

41°N

THE MAKERS ISSUE

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ABOUT 41°N

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MAKING “THE MAKERS”

NOT WANTING THE ART OF QUAHOG TONG MAKING TO BE “LOST TO history,” Ben Goetsch, Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council aquaculture coordinator, reached out to us a while ago to ask if we would be interested in writing about the few remaining local craftsmen supplying equipment to dwindling numbers of quahog tongers. That request led to our cover story (page 8) as well as got us thinking about other makers connected to the oceans—like wampum artists, salt makers, and boat builders. We also looked more broadly at less tangible creations, like communities being built and strengthened, as we see in “Cold Water Women” (page 2) and “Solidarity Through Seafood” (page 36).

And speaking of makers, we want to thank the writers and photographers who make each issue possible—many are longtime contributors whose names you see issue after issue and you come to know through their work. We are grateful they share their gifts with us, capturing stories from all corners of our coastline and helping us to appreciate the many facets of Rhode Island’s ocean and coastal places and people.

While we recognize that our oceans and coasts, their resources, and the communities that depend on them are still facing challenges from climate change to COVID, we wanted in this issue to celebrate the beauty of the things that people make from the ocean and for (and with) their neighbors. We hope these stories will give you a moment of respite amid the daily fray.

—MONICA ALLARD COX
Editor

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COLD WATER

*BUILDING CONNECTIONS
IN A NICHE SURFING COMMUNITY*



ER WOMEN

by **Meredith Haas** Photographs by **Cate Brown**

IT'S 7:30 A.M., AND I DON'T FEEL MUCH LIKE pulling myself from my warm bed on a Saturday morning, even though the sun is shining brightly through the window and the surf is up. The soft ping from my phone on the nightstand summons me.

I'm heading out now is all it reads. With a huff of exertion, I roll out of bed and begin the process.

It's mid-March, which means the air is in the mid-30s to 40s with water temperatures about the same. I pull on my knee-high wetsuit socks that make the next part of pulling on the wetsuit 100 times easier. Winter wetsuits are not as flexible as their warm-weather counterparts, owing to a substantially thicker construction of neoprene that provides protection from the painful cold. The socks reduce the friction, helping the wetsuit glide on until my knees. From there, it's a shimmy dance to get it over the rest of my body.

Once encased and with booties on, I toss my gloves, a handful of towels, a mug of coffee, and a surfboard into a sand-filled car and head to the shore. At the break, I stuff my hair down the back of my wetsuit, pull over the hood that binds tightly around my head, which mutes most ambient sounds, and pull on my gloves—leaving only my face exposed.

My feet are protected from the periwinkle-studded rocks as I wade out towards the surf—the wetsuit doing its job in keeping the cold water at bay. As the water deepens and I begin to paddle, any stiffness wears away. Eight other heads are bobbing in the water,

waiting in the lineup for their turn. As a set rolls in, I see one pop up and then another, gently cruising down the line of a wave. With everyone all hooded up, it's not easy to determine who is who until they're under-way and I can see the color of their wetsuit or board, or the way they move on it. At the end of her ride, my friend sees me and waves with a big smile. I'm glad she texted.

There's a demographic of women you don't see much of when it comes to surfing. Women consumed head to toe in thick neoprene, surfing in colder regions that require wetsuits at least two-thirds of the year.

"You just never see representation like that," says Abby Boone, a pediatric nurse and Wakefield-based surfer. "Growing up and working at a surf shop, I just can't remember seeing magazines, TV, or movies showing women surfing in hoods. They were always in bikinis or short wetsuits."

Boone, a cold-water surfer from York, Maine, has been surfing for nearly 20 years and says there's a whole community of women who surf cold conditions day in and day out year-round who haven't been represented. "I felt like women in the Northeast were a demographic left out."

This drove Boone to start the Cold Water Women Instagram account as a way to celebrate this small niche within the surfing community and connect like-minded women.





“I just wanted to celebrate real women in real conditions because this is just life for us. Many of us have jobs we have to go to, [children], or other responsibilities, and are just stoked to surf when we can, even when it’s hard,” she says. “I wanted to create a space for us to connect and share that bond.”

“The surfing may not be as flashy or aggressive as our male counterparts,” says Chrissy Duffy, a pharmacist and Narragansett-based surfer who helped inspire Boone to start Cold Water Women. “But there is grace, beauty, and a sense of light heartedness that comes with these women.”

To capture that grace and beauty, Boone has relied on the support of many photographers up and down the New England coast who have contributed a number of images to the account, says Boone, noting that the quality of images pays tribute to the women that are passionate about surfing.

“When Abby reached out to start this online community, I was totally supportive of her, her mission, and I certainly had content to contribute,” says Cate Brown, a Rhode Island-based photographer who can often be found as a bobbing head amongst the surfers, geared with her fins and camera ready to capture those nose rides, party waves, or steep drops. “There’s just

Chrissy Duffy, left, and Abby Boone have bonded over a shared love of surfing.

something so different about having a group of women in the lineup. There’s a level of support and camaraderie that’s truly organic and wonderful, and the more women who can feel that ... is a win in my book.”

For Medelise Reifsteck, a real estate agent and Matunuck-based surfer, it was the first time she had seen anyone in the New England surfing community highlighting women. “It was really nice to see someone focusing on the women. That’s what I love about [Cold Water Women].”

In the two years since it launched, Cold Water Women has expanded its reach beyond New England to other cold-water communities of women from all over the world, whether it’s the Pacific Northwest, Nova Scotia, the U.K., or Denmark.

“It has definitely helped to build connections in Rhode Island and elsewhere,” says Boone, explaining that Cold Water Women still only covers a fraction of the women out in the water but that it has helped connect her personally to more women surfers locally, and she hopes to connect with those abroad once the pandemic is over.



Cold Water Bond

Boone grew up in a small surfing community and frequently found that she was one of a few women, if not the only woman, in the water with male surfers, which could be hard at times.

When she moved to Rhode Island for college, she discovered a kind of camaraderie she didn't have before.

"I was out in the water, and I think on a wave, when this other girl smiled at me and shouted, 'Nice wave!' We became friends immediately and have been best friends ever since," she says of Duffy. "It was refreshing to be cheered on by another woman, who was a total stranger to me. It was the kind of supportive energy I wanted to replicate."

Mary Watson, a 5th grade teacher and Newport-based surfer, didn't even know any other girls who surfed when she was younger, nor even after college when she became more dedicated to the sport during a stint in Florida. "Before, it was about getting better, or trying to catch up, but I never had this camaraderie," she says, explaining that after moving back to Rhode Island there was a day where she met other women in the water and felt jazzed by the connection.

"I'll never forget that day, that feeling and desire to

[have] friendships with women that were [also in love with surfing]."

From that desire, Watson started Newport Women's Surf Club nearly 10 years ago, which now has more than 200 members. "I wanted to facilitate a space to create those relationships for myself and others."

While Cold Water Women and the Newport Women's Surf Club set out to connect women surfers, at the end of the day, surfing is still an inherently solitary activity. But it's one that connects even perfect strangers because it's a shared personal experience, which is why many of these bonds can be lifelong.

"We aren't far away emotionally because surfing isn't just a hobby. You're connecting with women on a different level because surfing isn't just a sport or activity, it's this spiritual, natural thing ... it's this relationship you have with the ocean, and anyone that surfs [understands it]," says Watson.

From the perspective of a self-described "older" surfer, Reifsteck, who will be 60 next year, says that the scene has transformed over the last 20 years since she started surfing when her daughter was 9 years old, and back then, there were few women in the water. "Talk about progression for women. You can be out on any given day now and see [a number of women in the

For Medelise Reifsteck, surfing has seen her through many life changes.

lineup]. On a personal level, that feels really nice and empowering—that we have embraced the sport, which goes even further when it comes to the winter because it’s definitely hard.”

The Screaming Barfies

It takes a special kind of grit to surf in regions where the water temperatures may not even peak at 60°F in the summer, never mind the frigid temperatures of the winter.

“I would always make an extra effort to approach girls in the winter because those are the girls that are really surfing,” says Watson. “There’s this different commitment because you have to put on all of this stuff and then take it off, and it sucks.”

That, and surfing in winter gear is just hard, adds Boone. “All the gear is restrictive, you lose your dexterity, you can’t feel your footing,” she says, adding that it can be hard to even hear with the hood cinching down on your face. “In spite of that, it’s really cool to see people get out there.”

Winter surfing is a niche within a niche, and one that’s been growing steadily for women because the reality is, as Boone points out, that in these colder regions, if you don’t surf in the winter, you’re missing out on six or more months of the year—a time when the waves are better and there are generally fewer people in the water. But it also means dealing with much colder conditions and numb faces, numb feet, and numb hands.

For some of us, the experience may be a little more intense. The term “screaming barfies” is often used by ice climbers or mountaineers to describe the painful sensation when your hands or feet begin to warm up after being cold for an extended period of time. The actual medical condition is referred to as the “hot aches” and can occur after winter surfing or any other cold-based activity. For me, personally, it feels like my hands or feet have been hit with a sledgehammer, knocking the wind out of me and leaving me with this nauseous feeling. I want to scream in pain and hurl at the same time, hence “screaming barfies.”

“Yes!” says Reifsteck, in agreement with my description. “It almost takes your breath away when it’s at that excruciating point of blood going back into your extremities ... You push yourself and stay out longer, like, ‘meh, it’s not that bad,’ and then it’s like, ‘holy s---.’”

