



LOBSTER SMACKS IN MAINE

by

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Preface

Unfortunately the story of commercial fishing in Maine has been largely neglected by historians. Indeed, the majestic square-riggers built and manned by Maine men have inspired many more volumes than have the pinkys, or the pea-pods, or lobster boats, or smacks, also built and manned by Maine men. Maine's harvesters of the sea (past and present) represent a distinctive blend of hard working characters, all contributing to a unique way of life. And these individuals are no less significant than any other occupational grouping in Maine. One of the fading stories of Maine's commercial fisheries is that of the lobster smacks. It is a story known by few and known well by fewer. My observations presented in this paper are primarily a result of information given to me by two very knowledgeable, retired smack skippers: Captain Sidney Sprague, age 70, of Rockland, and Captain Charles Dodge, age 83, of Friendship. The primary purpose of this paper, then, is to describe the significance, chronology, and individuals associated with the lobster smacks of Maine.

The secondary purpose of my endeavor is to promote a technique valuable as a method of collecting and preserving information of a cultural, historical nature. I employed the techniques of oral history, that is, I tape recorded interviews with an individual who possessed singular knowledge about a particular subject. Tape recorded interviews allowed me to review and re-evaluate interviews with Captain Sprague before assembling this paper. Additionally, the tapes which contain the story of Captain

Rockland
Friendship

Sprague's experiences, in his own words, have been preserved at the Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History at the University of Maine, Orono. Captain Sprague's reminiscences will thereby be available for future review by historians and scholars. Oral history, for me, is the best way to perceive the basic similarities between myself and those who have lived in different times and have experienced what I have not. Obviously this is a very valuable technique, but unfortunately, like the story of Maine commercial fishery, it has been greatly ignored.

I regret that I could not afford the time and expense that could have improved upon the accuracy and depth of this study. I wish that I could have engaged in more extensive interviewing. Particularly I would have liked to have talked with more of Maine's older fishermen, individuals with smacking experience from the Portland and Jonesport-Beal's Island areas, and knowledgeable persons in Nova Scotia.

To those interested in adding to the recorded knowledge on Maine coastal life, I would suggest several topics that I have touched on lightly:

- (1) The effect of the Nova Scotia lobster fishery on the Maine lobster fishery.
- (2) The significance of the market port of Boston to Maine's fisheries.
- (3) The evolution of lobster fishing techniques, gear and vessels.
- (4) The future of the Maine lobster fishery.
- (5) The development of the Nova Scotia lobster fishery.
- (6) A comparative study and/or history of life on Maine's islands.

ston
island
Jonesport
Portland
Orono

(7) The development of communication and transportation along the Maine coast.

Researching for this paper was very enjoyable. I added to my knowledge, made some new friends, and even went out to Vinalhaven aboard the smack "A.C. McLoon" for a load of lobsters, fish, and shrimp. I am indebted to many individuals who have assisted me, particularly Captain Sidney N. Sprague, of Rockland. To these friendly and helpful people, thanks!

Vinalhaven
Rockland

The Informant---Sidney N. Sprague

Sidney N. Sprague was born on August 24, 1903, the son of a Swan's Island lobster fisherman. The Sprague family moved from Swan's Island to Rockland when Sidney was an adolescent. While still a teenager, he worked for a Rockland lumber company, and later worked for the J.A. Young Lobster Company as a lobster packer. In 1923, at the age of 20, he went to work for the McLoon Lobster Company of Rockland, as an engineer aboard Capt. Gil Simmons' well smack "Adelle McLoon". He worked as an engineer from 1923 until 1934 when he took over the command of the "Adelle McLoon" from ailing, 71 year old Capt. Simmons. Sprague continued to work steadily for the McLoon Lobster Company, and in 1947 he was given command of the new, Friendship built dry smack "A.C. McLoon". When he retired in 1970 after 46 years of dependable service, Capt. Sprague had carried several millions of pounds of Maine and Nova Scotian lobsters in the smacks that he had skippered. On trips from Nova Scotia alone during the years 1951-1955, he carried over 1.76 million pounds. In addition to his piloting duties, Sprague built pounds, operated the company's marine railway; and was a consummate jack of all trades for the McLoon Lobster Company.

Captain Sprague has seen a great deal of change during his life. He has seen the development of smacking vessels from sailing smacks to power smacks; the opening of the Nova Scotia lobster fishery; the development of communications facilities along the coast; and he has sadly witnessed the decline of the once flourishing lobster

*Swan's Island
Rockland
Friendship
Nova Scotia*

companies.

He is a tall man, white haired, determined. He has a Pacemaker in his chest and he is glad to tell you about his operations. He has a sharp mind, he is honest, he is steady, and he is proud. He is one of the last smack skippers.

Early History of the Lobster Fishery

Lobster fishing has probably been practiced as long as there have been inhabitants along the New England coast. Undoubtedly, along with other shellfish, lobsters served as an abundant food source for coastally oriented Indians. Not surprisingly, white settlers to the region soon acquired a taste for 'Homerus Americanus', and it is even speculated that lobster over-shadowed the traditional turkey at the 'first Thanksgiving'.

At first, white settlers lived on or near the coast and each family could easily secure a supply of lobsters. However, as settlements gradually moved inland it became unfeasible to trek down to the coast for the tasty crustacean. Soon it became commonplace for certain individuals living on the coast to supply lobsters to the inlanders, thus the commercial lobster fishery was born.

Due to the abundance of lobster, and its marketability, lobster fishing became a popular occupation in Massachusetts, however over-fishing gradually depleted the lobster population in Massachusetts waters. For example, the lobster fishery of the fishing grounds of Cape Cod began around the year 1800, by Connecticut lobstermen who carried nearly there entire catch to New York City. As early as 1812, the citizens of Provincetown began to believe that unless some restrictions were placed upon the fishery, the species would be exterminated. Protective laws were passed at once by the Massachusetts legislature but they did little to hinder the decline of the lobster population. The fishermen of Provincetown did not themselves engage in lobstering until 1845, but between then and 1850 the fishery was

Mass. Conn. Cape Cod fishing

greatly expanded and a large trade was started with New York City. In fact at this time the latter market received nearly its entire supply from the area of Provincetown. These were profitable times and yielded the inhabitants of the town a fine income. The smacks that carried the lobsters to New York obtained large fares and were kept busy. After 1865 a rapid decrease in the number of lobsters forced more and more lobster fishermen to search for other occupations. In 1880 there were only eight men engaged in the catching of lobsters, and although they used the most improved techniques, their annual gross income was only about \$60 each.¹

While a supply of lobsters was not now available, a taste for them nevertheless remained and southern New England looked northward to Maine for a new supply. The Maine coast is exceptionally well suited for this type of fishery, and as early as 1830, before lobster fishing had been taken up to any extent, smacks from Boston and Connecticut and New York (most of which had been engaged in the transportation of fresh fish) visited Harpswell for fresh lobsters. It is quite likely that smacks visited points to the westward before this time.²

What is a smack? To those unfamiliar with the terms associated with coastal commerce, 'smack' might mean a resounding slap, or perhaps a warm, moist indicator of amorous design, but for this study 'smack' is a general term referring to the several types of vessels having a well in which fish (and lobsters) may be kept alive. As in the 1891 edition of the Fisherman's Memorial Book: "Many of them [vessels] were made into smacks, so-called, which was done by building a water-tight compartment amidships, and boring holes in the bottom to admit sea water, and thus the fish were kept alive."³

New York
Provincetown

An older definition is also relevant, particularly in regard to the first smacks: "a single-masted sailing vessel. Fore-and-aft rigged like a sloop or cutter, and usually of light burden, chiefly employed as a coaster or for fishing and formerly as a tender to a ship of war."⁴ This meaning was reported as early as 1611. Although there is little supporting evidence, the first lobster smacks that visited the Maine coast were probably one and two masted sailing vessels (sloops and small schooners).

At first, owing to the abundance of Maine lobsters, smack men were able to catch sufficient amounts of lobsters by themselves and then return with them to the larger market ports to the south. But when coastal inhabitants observed smack men anchored in their harbors, catching up their lobsters, they were quick to claim their territory and the rights to its valuable resource. The following facts regarding the early lobster fishery of Maine are from the Fisheries Industries of the United States, section v., vol. II:

In 1841 Capt. E.M. Oakes began to carry lobsters from Cundy's Harbor and Horse Island Harbor, Harpswell, to Mr. Eben Weeks, at East Boston. He was then running a well smack, named the "Swampscott", of 41 tons, old measurement. The season extended from the first of March until about the fourth of July, after which time the lobsters were supposed to be unfit for eating; the black lobsters, or shedders were even considered poisonous. During this summer of four months Captain Oakes made ten trips, carrying in all 35,000 by count. He continued in this trade about six years, taking the combined catch of about five or six fishermen. At this same period the smack "Hulda B. Hall", 50 tons of New London, Conn., Capt. Chapell, was carrying lobsters from Cape Porpoise, Gloucester, Ipswich Bay, and occasionally Provincetown, to Boston, making 15 trips in the season of four months, and taking about 3,500 lobsters each trip. Captain Chapell was supplied with lobsters by four men at Cape Porpoise, and by the same number at both Gloucester and Ipswich Bay. For four months following the close of the lobster season on the Maine coast, or from July 4 until November, Captain Chapell ran his smack with lobsters to New York, obtaining most of his supplies from Provincetown.

In 1874 Captain Oakes purchased the smack "Josephine"

*East Boston
Harpswell
Cundy's Harbor
Horse Island Harbor
New York
Cape Porpoise
Gloucester
Ipswich Bay
Provincetown
Boston
Swampscott*

with which he began running to Johnson & Young's establishment, at Boston, in 1848, buying a portion of his lobsters in the Penobscot Bay region, where the fishery had just been started. The quantity of lobsters carried by him that year was 40,000. The prices paid to the fishermen for smack lobsters were as follows: During March, three cents each; April 2 1/2 cents; May and June, 2 cents. In 1850, he began to obtain supplies from the Muscles Ridges, leaving Harpswell entirely, on account of the small size of the lobsters then being caught there. At thsi time the average weight of the lobsters marketed was about three pounds, and all under 10 1/2 inches were rejected. The traps were made the same as at present, but were constructed of round oak sticks, and with four hoops or bows to support the upper framework. A string of bait, consisting of mainly flounders and sculpins, were tied into each trap. About 50 traps were used by each fisherman, and they were hauled once a day. The warps or buoy lines, by which the traps were lowered and hauled, were cut in 12 fathom lengths. Lobsters were so abundant at the Muscles Ridges, at this period, that four men could fully supply Captain Oakes with lobsters every trip. In the course of ten days each man would obtain between 1,200 and 1,500 marketable lobsters. In Captain Oake's opinion, the Muscle Ridges have furnished the most extensive lobster fishery of the Maine coast. He ran to this locality until 1874.

Capt. S.S. Davis, of South Saint George [Maine], states that about 1864, when he began buying lobsters at the Muscle Ridges, three men, tending 40 to 50 pots each, caught all the count lobsters he could carry to market in his smack. He could load 5,000 lobsters at a time, and averaged a trip in 7 to 9 days. This traffic continued for six or seven years. In 1879, Capt. Davis bought from 15 men in the same locality, and at times was obliged to buy also of others in order to make up a load." 5

Rapidly the fishery was taken up in the communities of Penobscot Bay: North Haven began in 1848, Deer Isle in 1852, Swan's Island in the early fifties, Isle au Haut about 1855, and at Matinicus in 1868. The fishery was initiated in Eastport around 1853.⁶

About 1860 lobster canning factories in Maine began to absorb a considerable part of the catch, and they employed vessels to ply along the coast and buy lobsters. As these vessels would only be out a few days at a time, wells were not necessary, and the lobsters were packed in the hold. However in the summer a great number of lobsters

Eastport
Matinicus
Isle au Haut
Swan's Island
Deer Isle
North Haven
South Saint George
Muscle Ridges
Boston

were killed by the heat in the hold. Since fresh lobsters are an exceedingly perishable commodity, the introduction of canning made Maine lobster available all over the world. This larger market condition created by the canneries would at first seem to be a boon to the lobster industry, but in fact the opposite was true. No law regulated the size of lobsters caught and so canneries could buy lobsters of any size, including egg-bearing females. Consequently the lobster population began to decline drastically. The Maine state legislature passed several bills pertaining to the legal size limit and canneries began to close down as they could not afford to pay the high price demanded for lobsters of legal size. After 1885 the canneries rapidly dropped out of business, with the last one closing in 1895.⁷ After the closing of the lobster canning factories the Maine lobster fishery became essentially what it is today---individual fisherman selling their catch to local dealers who in turn sell to wholesale and/or retail buyers.

The Smacks

In 1880 there were 58 smacks in Maine waters of which 21 were dry smacks, that is, they had no wells amidships. By 1898 the number had grown to 76, of which 17 were steamers and launches and 59 were sailing vessels.⁸ These were all well smacks. A few sailing smacks also engaged in other fishery pursuits during the dull summer months. In 1879 a steamer which had no well was used to run lobsters to the cannery at Castine. The first steamer fitted with a well to engage in the business was the "Grace Morgan", owned by F.W. Collins a Rockland lobster dealer. Collins describes his steamer as follows:

The steam and well smack "Grace Morgan" was built in 1890, by Robert Palmer and Son, of Noank, Conn. At that time she was a dry boat, but the following year, 1891, the Palmers built a small well in her as an experiment, but I am of the opinion that it did not prove very satisfactory or profitable; consequently they offered her for sale and wrote to me in relation to buying her. I went to Noank and looked her over and came to the conclusion that by enlarging the well and making other needed changes she could be made not only a good boat to carry lobsters alive, but also to do it profitably; consequently I bought her and brought her to Rockland, had the well enlarged on ideas of my own, and differently constructed, so as to give it better circulation of water, and also made other needed improvements throughout the boat to adapt her especially for carrying lobsters alive. The changes I made in her proved so successful in keeping lobsters alive, while it increased the capacity for carrying, that I have since adapted the same principles on all my boats. The well I had put into the "Grace Morgan" is what is termed a "box well", that is without any well deck. The well is built from the sides of the steamer directly to the hatch on the main deck, with bulkheads forward and aft and tops running directly over the deck.....

Both of my steamers have box wells aft, and from my experience, compared with all other steam and well smacks afloat, I am convinced that this well, for all practical purposes, is the best that has yet been adapted to steam smacks. So far as the "Grace Morgan" is concerned, she has been a perfect success in carrying her lobsters in all kinds of weather since I put her into commission October 27, 1892, during which time

Noank, Conn.
Castine
Rockland

she has had a wonderful career, as well as carrying millions of lobsters. Probably no boat of her size [she was 49' LOA, breadth of 13.9', depth of 5.7', a gross tonnage of 21 tons, and a net tonnage of 10 tons] has ever had such an experience as she has run steadily the year around in all kinds of weather during the past eight years..... Previous to buying the "Grace Morgan" I had run steamers in the lobster business, but they had no well, and being so hot in their holds, particularly in the summer months, the lobsters died so fast that the business in dry steamers could not be made profitable. This is what prompted me to construct a well in mine, as I have done." 9

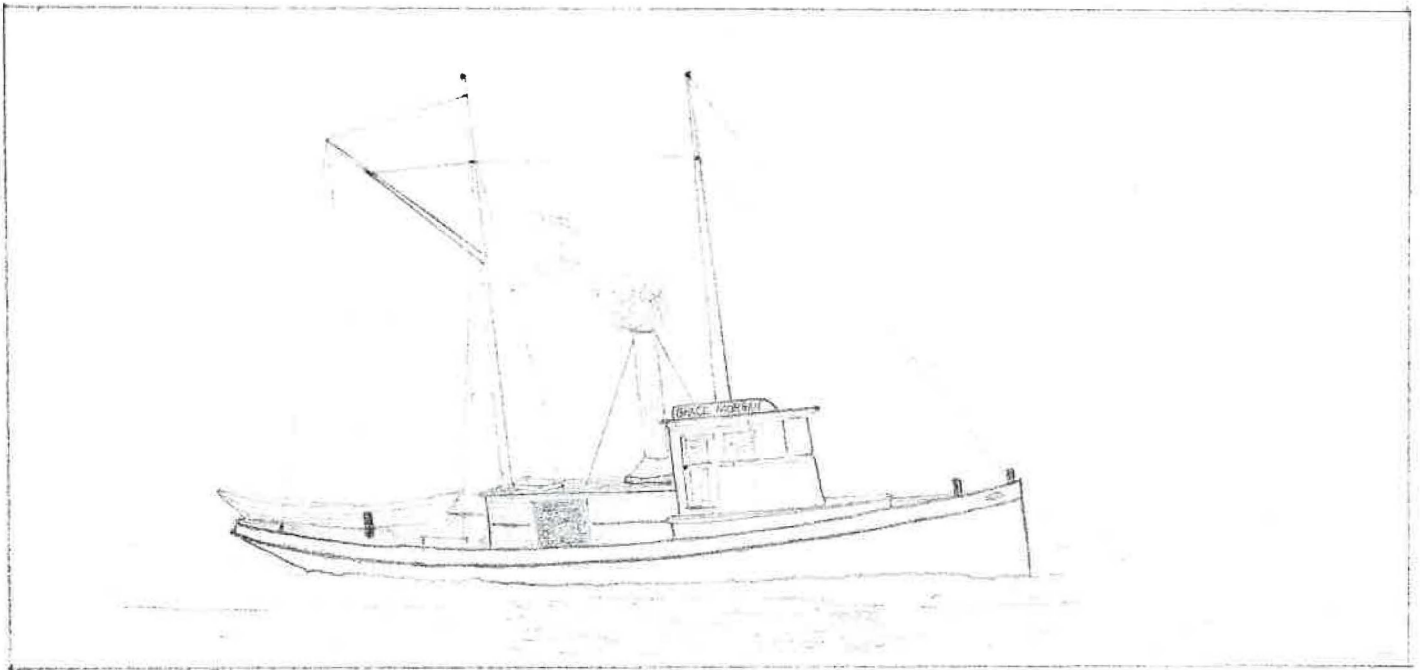
Lobster smacks in Maine, then, could be placed in four rude classes: (1) sailing vessels, (2) steamers, (3) sailing vessels with auxillary engines, and (4) vessels powered by engines alone. The McLoon Lobster Compnay of Rockland, Maine did at various times own vessels from at least three of these classes.

