the profile of the boats to a pair of horns. The traditional history of the type is that they were originated by Trustrum Dodge, the only one of the sixteen original settlers of Block Island in 1661 who was a boatman. It is also said that the boats were built during the Revolution by John Rose, who was followed by Lemuel Rose, both Block Island boatbuilders. From 1850 to about 1870, the prominent builder was Deacon Sylvester D. Mitchell, who is credited with the *Daintless* and other noted boats. The claims for Dodge and the other early builders appear unsupported by any evidence, and it is by no means certain that the type actually existed in a recognizable form before 1840. It is often supposed that the boats developed from whaleboats; a standard assumption, apparently, for the origin of nearly every American double-ender.

The cowhorns ranged in length from 17 or 18 feet, over the gunwales, to about 40. The boats over 30 or 32 feet in length appear to have become very common after a breakwater was constructed at "Old Harbor," which allowed boats to remain afloat rather than having to be beached. The maximum draft of the large boats was between 6 and 7 feet, and the greatest beam was about 14 feet. The older boats, built for beach work, were small; the most common size appears to have been between 18 and 24 feet length, 7 to 10 feet beam, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet draft. The model was a peculiar one, having great beam, much sheer, and very raking ends. The midsection was almost a perfect V. The ends were relatively full, and only the after water lines showed much hollow as they approached the rabbet. The boats were not stiff; they were designed to be

rowed, and this probably had much to do with the model. The small boats had no decking; beach stones were used for ballast. The larger cowhorns were decked forward (the deck seems to have had no crown), and under this a cuddy was built. The small boats were worked on the beach with the "ladder," as a rule. It seems that the form and size of the Block Island boats must have been much influenced by the fact that they had to travel some distance to fishing grounds by 1850 and that they were also required as transportation between the island and the main.

The construction of the boats varied; some had bent frames, others had sawn frames of a single futtock made of cedar root. All were lap-strake, planked with cedar. The keel and posts were larch or oak. When bent frames were used, the floor timbers were also of bent stock, and these were placed between the side frames and clear of them; the ends of the floor timbers amidships were carried well up the sides nearly to the water line. The strength of the hulls depended to a great extent on the flexible frame and also upon the substantial thwart, of which there were three to five, depending upon the size of the boat.

The rig was that of the old shallop, with but slight modification. There were two masts, set with some rake, the foremast well forward in the boat and the main about amidships. The masts were of about the same height; on these were sails having very short gaffs hoisted by single halyards. The foresail was loose-footed and overlapped the main. The mainsail was loose-footed but was fitted with a boom. No light sails or jibs were carried. The sail area was respectable, and so each sail had many reef bands; the main commonly had four, the foresail five.

Figure 64 shows the lines, rig, and construction of a small cowhorn of a once popular size. This drawing is copied from one made from an old hulk by Paule Loring and Commander George Cunha, U. S. N., which was used by Mr. Loring to build a replica named *Glory Ann*. Some modifications in the arrangement of the boat were made in the replica; the drawings here have the inboard arrangement as shown in photographs of a very similar boat contained in Paul C. Nicholson's article in the *Rhode Island Historical Society Collection*, 1923. The drawings show the washboards, called "iceboards," that were set up along the rail cap in bad weather to

raise the low freeboard. These leeboards were in short lengths for stowage and were stepped by means of stanchions inside each section whose heels socketed into holes in the rail caps. The great flare of the sides of the hull produced the well-known phenomenon of

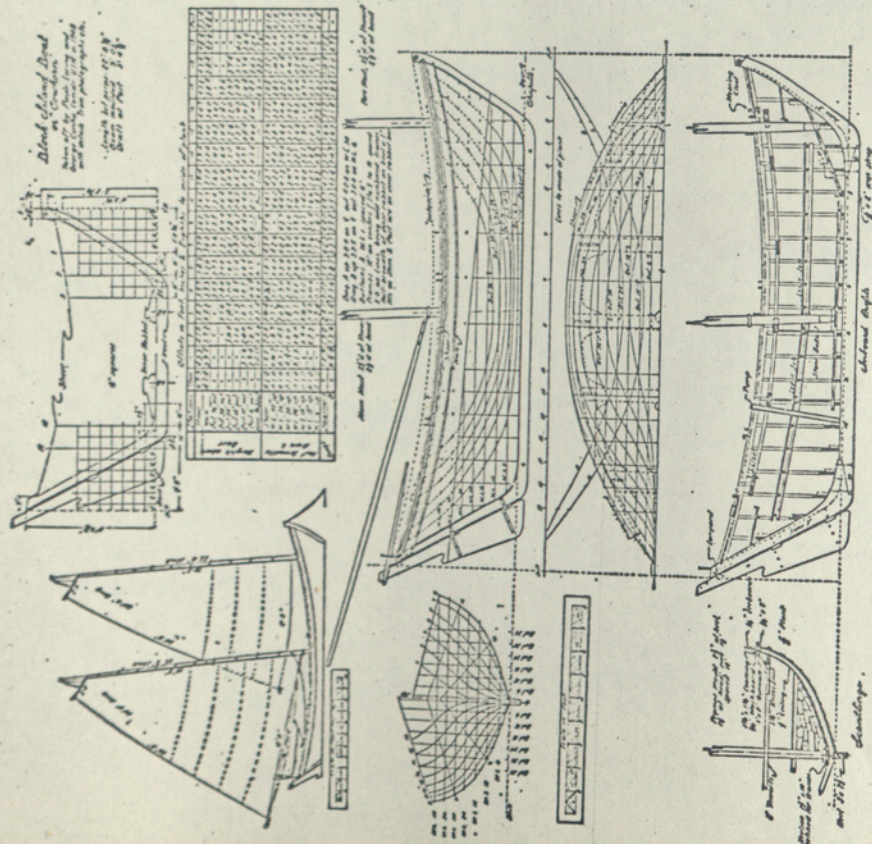


Fig. 64. Typical small Block Island boat.

the gunwale appearing to be below the level of the sea, when the boat was heeled and moving fast, without water being shipped. The washboards merely kept out the dollops thrown off by a cresting sea in a strong wind.

The Block Island boats are so well known to American yachts-

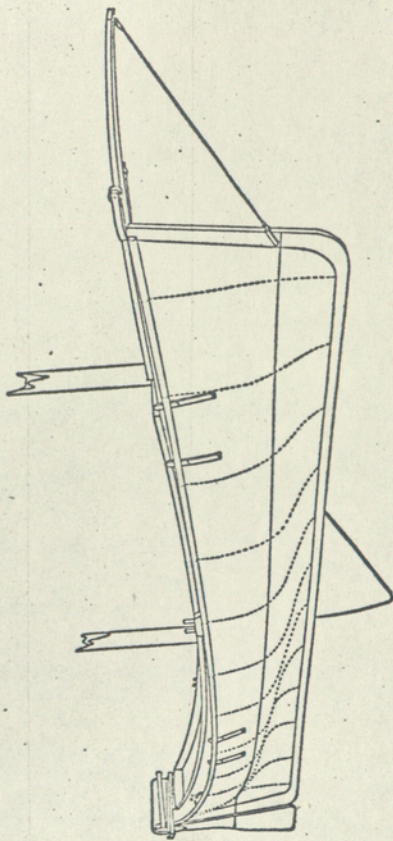
men that it would not be necessary to discuss the type further, were it not that many of the copies of the cowhorns, built as yachts, illustrate the dangers of attempting to cure imaginary ills in a working-boat type, or to make a type into something it was not intended to be originally.

The cowhorn was originally designed to be worked by two men, or a man and boy, in fishing in open waters in all weathers. This controlled the hull and rig design to some extent; the additional factors were the necessity of working on the beach and of being rowed in calm weather. Quick tacking was not necessary, but certainty in staying in heavy seas was very important. This meant, in a small boat, the need of having full control of the boat every instant, and so the boat was intended to be sailed around, in staying, by handling the foresail, as would be done with a jib in a heavy sloop. Thus, if a sea hit the boat in stays she was not stopped and put into irons, as would be the case with a small and rather light-displacement boat turning on helm alone and depending upon momentum to come around. Now, this has not been understood by yachtsmen interested in the type, and so, the boats being "slow in stays," the replicas were fitted with jibs or were completely re-rigged and "modernized" by rigging the hull as a cutter or ketch with the popular high and narrow jib-headed sails. The result is disappointing, for the hull profile still prevents the boats from spinning around when the helm is shoved over, as in a short-keel hull.

It is common to find the replica, rigged in a modern fashion, to be tender under sail. This is due to the high center of effort in the modern rigs, of course, combined with the slack-bilged cowhorn model. So outside ballast is often added in the hope of overcoming this difficulty. The result is usually again disappointing, for the depth is insufficient to allow the outside ballast to be very effective. The process of improvement has, in the meantime, raised the building and rigging cost of the original to yachting standards and has produced only an inferior yacht. The rather short run, great beam, and full bow do not permit the cowhorn to be a very fast sailer on all points, and so she cannot benefit from a large and "more efficient" rig.

The cowhorn has no qualities that make it suitable for all waters and every use. It has great value for individual use in open water

where it may meet heavy weather. The fishermen could not drive a small, open boat to windward in a gale by carrying sail, because they would soon become exhausted, and this would lead to some fatal mistake in handling; it is this that makes the cowhorn what she is and not a racer, ocean or otherwise. In short, the cowhorn was a boat that must work under short sail in heavy weather; hence the numerous reefs, so that the crews could take it as easy as possible in a small, open boat in a winter gale. In its original form and rig, the cowhorn makes a splendid family boat, or small cruiser, for use in exposed waters, and she would be a relatively



Mackinaw Boat

cheap boat to build and maintain. She can be made into a racing yacht or "fast cruiser" only by being completely redesigned into something having none of the qualities that made the cowhorn so noted.

Chapelle, Howard I. The National Watercraft Collection. Washington,
D. C., Government Printing Office, 1960.

BLOCK ISLAND BOAT, 1875
RIGGED MODEL, USNM 25825

The old Block Island boats, known as "cowhorns," were noted for their seaworthiness. Originally built to be launched from beaches, they were small craft from about 18 to 26 feet long but, from the middle of the 19th century on, larger boats, up to about 40 feet gunwale length, were built, as these could work out of the partial harbors built at various times prior to completion of the "Government harbor" in 1873. Tradition claims that only one of these boats was lost, but the Customhouse records show that two were lost or wrecked: the *Vanderbilt* was lost in November 1871, and the mail boat *Thomas J. Lynch* was wrecked in 1889 on Peaked Rock off Point Judith. Considering the number of these boats and the exposed waters in which they worked, this record is an excellent one.

The rig of these boats was 2-masted, with the foremast stepped in the eyes of the boat; the masts were usually of nearly equal height and with some rake. The sails had short gaffs with single halyards; the foresail was boomless and overlapped the mainsail; the latter had a boom but the foot of the sail was not laced. The boats were fitted to row.

The model represents a typical Block Island boat of the small class in 1875; it illustrates a lapstrake, double-ended, open keel boat having a straight keel with marked drag, raking straight sternpost with rudder hung outboard, raking and slightly curved stem with prominent stemhead, strong sheer, upright washboards along the gunwales for about two-thirds the boat's length, and fitted with thwarts and stern sheets.

Davis, Charles G., SHIPS OF THE PAST. (Salem, Massachusetts: The Marine Research Society, 1929)

CHAPTER I

BLOCK ISLAND BOATS AND PINKYS

TO the man who really loves boats there is no greater enjoyment than to cruise along the coast and anchor in every little out-of-the-way nook and corner. There he can see some of the local craft, swap yarns with the hardy men of the sea, and learn many things about boats of all kinds, not to be found in books.

It is well-nigh impossible to accomplish this in any other way than by boat. To reach the haunts of these men and see their craft, as one should see them, in use and not abandoned or hauled up for the winter, is impossible by auto or any shore conveyance, for some of the best specimens may be found where there are no passable roads. Some are on islands or are found when you bear up for a harbor behind some breakwater, on the approach of a storm, and there discover some of the oddities of the sea—craft you couldn't find in any other way than just by chance.

Many years ago (in 1894) when we dropped our hook in the salt pond at Block Island, landlocked amid green rolling hills, marked off into farms by snake-like stone walls; to us, the chief characteristic of the landscape was a fleet of scoop-sheered, wide, lap-strake, two-masted sailing boats huddled along the shoreline. Moored to poles almost as big as their masts, the spars of these boats made a maze of sticks like that seen at the famous catboat dock at Newport, Rhode Island. We were interested in all kinds of boats and wanted to see those in Pole Harbor on the eastern shore, and after tramping across the island we found three of them. They were real old Block Island double-enders, bilged, busted and rotting and half full of sand. We had a good opportunity to study the lines of these wonderful sea boats that could cross Nantucket Shoals when no other craft could live. In the outer

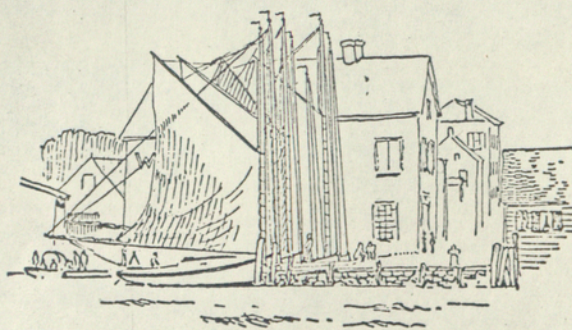


FIG. 1. CATBOATS AT NEWPORT, R. I.,
IN 1894

SHIPS OF THE PAST

basin rode a dozen or more of these hardy little craft moored to tall stakes in the cove sheltered by a newly-built stone breakwater.

Later, when we sailed across to the mainland and dropped anchor in Newport harbor, what should we see, close aboard of us, but a peculiar little schooner, the *Island Belle*, the most famous Block Islander ever built. Her skipper, in years gone by, had the contract from the Government to carry the mails to Block Island and carry them she did, winter and summer, blow

high or blow low. Some of her trips were made when seamen declared no boat could live outside Newport harbor.

I made a sketch of her just as she was then rigged, with all the top-hammer of a full-fledged, two-masted schooner, topmasts, crosstrees, backstays, triatic stay and all, like a Gloucesterman; but the plank lashed under her stout bowsprit, with its pulpit and spear, and the line-wound casks aft on deck, showed that she

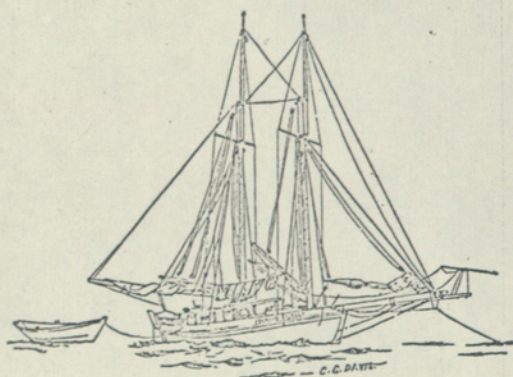


FIG. 2. *THE Island Belle*

was then being used as a swordfisherman. With such a complicated rig she never would have carried the mails as she formerly did. When she was in her prime, she had two long, unstayed, tapered masts with very short-headed gaff sails, the rig known as the Block Island rig. The *Rhode Island*, another fishkiller that rounded to and anchored near her, carried this rig.

We lay nine days, fog and storm bound, in Newport harbor, with a fleet of twenty-eight Gloucester fishing schooners anchored around us. I sketched

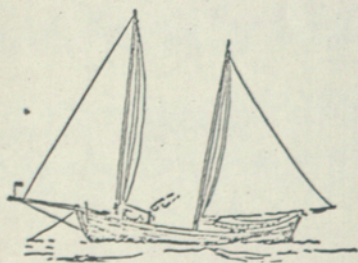
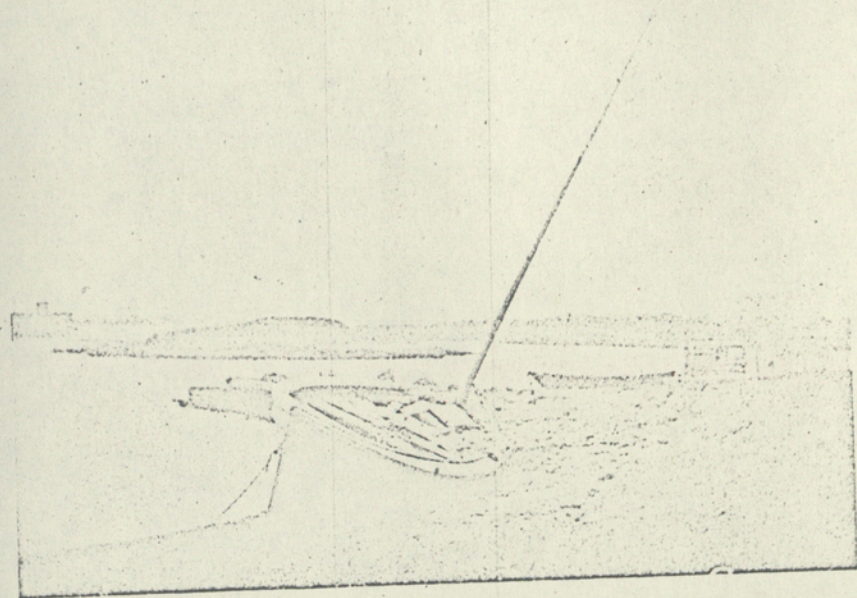


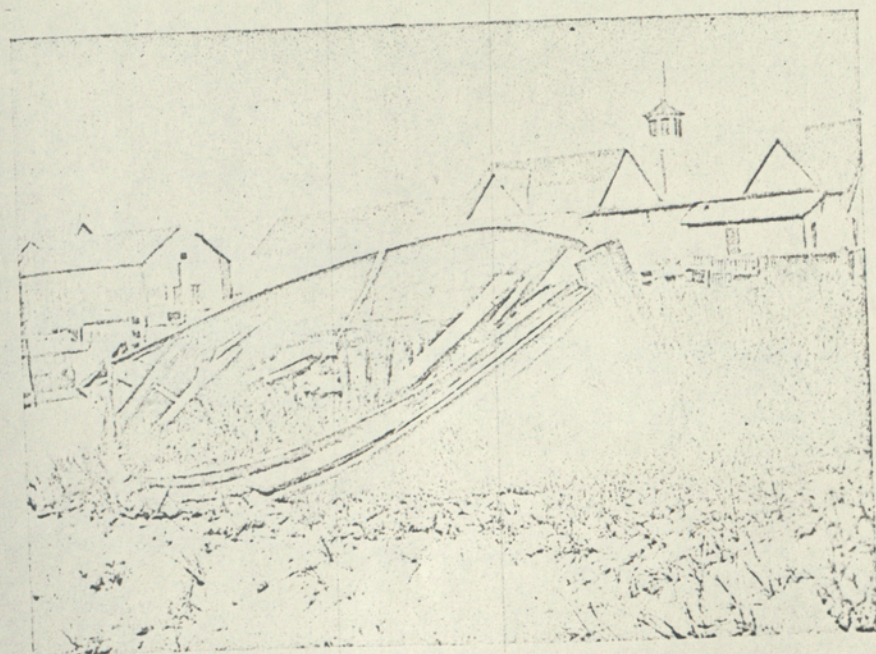
FIG. 3. BLOCK ISLAND BOAT
Rhode Island

several and we visited many of them, their skippers only too glad to have company to relieve the monotony of enforced idleness. Three times the fleet attempted to leave. Sail was hoisted and anchors hove up to such an accompaniment of flapping canvas, clanking windlass pawls and merrily sung chanteys as only a fleet of sailing vessels can produce. Each schooner's crew, vying with the others, jumped to its work. It seemed like the start of a yacht race; one of the old-

fashioned kind where boats started from an anchor. The schooners looked like a flock of swooping sea gulls, their white sails brilliant with rounding shadows in the bright sunlight, the deep blue sea water rolling over into



BLOCK ISLAND BOAT IN WEST HARBOR



BLOCK ISLAND BOAT AT NEW HARBOR, 1913

BLOCK ISLAND BOATS AND PINKYS

white soapsuds under each schooner's bow as they tacked and retacked, careening gracefully under the puffs of a brisk new so'-west wind. As they beat out through the narrow, rock-bound channel, past the Fort and past the Dumplings light, they met an impenetrable bank of gray fog that came rolling in from sea and the whole fleet turned tail and sailed back with lifted sheets; back to the anchorage where they came from.