It’s not always agony, she adds, noting that it’s just those really cold days that make it difficult to stay out for any length of time. She describes other days in the middle of the winter that can be beautiful, sunny, and clear with no wind, making it quite comfortable out in the water. “It’s like this best-kept secret ... like you’re getting away with something.”

For those that live less than 15 minutes from the nearest break, everyone seems to agree that suiting up at home is the best choice.

“If I’m already suited up and the waves aren’t awful, there is no way I am backing out. I find if I have to put my wetsuit on in a freezing parking lot or side of a road, I am more likely to skip a session if the conditions aren’t that stellar,” says Duffy.

Reifsteck agrees that it can be easy to talk herself out of a session when it’s cold and the waves are small, but that the effort of getting on her wetsuit propels her to get in the water, and she never regrets that she did. But then it’s straight home. “I almost never get out of my wetsuit until I get home ... I can’t even imagine taking my wetsuit off on a 20-degree day after I’ve been surfing for an hour in 38-degree water. I just want to get home and warm.”

Worth It

While there are those isolated days of cold agony, almost everyone will agree that it’s worth it.

“It’s meditative—stress and time do not exist when I am in the water. No matter how crowded the lineup is or poor the conditions are, I always leave the water with a better feeling than when I got in. It washes the day away and leaves me with a feeling of lightness,” says Duffy, who recently had a baby and is looking forward to getting back in the water. “Surfing also gives me time with my friends and an opportunity to meet new people, which is not always easy with our busy everyday schedules.”

“I feel like myself when I surf,” says Watson, who hasn’t been able to get out in the water as much as she’d like to with a 5-month-old. “I think about it all the time. Any exercise I do is to be strong so I can get back in the water.”

For Reifsteck, surfing has evolved over many life stages. At first, she says her early drive was to get better and be a part of the surfing community. And when she got divorced, it became a way to connect with other women and make new friends during a hard period. Now, she says, a lot of her motivation has to do with staying healthy and young.

“It gives me a sense of pride that I’m still doing it ... Sometimes I force myself when it’s cold because I always enjoy it once I do it, and it helps me stay healthy physically and mentally,” she says. “The day I don’t go in to surf is the day I’m starting to get old.”

Forging On

THE LAST OF THE QUAHOG TONG MAKERS

by **Ellen Liberman** Photographs by **Jesse Burke**

THE CLAM HAS BUT TWO DEFENSES: A SHELL AND a foot. It uses the latter to burrow as much as 11 inches under the sea floor, where it hopes to live quietly in the muck, filtering phytoplankton for a dozen or so years, on average. (Ming the mollusk is officially the longest-lived ocean quahog, reaching 506 years before being scooped up in Icelandic waters for a scientific survey.) But the clam has its enemies. They range from delicate safecrackers like moon snails, which drill a hole to suck out the toothsome meat, to smash-and-grab artists like seagulls, which drop clams on rocks to pulverize their shells.

Then there are the human predators, who have other tools at their disposal. The first clam diggers tread the shallows, feeling with their feet and harvesting by hand. But eventually, technology was brought to bear. One of the earliest implements was the hand tong for oystering, first documented in colonial Maryland in 1701. Shellfish tongs have a deceptively simple design: two sharp-toothed metal baskets are fixed to long wooden handles, called stales, and joined together, like scissors. But there's a bushel of difference between a good set of tongs and a bad set, located someplace around the hinge point—and Harry Andersen knows exactly where it is.

On a sunny December afternoon, two pale lengths of Douglas fir lie on the bench in his Touisset workshop. Andersen favors this species for its tight, straight grain and absence of knots and pitch pockets. The flat boards are narrow at the top, where the quahogger will grasp the stales, and slightly flared at the bottom, where they will be fitted to the heads. Bill Beebe, a family friend, plants himself at the wide end, which is clamped in place and marked.

"Cut it proud to line—still have to teach these kids," Andersen jokes.

Andersen is a baby-faced 91-year-old, with polar-night blue eyes framed by thatches of white hair on his head and chin. By his reckoning, he's hung several



Harry Andersen, right, has crafted wooden handles for hundreds of sets of quahog tongs.

EDITH W





Bill Beebe and Harry Andersen hang a set of tongs for Ben Goetsch of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council.

hundred pairs of tongs in the last quarter century. But Andersen moves more slowly and tires more easily than when he started, so it's Beebe who guides the skill saw along Andersen's steeply angled pencil lines. The cut falls to the floor and the smell of sawdust rises.

Andersen's workshop is a grand bazaar of antique hand planers and power tools, jam jars of custom washers, random boards, and intricate ropework.

"This place is a mess—a typical shop, I guess," he says drily.

More accurately, it is a tableau of Andersen's personal history and family heritage. His father, Anders Andersen, immigrated from Larvik, Norway, in the early 1920s. The replica of a Viking long ship mounted to the shop wall attests to his Scandinavian roots. The family settled in Providence, where Anders opened his carpentry business. His business sign hangs in the opposite corner, while a salesman's sample of a curved staircase he built occupies the floor.

Harry himself started out as a journeyman carpenter, but he spent most of his career in the precision tool business, first as head of engineering for Bruce Diamond Company in Attleboro and later as head of his own company, Cone Set. He's been on the water since he was 6 years old, sailing out of the Washington Park and Edgewood Yacht Clubs. In 1956, Andersen moved to Warren to build the house he still lives in, which hugs the banks of the Cole River.

He had a brief second career shellfishing. For two years, he was captain of the *Wando River*, a 92-foot ocean-going clam dredger. Then, Andersen lobstered part time for several years, aboard his own 32-foot

Holland, the *Edith W*, named for his wife of 68 years. In 1995, he retired, and sometime around then Harry met Dennis Medeiros. Andersen's daughter Kimberly had hired Medeiros, a clammer, a welder, and a maker of rakes and tongs, to paint her house across the street.

"We got to talking and, for some reason, he saw my shop," recalled Andersen. "He asked me, 'Have you ever hung clam tongs?' I said 'No.' Well, I needed a pastime in retirement, and I had used clam tongs before. [Medeiros] showed me the way he did it, and I've done them ever since."

Beebe cuts the second stale and switches to a hand planer to shave each end, curl by curl, to a perfect fit.

"Now the truth comes out," Andersen says. Beebe gingerly taps one basket onto the handle, before Andersen grabs a hammer to bang it home. "Okay, let's see how she looks."

Beebe and Andersen stack the stales and study the marriage of metal baskets. Andersen cocks his head to take a side angle; he doesn't like the view.

"See the teeth?" he says, "they aren't in the middle. See the spacing? These have to be parallel."

A Unique Pair

Tong making also requires a skilled welder to manufacture the metal baskets. Three years ago, Medeiros persuaded Ned Miller to become the heir to his tong and rake business. Miller, who studied sculpture with Connecticut artist Nicholas Swearer, had been fabricating decorative ironwork and structural steel pieces, and had never considered making shell-fishing equipment.

"It kind of fell into my lap," he recalls.

In another instance of serendipity, Medeiros was scouting Tiverton real estate when he spotted a welder's business sign. That man wasn't interested in buying Medeiros' operation, but he passed on Miller's name.

"The next thing I know, Dennis calls me about this opportunity. We met and agreed on a price, and I would work with him for couple of months to learn the nuances of building bull rakes. It's a specialty. A lot of the parts and pieces are made off handmade jigs, and quahog fisherman are a solitary and picky crew," he says. "I was afraid I would take over the business and they would throw up their hands after 30 years buying





equipment from the same guy. Someone new changes things—even subtle changes. It’s a safe assumption that the fishermen wouldn’t be happy about that.”

By all accounts, Miller and Andersen have worked well together. But their partnership feels fragile.

Ben Goetsch, the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council’s (CRMC) aquaculture coordinator, ordered the pair on Andersen’s workbench for himself, after trying to replace the tongs the department uses for shellfish sampling. His predecessor conducted surveys with his personal pair, and when he retired, he took his tongs with him. As far as Goetsch could figure, Andersen is the only one who still makes the stales and knows how to hang them properly. Miller is the last blacksmith on the East Coast—maybe the entire country—still forging heads.

“This really is a dying art form,” Goetsch says.

The Clam Tong’s Heyday

Tong making has always been the province of individual crafters, inviting few innovations. The U.S. Patent Office database, going back to 1791, contains one patented clam tong design, from 1929.

“Everyone tried their own thing and saw what was working and copied that. Even still, the rakes are made by a guy in his shed—nothing mass-produced here,” says Sarah Schumann, author of *Rhode Island’s Shellfish Heritage: An Ecological History*.

Nor was there much demand for clam tongs until after World War II. Oysters were the main fishery, Schumann says. For 30 glorious years, the money was in oyster farming or harvesting seed stock for the big players. By 1911, there were 21,000 acres of Narragansett Bay bottom under lease. But the industry collapsed under the combined weight of ecological and economic forces: metal effluent and raw sewage polluted the water, the Hurricane of 1938 demolished the shucking sheds, soil run-off silted the seabed, the war drained the labor pool, and the per-bushel price flatlined.

As Schumann recounts, the wreckage of the oyster industry created the ideal conditions for the rise of the quahog fishery and the ranks of its wild harvesters. The hard-bottom estuary softened into a mucky habitat favored by the hard-shelled *Mercenaria mercenaria*, also known as the northern quahog, which is landed today. In the 1920s, state regulators began to take note of the clams’ abundance. About 20 years later, Rhode Islanders took up quahogging in earnest.

“Before it was more of a fringe activity,” Schumann says. “In the 1940s people flocked to it as an industry, and going to work on the water became more of a full-time job. That’s when they started to improve how they harvested.”

