

- April 19, 1956 -

Home Port Awaits Its New Dragger

Sometime during the weekend, perhaps on Saturday, more likely on Sunday, a new dragger will come proudly into her home port of Provincetown, latest and largest addition to the Cape End fleet and at her wheel will be Captain Frank L. Reis, 381 Commercial Street, who will be skipper of the new craft.

Christened Monday at the Harvey Gamage Boatyard at South Bristol, Maine, where she was built, the new dragger carries the name of Stephen R., as a tribute to the skipper's nephew, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Reis who died a year ago. Those present at the launching say that Mrs. Reis, mother of the new boat's captain gave a superb performance in crashing the traditional bottle of champagne on the bow, perfectly timed before the heavy hull began sliding into the water. The champagne of an ultra fine vintage was donated for the occasion by that dryland skipper, M. F. "Pat" Patrick of the Flagship.

The Stephen R. is 70-feet, 4-inches in length with a 19-foot beam and draft of 11 feet. She is 50-ton net and 70-72 gross with a capacity for 75,000 pounds of iced fish. She was designed by Dwight Simpson, marine architect of Boston. Power plant of the Stephen R. will consist of a 260 horsepower Enterprise diesel motor, with 800 RPM and 2 to 1 reduction.

With eight berths forward, two aft and one in the pilot house, quarters will be ample for the crew of seven men and the skipper. Oil will be used in the Shipmate cook stove in the galley and for the hot water system, which in cold weather will keep the boat's quarters warm with radiators in the pilot house, in the captain's quarters, in the engineer's and crew's compartment and toilet.

Just about every type of equipment, products of today's scientific development, both for safety and better fishing, have been incorporated in the Stephen R. Included are an auto pilot, RCA auto pilot radar, RCA 100-watt radio, loran, fathometer, Colum-

bia 52-40 propeller, Snow-Nabster reverse gear, an auxiliary single cylinder FR-1 Lister diesel driving one 5 KW, 115/140 DFC generator and a No. 130 Marine Products pump.

The lifesaving equipment includes two Beetle fiberglass life boats, two life rings and the required number of life jackets.

Marine losses in the year 1870 for the United States are over \$17,500,000.

Last Wednesday (Jan. 1871), a Portuguese named Frank Sears, while coming in with a load of fish, in "jibing" the dory which was carrying a large sail, upset, throwing him and another man into the water. Sears struck out for the shore and when about half way shouted to his companion that he could swim no farther and sank. The body was not recovered. A passing boat rescued the other man who was clinging to the overturned boat. These fishing dories have been in the habit of carrying too much sail and several accidents have happened from it. . . .

SHIPBOARD BREAD

In the old days the principal diet of all whalers consisted of salt beef and shipboard bread or hardtack as it was often called. In this present age, ship bread would hardly be considered a delicacy, but in a day when taste was less fastidious it was relished. If the supply was not consumed during the three or four years of the whaling cruise, it was shipped out on the next one. It may have become wormy but a whaling ship was no place for men with queamish stomachs. Ship's bread was simple to make, as it consisted of only flour and water, and required only kneading. It was worked into a stiff paste and cut into shape, a circle about 6 inches in circumference and about an inch thick. As soon as it cooled it would be packed into casks which had been soaked in rum. Bread of this nature when packed in a tight cask was guaranteed to keep four or five years. Some baking was done in Provincetown during that period but the greatest percentage was done in New Bedford and kept in great demand up until the turn of the century.

THE "FLUSH TIMES"

The years during the war of the Rebellion, were boom ones for Provincetown and the fishing industry was known as the "flush times". The high price of fish during those years found nearly everyone engaged in the business of fishing or some connected part of fishing. Vessels were built here employing crews of native labor, ship's carpenters, riggers, sailmakers, and the like were busy from dawn 'till dusk and the town hummed with activity. Wharfs were built and fish sheds were everywhere. Row upon row of fish hung out for drying could be seen in every yard in town. Dry fish sold for five to six dollars a quintal, and upon occasion supplied by market demand reached as high as eight dollars a quintal. The captains and owners would assume all risks and the crew would earn as high as five hundred per man. Now it must be remembered that everything in those days were under sail, and all labor was a man-handled affair, and fishing was done with hand lines. Most of the fleet fished from the Grand Banks and many days were spent in reaching the grounds. A voyage could last anywhere from seven weeks to two and a half months and during that time all fish lay "ripening" below, well salted down. When the vessel reached port the fish were dumped overboard for "rinsing" before taken to the wharfs for the final curing. The town showed evidence of the success of those years and many new homes were built, and the size and ornateness of the house was credited to the financial success of the captains it represented. These "flush times" lasted for several years until a newer method "the fresh fishing" industry steadily crowded out the old ways and by the late 1800's hardly a salt yard existed and today the curing of salt fish is only a memory to the old folks.

Today, Feb. 12, 1873, a brig lay in Provincetown Harbor, said to have been 365 days from Demarara.

TRAGEDY ON THE GRAND BANKS—April 22, 1893

Another Provincetown vessel displayed the signal of death Tuesday morning. It was the schooner, I. J. Merrit, Captain Souza, in from Boston, where she had sold her trip of halibut and cod caught on the Western Bank. At 8:00 a.m. April 8th, while the dories were drawing trawl on the western part of the bank, a heavy sea struck the dory manned by Frank Fratus and Joseph Simmons, capsizing the craft and throwing the men into the sea. Fratus despaired of rescue and called to his dory mate, "I am going to die". Simmons urged him to hang on and endeavored to cheer him up, but he continued to say, "I am going to die", and a moment later he went down.

Simmons thrust his arm through the dory's bottom strap and was tossed tremendously by the rough water. But fortunately before he was completely exhausted men in a dory nearby saw his plight and hurried to his assistance and pulled him in, badly used up.

Fratus was a man of about 30 years, married, and had parents, brothers, and sisters living in this town.

The Merritt, as usual, brought in a very good catch of fish and the crew shared \$48.00 each. They have shared \$200.00 per man so far this season.

A FULL LOAD OF HERRING...

The schooner Jesse T. Matherson, captain Cambell, was at St. Pierre, Miquelon, Thursday, April 8, 1893, bound home from Newfoundland with a full load of herring. The schooner had been at Newfoundland all winter, getting nothing. Tried Fortune Bay, then Placentia Bay and other ports, finally going back to Fortune Bay where a full load was obtained. . . .