At the third attempt, we, too, ran out to sea, but it wasn't long before we were swallowed up by fog, that clung, wet and clammy, until we were almost up to the old whale dock at New Bedford, where we ran out into beautiful sunshine with a deep blue sky overhead. There we anchored and rolled up our sails just as the sun set in a shimmering mass of gold. Here we found four old whale ships, stripped of their gear, lying tied up at the dock and although we went ashore and spent a day looking them over—at their huge anchors and big casks of whale oil stored on the rickety old wooden pier—we didn't then consider it worth while to record their names. They were only old "blubber hunters," anyway. But I made a sketch of them as seen from the deck of the old cutter *Pelican*, owned by my friend Commodore C. M. Connelly of New Rochelle, N. Y.

At Edgartown, on the island of Martha's Vineyard, we found an old whaling schooner rotting away at the pier, the clumsy wooden davits that disfigured her side undeniably denoting her vocation.

And so it is with each locality along the coast, from Maine to Texas, each producing different types; a model that has either proved by experience best adapted to the work it has to perform and the waters it has to work in or else a type which the settlers in those regions had used in the land from whence they came. Down in the Gulf, at Pensacola, for instance, the fleet of red-snapper fishing schooners are

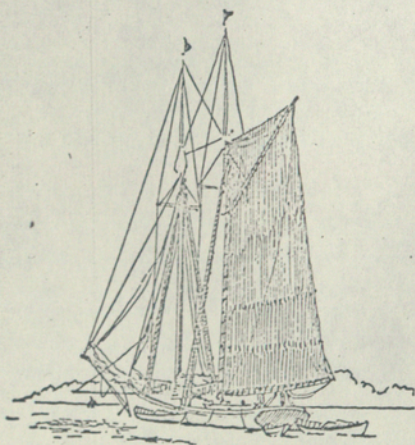


FIG. 4. GLOUCESTER FISHING
SCHOONER *Kearsarge*

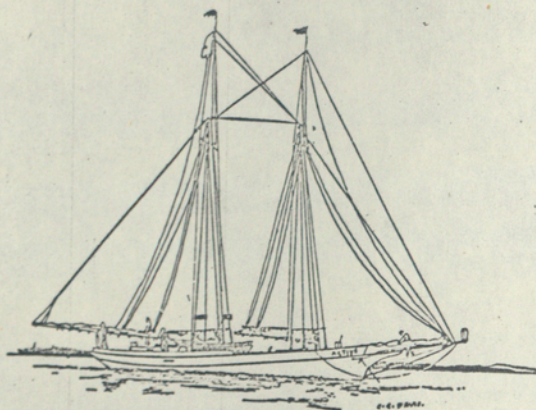


FIG. 5. *Active at Newport, 1894*

SHIPS OF THE PAST

nearly all Gloucester fishing schooners that have been purchased by the Bluenose fishermen who have settled there and they are intermixed with a few little schooners that were built at Key West or Nassau. At Tarpon Springs, Florida, there is a large settlement of Greeks who use a double-ended boat, very similar in model to the old Block Island boat. They are sponge fishers, which is the sole industry of this place. It is one of the sights that tourists go miles to see on a Sunday when there will be a fleet of nearly fifty of these high-sheered, brilliantly painted boats tied up with their bows butted in to the long wooden pier built along the shore of the river.

In the Watercraft Collection in the United States Museum at Washington, D. C., are scale models of many of the various types of vessels used along the seacoast and it makes a most interesting collection to a lover of

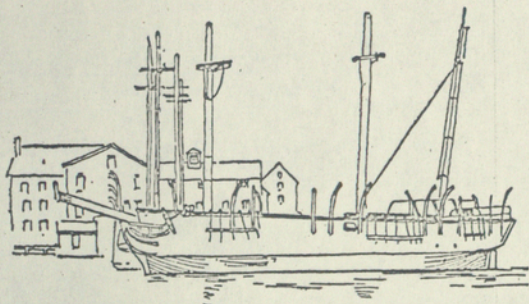


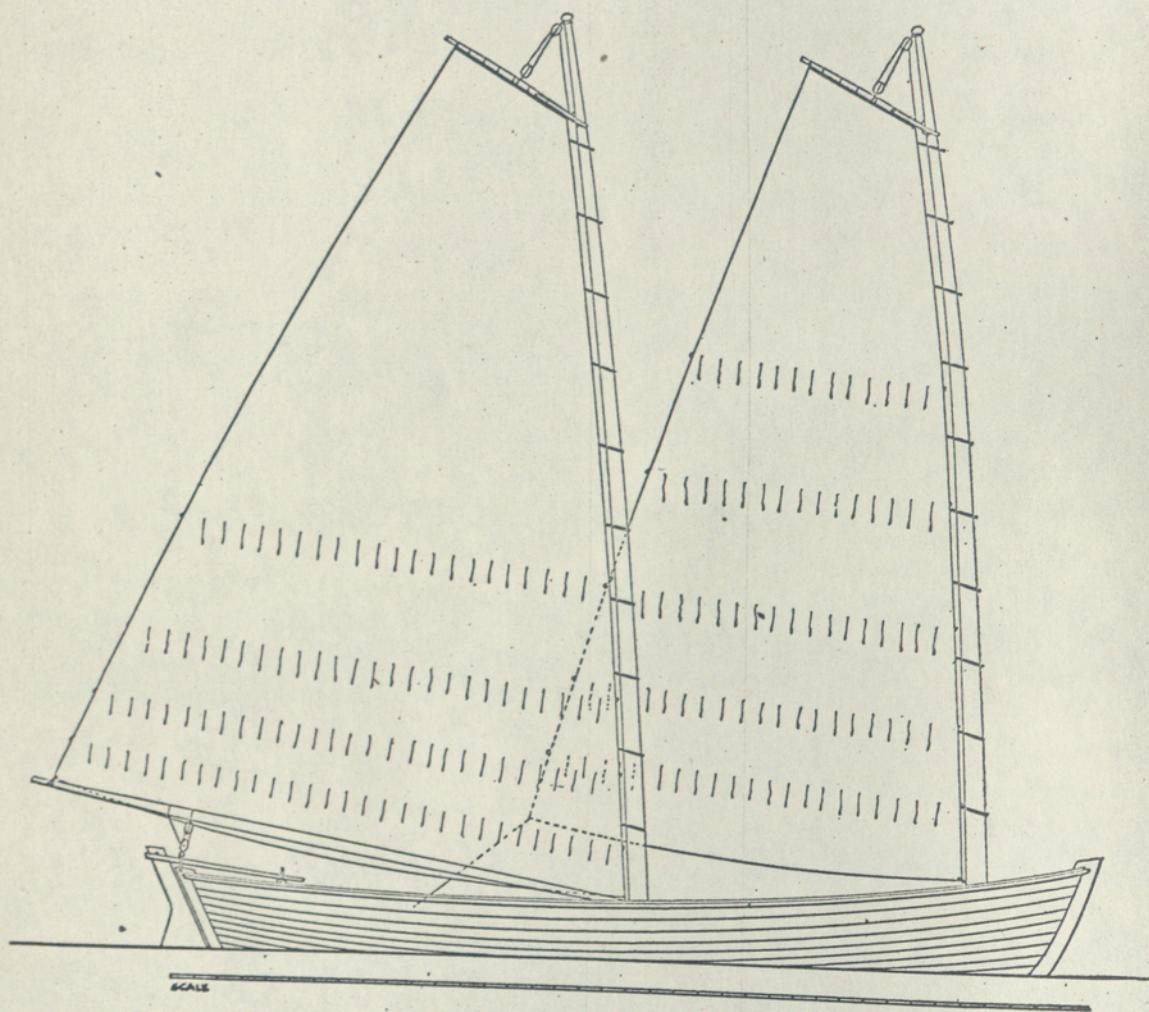
FIG. 6. OLD WHALE SHIP AT
NEW BEDFORD IN 1894

nautical affairs. There, side by side, one can compare the sharp Chesapeake "pungie" and "bugeye" with the clumsy looking, high-sided, blunt-ended "heel tappers," "dog-bodies," Chebacco boats and pinkys of the New England coast.

Fortunately the lines showing the model or shape of the hull of some of the Block Island boats have been preserved to us by two enthusiastic fellow yachtsmen, long since dead. John Hyslop, who for years was the official measurer of the New York Yacht Club, made a special visit to Block Island in the summer of 1881 and took measurements and from the builder at Newport, R. I., he obtained the lines of the *Island Belle* which are here reproduced. In the summer of 1906 Martin Coryell Erismann took off the lines of the *Dauntless* and in 1911, after buying the old *Lena M.* of Block Island and finding her too far decayed to repair, after sailing her up to Marblehead, he took off her lines and had a new boat built from them which he named the *Roaring Bessie*.*

Though these boats were all built by "rule of thumb," a strong family resemblance is noticeable. Most of them, in later years, were built at Newport, R. I., by Benjamin Caswell, and prior to his time Deacon Sylvester D. Mitchell, at Block Island, turned out between 1850 and 1875, such successful craft as the *Active*, *Dauntless*, *Sappho*, and the former mail boat *Thomas Lynch* and many others. Prior to his time, away back in Revolutionary days, John Rose was the principal boat-builder on Block Island, and he was succeeded by Lemuel B. Rose.

* See Rudder for April, 1912.



Sail Plan of BLOCK ISLAND boat "ISLAND BELLE."

SHIPS OF THE PAST

The lumber for building these boats was obtained from the mainland for there were not trees enough on the whole of windswept Block Island to build half the fleet that tied up in Pole Harbor. Fifty-five boats were owned there in 1857. These boats were ballasted with stones and on the approach of bad weather they could be lightened by throwing out this ballast. They would then be dragged up on the beach by a yoke of oxen, for Block Island is so exposed, to the open ocean, that its shores get a terrible pounding during a gale.

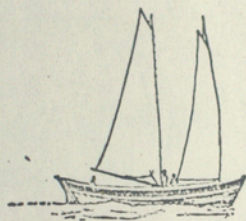


FIG. 7. BLOCK
ISLAND BOAT

In fair weather these boats tied up, bow and stern, to oak poles sunk about six feet into the sand, their tops standing above water ten to fifteen feet. There were over a thousand of these poles at one time and though many of them were pulled up when the Government built a new stone breakwater at the old or east harbor, as late as 1876 there were still remaining seven hundred

and fifty of these poles.

Mr. Hyslop's description of the Block Island boat, as printed in 1884, is as follows:

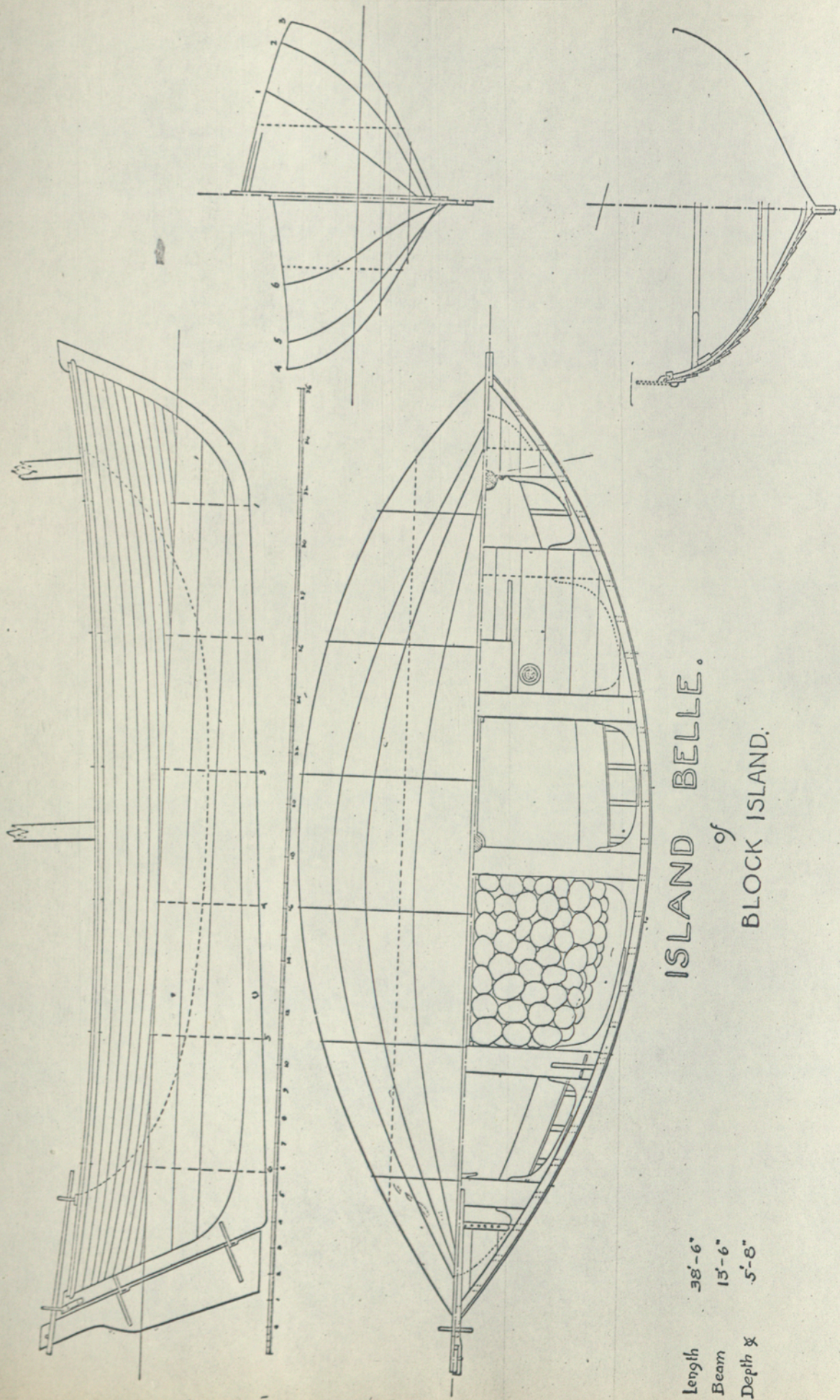
"... About sixty fishing boats are owned on the island; they vary in length from about twenty feet to a little short of forty feet and, with one exception, no Block Island boat has been lost during the present century. The only recent instance of loss occurred a few years ago by a boat striking a sunken rock near Point Judith. The next preceding loss was that of a small craft under twenty feet long, and occurred over ninety years ago; she left port and was not heard of again.

"Until 1877 these boats carried the mails and furnished the only means of communication with the mainland. The *Island Belle* was engaged in this service and through winter and summer the trips were made in regular course. The *Island Belle*, like the rest, is entirely open, with the exception of the small space forward of the foremast, a similar extent of deck aft, and a space between the second and third thwarts of about six feet, fore and aft, which is boarded in to form a cabin. The space between this and the next thwart is vacant, with a dividing partition running fore and aft, and is available for cargo. The next space has also a partition in it, and contains the ballast, which consists of large stones picked off the beach; this can, of course, be very readily shifted to windward or thrown overboard if required, though it is not often that either of these things is done.



FIG. 8. BLOCK
ISLAND BOAT

"The gunwale of these boats is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide by 2 inches deep,



ISLAND BELLE.
of
BLOCK ISLAND.

Length 38'-6"
Beam 13'-6"
Depth 5'-8"

SHIPS OF THE PAST

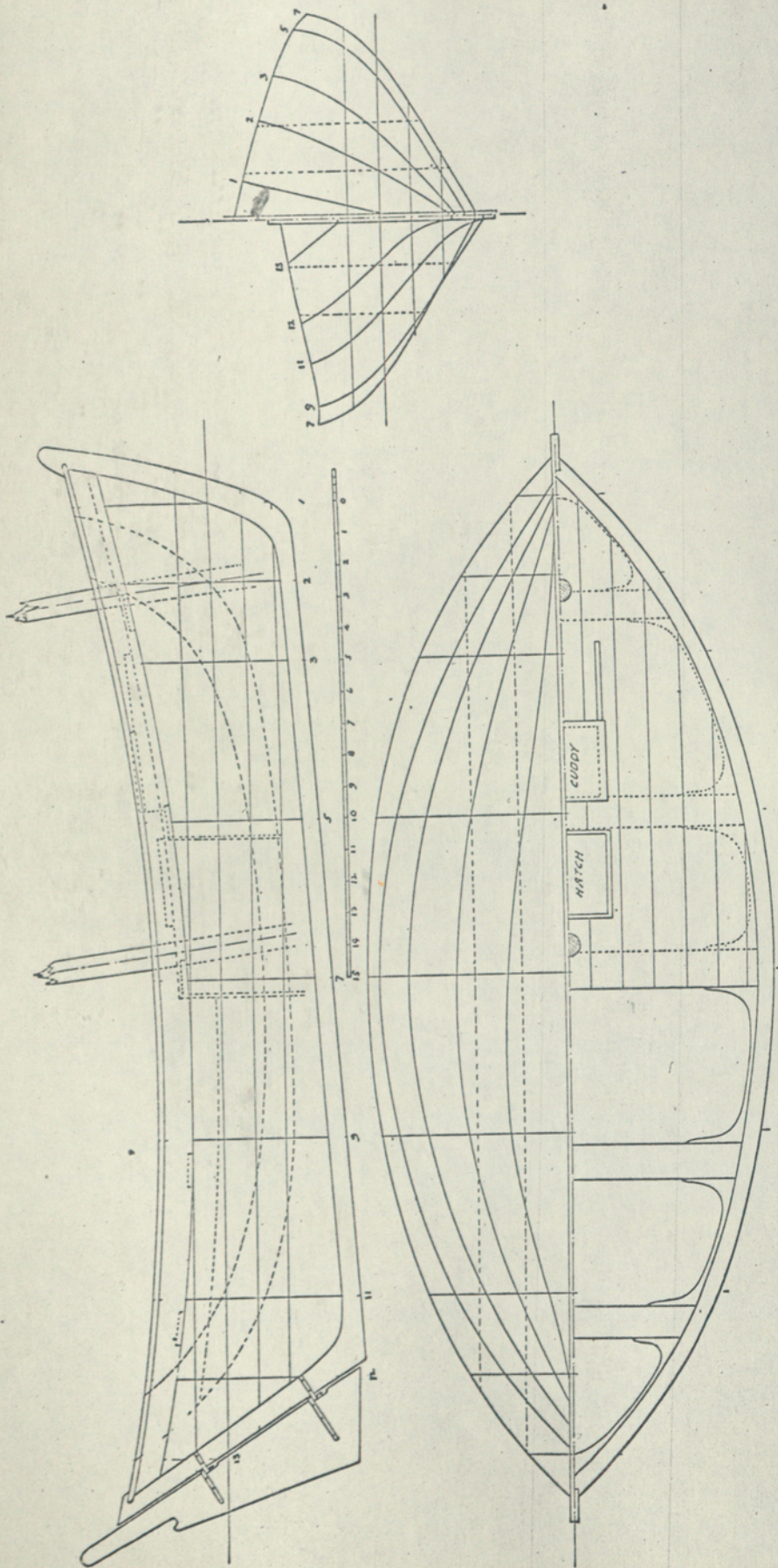
and has holes or sockets in a line near its outer edge, and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet or 2 feet apart. When they are being sailed gunwale to, or when spray is coming in to windward, light boards, one inch by twelve inches, and in sections about ten feet long, can be used in the waist or as far along as may be desired, to build up the sides and keep water out. These boards have bolts or pegs set off from the inner sides. The boards are bent round on the outside of the gunwale and the pegs are driven down into the sockets which are indicated by dots on the gunwale lines in the accompanying drawing.