Historians have identified 15 different harvesting

Matt Steely is an assistant welder to Ned Miller and works on fabricating quahog tong baskets.



methods or tools, used at different times and in different regions. Clammers have used rakes, in one form or another, since at least 1863. The progenitor of the modern bullrake was purportedly invented in 1940 by Long Island shellfishermen and refined to its present design in 1974. In the Narragansett Bay fishery, tongs dominated until then. The real tension arose between those who put their backs to the task and those who preferred the efficiency of machines. World War II launched a fleet of 40 dredge boats, plying the bay. A dredger could scoop up in minutes what cost a manual harvester hours of labor. The battle made the newspapers and prompted the General Assembly to progressively confine the dredgers to deeper waters. Dredging was officially prohibited in 1969. But a drop in demand for the larger “chowder” clams that the dredgers harvested dismantled the fleet more decisively than legislation.



"At that time there were two cultures," Schumann says. "One wanted to harvest with their hands using man-made rakes and tongs, but others wanted to harvest in a mechanized fashion. There was a period of negotiation of how we would harvest this resource, and the hand rakers won out. Now it is all hand harvest."

Clam tongs, however, were on their way out as the professional's tool of choice. Stales top out at 20 feet, limiting the tonger to depths of 14 feet or less. The resource was moving farther offshore and out of a tong's grasp. Bullraking required more muscle and technique to work with the skiff's drift, but it had two key advantages over tongs: you could quahog in deeper waters and catch clams in different types of sediment. In the late 1980s, divers began competing with tongers in the shallower hunting grounds.

Tongs still have their enthusiasts, even though their numbers have diminished.

"If you get a guy who knows what he's doing with a set of tongs, you're going to get a lot of clams, if he's got the right bottom," says Bill Long, a retired fisherman from Wakefield who had hired Miller and Andersen to make his set of tongs. "A good tonger can do as good as a bullraker, but he's not going to be in deep water."

Goetsch has a slightly dreamier take.

"There's something to tonging. It's interesting—a different type of meditation. Raking is playing the averages," he says. "When tonging, you are really feeling the bottom and seeing where quahogs are or aren't; there's a different feel to it."

A Place for Tongs

The sun is warm on the back of the neck, and the wind is out of the southwest at 12-15 miles an hour, as Dan Goulet pilots the SeaArk Commander along the coast of Tiverton. Goulet, the CRMC's dredge coordinator, and Goetsch are heading to Seapowet Point to survey a skinny slice of the Sakonnet River estuary. In mid-December, the CRMC was scheduled to discuss a proposal for an oyster farm on a 3-acre patch, about 200 feet offshore, and Goetsch needed to take the bottom's measure before the weather turned against him.

"You don't want to put a shellfish farm on a productive shellfish bed—that's off limits because it creates a de facto spawning sanctuary," says Goetsch. "We want to make sure we are not [leasing] areas that are already important for commercial or recreational use."

Tongs are Goetsch's sampling instrument of choice, and a pair of 14-footers rest atop a storage locker on-deck. The goal was to pull up whatever inhabited the riverbed at five to eight different square-meter spots. The breeze had stirred some trepidation. Southwest winds create a lot of fetch—they weren't entirely sure Goulet would be able to hold the boat still against the chop.

"You want to get an accurate, discrete sample," Goetsch explains. Rakes work with the drift, so it's difficult to identify with certainty what ground was covered. "With tongs you can drop them where you are."

Buoys marked the proposed farm, just south of a rock jetty shouldering the beach. Goulet throttles



Ned Miller



down to ease up to the spot. They debate dropping anchor but fear that it wouldn't take long before the boat would drift right out of the lease bounds. Using the engine torque against the waves seems the best bet; Goulet turns the bow into the wind, where the outgoing tide helps to hold the boat in place.

"You just might be all right," he says.

Goetsch positions the tongs above the water, and they slip straight down like a high diver. Goetsch leans over the portside gunwale, opens the stales wide, and feels the teeth grab the sediment. He draws the stales closed and vigorously shakes the tongs before hauling them up, hand over hand. Goulet and Goetsch slide the tongs horizontal to the rail and work their fingers through the black muck dripping from the basket. Rocks, some slippers, a sea snail—no clams. Goulet records the sample on a form in the wheelhouse.

The pair reposition the boat and tongs at scattered points to finish the survey; the haul of marine life remains meager: some slippers, one whelk, one old quahog, and lots of rocks. Goetsch couldn't fault his equipment.

"These tongs work great," he says, as they head back to the docks under the Sakonnet River Bridge. Goetsch demonstrates, interlacing his fingers together and snapping his palms closed. "The teeth have to catch the clam and pop it in the basket."

"It has to do with the geometry of how they are hung," he says. "Every head is different, and the teeth have to be aligned a certain way. The fulcrum position is very important to give the proper mechanical

advantage, otherwise they are hard to operate. So, you are taking a big enough bite to cover some ground, but your arms only expand so wide, and you only have power between your shoulders. Where the fulcrum is based will determine how wide the basket will open when it's shoulder-width apart, and a special formula determines the length where to put the pin. That's pretty critical."

A tonger also appreciates well-placed teeth. Gary White, a former Swansea police officer, has been shell-fishing for side money since he was in high school. He purchased a quahogging boat and a bullrake, but "bull-raking was not my thing. You have to have a knack for it. After about a year or two, I switched to tongs. They look like something very easy to put together, but the teeth have to be angled a certain direction and spaced exactly, because if they are too far apart you will lose the most valuable shellfish, which are the small ones."

White now owns four pairs in 8-, 10-, 12- and 14-foot lengths that he uses in the Cole and Lee Rivers, which empty into Mount Hope Bay above the Rhode Island border.

"I was always happy with tongs. I could hear the 'cling.' You could tell if you were picking up rocks or quahogs. It has a different feel," he says. But, the best thing about tonging, White says, is that they extend a shellfisherman's career. The wooden stales have a natural buoyancy that makes them easier to haul. "You have 76-year-olds out there, and they can swing tongs better than a younger guy. Those old-timers make more money than I ever did."



Ben Goetsch uses tongs to determine whether a potential oyster lease has quahogs, making it unsuitable for aquaculture.

Requiem for the Tong Maker?

The obituary for the clam tong has been written in other coastal communities. The ecosystem shifts and the orders dry up. The tong maker ages, and there doesn't seem to be anyone or any reason to carry on the tradition. Some here are preparing themselves for the end of this era in southern New England.

"It takes such an art to make a good pair of tongs. Even the type of wood you have to use has to be right. [Andersen's] unbelievable," White says. "It's going to be difficult to find someone to make tongs like his once he goes out of business."

Miller almost parted with Medeiros without learning how to make the heads. He literally was on his way out of Medeiros' shop when he remembered, "Wait! You never taught me how to build tongs." Miller couldn't stay, so Medeiros taught his assistant, Matt Steely, who makes them today—even as the demand has steadily waned.

"The majority of my business is 90% bullrakes and 10% tongs," Miller says. "That's because there's not that many tongers left, and a lot of the tongers who come in are close to retirement."

Likewise, Andersen's seen his business fall from hanging 20 tongs a year, to just a handful. Neither Miller nor Andersen is sure how long they'll keep at it.

"Tongs are labor intensive, because they have twice as many teeth as a rake," Miller says. "I tried to keep [the old] pricing for a year, but then I needed to adjust. It's a tough balance. Everything goes up and the profit



margin is low. I've been thinking about phasing them out. But there's an historical aspect to it, and if we weren't building them, I don't know who would be."

Andersen is no less willing; his mind is sharp. But the old-growth fir from the West Coast was already scarce and expensive before the summer's wildfires wiped out more of the species. Schlepping to the lumber yard, carrying the wood, and maneuvering them around his shop are tasks rapidly moving beyond his limits.

"I can't physically do it much longer," he says. "I'm getting too old, and it's too hard to handle them." He's passing on the trade secrets to Beebe. "He'll probably do it after I pass away—as long as somebody wants to buy them."

Beebe and Andersen fiddle with the heads until they are satisfied that the teeth are properly nested, and then Beebe bolts them into place. He transfers the stales to the ancient Homecraft drill press that Anders Andersen once used to the drill the holes at the precise point above the baskets. They fit a pair of washers under the bolts recessed into the wood to become the bearing point for the pin between handles. They insert the stainless bolt to join the stales together and open and close the tongs to test the hinge.

"Yeah," Andersen says. "That should be it. Yep."



REVIVING THE ANCIENT CRAFT OF SALT MAKING

by Meredith Haas

WE WERE OUT OF SALT. AFTER MONTHS OF home cooking during the COVID-19 pandemic, we went through basic supplies, like flour and yeast, much faster than previously—especially during the holidays. And whether you're into baking or cooking, there's no getting around the importance of salt. But instead of going to the store, my boyfriend and I thought it would be a good idea to try our hand at making our own. Plus, it was a sunny, clear, December day—a good excuse to get outside and go to the beach, armed with a 5-gallon bucket.

After filtering the seawater we had collected at East Matunuck, we filled a large Pyrex baking dish and set our oven set at 250°F with the intent to evaporate all of the seawater and not burn the salt left behind. After many hours, we started to see white crystals form, becoming whiter and thicker as the water vapor escaped. The satisfying crunching sound as we scraped this beautiful, white, flaky salt into jars made us feel very accomplished—like modern-day Renaissance people.

And then we tried it.