Since 1913 the various McLoon Company smacks were built at three yards: the Wilbur Morse Yard at Thomaston; the Lash Brothers Yard at Friendship; and the yard of Irving Adams at East Boothbay. McLoon's first smacks were probably sailing vessels entirely dependent upon the wind for movement, but in 1913 and 1914 four new 'power and sail' smacks were built. Irving Adams built the "Silas McLoon" and the "Louise McLoon", and Wilbur Morse built the "Adelle McLoon" and the "^{Pauline}~~Louise~~ McLoon". All four were two-masted schooner-type vessels with fore-and-aft sails. In addition they were equipped with small gasoline engines of about 40 horse-power. The largest of the four, the "Silas McLoon", cost \$4,000 completely fitted out and ready for service. She was a well smack with a carrying capacity of 18,000 pounds. The other three carried about 10,000 pounds of lobsters. In 1947, the 'power' smack "A.C. McLoon" was built in Friendship by the Lash Brothers Yard (formerly the yard of Scott Carter). She was 64'10" LOA, with a 17' beam, drawing

East Boothbay
Friendship
Rockland

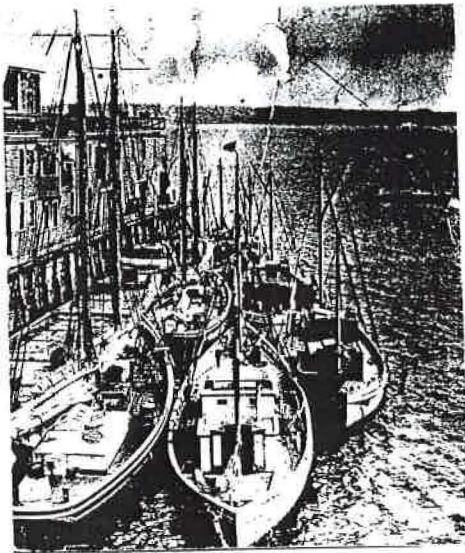
7 feet of water. Equipped with a Fairbanks-Morse direct-reversible engine, and boasting R.C.A. radar gear, she cost \$55,000 ready for service. She was a dry smack, that is, water did not circulate in her hold. Several years later, in order to compete with larger Canadian smacks that carried more lobsters and could therefore charge less per pound, the "A.C McLoon" was hauled out of the water at Rockland, sawed in half, and had 11 1/2 feet added to her length. She could now accomodate 365 crates of lobsters in her hold for a total of 36,500 pounds per trip, and she could carry up to 20,000 additional pounds on her deck if necessary.

These were by no means the only smack builders. Many yards and skilled individuals up and down the coast turned out smacks from time to time. Few smacks remain today, most have fallen apart, some converted for other uses, but only a few still function as true lobster smacks.



The smack "Grace Morgan", the first steam smack to carry lobsters in a well. Built in 1890 by Robert Palmer & Son of Noank, Conn., for F.W. Collins, a lobster dealer from Rockland, Maine. Her length was 49 feet, breadth 13.9 feet, and her depth was 5.7 feet. (drawing by David Littleton-Taylor)

Noank, Conn.
Rockland



Two-masted schooner smacks at anchor at the A.C. McLoon Lobster Company wharf, c. 1915. The smack at center, foreground is the "Silas McLoon".

~~524.2~~ P-993

Canadian and American 'power' smacks at anchor at Abbott's Harbor, Nova Scotia.



~~524.3~~
P-994

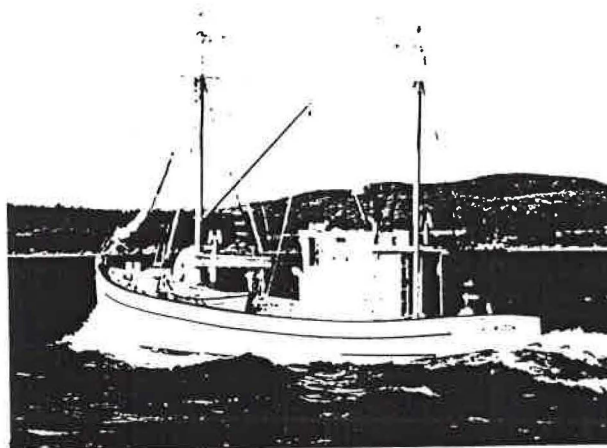
Abbott's Harbor, N.S.



524.4

P-995

The smack "Silas McLoon", built in 1913 by Irving Adams of East Boothbay, Maine. She was a well smack capable of carrying 18,000 pounds of lobsters.

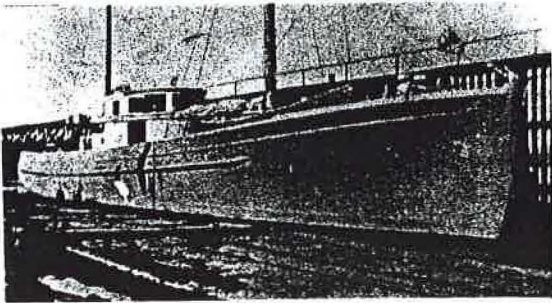
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P-996

East Boothbay,
Maine

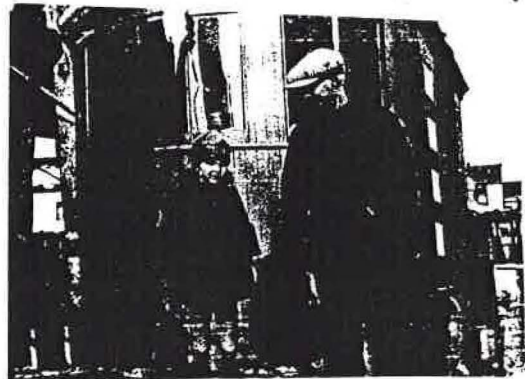
The dry smack "A.C. McLoon", built in 1947 by the Lash Brothers of Friendship, Maine for the A.C. McLoon Lobster Company.

7540021

P-997 ~~524.6~~

The dry smack "Consolidated",
owned by the Consolidated Lobster
Company of Gloucester, Mass.
She is tied up in the harbor of
Friendship, Maine. Photo: c. 1928.

Capt. Charles Dodge and his
daughter standing in front of
the pilot house of the smack
"Consolidated", skippered by
Captain Dodge. Photo: C. 1928.

~~524.7~~ P-998

*Gloucester, Mass.
fish ship*

The Smack Men

Before the days of the power smacks, the men who transported lobsters aboard smacks were a rugged lot, they had to be. They put in long, physically tiring days loading and unloading lobsters and attending to the sailing of the vessel as well. Early skippers had only a compass, a time piece, and a chart with which to navigate. These skippers had to be good pilots, and they were proud of their abilities.

Innovations made life easier for the smack men as steam engines, gasoline engines, radios, and radar began to be installed in the smacks. But these advances by no means transformed smacking trips into pleasure cruises. During the busy months of September, October, and November, smack men might be away from home and family six out of seven days. And none looked forward to crossing the rough Bay of Fundy in the winter.

In the era of the power smack, crews usually consisted of two or three men. On runs along the Maine coast, generally only two men crewed a smack, the skipper and his engineer. On longer trips to Nova Scotia a third man was added (the cook), who came along to share in the work and take his turn at the wheel. Canadian smacks were often larger vessels requiring larger crews. These men worked at lower wages than did American smack men.

On board American smacks, the crewmen were assigned the following tasks and responsibilities: the cook---naturally attended to cooking, but he also had to do most of the deck work, take his

Bay of Fundy

turn at the wheel, keep the smack cleaned up, and handle the lobsters when they were loaded and unloaded. The engineer--- had to keep the engines in good running order and also take his turn at the wheel. When only a skipper and an engineer comprised a crew, the engineer assumed the tasks of the cook. These two men, the engineer and the cook, were usually hired by the skipper. This practice helped assure cooperation and compatibility afloat. The skipper was the boss, unquestionably. He handled the money to be used for the purchase of lobsters (usually several thousands of dollars), he was the pilot, he negotiated with the fishermen and the dealers, and in short, he was in complete control of the smack. In hierarchical terms, the skipper was on top, followed by the engineer, with the cook on the bottom. When smacks became larger additional men were added, but two or three was the usual number aboard the smacks.

Company skippers were paid a monthly salary. In 1923, McLoon Lobster Company skippers were paid \$80 per month, and engineers received \$60. Independent skippers, of course, received so much per pound for what they carried, the more they carried the more they made. With the enormous degree of control and responsibility that they possessed, magnified by poor communications facilities and distance from boss or buyer, it was not uncommon for independent skippers and company skippers alike to profit by taking advantage of the fishermen and cheating the companies. Skippers cheated the fishermen by fixing their scales to read less than the actual weight. Previously, when lobsters were sold by number not weight, they were often 'miscounted' by smack men. Skippers cheated those that they

carried for by reporting that they had paid more for the trip of lobsters than they actually had. The skippers had control of a large amount of money with no supervision. It was up to him what price was reported for lobsters bought. In all of these cases, the skipper, not the crew, pocketed the ill-gotten profits. While it was very difficult for a company to check up on what price had been paid for lobsters at a particular place at a particular time, many unfortunate skippers were 'found out' when a little investigation was done.

Lobster Companies and Independents

In 1923 when Sidney Sprague began to work for the McLoon Lobster Company as engineer aboard the smack "Silas McLoon", there were, in addition to the McLoon Company, six other lobster companies operating in Rockland. They were: Parnell Lobster Company (with 3 or 4 smacks), Rackleff and Witham Lobster Company (2 smacks), H.W. Look Lobster Company (1 smack), Thorndike and Hix Lobster Company (2 or 3 smacks), J.A. Young Lobster Company (2 smacks), and the Consolidated Lobster Company of Boston (later Gloucester) with 6 smacks based in Rockland. McLoon had the largest fleet of smacks at that time with twelve.

As one might assume, the Rockland lobster companies were intensely competitive. For instance, during a period of difficult sales, a minimum price would be agreed upon by all. Suddenly, one company would drop its price, sell all its lobsters, and leave the other companies still holding theirs. This was done frequently, but other than that they were an amazingly cooperative, close-knit group of rivals. All of the owners (with the exception of the Consolidated Lobster Company), managers and Rockland based skippers knew each other very well, and closeness fostered a measure of cooperativeness. If one dealer had an order that he badly wanted to fill but did not have any lobsters, he could always buy them from another dealer if that dealer had them.

In Portland two other lobster companies maintained smacks: Willard and Daggett Lobster Company (1 smack) and the Trefethen Lobster Company (with 2 sailing smacks that were eventually converted to power smacks). Several lobster companies from Boston ran smacks, but the

Had
Gloucester
Boston
Rockland

bulk of their service was with Nova Scotia and they did not participate in the Maine lobster trade to a great extent. However during the closed season in Nova Scotia, Boston smacks carried lobsters to Boston for Maine lobster companies.

Boston smacks or Maine smacks that dealt directly with Boston buyers took advantage of an unusual arrangement by which they could buy Maine 'short' lobsters and sell them in Massachusetts. They could take lobsters that were short, and therefore illegal by Maine standards, and if they did not stop at any ports in Maine on the return trip, they could sell the lobsters in Massachusetts where smaller lobsters were allowable. Another arrangement permitted Maine companies to buy Nova Scotian lobsters that were over-size and illegal by Maine law, but if they were sealed in separate crates (i.e. separated from legal sized lobsters) they could be returned to Maine, shipped to Boston, and sold.

Competing with the lobster companies for lobsters were independent buyers. Independent buyers were men who owned their own smacks (generally only one smack) and skippered that smack themselves. They would buy a 'trip' of lobsters and sell it where ever they could get the best price. Before they ventured to buy a load of lobsters they were usually quite certain that they had a client who would buy them. Independents would sell to anyone, but the majority had particular buyers who took most of their lobsters. For example, Capt. Ladd Simmons of Jonesport, owner and skipper of the smack "Aerolite" ~~"Arrowlight"~~, sold to Willard and Daggett Lobster Company of Portland, and occasionally sold to Boston concerns. Hiram Stanley of Swan's Island, another

Nova Scotia
Boston
was
exported
to
Maine
Island

independent, brought his lobsters to Rockland for the Thorndike and Hix Lobster Company. Capt. Bridge Burns of Friendship, Capt. Lou Kirby and Capt. Guy Carver both of Jonesport, were also independent smack men.

Independent smack owners were paid a certain amount per pound for the lobsters that they carried. For example if a skipper was paid three cents a pound for carrying lobsters (already purchased with the buyers money) he could realize \$600 on a trip of 20,000 pounds. If they were good businessmen they could probably earn more than company wages and still pay the crew and keep the vessel in good repair. Eventually lobster companies prospered, sent out their own smacks, and accumulated the capital which allowed them to out-bid the independents when competing for lobsters. In this way the independent smack owners were forced out of the trade.

As Maine natives were quick to claim their lobster territories, so too were Nova Scotians eager to profit from their lobster resource. Canadian lobster companies and independents operated smacks which carried millions of pounds of lobsters across the Bay of Fundy to Maine and Massachusetts. They provided stiff competition for American smacks operators as they ran larger smacks capable of holding more lobsters and ^{carrying} ~~carried~~ them cheaper than could most American smacks. And so for a time there were several distinct participants in the realm of smacking: independents (Americans), independents (Canadians), and companies (American), and companies (Canadian).

Lobster buying territories were not exclusively owned by the independents or the companies. Smacks competed with each other

no.
up
Friendship
Rockland
Jonesport
Fundy

for lobsters, and it was not uncommon to see four or five smacks, all sent by different companies, anchored in the same isolated fishing harbor. Fishermen from that harbor would row from smack to smack, asking what the various companies would pay for lobsters that day. The shrewd fishermen would not sell their entire catch to one smack----they divided it up among all of the smacks. They knew that if they could keep several companies interested, the price would remain high through competition.

Because of the isolation of many fishing hamlets, smacks were depended upon for many things. Almost anything that a fisherman ordered (e.g. apples, flour, sugar, gasoline and other supplies) could be delivered by the accomodating smack men, eager to remain in the good favor of those from whom they purchased lobsters. Liquor, rum particularly, was frequently used by the smack men as an attractive lure. The smack skipper who did not stock liquor for his fishermen friends could not easily compete with skippers who did. The following from Sailing Days on the Penobscot illustrates what happened on Isle au Haut:

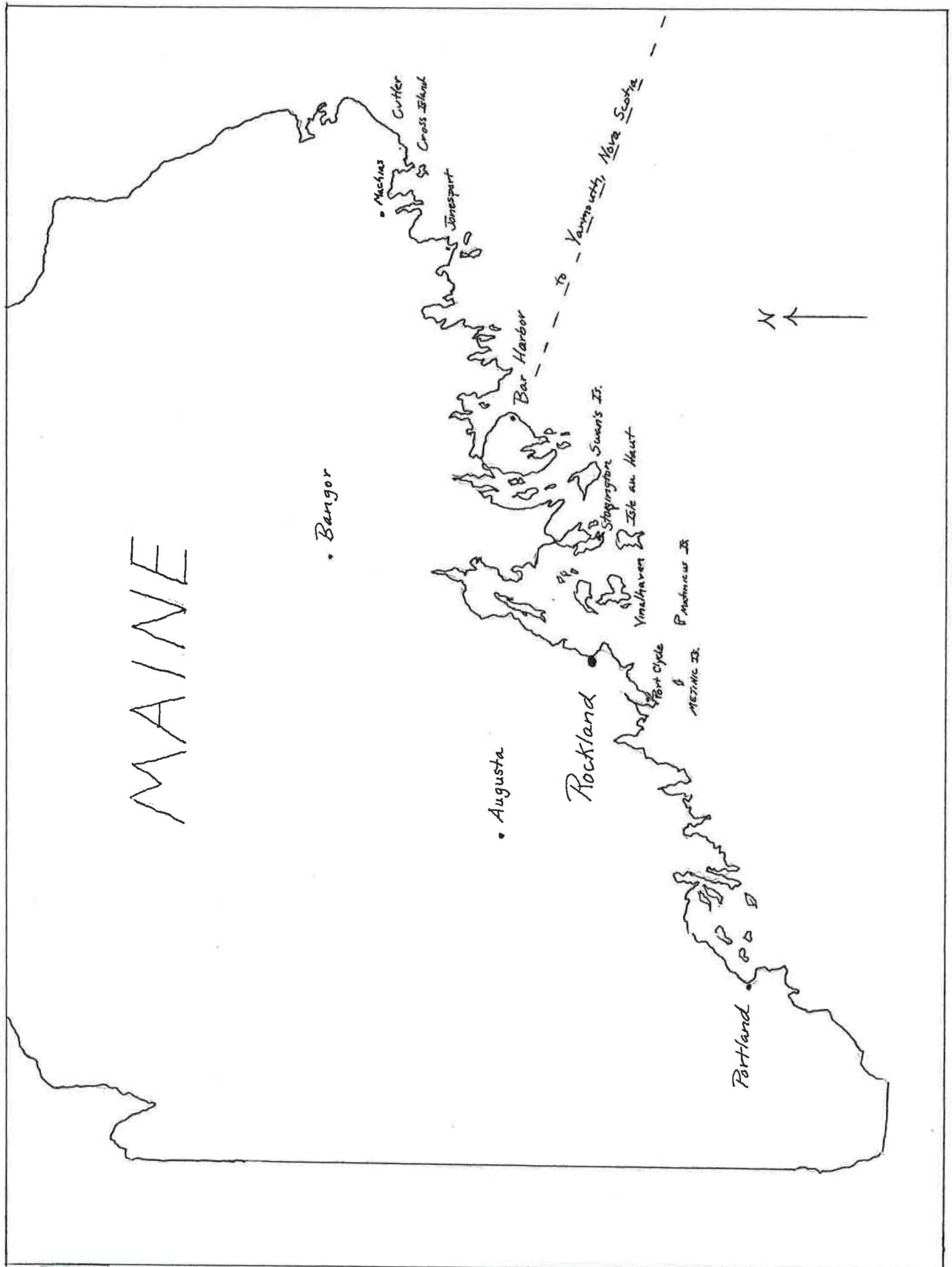
"It was not solely on account of a desire to receive cash for their accumulated catch that lobstermen anxiously watched for the arrival of the smacks. Apples did not flourish in the salty air of the island and cider was a rarity. Copious draughts of the barber's own peculiar make of spruce beer, together with insufficient imbibing of dandelion wine in teacups, occasionally produced by women folks, were all very well in their way, but naturally men following the arduous business of lobstering could not be expected to live by such drinks alone. Smacks not only brought news from towns and cities on the main, but except just previous to election time, they also enjoyed special facilities for bringing out stone jugs with contents of far more cheering nature, to patrons ordering such in advance. Skippers of certain smacks, balking at this important part of the business, were generally brought to terms by the significant words

"No rum brought, no lobsters sold." Thus the contents of numerous cars were fairly well distributed among visiting smacks." 10

While smacks companies did not 'own' specific areas, they often sent their smacks out into particular regions of the coast and had them stop with a good degree of regularity at certain fishing villages. The McLoon Lobster Company assigned its smacks to the following 'runs': (1) the down-east run from Rockland to Cape Split, Jonesport, Cutler, Cross Island, Starboard's Creek, Little Kennebec River, and Buck's Harbor; (2) a run from Rockland to Hewitt's Island, Spruce Head, Tenants Harbor, and Metinic Island; (3) a run from Rockland to Matinicus, Crie Haven, Wooden Ball Island, and Seal Island; (4) a run from Rockland to Swan's Island; (5) a smack was stationed at Vinalhaven and brought lobsters into Rockland; (6) a smack was stationed at Stonington and also brought lobsters in to Rockland; (7) a run from Rockland to Port Clyde and Medomak; (8) after the construction of the four smacks in 1913, McLoon Lobster Company smacks ran to Nova Scotia for lobsters.