"The boats are all lap-strake, of $\frac{7}{8}$ inch cedar, on two inch bent oak frames, spaced about 13 inches from centers, with bent floors put in between, and extending halfway up the sides. They are all keel boats. In this and in some other points to be named, they differ from prevalent American custom. [Mr. Erismann also noted the fact that these boats and those used by the natives of the Isles of Shoals, off the New Hampshire coast, were of the same type.]

"The sails are very narrow in the head. The mainsail has a loose foot, the foresail is without a boom and the mainsheet has a traveler across the sternpost or the little deck aft. The sails are liberally supplied with reefs, namely, five rows of points in the foresail and four in the mainsail, but the running gear is reduced to a minimum—one halyard for each sail.

"Block Island boats are handled by from two to five men and even by a man and a boy. There is a rack carried across the after-deck with pinholes a few inches apart. With sheets flat aft and a full press of canvas, the craft jumps to windward in a very lively fashion. The helmsman would then stick a wooden peg or pin into the midship hole of this pin rack, put the tiller on the weather side of it and go into the waist (the middle of the boat) and with a boy's help, pick up a weather-board, adjust it to the gunwale quite deliberately, and resume his steering when he was ready. When he wanted to go about he would put his helm down, jam it upon the chafing strake and behind the gunwale and go forward to help the boy to haul the foresheet; the mainsheet would, of course, travel over without attention.

"These boats can be worked to windward under the foresail alone or under part of it and when caught in a hard blow on the fishing grounds, ten or fifteen miles off shore, they will get under sail and make their way into harbor, leaving schooners (much larger vessels) lying to and unable to follow them until the weather moderates. [This is where the double-ender or pink-sterned boat excels, as the sharp stern presents a shape, sharp like the bow, to the oncoming sea and parts it without the boat being pushed ahead at a mad, racing speed as it would be if the stern presented a flat transom to the sea.]



DAUNTLESS.
of
BLOCK ISLAND

Length 33'-6"
Beam 12'-10"
Draft 4'-6"

SHIPS OF THE PAST

"The masts are all made very small at the top and with a straight taper. Those of the *Island Belle* measured nine inches in diameter at the foot and about three inches at the head, or top. They are made of spruce and are without shrouds or stays of any kind.

"The nearest customhouse or port of entry being Newport, these Block Island boats all have to register there and that is why, though owned at Block Island, Newport is painted on the stern as their hailing port."

The *Dauntless*, when Mr. Erismann took her lines off in 1906, was partially decked and his description of her is as follows:

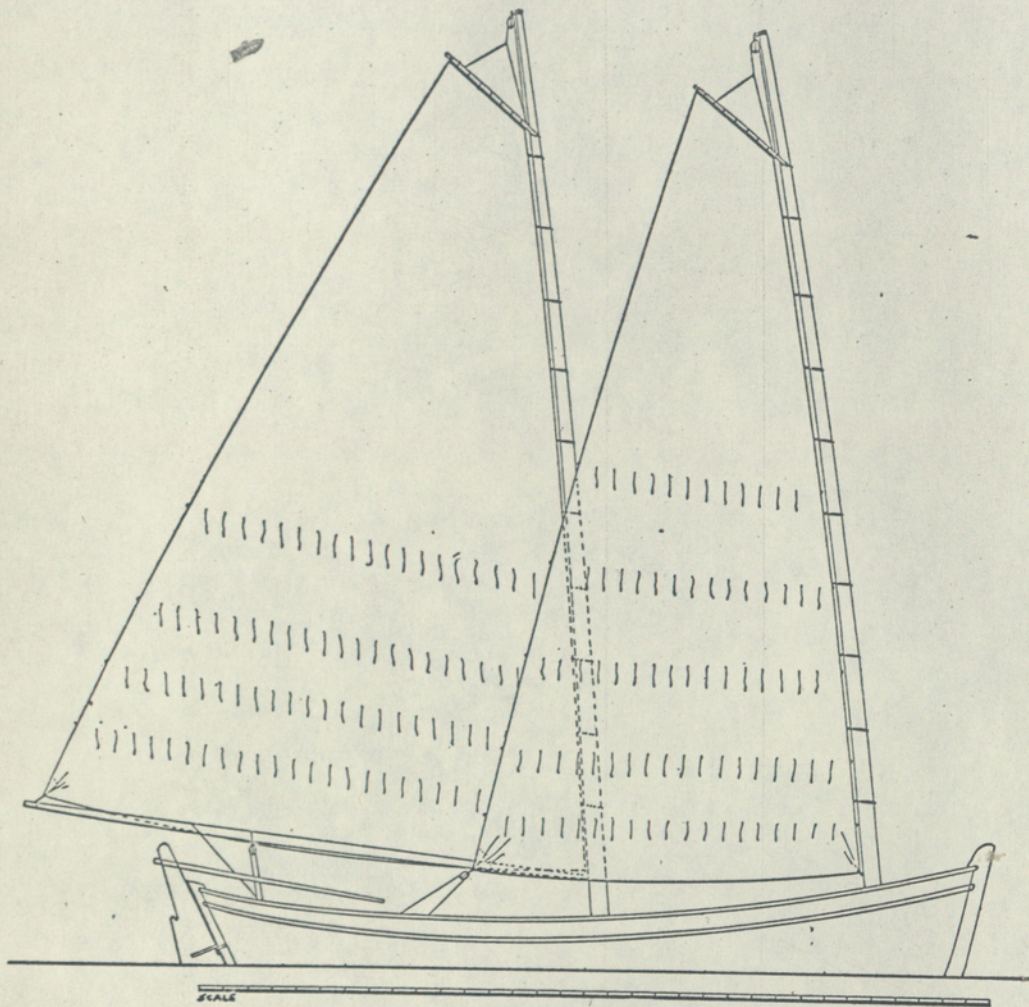
"The boats are decked from the bow to about two feet aft of the mainmast, this deck being about eight inches below the waterway, which is six inches wide. The deck is pierced by a sliding hatch, which gives access to a cuddy about ten feet long with about four feet of headroom. The after end of the cuddy is shut off by a bulkhead and the compartment forms a hold about five feet, fore and aft, with a square hatch in the deck.

"Aft of the break comes the cockpit, fitted with two heavy thwarts acting as braces and tying the boat together. The construction is fairly simple, the boats being lap-straked planked with cedar about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. The frames are laid on the flat and are $1\frac{5}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$, about ten inches center to center. There are no bilge keelsons, but the main strength lies in the gunwale. The shelf is of yellow pine, $6 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and to this are kneed the thwarts, which act as mast partners; and hanging knees are also fitted. Outside, heavy rubbing strakes of oak and pine take the wear. The keel is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick with a 3×3 inch keelson and floors, five inches deep. A fish well is fitted in the cockpit, in which the ship's pump empties."

The dimensions of the *Dauntless* were as follows:

Length on deck	33 ft. 6 in.
Length on water-line	30 ft. 9 in.
Breadth over gunwales	12 ft. 10 in.
Breadth at water-line	10 ft. 0 in.
Draft	4 ft. 6 in.
Least freeboard	2 ft. 0 in.
Freeboard at bow	4 ft. 9 in.
Freeboard at stern	3 ft. 3 in.
Sail area	702 sq. ft.

The *Dauntless* was evidently an open boat, built with the same arrangement of thwarts as was the custom, but at some later date she had been decked over at the forward end. Today, summer visitors to this quaint old island see nothing but motor-driven boats with, maybe, an apology of a



SAIL PLAN of BLOCK ISLAND BOAT DAUNTLESS.

Morris, E.P. The Fore and Aft Rig in America.
New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927,

THE BLOCK ISLAND BOAT. Two local types of two-masted craft, the Chesapeake bug-eye and the Fain Haven sharpie, unique in hull and rig, have been described above; the Block Island boat is a third such type, not less remarkable in its characteristics and interesting in its history.

Descriptions of this boat have appeared in various yachting magazines. Mr. John Hyslop, the designer and for many years the official measurer for the New York Yacht Club, published in the London *Field* of December 15, 1883, and in *Forest and Stream* of January 3, 1884, a description and drawings based on his own observation. Mr. Martin C. Erismann, also a trained designer and a student of the history of American sailing craft, whose work was unhappily cut short by death, described the boats in *Forest and Stream*, February 16, 1907, and had a replica of the last of them built from his own measurements in 1911. In *The Rudder* of April, 1912, pages 261-268, Mr. W. M. Thompson gave a full description of the Block Island boat and of Mr. Erismann's reproduction, with lines, sail plan and many photographs. There is a very good model by Boucher in the Peabody Museum at Salem and another, less perfect, in the National Museum.

Figure 36 is an outline of the sail plan and lines—for in this boat rig and hull must both be considered—redrawn from the plans in Mr. Thompson's article. The details deserve careful notice, since they tell the story of the rig. The masts taper from the deck and are without stays; the foremast is up in the bow, and the after mast is almost exactly amidships. The gaffs are very short, with single halyards. The foresail is a little the higher, but considerably narrower on the foot and less in area; it has double sheets, without boom; the mainsail has a boom, to which it is not laced. It is an out-and-out Dutch rig.

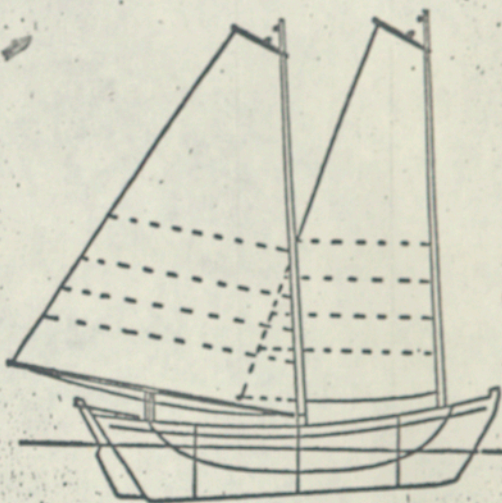
On some boats a plank might occasionally be seen projecting from the bow. It was a swordfish stand, not a bowsprit, and no sail was set on it. But the largest boats were sometimes schooner rigged, with topmasts and a bowsprit, as Casco Bay boats and bug-eyes added a jib to their two-masted rig. In *Forest and Stream* of February 23, 1907, there is a sketch of a Block Island hull with schooner rig, which shows also the swordfish stand and the pole lashed across it in proper fashion.

The hull, too, tells its own story, a different story. The lap-streak planking, the sharp bow and stern with rudder on the stern-post, the long raking keel, the sharp sections and the flare at bow and stern—these are, if they are followed back far enough, as clearly Scandinavian as the rig is Dutch.

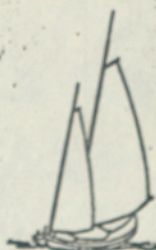
For many years these boats were used only about Block Island and were the only boats used there for fishing. Mr. Hyslop records that in 1883 there were about sixty of them, ranging from twenty to forty feet in length. In 1875 few of the boats had been recently built; some of them would certainly have dated back to 1850 or even 1825, for they were strongly built and well kept up. The tradition of the island was that they had "always" been used there, and it would be a safe guess to give the type a life of a round century. The only one now afloat is Mr. Erismann's reproduction, which is a scrupulously exact copy to the minutest details, except that it is carvel-built; it was still used as a cruising yacht as late as 1925, with its home port in Fox Island Thoroughfare in Maine.

The original boats were fishing boats for use in the open waters about Block Island, and they were admirably suited to this purpose. The testimony to their excellence as seaboats, not merely from their owners, but from unprejudiced observers like Hyslop, Erismann and Thompson, is unanimous and enthusiastic. The freeboard amidships seems rather low for a partially open boat—and the smaller boats were quite open—but this was to some extent corrected by the use of movable washboards and was explained by the convenience in handline fishing. A study of the complete lines in *The Rudder* would show that the boat would not be stiff; the sail area was therefore not large, and with the single halyards and the narrow head of the sail reefing would be easy and effective. Prettier bow and buttock lines and water lines it would be hard to find. Taking all the qualities together, it may be said with confidence that no other local type, with the possible exception of

Figures



36. Block Island Boat.



37. Dutch Yacht Rig, 1640-50.

the sharpie, was so well adapted to its peculiar situation and use.

The rig, it was said, is Dutch. During the first half of the seventeenth century many drawings show a two-masted short-gaff rig without headsail. Van Konijnenburg, *Shipbuilding from its Beginnings*, has two, clearly reproduced, but without date or source. There is a good drawing of the rig with details well shown in a print of a Dutch sea-fight, also undated, but surely of the seventeenth century. Clark, *Yachting*, has two; one is a reproduction of a very beautiful drawing in India ink on parchment; the other is dated 1638, a review of yachts, showing about a dozen of these rigs in the foreground and many more in the background. Plate XXIV is from a print in the British Museum, signed by S. Savry (or Savery), who died about 1664; this gives the rig in clear detail, though the fact that the craft is before the wind and is winged out makes it difficult to reconstruct the shape and size of the sails. These, however, are shown on the boat in the background, which is reproduced separately on a scale approximately that of the original print (figure 37). The elaborate decorations of the hull should not be overlooked nor the figures on deck; the well-dressed skipper—for this is a yacht—is making a courteous gesture of acknowledgment to his passengers, who are pledging him with upraised glasses—the lady's quite properly the smaller; another passenger has gone forward to smoke his long pipe and listen to the yarns of the bearded deckhand; the sea is smooth, but the unfortunate by the rail does not think so and is wishing he hadn't come.

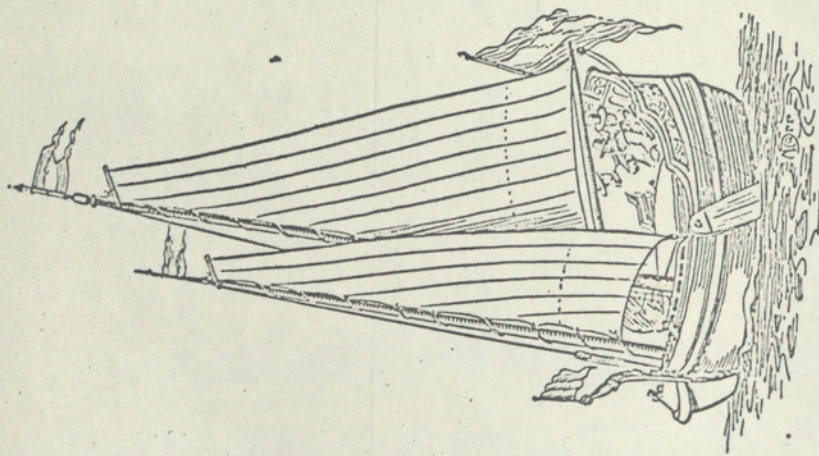
The similarity of the Dutch rig and the American may be seen in plates XXV, A, and XXV, B. Plate XXV, A, is reproduced by the permission of the publishers from Chatterton's *Fore and Aft*, page 78. It is a sketch from a painting of about 1642 in the museum at Rotterdam; I have not seen the original, but the sketch may be presumed to be substantially correct. Plate XXV, B, is from a photograph of Mr. Erisman's humorously named *Roaring Bessie*, the frontispiece to

The Rudder of November, 1911. The two boats can be the more closely compared because they are of about the same size, are on the same tack and are taken from the same angle. It is not too much to say that the rigs are identical, the agreements are so many and so characteristic, the differences so few and unimportant. Both have tapering masts without side stays; the foremast is well up in the bow, the mainmast more or less forward of midships; the sails are of the peculiar short-gaff type, with single halyards; the foresail is the smaller, the mainsail has a boom, to which it is not laced. Over against these identities the differences are nothing; the Dutch boat has a forestay; the modern boat has a tackle for the halyards and hoops instead of the spiral lacing. The only difference that needs explanation is that the modern foresail is higher, though still somewhat smaller, than the mainsail, while all drawings of the seventeenth century craft show the foresail lower and smaller than the mainsail, and in consequence the mainmast is further forward than on the American boat. Such a change is precisely of the kind that may be made in any rig from the desire to get more sail. The probability of a direct connection between the two is strengthened by the fact that some of the details of the Block Island rig—the true short-gaffs, the mainsail not laced to its boom—were not to be seen on any other American type in the nineteenth century. The only reasonable explanation of these details and, indeed, of the whole rig is to regard it as a Dutch rig, which has survived with astonishingly slight change from the early seventeenth century.

We have, then, two stages in the history of this rig; it was used on yachts in Holland between 1600 and 1650, and was again in use on American fishing boats between 1800 or a little later and 1900. To complete the history evidence is needed for the intervening time.

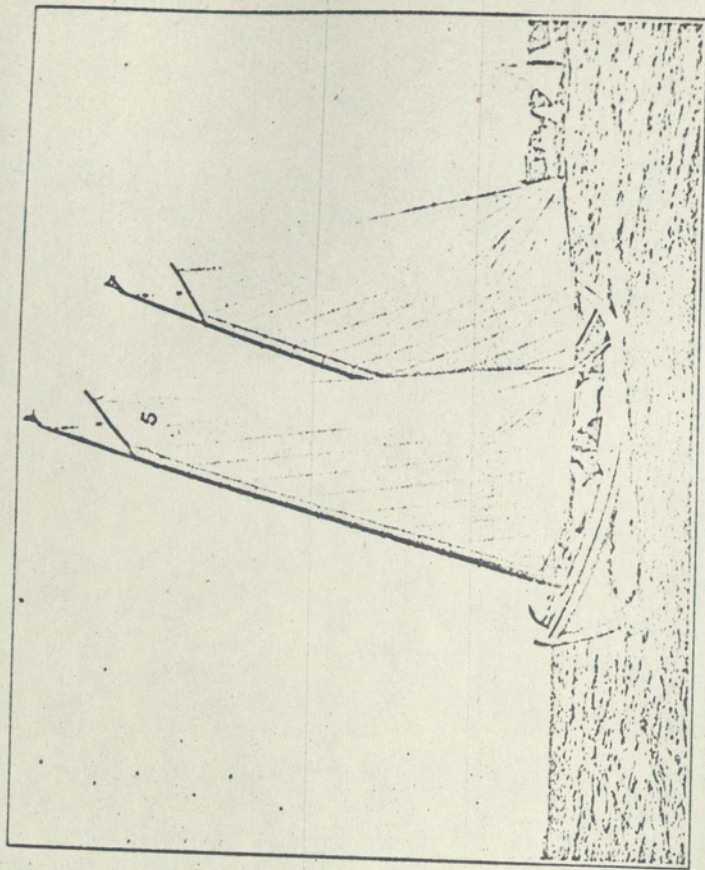
THE CHEBACCO BOAT. During the period of the Revolution and for some time after there are many allusions to a kind of boat that was much used about Cape Ann for fishing along

PLATE XXV, A



DUTCH YACHT, 1642

PLATE XXV, B



BLOCK ISLAND BOAT

The Block Island "Double Ender"

By PAUL C. NICHOLSON

Reprinted from
Rhode Island Historical Society
Collections, October 1923

Deep sea fishing has been the mainstay of Block Island ever since its settlement by white men, and even as long ago as 1670 an Act was passed to erect a pier for "incouradging fishing designes." The Island lies in the Atlantic Ocean well off the south coast of Rhode Island, and as only few fish can be caught from the shore, it has always been necessary for the inhabitants to use boats for this industry.