Wow! I had never tasted anything so bitter and salty. It was like salt on steroids, with a one-two punch that made my face cave in on itself. *How did this happen? Where did we go wrong?*

“Oh, yeah, that's those calcium and magnesium salts that come out of the solution first,” says Matt Mullins, co-owner of Newport Sea Salt Co. “They are super bitter ... I filter those when I transfer the water from the boiling kettles to my simmering skillets.”

Noted.

Before he and his wife, Tami Mullins, started Newport Sea Salt Co. four years ago, their first batch, like ours, wasn't very good. He and his oldest son had gone out to Brenton Point on a Sunday afternoon and filled half a bucket with seawater to bring home and make their first batch of sea salt.

“We were amazed that after a few hours the salt crystals started forming, but it wasn't so successful,” he says, describing the same “bitter and very harsh, very in-your-face salty” experience.

“It was a series of trial and errors. Making salt is a mixture of art and science. You have to understand the different temperatures that will create different sizes of crystals and durations of boiling versus simmering.”

Matt's passion for sea salt grew from a career on the ocean. He spent 20 years in the Navy, traveling to over 40 countries. But it wasn't until he was stationed in Naples, Italy, with his family on one of his last assignments before retirement, planning troop

exercises in southern Europe and the Mediterranean, that he realized the power of salt.

“We really picked up on the proper use of seasoning [with] the Mediterranean sea salt—whether it's seasoning fresh bruschetta or a big salad,” he explains.

The defining moment for them, they both recall, was trying the Fish of the Day at a small seaside restaurant on the Amalfi Coast.

“Until that point, we had pasta at every meal. Pasta, pasta, pasta,” laughs Tami.

“[The fish] was done so simply. It was fresh with just olive oil and sea salt, and grilled,” says Matt. “Mmmmmmm,” adds Tami, remembering their past meal.

“Eddie changed our life,” she says, referring to their Italian server who gave them sage advice that would be the seed of Newport Sea Salt Co.

“He said, ‘Fresh ingredients, good olive oil, and good sea salt is all you need.’”

Upon their return to the States, when the boxes of Mediterranean sea salt they carried home ran out, they were surprised that they could not find any local sources.

“I mean, considering here in Newport, we are an island literally surrounded by sea salt. And we are the Ocean State. We have this great resource called the Atlantic Ocean, and nobody was utilizing it. How can this be?” Matt says, recollecting his dismay. “Salt is the most basic ingredient, yet [Rhode Island] was importing all our sea salt and it didn't make



Matt Mullins collects seawater at Brenton Point to transform into sea salt.

Matt Mullins follows a precise method of filtering, boiling, and simmering seawater to create his company's trademark salts.

sense. Imagine if Rhode Island was importing all of its quahogs? I like to say our quahogs taste so good because they're marinating in our salt."

Since perfecting their process, Newport Sea Salt Co. was born and now sells to 17 vendors, providing sea salt to restaurants, meat markets, olive oil shops, and local farmers markets, among others.

"Now, the process is much more refined and removes the bitterness, and instead of a salty punch to the face, it's more palatable," he says. "It enhances the flavor of the food."

White Gold

Salt is one of the most omnipresent minerals on earth, found in inland deposits from ancient seas that have dried up or in the oceans where minerals are weathered from the land or released from the Earth's interior at rifts in the seabed. So much salt exists in the oceans that if it were all removed and spread over the surface of the Earth, it would form a layer about 500 feet thick, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. That's the height of a 40-story office building.

Salt is the oldest food seasoning and preservative, a quality that helped propel modern globalization by allowing the transport of food over long trade routes or overseas journeys. Ancient cultures, such as the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and others, used salt in religious offerings and as a valuable currency that was traded pound for pound with gold.

Colonial Americans relied on salt imports from England or the Caribbean to preserve meat and fish in order to survive the harsh winters. During the Revolutionary War, salt shipments were blocked by the British, prompting the establishment of saltworks along the coasts for domestic salt making.

The last reference to a saltworks industry in Rhode Island seems to be in 1829 in Newport, according to the Newport Historical Society, although saltworks proliferated along the Cape Cod shoreline and elsewhere in New England late into the 19th century. But the coastal industry declined as inland sources became cheaper and easier to obtain and as the price of lumber needed to build saltworks rose. The advent of refrigeration to preserve food and other technological developments spelled the end of local saltworks.

"It's been almost 200 years since anyone else has taken this sort of venture up of making salt here," says



Matt. "We are not the first ones to do this, but the first ones in a long time as we're revitalizing an older craft of creating sea salt."

Earning Your Salt

Originally, the Mullinses had planned on using a solar evaporation method—the oldest method of salt production that lets the sun do all the heavy lifting in evaporating water. This method is still highly popular around the world since it allows for larger batches to be made and is typically done in shallow ponds or artificial basins. But it works best in warmer climates. "There's no way to get rid of those bitter salts because everything you put in the pan and let the sun dry is all in the final product," says Matt. But they went with the fire and stove method primarily because the Rhode Island Department of Health was not on board with solar evaporation. "My technique allows for a little more control, so I can eliminate those bitter salts ... So, I'm glad DOH [the Department of Health] didn't allow us to solar evaporate," he says, because it led them to making a better product, "a more delicate flake that's not so coarse or harsh."

While the fire and stove method offers more control, it also makes an already physical process more physical. About once a week, depending on the weather, Matt heads out to Brenton Point with a 150-gallon tank to fill with seawater and transport back to Hope & Main in Warren, where they rent one of several commercial kitchens. He lets the seawater settle for a day or so and filters out seaweed and sand with fine-grade mesh filters so that the result looks like drinking water from a faucet.

"I really like collecting water during the winter months because generally we get these northern winds, creating calmer water and less turbidity and stuff to filter out," he says.

Once filtered and ready, another day is spent boiling and simmering, transferring water from large kettles to simmering skillets. Matt arms himself with a timer and a chart that shows which salts come out of solution first to make sure he gets exactly the salt he wants.

"It takes one week to make a batch. It's a physical process getting the salt, transferring it, and reducing it down. And then all the deliveries," he says. "The batches are generally gone after a week. They're sold before we even make them."

One batch makes roughly 28 pounds of sea salt that carries a unique flavor of the region.

"Depending on where your source water is from, the trace minerals can change from location to location," says Matt, adding that a local chef described their product as a "classic sea salt that was light on the

palate" and not too high in any particular trace mineral "whereas some sea salts might be higher in iron, like Himalayan salt, which is why it's pink."

Modern Upgrade

After hours of reducing seawater to sea salt, the final product is a mixture of large flakes and fine grains.

"Once the crystals start forming at the surface of the water, we let that settle to the bottom. It's pretty neat looking—it looks like a piece of ice. When they get to a certain weight or density, they sink to the bottom of the pan. And that goes on for several hours. I'll scoop that out, and it's a nice, flaky, finishing-style salt, and then towards the end of the process, because there's less salt in solution, the remaining salt is more fine, almost like a *fleur de sel*," Matt explains. "We are able to capture that and use a lot of that finer salt for some of our mixtures and cocktail salts."

While local chefs like using the larger flakes to finish dishes, Tami says that they often get feedback from customers who want a smaller-sized salt or different flavors.

"We never thought we would go down that lane. We wanted to stick to pure sea salt," she says, adding that using that finer salt for their signature blends and cocktail salts has been successful.

"We do a butcher's blend, which is great for seasoning burgers and steaks, but also scrambled eggs," says Matt.

"Or Bloody Marys," chimes in Tami.

"The rosemary thyme blend works great with fish and poultry," Matt adds. "And a spicy one we make in collaboration with the Ocean State Pepper Company. He [Ocean State Pepper Company] grows the hot peppers here in Rhode Island, and we utilize them to make the spicy fire salt."

Using local resources and collaborating with local businesses is a priority for the Mullinses and will shape how Newport Sea Salt Co. continues to evolve.

"We have such a supportive community ... we're just trying to figure out the next step," says Tami, who continues to work part time at the Naval War College, noting the importance of that income given the ups and downs of running a small business.

Their 16-year-old son, Matthew, says it's been inspiring to have motivated and passionate parents dedicated to what they do. "It makes me want to achieve more in life and accomplish as much as they have. They also make some amazing meals with our sea salt!" he says.

"It's our journey, and [our kids] are watching it all unfold. We're very thankful."

"Who would've thought just plucking buckets of water would turn into a business," adds Matt. "Somehow, we figured it out."



WAMPUM CRAFT

THE POWER OF A PURPLE SHELL

by **Sarah Schumann**

Photographs by **Marianne Lee**





Wampum artisans Allen Hazard of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, Josh Carter of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Kristen Wyman of the Natick Nipmuc Tribe, and Annawon Weeden of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe are descended from the original peoples of the New England region and have spent years uncovering and expressing the beauty of the quahog shell.

THE COLOR PURPLE IN NATURE IS PRIZED FOR its beauty and rarity. Here in New England it is found buried in the murky depths of estuaries, further hidden in the cavity formed by the securely clamped shells of the Northern quahog (*Mercenaria mercenaria*).

Like the curl of purple inside a quahog's shell, the history and contemporary culture of New England's Native peoples often remain obscured from the mainstream view. In fact, one of the wampum makers profiled in this story recalls his schoolteacher sending him to detention as a child when he insisted that Native people existed at all in New England.

Through their work with wampum, these artisans illuminate their communities' overlooked existence while invoking the craft's traditional meaning—a meaning that artisan Josh Carter defines as “honoring those relationships with the shell and its life-giving properties from the ocean and then continuing to use the shell to exhibit relationship amongst other people.”

