Eastport: A Maritime History

BY C. DONALD BROWN

WHEN one thinks of Eastport, one necessarily thinks of the sea, for the sea has supplied Eastport with a livelihood for the past century and a half. The very existence of the town is linked inextricably to the ocean and well might this be so, for Eastport forms a part of eastern United States which thrusts itself out into the Bay of Fundy. The waters which form the deep and navigable Passamaquoddy Bay are the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, which pour through Fundy to form one of the best harbors on the Atlantic coast. Thus upon the sea depends the fortunes of the people of this town.

The maritime history of Eastport, so far as history records, began in 1604 when a small group of French colonists, led by Sieur de Monts, explored the Bay of Fundy and proceeded into the waters of the Passamaquoddy where they made a settlement on what was named Dochets Island in the St. Croix River. The climate here was so severe that the following year saw the colonists depart for Arcadia taking with them a small boat built during the winter. That boat was undoubtedly the first ship ever launched in these waters by a white man.

Soon the British began to sense the possibilities of the region and, in 1613, Captain Argol was sent up from Virginia to dislodge the French. There followed a series of skirmishes which finally ended with the Peace of Paris in 1763 by which English supremacy was established.

The treaty ending the Revolutionary War left the exact boundary of eastern Maine undefined. The treaty specified the middle of the St. Croix River as the boundary, but an argument soon arose as to which of the three rivers, the Cobscook, the Schoodick, or the Macadava, was the real St. Croix, and some twenty years were to elapse before the question was settled. This accounts for the long British occupation after the War of 1812 was over. The controversy which was finally settled by a commission in 1817 gave to the United States Moose Island, Dudley Island, and Frederick Island and gave to Great Britain the rest of the islands in the

vicinity.[1] This decision was to come into prominence in 1935 when a projected power project was stopped because Canada, owning Campobello and other islands involved in the plan, refused to consent to the building of a dam on their territory.[2]

The earliest settlers of Eastport were fishermen from Lynn, Marblehead, Cape Ann, and Portsmouth, who came here to take and cure fish at the close of the Revolution. Boats were used as a means of transportation and, as a result, the town itself was irregularly laid out, a fact which has caused some annoyance in later years. As the water provided the best means of transportation, no other method was needed, and when in 1804 the first horse was brought to the island surprise, curiosity and even fear was aroused by his appearance.

Indian Island, across the bay, had already been settled and was at the time used as a trading post. At this time, too, Benedict Arnold was engaged in the fishing business on Treat's Island, in Eastport harbor.

As the inexhaustible supply of fish—cod, haddock, herring, etc.—brought more people to the island, the settlement spread from the North End of the island where it had originally started, to the eastern side toward Lubec, the water front being at all times the trading heart of the community.

The first vessel built on the island was the schooner *Industry* owned by Captain John Shackford, in 1787. Later, as the fishing industry expanded, he built *Delight, Hannah,* and *Sally,* all of which were engaged in the trade. This family is typical of the families that lived in Eastport at this period. Bluff, hearty, and a mighty good sailor himself, Captain John raised a family of seagoing youngsters. By the first of the nineteenth century all of them were engaged in the lucrative West Indies trade. One son, Jacob Shackford, skippered the fast sailing packet plying between Eastport and New York. Later he was to become captain of *New York,* the first steamer to touch at this port.[3] The family was typical of the Eastport families of this period and the call of the salt water ran strong in their veins. They and many other Eastporters between 1800 and 1890 were to tread the decks of ships which carried them to the West Indies, the South Sea Islands, to Europe, and to ports of call which today are but names on the map but which at that time were common household words.

By 1800 England and France became locked in a titanic struggle for

1 These were the islands of Grand Manan, Campobello, and Deer Island.

2 This division was the result of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1817 tracing the 'true course of the St. Croix River.'