More than a century ago the natives of Block Island adapted or designed an open fishing boat which had several remarkable features, and it seems advisable to record the few meagre details which are known regarding these craft before they are forgotten, and like the boat itself become practically extinct.

Although the beginnings of this type are lost in antiquity, it seems certain that the Block Island Double Ender was adapted

or copied from the so-called "chebacco boats,"¹ which were in common use for fishing in New England waters in the 18th and latter part of the 17th centuries, and the open double ender was used almost exclusively by the Block Island fishermen from at least 1750 and undoubtedly earlier, until 1870, when the construction of the breakwater harbor allowed the use of heavier vessels. After that date the design became modified,¹ decks and

¹"The Sailing Ships of New England," Salem, 1922:

"Following the shallow, pinnace and sloop, eighteenth century New England built a great variety of one and two masted boats variously named and generally used in the fisheries."

"The fishing pink after a time became known as a 'pinkey' and one form of the fishing pinkey in common use along the northern shore of Massachusetts Bay during the seventeenth century and also well into the next century, was the 'chebacco boat,' so called because it was first built at Chebacco, now the town of Essex. Sometimes called 'standing room' boats, they were from 10 to 12 tons burthen, had two masts, but no bowsprit. * * * The deck had no railing, and the stern was sharp like the bow. * * * The fishing pinkey and the chebacco boat doubtless closely resembled the 'two masted boat,' so called, of the first half of the seventeenth century."

"The Maritime History of Massachusetts," S. E. Morison, Boston, 1921:

"The typical Cape Ann fishing vessel of the Federalist period was a Chebacco boat (ancestor of the Down East pinkies of to-day)—so called from the Chebacco parish of Ipswich where the type was invented and built. Double ended, 'pink' (sharp) sterned, rigged with two pole masts, stepped well forward so that no head sail was needed, and not over 30 feet long, the chebacco boats were easy to handle and rode the water like a duck."

"Cape Cod and Buzzard's Bay used the lap streak, round bottomed whale boat and the Block Island or Vineyard sailboat, a fast, able, flat bottomed type with a Chebacco rig." (Evidently an error, as the Block Island boat was never flat bottomed. P. C. N.)

"The same types of vessel were used in mackerel as in cod fishing. Chebacco boats and 'heel tappers' were gradually superseded by pinkies—an enlarged Chebacco boat with bowsprit and jib, measuring 20-60 tons. About 1830 a new type of square sterned schooners of 20-90 tons burthen came into use."

"In 1792 Cape Ann owned 133 Chebacco boats of 11 tons burthen on an average, and by 1804 the number had increased to 200 and the tonnage doubled."

¹Henry T. Beckwith, "History of Block Island," 1857 (Appendix 1873):

"Several new decked vessels have been purchased or are in the process of being built for the convenience of passengers and freight between here and the mainland."



even cabins were added to the boats, and the new harbor facilitated the use of cats, sloops and schooners² for fishing, until in 1893 there were but a few of the double enders left, and a few years later the last one had disappeared from Block Island waters. However, the remains of a small 21-foot double ender or "cow horn" may still be seen lying on the beach in a little cove on the south shore of the New Harbor. She is half full of sand, and weeds are growing through her opened seams, but her general form and rugged construction are well enough preserved to indicate the type of boat used by the island fishermen fifty or sixty years ago.

The coast of Block Island afforded very little shelter in the way of a harbor for boats, the only refuge being a small bight on the east side of the Island at which was located the "landing place." In this bight, which is sheltered from westerly and southerly winds, the double enders were kept, tied to stakes in fair weather, but light enough and so designed that the fishermen could hitch on a yoke of oxen and haul them high and dry on the beach in case of foul weather.³

There are three known models of so-called Block Island boats, one of the "Lena M" in the Peabody Museum, Salem, built by Mr. Horace Boucher in 1910.⁴ The "Lena M" was the last one of the double enders to be built, and the model shows the later development just before the boats went out of existence. A second model is in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington⁵ but is not representative of the earlier boats in that the aft mast and sail have been reduced as in the ketch rig, and the model

²The first fishing schooner owned at the island was the "Hattie Rebecca," 44 feet long, 15 tons burthen. She was brought to the Island September 4, 1875.

³Henry T. Beckwith, "History of Block Island," 1857:

"An island in the Atlantic, dependent much on deep sea fishing without a decked vessel is also remarkable. But there is a reason for these open schooner boats of Block Island. Its only harbor of refuge is the high and dry beach. The fishing vessels, therefore, must be light enough to be drawn quickly out of water."

⁴See "The Marine Room of the Peabody Museum of Salem," Salem, 1921.

⁵See "Motor Boat," January 25, 1923.

shows the narrow decks and combing typical of the later designs. The third model, which was built at the Island many years ago by Mr. Leslie H. Dodge, is in the author's collection, and appears to accurately show the characteristics of the open boats which were in general use at the Island before the "pole harbor" was superseded by what is now called the "old harbor."

The Block Island double ender was two masted, clinker built, or lap streaked, sharp at both ends and with a long straight keel. The bow and stern were high and the waist low, giving a pronounced sheer somewhat comparable to the modern lifeboat. Excepting for a short deck from the foremast to the stem and from the tiller rack to the stern, the boats were entirely open. When the weather became rough, the fishermen resorted to the use of wash boards, or lee boards as they were called, in order to raise the gunwales. These boards were six in number and were equipped with wooden pins which fitted into holes in the gunwales. The boats were steered by a long tiller, the head of which fitted over the rudder post and rested on a wooden pin so that it could be readily moved perpendicularly as well as horizontally. A comb of wooden pins arranged on the short after-deck allowed the tiller to be left in any desired position so that all hands could fish or tend sail as the occasion required.

⁶"History of Block Island," S. T. Livermore, Hartford, 1877:

"The Pole Harbor, as it may be designated, was begun about the year 1816. A single individual, at low tide, near the shore end of the present breakwater, sunk a few spiles close to each other, about six feet deep, the upper parts of them rising above the water from ten to fifteen feet. To these he could tie up his boat in ordinary weather. Others followed his example, until long rows of such poles extended out into a considerable depth of water at high tide. * * * This construction was carried on for many years by so many of the islanders that a forest of oak poles became the principal harbor. * * * Thus matters went on * * * until the poles were over a thousand in number. After many had been removed for the present harbor, seven hundred and fifty are now standing in 1876 and are still of considerable service, in fair weather, to the fishermen."

"The value of these fisheries is also indicated by the white oak poles, now standing at the harbor, put there for the convenience of the boats of the fishermen. They were a substitute for the old and the new piers which had been destroyed by a storm and as such they served until the construction of the present national harbor, inadequate as they were, leaving a necessity on the fishermen of turning out at midnight in a cold storm to yoke their oxen, go to the harbor, and haul their boats up on the bank for safety."

As the boats had no weighted keel, it was necessary to ballast them, and rocks from the beach were used for this purpose. They could be readily shifted from side to side, and if enough fish were caught to act as ballast, the rocks were thrown overboard.⁷

Actual dimensions of the double enders are uncertain, but it has been established that they were built in lengths varying from sixteen to forty feet. Most of the boats were constructed on the Island, in Revolutionary times by John Rose, and later by Lemuel B. Rose. From 1850 to 1875 the principal builder was Deacon Sylvester D. Mitchell, who was the creator of many successful fishing boats, such as the "Active," "Dauntless," "Sappho," and the mail boat "Thomas Lynch," the latter which was about forty feet long by fourteen feet beam, being the largest of the fleet.

No blue-prints or drawings were used, and the vessels were built by the "cut and try" method. No two of the boats were exactly alike so that the dimensions can only be approximated. A boat 33 feet to 35 feet long would have a beam of from 12 feet to 13 feet and a draught of from 6 feet to 7 feet. It was general practice to build the keel and frames of oak and hackmatack and to make the planking of cedar, all of which were cut on the mainland and brought to the Island for the purpose.⁸

The rig consisted of two pole masts of the same height with-out shrouds or stays, the foremast being stepped well towards the bow and the mainmast nearly in the center of the boat. The

⁷"History of Block Island," S. T. Livermore, Hartford, 1877:

"Far different is the scene in the afternoon, when one of the same boats after another struggles in, with wet and weary fishermen, with ballast of tons of staves thrown overboard to give place to hungry, and hunger-stopping codfish."

⁸The old double ender at the New Harbor was measured on August 24th, 1923, and found to be 21 feet over all, 8 feet beam, and to have three feet six inches draught. She was built of very heavy oak knees, ribs and thwart, and planked with $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch cedar. At each end a short deck extended $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet towards the waist. Her six-inch oak keel was protected by an iron shoe which extended down the stem post and the entire length of the long straight keel.

masts were supported against the deck or thwart by hinged iron cleats held by wooden pins so that they might be readily unshipped when the boats were hauled out on the shore.

But two sails were carried, as these boats were not fitted for head sails and had no bowsprit. Each sail was hoisted on rings or hoops and by a single halyard attached to a very short gaff. The mainsail was loose-footed on a boom which extended out over the stern, while the foresail carried no boom but was simply sheeted aft on either side as might be required. Each sail was fitted with five rows of reef points.

Customarily the double enders were painted with green topsides, sometimes surmounted by a white band, while the underbody was always coated with "verdigris" paint to prevent the marine growths from accumulating and the worms from attacking the planking.

Long oars were carried and on the smaller boats a crew usually consisted of five men, so that in case of necessity in a calm four could row, two to an oar, while the fifth steered.

At the height of their use there were about fifty of the double enders engaged in fishing at Block Island, and their remarkable qualities as sailers and in a sea-way have been the cause of much comment.⁹

The building of the breakwaters at what is now called the "Old Harbor," allowed the introduction of heavier and decked-over vessels for fishing, and despite Mr. Livermore's prophecy in 1877 regarding the double enders, that "it is doubtful whether they will ever be superseded while the Island continues," cats,

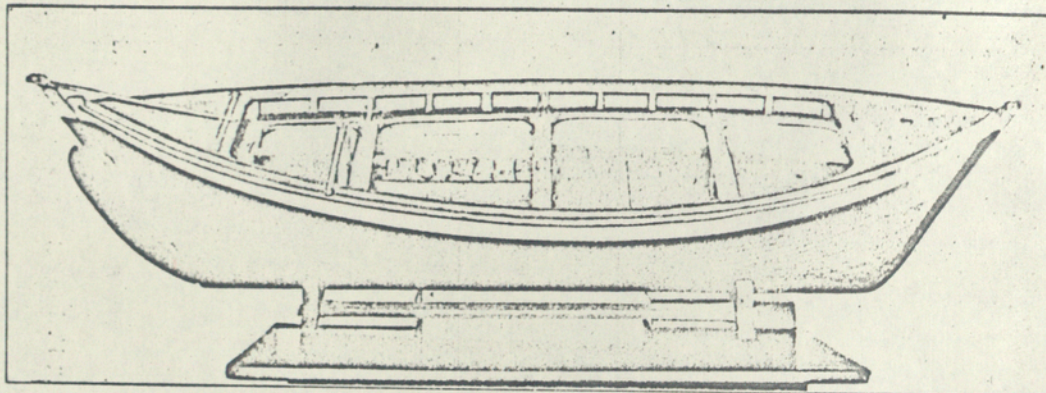
⁹Henry T. Beckwith, 1857, "History of Block Island":

"There are now about 55 of the island boats, well known from their peculiar build, being all two masts, clinker built and sharp at both ends. It is stated as an evidence of their good qualities, and the skill of their managers, that in open sea navigation in which they are used, but one has foundered in 59 years."

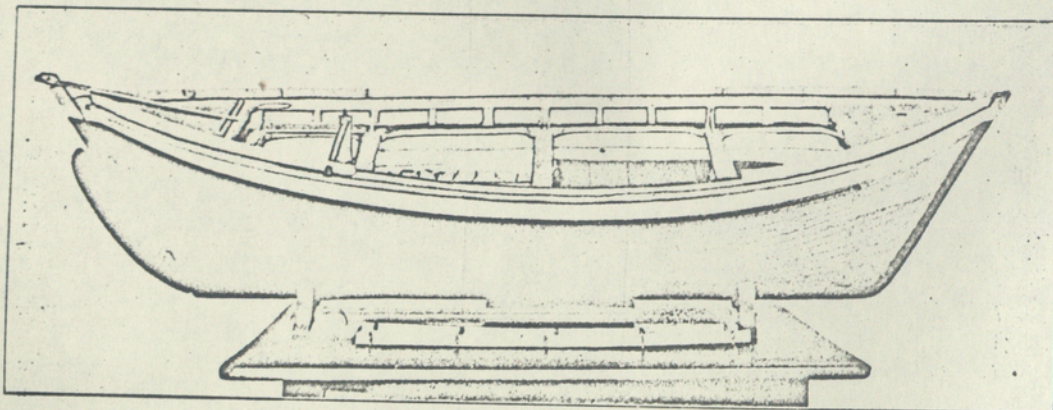
"History of Block Island," S. T. Livermore, Hartford, 1877:

"While their number has averaged over forty during the last fifty years, not a life has been lost on account of the sea-unworthiness of the boats. They have been known to sail into the winds in storms that would quickly swamp larger vessels that should attempt to follow them."

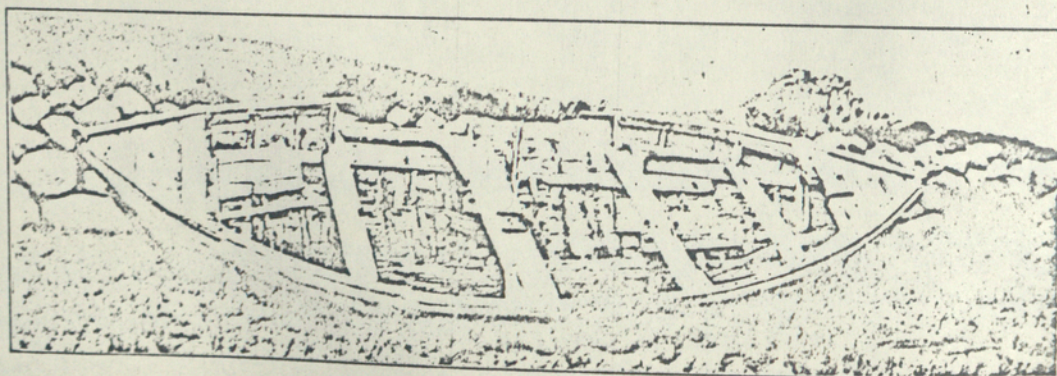
(Old fishermen claim that the roughest trip ever made to the island was by the double ender "Thomas Lynch" on February 3, 1871.)



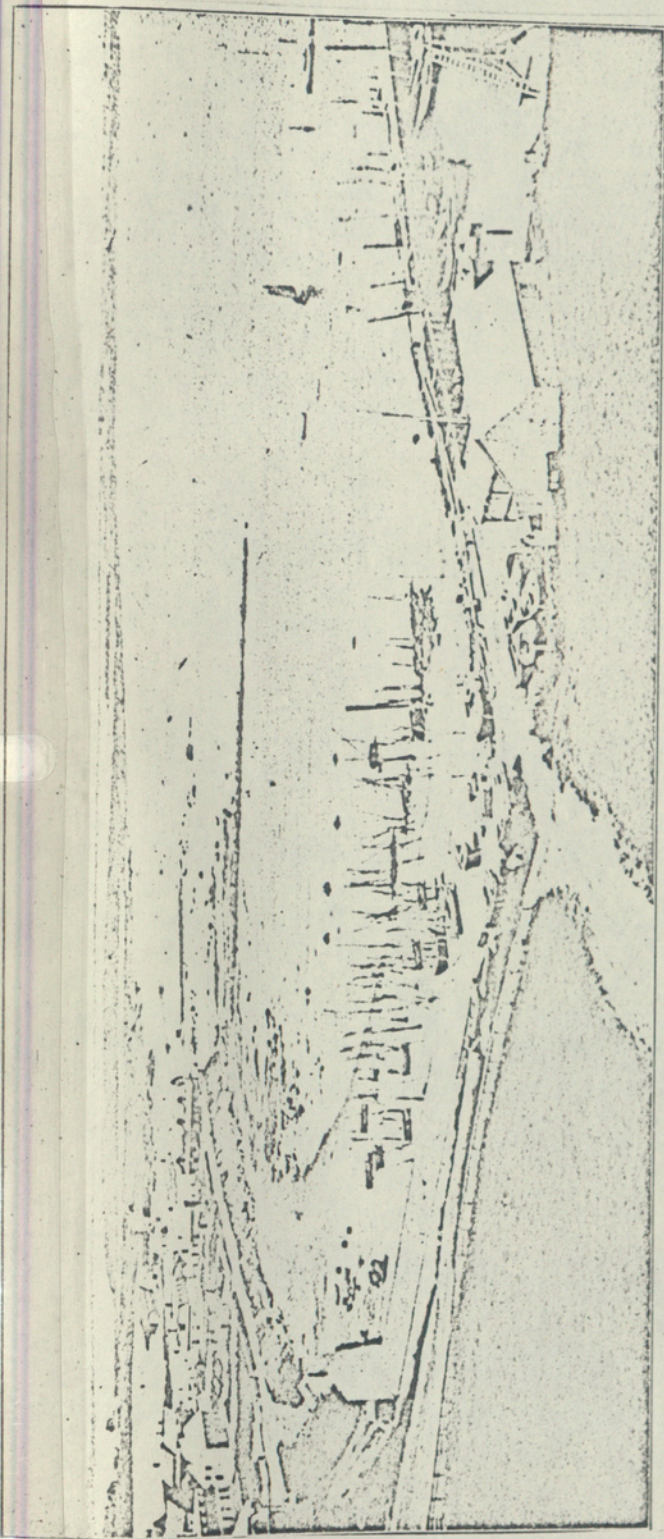
Model of the Block Island boat showing interior arrangement and construction. In this model sand bags were used to indicate the ballast of rocks which the boats customarily carried.



Photograph of the model showing four of the six "lee boards" or wash boards in place. The remaining two may be seen in the foreground on the table.



The last double ender.



Old photograph of Block Island old harbor showing many of the oak poles which formed the "pole harbor" before the present breakwater was built. At the right may be seen several double enders tied to the dock, and in the middle foreground six or seven more are lying hauled out on the beach. The long roof in the left foreground is the old fish drying house. Note the incomplete breakwater in the middle of the photograph.

sloops and schooners came to take their place in the fishing industry. These latter have given way in turn to the less romantic but more practical motor-boat. One finds to-day that fishing at the Island is either carried on from an out and out motor-boat or occasionally from a sloop, cat or schooner equipped with a gasoline motor as an auxiliary. The Block Island double ender is only a memory.