Medomak
Port Clyde
Stonington
Vinalhaven
Swan's Island
Matinicus
Crie Haven
Wooden Ball Island
Seal Island
Nova Scotia

Spruce Head
Hewitt's Island
Buck's Harbor
Little Kennebec River
Starboard's Creek
Rockland
Cape Split
Jonesport
Cutler
Cross Island
Tenants Harbor
Meticinic Island



Lobsters from Nova Scotia

As fishing technology spread northward along the northeast coast more and more fishing areas were opened up. Soon an extremely abundant region was realized along the shores of Nova Scotia, and a lively trade was initiated. Eventually scores of Canadian and American smacks ran across the Bay of Fundy carrying millions of pounds of lobsters from Nova Scotia to Maine and Massachusetts. On Januar 15, 1892, under the headline: 'That Novel Lobster Industry', the Halifax [Nova Scotia] Herald reporting on a new innovation regarding catching lobsters from a large tidal pond, stated:

".....Fishing begins as soon as the season open [sic] at the first of January and is continued until the first of July, when the close season shuts down lobster fishing; attention is then turned to the shipping and catching of mackeral [sic]. Last year the lobsters occupied the whole time and very little attention was given to mackeral, except to make arrangements for extensive captures this year. The company had upwards of 70,000 lobsters in the pond on ~~July~~ 1st, 1891. Of these about 40,000 were shipped alive in crates to Boston via Yarmouth. The steamer "Weymouth" calls twice a week taking the crates to Yarmouth [from the Long Beach area of Annapolis] during the shipping season." 11

In the early days of smacking in Nova Scotia there were no Canadian smacks to compete with the Americans and the few American smacks that operated in Canadian waters did not come in contact with each other very often. Therefore, because competition was low a smack skipper could get a load of lobsters from Nova Scotian fishermen cheaper and more easily than he could in Maine, particularly if the fishermen were still catching lobsters and had no place to keep them.

*1900s, Annapolis, Md.
Boston
Halifax, N.S.
Nova Scotia
Bay of Fundy*

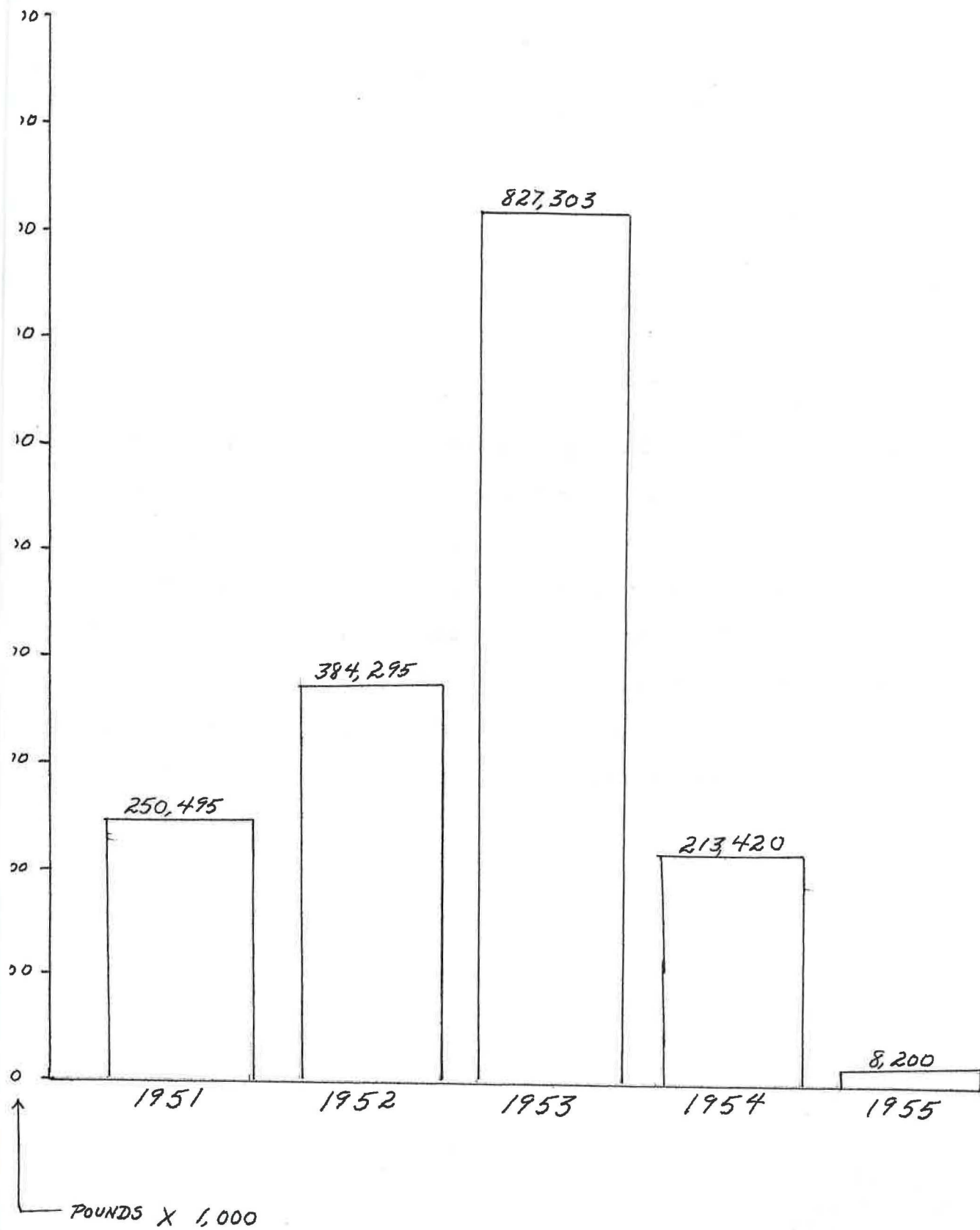
Gradually American smacks became more numerous, Canadians began to operate lobster companies and lobster smacks, fishermen gained expertise, and it was not as easy to obtain a quick, cheap trip of lobsters. When Captain Sidney Sprague went to Nova Scotia for McLoon in 1935, lobster companies no longer purchased lobsters directly from the fishermen, but utilized the services of Canadian dealers who acted as lobster brokers. These dealers would locate and buy a quantity of lobsters from various fishermen and then sell to various American lobster companies. Smack skippers bargained with these 'brokers' over the price to be paid, and then took their smacks to where the purchased lobsters were located, loaded up, cleared customs, and headed for home. The McLoon Lobster Company bought from Mr. Austin Nickerson of Yarmouth, who did most of the buying in that area. McLoon smacks usually took on lobsters at Clark's Harbor, Shag Harbor, Abbott's Harbor, the Tusket Islands, or Pubnico. Capt. Sprague describes what took place in Nickerson's office on a typical day:

".....there's several, be several people buying, after lobsters, and the question would be the price. Some [i.e. some company skippers] would be held down, sometimes we were held down to a certain price and somebody else could pay them a little bit more. Well, if we wanted them bad enough well we'd pay an extra penny and get them. But Nickerson, he operated on a very small margin. If he'd get half a cent a pound on a trip of lobsters he was happy, which now of course nobody would even think of." 12

*Pubnico
Tusket Islands
Abbott's Harbor
Shag Harbor
Nova Scotia
Yarmouth
Clark's Harbor*

pounds of lobsters carried from Nova Scotia 1951-55

by the smack "A.C. McLoon"



The Bluenose

On January 4, 1956 the launching of the Canadian National ferry "M.V. Bluenose" signalled the end of the profitable smacking trade between Nova Scotia and Maine and Massachusetts. Lobsters could now be ordered from a dealer in Nova Scotia, loaded onto trucks which boarded the "Bluenose" at Yarmouth and a few hours later landed at Bar Harbor, Maine. From there the trucks transported the lobsters to buyers in New England, notably Boston. Trucks made it possible for a purchaser to order almost any amount of lobsters. Smacks however were economically feasible only when a large order (25,000 to 30,000 pounds) was procured. The initiation of the ferry service between Yarmouth and Bar Harbor and the economic success of lobster trucking replaced the smacks and ended also the usefulness of transportation of lobsters by railroad. Smaller Maine island ferries too decreased the need for lobster smacks. Simply, transportation facilities improved and made the smacks obsolete.

Nova Scotia
Mass.
Yarmouth
Bar Harbor

Commercial Truck Arrivals Via the M.V. Bluenose

(at Bar Harbor, Maine from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia)

1956 - 856
1957 - 1305
1958 - 1388
1959 - 1361
1960 - 1488
1961 - 1527
1962 - 1460
1963 - 1688
1964 - 1694
1965 - 1752
1966 - 1748
1967 - 1777
1968 - 1619
1969 - 1420
1970 - 925
1971 - 595
1972 - 436
1973 - 93 (as of April 7, 1973)

Regarding this list, R.M. Grindle of Canadian National Railways states: "It would probably be safe to say that 90% of these trucks were carrying sea associated or fish products." 13

Bar Harbor
Nova Scotia
Yarmouth

Footnotes

- 1 Rathbun, Richard. "Notes on the Decrease of Lobsters", in the Bulletin of the U.S. Fish Commission. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1884. vol. 4, pp. 423-4.
- 2 Cobb, John. "The Lobster Fishery of Maine", in the Bulletin of the U.S. Fish Commission. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899. vol. 19, p. 243.
- 3 Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1933. p. 254.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Cobb, John. "The Lobster Fishery of Maine", in the Bulletin of the U.S. Fish Commission. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. vol. 19, pp. 243-4.
- 6 Ibid. p. 244.
- 7 Ibid. pp. 256-7.
- 8 Ibid. p. 250.
- 9 Ibid. pp. 250-1.
- 10 Wasson, George S. Sailing Days on the Penobscot. Salem, Mass.: Marine Research Society, 1932. pp. 113-4.
- 11 'That Novel Lobster Industry', an article from the "Halifax Herald". Halifax, Nova Scotia, January 15, 1892. p. 5.

12

from the transcript of the March 21, 1973 interview with Captain Sidney Sprague of Rockland, Maine.

13

from a letter to the author from R.M. Grindle of the Canadian National Railways, Bar Harbor, Maine. Letter dated: 4/7/73.

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Rowe, W.H. Maritime History of Maine, Three Centuries of Shipbuilding and Seafaring. New York: W.W. Norton, 1948.

Short, V. and Sears, E.B. Sail and Steam Along the Maine Coast. Portland, Maine: Bond Wheelwright Co., 1955.

"That Novel Lobster Industry", an article from the 'Halifax Herald'. Halifax, Nova Scotia, January 15, 1892. p. 5.

Wasson, G.S. Sailing Days on the Penobscot: The Story of the River
and the Bay in the Old Days. Salem, Mass.: Marine Research
Society, 1932.

7540042

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

Name of Vessel "A.C. McLoon" Owner McLoon Lob. Co.

Name of Company A.C. McLoon Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 10

Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built 3/8/47--launch

Where Built Friendship, Maine Builder Lash Brothers

Length 76' 6" Width 17' Draft 7'

Wet well Dry Well X Engine 175 H.P. Fairbanks-Morse

Cargo Capacity 36,500 Name of Skipper S.N. Sprague

Address of Skipper 45 Crescent St., Rockland, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company 46 years (1947-1970)

Size of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: Boston, Mass. to St. Andrews, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia

informant: S.N. Sprague

Additional Comments on Reverse

*Rockland
Friendship*

7540043

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Pauline McLoon" Owner McLoon Lob. Co.Name of Company _____ Number of Smacks owned 10Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built 1914Where Built Thomaston, Maine Builder Wilbur MorseLength 57' Width 14' Draft 6'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine 40 H.P. gasoline engineCargo Capacity 12,000 Name of Skipper L.W. SimmonsAddress of Skipper Rockland, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 10 yearsSize of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: ports in Maine and Nova Scotiainformant: S.N. Sprague

Additional Comments on Reverse _____

*Rockland
Thomaston
Nova Scotia*

7540044

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Adelle McLoon" Owner A.C. McLoonName of Company A.C. McLoon Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 10Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built 1913Where Built Thomaston, Maine Builder Wilbur MorseLength 53' Width 14' Draft 6'Wet well X Dry Well Engine 40 H.P. gasolineCargo Capacity 10,000 Name of Skipper Gilbert SimmonsAddress of Skipper Rockland, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 21 yearsSize of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other Crew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Boston, Mass. from Cutler, Maineinformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse *Rockland
Thomaston
Boston, Mass.
Cutler*

7540045

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Silas McLoon" Owner A.C. McLoonName of Company A.C. McLoon Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 10Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built 1913Where Built East Boothbay, Maine Builder Irving AdamsLength 58' Width 14' Draft 6'6"Wet well X Dry Well Engine 40 H.p. gasoline engineCargo Capacity 18,000 Name of Skipper S.N. Sprague
13 years as skipperAddress of Skipper 45 Crescent St., Rockland, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 46 yearsSize of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other Crew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Boston, Mass., St. Andrews, New Brunswick, and ports in Nova Scotiainformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse *Rockland
Boothbay
Boston
St. Andrews
N.B.
Nova Scotia*

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Louise McLoon" Owner A.C. McLoonName of Company A.C. McLoon Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 10Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built 1913Where Built East Boothbay, Maine Builder Irving Adams

Length _____ Width _____ Draft _____

Wet well _____ Dry Well _____ Engine _____

Cargo Capacity _____ Name of Skipper _____

Address of Skipper _____

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew _____ Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: _____

_____informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Rockland
Boothbay*

7540047

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Mary McLoon" Owner A.C. McLoonName of Company A.C. McLoon Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 10Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built 1913Where Built Thomaston, Maine Builder Wilbur MorseLength 36' Width 12' Draft Wet well X Dry Well Engine Kermith gasoline engineCargo Capacity 3,500 Name of Skipper Leroy NickersonAddress of Skipper Vinalhaven, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 20 yearsSize of Crew 1 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other Crew Hired by: Company Skipper Ports of Call of this vessel: Vinalhaven to Rockland
informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse *Rockland
Thomaston
Vinalhaven
Rockland*

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Marion McLoon" Owner A.C. McLoonName of Company A.C. McLoon Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 10Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1910

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length approx. 60' Width 15' Draft 7'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine schooner smack with gasoline aux.Cargo Capacity 10,000# Name of Skipper Gilbert SimmonsAddress of Skipper Rockland, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 24 yearsSize of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper OtherCrew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: ports along the Maine coast and Nova Scotiainformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Rockland
Nova Scotia*

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

7540049

Name of Vessel "Mohawk" Owner Frank Bridges

Name of Company independent Number of Smacks owned 1

Company Address Swan's Island, Maine Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 60' Width _____ Draft _____

Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine _____

Cargo Capacity 10,000# Name of Skipper Frank Bridges

Address of Skipper Swan's Island, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew _____ Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: Swan's Island to Rockland, Maine

informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____

*Swan's Island
Rockland*

7540050

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

Name of Vessel "Arthur F. Woodard" Owner Vernald Woodard

Name of Company independent Number of Smacks owned 1

Company Address Beal's Island, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1950

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 60' Width 15' Draft 6'

Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine _____

Cargo Capacity 12,000# Name of Skipper Vernald Woodard

Address of Skipper Beal's Island

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew _____ Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: _____

informant: S.N. Sprague

Additional Comments on Reverse _____

Beal's Island

34JUPA⁴ is now owned by
Arthur Hupper a lobster dealer

7540051

from Tenants Harbor, Maine, the Lobster Smack Information Sheet
now runs to Monhegan Island
and returns to pick up
lobsters.

Name of Vessel "Bajupa" Owner Rackliff & Witham

Name of Company Rackliff & Witham Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned

Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built

Where Built Southwest Harbor, Maine Builder

Length 50' Width Draft

Wet well Dry Well X Engine 4-71 GM Diesel

Cargo Capacity 6,000# Name of Skipper

Address of Skipper

Length of Time in Employ of Company

Size of Crew Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel:

informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse X

*Rockland
Southwest Harbor*

7540052

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Onaway" Owner Consolidated Lob. Co.Name of Company Consolidated Lobster Co. Number of Smacks owned 6Company Address Boston, Mass. Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 55' Width _____ Draft _____Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine _____Cargo Capacity 10,000# Name of Skipper _____

Address of Skipper _____

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper OtherCrew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: made stops in Maine, Massachusetts,
and Nova Scotiainformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Boston, Mass.*
Mass.