3 William Henry Kilby, *Eastport and Passamaquoddy* (Eastport: Ed. Shead Co., 1888), pp. 169-170.

supremacy in Europe, and the maritime trade of America soared to unprecedented heights. The number of vessels arriving and departing from Eastport became very large. Most of these vessels were owned by people from other parts of the country but a few belonged to residents. The schooner *Delesdernier* was owned and skippered by Captain John Shackford; another was the sloop *Packet* owned by Captain Anthony Brooks. These were the only ships capable of making long voyages. Captain Joseph Livermore, master of the first packet to Boston, had retired a short time before to enter the revenue service.

In 1807 President Jefferson put into effect his famous Embargo which, to prevent our ships from being sunk by either belligerent, forbade American vessels to trade with them. Maritime trade in all parts of the land languished, but not so in Eastport. Lorenzo Sabine, in his *'Tis Sixty Years Since* says:

> In the era preceding the War of 1812, Eastport was one of the most noted places in the country. Its fame was, however, not the kind that people would desire, as the general impression of the place was that its people were bold and reckless men who earned their livelihood by sheltering and sharing the gains of adventurers and smugglers. An enormous trade in contraband goods prevailed for several years and strangers flocked here to engage in it.[4]

As the maritime provinces of Canada had always received their foodstuffs, meats, and naval stores from the United States, it can readily be seen that the border towns did not intend to lose this lucrative trade even if forbidden to engage in it by so eminent an authority as the President himself. The embargo prevented this trade to continue legally, but means were soon found to get around this. Articles of trade were shipped from various parts of the United States to Moose Island legally. Once on the border, persons were found who purchased the articles and, with the help of the British, shipped them across to the provinces. In 1808 ports in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were opened up to this trade and Eastport became a very busy town. In spite of the efforts of the United States government to stop this trade, it continued to flourish. In less than a month, large quantities of flour were sent here and fourteen vessels with full cargoes lay at one time in the harbor. Later on, 30,000 barrels of flour were received here in one week. In the run of a year, about 160,000 barrels more arrived. Piling places were made on the beaches as all the sheds were full. Besides flour, other articles were sent here and Little River in Perry became the principal market for them.

[4] Lorenzo Sabine, *'Tis Sixty Years Hence* (Eastport: Ed. Shead Co., 1875), p. 60.

Many battles took place between the smugglers and the police, although it is quite significant that no one was seriously hurt. In 1808 the United States sloop of war *Wasp,* Captain J. Smith, and the ill-fated *Chesapeake,* Lieutenant Stephen Decatur, together with three gunboats were sent here to stop the smuggling. Every building and flour pile was strictly guarded and boats and barges were on the alert. On the shore the collector kept a constant vigil. Yet the flour continued to disappear. The risks were great but the rewards were high. At first the smugglers demanded 12.5 cents a barrel, but the risks increased and the price rose to $3.00 a barrel. Boats of all kinds, even canoes, were pressed into service. One man was reported to have made $47.00 in one day. Living expenses were high but who cared?[5]

Fog and darkness aided the smugglers, as did helpers on shore. Bribery was common and for fifty cents a barrel the guards would be elsewhere when the flour was taken. Yet all were not false to their duty as is shown by the stealthiness of the smugglers and by the fact that two British sloops of war waited across the line to protect the smugglers as soon as they reached Canadian waters. The United States sloop of war *Wasp* captured fourteen smuggling boats in one night while the British armed ships lay off Campobello, their decks covered with flour that had been safely smuggled across.

Many ships, when flour sold in Jamaica for $25.00 a barrel and lumber sold for $75.00 a cwt., put out from Eastport and sailed for the West Indies. Arriving there, they would wait until a storm blew up then put into the harbor, claim that they had been blown there by the storm, and sell their cargo 'in distress.'

Finally in 1809 a battery of six guns covered by a blockhouse with barracks for fifty men was erected on Sullivan Hill, where the high school now stands. As the British still claimed the island, the Governor of Nova Scotia, Sir John Warren, demanded to know by what right the United States had erected military works there.