Ritchie, Ethel Colt, BLOCK ISLAND LORE AND LEGENDS.
(Block Island, R.I., F. Norman Associates, 1955).

Double Enders

The double ender was peculiar to Block Island ship building. No vessel was ever more sea-worthy and easily handled in all kinds of weather than these boats. Their distinguishing feature consisted of being pointed at both ends so that prow and stern alike could take a sea to ride the waves lightly and plough a trough. They were the ablest sea-going under-decked craft in the world and seldom a storm so wild that the largest of these boats, with a crew of from two to four men, could not pass to and fro between the Island and ports on the Connecticut and Rhode Island mainland.

A double ender measured from 12 to 35 feet in length and had a beam up to 9 feet in proportion. Lapstreaked and built of very thin cedar, one-half to seven-eighths of an inch in thickness, with knees and timbers of oak, very strongly and tightly made, the stern and stem posts riding at an angle of 45 degrees from the keel. Two slender masts without shrouds or jib stays carried two tapering sails, a foresail and mainsail, the foresheet leading aft. The largest of these could carry from ten to fifteen tons of cargo and drew about 6 feet of water when loaded.

Primarily sea boats, and not remarkable for speed when going with a free wind or light weather, they were unusually fast in a deep sea close hauled, especially during heavy gales of wind. If the wind failed, the crew plied the oars, for the double ender was dependent on either wind or man power.

In the olden days of the Island as many as forty to fifty boats set out at dawn for the nearby fishing banks and it was generally the order of the day for several crews to set up a race to see who would get there first. At night when they came

back to harbor, each crew unloaded its catch on the beach and divided the fish into as many piles as there were crew members. Then one of the crew turned his back and was asked, "Whose pile is this?" and the member named claimed it, the last pile falling to the dealer. Very few of the boats were owned outright, but cooperatively by the crew, so this method gave each an equal share in the catch.

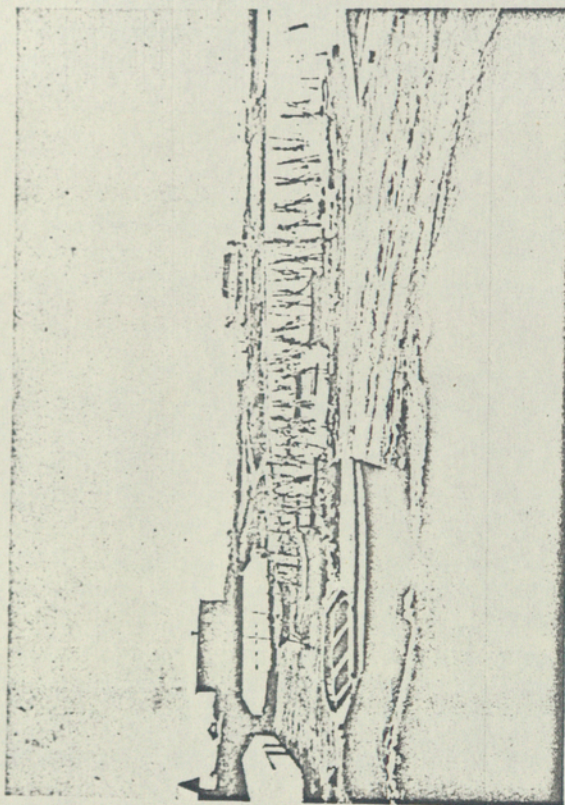
For ballast the dories carried beach stones in ballast-bins along either bowed sides and these stones would be tossed overboard and replaced with the fish caught. If a fish or two remained to proclaim itself, the rich odor did not disturb the sailors to any great degree. It was part of their boat to them. When the fishermen sailed far abroad, the boat could be hauled up on the beach and turned over, serving as an excellent shelter for the night.

Some New Englanders called them "cow horns" and their design in many variations has been used for over two centuries past. The seaworthiness of the "cow horn" is legendary and they would always "go where they looked" in the vernacular of their fishermen owners. The Island adaptation of this model has been attributed to Trustrum Dodge, the Nova Scotia fisherman, who was among the original settlers of Block Island.

These small, light craft were discarded for abler vessels of power when the harbors of the Island were improved to provide a safe haven for larger seacraft. There is a story told that many a dory closed its career by ignominiously serving as henhouses. Sawed in half and up-ended, with a door annexed between the sides, they no doubt sheltered many an Island biddy as loyally as they carried their crew to sea in palmier days.

Boats have been built on the Island as late as 1939 when Capt. Milton Steadman launched his 34 foot craft, the "Alsa," which he built to replace the boat he lost in the 1938 hurricane. Captain Steadman's boat was built of strip-planked white pine with oak timbers, partially decked, and powered

by motor. The "Alsa" is still doing duty as a fishing boat captained by Enoch Steadman of Narragansett, R. I. The second boat to be built on the Island after the hurricane was the "Ruth and Eva," built on the west shore of the Hog Pen by Capt. Freeman Milliken and named for his twin daughters.



Courtesy Block Island Historical Society

Fish Houses Double Ender Pole Harbor

Shell Fisheries

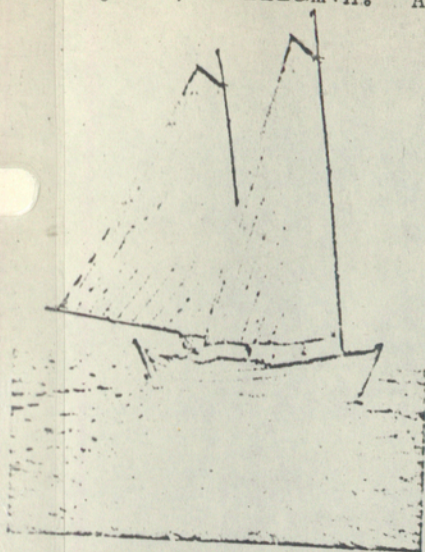
From the earliest time of which tradition speaks, the Great Salt Pond yielded an abundant supply of oysters, clams and scallops. Oyster shells measuring seven inches long have been found in the Indian shell mounds, or "kitchen middens," near and around the Great Salt Pond indicating that it had always been more or less open to tidal flow. From the study of these Indian shell mounds, scientists have found that, in the Indian-occupied days, the pond yielded mussels, quahogs, long clams and boat shells, in addition to the oysters and scallops.

Taylor, William H. "An Authentic Block Islander," *Yachting*, Feb. 1949.

AN AUTHENTIC BLOCK ISLANDER

"Glory Anna II" Proves a Credit to Tradition

By WILLIAM H. TAYLOR



"Glory Anna II" is a true reproduction, in hull and sail plan, of the Block Island "cowhorn" boats of the last century

PAULE LORING, the sailing antiquarian, artist and gadgeteer of Wickford, R.I., has had a season's sailing in his authentic reproduction of a Block Island "cowhorn" boat and is thoroughly pleased with her. She caused something of a stir when she sailed into the Old Harbor at Block Island last summer, and this year she'll take part in some activities of the Marine Historical Society at Mystic, Conn.

Glory Anna II is 22'2" over all, 19'1" waterline, 9' beam, 4'2" draft, and carries two tons of inside field stone ballast and 390 sq. ft. of up-and-down-cut canvas in her two short-gaff sails. Her unstayed masts are cedar trees from Rhode Island's Great Swamp. She is planked and framed with native cedar and oak, lapstraked and copper-riveted in the old manner. Her topsides are painted Block Island green, with red rub rails and a white band. Even her engine is in character, being a 2½-hp. 2-cycle of a type that has changed little in 50 years. She was built at Wickford, R.I., under Mr. Loring's supervision and launched last summer.

"In other words," says Loring, who looks disdainfully down his nose at "improved" and "Fancy Dan" versions of the Block Islanders, "she is the only true Block Island boat afloat that has been built in recent years."

Howard Chapelle, naval architect and authority on old types of sailing craft, has contributed much advice to *Glory's* design and building, so Loring invited him down to Wickford for a sail as soon as the new boat was in commission.

"He took the tiller," Paule writes, "tucked it under his arm and brought out a pipe the size and shape of a saxophone, filled it up and puffed, looked, puffed, looked and said—you guessed it—nothing. A day later we threw a clambake and when Chap was filled up with food and again puffing the saxophone I hinted I would be glad to know what he thought of the boat. I know he enjoyed the clambake. He said so."

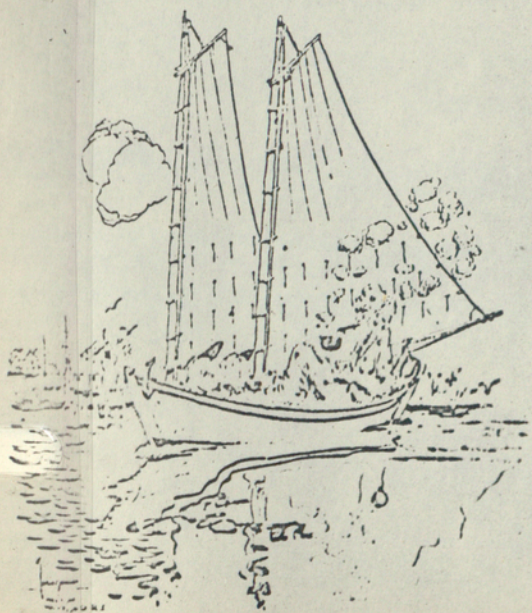
"A week or two later we got a letter from Mrs. Chapelle who said not to be surprised if Chap built a Block Island boat for himself, as he liked *Glory Anna* so much."

Subsequently a long letter from Chapelle affirmed this approbation, ending "Now that I've seen Paule's cowhorn I'd sure like to chisel him out of her." Some of his more detailed comments follow.

Subsequently, Paule sailed the *Glory* over to Block Island where she was critically inspected by the veterans who, true to form, kept their opinions to themselves. This, from a Block Islander, is tantamount to a *summa cum laude*. Perhaps the tip-off is the reaction of Walter Eddy, an old-timer who lives "over south" on the island and hadn't heard about *Glory Anna II* being built. Seems, according to the way Paule heard the story, Eddy looked out to sea one day and spotted the *Glory* standing in. He blinked, ran into the house for his binoculars, and took another long look. Then he grabbed the telephone and started passing the word to some of his cronies. "Honest to Codfish," he is reported to have broadcast, "there's a Block Island boat off Southeast Light. I wonder what old-timer is coming home."

The Island tradition is that when the old double-enders were fishing they "never lost a man or a boat." One boat was blown off in a gale and never heard from, but the die-hards explained that her crew had probably decided to leave the island anyhow, and sailed to the mainland. Maybe Eddy thought that boat was coming home!

(Continued on page 84)



We waited hopefully for the ultimate authority to hand down his opinion (left). Walter Eddy (right) thought one of the old-timers was coming home when he sighted "*Glory Anna II*"



AN AUTHENTIC BLOCK ISLANDER

(Continued from page 56)

But to return to Howard Chapelle's comments on *Glory Anna II*, and on the subject of old type boats in general, what follows is a digest of his letter which finally relieved Paule's suspense.

"It is not easy to improve a type like the Block Islander, for the model and rig were the results of evolution by generations of practical and intelligent sailors, fishermen and builders. Changes invariably destroy some of the advantages of the original, and a 'modern design' is no assurance of superiority.

"Many men are finding the modern pleasure boat burdensome in cost, but have felt that the conventional yacht was all that was available. A characteristic of old types of small fishing and commercial sailing craft was low cost, partly due to model and rig, partly to simplification of arrangement and partly to their structure. There is no point in reverting to such a type if pride of possession is to be based on fancy gear and beautiful and everlasting construction. Low costs can be most readily obtained by keeping cabin accommodations to the minimum that experience dictates.

"It is the fashion to look on anything but the modern high, narrow, jib-headed mainsail and overlapping headsails as inefficient. Such a rig is superior to windward where artificial racing rule limitations exist. Cruisers and day sailers do far less windward work than on other points of sailing and their handling of light sails is kept to a minimum hence, when rigged in the modern fashion, they are under-cannased. To increase their power, mast height must be increased, which creates masting and rigging problems. Considering costs and actual use, many boats could better be rigged in one of the old styles.

"Another misconception is that excessively light masts with complicated systems of shrouds and stays will insure speed and safety. The effect of windage on such complicated rigging is too little appreciated, and modern rigging insures safety only so long as the maintenance is carefully attended to. Also, the set of sails often is spoiled by improper adjustment of rigging.

"Some modern yachtsmen seem to think that there are only three good rigs, sloop, ketch and yawl, a fable that can be accounted for only by lack of experience with other rigs.

"As to hull, we find many thinking that overhangs are necessary in a seagoing cruiser, that outside ballast is 'safest,' that shoal craft are inherently unseaworthy, that a deep, narrow hull is best suited for deep water, that a short keel giving sensitive steering is desirable in offshore cruisers, and similar notions which the history of design has shown to be fallacious.

"The Block Islander was diametrically opposed to these concepts. She was a shoal, keel hull with inside ballast, two-masted without any standing rigging and with heavy masts and a long sail base. She was undecked for most of her length, had no overhangs, though her ends were raking, and was clench built and lightly constructed, more like a whaleboat than a large sailing boat.

"*Glory Anna II* is an unimproved 'cowhorn,' except for the small auxiliary engine. One is impressed by the room in her, for the Block Islander's beam and big cockpit give spaciousness unobtainable in any but a Cape Cod cat of her length. She was built exactly in the Block Island manner, of good, but not the finest, materials.

"I sailed her under the most unfavorable conditions, in light airs and with the sails not yet stretched, yet she gave a favorable impression. She was steady on her helm, pointed well and fetched where she pointed, moved in the lightest airs and was very responsive. I would have no doubt of her ability in a breeze. I noticed that she could be heeled in light airs, and when heeled sailed better. The fishermen had to have a boat that could work in both light airs and a breeze and occasionally be rowed in a calm. A reef can easily be tucked in, in a strong breeze, with this rig.

"She is not a 'spit-and-polish' yacht, but a professional sailor's boat. For the man who can't give all his time to his boat, who can't hire a professional caretaker, and who wants a real boat capable of long trips considering her size, this is it."

The Rudder

Edited by THOMAS FLEMING DAY

Vol. XXVII

APRIL, 1912

No. 4

ROARING BESSIE

Winfield M. Thompson

Photos by James W. Carret and
Chas. J. A. Wilson, Boston Y. C.



COURAGE must be his who would essay the unusual. Man is a conventional animal. He wears a hat of a given shape and color because a majority of the men he knows wear similar hats. He builds a boat on certain lines because the designer or builder tells him "that is the way they are building them now." To such a degree has conventionality and a slavish following of fashion possessed modern yachtsmen that our most expensive yachts, in their respective classes, are as alike as peas. Only the trained eye can distinguish one boat from another in an up-to-date racing class, and then the feat is usually performed by the aid of some distinguishing mark of an ulterior nature, such as the color of a mainsail or of a cabin top. Even the owner of such a boat must have some mark by which to distinguish his property from his neighbor's, on the same principle as the man who lives in a city block and tells his own house only by the shape of the mud-scraper on the stoop. Indeed, the conventional yachtsman is in much the same position as the youth who married a twin, who could only be distinguished from her sister by a mole on her person.

Turning from the conventional, which is always colorless, we are refreshed by the man who knows what he wants and has the courage and ability to get it, without regard to fashion. Such a man is the owner of the boat whose name appears at the head of this article. Even in the selection of a name for his ship he turned from the smooth and polite forms of society. What "Roaring Bessie" may mean to the next man he cared not; to him it was like the name of some bouncing young dame out of an old chantie—a sailor's sweetheart, a girl of the beach and the port; a fisher-wench, maybe, on some Breton sands; at any rate, a breezy, companionable, hard-working, honest creature of sea and shore

tales. Why she should be termed "roaring" may be known only to the originator of the name. Possibly a droll humor prompted him to register his views of the conventional yacht, and conventional yachting names, in that way. Yet the ancient dramatists bear him out in a legitimate use of the word, for they often speak of "roaring gales," whose gay and frolicsome manners won them this title, while "to roar along" in olden time meant to go briskly. This latter sense was not overlooked by the owner of Roaring Bessie, and a brisk-stepping lass his ship proved to be.

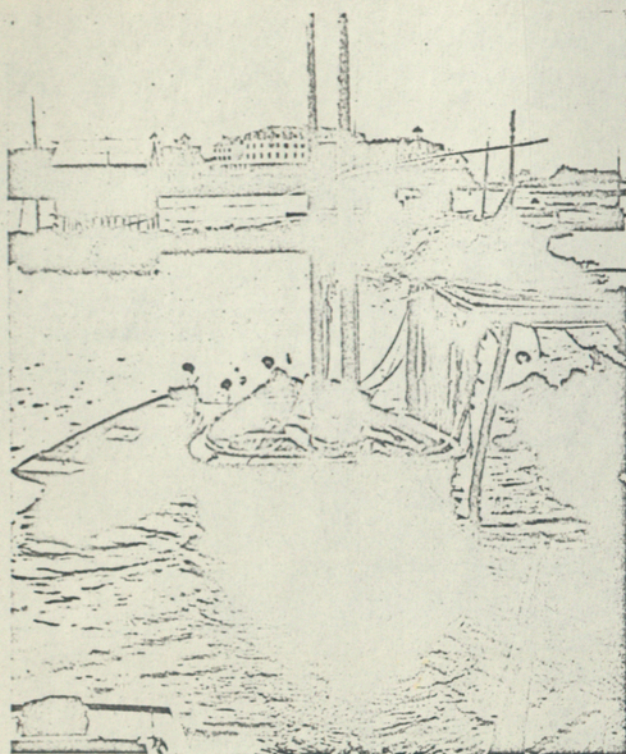
Roaring Bessie roared, and made merry, among the yachts of the New England coast in the season of 1911, like the sailor's sweetheart she was, and in every marine picture of which she formed a part she looked like a section of an old Dutch painting. William Vandervelde, marine painter to Charles II, and his son, both painted such craft. In a museum at Rotterdam is a painting by an unknown artist, dating from about 1642, of a rig identical to that carried by Roaring Bessie, with the short gaffs, lug-foresail and mainsail not laced to the boom, all in like aspect and proportion. It is not unreasonable to say, therefore, that Roaring Bessie, with her rig three centuries old at least—for it was old when painted in 1642—was the most striking American yacht of 1911.

Her owner's fancy having led him to paint her pea-green, she was striking for another reason. As soon as she rose her stubby gaffs above the horizon she was notable, and when she sailed, a green streak, across the nearer view, no man could escape her presentment. Therefore, wherever she appeared, the stranger asked: "What kind of boat is that, and who owns her?"

The answer was usually promptly forthcoming: she was a Block Island boat, the only one of her kind, and her owner was Martin C. Erismann, a naval architect, who was a member of the Corinthian Y. C. of Marblehead, and of the Boston Y. C. (Mr. Erismann is now a resident of Seattle, Wash.)

Nine persons in ten, after critical observation of Roaring Bessie, might be depended on to say, "Mr. Erismann is welcome to her," or words of like import. The tenth man might remark that Mr. Erismann was a man of original tastes, while all agreed that he had courage.