7540053

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

Name of Vessel "Gladys R." Owner Harold Smith

Name of Company Independent owner Number of Smacks owned one

Company Address Swan's Island, Maine Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 37' (sloop) Width _____ Draft _____

Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine 10 H.P. Hartford G2S

Cargo Capacity 3,500# Name of Skipper Harold Smith

Address of Skipper Swan's Island, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew _____ Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: _____

informant: S.N. Sprague

Additional Comments on Reverse _____

Swan's Island

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Jaunita" Owner A.C. McLoonName of Company A.C. McLoon Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 10Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1900

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 45' Width 12' Draft 5'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine 40 H.P. Lathrop gasoline engineCargo Capacity _____ Name of Skipper Granville RobbinsAddress of Skipper Stonington, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 10 yearsSize of Crew 1 Cook _____ Engineer _____ Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company Skipper _____Ports of Call of this vessel: Stonington to RocklandInformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Rockland
Stonington*

7540055

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Edward J." Owner Jameson Lob. Co.Name of Company Jameson Lobster Co. Number of Smacks owned 2Company Address Portsmouth, N.H. Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 60' Width 14' Draft 6'6"Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine Fairbanks-Morse dieselCargo Capacity 15,000 Name of Skipper S. BurnsAddress of Skipper Friendship, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company Skipper _____Ports of Call of this vessel: ports in Maine and Nova Scotia_____
_____informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Portsmouth, N.H.
Friendship
Nova Scotia*

7540056

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Hilda-Emma" Owner Jameson Lob. Co.Name of Company Jameson Lobster Co. Number of Smacks owned 2Company Address Portsmouth, N.H. Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 60' Width 15' Draft 7'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine Fairbanks-Morse dieselCargo Capacity 10,000# Name of Skipper S. BurnsAddress of Skipper Friendship, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company Skipper _____Ports of Call of this vessel: ports in Maine and New Hampshire_____
_____informant: S.N. Sprague

Additional Comments on Reverse _____

*Portsmouth, N.H.
New Hampshire
Friendship*

7540057

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Flora Belle" Owner Brainard SimmonsName of Company independent Number of Smacks owned 1

Company Address _____ Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 50' Width 17' Draft 6'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine Frisble gasoline engineCargo Capacity 5,000# Name of Skipper Brainard SimmonsAddress of Skipper Southwest Harbor, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company more than 10 yearsSize of Crew 1 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper OtherCrew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Southwest Harbor to Rockland_____
_____informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Southwest
Harbor
Rockland*

7540058

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Francis Evelyn" Owner Lewis KirbyName of Company independent Number of Smacks owned 1Company Address Jonesport, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1935Where Built East Machias, Maine Builder _____Length 57' later lengthened to 70' Width _____ Draft 6'6"Wet well X later changed to dry well
Dry Well _____ Engine _____Cargo Capacity 18,000# Name of Skipper Lewis KirbyAddress of Skipper Jonesport, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 20 yearsSize of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Boston and ports in Maine and Nova Scotia_____
_____informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Jonesport
East Machias
Boston
Nova Scotia*

7540059

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Aerolite" Owner Ladd SimmonsName of Company independent Number of Smacks owned 1Company Address Beal's Island, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1930Where Built East Machias, Maine Builder _____Length 57' Width 15' Draft 6'6"Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine 40 H.P. Fairbanks-Morse dieselCargo Capacity 18,000# Name of Skipper Ladd SimmonsAddress of Skipper Beal's Island, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 20 years as skipper of this vesselSize of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Maine, Nova Scotia and Massachusettsinformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Beal's Island
P. Machias
Nova Scotia
Mass.*

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

7540060

Name of Vessel "Marguerite" Owner Penobscot Fish Co.

Name of Company Penobscot Fish Co. Number of Smacks owned

Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1910

Where Built Friendship, Maine Builder

she was a sloop

Length 36' Width 13' Draft 7'

Wet well X Dry Well Engine 9 H.P. Knok gasoline aux. engine

Cargo Capacity 3,000# Name of Skipper Ellis Sprague

Address of Skipper Rockland, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company 15 years, 5 years on this vessel

Size of Crew 1 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: Vinalhaven from Rockland

informant: S.N. Sprague

Additional Comments on Reverse

*Rockland
Friendship
Vinalhaven*

7340061

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

Name of Vessel "Trimembal" Owner Rackliff & Witham

Name of Company Rackliff & Witham Lob. Number of Smacks owned 2

Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1910

Where Built Rockland, Maine Builder I.L. Snow

Length 50' Width 14' Draft 6'

Wet well X Dry Well Engine 40 H.P. Lamb gasoline engine

Cargo Capacity 8,000# Name of Skipper N.L. Witham

Address of Skipper Rockland, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company he was one of company owners

Size of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: from Rockland to Jonesport and back

informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse

*Rockland
Jonesport*

7540062

Swan's Island
Rockland

7540063

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "H.A. Johnson" Owner Fred JohnsonName of Company independent Number of Smacks owned 2Company Address Swan's Island, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1915Where Built Swan's Island, Maine Builder Fred JohnsonLength 50' Width 14' Draft 6'Wet well x Dry Well Engine 24 H.P. Lathrop gasoline engineCargo Capacity 6,000# Name of Skipper Fred JohnsonAddress of Skipper Swan's Island, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 10 years as skipper of this vesselSize of Crew 2 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other Crew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: went from Swan's Island to Rocklandinformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse *Swan's Island
Rockland*

7540064

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Mary Pickford" Owner Penobscot Fish Co.Name of Company Penobscot Fish Co. Number of Smacks owned _____Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built c. 1915

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 36' sloop Width 12' Draft 7'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine 16 H.P. Lathrop gasoline engineCargo Capacity 3,500# Name of Skipper Bert SimmonsAddress of Skipper Friendship, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company 10 yearsSize of Crew 1 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper OtherCrew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: went from Port Clyde, Maine to Rockland_____
_____informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Rockland
Friendship
Port Clyde*

7540065

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Fannie" Owner Consolidated Lob. Co.Name of Company Consolidated Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 6Company Address Gloucester, Mass. Date Smack Built c. 1930

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 80' Width 18' Draft 7'6"Wet well _____ Dry Well X Engine 100 H.P. Fairbanks-Morse dieselCargo Capacity 30,000# Name of Skipper _____

Address of Skipper _____

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew 4 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company Skipper _____Ports of Call of this vessel: Boston and ports in Maine and Nova Scotiainformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Gloucester, Mass.
Boston
Nova Scotia*

7540066

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

Name of Vessel "Consolidated" Owner Consolidated Lob. Co.

Name of Company Consolidated Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 6

Company Address Gloucester, Mass. Date Smack Built c. 1940

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 85' Width 18' Draft 7'6"

Wet well _____ Dry Well X Engine 160 H.P. Fairbanks-Morse diesel

Cargo Capacity 30,000# Name of Skipper Charles Dodge

Address of Skipper Friendship, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew 4 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: Boston and ports in Maine and Nova Scotia

informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____

*Gloucester, Mass.
Friendship
Boston, Mass.
Nova Scotia*

7540067

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Chester Marshall" Owner Consolidated Lob. Co.Name of Company Consolidated Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 6Company Address Gloucester, Mass. Date Smack Built c. 1930Where Built East Boothbay, Maine Builder _____Length 65' Width 14' Draft 6'6"Wet well x Dry Well _____ Engine 60 H.P. Fairbanks dieselCargo Capacity 18,000# Name of Skipper C. CrowleyAddress of Skipper Jonesport, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company over 20 yearsSize of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper OtherCrew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Boston and ports in Maine and Nova Scotia_____
_____informant: S.N. Sprague

Additional Comments on Reverse _____

*Gloucester, Mass.
Boothbay, #1
Jonesport
Nova Scotia
Boston*

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Grace Cribby" Owner Consolidated Lob. Co.Name of Company Consolidated Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 6Company Address Gloucester, Mass. Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length 60' Width 14' Draft 6'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine 60 H.P. Fairbanks dieselCargo Capacity 15,000# Name of Skipper Charles DodgeAddress of Skipper Friendship, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other _____Crew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Boston, and ports in Maine and Nova Scotiainformant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____

*Gloucester Mass.
Friendship
Nova Scotia
Boston*

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Satelite" Owner Consolidated Lob. Co.Name of Company Consolidated Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned 6Company Address Gloucester, Mass. Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length approx. 56' Width 14' Draft 6'Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine 45 H.P. Fairbanks dieselCargo Capacity 12,000# Name of Skipper _____

Address of Skipper _____

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper OtherCrew Hired by: Company SkipperPorts of Call of this vessel: Boston and ports in Maine and Nova Scotia_____
_____informant: S.N. Sprague
Additional Comments on Reverse _____*Gloucester, Mass.
Boston
Nova Scotia*

for 14 years of service for the Zahn Lobster
company, the "Anne Sylvia" was sold to some
Massachusetts man who
used her as a dragger.
In 1934, she cost \$6,000 to build,
is \$1,200 for the engine.

7540070

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

Name of Vessel "Anne Sylvia" Owner B.T. Zahn

Name of Company Zahn Lobster Co. Number of Smacks owned 1

Company Address Bremen, Maine Date Smack Built 1934

Where Built Friendship, Maine Builder Scott Carter

Length 54' Width Draft

Wet well x Dry Well Engine Heavy Duty Palmer, direct drive

Cargo Capacity Name of Skipper Charles Dodge

Address of Skipper Friendship, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company

Size of Crew Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: in Nova Scotia: Abbott's Harbor,
Yarmouth, and Turpentine Island. She also went to Boston and hauled
lobsters for pound owners in Maine.

informant: B.T. Zahn, Bremen, Maine

Additional Comments on Reverse x

*Bremen
Friendship
Nova Scotia
Abbott's Harbor
Yarmouth
Turpentine Is.
Boston*

7540071

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Susy O. Carver" Owner Guy CarverName of Company independent Number of Smacks owned Company Address Beal's Island, Maine Date Smack Built Where Built Builder Length Width Draft Wet well Dry Well Engine Cargo Capacity Name of Skipper Guy CarverAddress of Skipper Beal's Island, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company Size of Crew Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel:
informant: Charles Dodge, Friendship, MaineAdditional Comments on Reverse *Beal's Island
Friendship*

7540072

Lobster Smack Information Sheet

"North Star" was a converted
 to chaser. She competed with
 schooners skippered by
 Edgar Burns and his son (of
 Friendship) who worked for Creamer & Boston at that time.

Name of Vessel "North Star" Owner Dench & Hardy Lob. Co

Name of Company Dench & Hardy Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned

Company Address Boston, Mass. Date Smack Built

Where Built Builder

Length 110' Width 13' Draft

Wet well Dry Well Engine

Cargo Capacity Name of Skipper Charles Dodge

Address of Skipper Friendship, Maine

Length of Time in Employ of Company

Size of Crew Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: Crie Haven, Isle au Haut, Vinalhaven,
Jonesport, Friendship, Prospect Harbor, Bremen.

Informant: Charles Dodge

Additional Comments on Reverse X

*Prospect Harbor
 Boston
 Friendship
 Crie Haven
 Isle au Haut
 Vinalhaven
 Jonesport
 Bremen*

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Admiral" Owner Thorndike & HixName of Company Thorndike & Hix Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned Company Address Rockland, Maine Date Smack Built Where Built East Boothbay, Maine Builder Irving AdamsLength 80' Width Draft she had one 'wet' hold, and one 'dry' hold
Wet well X Dry Well X Engine gasoline engineCargo Capacity Name of Skipper Address of Skipper Length of Time in Employ of Company Size of Crew 3 Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: Yarmouth, Nova Scotia and the Seal
Islandsinformant: Capt. Robert S. Lash, Friendship, MaineAdditional Comments on Reverse

Rockland
 Friendship
 East Boothbay
 Yarmouth
 Seal Islands

7540074

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Mayflower" Owner Trefethren Lob. Co.Name of Company Trefethren Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned Company Address Portland, Maine Date Smack Built Where Built Builder Length about 45' Width Draft Wet well X Dry Well Engine Cargo Capacity Name of Skipper Ralph Simmons, Ernest BurrAddress of Skipper Simmons and Burns both of Friendship, MaineLength of Time in Employ of Company Size of Crew Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: smacked in the Portland area and went
also to Matinicusinformant: Robert S. Lash, Friendship, Maine
Additional Comments on Reverse *Portland
Friendship
Matinicus*

7540075

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Mary F. Smith" Owner Willard & DaggettName of Company Willard & Daggett Lob. Co Number of Smacks owned Company Address Portland, Maine Date Smack Built Where Built Builder Length about 70' Width Draft

she was a two-masted schooner smack.

Wet well X Dry Well Engine Cargo Capacity Name of Skipper Address of Skipper Length of Time in Employ of Company Size of Crew Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: informant: Robert S. Lash, Friendship, MaineAdditional Comments on Reverse *Portland
Friendship*

Lobster Smack Information SheetName of Vessel "Etta M. Burns" Owner Skillings Lob. Co.Name of Company Skillings Lob. Co. Number of Smacks owned _____Company Address Portland, Maine Date Smack Built _____

Where Built _____ Builder _____

Length about 70' Width _____ Draft _____

she was a 2 masted schooner smack with a gasoline engine

Wet well X Dry Well _____ Engine _____

Cargo Capacity _____ Name of Skipper _____

Address of Skipper _____

Length of Time in Employ of Company _____

Size of Crew _____ Cook Engineer Deck Hand Skipper Other

Crew Hired by: Company Skipper

Ports of Call of this vessel: _____

informant: Robert S. Lash, Friendship, Maine

Additional Comments on Reverse _____

*Friendship
Portland*

This is Wednesday, March 14, 1973. I'm at the home of Mr. Sid Sprague of 45 Crescent Street, Rockland, Maine. Mr. Sprague is going to talk to me today about his life as a smack skipper. My name is David Littleton-Taylor.

[D: David Littleton-Taylor S: Sidney Sprague]

D: Okay we'll start with some ah, some early things like ah, where were you born to begin with?

S: Well I was born in Swan's Island, Maine, August 24, 1903. And I lived there until I was seventeen years old, and then during the, the east coast fishery time, there when they were doing a big business, my folks moved over here.

D: What did your father do for a living?

S: He was a lobster fisherman.

D: And he fished out of Swan's Island?

S: He fished out of Swan's Island, yeah, when I was a boy, and there was five of us, five children, and my older brother, he was drowned when I was seven years old, he was ah, five years older than I. And then we moved over here. But I didn't go back, I started driving, working for a lumber company up here.

D: Over here in Rockland?

S: Over here in Rockland. And ah I worked there for three or four years and when I was twenty years old I went down east with the McLoon Company, that was in 1923. (D: Mmhmm.) And I worked there one year and I decided, well I wanted to stay ashore. So I got a job with J.A. Young Lobster Company, packing lobsters. (D: Mmhmm.) Well I worked there two years and nine months, and finally I went back with the same

*Rockland
Swan's Island*

captain that I was with before, Capt. Gil Simmons. And we, we operated we used to start, leave here Sunday morning, go to Machias Bay and pick up lobsters ah, ah, Cutler, Cross Island, Buck's Harbor, Starboard's Creek, and Little Kennebec River, that was, we made that trip down there once a week. Now--.

D: What company was this for now?

S: That was A.C. McLoon, (D: Right.) American Lobster Company, that's who we was buying for the American Lobster Company, (D: I see.) actually it was A.C. McLoon. And ah, at that time, course we used, we used to take the gasoline down there for the fisherman in barrels. Because they, no one was selling gas down in that area. (D: Mmhmm.) So ah, we used to take their lobsters to the pounds, Rockland, go back down there on Sunday morning again, that is leave Rockland on Sunday morning, get down there Sunday night or Monday morning and pick up lobsters direct from the fishermen. (D: Hmm.) Now at that time you see we put em in the, in the smack wet, (D: Yeah.) and delivered them that way.

D: Hmm. Now when was the first time you ever saw a smack when you were a boy?

S: Oh smacks was, just as long back as I can remember.

D: What kind, what type of vessels were they then, the first ones that you saw?

S: The first ones were like the ones I showed you here, that ah [Mr. Sprague looks through his photo album] those, no I didn't show you, no I haven't showed you that one yet.

D: Were they gasoline powered smacks?

S: Ah, gasoline and sail, (D: Yeah.) wh-, when I was a kid at home they were mostly sail, and ah some of them sail and power.

D: Relied on the engine mostly though?

Handwritten notes:
Machias Bay
Cutler
Starboard's Creek
Buck's Harbor
Cross Island
Little Kennebec River
Rockland

S: Mostly. Relied on the engine mostly.

D: How, how long were they do you remember about?

S: They were from sixty to seventy feet, the largest ones, (D: Yeah.) the sail ones, but then they went from that, you know from, well actually they went from a, what they call a sloop boat right up to the two masted sailing vessels, which were the larger of the fleet, and McLoon, all the boats that he had built he had named McLoon.

D: All his relatives?

S: All his relatives. Now mostly grandchildren, well "Pauline McLoon", that was his daughter, the "John McLoon", that was his son, but the "Virginia McLoon" was, was a neice, the "Mary McLoon" was a neice. There it is. [Mr. Sprague has found the photograph that he had been searching for.] (D: There it is.) Those were the largest of the sloops, this is the "Marion McLoon", (D: Mmm.) now he had that one built probably around 1900, because that's when he started in business, and that was the only type of lobster smack when I was at home with my folks.

D: Now these all had engines and--?

S: Those all had engines, yeah, (D: Yeah.) for auxillary, but they didn't (D: Two-masted, fore-and-aft sails, yeah.), they depended [three or four words by Mr. Sprague unclear here]. Now that type, that type of boat went to Nova Scotia and Boston, and then in 1915, he had those four right there built, the "Silas McLoon", the "Pauline McLoon", the ah "Louise McLoon" and the "Adele McLoon". Those were all, those were power.

D: What kind of sailors were those type vessel anyway? What did the people that ran them think about them?

S: Oh they were nice, they were nice boats all of them, (D: Mmm.) for

*Boston
Nova Scotia*

that type of boat. Ah, course they had, each one of those, each one of those was well smacks, for circulation they had twenty-five hundred holes right out through the bottom of them, in the, in the center of the ship, for circulation.

D: Right, you could only, just come down through the top, from the top of the deck to get em. (S: Right, right.) How many ah pounds of lobster did they hold?

S: The ah "Silas McLoon" carried eighteen thousand and the other ones carried about ten, (D: Mmhmm.) and the sailing vessels around twelve thousand.