In the spring of 1809 many of the inducements to smuggling had disappeared, the Embargo having been lifted and the ports of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia having been closed to American produce. The principal remaining trade was in plaster of paris. There was no lawful means of introducing this commodity into America but various methods were tried. One classic example of ingenuity was exhibited by an Eastport merchant. He would purchase a cargo of plaster of paris and have

[5] William Henry Kilby, op. cit., p. 185.

it shipped to Passamaquoddy Bay. He then would go to the collector of customs and lodge a complaint against his own property. At the sale, it would be arranged that no one would bid against the merchant, who thus got his own property back at a low figure plus his share of the proceeds as an informer. Once in his possession, he could transport the plaster of paris to any port of the country he wished legally. The plaster would be put on board ship, the collector would be accommodating, and the clearance would specify no definite quantity. The ship would head out to Head Harbor where she would complete her loading and the merchant would make a handsome profit on his investments.

In 1812 the United States, for various reasons, declared war on Great Britain. This declaration was not popular in New England where the seaport towns intensely resented it.

News of the war hit Eastport very hard. Many families moved to less exposed places. Tension was felt everywhere. In the harbor off Eastport lay twenty American ships, while in the Canadian port of St. Andrews, just up the river, thirty British ships loaded their cargoes feverishly. By mutual consent, however, the people on both sides of the boundary determined to live amicably, and to a large extent this resolution lasted throughout the war.

During the first year of the war, little suffering was experienced for, although trade with the southern ports was disrupted, that with Boston, New York, and other coastal cities continued. In 1813, however, communication by ship became increasingly dangerous. Open boats must now be used which, by hugging the shore by day and stopping by night, made trips to New York, Boston and Portsmouth, carrying oil and fish and bringing back foodstuffs. Once again Yankee ingenuity provided a solution.

By the latter part of 1813 privateers began making their appearance off Quoddy. So successful were the American privateers in wrecking English trade with St. John and St. Andrews that the British threatened to burn Eastport in retaliation. Privateers from Portland, Salem, Lynn, and other ports came here attracted by thoughts of prizes. Some of the privateers were little more than pirates and often took ships flying their own flag. Finally the British, in exasperation, warned all small fishing smacks to keep within a prescribed area or be taken. Now indeed did Eastport feel the effects of the war. No privateer was owned by Eastport citizens and only one man, Noah Edgecomb, captain of *Olive* from Portland, was engaged in the practice as an officer.

The latter part of 1813 and 1814 witnessed many cruisers and privateers of the enemy in these waters. Of the ships of war, the frigates *Sparton* and *Maidstone* with the sloops of war *Fontain, Rattler,* and *Indian,* the brigs *Plumper* and *Boxer,* with the smaller sloop *Breame,* caused much damage to shipping. *Breame* captured the locally owned schooners *Delesdernier* and *Dolphin,* took Captain John Shackford and Samuel Wheeler prisoners, and forced them to pay ransom for their release. *Dolphin,* under Captain Anthony Brooks, was bound for Cadiz. *Expedition,* second packet to run to Boston, was captured and sent to St. John where she was renamed *Sarah* and after the war was used in the plaster trade.[6]

Boxer was well known here and her commander, Lieutenant Blythe, was highly respected. He made several captures off the harbor but always treated his prisoners kindly. A week before his death, John Shackford, Daniel Pierce, and Samuel Shackford were his prisoners. Blythe asked them about *Enterprise* and expressed the hope that he would see her. A week later the two ships met and, although the American brig won, both commanders were killed.

Trade was now entirely disrupted and Eastport began to suffer from its lack. One man was impressed by the British and compelled to serve in their navy. The brig *Orient,* owned by Dana and Wheeler and skippered by the energetic William Shackford, sailed from Eastport bound for Cadiz, but was captured within twenty-five miles of her destination; the crew taken prisoners and interned at San Luccar. The captain, mate, and cook were left to get home as best they could.

In 1814 the British proclaimed a blockade of the Atlantic coast. Eastport became once again the center for the smuggling trade. Ships flying the American or British flags always carried a fake Swedish or Norwegian registry with them so that if stopped they could pose as neutral traders. Even the crews were sometimes disguised as Swedes. Indian Island and Campobello became veritable beehives of industry. English goods were shipped here in 'neutral' vessels and smuggled into Eastport at night. Their cargoes consisted of manufactured silk, wool, cotton, and metals. From Eastport the goods would be transferred to wagons and sent to the Penobscot, reaching eventually Portland, Boston, and New York.

