

## Generous Offer To Present Old Anchor To Town Made By Skipper And Crew Of Dragger Cap'n Bill

A beautiful and perhaps historically valuable old anchor may become another of Provincetown's scenic attractions, through the very generous offer of the skipper of the dragger Cap'n Bill, Captain George Adams and his crew, who have indicated that they are willing to give up their shares in the anchor's potential purchase value, in order to present it to the town. Captain Adams feels, as do many other local citizens that the twelve foot long wood and iron anchor would be an appropriate decoration for the oval island in Lopes Square, reflecting the past history of Provincetown as a significant whaling seaport and signifying its present position as home of one of the largest commercial fishing fleets on the Atlantic coast.

A description of the anchor and of the proposal to present it to the town was made to the Board of Selectmen on Monday evening by Kurt Ruckstuhl, co-owner of The Old Village Store. Mr. Ruckstuhl told the Board of Capt. Adams' and the crew's generosity and explained that a collection might still have to be made to pay the charges for hauling the anchor to Lopes Square and the previous charges for taking it from the dragger to the salvage yard.

The Selectmen, who agreed that the idea of having the anchor for the Town was wonderful, then thanked Mr. Ruckstuhl for his interest, and Selectman Ralph Carpenter indicated that he would be willing to pay for having the anchor placed in the square.

An attempt will also be made to secure further information on the anchor by contacting Edward Rowe Snow, author of many books on ships and shipwrecks on Cape Cod, and the Mystic Seaport in Connecticut.

The anchor, whose estimated weight is 4,000 pounds, was brought into Mac-Millan Wharf early last week, after it had become entangled in the nets of the dragger, fishing near Chatham, off Follock Rip Lightship. According to Capt. Adams the area in which the anchor was found is "loaded with anchors and anchor chains," remnants of the days when the site was a haven for sailing ships seeking refuge from storms. If the wind shifted suddenly, as often happens, the ships were forced to slip their anchors at once, to avoid



The Anchors in above article. They are on the little square at head of the Town Wharf. September 20, 1959.



the risk of being driven into shoal water and onto the bars, for in those days of hand operated winches, hauling in a ship's anchor was a lengthy operation.

When brought up by the crew of the Cap'n Bill, this anchor was attached to a long length of chain, from which it was removed, a procedure not too difficult because of the composition of the early iron and the deterioration caused

by the salt water. One link of the chain was kept by Capt. Adams; the single link weighs thirty pounds!

It is interesting to conjecture on what ship the anchor might have come from and when it was made. The design of the anchor gives some clue to the period of its manufacture, for according to the Encycloperia Britannica, until the beginning of the 1800's anchors were of imperfect manufacture.

the means of effecting good and efficient welding being absent and the iron poor, while the arms being straight had a tendency to part at the crown, or point at which they were joined to the shank, when weighing from good holding ground. Curved arms were introduced in England in 1813 (and probably in this country at about the same time) and prior to 1838 were rigidly attached to the shank. In that year a patent was taken out for an anchor of new construction, although the principle had been known before, in which the arms were movable around a pivot at the end of the shank. This new invention had the advantages of enabling the anchor to be stowed more conveniently, fouling was not likely and it was not so liable to break.

From the above description it seems likely that the anchor brought up by the Cap'n Bill, was made generally in the period from about 1810 to 1840, the era of the great clipper ships. The extreme clipper, a long slender vessel of great beauty, which might make 18 knots, was developed principally during the first half of the 19th century, being abandoned in 1854 in favor of the "medium clipper," a smaller ship built along the same general lines. According to Capt. Adams, the anchor brought in by his dragger, must have come from a ship "at least 150 feet long."

Several offers have already been made to Capt. Adams from persons interested in buying the anchor, and he was also approached by a group of local people who were interested in collecting a fund to purchase the anchor and present it to the town. It was then that the captain disclosed that he had also given consideration to giving the anchor to the town and had discussed the matter with his crew, who are entitled to share in any proceeds from the sale of the anchor. The crew also indicated they are willing to relinquish their shares, if the anchor could be given to the town.

The anchor was removed from the dragger by Bob Souza, who with James Enos runs a salvage business, using the firm's truck containing a winch. Some difficulties were encountered here, when it was found that the truck was not heavy enough to hold the 2-ton anchor, which when placed on the back of the truck caused the front to rise up. This was taken care of by weighing the truck's front end for the trip to the firm's dump yard, where the anchor is presently waiting until a decision is made as to its disposition.

Belatedly answered a letter today thanking Robert F. White, Assistant Curator at Mystic Seaport for writing to us to offer some advice in trying to date the antique anchor now in Lopes Square. (Before hearing from Mr. White an 1808 date was discovered on the anchor, but his letter makes interesting reading.) According to Mr. White the dimensions of the Provincetown anchor correspond roughly to those of a 1,230 pound (11 hundredweight) anchor of the early 19th century, while the estimated weight of the anchor, approximately 3,800 pounds or about 34 hundredweight, would correspond to an anchor which should have a shank length of 15' 1" and a stock length of 16' 2". The actual dimensions of the anchor here have the length of the shank at 10 1/2' and the length of the stock at 10'. Writes Mr. White, "Since the weight of your anchor was estimated, I accepted the dimensions as being more nearly correct and concluded that it was on the order of an 11 hundredweight anchor." Continues the curator, "You will know, I'm sure, that a particular anchor might have several possible uses, as a bower, sheet, stream or kedge anchor. An anchor of 11 cwt could have been used as any of these, i.e. it might have been a kedge anchor on a very large vessel, a stream anchor on a medium tonnage vessel, or a bower anchor on a small vessel. Assuming it to have been a bower anchor, an 11 cwt would have been used on a vessel of about 200-250 measurement tons. Such a vessel, depending upon a number of variables, as type of hull and measurement standard used, could be a brig or bark of from 90 to 100 feet in length."