



NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents:

“The 30th Anniversary of the Noank Artists Exhibition:
The artwork, the artists and their subject matter”

By Tim Mockler and Sloan Keck



JOIN US: WEDNESDAY, September 20, 2023
7:30 PM

*The Latham/Chester Store,
108 Main Street, Noank*

In celebration of 30 years of exhibitions, first gallery director and contributing artist, Sloan Rankin, will review the creation of the Latham/Chester Store as a summer gallery. Work by some of the earliest participating artists will be on display. The evening will honor the high-liner artist, Tim Mockler, who has generously donated all the proceeds to NHS from the print pictured above. Prints will be available for purchase. Mockler will present personal memories, some imagery and speak about how the village of Noank inspires his work, past and present.

The public is cordially invited. Refreshments will be served.
<http://www.noankhistoricalsociety.org>

Selections from the NHS Photograph Collection: Down by the Dock

By John Wilbur, NHS Historian



This photograph was taken by Moses W. Rathbun during the first world war. We are standing at Freeman Rogers' boatyard, (what is now Fords Lobsters). On shore in the immediate foreground is the stern and aftmost thwart of a flat-bottom skiff, locally called a sharpie. Interestingly, there is no skulling lock in the transom.

Next is a jumble of three vessels side by side. One can't help but wonder about the curious motor launch apparently named *Possum*, seemingly down by the head. Her superstructure looks to be an afterthought, and the for-

ward facing companionway would have to remain closed on all but the calmest of days.

Between *Possum* and *Ella May* is a well-dressed man, possibly *Ella's* owner, Captain John Carrington, standing in what must surely be another sharpie. At first glance, one might conclude he is either hoisting a lobster pot aboard *Ella May*, or else retrieving one off her. It is also possible, he is surveying her general condition with disfavor. It is hard to tell whether this is a spring or fall photograph. Another photo, almost certainly taken within minutes of this one shows a catboat ghosting up the river, the people aboard it in summer attire, as well as the schooner yacht *Jeanette*, out of commission, around the corner. Is the man in the sharpie contemplating the season ahead, or is he reflecting on the one just concluded? The small mountain of pots are either waiting to be put aboard, or else awaiting transport to their winter quarters for overhaul. Possibly, the war raging in Europe was influencing matters.

An altogether different war was also raging at this time. Noank lobstermen were told "at gunpoint" by the New York Game Warden, to remove their gear from New York waters. The biggest point of contention apparently being that laths on the bottom of the pots were not properly spaced. Connecticut and New York have been engaged in disputes over fishing rights for many years. Tensions between the two states in the first two decades of the 20th Century were particularly high. The problem did not admit to an easy or quick solution, and on occasion led to lively encounters between lobstermen and law enforcement. Not helping matters was that the lobstering season of 1916 was particularly poor, and described by *The Day* on 26 August as a "frost."

Arguably, the main topic of this photograph, is the old, 35-foot long smack *Ella May*, in a state of *dishabille*. Built in 1877 in Mystic by D. O. Richmond, she was celebrated at that time as "one of the best vessels ever built here." *Ella May* enjoyed a long and adventurous life in the local fisheries, and survived running ashore on Mystic/Ram Island in the blizzard of 1888. One of the last of the local smacks to receive auxiliary power,

she was fitted with a 10-hp Lathrop gasoline engine in March 1905. Although registered in Stonington, she shows Noank as her hailing port. *Ella* has a rig typical of the local sloop-rigged genre, with a single large, boomed headsail and a large gaff mainsail. Her main boom lies on deck, as does her gaff. The topping lift for the boom, mainsail throat halyards, and possibly her jib halyard are wrapped around the mast. The peak halyards do not appear to be rove off on the mast, nor are the blocks or bridle fitted on the gaff. Ironwork exists for a topmast that is either ashore, or nonexistent. Her open taffrail will shed a boarding sea rapidly. A davit to haul pots is visible just aft of her port shrouds, further confirming her to be in the lobster fishery.