On 11 July 1814, a British squadron consisting of some fifteen ships sailed into the harbor and demanded the immediate surrender of the town. Resistance would have been impossible and the officers in command did the only thing possible under the circumstances—they surrendered. Thus began a reign of British occupation that was only ended by

[6] William Henry Kilby, op. cit., p. 172.

the settlement of the boundary controversy in 1817. By the beginning of 1818 the last of the British troops had left these shores never to return again as belligerents.

One interesting occurrence took place at the time of the capture of Eastport. The collector of customs, Lemuel Trescott, attempted to escape with the duty bonds and other valuable papers in his possession. A sloop of war stationed between Lubec and Tuttles Ferry cut off his escape, so he hid the papers and returned to town. A few days previous to this, he had seized the vessel and cargo of an out-of-town skipper. This man watched Trescott's movements and reported to the British. Now the people who had signed the bonds were in an unpleasant situation as both Uncle Sam and the British authorities demanded payment. To escape the double payment, the obligers were forced to flee the town, five of them going to Lubec where they built wharves and stores and commenced business. Thus an attempt on the part of Eastport citizens to avoid payments on duty bonds to the British was the main reason for the founding of the town of Lubec.[7]

Eastport, being under British control, was allowed to trade with the maritime provinces and Castine, for the latter had become a British possession shortly after Eastport. Ships traveled between these ports under the convoy system. Soon American merchants flocked to the border to participate in this trade. The risks were great as American patrols attempted to stop it. Risks, however, pay off in profits, and the old fake-register game was once more put into effective use. One such vessel, *Abo,* owned by a New Brunswick resident living in Eastport, was supplied with several registers and changed her nationality whenever the need arose. Loaded to the water's edge, she was yet so fast a sailer that voyages to Sweden or Norway in one day were, thanks to the fake registers, among her accomplishments.

America, as well as England, was now growing heartily sick of a war that was driving her maritime commerce from the seas, and which was sowing seeds of dissension and even secession in her New England states. Arrangements for peace were made and, by the Treaty of Ghent, 1815, hostilities ceased.

Trade was resumed and by 1818, after the last of the British had left, shipping to and from Eastport grew by leaps and bounds. In 1803, when Eastport first became a port of entry, only three ships were locally owned. By 1820 the number had doubled and by 1830 twenty-eight vessels totaling more than 3,000 tons had entered. From 1818 to 1830, twenty-one

[7] Lorenzo Sabine, op. cit., p. 82.

ships had been built, averaging 105 tons each. Yet with all the trade and business of the place, only three vessels had entered here from foreign ports. They were the sloop *Sumner* from the West Indies carrying rum, sugar, etc., the brig *Eliza Ann* from Cadiz in ballast, and the English ship *Protector* from Liverpool with salt.[8]

From 1812 on, trade increased enormously. In 1844 there were, in the harbor, 139 vessels of a total of 7,333 tons, and five foreign vessels of 943.47 tons. In 1833, there were thirty-nine American vessels of 3,957.49 tons, and 1,784 foreign vessels of 108,659.07 tons. This huge increase in foreign shipping was due to the admission of British vessels on equal terms with our own from 1839 on. Most of the ships came from Liverpool and the West Indies. In 1833, the number of foreign ships nearly equaled that of New York and exceeded all other American ports. In that year, there were 1,925 ships in New York harbor and 1,017 at Boston that hailed from foreign ports. When the British colonial ports were opened up to the American trade as a result of a change in the Navigation Acts, Eastport lost much of this trade as ships could proceed from the place of production directly to the place of consumption without stopping at the frontier ports.

Eastport, in the 1830's, presented a striking appearance indeed. The *Eastport Northern Light,* a paper of that day, stated in 1831 that in one day there were, in the harbor, more than thirty British vessels carrying cargoes of plaster, grindstones, and the like, to exchange for flour, lumber, fish, etc. This, according to the paper, was the largest number of ships entering in one day. What a contrast this scene presents to the harbor of the present day!