It was the tenth man only who approximated an understanding of Mr. Erismann's purpose in building



Lena M. Last of Her Kind at Block Island

Roaring Bessie—for the boat was in her first season, though of ancient rig and model. Mr. Erismann is a student of the origin in everything relating to present forms and customs in yacht-building. Indeed, I doubt if any other man has given more thought than he to what may be called the original documents in American boat-building; that is, the lines from which our boats of to-day were developed. He has studied all that has been written on the subject; but treating written knowledge merely as second-hand, he has turned to the sources of such knowledge, the early boats themselves. To do this he was obliged to hunt up ancient boats on various parts of the American coast, and also in Europe. He was fortunate to have, as an aid in this work, affiliations with both hemispheres, for though an American—he was born in New Jersey, being descended on the maternal side from the old Coryell family, of Coryells Ferry, now Lambertville—his father is a native of Geneva, Switzerland, and there Mr. Erismann received his early education. First-hand knowledge of European boats merely whetted his appetite for the study of American types, and their relation to European originals. After finishing his naval-architecture course at Glasgow, therefore, now more than a dozen years ago, Mr. Erismann, settling in his native America, began his study of old American boats.

While working for a shipbuilding concern in Maryland he had opportunity to study the ancient sloops of the Chesapeake, and he bought one of the oldest he could find. The shell-back he hired to assist him in making this craft fit for service (of a somewhat limited character) was seen to tap his forehead significantly when his employer's back was turned, and whenever they sailed forth instinctively he measured with his eye the distance to shore on every tack.

Going to New England, Mr. Erismann began the study of several types of New England boat of which he had read, but which he had never seen before.

Among these he found the pinkie the most interesting, both on account of its importance in American maritime history and its many good qualities from a technical point of view. Not many pinkies survive, but Mr. Erismann found one, in a little harbor on the New Hampshire coast, and through the courtesy of its owner, a wealthy Bostonian, was enabled to take off its lines. It was the first time, probably, that the lines of one of these craft built in America—the type is as old as the ships of Columbus—was ever transferred from the actual hull to paper, on the coast of New England at any rate, and the American pinkie no longer exists anywhere else.

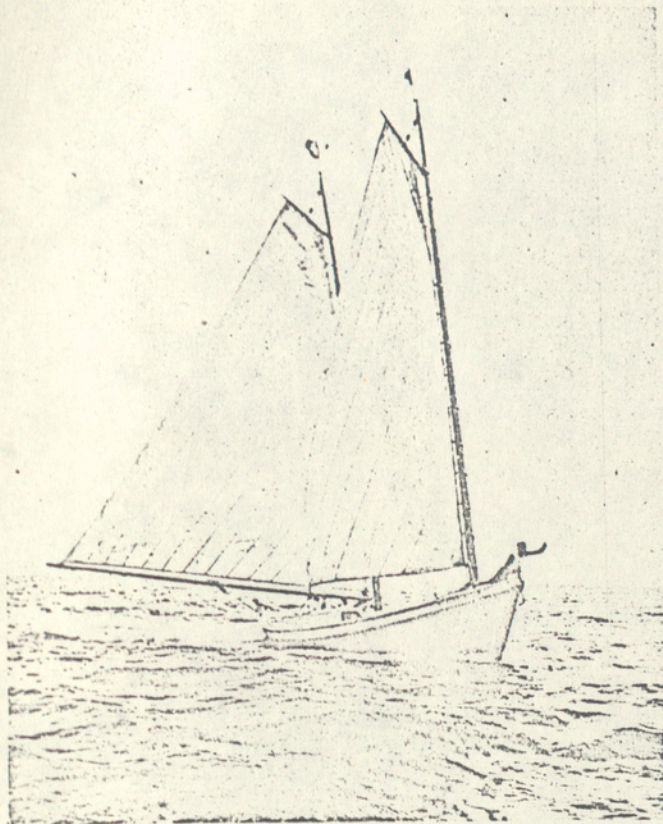
It was in the course of his study of the pinkie that Mr. Erismann found an excellent example of the Isles of Shoals fishing boat—they were of the double-ender type—and the lines of this he also transferred to paper. This boat he found lying under a hotel piazza on one of the Isles of Shoals. The type has since become practically extinct, as not a single boat of the kind was afloat at "The Shoals" in 1911.

Continuing to devote his time and means to his study of ancient craft—for the benefit of future generations of naval architects, be it said, since he could hope for no present gain from such pursuits—Mr. Erismann turned his attention to Block Island boats, the most celebrated type of working boat in America in the last century, without question. When Mr. Erismann first began to study the type there were several of the boats afloat at Block Island. (A group of them are shown in a photograph appearing in *THE RUDDER* for March, 1912, in an article on Block Island.)

The yachting world had heard something of them a quarter century before, through an article prepared by John Hyslop—for many years measurer for the New York Y. C.—which was printed in the *Field* (London),



Owner of Roaring Bessie (on a Seattle Power Boat)



A Viking Pose, Roaring Bessie

of December 15, 1883, together with the lines of one of the island boats, Island Belle. As the main points of the type cannot be better presented than through the words of this trained observer, who studied the boats when they were the chief means of transportation for the numerous inhabitants of a sea-girt island, I give the following extracts from his article:

"About sixty of these boats are at present (1883) owned on the island. They vary in length from 20 to 40 feet. The boats are all lap-strake $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch cedar plank on 2-inch bent oak frames spaced 13 inches on centers, with bent floor put in between and extending halfway up the sides. They are all keel boats. (At that time also they were chiefly open boats, with a small decked space between the second and third thwarts, for shelter and stowage.) The masts are all made very small at the head, and with a straight taper, those of the Island Belle measuring 9 inches diameter at the foot and about 3 inches at the head. They are made of spruce, and without shrouds or stays of any kind.

The stem and stern-post rake, the mainsail has a loose foot, the foresail is without a boom, the main-sheet has a traveler across the stern. The sails are liberally supplied with reefs, namely, five rows of points in the foresail and four in the mainsail; but the running gear is reduced to a minimum—one halyard for each sail.

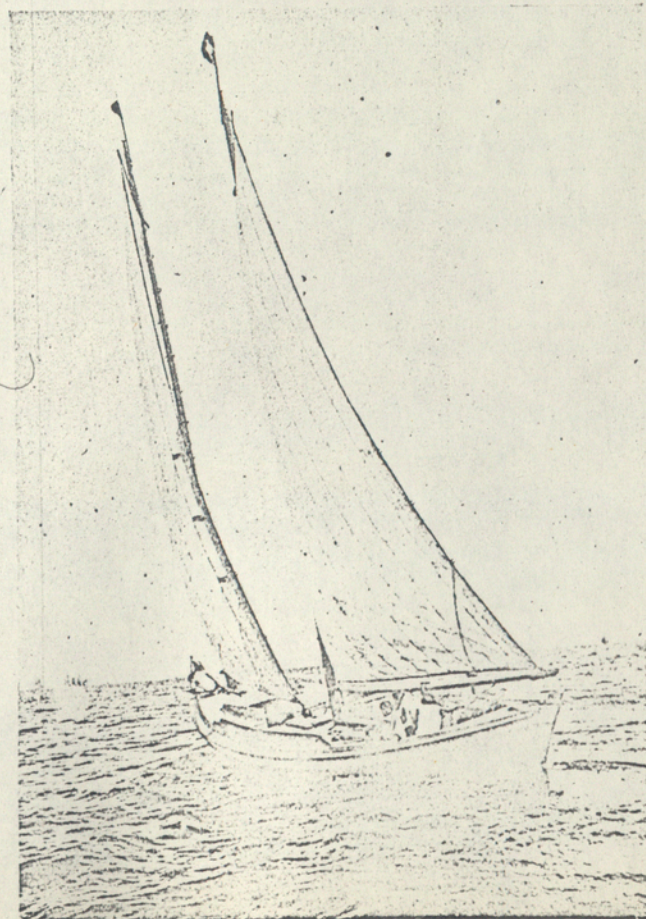
"I have not been able to hear of a single instance of one of these boats being blown off. I have, however, learned of cases where a five-reefed foresail had been more than could be carried, and they have got into harbor under a mere scrap of canvas. I am told that they can work to windward under foresail alone, or under part of it, and that, when caught in a bad blow on the fishing grounds, 10 or 15 miles off port, they will get

under sail and make their way into harbor and leave schooners (much larger vessels) lying to and unable to follow."

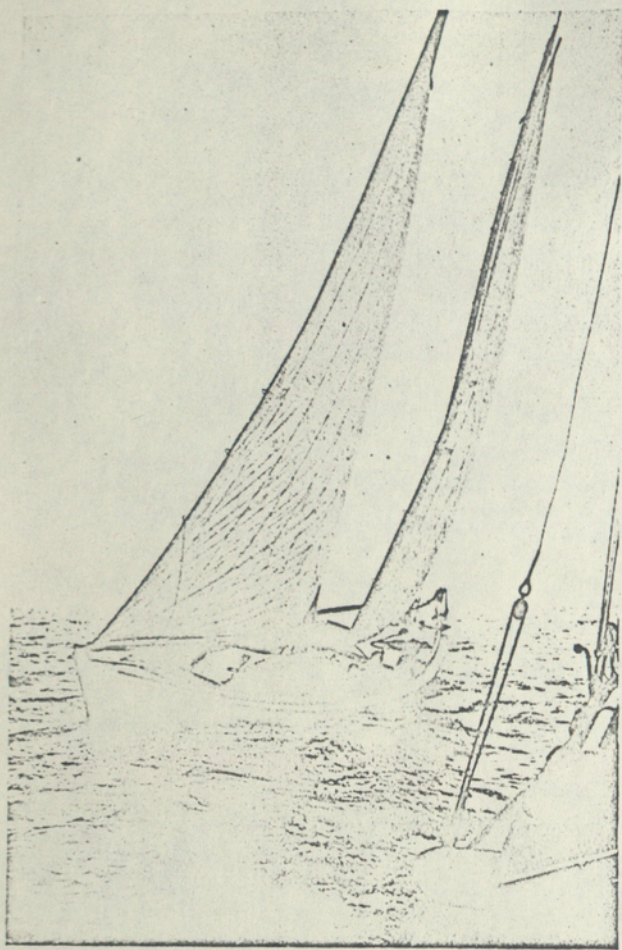
Mr. Hyslop pointed out that only one of these boats had been lost in a century, and that foundered after striking a rock off Point Judith. The Island Belle was used for transporting the mails to and from Newport, 20 miles away.

"It rarely happened that any delay was made on account of weather," wrote Mr. Hyslop, "though it often occurred that the crews had a rough time on the passage, and appeared at Newport with their sou'westers and oil clothes thickly covered with frozen spray. The boats sometimes carried to and from the mainland cargoes for which their small size would appear to make them little adapted, such as several teams of oxen and a lot of window sashes at the same time."

Mr. Hyslop went out in the Island Belle in a strong breeze, and noted that the boat was handled easily by a man and a boy, though she was 38 feet 8 inches long, and 13 feet 8 inches breadth of beam. He noted specially the use of portable "weather-boards" fixed to the rails by means of pins, to keep out spray to windward or wash to leeward, the boats being rather low-sided. He also noted the characteristic pin-rack, for securing the tiller. "With sheets flat aft," he wrote, "a full press of canvas, and the craft jumping to windward in a very lively fashion (she had a very buoyant and springy motion), the owner would stick a pin into the midships hole of the pin-rack, put the tiller over the weather side of it, go into the waist, and with the boy pick up a



Steering Herself



Closehauled

weather-board, adjust it to the gunwale quite deliberately, and resume his steering when he was ready. When he wanted to go about he would put the helm down, jam it behind the gunwale and go off and help the boy to haul the foresheet. The main-sheet of course would travel over without attention. At about this time I saw near us a handsome fishing schooner, many times our tonnage, under shortened canvas and diving bows under at every plunge, while not even spray was coming aboard us, and the weather-boards were useful only in keeping out the wash to leeward. There was some very nimble dancing going on, however."

With such laudation before him of a type of boat that was historic for its notable services, and with the knowledge that the type was passing, and the last examples of it would disappear unless he did something to preserve them, Mr. Erismann visited Block Island, with the intention of buying one of the boats. The one he believed best adapted to his purpose, because of its age, unfortunately sank at its moorings about this time, and was not raised. He made no purchase then, and other matters intervening to prevent it, he did not again visit the island until 1910, after a lapse of some years. He found that Time's tooth had been gnawing deeply into the little fleet of island boats, and that but one remained afloat. The present writer had been at the island a few weeks before, and had seen this boat, the Lena M—at least a half-century old—lying in the basin of the Old Harbor, with a litter of discarded fishing gear, old spars, boxes and odds and ends on her broad deck, and had photographed her, with an eye to pre-

serving, by this means at least, the lineaments of the last of a noble line of craft.

To me the origin of the boats in the island—the means of their adaptation from Dutch originals—was an interesting subject of speculation, but nothing that I had read, in early island annals or elsewhere, threw much light on the subject. The early settlers of the island were English, from the Rhode Island mainland. There is a tradition in the island that an early wreck cast a number of Dutch immigrants on its shores, and there may be enough substance in this to account for the introduction of a purely Dutch rig among the islanders.

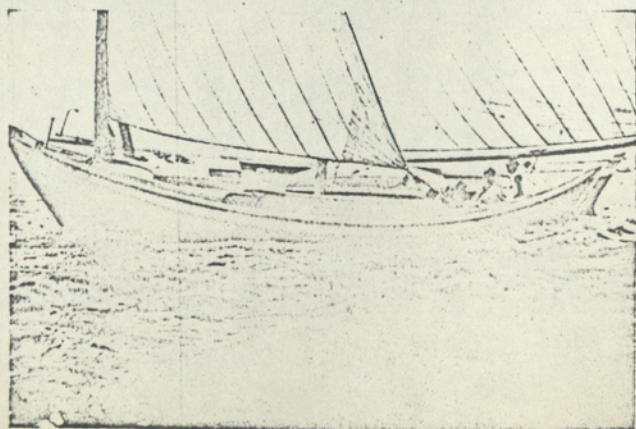
Not only the rig, but the dimensions of the Lena M were like those of early Dutch boats. Her length was about 32 feet, and her breadth about 12 feet. Like all of her kind, she was a "double-enders." As the last of her kind this boat represented such changes as had been made by the islanders in the arrangements of the boats as a result of local experience. The original boats were open, or nearly so. Lena M was decked, with the exception of the cockpit. There was a "cuddy" forward with rather low headroom, and a galley under the deck aft of it.

I examined Lena M critically, for I never expected to see her like again, not having information, at that time, that Mr. Erismann proposed to perpetuate the type by buying this boat, preserving her lines through his technical skill, and building a replica of her, for another half-century's preservation, with Fate's consent.

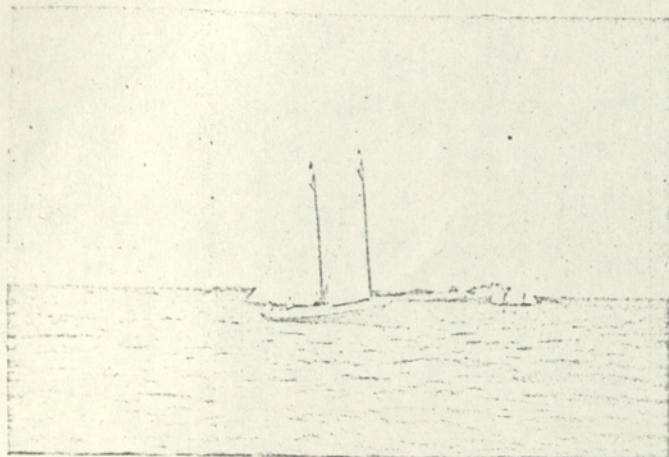
The enthusiasm of an antiquarian, a collector, a dreamer of old dreams, drew Mr. Erismann to the island, to secure that last boat. Cheerfully he paid the owner's price for the Lena M, hired a sailorman, fitted out the venerable craft, and sailed away Eastward. Here again he displayed courage, for the old hull was no longer sound, and you could feel the deck rise and fall abreast the mainmast, as she rose and fell to the seas.

The voyage of the Lena M, being the last made by an original Block Island boat, is worthy of sentimental regard at least, and as recorded in the rough notes of the boat's log, set down by Mr. Erismann, its details cannot fail to interest the yachtsman, whatever his home waters. I present the log without elaboration:

Block Island, R. I., August 13, 1910.—At 2:30 a. m. cast off lines; was towed out near the bell buoy by a fisherman; made all sail in a light Southwesterly wind. Point Judith abeam at 9:30. Wind freshened between Point Judith and Narragansett Pier. Came into Newport with the tide. U.S.S. Georgia passed us abreast



View Showing Deck Arrangement



Roaring Bessie Off Marblehead

of Brentons Lightship going in. Opposite Brentons Cove rounded up and took in mainsail, then filled away under foresail. Boat handled well, considering she is foul. Tied up to the wood dockyard. Made enquiries for the boatyard. Williams & Manchester undertook to haul me out for \$5. Boat was towed around and soon out of water. Long grass on keel. I was very well satisfied with my boat when I saw her out. We scrubbed with fresh water at once, and painted. I had a shelf made in the cuddy for my clothes. The separate galley is a godsend, comfortable and handy and superior to messing up the cabin at each meal. Went into the town to get stores. Stores arrived late. I curled up in the foresail and slept till they came.

Sunday, 14th.—Fine day; still on the slip; foggy at times, wind S.W. We are going off at daylight to-morrow. Paid my bill, \$11, for railway, paint and work.

Monday, 15th.—Let off railway at 3 a. m. Underway at 4:30, in very light Westerly. Fog came in 7:30; off Brentons Reef buoy, wind very light. Seaconnet abeam 10:45, weather now clear, wind stronger from South. Headed up for Westport to get an old fishing boat I bought there last year. At noon took in mainsail and jogged about waiting for Captain Gifford to appear with boat. Not seeing him, proceeded in. Tied up in the slip. Had numerous visitors, all anxious to see the boat. After dinner tried to get small boat on deck, in vain; as she is so heavy to tow decided to make a dicker to send her to Fairhaven by boat and by train to Boston. Bought another boat of the same type for \$10. Transportation to Fairhaven \$10 for one, and \$12 for two.

Tuesday, 16th.—Woke at 5, to find water running in; deck leaking; N.E. wind; had rained all night. Canvassed fore deck and made a good job before 12. This afternoon wind N.E.; drizzling from time to time.

Wednesday, 17th.—Rose at 6:30; wind still N.E. to E. but clear. Have all my clothes on deck drying. Went up to the store to see about stores and ice. Westport is a lovely place—peace reigns. All the men are gathered on the steps of the old store, in the sun, gossiping. Walked to the beach; straightened the galley; supper at 6. Turned in at 10. Clear, still blowing N.E.

Thursday, 18th.—Rose at 5:30, towed out at 7. Air moderate N., cloudy. Anchored S.W. corner Quicks Hole 12:45 waiting for tide as the wind is very light; weighed anchor at 2 and started through the Hole. West Chop at 5:10. Proceeded up harbor to Steamboat pier and tied up. Received a new main-sheet, and made new strops for foresheets.

Friday, 19th.—Got up at 3:30, and away at 5. Wind South, moderate, cloudy. Cross Rip abeam at 7:40 a. m. A number of schooners are going Eastward and we are holding on nicely with them. Handkerchief abeam 9:55, Pollock Rip at 12, abeam. Pollock Rip shoal 1:40. Wind fell, at 2:30 shifted to the Northward.