D: How did you hear about the transition from the sloops to the sailing vessels? How did you hear about that? Just from the people around the island?

S: Oh yes, course when I was, when I was ah a little before going to school, my father was lobster fishing and all the, all the lobsters that he [Mr. Sprague is looking through the photo album again.] caught were sold to those sailing smacks, (D: Mmhmm) that all they had at that time until 1913, well 1913 cause I was ten years old, (D: Yeah.) but I could remember back you know before they had those, those power smacks.

D: How much did your father get for his lobsters when ah when you remember him selling ?

S: Well, ten, twelve cents a pound.

D: They did sell them by the pound then?

S: They sold them by the pound. When ah, course before my time, course they sold them by the piece, but during my time its all been by the pound. (D: Mmhmm.) And ah, they had all those boats and they had ah,

in the, in the spring they had three, three smacks running to Nova Scotia and all the rest of them were running around the islands here, see because no, no island boats carried any lobsters, course there weren't any trucks or anything at that time, everything was delivered by those lobster smacks, (D: Hmm.) and, and course they had no dry smacks, no crates, it was all wet-well smacks. And McLoon had one stationed in Vinalhaven, one in Stonington, then he had one that run to Swan's Island, Long Island, then we took the eastern run, then, then we'd stop sometimes at Cranberry Island pick up a, [Mrs. Sprague can be heard talking on the telephone at this point.] Winter Harbor, Cape Split, Jonesport, and this LittleKennebec River, you know you might get confused with the Kennebec River but it's, but it's the one down to Machias (D: Yeah.) yeah, (D: Yeah I've heard of that.) yeah.

D: Now how did you get your tra-, what did you have to learn to become a smack skipper?

S: Well, I went lobster fishing course during vacation time with my father and then I went engineer for ah, during the year 1923 and from 26 to 34. Well you go engineer and cook on one of those boats course you've got to steer quite alot, (D: You have to take your turn.) you have to take your turn steering, so you just automatically (D: Just kind of catch on, yeah.) work into it, sure, sure. So in 1934, the captain I was with, Capt. Gilbert Simmons, he was seventy-one years old and he had a nervous break-down, and in fact we were down east at the time he had it, (D: Hmm.) and the owners come down and got him and brought him back here (D: Mmhhh.) by land, and the, another man down there brought the boat back, then I took the boat from then on, 1934. Well I was on the "Silas McLoon", the "Adele McLoon", the

*McLoon
LittleKennebec River
Cape Split
Winter Harbor
Cranberry Island
Long Island
Swan's Island
Stonington
Vinalhaven
Jonesport*

"Pauline McLoon", the "Louise McLoon", all those boats during that time. Then in 1926 of course he got the first oil boat.

D: What do you mean by oil boat?

S: Well the one that carried just oil, (D: Oh, right.) so that we wouldn't have to carry gasoline out to those fishermen. Then they (D: I see.) started installing tanks down there so that the fishermen could get their without depending on a lobster smack bringing it all.

D: So that's how the McLoon Company got started as an oil company.

S: That, that's how they started in, in oil and lobsters at the same time. (D: I see.) The reason they started, they started the lobster business but they had to have the oil because the places we went, the fishermen had those little engines, but they had no gasoline, (D: Yeah.) without going along ways to get it. (D: So to--) So we used to take it in, in fifty-five gallon barrels, six, eight barrels to a trip for the fishermen that we, we had. And those fishermen used to save their lobsters, we'd go down there, we'll say on a, be down there on a Monday morning, and we would ah pick up lobsters we'll say in the Kennebec River then we'd go to Starboard Creek, Buck's Harbor, Cross Island, Cutler, (D: Mhmm.) and we'd be on our way back Friday. But the fellows that we picked up lobsters from on a Monday and Tuesday, they 'd car those lobsters until the next Monday or Tuesday, because they had no other way of selling them.

D: Were there other smack companies that came down to these same places?

S: Not, not there at that time, no. (D: So you were the only--) We were the only ones. (D: Mhmm.) Then later ah, Clark Wallace from Cutler, he started a lobster business, in fact we used to buy lobsters from him, but he started in the lobster business buying at Cutler, then he bought a boat, and he put a man in it to run around and, and pick

Starboard Creek
Buck's Harbor
Cross Island
Cutler
Kennebec River

up lobsters from these different places. Then from there on it, there was more competition, and ah in 19, in 19 [pause of five seconds] 46, 1945 was the last year that we run a smack for McLoon's down, we'll say to Buck's Harbor and Machias Bay because then there was fellows there that build walls, and they handled the bait, and they had gasoline and they bought lobsters right from the, right from the dock. (D: Hmm.) So a fisherman didn't then, didn't have to keep the lobsters a week, they could sell them every day, which was better for the fishermen, in fact better for the dealers because the dealer could send a truck down there or a boat and buy their lobster the same, only they cost them a little more money to buy from the dealer.

D: Did you as smack skipper ah deal with the fishermen or was there some---?

S: Direct r-, direct with the fishermen. (D: Hmm.) And w-, ah what I mean by direct with the fishermen, we bought from the fishermen and we, we took supplies down to them. That would be flour, sugar, apples, anything they wanted, we used to take it to them.

D: They used to order it ahead?

S: They used to, no, in the fall of the year they used to order, people that lived in these out of the way places, they used to order, we'll say flour, they might order eight bags of flour, that would be a barrel, a barrel of flour, eight bags, (D: Yeah.) and they might b-, have a bag, a barrel of flour each trip for four, five trips. If they had a big family, some, some of them used to have six, seven barrels of flour put in for winter, because they didn't lobster fish in the winter. What they made they made in the spring and fall, because down there July and August was a closed season, no fishing at all. (D: Hmm, so,

*Machias Bay
Buck's Harbor*

[pause of four seconds] ah.) Yeah, no stores, in those small out of the way places (D: I see, yeah.) so they depended on the smack for everything. (D: Hmm.) When we went down we had a load of [Laughs] a load of groceries, and when we come back, but we carried nothing that would spoil.

D: I see, like a floating grocery store.

S: That's right, that's right. (D: With that oil and ah groceries on there and lobsters--) And the oil, the oil, once in a while somebody would buy a barrel , but the most of it was pumped out five gallons at a time.

D: Hmm, so they, did you deduct what they owed you from the lobsters? (S: Right, right.) I see. (S: Mmhmm.) Did they, ah---. What happened when you, when you came into a port, what would happen after you, after you came in? Would fishermen come aboard of you, or what?

S: They would, yeah, we'd go in and anchor and the fishermen would start coming right aboard of us, (D: Hmm.) with their lobsters. One, one fellow, the first engineer I had with me, he married a girl down there, and there was quite a large family. There was seven, eight kids in that family. Now this girl lives right over here, couple streets from here now, she married a fellow that went with me, first engineer I had with me, she, he married her. And ah, her father and his brother, they used to c-, bring their lobsters off in a dory, and they always had, I always ah, I always told them that he had a d-, a, the stern of the dory was loaded with lobsters and the bow was loaded with kids. [Both Laugh] Because he always had those kids with him, see the kids all come around, because they knew that there was always apples or

grapes or something for them to get [D: Laughs] and they were one of the, the heavy buyers on groceries.

D: Oh yeah. Where did you store all these ah groceries on the vessel?

S: Well, alot of them was in the pilot house, alot, and we had a hold down aft we put em in, even down in the living quarters. [D: Laughs] But see on those ah apples, sugar you had to be very careful of, flour we always kept in the pilot house, th-, and ah, but ah apples, sugar stuff of that nature we, we used to put in the hold down, down aft.

D: How did you determine what price you were going to give for lobsters? Did you dicker with the fishermen or what?

S: No. Ah, Jonesport, they generally knew what the price was in Jonesport, (D: Mmhmm.) and when we went east regardless of what the price was up here, we went by waht the price was in Jonesport. Now sometimes it might be five cents higher and sometimes it might be five cents lower, but that was what determined the price there, was Jonesport and Cutler, (D: Mmhmm.) those two, two places. So on the way down, generally it used to take us all day to g-, get down to Jonesport. So we would stop there and check, see what the price was, and that's what we would pay that week.

D: I see, so the price changed according to how it was in Jonesport.

S: If the price changed during the week while we were down there we might have to make up the next trip. (D: I see, hmm.) See on, on part of those lobsters. Now, now they held lobsters we'll say from Monday, first place we went to was on, would be Kennebec River, would be on a Monday, and we didn't get back there until the next Monday. Well, if we took their lobsters on a Monday and the price went up Tuesday morning, well we didn't have to bother with that, but if the

*utter
Jonesport
Kennebec River*

price went up Sunday, or Saturday, then we paid them the higher price for all they had.

D: I see, pretty fair about things then? (S: Oh sure, oh sure.)

Where did these fishermen keep their lobsters?

S: They had lobster cars. (D: Mmhmm.) Now those lobster cars, the ones they had would probably hold, oh, seven or eight thousand pounds, (D: Hmm.) and---

D: Was this in a pound or were these individual cars?

S: Individual, individual cars. (D: Hmm.) And we, we used to ah, sometimes they would pick them out themselves, bail them out themselves, and sometimes they'd float the cars right over to us, and we'd hoist them up.

D: I see. Were there any pounds down there at that time?

S: Ah, down to, we had ah, McLoon had two at Bunker's Harbor, that's about, well that's down on the other side of Bar Harbor. (D: Yeah.)

You-- (D: I think I know where you mean.) Well it's down by Prospect Harbor, between Prospect Harbor and Winter Harbor. (D: Mmhmm.) We had two lobster pounds down there, and ah other people had two pounds at Jonesport. One at West Jonesport and one at Great Wass Island. But now I think they have about, let's see, two, four, probably about six down there, (D: Yeah.) in that Jonesport area. Cutler they haven't any pounds, and the next pound going east wo-, would be the only one, would be the one at ah Deer Island, that's in New Brunswick, that's about three miles beyond Eastport, which is the largest pound in the world.

D: Mmm. How much can it hold?

S: About ah two million pounds. (D: Wow!) Yeah, see on, on this

Prospect Harbor
Winter Harbor
Jonesport
Deer Island
Bunker's Harbor
Great Wass Island
Cutler

-11-

pound there's ah, it's actually five in one, they have five sections. It's the largest pound in the world.

D: Goodness. Now is this the route that McLoon that the McLoon Company kept for quite a while, down that way, or what?

S: We kept that, he kept that from the time he had those smacks built ah shortly after nineteen hundred when he had the sailing smack, he, he, ah, he run, he run that run from that time until ah, I think the last time I was down there was around nineteen forty-five, forty-five, forty-six, right around there, and then, after that, whenever he'd want any lobsters from that area he'd buy them right from the dealer.

(D: I see.) But we never run down there after that, but then we run to Nova Scotia, in the spring and in the winter.

D: How did they happen to get started running to Nova Scotia?

S: When he had those boats built, the sailing vessels, (D: Yeah.) he started right in running some of them over there, because at that time you could get lobsters over there much cheaper than you could here. And over there they were buying by the piece. (D: Mmmmm.) And they, course they admit, course they couldn't count very good. [Both Laugh] So they anyway, they ah, they used to have, I guess considerably more than they bought, and the captain was on a commission, he was the one that made the extra money, because the companies here ah paid him for the number that he bought.

D: Now did the skipper set the price up there pretty much? From--

(S: That's right, that's right.) There was no ah, no Jonesport--

S: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, and those places that the, that bought over there were out of the way places, (D: Hmm.) where it

Y. Macdonald

was hard to get to. You see it hadn't been so awful many years ago that ah, the traveling by highway is like it is now. See it used to be more, all practically all boats anyway. (D: Yeah.) Now Swan's Island, they had ah, there's three settlements on Swan's Island: Swan's Island, Minturn, and Atlantic. (D: Mmhhh.) Well, when we first started running down there, the only way you could get those lobsters was to go to all three of those towns, which, Atlantic is on the northern side of Swan's Island and, and Minturn and Swan's Island proper would be an old harbor, one on each side of the harbor, (D: Mmhhh.) but now course you can get them by truck and you don't have to bother with a boat, and that's the way Swan's Island ships all their lobsters now, is by truck.

D: Over that ferry to Bass Harbor there, yeah.

S: Right, mmhhh, they find it's cheaper, they can get more for their lobsters, less handling.

D: Now you carried, you carried groceries when you started. Was there ah, were you, do you think you were very important as far as communication goes? Telling people what was going on and things like that.

S: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. Yeah, we were just like the local newspaper.

[Both Laugh]

D: What kind of things did people want to find out about most?

S: The price of lobsters. (D: Yeah.) What they were up here, which you couldn't tell them, unless they happened to be lower up here.

[Both Laugh] Because Jonesport was what determined the price down in that area, (D: Yeah.) and ah that's what we went by.

D: Mmm. Did you take newspapers with you, things like that?

S: No, no, (D: Never did?) no, no, no, no. But the last of my running

Jonesport
Bass Harbor
Atlantic
Minturn
Swan's Island

-13-

down there, you see, the lobster fishermen were getting educated, and they had a little more money to spend, and they started in after the war, having telephones aboard their boats, and they didn't have to ask anybody then, they could haul their traps and listen to the news, [D: Laughs] and they knew what somebody else was paying in different places. (D: Hmm.) But ah, on, on these particular type boats course you always had to anchor them, you couldn't go into a dock and tie her, not if you had lobsters aboard. (D: Right.) Because you had to, you had to keep them where the, a little bit on the rough side for circulation.

D: Mmmm. Now, there were quite a few McLoon vessels in that picture, ah they all didn't run to the same place at the same time did they?

S: No, we, see we took in ah, when I was on the Adele and the Silas, which ever, which ever one I was on, we took in that eastern run.

That would be from, we'll say Cape Split, Jonesport, Kennebec River, Starboard's Creek, Cross Island, Buck's Harbor, and Cutler. (D: Mhmm.)

Now they had another, another one of those smacks that took in Hewitt's Island, Spruce Head, Tenants Harbor, and Matinic Island, that's down here to the west'ard a little bit. Then they had another one that used to take in ah Port Clyde and Medomak. (D: Mhmm.) Then they had another one at, the "Mary McLoon" was at Vinalhaven, he, the fellow, he bought lobsters over there and brought them in every few days. And they had another smack that ah, stationed, stationed in Stonington. They had one that run from here to Matinicus, Crie Haven, and Wooden Ball and Seal Island, that would be two islands close to Malinicus. No fishermen on there now, they, they just don't fish on there any more. (D: Mmm.) But that's the way they did it that time,

Handwritten notes in left margin:
 Silas
 Adele
 Haven
 Matinic
 Island
 Spruce
 Head
 Tenants
 Harbor
 Port
 Clyde
 Medomak
 Vinalhaven
 Matinicus
 Crie
 Haven
 Wooden
 Ball
 Seal
 Island
 Malinicus
 Stonington
 Cape
 Split
 Jonesport
 Kennebec
 River
 Starboard's
 Creek
 Cross
 Island
 Buck's
 Harbor
 Cutler

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we, ah they fished right at the island, stayed right on the island and we used, the smack used to go and pick lobsters up there. Then they had another one that took in the eastern side of Vinalhaven.

D: What's that, North Haven side?

S: Well that would be the, well i-, one of, one of their runs would be down through North Haven and around Pleasant River.

D: Right up through the middle there?

S: Yeah, (D: Yeah.) and, and around to the back side of Vinalhaven. And they ah, they, they tended that. But those were smaller, small smacks. (D: Mmm.) Then they had one that would leave here Sunday or Monday and go to Swan's Island, and lay right down there all week and buy lobsters from the fishermen, and if you got a load before that time you bring them in, if you didn't need to stay all the week.

D: Which was the best run to have; among the skippers, who, what was the best, what was the most desireable run?

S: Oh, well, if anybody wanted to be home, which course most people did, (D: Yeah.) it would be this run down here to Matinic, Tenants Harbor and Hewitt's Island. Because you go out and come back the same day. (D: Mmm.) But on the eastern run you see, we, we left, the captain I was with always left on a Sunday morning so as to be down there on Monday morning to start buying. And we were down there until Friday. Friday we'd start back. Well if we stopped at Bunker's Harbor pound we'd have to depend on getting it out when the tide was high, get rid of the lobsters, come to Rockland, get our supplies, and bring the old shell, which we never put in the pound, bring those in, and get ready Saturday and go right back on her Sunday morning. (D: Hmmm.) So we didn't have any time at home on that, that run. It was a hard

*Swan's Island
North Haven
Pleasant River
Bunker's Harbor
Vinalhaven*

run, cause it was about the same as running to Nova Scotia. We were tied up in a harbor every night, (D: Yeah.) but not at home.

D: I see, so you stayed right aboard her?

S: Oh stayed right aboard the boat all the time, yeah, mmhmm.

D: What did you do nights, if you knew you were going to stay over night? (S: Nothing.) Just stayed aboard and--?

S: Yeah. Because ah, those fishermen ah sometimes you'd be, you go into, well we'll say Buck's Harbor, and some of the fishermen would start right in the minute you got there, bringing their lobsters aboard. (D: Mmhmm.) Some of the fishermen, they didn't want people to know how many lobsters they caught, so they would wait until the last thing [D: Laughs] before, everybody was gone, before they'd bring their lobsters aboard here. (D: Hmm.) Then they'd say, "Don't tell so-and-so how many lobsters I had." [S: Laughs]

D: They just didn't want people to find out (S: No, no,) where they were catching them, (S: no, no, that's right.) yeah.

S: But, it wasn't, it was a, at that time it was a good life.

(D: Yeah.) I enjoyed it.

D: You had to stay on board because you didn't know when somebody was going to come over and start selling them.

S: That's right, that's right, (D: Hmm.) yeah.

D: Now, wh-, ah, what were the other positions on, on board? What were the crew members? What did they have to do?

S: There was only two of us, the captain and the engineer was engineer and cook.

D: Mmhmm. Did you ever take a deck hand along or an extra man like that? A cook, an engineer, and a---.

subscribed

S: No, only at Nova Scotia. When we run to Nova Scotia we, we on the well, on the well smack boats we had ah the captain and the cook and the engineer, three. (D: I see.) Because on steering, you had to steer watches, three or four hours each, and ah it's quite a long run to get over there see, it takes, it used to take twenty, twenty-four hours [two or three words unclear here] you know, so they had three men. But ah, other than that, on this coast they always ran them with two.