The first Eastport-to-Lubec ferry was established in 1820. In that year, also, over $60,000 was spent in wharves, warehouses, and stores. Eastport settled down to enjoy prosperity such as she has never known since.

Much of Eastport's maritime activity was due to the growing packet trade with Boston, New York, and the southern ports. Foreign trade was carried on with England, Germany and Scandinavia. In those days, the coastal trade was carried on in 'coasters'—three-, four-, and even five-master schooners, while the foreign trade was characterized by barks, brigs, and the like.

Eastport was justly proud of her packet trade, and well she might be. Although not nearly as speedy as the later-day clippers, these sturdy craft could make England in twenty-three days, which was no mean feat at that time. The ship's longboat was lashed amidships to make room for

[8] Ibid., p. 88.

hens, sheep, and pigs which were carried to insure a supply of fresh meat.

In the late 1830's, when steam first made its appearance, Jonathon Bartlett (who had taken over the firm of Dana, Wheeler and Bartlett) tried steam service to Bath and Castine; but people were not yet accustomed to this new mode of travel and the trade soon went back to the noted sailing packets of the day—*Boundary, Edward Preble, Sarah, Splendid,* and *Hayden*.

When steam did become more popular, the sailor looked on boats using it with contempt, and skippers made it a point to run past such craft as close as possible to show their superior speed.

The North Atlantic packet trade was a splendid school for hardy seamanship. Here many an Eastport lad received the training which was to earn for him his captain's papers and which was to help make Yankee seamanship famous around the world.

The years between 1830 and 1890 saw much activity in Eastport shipyards. In 1830, there was but one yard in the town but by the end of the Civil War, the number had increased considerably, due to the coastal and foreign trade.

The shipyard located at Houston's Cove played a prominent part in Eastport's shipbuilding history. Situated on a natural inlet on the island, the yard was well adapted for sheltered construction and an average rise and fall of eighteen to twenty-eight feet in tide allowed for the building of large, deepwater ships. One of the most famous ships to be built on the island was *Grey Feather,* built by C. S. Houston for J. W. Bass of New York. This clipper was built in 1850 and was named for a chief of the Passamaquoddy Indians. She was 138 feet long, 30 feet beam, and 19 feet deep. Her net tonnage, 586, was small for the California trade in which she entered.

The first skipper of *Grey Feather* was Captain Dan McLaughlin, a native of Grand Manan, but who hailed from Eastport. He became well known in the California trade and compiled an excellent record while a shipmaster, for *Grey Feather* was but one of the many fine vessels which he commanded. Under McLaughlin, *Grey Feather* made her maiden voyage from New York to San Francisco, returning by way of Calcutta and Peru. In those precanal days, ships traveling from New York to California must take the long and arduous voyage around South America's Cape Horn. Yet *Grey Feather,* under Captain McLaughlin, made the long voyage in 126 days, leaving New York 4 November and arriving in San Francisco 15 March, a run that the master of many a larger ship would have been proud to claim. In 1852, *Grey Feather,* under Captain Mc-

Laughlin, left New York for San Francisco with fifteen other vessels. This was one of the most remarkable races ever to be run around the Horn, for each vessel was rated among the best in the trade. Handicapped by a full cargo which kept her well down forward, the small *Grey Feather* gave a good account of herself, making the trip in 144 days, twelve days behind the winner. From this trade, she was taken, in 1855, and put into the Australian trade where, under McLaughlin, she made a record-breaking run from Melbourne, Australia, to Calcutta, India, in thirty-six days. Yet, so accustomed had her skipper become to her speed, he only records in his log:

> 8:30 p.m. saw Fals Point bearing N. by W., then shaped a course for the pilot station. At 11:45 p.m. took pilot and proceeded up the river. This ends the abstract and also the quickest passage ever made between the two ports.