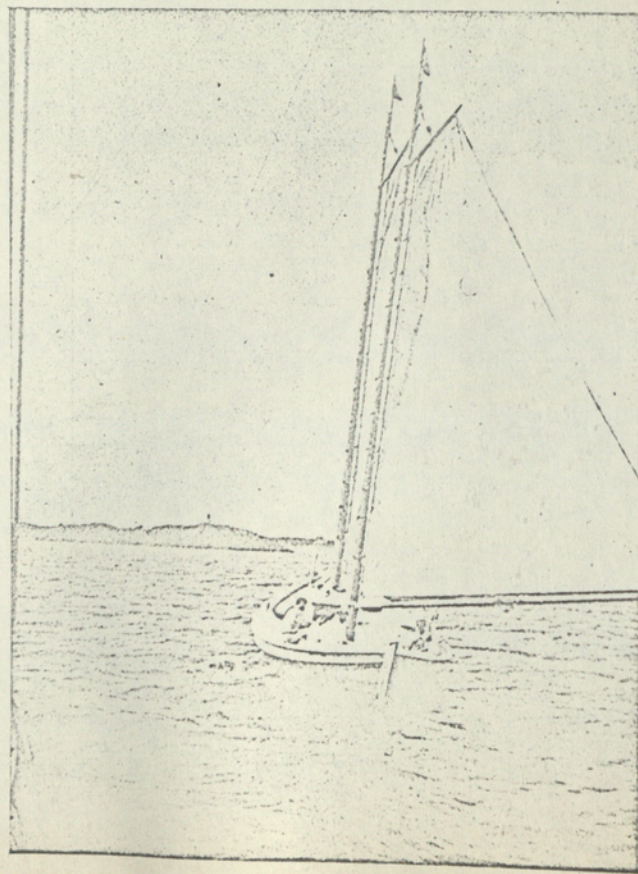
Saturday, 20th.—Highland Light abeam at 2 a. m. Wind light and from Northward; beat on and off till about 4 a. m., wind then strong and from N.E. Race Point abeam about 5 o'clock, laid course for Marblehead, N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. Wind and sea increasing, changed course for Boston. Took two reefs in mainsail 6 o'clock, one reef in foresail 6:30; traveling well in spite of steep sea. Shook out our reefs at Boston Light 10:30. Hingham 11:45. Inquirers believed the boat to be from the Chesapeake.

Sunday, 21st.—Got underway at 10:30 in a light air, outside stronger from E. by S. Laid course for Marblehead through Black Rock Channel; Boston Light abeam 11:45. Marblehead Rock abeam at 1:55. Anchored in Marblehead Harbor. At 3 o'clock set sail with S.W. breeze. Came through Black Rock Channel. It is unlighted. Had, however, a good breeze and fair tide through Hull Gut. Picked up mooring at 8:30.

Monday, August 22d.—Cleared out the boat of all cruising duffle and paid man off and started him home for Block Island.

After a month or more of sailing in Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay—attracting much attention, for no boat of that sort had ever been seen there before, at least by the generation that beheld this one—the venerable *Lena M* was laid up for the season.

Mr. Erismann planned to have her overhauled before another season, and various repairs made. Preparation



Off for a Cruise

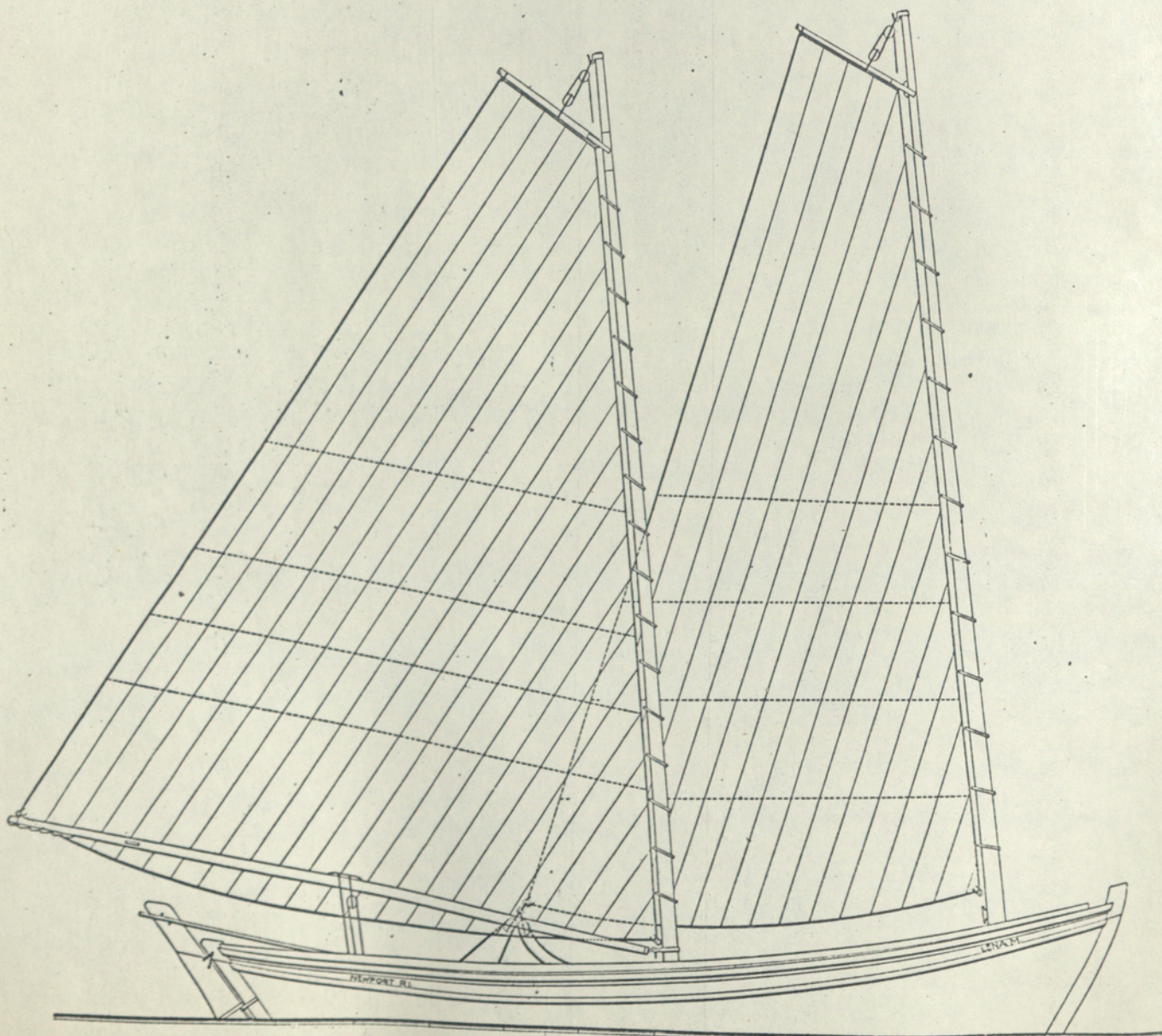
for this was made, at a Quincy yacht yard, by pulling out the ceiling in what had been the old fish-compartments. Alas for the man who starts to rip out the interior of a very old boat! He finds more than he had bargained for. The owner of *Lena M* discovered a condition of affairs that would have sadly upset his confidence had he known of them before that trip around Cape Cod. The boat's timbers were so "dozy" in places that he could pick out sections of them with his fingers. He began picking, until it seemed that he could pick out all the vitals of the boat. Then he quit long enough to get a figure for having her framed out anew, and newly ceiled, with a new deck and a few other things new. When he received the builder's estimate he backed out of the shop. It was enough to have covered the cost of the boat in the days when she was built, and much to spare.

Having the means of pursuing his experiments with boats as he wished, Mr. Erismann decided to reproduce *Lena M*. He took off her lines with his usual precision. These lines, here reproduced, will serve for those of *Lena M*'s successor, *Roaring Bessie*, since the new boat

was built to them strictly, the only changes made being in construction. The lapstreak plank was discarded in favor of a smooth skin, and the frames were made a little heavier. The work was done by Lawley, and was the equal in every respect of a first-class yacht job. Although the old builders at Block Island used to "warrant every nail," and get out every piece of oak in a boat's frame in the woods themselves, they could have done no better work than that in *Roaring Bessie*.

In rig and deck details *Roaring Bessie* was an exact copy of *Lena M*. Mr. Erismann's professional exactness went so far as to reproduce the flat forward deck, which gave scant headroom in the cabin. He could have had more headroom easily by raising the deck, but said: "That is not the way it is in the original. This is a historical copy. I will not change it." So he had but 4 feet headroom in his "cuddy," and but 3 feet in the galley, aft of it, under the main deck.

There was, however, a liberal hatch in the deck, and the cook, sitting on a stool and tending the fish chowder on the galley *Shipmate*, could view the scenery at the same time. There was a small ice-box, a fuel locker and



Sail Plan of Block Island Boat *Lena M*

bins for provisions in this galley, and in the "cuddy" a pipe berth and a transom, the whole making, barring the want of headroom in the galley, a comfortable cruising outfit.

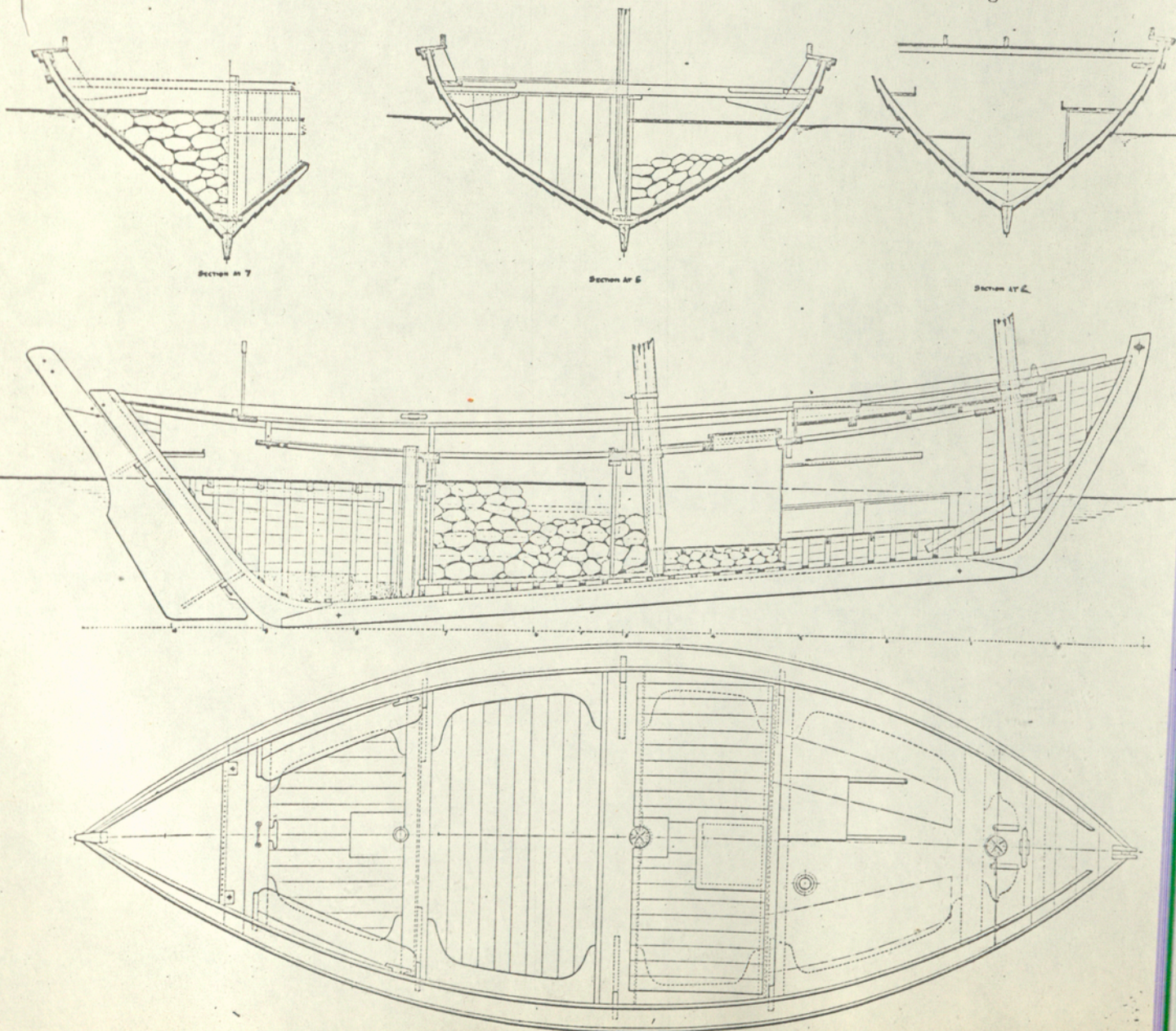
The large compartment between the galley and the mainmast was almost filled with field stones for ballast. Field stones had been used by the owners of the original boats, who believed they made their boats "lively" in a sea. Therefore Mr. Erismann used them. He found, however, when the boat was afloat, that he could not get stones enough in to bring her down to her waterline, so long as she was new. He added, therefore, a ton of lead, which was stowed over the keel. This made the boat stiffer than before, for with the stones alone she showed a tendency to be tender in a breeze.

It is a mistake to suppose these boats are great sail carriers. They have a short rig, and an ordinary yacht can lug canvas longer than they in a blow, and get away with it; but the Block Island boats will do better under short canvas than a yacht. Like all natural types, the result of centuries of development, they respond quickly

to intelligent treatment as to canvas. If reefed at the right time they will take you easily and dry through a gale. If not reefed they will lie down and wallow along slowly.

On such a boat, with everything inboard, there is no excuse for not reefing at the right time. The broad deck makes a firm and safe foothold, in pleasant contrast to the coach-roof of a yacht cabin-trunk. The foresail is reefed merely by tying the points under the foot of the sail, and shifting the mainsheet block sister-block from the lower cringle to one about 6 inches above the row of reef-points that have been tied in. The mainsail being loose-footed, reefing it, and pulling it out on the boom is the simplest sort of process. As for hoisting away after reefing, it is very easy, as the gaffs are so short you could hide them in the legs of your oilpants.

From observation of Roaring Bessie I have decided that a better sea-boat cannot be built. If I were going on a deep-water voyage in a small yacht I would select Roaring Bessie without thinking of any other type. Her motion in a short sea is like a rocking chair. She never



Construction and Arrangement Plans of Block Island Boat Lena M

THE RUDDER

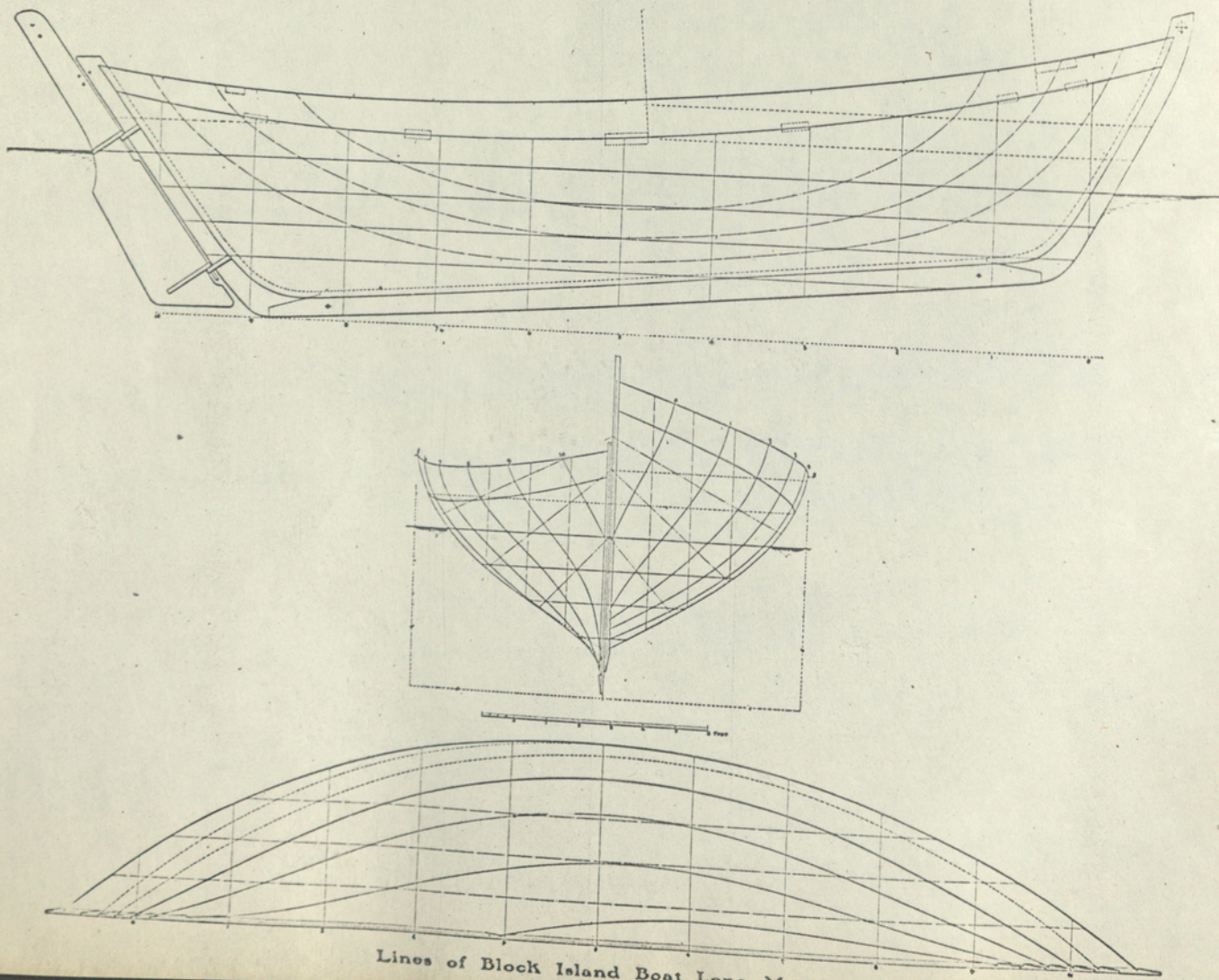
smashes into a head sea, but rides it like a duck, and when on the wind she is always inching to windward, no matter how hard it blows. Her sails are so easily reefed that one man can handle her without undue labor, while two is an ideal crew. She steers perfectly and is one of the few boats I have seen that will steer herself indefinitely. I have no doubt that place her in steady trade winds and she would repeat the performance of continuous self-steering for days attributed by the late Captain Slocum to the yawl *Spray*, on his single-handed voyage around the world.