D: Hmm. What did the cook have to do? What were his duties?

S: Well, he used to have to cook, do the deck w-, do most of the deck work, keep the boat cleaned up, steer, handle lobsters, cook them.

[Both Laugh]

D: Did you eat lobsters very much aboard?

S: Oh not too much, not as much as you'd think.

D: Yeah, with hauling that many of them around. (S: That's right.)

Yeah. What did the engineer have to do? What were his duties?

S: Ah keep the engines running good, you know, and he had to steer a certain percentage of the time.

D: Hmm. How about the skipper?

S: The skipper, he took care of the money. And this was all, all this, all these lobsters that were handled, he paid each fisherman in cash.

There was no checks (D: Hmm.) or anything like that. Eavery fisherman that, thatwe bought lobsters from was paid in cash, unless they had more lobsters than we figured on and then we got them on credit and paid them on the next trip.

D: If you ran out of money in other words? (S: Right.) How much money did you take with you?

S: Oh depends, two to five thousand dollars. [Mrs. Sprague can be

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washing dishes at this point.]

D: Hmm. Where did you keep all that?

S: Right in a tin box.

D: [Laughs] Hmm. Did you ever ah, have any trouble with that?

S: No, (D: Good.) no. (D: Hmm.) No, you, you know those boxes, you perhaps see them once in a while in a [one word unclear here], about so long you know, and about so wide [indicating with hands: a rectangular shape, about 10" by 4" by 2"] and about so deep, (D: Yeah.) with a lock on them you know, little lock.

D: Yeah, yeah, little, little grey box.

S: That's the only thing, that's the only thing they had to keep to carry money. But you never thought about somebody robbing you.

(D: Hmm.) Th-, there don't seem to be any dishonest people that way, but, well now, you'd hesitate (D: Yeah.) about doing that.

D: Hmm. Ah what did you have to know to be a good skipper?

S: Well, you got to know where all the rocks are, or in the area where you were going to go anyway, (D: Mmm.) and of course you want to, you got to know how to read your chart, you got to know how to take the course off the chart. And then, the main thing if it comes in foggy, you got to know which way the tide is running, was it with the wind or against the wind or vice versa or, because the wind has a, quite a control over the tide. So to know, we'll say you might be running north west and you might be running thirty minutes, well you might have to allow half a point for tide, and you, you want to know which way to allow that half a point, but for some reason, when you, when you ah, when you're running like that, sometimes you figure, well I'm allowing a little too much, so you'll change course a little bit,

but we always seemed to make her alright, so (D: Hmm.) it kind of, you know, kind of comes to you. Ah, the f-, this captain that I went with from 1926 until '34 steady, the last of it he used to make a mistake on his courses, forget them you see. (D: Mmm.) So I'd say to him, "Why don't you write your courses down?" "Well," he said, "I never did, too late to start now." "Well now," I said, "how do you, how can you start out of here and go from here down east and remember your courses and times?" Ah, I always had a clock and I had a set hand on it, when I left one place I'd set the set hand on, at the time I left and I had my courses in the book. (D: Hmm.) And, and I used the book, I looked to see what the course was, and the time that I was supposed to run. "Well", he said, "I start out from the wharf here and I, I run out to the breakwater, and I know the course over to the Fiddler, that's east-south-east, so when I get to the Fiddler and I want to run up to [one or two words unclear here], I haul her up about so [D: Laughs] and when she comes on that course, it comes to me just like that." And I've seen that fellow take his watch out, take his time, and be going along and it might be a fifty, sixty minute run. And all at once you see him take that watch out of his pocket again and take a look at it, and I'd say to him, "Er, we're not there yet." [D: Laughs] He says, "No, but I forgot what time it was when we left." [Both Laugh] but he said, "When I took my watch out it always comes to me." (D: Hmm, huh.) That's the way he went.

D: Yeah, he kept it in his head.

S: Kept it right in his head all the time. (D: Yeah.) But, see when he'd take that watch out and look at it, it come to him what time it was he left. (D: Mmm.) And when he'd change the course for something,

when, when she swung about, away, (D: Yeah.) it come to him what that course was. (D: Huh.) You know everybody can't do that. I couldn't do it, I couldn't do it, I wouldn't even try it.

D: So you had to be a good pilot.

S: You had to be a good pilot.

D: Now how about dealing with the fishermen. Did you have to be a, a good-natured soul and all that?

S: You had to put up with alot, (D: Mmm.) alot. But they, they weren't so hard to get along with, you know.

D: What did you have to put up with, just them complaining about the price and things like that?

S: Well, no, the, the, the worst thing was, was the lobsters that they would try to sell you that weren't quite long enough.

D: What was the measure then?

S: Ah, three and a quarter. And at the first of, of ah [one word unclear here], they used to measure the lobsters from the ah back, over the top, between the eyes, not in the eye socket, but they, they had a, what they call a jib boom, that stuck out between the eyes, you know that pointed thing? (D: Yeah.) Well, sometimes you could haul one of those smellers out, those two smellers that are on each side, you haul one of those smellers out and where that large part is there might be a little longer than the smellers on that nose, so what they used to do was snip that right off, take the, take the measure and break that nose off, (D: Mmm.) then you had to measure by the smeller, see? (D: Yeah.) But, they used to, sometimes the wardens would be tough on us and sometimes they wouldn't. Well if they wasn't too tough well we didn't have to be quite so, but then when we'd get in

here and they'd start in throwing out a few extra shorts, then the next trip we have to clamp down on them a little bit, and that's what bothered more than anything.

D: Now did you check the lobsters when they came aboard?

S: We, we che-, yeah.

D: Hmm. How ah how many did you check would you say? I mean ah---.

S: Everything that looked small, everything that looked small. But we'll say the, the back of the lobster is like this see [indicating the shape of the rear portion of the carapice], (D: Yeah.) well right on the back end of that there's a hair that's on the back of the shell?

(D: Yeah.) Well, if that measure went from there back and just outside this hair, that was on the back of that shell, they call them 'hair touchers'. [Both Laugh] Well if they needed lobsters real bad we'd take those, but if they didn't need them so bad then we didn't take them. That measure had to fit that shell.

D: Who did the measuring? Ah, all the, all the people in the crew?

S: Ah, generally the engineer. (D: Mnhmm.) Engineer or cook, because generally the captain was busy with ah, you know, paying the fishermen. W-, ah see there was alot of fishermen coming ah when there was two of us if I was the engineer I, I'd weigh up the lobsters, tell him what they were, how many there was, he'd pay the guy, get him his groceries whatever he had ordered, take that out of his pay, mark it down in the book with how many lobsters he had, how much they were, and keep tract of that, which kept him quite busy. [clock is striking in the background at this point] Because by the time maybe one fisherman had left there, there'd be another one there with his lobsters.

D: Hmm. How did they bring them aboard?

S: Oh generally boxes, baskets anything they happened to have.

D: Just row up along side of you (S: That's right, yeah.) and put them over?

S: Alot, alot of rowboats, (D: Yeah.) in those times of course.

(D: Double-enders?) Double-enders, dories, yeah.

D: Getting back to the crew again. How were they hired? Who hired the, the people on the crew?

S: Ah they were hired, the ah, the ah, the company hired the captain

(D: Mmhmm.) and he hired his man. Because they started out ah, the company hiring both, (D: Mmhmm.) and that didn't go too good. See might be somebody the captain didn't want or something, so then they says, "We'll, we'll pay you so much a month for running the boat and then, then we'll give you so much to pay the man. And in 1923, they were paying sixty dollars a month, for an engineer and eighty dollars a month for a captain.

D: Hmm. How much did the cook get?

S: The cook got the same as the engineer, sixty dollars a month.

(D: I see, mmhmm.) If, if there was a cook. (D: So did you---?)

And no over-time. [D: Laughs] (D: Mmm.) But that's what ah, that letter I showed you there about McLoon see, they had a, a man down there that they hired, in fact they had a chance to hire two men, this was in 1951, and Mr. McLoon told me that he'd hired these, this man, and he, there was another one there that he had let go. And I said, "I think you hired the wrong man." "Well", he said, "I hired him to help you, because you haul boats on the railway, this fellow can haul boats, and he can do this and he can do that." "Well," I said, "mmhmm." So, I was down east, and they had a boat come in there

going to be hauled. So he said to this fellow, [man's name unclear], he said ah, "Boat in here t-, wants to be hauled out." "So", he said, "you'll have to wait until Sid gets in because I don't know anything about that." "Well", he said, "I thought you hauled boats." "Well", he says, "I was down here to the ship yard." See he operated the ship yard down there, (D: Mmmmm.) Small's Ship Yard, for, during the war. He said, "well, I, I was in the office. Sure I hauled boats [Both Laugh] but", he says, "I had somebody to do it, you know, do the labor, I didn't do the actual labor. (D: Yeah.) I was the man that they contacted to have their boats hauled sure, but I didn't do the labor. And I don't know a thing about it." [D: Laughs] So they had this financial expert down there that went through the business. And they decided that ah this man was too expensive for what he was doing, so they laid him off. Then they decided, well you do this, you do that, you do this, you do that, so that's the way that went. But I wasn't doing it any different after he had that meeting than I was doing before. The only, the only thing it did help me out on, that when I wanted help, see I could hi-, I could go and ask anybody down there, tell them that I wanted them to help me, and they had to do it. Where before, i-, I couldn't get them to do that. (D: Mmm.) See they had their job and they figured I had mine, but after McLoon had ah, had put it right in writing that I was marine superintendent of repairs and buildings, so on and so forth, w-, and ah, solicit any help I needed, well course I could hire any, take any of them. (D: Mmm.) Which made it easier for me and no worse for them. (D: Yeah.) The only difference was, the way it was before, he would have to tell them to work with me. Well he got rid of that.

D: So as smack skipper now, h-, where did you find men to crew for you? Did they just come and see you or--?

S: Generally you could always find somebody. There was always people looking for a job.

D: They'd come, come to you sometimes?

S: Yes, generally, most always, most always.

D: Now, di-, did they stay on very long, on the average?

S: Oh yeah, some of them. Well, oh some of them two or three years, (D: Mmm.) some of them course you'd get wouldn't stay four, five months. Now th-, the last engineer I had on the "A.C. McLoon" was with me eight years. The, the, the cook I had before he come aboard there, I had ten years, which wasn't too bad. And then the fellow continued to work for the company for another six, seven years. And then I hi-, took him back on the boat again. (D: Mmm.) He's dead now, died just a short time ago, but, but he made me a good man.

D: When was the ah busiest time of the year when you were running smacks?

S: September until December.

D: And why was that?

S: Well that's ah, you see lobsters are shedding in, in J-, July and August, and after they've changed their shell, then you get more.

(D: Mmhmm.) And that's when you got the largest supply of lobsters was: September, October, and November. December they slacked off some. But actually September, October, and November were the really busiest. But after that you see we'd put all those lobsters in those pounds, then it was a matter of getting those lobsters out of the pounds and getting them into the market. So you might lay around here four

five days, and then rush, rush, rush to get them out of the pound.

(D: Hmm.) And as I was showing you in some of those pictures of the pounds that had ice in them, ah when Mr. McLoon was alive, this is getting back now to 19, well, 1926 to '30, every trip we'd go to the pounds, he'd always go with us. And we'd leave just as soon as the fellows got their work done in the shop, take the shop crew. Now the shop crew was getting ah twenty-one dollars a week, the foreman was getting twenty-four dollars a week, and they'd pack lobsters from three o'clock in the morning until seven. They got aboard that boat with Mr. McLoon and ah we'd take them to Hewitt's Island. Give them their breakfast on the way to Hewitt's Island. We'd work down there all day and never got back here before dark, see it would be dark generally when we'd leave down there. (D: Hmm.) Then we'd have to unload our lobsters, those fellows go home, and back down at three o'clock in the morning to pack lobsters for the express that was going out of here at that time. And no over-time. That twenty-one dollars and twenty-four dollars a week for the foreman was all they got no matter how many hours they worked, and no one seemed to complain.

(D: Hmm.) But Mr. McLoon was ah, he, he was a, well, we'd get down there and ah sometimes you couldn't get in ah where the ah pound was, so we'd have to go in the back side of the island, and we'd make sleds out of barrel staves and put a barrel on it and put the lobsters in those barrels, and haul them across the island (D: Hmm.) to put in that, to put them in that boat. And he helped do it too, he worked just as hard as anybody, and he was a man that you never, he, yo-, ah, he never asked you to do anything but he'd work so hard himself that you'd feel a little bit ashamed if you didn't (D: Hmm.) work right

Hewitt's Island

along with him.

D: Yeah, well that makes you feel good if you've got your boss

(S: That's right.) that's willing to work.

S: That's one thing that he was willing to do, he was willing to work.

He was a hard worker, but he ah, he'd never, he'd never tell you, "Well come on, get up there, you're setting down too long, do this, do that." But on sawing ice, he'd say, "Well w-, we'll take turns, ten strokes apiece." (D: Mmhmm.) Well he'd, he'd saw ten strokes and some-, the other fellow would take right over and saw ten strokes and he'd be right there to take his ten strokes again. And that's the way they used to do it. But he was always working with his men.

D: Now when did you first run into Mr. McLoon?

S: 1923, first time I ever met him.

D: What was it like when you first met him?

S: Just the same it was when I got through with him, nice man.

D: Yeah. How did he make his money, or how did he get started? Was he a self-made man would you say?

S: Yes, he had nothing when he started out, and during his career he made alot of money and he spent alot of money, in, you know in property, (D: Mmhmm.) he didn't, he didn't try to accumulate alot of money, cash. But when he died, which was in 1965, his business was worth about two million.

D: Woo! Was he always a Rockland man?

S: Yes. (D: How did he happen---) He never, never took a drink, drink in his life, never drank, never smoked. And we used to, used to kid him once in a while about it you know, and say, "How come you don't smoke?" "Huh!" he'd say, "I've got something else to do

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besides that." "Did you ever drink?" He said, "No, I never dared to. My father was a rummy was I never dared to." [Both Laugh]
And it was the truth. (D: I see.) His, i-, his father ah used to get tight and one time, he got aboard a ship and when they heard from him he was in England, [D: Laughs] broke. So Mr. McLoon, he got aboard a night ship and went to England and got his father and brought him back. [Both Laugh] So what he'd made, he made himself. Sometimes he ah maybe done it the hard way, he, he, you would have to show him that he was wrong, (D: Hmm.) he would never admit it unless he was. Now he might be repairing a building, and the carpenter would say to him, "Well you shouldn't do that that way, it's the wrong way." And he said, "Well, my money paying for it, do it my way." (D: Hmm.) Well maybe they'd have to take it out and do it over again but they'd do it his way first anyway. (D: Mmm.) And of course he was in the ice business, the lobster business, the oil business. Because in order to ship those lobsters they had to have ice, (D: Mmhmm.) and they had n-, n-, ah no refrigeration other than, other than, you know, ma-, you know not made ice but you know, frozen ice. (D: Right.) So that he had a couple of ice houses up to the quarry here, Indian quarry, and we used to go up there in the winter and get his ice for him.
D: That's up here in Rockland?
S: Up here in Rockland, (D: Yeah.) just up in back of Rockland, yeah. (D: Which--.) Well it's a little bit further up than the Rockland dump, but it's ah, it's one of those lime-rock quarries, (D: Right.) yeah just a little bit to the north of that. But every winter we used to go up there and help him get his ice.

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D: How much did you get?

S: About twenty-five hundred ton.

D: Where did you keep it all?

S: Had, had two ice houses up there.

D: I see, yeah, packed it all in saw-dust.

S: Packed it all in saw-dust, yeah, yeah.

D: How did you get it back, get it down to the smacks?

S: They, they, course we didn't carry it on the smacks, (D: Oh that right, you had the ah well--) but they had it, but they had it in the shop. They had to put it in the shop. Oh they had a truck, (D: Mmhmm.) they had a truck to bring it down with.

D: What was his first enterprise, Mr. McLoon's?

S: Lobster.

D: He went into that and then branched out?

S: He went into that, i-, and, he went into that, and in order to have the lobster business he had to have ice. So he built his ice houses and he got his own ice. And the fishermen had to have gasoline so he decided to have gasoline. And all the gasoline that come in to Rockland at that time, come in on, on ah on tank cars, you know on the (D: Railroad?) railroad, yeah. And they had a trestle work that run from way down here right over around McLoon's and over to the ah lime company wh-, which was over where Marine Colloids is now. (D: Yeah.) And, and they had a little spur line off there that, where they could set two or three tank cars and run the oil into the into the tanks. Then they had the barn there with a couple, two pair of horses that delivered the range oil (D: Mmm.) for kerosene lamps and stuff like that, that's about all they did at that time. Now

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that's the way, that's the way he started with a, with a tank on a wagon that held about, oh four or five hundred gallons and they would go and deliver around to these garages and stores. Course th-, all stores carried k-, kerosene. And they used to lug it into those stores in ten gallon cans and dump it into this tank they had there that would hold perhaps fifty, hundred gallons, you know.

D: How did he get started in the lobster business?

S: [Sighs] Well, he had this island that belonged to his father, this Hewitt's Island. (D: Mmhhh.) And he decided that he, he'd build a pound there. So he did. He built this lobster pound. You know what a lobster pound is don't you? (D: Yeah.) Yeah, just a cove you know with a dam across it. (D: Yeah.) Yeah. And, that's that's the way he got started. He used to buy these lobsters, put them in there, keep them until winter, sell them. (D: So--.) Keep making a little extra, making a little extra, spreading out a little bit, build a few more lobster cars, build a few more pounds. Now the last pound that he had ah, he had one pound at Hewitt's Island, then in 19, ah 19 ah, [pause of four seconds] well let's see, must be fifty, fifty-eight years ago he built a pound down to Hewitt's Island, a second one, and it, the sea washed it away the first year they had lobsters in it, they had lobsters in it one year and lost it. They didn't continue that pound any more they just discontinued it (D: Mmhhh.) until 1959, and I went down there and built that pound again. And that one is still down there, so they're using that now. They're using two down there and two at Bunker's Harbor which he bought.

D: How did he learn about lobstering and lobster fishing? (S: Him?)

Bunker's Harbor
Hewitt's Island

Yeah.