In 1860, under Captain Mayo, a Hampden, Maine, man, *Grey Feather* made the 14,000-mile trip from New York to Melbourne in eighty-four days—a record run for ships of this size, and one that would have done credit to the clippers of a later day. From Melbourne, Captain Mayo sailed to Ceylon, back to New York, then to Madras to complete her lading. Finally, in 1862, this grand ship whose keel had known the waters of the seven seas and whose exploits had created a legend among sailing ships, was sold to Ruget Brothers of Bremen, Germany. She ended her life in drudgery as a coal packet plying between Baltic ports.

Many other ships were built or entered here at this time whose feats were to spread the fame of Maine all over the globe. In 1852, the bark *Comet* entered here from Pembroke. She was followed by *Queen of the Pacific,* a clipper ship of 1,356 tons which made several record runs.[9] While attempting to break the record from New York to San Francisco she was lost, 19 September 1859, off Pernambuco on the coast of South America. *Juniper,* a ship of 514 tons, left the ways here in 1853. Her life was cut short in 1857 when she was lost off Pernambuco. *Red Gauntlet,* in a Liverpool to Boston run, ran into one of the worst storms in years. She was in the storm for fifty-six hours, losing her boats and staving in her bulwarks. Later, in 1863, she was burned by the Confederate cruiser *Florida.* The following year saw the launching of *Western Continent* and *Crystal Palace;* both ships being sold to merchants in Massachusetts. *Dictator,* 1,923 tons, built in 1865, had the misfortune to meet with the Confederate cruiser *Georgia* which, following the custom of armed raiders,

[9] Customs Records, Port of Eastport, makes note of the entry of these and others. These records, 1815 to 1896, are in the National Archives.

burned her. Other vessels of smaller tonnage were the brig *Robert Mowe,* the sloop *Dolphin,* the schooner *Tarbox,* and the schooner *E. C. Gates.*[10]

The decade of the 60's to 70's saw continued activity in the shipyards of Eastport. Although the Civil War took many of the young men into the army and navy, enough of them remained to continue the work of building and sailing ships. In that decade were built the schooner *Margie,* a coaster of 105 tons, the bark *Saint Mary,* 708 tons, and the schooner *Palos,* 259 tons which entered the California trade. The schooner *C. B. Paine,* a 206-ton coaster, became a packet. The 195-ton schooner *Lucy* was sold to a New York concern, and the brig *Daisy Boynton* was sold up river to Ernest Shackford, who entered her in the West Indies and Southern trade. This list does not include the locally owned vessels which were to make Eastport a thriving fishing center.

This decade also saw the development of a type of boat that was entirely local in character. The 'Eastport pinkie' was built on fast lines, having a low, rakish appearance, carrying a huge press of sail, and being schooner-rigged. This type of craft shows the ingenuity of her Eastport builders who knew that the tides and weather peculiar to this section demanded a boat which would be speedy and at the same time seaworthy.

Shipbuilding attracted numberless craft to Eastport for rigging and outfitting and, as a result, the ship chandlery business grew to occupy a place of its own. Eastport was now more than ever before bound to the sea, and youngsters sailed their own little boats around the harbor, knowing that an adventurous life on the sea was to be theirs in their manhood. It was to be these lads who were to skipper the ships and barter Eastport goods all over the world.

After the 1870's, the shipbuilding industry began to lag. However, these years saw the launching of the schooner *Carrie W.,* the sloop *B. B. B.,* the schooners *Zelia* and *Annie.* The hermaphrodite brig *Eugene Hale* was sold to a group of Calais merchants who put her into the West Indies trade. The coasting trade was still booming as well as that with the West Indies, Spain, and Italy. At one time, Captain Raye had several vessels of the three or four hundred-ton class in the coasting trade. Coal was brought from southern ports and lumber shipped out. A large export trade was conducted in cured fish: hard salted line fish which were dried and packed in drums for the West Indies and South America. Large herring from the Magdalene Islands were brought to Eastport, packed in salt in barrels, sometimes smoked, and then shipped out.

10 Much more of the effects of the Civil War on Eastport's sailors may be found in Kilby's book.

With the inception of the sardine industry, cargoes of salt were brought here from Turks Island in the West Indies, and from Trapani, Italy. In this era, foreign ships with foreign crews were common in the harbor.