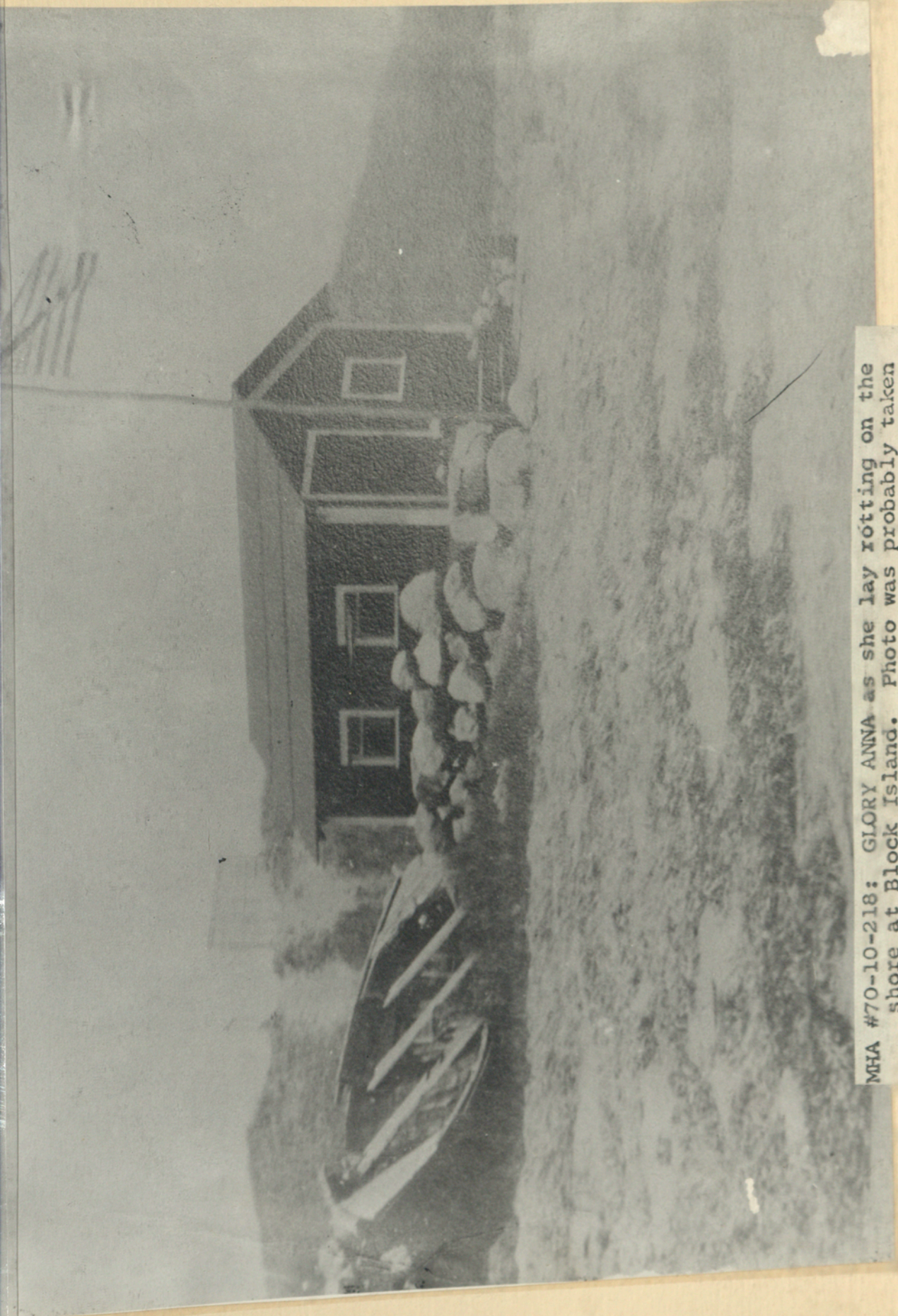
In order to make a test of the boat on this point, I took her out of Marblehead one rough morning in September, under single reefs. The wind was Northeast, and an East-going tide made a strong sea. On leaving the harbor I put the boat as close to the wind as she would lie, set the tiller between two pins on the pin-rack, and coned the course by compass. She passed through some hard puffs, and through a soft spot caused by the lee of an island, without veering a quarter point either way from her course. When well outside, where the wind settled down to a strong, steady blow, she bowled along beautifully, climbing the short, hard seas and going down into their trough without varying her course more than 3 degrees either way. We kept her on one tack thus for 20 minutes, with the same result, be-

fore coming about for the land. On the run in, with the wind abeam, it was more difficult to get the exact trim on the sails to help her to hold her course, but by taking in a few inches on the foresail, and a little on the main, we got her balanced nicely, and she repeated her performance. In the smooth water of Salem Bay she did the same thing. This satisfied me that by reason of her perfectly proportioned hull and rig, *Roaring Bessie* would sail herself for hours as easily and straight as the *Spray* ever did.

It is not my purpose to follow here the season spent by Mr. Erismann sailing in his unique yacht. He took her to the Maine coast—where they called her a pinkie—and back to Boston, and found her an ideal cruiser. She was not fast, compared with modern boats having outside ballast; but in the give and take of an ocean passage I would back her against the best of her length. Nor was she without speed, either, under some conditions, for on her last run of the season, in October, from Marblehead to Boston, in a strong Nor'wester—a beam wind—she logged 7.36 nautical miles in an hour.

A striking picture of *Roaring Bessie* under sail, with Mr. Erismann near the lee rail, formed the frontispiece of *THE RUDDER* for November, 1911. The lines herewith are those of *Lena M*, from which *Roaring Bessie* was built.

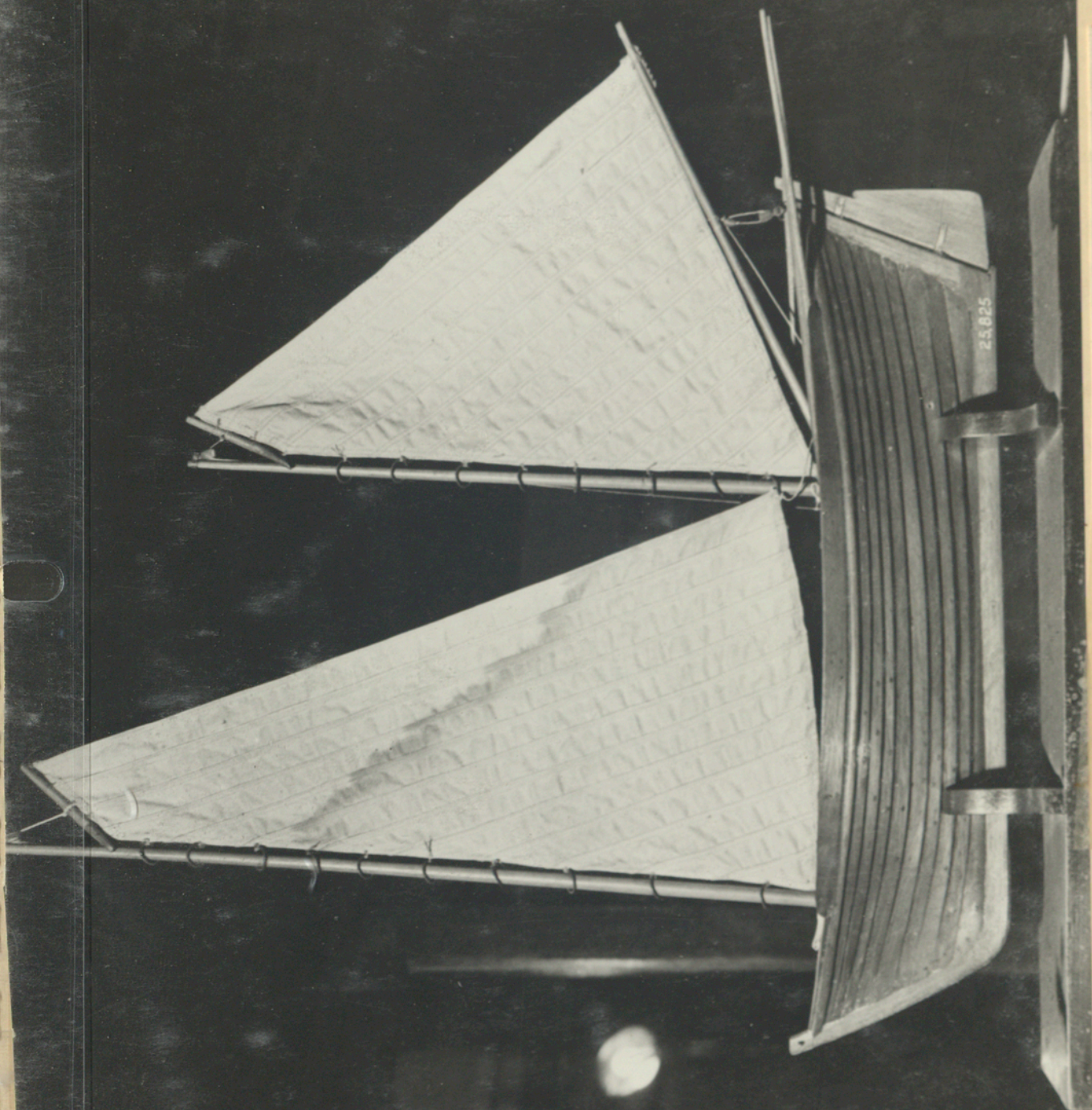




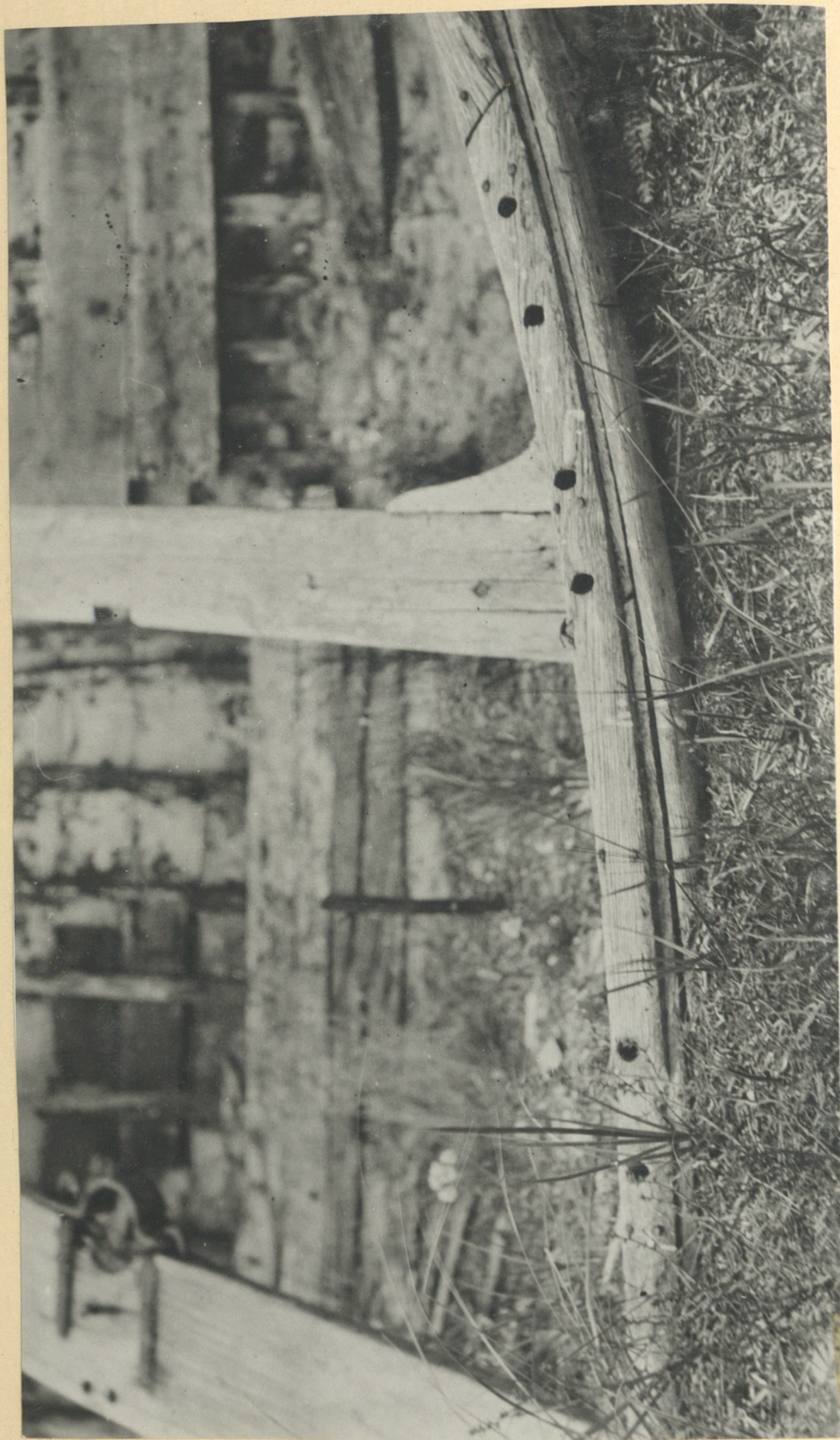
MHA #70-10-218: GLORY ANNA as she lay rotting on the shore at Block Island. Photo was probably taken in the early 1930's. Camp now (1972) owned by Mr. George P.P. Bonnell and called "Huddy Mansion" after its original builder/owner. Original loaned by Mrs. Paule Loring.



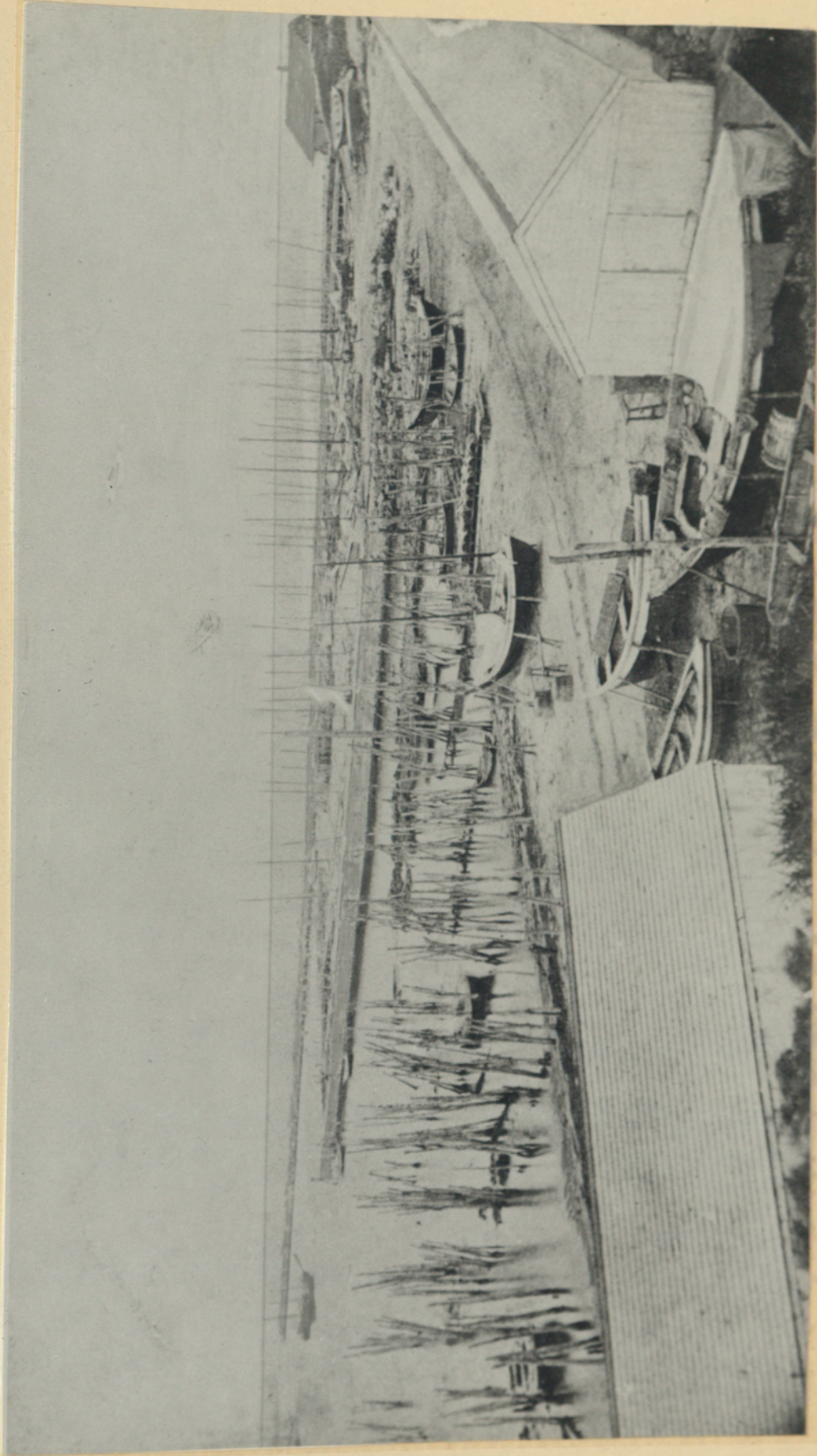
MHA #70-10-232: Model of cowhorn - unidentified. From collection of Mrs. Paule Loring.



MHA #70-10-233: Model of small "cowhorn" of about 1875
owned by Smithsonian and described in Chapelle's
Watercraft Collection.



MHA. #70-10-240: Close-up of GLORY ANNA at Block Island as she lay rotting on the shore. Photo probably taken in early 1930's (same time as #70-10-218).

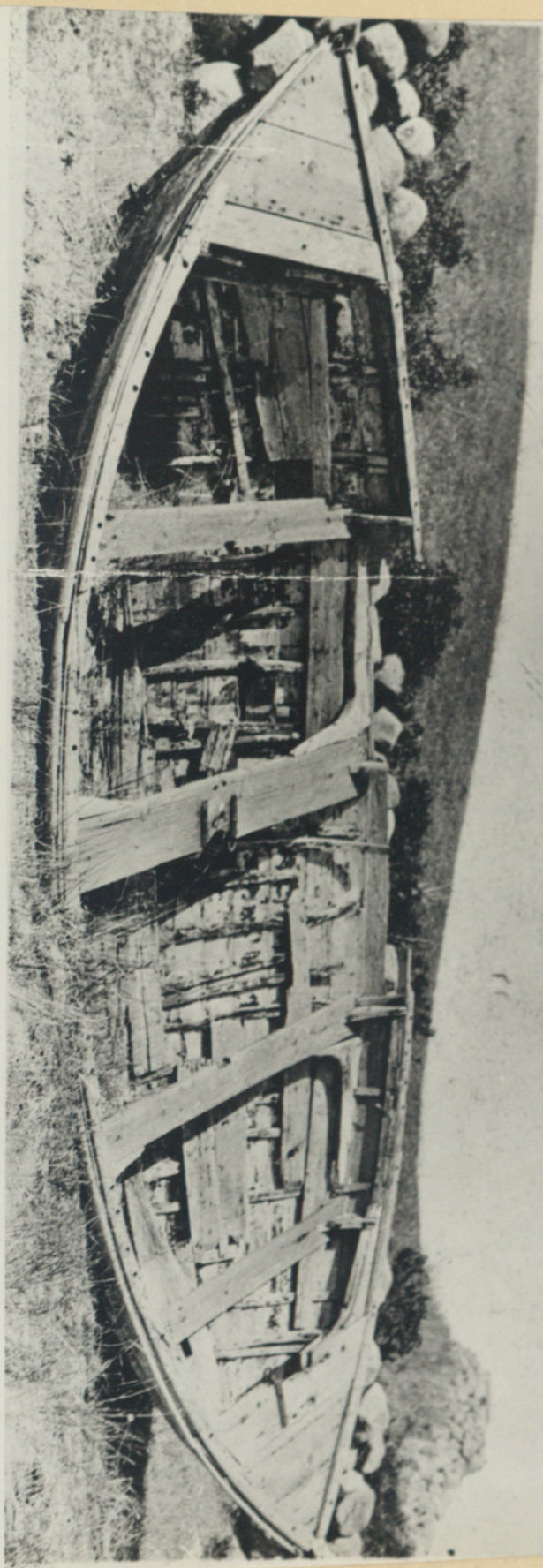


MHA #70-10-226: Scene of Old Harbor at Block Island while small "cowhorns" were still in use. Probably taken shortly after 1873 when breakwater was built. Original loaned by Mrs. Paule Loring.



MHA #70-10-242: Later (and larger) Block Island boats.
From postcard loaned by Mrs. Paule Loring.

#70-10-242



70-10-438