S: Well I really don't know. I think it's one of those things that ah sometimes you get in a business where you don't know much about it but you just learn as you go along. I think that's about the way it was with him because he, he never lobstered fished or anything like that, he just decided he could make some money by buying and selling lobsters.

D: What do you think made him a good, successful business man?

S: Well, he was an honest man, and some people didn't like him, they figured, "Well he doesn't pay me as muc as somebody else." But he would always pay you what he told you he would pay you. (D: Mmm.) That's the one thing that the majority of the people liked about Mr. McLoon. And he, and he had alot of friends. But he'd never, he'd never, he was never a fellow that ah bawled his help out.

D: So he built all that down there, the ah oil company and the lobster company, all that.

S: That's right, that's right. All those buildings down there, all those buildings down there he, he was the boss of building them. Did you go in the lobster shop?

D: Yeah, I did.

S: Well at the time ah, when he, when he, ah course they used to have lobster cars there, and when he changed over in about 1946 maybe, and put lobster tanks in, instead of the, instead of having them in the, in the, in the lobster cars still in along side of the dock, and put pumps in to supply the water. He had those tanks ah, ah three high. Then the lobsters didn't keep too good in those top tanks, because he had this la-, this two inch pipe come right down by the side of the three tanks and then they branched off each one. And

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they'd get, and once in a while they'd get plugged up, you know, and they wouldn't circulate. So ah he says to me, "I don't think that's a good rig there, do you?" And I said, "No, I don't." "Well", he said, "let's you and I go to Boston." So he and I went to Boston. And we went into two, three lobster companies there, and we went in to see one fellow, his name was Dewey, and he'd spent alot of money on tanks and he only had two tanks high. And he only pumped water into the top tank, with a larger pipe. (D: Yeah.) See, in other words it didn't plug up so, so quick, but he had it reduced down from two inch to inch and a quarter and he circulated his water, one pipe [noise results as microphone is accidentally moved] went, headed this way, down the side of this tank, the other one headed this way, so it kept this water going around, (D: Yeah.) in the same direction. And as it went around, it went down through this hole, down ah, the bottom of that pipe there was an ell on it with another fitting that's, that runs this way [demonstrating with a drawing that he had just made] over near the corner it run over, so it kept that water circulated. But it only pumped into the top tank, and it made it alot better, and that's the way they are now. And I changed those over in oh '47, '48 I guess, changed all those tanks over.

D: Yeah, mmm, now they're all empty today.

S: Now they're all empty.

D: Still circulating but empty.

S: And that letter that you, that you read there, he says, this is the part that bothers me, he says, "I want to have this business continue after I am gone." You remember reading that? (D: Mmmmm.) But it hasn't continued. (D: Mmm.) But he built it up for his son

Boston

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and his grandson, but they, they're not the ah, they're a different type of people than the father.

D: Not as ambitious as he was do you think?

S: No, no. And they, and they ah, for instance, probably shouldn't say this but ah, John McLoon, ah Mr. McLoon would say, "If you're going to spend any money," if I want to spend some money, I ah, if it didn't cost very muc, why there was not much said about it.

(D: Mmhhh.) But if it was going to cost afew thousand dollars, well we done alot of talking about it before he'd say, "O.K. we'll spend it." (D: Mmm.) Well now the boy, John, i-, he, if it was five dollars that I wanted to spend, then I'd say, "Well we want something that doesn't cost four or five dollars, I got to get that." He'd talk about it alot, but if it was eight or ten thousand, he say, "O.K., go get it." (D: Mmm.) Now, now in 19 ah, in 1951, I was running the "A.C. McLoon" to Nova Scotia. Well this fellow was on the boat, and we come in this trip and it was, it was a hard trip. And he said to me, "If ah, if you weren't running to Nova Scotia I'd take the insurance off from that boat, becuae it costs me twenty-five hundred dollars a year." "Well," I said, "the rocks are just as hard over here as they are over there. I'm just as well acquainted over there as I am down here. (D: Mmhhh.) You can run ashore here just as well as over there. But", I said, "if I owned the boat and I had four men on that boat and I felt that way about it, I would buy radar and put it on that boat." He said, "If you could get radar to put on that boat within a week I'd buy you one." And I said, "You know how much it will cost?" And he said, "Not exactly." "Well", I said, "it will cost you around six thousand dollars." "Well", he says

Nova Scotia

"you get one within a week." "Well", I said, "can I use your telephone?" He said, "Sure." So I called Portland, Harris Company, and I asked them if they had a, a radar there you know, in stock, and they said, "Yes". Well I knew before I called that they had it and they said, "Yes". Well I said, "When could you have one down here to McLoon's?" He said, "Tomorrow morning." So I told Mr. McLoon and Mr. McLoon said, "Yes, tell them to send it down." So they did. So they put the radar on, that was in 1951. Now in 1969, th-, the oil boat was built in 1954, and she had the same type radar that I had, both R.C.A.'s. The captain of the oil boat wanted a new radar because he didn't figure that this one got down low enough, (D: Mmm.) close enough. (D: Mmm.) And ah, so he ah said O.K., to John, "We'll see what we can do." So John McLoon come to me and he said ah, "Well, I got to buy two new radars." "How's that." "Well," he said, "the 'William McLoon', the captain of the 'William McLoon' he wants a new radar, and his was put in in 1954, yours was installed in 1951. Well I can't very well buy one for the 'William McLoon' that was installed in 1954 and let yours go. So, why don't you go up to LaFayette and see what you can buy two for." So I says, "O.K.". So I went up. Now he didn't have to buy that one for me because I was satisfied with mine, but he did. See he spent another fo-, forty-three hundred dollars that he didn't have to. (D: Mmm.) Because that one that I had was perfectly alright. But when it come to thousands of dollars, he'd spend it. But on small amounts of money, he'd hesitate.

D: Hmm. Do you think he knew as much about the company as--?

S: No, no, absolutely no.

Portland

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D: Do you think maybe he tried to, to cover up for this ignorance by buying things like that?

S: Well, you see his father would never let him go on his own any.

(D: Mmm.) His father was always holding him down, holding him down. And John, if he wanted something, alot of times he'd come and ask me if I wouldn't ask his father about doing this or doing that, and, which I have done several times. But his, his father says, "Sid I want you to pay attention to this business because John has got a good head on him, but it isn't mechanical." [Both Laugh] As far as the machinery went see, ah, you know (D: I see.) or doing something like that, repair work, you couldn't, he just didn't, but he is a, he, John is a nice fellow, but he's not, not the business man, he's not a business man like his father. His father ah knew what he wanted and could have it built, and he'd have it about what he wanted. Where John, he knows what he wants, but when it comes to building he'd say, "Well that's what I want, ah you, you build it." But he'd stay away from it. He'd, he'd know that he didn't know a thing about it. When his father would be right there helping. (D: I see.) Which makes a big difference in men. But--.

D: Better turn this thing over. [pause as tape reel is turned over]

S: I never knew him, he was, he'd gone before I was down there.

(D: Mmm.) The only thing I know about Mr. McLoon's father was what, you know, what Mr. McLoon had told me, in, in other words like he never took a drink because (D: Yeah.) he didn't know that he could handle it, (D: Mmm.) because his father couldn't. "Well", he said, if I don't take that first one I know I haven't got to worry about it."

[D: Laughs] So he never did.

D: How old was ah A.C. McLoon when he died?

S: Ninety-one.

D: Wh-, what was his first name? Have you told me?

S: Albert. (D: Albert McLoon, mmm.) Albert, yeah he was ninety-one years old. He went home, he went home on ah a Saturday night and Monday morning, he went to bed Sunday night, Monday morning he didn't get up so his house-keeper went in to call him, rapped on the door, no answer, she opened the door, looked in and he was dead.

D: Hmm. Was he active up until he died?

S: Oh yes.

D: Never retired?

S: Retire! [Both Laugh] He never even took a vacation. He come down there every day and sit in that chair across from ah this Don Leech, which was the manager of the lobster department. And I've gone in there and he'd say, "What's Sid doing today?" See, me.

(D: Yeah.) Wanted to know if I was out or in or so and so. But he, he would sit right there until noon time and this Don Leech would give him a ride home, pick him up, using the company's car, (D: Yeah.) pick him up after lunch, bring him back, take him home at night.

(D: Hmm.) Six days a week. And I said to him one time, "When do you want me to take my other week's vacation? You want me to take it next week or do you want to give, pay me the money for it?"

"[two or three words unclear as Mr. Sprague imitates McLoon's voice] how is it that I never take a vacation?" (D: Laughs) See? No, no he never took a vacation.

D: Yeah. Well it gets to be a part of you I guess, something like that.

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S: It's, it was a part of him, that, that business, he, he just couldn't get along without it. (D: Mmm.) And he had a, he had a, in 1959 ah '58, we'd been down to Hewitt's Island and we walked around the mud there, he was there, you know, thinking about building this lobster pound. "Well", he said, "I want you to," he says, "how much you think it'd cost? How much is it going to take?" And he, and I said, "Well I figure it up." So I figured it up and I ah, after I got home here, and I, and I, come back and I told him ah, I said, "Probably between twenty and thirty thousand dollars." Well that was alright, he thought probably that was about right. And I told him about how much lumber we'd have to have. He says, "O.K., go buy it." So I ordered the lumber and we took it down there and we built that lobster pound. Now that lobster pound, I started to built, build that on the tenth day of May and the tenth day of September we had it all finished, four months. But I took a crew down to stay all the week you know. (D: Mmhmm.) And during the time, just got ready to build that pound and he had a heart attack. And they put him in the hospital. Well, he had that lobster pound on his mind, and John and Don Leech used to go up, no one allowed to see him except the family, and they started in telling him about what I had said about the pound. And finally the doctor informed them that he thought it might be better if I could come up and tell him then to have them tell him because he asked them a few questions that they couldn't answer. (D: Mmm.) Where if he asked me, I would be able to tell him and it would be less confusing for him, be easier on him where he had the stroke. So that's what I used to do every Saturday afternoon when I come in from Hewitt's. I would go up there and he'd ask me

Hewitt's Island

the question and I'd tell him, and everthing was, he didn't get nerved up a bit. (D: Mmm.) But with John telling him or Mr. Leech, it nerved him up, he, he just couldn't ah, you know, he'd ask them those questions and they couldn't answer and he'd get all nerved up.

(D: Mmhmm.) Then his, I guess his old ticker started in to acting

[D: Laughs] and, it would be too hard on him.

D: Mmm. Now that I think about it, it sounds like he had two children, John and the company.

S: [Laughs] That's right. But he was really interested in the company. (D: Yeah.) Yeah. And of course he has, he had ah, he had two daughters, one of them worked down to the wharf there, she was, her name was, she was in charge of the sales from the lobster pound, (D: Mmm.) and she died, with cancer, then the other daughter died before he did. (D: Mmm.) And of course John, he was in the hospital for quite a long time and he had a, a stroke, he was very bad, ulcers and one thing and another, and for a long time they didn't expect him to live, but he come out of it and he's, looks real healthy now.

D: Mmm. And he sold out to the Bay State Company, ah?

S: The lobster department was s-, sold out to Bay State Lobster Company in Boston. (D: Mmhmm.) The oil department ah, goes under the name of A.C. McLoon, but it's the Valley Oil Company, I believe they're up in Connecticut or somewhere, (D: Oh really?) yeah. But ah, course the wharf and everything is, is ah going down, they're not, they're not doing anything to it. (D: Mmm. Yeah well--.) But they say they're going to this summer, (D: Mmm.) but. So then had that, then they had that s-, "A.C. McLoon" built in '47, and I run her until the end of 1970, and that was it.

Boston Connecticut

D: How did they happen to, to build a new smack at that time?

S: Oh I was on that "Silas McLoon", and I didn't expect to get over here from Nova Scotia. I come out of Yarmouth at five o'clock at night and at eleven o'clock that night I was right back where I could look right up that harbor. Oh blowing a gale of wind, and their boat that they had built [Mr. Sprague is looking through his photo album at this point] all of their steering gear, th-, th-, come right up through the deck, (D: Mmhmm.) and the ropes went down through the deck, along here and up to the steering wheel.

(D: Yeah.) [Mr. Sprague is indicating steering arrangement with the aid of a photograph.] Well, when that stern would go under water, they would take in an awful lot of water where those, that steering gear went down through the deck. And, course we run three quarters of an hour slowed down against the wind, turn around and let her drift back with the wind and take ten to twelve minutes to pump her out by hand. And the pump was right here by the, a-, i-, right here in the back of the pilot house, (D: Mmhmm.) and sometimes the engineer and I, sometimes would be standing in water up to our hips, where the sea come right in over you know, (D: Yeah.) and we'd be pumping water to get her pumped out, and ah that's the way, that's the way we come across the Bay of Fundy that night. So up my mind then if I get through this season with this boat, I'm not going back again. So he said, "O.K., we'll have one built." So they had that "A.C. McLoon" built. Now--.

D: Business was going strong enough so that they (S: Oh yes.) wanted it. (S: Oh sure.) Mmhmm.

S: And they had to have a, they just had to have the bo-, have, have

*Nova Scotia
Yarmouth*

the boat. And those boats were getting old, see that's, they were built in 1913, and they were obsolete, and things were changing from a well smack to dry smacks, and less [one word unclear], much better. (D: Mmm.) So ah, he and I went down to Friendship and this Scott Carter had a boat yard down there, that would be Lash Brothers now. (D: Yeah.) And told him what we wanted, in fact I went to Jonesport and got the ah, got a model, to have it built by. D: Who did you get the model from up there?

S: Ah, ah Ladd Simmons. He, he, he was a smack captain too, and he had, I got it from his wife, his ah, Ladd Simmons had this model and he was going to Friendship and have this boat built, he had one well smack, but he was going to Friendship and have this bo-, have this dry smack built. And he just left home and gone a little ways when somebody backed out of a drive-way and hit his car. And he turned right around and went back home again. [D: Laughs.] And it wasn't no short time after that he died. (D: Mmm.) So he never did build the boat. And I knew that his wife, I, I talked with him about it and I knew his wife still held, had that model. So I went to Jonesport and I asked her if she still had the model that her husband was going to build the boat, and she said, "Yes, I have, and, what are you interested?" I said, "Well, Mr. McLoon is thinking about having a boat built and that was about what we'd like to have." And she said, "Well if you wanted to borrow it to have a boat built you're perfectly welcome to it." So I borrowed the model and we took it to Friendship, and this Scott Carter was going to build the boat, so he ah was getting the lumber and he just started to ah make the keel when he had a heart attack and died.

Jonesport - Friendship

(D: Mmm!) So Lash brothers, they were working there for Scott Carter at the time. So they took over the yard and finished building the boat. (D: Mmm.) The boat was started in September and they launched the boat the eighth day of March, 1947. And I think we made our first trip around May (D: Mmhmm.) of that, that, that year.

D: How much would a vessel like that cost?

S: When they had that boat built she cost thirty-five thousand, (D: Mmm.) that without the engine. Then the engine cost twenty thousand.

D: What kind of engine was she?

S: Fairbanks-Morse. (D: Mmhmm.) Fairbanks-Morse, and ah then we, we went on that boat to Nova Scotia we run her for seventeen years before we ah [Mrs. Sprague sneezes in the next room.] had to change the engine.

D: Mmm. I guess those Fairbanks-Morse were pretty good engines weren't they?

S: Oh yeah. The o-, the only trouble ah, why we changed the engine, ah it would cost around seven thousand dollars to over-haul it,

(D: Mmm.) this was what the factory figured, around seven thousand dollars. And it was direct-reversible, (D: Mmhmm.) in other words if the, if the, when the engine started the boat went, no reverse gear, no nothing. (D: I see, yeah.) And sometimes you might lose your air and if a stranger was operating it he could get in trouble. So you could buy a new Caterpillar with more power, less weight for ten thousand. So I told Mr. McLoon, I said, "Well if it was me I'd buy a different engine and have it pilot house controlled so anybody

Nova Scotia

could operate it." So that's what he did, he bought the Caterpillar. And that's what they have in her now.

D: Yeah, I saw that.

S: Yeah. So that was put in there, that was put in there about six, six years ago, (D: Mmm.) six, seven.

D: What else did the "A.C." have on her? What did she have on for hoists and winches and things like that?

S: Well, she's got a winch on the front end of the main engine, you know, (D: Mmhmm.) v-belt driven, that's up on the front side of the pilot house there. We had ah, we h-, but we never used that much, but for hoisting we used ah just an ordinary deck engine forward, eight, nine horse, eight horse Briggs and Stratton with a winch. (D: Mmhmm) That's the only thing for that. Course for the lighting plant was a Patter diesel which done a good job. And see the [one or two words unclear here] we still got the, we traded the, ah we traded those radars (D: Mmm.) those R.C.A's for the ah Kelvin-Hughes, then the guy informed me that it would cost eighty dollars to take them out and I said, "I'll take them out for eighty dollars." And he says, "O.K. you take them out and we'll deduct it right off the bill." [Telephone rings at this point and Mrs. Sprague answers it.] I said, "Well supposing I don't want to take them off, don't have time?" He said, "Leave them there, we don't care, we don't want them." And we left them right there, and they're still operating today. (D: Mmm.) So each boat has two radars.

D: Yeah I saw one covered up over there, (S: Mmm.) yup. How was the "A.C." different from the previous smacks?

S: Well, she was a little bit shallower forward, (D: Mmm.)

D: But pretty much on the same lines?

S: Pretty much on the same, pretty much on the same line. Ah pretty much on the same line as, as the majority of the sardine boats, (D: Mmm.) only your sardine boats, ah, alot of them have different sterns. Where the "A.C." has got the square stern, you know, that's pretty much the way.

D: What were her dimensions?

S: The "A.C."? (D: Yeah.) When she was built she was ah sixty-four foot ten inches overall, seventeen feet wide, seven foot draft. Then we put eleven feet and a half in her, (D: That's right.) which made her seventy-six and a half, same width, and drawing a little less water, about six inches less, (D: Mmmhmm.) because we took out the eight ton Fairbanks-Morse and put in a three ton Caterpillar, see we took out five ton right there, plus the, alot of stuff that went with it, there was alot of heft. (D: Mmm.) So, so she doesn't draw as much water now as she did when she was new, and, and the boat goes better.

D: Why did you want to lengthen her out?