Origins of Wampum

The word “wampum,” or “wampumpeag,” derives from the Algonquian word for “white,” and originally, “wampum” referred to white beads hewn from the inner shells of whelks, not quahogs. Purple quahog shells, in turn, were called “suckauhock,” which incorporates the Algonquian word for “dark.” Over time, the words have become conflated, with “wampum” now generally referring to a variety of beads, adornments, and other crafts made from the shell of the quahog.

Historically, wampum was made by coastal tribes who had access to the shells, but it was culturally important for many Northeastern Woodlands nations, including those living hundreds of miles inland.

“We didn’t spell out words,” Annawon Weeden explains. “We didn’t have any form of an alphabet.” Instead, the white and purple beads were strung into woven belts, their contrasting colors forming patterns and pictures that communicated important information.

“My chief could wear our history,” Weeden says. “My medicine man could wear our history. A storyteller could bring the ‘bible’ out and explain each bead, how maybe hundreds of years ago, it was your great-great-great grandfather who actually made these beads over here. That was the original purpose of the wampum.”

Early wampum was made by hand, with pump drills or bow drills fitted with antler points or rigid thorns. The process was time-intensive. Ancient wampum artists used only the thickest part of each shell, where the purple is the darkest, and each shell typically produced a single bead.

“If you can imagine the time it takes to manufacture one bead,” Weeden reflects. “Those beads would be possibly saved for generations. I might need a couple of centuries of beads just to put together an ounce of that nature, depending on the size and the details in the belt.”

As a result, wampum was treasured. Carter explains, “The message would be spoken into that belt through a specific ceremony, prior to it being delivered to the receiver. Once that belt was delivered to its receiver, that same ceremony would be had, and it was believed that it would strengthen the message, strengthen the medicine.”

The purpose of wampum became misconstrued when Europeans arrived in North America. Seeing Native people offer each other wampum as a means of expressing gratitude, Europeans incorrectly concluded that wampum was a form of currency. Over time, explains Allen Hazard, wampum was adopted as a medium for exchange between settlers and Native



At left is a pipe made by Allen Hazard, which he began as his daughter was diagnosed with cancer. He finished it the day he found she had gone into remission, and hopes to pass it down to her and succeeding generations of family.

At right is the first pipe made by Josh Carter, entitled “Gift For My Grandchildren.” He and Hazard worked on this project together through the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts.

“IT’S A GIFT
TO KNOW
HOW TO DO THIS”





Americans, as “we started to realize that money will get us things that just pulling things off of the land wouldn’t.”

However, the temporary use of wampum as a medium of exchange was a small part of a much larger, unbroken tradition of making and gifting wampum as an expression of reciprocity and connectedness. Most wampum makers consider the comparison to money to be demeaning.

Tradition to Today

Today, wampum available to the general public is most often in the form of decorative necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. Modern wampum makers use a variety of power tools, from tile saws to Dremel tools to diamond-tipped drill bits.

“There’s nothing wrong with adding the new with the old,” says Hazard. Early makers “weren’t able to use seven-strand cable. They weren’t able to use silver crimps. These are just little things that I know that you as a buyer might want my necklace to be made from.”

Another characteristic of modern-day wampum is its diversity. Early wampum makers prized uniformity, because beads crafted by multiple makers needed to be strung together on the same belts. Consistency of size and shape was achieved by threading beads onto a string and running the string through a groove in a designated stone. The same stone would be used by all wampum makers in the community, ensuring that all beads were the same size, regardless of whose hands made them.

Contemporary wampum making, in contrast, enables each maker to create a unique style all their

own. All four wampum makers profiled here are able to differentiate among wampum pieces made by different artisans just by looking at them.

Carter compares these distinctive qualities to accents, “Like if you’re from Boston, and you got that slang. It has a little something to it that distinguishes something I would make versus something Allen would make. It’s something that I know most people aren’t going to recognize, but it’s something that stands out to me like a sore thumb.”

The Making of a Maker

Allen Hazard, the oldest of the four wampum makers profiled in this article, was exposed to wampum from a young age. “I saw my Uncle Harold and my Aunt Laura. I was just a nosy little stinker, and I knew what I liked. I would ask them questions. Then I would go off by myself. I was very confident that when I was done, it wasn’t going to be like what I saw; it was going to be better.”

At age 16, he made his first complete wampum piece: a macrame-braided necklace made of the prettiest shells he could find. He broke all the shells by hand using stones, and scraped them with another stone, rather than using power tools. “I was stubborn,” he recalls, saying that his attitude at the time was: “I’m doing this the old-fashioned way.”

Although Hazard now uses modern tools to speed up the process, he continues to be driven by a desire to uphold “Narragansett tradition, the sacred reality of working with what the Creator placed on this earth for us to respect, the line that says, ‘This animal, this



live being, has given its life so we can continue ours.”

“That is what inspired me to think like my ancestors did,” Hazard adds, “and to take the artistry of it to a whole other level, in ways that they couldn’t, because of the tools that are available to me that were never available to them.”

Josh Carter didn’t start making wampum until he was in his 30s. Growing up, Carter recalled, “I didn’t believe I had one artistic bone in my body.” The desire to make wampum came to him suddenly during a moment of mourning.

“I lost a cousin who was a few years older than me,” Carter explains. “He was one of them larger-than-life humans. Rock solid. When somebody passes in our community, we have passing fire. That fire stays lit until that person is put in the ground. It’s a healing process, a way to mourn and a way to share. I was at his fire, and it was very apparent to me. This whole idea of wampum was something that I was kind of drawn to. I just kind of felt like it always been in my heart. I promised myself I was going to try to be an artist.”

Carter reached out to someone he knew he could count on to teach him the essentials: Allen Hazard. “I immediately sought Allen out, because he is ‘that guy.’ It’s just kind of common knowledge in our communities. He’s so giving and kind and patient. I will never be able to give back what he’s given me.”

Through wampum, Carter got to know himself in a new way. “For my personality and my personality traits, it’s just way outside of the box in terms of what I’m used to, this relationship with wampum. Just really connected. I look at the shell, and the shell tells me

what’s going to come out of that shell. I feel like there’s not a lot of separation between me and what I end up with.”

Wampum also deepened Carter’s connections with his ancestors. Making wampum, he said, “is a part of me that goes back thousands of years. It’s just amazing. It’s so humbling, and I’m so appreciative that the process is still alive. For some reason, the Creator chose to continue that through me. It’s like, ‘What, really?’ I don’t know if I deserve it, but I’ll take it.”

Kristen Wyman also apprenticed under Hazard for a year. “Prior to getting into wampum making, I did not consider myself a maker or an artist. My life purpose is to protect, defend, restore our food ways,” she says, which she does through her work with the nonprofit Why Hunger and as a grassroots organizer with the Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective.

She met Hazard at an art fair. Their chance meeting lingered in her mind, and a year later, she asked him if he would train her.

Reflecting on her apprenticeship experience, she says, “What’s beautiful about what happened is that I’m going to continue to carry on his way of making wampum. I haven’t taught anybody yet, but I imagine [teaching] maybe one of my daughters, or someone in the community. I know it’s a gift to know how to do this. I imagine, over time, I’ll find the right person that I’d say, ‘This is important to learn how to do and to continue.’”

Wyman’s community food systems work demands a lot of her time and energy, and wampum making is often pushed aside.



This necklace by Josh Carter is titled “Turtle Island,” and was inspired by an old creation story in which what is now called America is referred to as Turtle Island.



“The organizing work is very hard,” Wyman says. “There’s a lot of erasure and invisibility of indigenous people. It’s a pain that I live with every single day. In the work that I’m in, it’s me choosing to step into that every single day and face it head-on, knowing that I’m trying to change the situation. I get lost in that sometimes, and I just get depleted.”

Working with wampum, Wyman says, has been restorative. “Through that process, I realize how healing it is and what a privilege it is to be able to work with this material ... It’s a gift for me. It’s not about me controlling the process or controlling the outcome or the shell. It’s about me humbling myself to that, and spending time, and being aware of all of the benefits and gifts and medicines that it gives.”

Annawon Weeden is a performer who practices song, dance, and traditional building demonstrations to promote knowledge of Native American culture in New England. Weeden laments that for the mainstream New Englander, Native culture is like a “scavenger hunt, hidden mystery, a treasure.” In his

view, wampum is a way to make this culture more visible.

Although he made wampum casually for years, he decided to launch an online retail business, First Light Fashion, after observing the pervasiveness of Navajo turquoise jewelry throughout the Southwest.

“When I got out there, I noticed people were wearing the turquoise everywhere, even at the supermarket,” he recalls. “The arts are thriving everywhere. Young, old, boys, girls, you name it; everyone’s involved somehow in preserving the various arts of their community. It really showed me this is how Natives take pride, not just in [our] culture, but in our identity.”

That experience led to a revelation for Weeden. “I want to see that in wampum,” he says. “I may never see as many Indians walking around New England as I see in the Southwest. But if I can at least see as many people wearing wampum as I see wearing turquoise in the Southwest,” he concludes, he will feel he has lived his mission.

Making Meaning and Beauty

When Annawon Weeden, Kristen Wyman, Josh Carter, and Allen Hazard make wampum, they feel they are making much more than a bead or adornment. They are forging connections between past and present, between people and nature, between indigenous and mainstream cultures.