Ella May was reregistered in New London in 1920, and was abandoned five years later, not far from where this photograph was taken. Hauled up on the beach immediately south of Rogers' boatyard, she became a popular subject for artists. A painting of her as a storage unit for lobster pots hangs on the wall in the museum building on Sylvan Street.

On the face of the dock is the schooner *Beret J.*, built in 1914 in Friendship, Maine for Captain Charles Jenssen of Noank. Captain Jenssen was primarily a yacht skipper, but this was a purely commercial venture. *Beret J.* was representative of the smaller schooners of the age. She was built "bald headed" with "pole masts" (no topmasts), indicating a growing reliance on the internal combustion engine. Nevertheless, she has a generous mainsail, which makes little concession to the auxiliary power fitted. The foretopmast rigged is not to carry sail, but to support the lookout for the swordfish spotter. Evidently, *Beret J.*'s crew has done laundry recently, and has taken the opportunity to dry it in the gentle southerly wind.

Far beyond, the hotel on Mystic Island still stands, having been idle since the turn of the century. By 1921, only the main structure still stood. The hurricane of 1938 would remove the last vestiges of the once popular site, leaving only an earthen wharf on the east side of the island.



Noank in the News: 50 years ago two Noank families embarked on epic sails...



"The *Scud*, a 37-foot cruising sailboat built by George Maynard of Noank, awaits departure in Noank Shipyard. The wait for the fog to lift ended Friday when Maynard, his wife Mary, and their three children [Hudson, Gary and Molly] left for a two to three year cruise around the world. The handmade boat was launched at the shipyard in November. Mary Maynard, a former Day staff writer, left The Day in January to fit out the boat for the cruise."

-The Day, July 1973



Top: Flyer from the launching of the *Scud*, November 11, 1972. 1991.034, gift of James Burbank. **Below:** The Maynard family aboard the *Scud*. Photo from collection of Mary Drake.



The Drake family aboard the *Kismet*.
Photo from *The Day*, October 1, 1973.

“A Noank couple will leave this week with their four sons, and a terrier named “Needles” for a yearlong cruise – the kind that etches out dreams for a lifetime – following the winds, good weather, and individual whims. The *Kismet*, a 42-foot, nine-inch double-ended ketch, will become the new home for Pamela and Robert Drake and sons: Christopher, 9; Bruce, 8; David, 13; and Peter, 16. They now occupy the home on Prospect Hill where they have lived the past nine years...A rendezvous is anticipated with Mary and George Maynard and their family. The Maynards left [July 9] for a similar cruise in the *Scud*, which they have hauled for the winter. Land-bound again, they have rented a house in the Azores because they like the islands so much.”

-The Day, October 1, 1973

Editor's Note:

Both of these voyages were years in the making. The Drakes had been dreaming up their adventure for 17 years before they set sail. The Maynards arrived in Noank from Chicago in 1965 with the hopes of sailing around the world. It would be 13 years before they sailed back into Noank at the end of a 5 year voyage. In a presentation on the *Scud* given for the historical

society in 2017, Mary (Maynard) Drake recalled that other Noankers initially questioned “How can that kid from Chicago build anything? How’s he going to know?”

She continued, “but in Noank, we just absorbed everything from this wonderful village with all its nautical heritage...and particularly from Jack Wilbur and Fred Cousins and Major Smyth.” Ultimately the Maynards spent two years building the *Scud* in their yard with assistance of many locals. The vessel was modeled on the famous yawl *Spray*, which Joshua Slocum sailed around the world from 1895-1898. Slocum was the first known man to sail around the world alone, and his success was due in part to the unique design of the *Spray*, which had remarkable self-steering abilities.

When the ship was launched at the Noank Shipyard in November 1972, Stephen Jones noted that Noank “history is built into her very bones...the list of things that has gone into *Scud* forms a kind of epic.” In addition to the labor, advice and materials contributed by many of their Noank neighbors, the completed vessel also incorporated parts from many iconic local ships, including the wheel from the *Eleanor*, ballast from the *Joseph Conrad*, and the bilge pump from the *Emma C. Berry*.

