

Shipbuilding

By
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Few people realize that Weymouth shipbuilders hewed out an important notch in the maritime history of New England. Although the number of vessels constructed were fewer in number when compared with other seafaring towns, certain Weymouth ships became famous. The sounds of timber being sawed, spikes driven, and the aroma of hemp and tar, were commonplace at Weymouth Landing and North Weymouth. One of the most important events to take place in bygone days was the christening of a majestic ship and watching a future queen of the sea gracefully glide down the launching way to her destiny.

During the late 1600's Colonel Ephraim Hunt, and others, built vessels near the mouth of the Smelt Brook, at Weymouth Landing. An interesting 18th century shipbuilding contract of this locality stipulated that each worker was to receive a drink of rum each day. The "Good Intent", a well known packet, was launched by Clapp and Loring in 1813, and publicized the fact that Weymouth vessels were well built as she was still sailing the trade routes up until the late 1800's. Atherton W. Tilden commenced operations at Weymouth Landing around 1840, completing a total of 13 barks and one sloop. Weymouth Landing shipbuilding generally came to a halt when the South Shore railroad line filled land and laid track during the late 1840's.

The most widely known enterprise in Weymouth was founded by N. Porter Keen at Hunt's Hill, North Weymouth, during the mid 1870's. The property was formerly the site of the 1622-1623 Wessaguscus Settlement. He is said to have learned his trade from such famed men as Donald McKay of



Launching of the "Haroldine" 1884 at Hunt's Hill


Photo Courtesy Herbert Keene

"clipper ship days". Some of Mr. Keen's accomplishments launched at Hunt's Hill are the Bark "Joseph A. Ropes" (1877), Pilot Boat "Sylph" (1878), Bark "Alice Knowles" (1878), Bark "Rapid Transit" (1879), Bark "Alice" (1881), Schooner "Mark Gray" (1882), Pilot Boat "D. J. Lawlor" (1882), Pilot Boat "George A. Warren" (1883), Schooner "Haroldine" (1884), and Schooner "Clara B. Kennard" (1886). The "Alice Knowles" was a famous whaling bark of 115 feet in length, 28 foot beam, and 302.78 gross tons. She was a very successful venture for her New Bedford owners; however, was lost at sea in 1915 after a life full of hardship and excitement.

Believe it or not — the largest schooner in the world was launched from the Keen shipyard on May 29, 1884. Although bigger schooners were to be constructed several years later, the "Haroldine" made her mark. She was a four-master of tremendous size, measuring 209.8 feet in length, 40.5 breadth, and a gross tonnage of 1,361.64. Approximately a thousand persons were aboard when the vessel slid down the way, it being the most publicized event at Weymouth in many a year. The "Haroldine" was the first schooner ever to make the dangerous voyage to Australia, and returned safely with a hold full of wool. Later she carried coal and lumber between East Coast ports, but was wrecked off Florida in 1895. Thus, a milestone in shipbuilding faded into the oblivion of "Davey Jones Locker".

With few exceptions, the beauty of graceful sailing ships and billowing sheets of canvas have passed into the dusty pages of history.

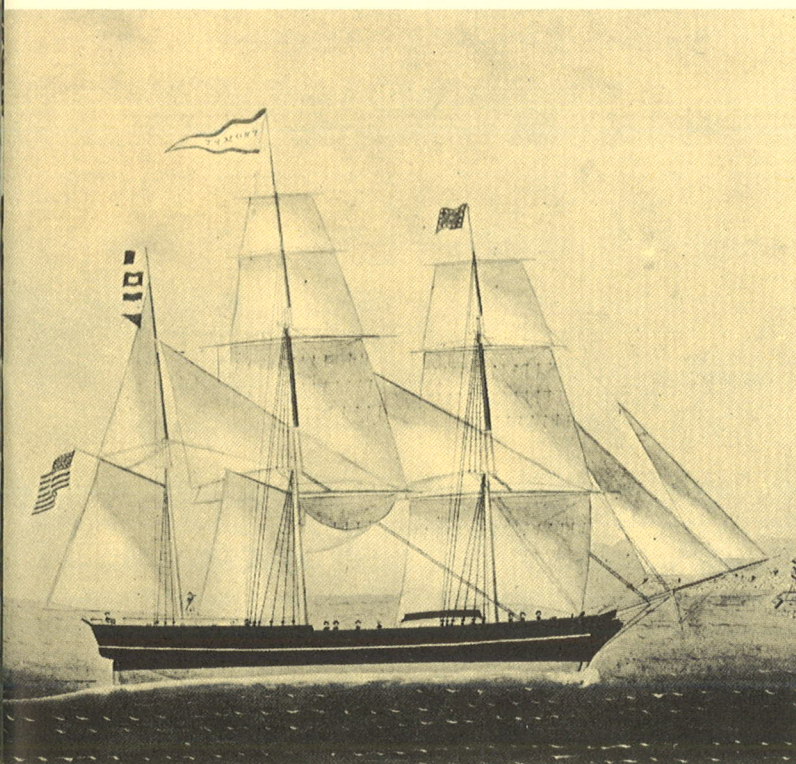




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 Ship, Yacht, and Boat
BUILDER.

Any of the above sailing craft built to order, and satisfaction given.
 Sample of work can be seen in Pilot Boat No. 5,
 "The Sprite," of Boston.

Foot Sea Street, Near Hunt's Hill,
NORTH WEYMOUTH.



Bark "Prompt"
 Built 1841 A.W. Tilden Shipyard, Weymouth Landing
 Photo Courtesy G. Stinson Lord



Schooner "Good Intent"
 Photo Courtesy Weymouth Historical Society