“There’s so much beauty and care and magic,” Wyman reflects. “Maybe magic isn’t the right word. I guess beauty would be the best way to describe it. Power. There’s so much power in that, too. To be able to transform that food that sustained our ancestors into something beautiful that carries that power, and spirit, no matter what, I believe is a traditional art. Our traditions are always adapted. We’ve changed over time, but what’s always been consistent is our spirit.”

LEARN MORE

The Purple Shell—Allen Hazard and Josh Carter

The Umbrella Factory, 4820 Post Rd Charlestown, RI 02813

Facebook: @thepurpleshellgifts

Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective—Kristen Wyman

Facebook: @EWRematriation

First Light Fashion—Annawon Weeden

<https://firstlightfashion.square.site>

Facebook: @FirstLightFashion

Instagram: @firstlightfashion



Kristen Wyman created this belt in honor of her grandmother. Each disk represents one of her grandmother’s children and grandchildren, and the disk with the single bead represents the community.

BOOSTING THE BAND OF BOATBUIL

by **Todd McLeish**

Photographs by **Jesse Burke**

AS A SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER AT A MIDDLE school in New York City, Ariana Murphy was restless. After earning a degree in history, she had worked a half dozen different jobs—from retail employee to tour guide to theater usher—before deciding to become a teacher, and yet she still wasn’t satisfied.

So she started thinking about woodworking.

“I was designing my future home in my mind,” she says. “I did a two-week design-and-build class over the summer in Maine, I was taking woodworking classes, but it wasn’t enough. I wanted more.”

That’s when she discovered the International Yacht Restoration School’s (IYRS) School of Technology & Trades in Newport. Murphy had spent much of her life around boats, including her father’s classic wooden sailboat, and she was drawn to the idea of building one.

“I’m not a sailor, but I knew boats, and I knew Newport,” she says. “I’d heard people say that if you can build a boat, you can build anything. Everything in a boat is curves; nothing is square; everything is so complex in its joinery that it’s a great base knowledge.”

So, she enrolled in the two-year program, and she hasn’t looked back.

“I’ve come to appreciate the absolute attention to detail and the painstaking hours of work that goes into the tiniest little curve, the detail that nobody might see except the boatbuilder,” Murphy says. “To make it right and make it watertight is pretty amazing. For me, it has honed my eye and my attention to detail.”

Rhode Island has a long and storied history of boatbuilding, from the Herreshoff Manufacturing Co.

in Bristol, which built steam-powered vessels and racing yachts starting in the late 1800s, to the iconic Blount Boats Inc. in Warren and the more than 100 others of today. According to a 2018 report prepared by economists at the University of Rhode Island, the Ocean State is home to more than 200 boatbuilding and repair companies, employing nearly 2,500 people and generating almost \$400 million in gross sales.

A considerable number of those working in the industry are graduates of IYRS, where students can learn not only traditional wooden boatbuilding but also marine systems (engines, electronics, hydraulics, etc.) and modern boatbuilding using high-tech materials. The school was founded in 1993 by a group of Newport residents who wanted to restore two America’s Cup J-class yachts.

“They felt that wooden yacht restoration was a dying art, and they wanted to do something about it,” says Kim Norton-O’Brien, director of development and marketing at IYRS. “For the first 15 years, boatbuilding and restoration was the only program, and students came from around the country and internationally to learn boatbuilding and ended up becoming woodworking artisans as well.”

The school enrolls about 100 students each year—a mix of recent high school graduates, career changers,

About 100 students annually enroll at IYRS for programs in traditional wooden boatbuilding and restoration as well as cutting-edge composites technology.



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military veterans, and retirees—and about 90% have a job in their field by graduation, many with multiple offers.

For Murphy, 34, the boatbuilding and restoration program is a big change of pace from her lifestyle as a harried big-city teacher.

“It’s a quieter existence,” she says. “We have a daily morning meeting to discuss what’s happening, and then it’s me hunkering down and focusing on a task for hours. The faculty do their rounds and we discuss some more, and then I’m back at it. It’s a lot of muscle memory, where you get into a kind of rhythm. It’s tunnel vision in a cool craftsman way.”

Since the program’s founding, the first year has always involved teams of three students restoring a Beetle cat, a plank-on-frame wooden sailboat that has been built the same way for a century. The boats the students work on in their second year can vary, depending on what vessels are available. Murphy and three fellow students are restoring a 14.5-foot Anderson catboat, which she describes as “beefier and more complex” than the Beetle cat and one requiring much more precise engineering.

“This whole experience has helped me hone in on what I want out of my future career,” she says. “It’s going to be a hybrid of all the things that I am. I have a faceted past, and now I’ve got to find some kind of hybrid job that takes into account my educational background and my woodworking interests.”

“I came into this program with a desire to become competent in woodworking, to understand clear project management, and to be able to read plans so I could possibly get a job or apprentice as a woodshop teacher in the future,” Murphy adds. “I’m not one of those that’s going to go into a boatyard; that was never my goal. I’m not done with being a teacher.”

Most of the retiree-age students enrolled in the boatbuilding and restoration program aren’t aiming for jobs in the industry either. They are predominately hobbyists who want to learn how to build or restore a boat for their personal use and pleasure. But most of the rest end up looking for jobs at boatbuilding companies and in area boatyards. And there is plenty of demand for their skills.

Eleven graduates went to work at Mystic Seaport on the three-year restoration of the *Mayflower II*, including the project’s lead shipwright. Another dozen graduates—including many from IYRS marine systems and composites programs—helped to build *American Magic*, the New York Yacht Club’s entry in the 2021 America’s Cup yacht race. Many others end up going to work for themselves.

That was the path taken by Carter Richardson, an Arizona native who was introduced to IYRS while in the Navy stationed in Newport. He walked by the IYRS

campus almost every day in 1997, admiring the wooden boats awaiting restoration in the courtyard, and he eventually went for a tour. After leaving the Navy and struggling to find a job after the September 11 attacks, he remembered IYRS.

“I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do, but it wasn’t what I was doing,” he says. “I figured I’d take two years at school, and if I liked it, I could move into a career in boatbuilding, and if not, then at least I’d have another skill in my quiver.”

He loved it. After graduating in 2004 and spending two years working at boatyards in Portsmouth and Mystic, Richardson and two fellow IYRS graduates started East Passage Boatwrights in Bristol. They started out exclusively focused on wooden boat restoration and maintenance, and their work soon achieved recognition, receiving top awards at the Wooden Boat Show at Mystic Seaport in 2012 and 2016 and, along with collaborators, winning the 2017 Boat Restoration of the Year from *Classic Boat* magazine for the restoration of a 1935 yawl once owned by Humphrey Bogart.

But while the awards were great for the business’s reputation, significant restoration projects only come along occasionally. So in 2019, Richardson commissioned a naval architect to design a 24-foot traditional open motorboat that he calls the *East Passage 24*. “The idea is that this boat will become our flagship that people will come to us for,” he says. “It’s going to be our next adventure. We’ll be going into production with it soon, we’ll build each one from the keel up, and we’ll be able to customize each one to what our clients want.”

Richardson believes the *East Passage 24* will help to build some consistency into his company’s work schedule and generate additional income. Although some people claim that the wooden boat industry is on the decline, Richardson’s experience proves otherwise.

“Boating skyrocketed last year because it’s seen as something you can still do safely with your family during the pandemic,” he says. “Brokers can’t keep boats in inventory. So I’m convinced there’s a market for the 24, in part because people still enjoy and are captivated by the classic look of a wooden boat. They’ve always had a huge following.”

Wooden boats aren’t for everyone, though. Many boats today are built for speed using high-tech materials. That’s why IYRS launched a composites technology program in 2010 to train students in designing and manufacturing using some of the lightest and

Social studies teacher Ariana Murphy turned to the IYRS wooden boatbuilding and restoration program to hone woodworking skills she could bring back to the classroom.



Murphy works on her second-year project, restoring an Anderson catboat.

strongest materials available. The nationally accredited program isn't exclusively focused on designing and building boats, however.

"We think of it in terms of the materials rather than the end product," Norton-O'Brien says. "Once you learn how to use the material and shape it the right way, you can make whatever you want. We've got graduates traveling the country repairing wind turbine blades, for instance."

Composites are materials made by combining polymer resins with fiber reinforcements, like carbon fiber, glass fiber, or Kevlar. They can be molded into a wide range of objects, from low-cost bathware to high-performance spacecraft structures.

"It's a program that appeals to a younger demographic, in part because when you build things with carbon fiber, those are things that go fast—race cars, speed boats, motorcycles," Norton-O'Brien says. "The nature of the materials has an appeal to younger students."

John Hatcher came to IYRS after getting laid off at a cabinetry shop in Colorado, sailing aboard windjammers in Maine, and working as a draftsman in New Jersey. Then the pandemic hit, and he decided it was time to start over again. At age 41, he's one of the older students in the composites program and one of just three composites students focused primarily on building boats.

He got hooked on boats during a weekend trip to a lake in Colorado. "That's when I realized I needed to get on the water more," he says. "Sailing intrigued me because it's not just hitting the throttle and going; there's more to it than that. So, I went out and bought a little catamaran. Within a day I got the hull flying out of the water, I was having a great time, and then I flipped it. It was scary, but I wanted to do it again."

He chose the six-month composites program because it could be completed relatively quickly, and the skills he would develop would complement his background in cabinetry, engineering, and drafting. When he graduates, he plans to remain at IYRS for another six months to complete the marine systems program as well.

"The wooden boatbuilding program would have been great—I'd be like a kid in a candy shop—but these two programs can be done in a year and I can be back to work again. I love wooden boats, but I've got a kid to feed, and it seems like there's better pay and more job opportunities in composites."