Yet all was not what it seemed, despite appearances. The growth of steam had struck a telling blow to the sailing ship, and the railroad was, by the early 90's, crippling the steam trade. In 1901, it is true, the 154-ton schooner *Benjamin Russell* slid down the ways to be followed by several others. But this was only a dying flurry. The year 1896 saw but ten vessels clear for foreign ports where, twenty years before, twice that number had sailed each week. The trade by sea was over; although World War I was to give it some impetus, the life and fire was gone.

In the late 1830's, Jonathan Bartlett had tried to inaugurate a steam service with Bath and Castine. He was an extensive shipowner and, in the 1840's, became a pioneer of steamboat navigation at Eastport. *New York, Patent, Eagle, Tom Thumb,* and *Lafayette* were the first steamers here permanently. Bartlett also dealt in the foreign trade, importing salt and British manufactures in exchange for timber, etc. After the Civil War, he erected a large saltworks at Princes Cove but a change in tariff ruined this. He was followed by Daniel Kilby, whose ships were *Henry Clay, Ambassador,* and *Hobart*. These ships were thought to be large but many of the later schooners were to exceed them by far.

During the decade preceding the Civil War, steam was beginning to make serious inroads in the sailing trade, and by the end of the war it was obvious that the heyday of sail was over. 'Fulton's folly' was introducing a new factor in American life and the romance of the sailing ship had to give way to the more prosaic but swifter steam.

The first steamer to run regularly from Eastport to Boston was *Bangor* in the 1840's. She was followed by *City of Portland, Telegraph,* and *Huntress*. Later came *Admiral, Eastern City,* and *Adelaide*. Other steamers which plied up and down these waters were *Bay State, Cumberland, Olivette, Pantagoet, Winthrop, Camden, City of Richmond, Express, Empress, New Brunswick, Tremont, Yale, State of Maine, Lewiston, Calvin Austin,* and *Governor Dingley*.[11]

The first registered steamship company here was the International Steamship Company, followed by the Eastern Steamship Company, the Eastern Steamship Corporation, and the Eastern Steamship Lines, Incorporated. The boats of these lines made trips to Boston, touching at Portland and Eastport, and terminating at St. John. *Rose Standish* and

11 These ships would make the trip from Eastport to Boston in two days. It was not unusual for tickets to be purchased weeks in advance. Business, especially during the summer, was quite brisk.

Charles Houghton plied the river between Eastport and Calais. It has been said that several of these ships could be seen at one time laying off in the harbor waiting for a chance to land. In those days, boats left for Boston every day.

These old side-wheelers must have been a picturesque sight as they paddled majestically up the river. For cargoes one could see, piled high on the decks, tin plate, barrels of cottonseed oil and, later, sardines, wool, tanned hides and many other articles.

Of all the shipping carried on by these vessels, only three wrecks were suffered—*New England* ran aground on Molasses Rock off the Wholves in 1872, *State of Maine* grounded on the rocks of Point Lepreaux in 1886, and *Portland* sank in a gale off Cape Cod. In the last wreck three hundred people were drowned, the only wreck in which lives were lost.

Local history centers perhaps more around the smaller river craft that operated up the St. Croix. *Belle Brown, Rose Standish* and *Henry F. Eaton* were familiar sights on the river. The latter was renamed *St. Andrews* because Mr. Eaton, to quote Mr. Leavitt, 'told me that he was sick and tired of having his father's name drawn through the sawdust of the St. Croix River.'[12]

When World War I broke out, the Eastern Steamship Lines were taken over by the government and some talk was made about turning the boats into sub chasers, but nothing came of it.

The first American sardines were packed in Eastport about 1875 and for forty years represented a canning business of no mean proportions. The first sardines were packed by William Martin and Alan Balkam, who began operations in the kitchen of a small house in North End (Beardsley's present location). The first fish were fried in oil, dried, packed in handmade cans, and bathed in a wash boiler. Thus from humble beginnings began a business which for years was to be Eastport's main source of income. In 1882 there were thirteen factories in the town and by 1898 the number had risen to nearly twenty.