Noank in the News: 100 years ago...

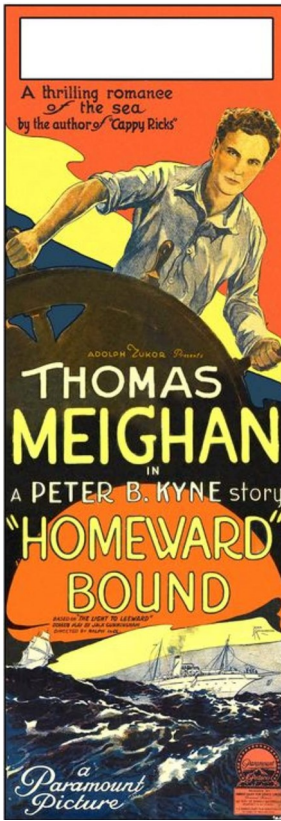
“The photographing of “Homeward Bound,” Peter B. Kyne’s latest film drama, which is being produced in this city and its environs, was continued today aboard the yacht SULTANA. With most of the photographic work at the Riverside Plant of the Thames Towboat Co. out of the way, operations were yesterday transferred to the Pendleton shipyard at Mystic, where several shots were taken aboard the three masted schooner *F. C. Pendleton* and around the yards.

-The Day May 28, 1923

In Memoriam

Jason M. Pilalas—1941-2023
Sven Larson—1941-2023





“The schooner *F. C. Pendleton*, tied up to the north pier at the Riverside plant, has been cleaned up for the part she will play in the cinema production. Owing to a wire getting crossed, the aged effect of the time honored hull was spoiled by a fresh coat of paint and an attempt was made to restore the weather-beaten appearance by smearing mud over the ship’s exterior. Fresh ooze from the harbor bottom at Mystic was plastered over the craft and was photographed. The *Pendleton* will probably go out in the Sound with Tom Meighan as Jim Bradford at the helm, the latter part of the week or early next week.”

-The Day, June 6, 1923

“Noank fishermen have been particularly fortunate of late in bringing in large tuna fish. Captains Musante of the *Frances* and Bocciccio of the *Baby* have secured the largest in weight. Recently Capt. Musante brought in a tuna weighing more than 600 pounds and yesterday landed another which weighed 500 pounds. Capt. Bocciccio captured on weighing 800. The mammoth fish are shipped to New York by truck, bringing a large price.”

- The Day Sept. 18, 1923



Tuna hung up on Bill Musante’s boat *Frances*, 1920s. 2002.035.0019, gift of the Lithgow family.

Notes from the “Mary C. Anderson” Museum

Labor Day weekend marks the close of a successful summer season at the museum. This year we had visitors from across the country and as far away as Berlin, Germany. Our extended summer hours are made possible by a dedicated team of volunteer docents. We would like to extend a special thanks to Debbie Bates, Tee Burdick, Nancy Codeanne, Susan Palmer Deragon, Sloan Keck, Chris Lane, Anne Lawrie, Shirley McFadden, Carol Oviatt, Dana Oviatt, Elisa Pendery, Steven Pendery and Deb Thompson for volunteering this year. The Sylvan Street Museum will be open to visitors and researchers on Monday afternoons (1-4pm) and by appointment throughout the fall. Please call us at 860-536-3021 or email us at noankhist@gmail.com with any questions, or to request an appointment.

We would also like to thank CT Humanities and Conservation ConneCTion for accepting the Noank Historical Society into their Collections Assessment Grant Program. We completed the museum assessment in August and are looking forward to making the recommended improvements to our storage and exhibit spaces over the course of the next year.

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If you have any questions, concerns, and/or articles to share in the Noank Ledger, please contact us at Noankhist@gmail.com. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the mailing of the ledger, or address changes, please contact Elizabeth Boucher at P.O. Box 9454, Noank, CT 06340