For his final project, Hatcher is building a 7-foot fiberglass dinghy. "The goal of this project is to learn how to make a professional-grade mold that I could



use to produce dinghies," he says. "A lot of the other students' projects are more like trying to crank out one part, but my project is learning how to do the mold. And maybe someday I can make and sell dinghies from that mold."

His ultimate objective, though, is to work for a boatbuilding company. "I want to learn about the process of building and refurbishing boats, how boats go together, and what it's like to work for a boat



company,” Hatcher says. “Long term, I want to work on the shop floor for a couple years, then maybe move into a drafting or project management position to combine my background in drafting and cabinetry.”

Despite the higher-paying job opportunities for graduates of the composites program and the industry demand for those who can design and build with composites, the wooden boatbuilding and restoration program remains the most popular IYRS program.

“Those who come into the boatbuilding program are often people who haven’t succeeded in traditional higher education because they want to work with their hands,” says Bill Kenyon, the IYRS director of education. “When they come into Restoration Hall and stand on the balcony looking down at the work being done, it’s not uncommon for them to say, ‘I don’t know what they’re doing, and I don’t know what it’s going to lead to, but I want to do that.’”



SOLIDARITY THROUGH SEAFOOD

by **Kate Masury** Photographs by **Jesse Burke** Alice Howard portrait by **Dana Smith**

“AS FISHERMEN, WE HARVEST FISH TO FEED people. It’s what we are good at, and now more than ever, as we navigate through the unprecedented pandemic, many Rhode Island families are in need of food,” says Fred Mattera, executive director of the Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island (CFCRI).

One in four Rhode Island families were food insecure in 2020, according to a report by the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, and immigrant communities, people of color, and low-income families were disproportionately affected. Meanwhile, the commercial fishing industry was also experiencing unique challenges as a result of COVID-19. The closure or reduced flow in many of the supply chains that local seafood typically was sold through, such as restaurants, export markets, and institutions, left fishermen with much-reduced market demand. This was reflected in lower prices and shoreside dealers accepting lower volumes of fish, leading to many boats sitting idle at the dock and many fishermen without a paycheck.

These factors, combined with the fact that Rhode Island’s vibrant immigrant and Indigenous communities already knew how to take whole, unprocessed fish and shellfish and turn it into delicious meals, presented an opportunity. The CFCRI and Eating with the Ecosystem, with assistance from the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, developed a new program that, with grant support and donations, purchases fresh local seafood from fishermen and seafood businesses and offers it to Rhode Islanders in need.

Refugees served by the Refugee Dream Center in Providence are among the recipients of a program that purchases seafood from Rhode Island fishermen and seafood businesses and offers it to those in need.

“I see the program as a two-part program,” explains Mattera. “The fishing industry has gone through the pandemic and experienced the low prices, et cetera, but now through this program, we can support the industry by paying them a fair price for their catch and encouraging them to catch species that have limited markets. For example, take medium scup, which is often priced so low fishermen won’t even land it. But now, through this partnership with the community groups, we have created demand. The dealers can say to the fishermen ‘actually Fred wants 2,000 pounds of medium scup,’ and we guarantee the fishermen a decent price, say 40 to 60 cents. And so, instead of throwing these fish away as bycatch, they land the medium scup.”

“The other part is helping our community. This is something that is very important in our industry and something we have done for decades,” Mattera says.

Each winter the commercial fishing industry donates fish for seafood dinners that raise money to assist the elderly and others in South County with essentials such as heating fuel, food, medical bills, and prescription costs. They also donate thousands of dollars annually to buy Christmas presents for children through the Toys for Tots program.

“But now,” says Mattera, “we are connected to these communities, which we weren’t connected with before, and it is incredibly rewarding. We are feeding children, families, and the elderly, and not only that, but it’s healthy, local seafood, caught directly by our industry.”

Between August 17, 2020, and March 1, 2021, over 45,000 pounds of local seafood has been donated to seven different community-based organizations in Rhode Island, and the numbers continue to grow. The first donation consisted of about 65 pounds of scup

“HAVING FRESH FISH MADE US FEEL LIKE WE WERE HOME IN AFRICA”

that went to the African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI) in mid-August. By the third week of the program, the George Wiley Center joined, and now the program has grown to include the Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education, the Refugee Dream Center, Women’s Refugee Care, SunRise Forever, and the Narragansett Indian Tribe.

The CFCRI works with fishermen and seafood dealers to place orders for the fish and shellfish, and the community-based organizations then pick up the orders in Point Judith and bring them back to their respective communities to distribute to their members. The species change each week based on what fishermen are catching. The program started with scup, whiting, and hake and later added mackerel, butterfish, quahogs, Jonah crabs, mussels, conger eel, black sea bass, and albacore. The program is now averaging over 3,000 pounds of donated seafood a week, and demand continues to increase.

“Fish is expensive, and the nutritional value is high,” says Julius Kolawole, the director and cofounder of the AARI, which assists African immigrants and refugees in Rhode Island and promotes unity among African communities in the state. “Last year when the COVID-19 crisis began, too many people in our community became food insecure and lost jobs and so on and so forth. We are not recovered yet, but this program has helped my community a lot.”

Alice Howard, the founder and executive director of SunRise Forever, a nonprofit organization that works in Rhode Island and Liberia on educational, humanitarian, and developmental activities, shares that the program is not only helping to provide food for her community, but it’s also helping her members save money that can be used for other expenses.

“In Liberia, where I am from, we border the ocean; seafood and fish is something we typically eat every

day. Here in Rhode Island, seafood is available to us, but it is expensive. This program is a great help because our community often has to ration their money between fish, other foods, and expenses like medicine or heat. If they are able to save their money on the fish, then they can afford other necessities,” she says.

For many recipients of the seafood, having access to fresh local fish and shellfish has helped them not only feed their families but connect with their heritage and cultural traditions.

“Having fresh fish made us feel like we were home in Africa,” shares one member of the AARI.

“There is a very large population of African residents in the state of Rhode Island,” Kolawole says. Indeed, more than 40 African communities are represented, including people from Cape Verde, the largest community, as well as Nigeria, Liberia, Egypt, Tanzania, The Gambia, and elsewhere.

“Where we come from, seafood is an important part of our lives, but we haven’t been lucky in Rhode Island to be able to access the seafood in the Ocean State,” says Kolawole, who has been working for years to bring local seafood into his community but has faced challenges such as a lack of seafood markets in the area of Providence where many of the AARI’s members reside.

In addition to African communities, Rhode Island is home to many people from seafood-loving areas in countries in the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, and Asia, where ties to the ocean are an important part of their culture and diets.

Camilo Viveiros, coordinator and executive director at the George Wiley Center, which supports local community organizing for social and economic justice, explains that being able to connect people with foods of cultural significance through the fish has been particularly beneficial for his community.

“One of the most important things we do here [at the George Wiley Center] is try to transform how people think about themselves. Sometimes people are embarrassed or feel shame asking for help. The fish has been a way to connect people with their own culture and traditions. A lot of them come from places with fishing communities. When a family brings home fresh fish and cooks it in a traditional way, they are helping to carry on a way of life and tradition that is at risk. Kids these days know more about Colonel Sanders and Kentucky Fried Chicken than the fish off our shores, and this program has helped shift the shame they are

Alice Howard, executive director of SunRise Forever, says that the program helps members of the Liberian community in Rhode Island enjoy fish that is a daily diet staple in Liberia.





feeling about being hungry and connects them with their cultural traditions,” says Viveiros.

There has been an educational benefit to the program as well. While some species such as scup have been familiar favorites, other species such as hake were new to many. “I grew up in an immigrant community on the coast, and scup was something that, if you were fishing on a shoreline or off the bridge, you were familiar with,” says Viveiros, “but it’s been educational to be introduced to and learn about some of these other local species. For example, when our group first saw hake with its whiskers, some people thought it looked like catfish, and not everyone liked catfish. But when



“The fish being distributed has ... created a multicultural, multinational village,” says Camilo Viveiros of the George Wiley Center.

we learned more about it and learned it was related to whiting and cod, people were more willing to try it.”

Alice Howard described some of the traditional Liberian dishes she likes to make such as scup marinated in spices, fried, and served with sweet potato greens, or spinach, onions, and peppers, or mackerel made into fish balls and served over rice. Comparing recipes and tips has been enjoyable for the community partners as well.

“It’s been fun to hear people talk about the ways they recommend cooking the fish and taking pride in the recipes,” says Viveiros. “One of our volunteers is a refugee who is applying for asylum from Uganda, and they were talking with another family and comparing how they prepare fish in East versus West Africa. It’s been educational and fascinating.”

The seafood donations have helped to bring together people from different cultural backgrounds to interact and work together.

“Our block here in Pawtucket is like a little United Nations. Our storefront on one side is a smoothie stand run by a Cape Verdean family, on the other side is a Dominican American church, which is right next to a Muslim karate studio, and around the corner from that is a Haitian church,” Viveiros describes. “When we distribute the fish, we do it on the sidewalk so people see what’s going on, and it’s the first time we have interacted with some of our neighbors. The fish being distributed has been a whole other element and created a multicultural, multinational village. Bringing back the idea of a fish peddler, which people remember from their own villages in other parts of the world. It’s been great having all these different people interact and bring them together.”

Of course, another group that has been brought together is the fishing industry.

“It’s really come full circle,” says Mattera. “They recognize the importance of the seafood industry in providing meals, and they are now reaching out to us saying how can we be supportive and helpful to the industry.”