The fish were caught in weirs which have changed little with the passing of years. From there they were loaded into the sailing boats, pinkies, carrying about ten or fifteen hogsheads. Later, as the industry grew, tugs were sent out to the weirs to pick up the boats, bringing them back in long, picturesque tows in which there were sometimes thirty or more boats. In the factory, all the work was done by hand and the fish were cooked in an oven and later placed in oil. The old folks used to call them 'fish biled in ile.'

[12] This remark was made to the writer during an interview with the late Mr. Leavitt.

As progress was made in the shipping world, the type of sardiner changed from pinkie to sturdier lighter craft and, in time, to the modern gas and oil carriers of today. These carriers, with greatly increased capacity and speed, can bring fish from distant weirs in locations which previously had not been visited because of the inability of the boats' cruising range. By 1921, all sardine carriers were powered. One such craft, *Calumet,* owned by the MacNichol Packing Company, had been previously a yacht and had a speed of seventeen knots. This craft was equipped with a two-way telephone between the ship and the factory. Progress has indeed been swift in the sardine industry.

The price of sardines has always fluctuated with supply and demand. From a low asking price of $5.00 per hogshead in 1913 to a high of $75.00 per hogshead during World War I and finally to an all-time low of $3.00 per hogshead in 1932 has caused the industry trouble. During the depression years the industry suffered reverses. Hit by fire, depression, and western and European competition, the packers were placed at a serious disadvantage. Today the industry survives, but its ever-present problem is to increase its share of sales in a market dominated by low prices.

During and after the war years, improved trawlers, seiners, and carriers made it possible to seek larger catches. The emphasis was to switch from weir fishing to seining. This new approach to an old industry consisted of using large seining vessels carrying miles of netting folded in such a manner that it could be paid out over the stern of the ship. By swiftly completing a large circle an entire school of herring could be trapped and captured in the seine, then 'pursed' in such a way that as the seine was brought aboard the fish were gathered in the ship's hold.

The present decade is witnessing the addition of a completely different fishing craft. A steel-hulled floating laboratory equipped with the very latest innovations, the new fishing vessel may fish for herring or tuna from New England to the waters off South America. A far cry indeed from the string of small sail-driven pinkies of the 1880's.

The depression years witnessed the death blow to shipping other than the fishing industry. It was in 1931 that *Governor Dingley,* last of the Eastern Steamship Line, was pulled off the Eastport to Boston run. The last surviving tugboat, *Mary Arnold* was sold to a Belfast concern, there being no further need locally for tugboat service.

A brief glimpse of former glories was witnessed in 1932 when several four-masters were towed into the harbor. However, the final destination of these fine old ships whose holds once carried the cargoes of the world,

was the junk yard. They were burned for the copper that held the sturdy frames together. Relics of their destruction may still be seen at Deep Cove.

While it is true that the old-time shipyards have long since disappeared, a brisk business in the building of small eighteen-foot pleasure craft well-suited for the rugged coastal waters of the area, is carried on locally.

The water front no longer is ringed by docks and wharves to shelter the many ships which once frequented this port city. A new, modern pier and breakwater now offers ample shelter to all craft large and small that seek haven here. Yet sometimes one wonders if at night when the moon is low and the sou'west wind blows gently over the waters, the sounds one hears as he walks along the water's edge may not be the creaking of the stays as some ghostly ship slides silently to her berth at some long-gone dock along the water front.

C. Donald Brown is a native of Eastport, Maine. He has a long interest in the history of the region and teaches American History in Morse High School, Bath, Maine.

SEA LAWYER

On 20 May 1736, the body of Samuel Baldwin, Esq., barrister of the Inner Temple, in compliance with an injunction in his will, was placed in a leaden coffin and dropped into the sea off the Isle of Wight. To the surprise of the mourners, it did not sink which occasioned various suggestions among the superstitious but, several holes being bored in the coffin, it quickly slid from view.

Mr. Baldwin's motive for this extraordinary mode of burial for a lawyer, was to prevent his wife from 'dancing over his grave,' which she had frequently threatened to do in the event she survived him.

CAPTAIN EDGAR K. THOMPSON, U.S.N. (Ret.)