

Cargoes To and Fro

THEY got about, those iron men who sailed wooden ships out of Cape Cod ports. They were hailed on all Seven Seas. They docked in foreign ports everywhere, to unload and load again. They had no use for "empty bottoms." They got cargoes where they could.

A voyage might be long, or short. It might last two weeks, or two years. It might take a ship round the world, or only half way round. Even the fisherman from Cape Cod might be "on the Banks" for many weeks at a time.

Cape Cod square-riggers took New England and other American products to South America, Australia, India, Europe, Africa, and the Orient. They got to Scandinavian countries, and rounded both Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope. Some made routine trips to the Argentine to bring home hides, others to Australia to bring back wool.

From the East Indies, China and India they returned with teas and spices. They brought home leather, saltpetre, copper, and guano from Chile. At Brazilian Venezuelan, and like ports came coffee, cocoa beans, vanilla beans and spices.

Some square riggers from the Cape "coasted" up and down between here and the West Indies. They brought back rum, sugar, and molasses. From our Gulf ports they brought our southern cotton.

Others went to British ports for coal, peat, ore, and fabrics. Some became passenger ships, carrying immigrants here from Europe.

Cape Cod whalers, of course, had a special mission. They took out no cargoes, but if lucky, came home with full quotas of barrels of whale oil, after, usually, many years' absence.

Four kinds of cargoes once carried in Cape Cod ships must be specially mentioned.

Cape Cod "coasting" schooners sometimes carried stone, lumber, and salt.

The most dangerous of these cargoes were those of stone and salt. The crew of a coaster loaded with stone could not throw its cargoes overboard if the vessel sprang a leak or took on such heavy seas that the hold was flooding. Such a craft rode deep in the water. She could easily be swamped. In a "following sea," when giant waves raced after her, she could be "pooped" by mountains of water coming over her stern and weighing her down dangerously.

A cargo of salt was another risky cargo. For salt "soaks up" water, and even a small leak could have dangerous results before it was detected. Like stone, salt could not be thrown overboard. Salt cargoes came from Turks Island, off Jamaica.

Ships that carried lumber were often loaded below decks, as well as above, with lumber not always well secured. In a storm, lumber was often washed overboard, a financial loss, and a menace to other craft, but perhaps a lucky find where it drifted ashore.

The fourth cargo was human freight. We like to believe that few Cape Cod ships ever carried one. For "slave ships" were terrible. In their dark, hot, breathless holds, dark-skinned men, women, and children, stolen from their primitive homeland of Africa were closely packed, in sweltering heat and bound fast in misery. Those who died in this dreadful months'—even two or three confinement were, daily removed and tossed overboard. The rest waited in the steamy dark.

Fishing Today At Provincetown

PROVINCETOWN is still a fishing town although its whaling days are over. The fishing industry is carried on chiefly by the Portuguese. These men are daring and hardened to the discomforts and dangers of their work. Facing storms and gales, they go far out into the Atlantic where they labor for hours, catching and filling their boats with codfish and haddock.

When they reach shore, their oilskins icy, and faces and hands numb, they still have more work to do. The frozen fish has to be tossed from their boats into large baskets which are swung from the wharves; then cleaned, packed in ice, and finally loaded onto trucks which take the fish to city markets.

It is a long and hard day for the Provincetown fisherman. When his day's work is done, he is ready to go home to a warm fire and his evening meal, which is often fish he caught that day.



A 270 lb. Halibut Caught at Provincetown, Mass.

- About 1920 -

John Cook with his Halibut "caught off Wood End and sailed his boat the five miles to the wharf single-handed"

Lower Cape Codder: "What's the fittest time after breakfast to launch a schooner?"

Upper Cape Codder: "Why, launchtime, I suppose."

Herrins

A rough old Cape Cod sea captain back in the eighties had sent his only daughter away to a finishing school, hoping to give her all the advantages that he and his wife lacked.

Daughter was home on her first vacation, and with her a beau from the city.

The old captain had a strong idea that she was trying to impress the boy friend, yet it irritated him to have her inquire what sort of trees the old scrub pines near the house were, and if he fed beach grass to the horse, and various other foolish questions.

But when she and her city beau came into the general store he owned and managed and began to look things over and poke fun at the countryfied way he did business, he had reached the bursting point.

So when daughter stuck her head out into the back store and inquired, "Papa, what are those little fishes with sticks stuck through their eyes?", he let go:

"Them's herrins, you darn fool—you've et barrels of em, an' right here and now young lady, let me tell you that I've sailed around the world three times but I never lost my bearin's as to Cape Cod scrub pines and beach grass, no, nor herrins, neither.

"Ef that school I'm payin, good money tew is just a-learnin you tew be a fool, then we quit to once and forever and you'll come home, where your mother and me can drill a little sense into your head, maybe."

And the old man banged his fist on the counter by way of driving the facts home.

Needless to say there were no more foolish questions asked and daughter returned to school at the end of her vacation.

Yarmouth Register - 1884 -

Capt. David L. Smith of schooner Benjamin T. Crocker, Provincetown, was the recipient of binocular glasses from the Canadian government for his humanity and kindness to a ship-wrecked crew.