According to Viveiros, the program has not only been advantageous to his community but also has helped form a connection that he hopes will inspire action. “Being able to share with people the name of the boat, the captain, and that these people in the fishing industry care, even though they also have their own struggles, has been really powerful. The more we can recognize each other, the more empowering it is. It breaks down the barriers. Our community wasn’t necessarily connected to buying fish in a store, but this has rekindled that connection and we are hoping it can continue and we can support the fishing industry and show solidarity with them, to get more support. We want to show reciprocity. The relationship doesn’t just put more protein on people’s tables but helps form that personal connection to people.”

“This is a model of mutual aid. Both communities supporting each other in their own way,” says Mike Roles from the CFCRI, who helped form many of the initial connections with a number of the different community-based organizations. “This is particularly important to me. I think that anytime you can create opportunities for communities to work with each



other and come together, that is my dream—having communities sustain each other and sustain themselves.”

Moving forward, the partners hope that the program will move beyond providing people with just basic needs and be able to present chances for the communities to engage and access new economic opportunities. Julius Kolawole at the AARI hopes that this program will open doors for members of his community and others to be able to participate in the Rhode Island seafood economy.

“This program opens up a new customer base for the fishermen and opens our eyes to learn more about the clams, squid, and different fish that are available. It opens doors of opportunity to all of us. These are communities who love seafood, and we don’t currently have good access. Where we are today presents a chance to think about the economy and the opportunity to expand this. We would love to have members of our community start their own business, where they purchase fish from the local fishing community and bring it back to our community to sell.”

This program was made possible thanks to our generous funders: The Rhode Island Food Policy Council provided \$800 in seed funding to get the program started. The Rhode Island Foundation provided a grant of \$35,000, an anonymous family initiative donated \$40,000, and Vineyard Wind donated \$5,000. Additionally, even though there was funding available to buy fish from seafood businesses, a few fishermen and businesses stepped up to donate free fish to the program. We would like to thank Mike Monteforte, FV Second Wind; Shawn Manville, FV Natator; Doug Feeney, FV Noah; The Town Dock; and Handrigan Seafood.

LIBERIAN-STYLE FRIED FISH WITH SWEET POTATO GREENS OR SPINACH

Recipe courtesy of Alice Howard from SunRise Forever

Photographs by **Monica Allard Cox**



This recipe is made with whole fish and the fish is eaten off the bones. This is traditional and delicious. However, if you prefer, you can also substitute the whole fish for boneless filet.

LIBERIAN-STYLE FRIED FISH

Serves 2-3 people

Ingredients

2-3 whole scup or other local fish (if using a smaller fish such as whiting, increase the number of fish)

1 large bouillon cube or 2 small cubes

1 hot pepper such as a habanero

2 onions sliced thin

Black pepper to taste

A small pinch of salt (to taste)

1-2 cloves of minced garlic (optional)

Vegetable oil

5 bunches of sweet potato greens or fresh spinach chopped into thin pieces (sweet potato greens are more traditional, but they can be difficult to find in most grocery stores so spinach is often substituted)

1 bell pepper diced (optional)

2 tablespoons of water

Cooked rice

Instructions

Clean your fish by scaling, gutting, and removing the gills (you can also have your fishmonger do this for you).

Cut each fish into 3-4 chunks, depending on the size of your fish (you can remove the head if you would like).

Season the fish with bouillon, salt, and pepper.

Blend the hot pepper, 1 onion (sliced), and the garlic (optional) in a blender or food processor. Add this mixture to the fish and mix so that it coats the fish pieces. Let the fish marinate for approximately 15 minutes.

Heat vegetable oil in a frying pan over high heat. You will be frying the fish so you want the oil to cover about half the fish.

Once the oil is hot (you can test this by putting a piece of onion in to see if it sizzles), carefully add your fish. Cook until the fish is golden brown on one side and then flip it



over and cook the other side (approximately 4 minutes each side). Depending on the size of your pan, you may need to cook your fish in batches. Once your fish is golden brown and cooked through, remove the fish from the pan and set aside on a plate with paper towels.

In a clean frying pan, heat 2-3 tablespoons of oil over medium heat. Add your chopped sweet potato greens or spinach, the other onion (sliced), and your bell pepper (optional). Cover the pan with a lid and cook for approximately 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. You don't want your greens to burn. Remove the lid and add about 2 tablespoons of water. Reduce the heat to low and add the fried fish on top of the greens. Cook for approximately 10 minutes, allowing the fish to steam. You can stir occasionally to prevent the greens from burning. Your dish will be done when your greens are nice and soft and tender and your fish is heated through.

Serve with white or brown rice.

Enjoy!

Note:

If you do not like spice, you can also replace the hot pepper with a bell pepper in the marinade, though you might use at least a little bit of hot pepper for flavor.

Whaling Captains of Color

AMERICA'S FIRST MERITOCRACY

By Skip Finley

Reviewed by **Monica Allard Cox**

WHALING WAS NOT A PROFESSION MOST CREW members would choose if they had better options.

Skip Finley paints a harrowing picture of whaling and how its very nature—dangerous, difficult, and remote—allowed an intrepid few Africans, African Americans, Native Americans, Cape Verdeans, and other people of color to attain the role of whale ship captain when limited opportunities were available to them, especially on land. Finley's book, *Whaling Captains of Color: America's First Meritocracy*, is a compendium of stories of these men from whaling's rise in the late 18th century to its decline the early 20th century. The individual portraits of each captain are woven together with Finley's keen observations and analysis about the men, the significance of their voyages, and the social, political, and economic contexts of their times.

As Finley describes the second-most hazardous occupation of its day (after mining): "There were hundreds of ways to die on a whaleship. Crewmen fell to their deaths from the ship's rigging, were slain by Native Americans, died from scurvy or other ailments, were dragged underwater by fouled lines, were killed while cutting in or while fighting whales, and drowned or died from other accidental causes."

Even when not fatal, a whaling voyage—which could last years—was certainly brutal. Crewmen suffered severe boredom when days or weeks passed and no whales were to be found. They choked down maggot-infested food. Even after flogging had been outlawed, it was meted out as punishment on whaling ships, and troublesome crew members could even be restrained in irons. When whales were captured and slaughtered, the butchering and processing was gruesome. Finley quotes from a whaler's writing in 1856: "Everything is drenched in oil, shirts and trousers are dripping with the loathsome stuff. The pores of the skin seem to be filled with it. You feel as though filth had struck into your blood and suffused every vein in your body. From this smell and taste of



blubber, raw, boiling, and burning, there is no relief or place of refuge." To clean the ship's decks of this slippery stuff, crewmen used buckets of their own urine.

Given these harsh realities, whaling was something most crewmen only did once. But its very difficulty presented opportunities to crewmen of color, who could rise through the ranks thanks to their ability to capture whales, lead others, and return home safely—and profitably. All this despite the fact that in addition to the perils confronting all whaling crews, they faced additional threats—before slavery was outlawed, they could be captured and enslaved or imprisoned at ports from North Carolina to Louisiana. The federal Fugitive Slave Acts further endangered the freedom of these men in any port, and indeed, the Northern states were



Whaling Ships Docked in San Francisco
Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum

not innocent—Rhode Island’s notoriety in the slave trade meant that only one captain of color hailed from the state, and that occurred long after the Civil War had ended.

Finley writes that the Massachusetts ports of Nantucket and later New Bedford drew a number of Black whalers, as the area’s Quakers were heavily invested in the industry, and they were strong abolitionists. However, their motives were not entirely altruistic. They knew that crewmen of color would accept lower pay than those who were white. This was equally true even after slavery was abolished. After the Civil War, as African American whalers found less dangerous and equally, if not more, lucrative work, Cape Verdeans, fleeing famine in their homeland, took their places. And it would take most of those men many more years than their white counterparts to command a whaleship.

Despite these challenges, several whalers of color became captains, often when the original captain could not, or would not, continue in the role. Finley tells the stories of all the captains of color that he can identify from the historic record, from the obscure to the notable, such as Paul Cuffe, who were able to amass considerable fortunes in their lifetimes. Still, he finds, these men were rarely able to pass their wealth along to subsequent generations, perhaps because racism

prevented their finding the investment opportunities available to white captains.

The few traces that whaling captains of color left behind seem to fuel Finley’s desire to record the names and histories of those he can glean any information about. He writes that since his research for the book, he looks at the familiar streets of Martha’s Vineyard, where he summers, in a new light.

“These men led whaling voyages to every part of the globe; indeed, several contributed to the mapping of the world’s oceans. They were adventurous, tenacious, fearless, and ruthless Unlike their white counterparts, they left no glistening white waterfront homes behind as testaments to their courage; to their families, they left only pride,” Finley writes.

“Little remains today of their accomplishments—tales of valor and a few monuments are all. It would be a tragedy to forget them.”

Skip Finley spoke about Whaling Captains of Color: America’s First Meritocracy at the Coastal Perspectives Lecture Series sponsored by the Connecticut Sea Grant College Program, the University of Connecticut (UConn) Department of Marine Sciences, the UConn Maritime Studies Program, and the UConn Avery Point Campus Director’s Office. To see the recorded lecture, visit marinesciences.uconn.edu/lectures/.

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A woman in a black wetsuit is holding a surfboard high above her head with both hands. The surfboard is long and thin, with a rainbow-colored stripe along its edge. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The woman is looking up at the surfboard.

Outdoor enthusiast Meredith Haas
("Cold Water Women," page 2)
is Rhode Island Sea Grant's science
writer and digital media manager.

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