S: Th-, those boats I showed you there from Novie were carrying lobster for two cents a pound, and we were charging three. Well we could only make six hundred dollars, see she only carried twenty-two thousand, twenty-two thousand pounds, and ah we only made about six hundred dollars a trip. Well, those fellows cut the price to two cents so in order to keep the trade we had to go to two cents so we lengthened the boat out which cost ah, seven thousand dollars, we lengthened the boat out eleven feet and a half, then we carried thirty-six thousand. (D: Mmm.) See for two cents a pound (D: Yeah.) which

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would give, give the company more money then it did on the three cents on the twenty-two thousand. (D: I see, yeah.) So that, that's the reason it was, that was done. (D: O.K.) And it made a much better boat out of her. (D: Better sailer?) Ah yeah, yeah she'd go about a mile an hour faster, with same power, and alot more comfortable. (D: Mmm.) So--.

D: Well why don't we stop right about here?

S: O.K.

D: This is the end of the March 14, 1973 interview between David Littleton-Taylor and Sid Sprague, held at Mr. Sprague's home at 45 Crescent Street, Rockland, Maine. The time at the end of the interview was 12:50 P.M.

Rockland

D: This is Wednesday, March 21. 1973, it's 11 A.M. and I'm at the home of Mr. Sid Sprague of 45 Crescent Street, Rockland, Maine. Mr. Sprague is going to talk to me today about his life and experiences as a smack skipper. My name is David Littleton-Taylor.

[D: David Littleton-Taylor

S: Sidney Sprague]

D: When did the ah Nova Scotia trade get started? Do you have any idea about that? When they first started running smacks up there?

S: Well McLoon started in 1900 and he had those smacks built shortly, those sailing smacks that I s-, give you the picture of, right, shortly after that, then in 1913 he had the four power smacks built which run to Nova Scotia to Boston.

D: Mmm, how did they first hear about the supply up there I wonder?

S: Well that I don't know but ah course it's ah you know, ever since lobsters have been in existence around this coast, why of course they was catching them at Nova Scotia. (D: Yeah.) The only thing was that in Nova Scotia they were a little more backward then they were over here.

D: As far as sales go?

S: Well as far as handling them and one thing and another. They, now ah at, when I first started going over there, we'll which is, was in '35, even then where they wanted to put bait in the dock or a truck load of lobsters come down, they had a winch that run by hand just like an elevator, just like the old elevators with the big bull wheel? (D: Mmmmm.) With the small drum, and that's what they used for hoisting their bait, traps, lobsters (D: I see.) onto the

*David Littleton-Taylor
Nova Scotia
Rockland*

docks. So that was in 1935 and very few th-, at that time had engines of any consequence. Some had those little, small three, four horse power, but that was about all. Shortly after that they used to buy automobile engines from over here and s-, these sardine boats used to come over and buy thirty, forty of them (D: Hmm.) from different garages (D: Yeah.) and take them back over there and convert them for boats. (D: Wh--.) From that time on they started, you know, gaining, and now they have just as good equipment as we do over here.

D: What kind of fishermen were they then?

S: Very good, very good fishermen, very good. But of course their fishing season was much shorter than over here, th-, their fishing season started in ah first of December and stopped, this was Western Nova Scotia, and stopped ah June the first. But from February, March no one fishes at all over there anyway, and ah so ah that makes quite a short season.

D: When was the first time you went up to Nova Scotia?

S: 1935.

D: What was that like when you went up? What did you think of that--?

S: That was the way it was at that time, they were very, very backward. Money was something they [Laughing] hadn't heard about.

[D: Laughs] But you know, but now that's where of course Boston gets the most of their lobsters. (D: Mmm. Now what---.) And they have alot, they didn't have any pounds over there at all, and now they have several large pounds, they have one in Yarmouth and they have ah probably seven or eight now from Yarmouth down to Cape Sable Island, which, they do a good business now.

*Yarmouth Island
Boston
Nova Scotia*

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D: What kind of things did you do when you went up there in the smack?

S: Well now what do you mean by that?

D: Well, ah.

S: We bought all from dealers, (D: Mmhmm.) all the time anyway, but alot of times well we'd go to Yarmouth and we'd, we'd see a buyer i-, that lives right there in Yarmouth, w-, this Austin Nickerson, he'd, he done the most of the buying around there and he'd buy a trip of lobsters for us, but we'd have to go get them. (D: Mmhmm.) Now that might be Clark's Harbor, might be Abbot's Harbor, might be Pubnico, Shag Harbor, Tusket Island.

D: So he'd, he'd run around and, and find the lobsters?

S: That's right, m-, mostly by telephone.

D: Mmhmm. But there were other buyers competing with him though?

S: Oh sure, (D: Mmhmm.) but ah, at ah, at the first of my going over there the most of the lobsters from down around the islands were brought in by power boats and ah put on the Boston boat. (D: Yeah, yeah.) And went to Boston on the "Evangeline" or the ah "Yarmouth", those were two steamers larger than, you know, larger than the "Bluenose" or the "Prince of Fundy", much larger. And at that time, those boats would come in there at the, at the dock [coughs] excuse me, and, and they didn't have any power to hoist those lobsters out of that boat onto the dock (D: Mmm.) so they used a horse.

[D: Laughs.] Horse with a snatch-box, see, (D: Yeah.) hoist those lobsters out two crates at a time, (D: Hmm.) but them on a truck and wheel them into the ship. (D: Hmm,hmm.) So that gives you an idea how, you know, how far back they were at that time. That

*Boston
Abbot's Island
Yarmouth
Pubnico
Clark's Harbor
Shag Harbor*

was in 1935, 35, even 1940 they were doing that.

D: So the way it worked Mr. McLoon would call up ah Mr. Nixon did you say? (S: Nickerson, yeah.) Nickerson.

S: No, no, I would go over there, he'd send me over there and I would go to this fellow (D: Oh I see.) and buy the lobsters.

D: Mmhmm. So what would you do, say you walked in ah to Mr. Nickerson's place wha-, what kind of things would you talk about?

S: Well, there's several, be several people buying, after lobsters (D: Mmhmm.) and ah the question would be the price. Some would be held down, sometimes we were held down to a certain price and somebody else could pay them a little bit more, well if we wanted them bad enough well we'd pay an extra penny and get them. (D: I see.) But ah Nickerson, he, he operated on a very small margin. If he'd get a half a cent a pound on a trip of lobsters he was happy, which now of course nobody would even [D: Laughs] think of.

D: Price is alot higher, (S: Price is alot higher, yeah.) half a cent doesn't mean as much.

S: Course at that time lobsters were fifteen, eighteen cents a pound, twenty cents, and ah, but they were still just as hard to do business with as they are now, ah, as far as competitive. (D: Mmhmm.) People didn't want to pay even half a penny more than, than they had, if they didn't have to.

D: So even though you didn't have to buy from the fishermen that way (S: We, we--.) you still had to dicker about buying lobsters.

S: We didn't buy them from the fishermen for the reason that ah, we'll say we, we go into Yarmouth, that's where the customs where, we'd have to enter the boat there. (D: Mmhmm.) When we'd decide

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on where we were going to get the trip of lobsters, then we would have to clear, go to the customs house and clear the boat, for we'll say Tusket Islands or Abbot's Harbor, well Tusket Islands they had a customs man down there, so we'd clear for, we'll say Tusket Islands (D: Mmhhh.) we'd go in there, enter, get our lobsters and when we found out how many we had we'd tell the customs man and away we'd go. (D: I see.) And, w-, when we'd get in here we'd have to enter here the same way, we couldn't take any lobsters out until [Clears Throat] customs man had been down to check to see if we had anything that we shouldn't have.

D: Mmm, like what?

S: Well, ah there was always the question of liquor. (D: Mmhhh.) Because liquor was much cheaper over there than over here, and some of them were carrying some, you know, a small amount and some were carrying quite alot, but that was the main thing they were after. But we didn't happen to be in that trade.

D: Yeah. Now in Nickerson's office there were the other people ah what companies did they represent?

S: Well, Charlie Dodge: Consolidated Lobster Company. There was Ladd Simmons ah which operated his own boat for Willard and Daggett, he carried most of his lobsters for Willard and Daggett in Portland.

D: What was the name of his craft?

S: "Arrowlate" . And ah then there was ah Guy Carver i-, in Jonesport. He was an independent buyer.

D: He had his own smack?

S: He, he, he had, he owned his own smack and he would buy for, buy a trip of lobsters and, and then sell them to anybody that he could

Handwritten note:
Tusket Islands
Abbot's Harbor
Jonesport

sell them to. But before he would buy a trip well he knew he had them all sold before he bought. (D: Yeah, I see.) Because that's, course that's the only way they could operate. And of course the Consolidate Lobster Company I think was perhaps the largest one in the business. They had the ah Consolidated Lobster Company, the "Consolidated", the smack "Consolidated", and the "Fanny", the "Chester Marshall", the "Grace Cribby", and the "Onoway" [not sure of spelling] and several more they operated.

D: That "Consolidated" was quite a big craft wasn't she?

S: Ah "Consolidated" I believe was eighty-seven, eighty-three or eighty-seven, eighty-seven feet long I think, (D: Mmm.) she was the largest one.

D: The largest one that was ever built?

S: No, no she was the largest one at that time, (D: Mmhmm.) no she was the largest one at that time, of course since that time the ah Nova Scotia people, they've had several boats larger than any boat that we've had on the American shore. (D: Mmm.) Same as the "Amy May", the "Rodco", they each carried a thousand crates of lobsters.

D: That's just (S: And they--.) up around Nova Scotia, they don't come down here?

S: Yes, they brought them over here. (D: Oh?) Oh sure, they, they ah, they, they had a run, they brought them right in here and shipped them from here.

D: Hmm! Were there many Canadian companies?

Nova Scotia
S: Well this ah, this outfit in, oh yes there were several, several of them, and there's several, several ah men over there that owned their own, own boats, and they would carry lobsters for the

Consolidated Lobster Company or Willard and Daggett or McLoon or anyone that they could s-, they could ah get a trip for. (D: Hmm.) Now those, th-, those pictures that I showed you there when you were down before, I think there was ah the day that that picture was taken there was eleven boats that loaded lobsters there. Well out of the eleven boats there was only, ah one, two, three, three boats that was American, (D: Hmm.) see the other eight were Canadians, th- the "Rodco", the "Amy May", the "Seretha" [not sure of the spelling of any of these] the "O.K.4", and the "O.K.--", [pause of four seconds] what they called the "Little O.K." that was the first one they, they had built which was eighty foot and the, and the "O.K. 4" was a hundred and twenty feet long, (D: Hmm!) carried two-thousand crates and they carried alot of lobsters for the Consolidated Lobster Company, in Gloucester.

D: Wh-, who owned those boats? The O.K.'s?

S: Th-, th-, they were owned by a ah, some outfit in Lunenburg.

D: Hmm. So who did out, who did the best do you think, the Canadians or the American smacks companies?

S: Well I think, I think maybe the Canadians did.

D: Mmm. Because they had bigger vessels?

S: Yeah, they had bigger vessels, and, and the crew was much cheaper.

D: Hmm. They have the same size---?

S: They had more men, more men, but they didn't pay them very much money.

D: They had more men in their crew?

S: Oh yes, course they were larger boats, but they, but they didn't pay them very much money. And they were quite competitive.

Lunenburg
Gloucester

-50-

D: Hmm. Did you ever get into any arguments or disputes or anything with these guys?

S: Oh no, no, no. No, no, now Yarmouth you go in there and you, you go up town you want to lock a boat. But down to Pubnico, that's where Charlie Dodge run for so long, which is Abbot's Harbor, you never had to bother to lock a boat. (D: Hmm.) And nobody would, were all, practically all frenchmen down there but you never lost anything. Nice fellows. (D: Yeah.) Yeah. Ah Capt. Ben Dionne, and Frank ah Dionne, they were ah couple of captains there, very nice people. Always willing to help you, yeah.

D: How many extra men would these, would these larger smacks carry?

S: The most of them carried six, but the "Amy May" and the "Rodco", they were sub-chasers, (D: Hmm.) what they were built for, and they had two holds, one forward and one aft. So they would, they would be taking out lobsters at both ends of the ship at the same time, and they come in here to the ah what was the old Thorndike and Hix dock, and they had a man here with a crew of men that run that place for them. When they come in they'd unload them and then they would ship them by truck from there to Boston or where ever they wanted them, where ever they sold them.

D: Hmm. Did the Canadians ever go all the way to Boston?

S: Oh sure, Mmhmm, yeah. The "O.K. 4", the "O.K. 4", course that was the most of, most of their running, (D: Hmm.) those big ones. Come in here some but not too much.

D: Did you ever run to Boston?

S: Yeah.

D: Right from Nova Scotia?

*Nova Scotia
Boston
Pubnico
Abbot's Harbor
Yarmouth*

S: No, from, from down east here, on this coast. (D: I see.) Yeah.

D: Where did you take them down there?

S: Go up, ah Consolidated Lobster Company, Gloucester. (D: I see.)

And, and, and McLoon had a place in Boston. (D: Hmm.) At one, at one time they had ah th-, all their lobsters that they had brought in from Nova Scotia, McLoon's, th-, ah they went to their shop in Boston, they didn't come to Rockland at all.

D: What kind of shop was that, a market or something?

S: Th-, they had a, a lobster cars, lobster cars there at the dock and an office and shipping place. (D: Mmm.) And they used to ship them right from Boston.

D: Truck and railroad?

S: Mostly railroad. (D: Mmm.) It's the same as here, see until the last few years it was all railroad. (D: I see.) And the first lobsters come in by plane here come in in 1930 or 1931 from

Shadiac, New Brunswick. (D: Hmm!) And McLoon had those come in.

D: Hmm, that must have been ah---?

S: Five hundred pounds. [Both Laugh]

D: How did they happen to do that?

S: Publicity, (D: Yeah.) publicity. I think I have that picture here that, that ah, course that was the first smack, I showed you those, (D: Yeah.) but this ah. [pause of six seconds]

D: They ever go up to New, New Brunswick for, for lobsters? Did they ever in the smacks go up there? (S: Beg pardon?) Did they ever go in the smacks to New Brunswick?

S: No, I never did. But ah, oh I've been down to, I've been down to, yes, I've been to Deer Island, New Brunswick, that's down, up above

Deer Island, N.B.
New Brunswick
Shadiac, N.B.
Rockland
Boston
Gloucester

Eastport, right there. [Mr. Sprague has found the photo of the airplane.]

D: Oh yeah, primitive looking old plane isn't it?

S: Now I guess so, I guess that was something wasn't it. [Both Laugh]
That was one of the old sea planes with a pusher type propeller, you know.

D: Mmhhh. She landed out here in the bay then?

S: Come right into McLoon's wharf. [D: Laughs] 1931.

D: Ah, I'm surprised they got five hundred pounds on that.

S: Yeah, five hundred pounds. They ah, they had ah, ah, he had ah one fellow with him and they had six hundred pounds of lobsters, and they couldn't get off, couldn't get off the water. [D: Laughs]
So they went back and they could either leave the man or a hundred pounds of lobsters, so they left a hundred pounds of lobsters and the next time they took off alright.

D: Did they ever do that again? Run the plane down?

S: No, no, no.

D: Just for the fun of it then?

S: Yeah, too expensive. But they did have oh several years later than that, they had those large three motor planes.

D: Ford Tri-motors?

S: About the same only they were sea planes, that landed on the water, ah, ah boat-type affair like that there. And ah they've run from Newfoundland, but they run back and forth all the time, course they could carry about ten thousand pounds. (D: Hmm, hmm.) But that only lasted about two years. And, and the people that started that was Airlines Lobster Company, which is the dock, the, the long

Newfoundland

-53-

building this side of McLoon's wharf.

D: What was the name?

S: Airlanes. (D: Airlanes.) Yeah, mmhmm. It was a new company but they didn't last too long, it was too expensive to handle lobsters that way. (D: Yeah I would think so.) Yeah.

D: Now mostly did you ah run to Boston or did, the majority of the time did you just come back to here?

S: The majority of the time I come back here. But the three smacks that McLoon had running to Novie in the spring, he didn't run any in December and January until we had the "A.C." built, that was the first smack that McLoon operated in December outside of two or three trips that I made in the "Silas". Until ah, 1947, (D: Mmm.) 1947 then we started in with the "A.C." running to Novie and in to Rockland, and ah we took one trip to Gloucester and one trip to Boston but that was the extent of my running to Boston (D: I see.) and Gloucester. (D: Yeah.) And that was only when we had a surplus.

(D: Mmm.) And the Consolidated Lobster Company they were short of lobsters, they needed them so we loaded up down east here and took them. (D: Hmm. Now ah--.) But when they were running their own smacks, they run direct from Clark's Harbor, Cape Sable Island to Boston, (D: Hmm.) to their main office in there.

D: The Boston smacks, made a straight line right---?

S: Yeah they were McLoon's, yeah they were McLoon smacks, (D: I see.) but they, but they run from Nova Scotia to Boston. The "Silas McLoon" went from Halifax to Boston, the "Louise McLoon" and the "Pauline McLoon" ran from ah, ah Cape Sable Island, that would be Clark's Harbor to Boston. (D: Hmm.) They did that April, May, and Ju-,

*Cape Sable Island
Clark's Harbor
Gloucester
Boston
Nova Scotia*

end of June. (D: I see.) Which was a very short season, then the rest of the season of course they, run around the coast. The "Silas McLoon" had a, had a, they run her to Block Island to Boston for years and the "Pauline McLoon", course they run her from the pounds down around here and into Rockland.

D: Now when you left for Nova Scotia from here in Rockland about how long would it take you to get up to Nova Scotia?

S: In the "A.C. McLoon" it takes ah about sixteen, seventeen hours to, to Abbot's Harbor, Pubnico. That's if it was good, fair, you know if it was good, fair weather you know, (D: Mmm.) but course you can spend up to double that time.

D: Hmm. Did you burn much gas doing that?

S: Oh we, we right around ten gallons an hour, see and make about ten knot. So about a gallon a mile.

D: Did you ah, well you must have, the crew must have took turns at the wheel then? (S: Oh sure, oh sure.) How long a trick did you take?

S: Ah two hours each. Once in a while it would be three, but not very often. We found that it is much better to have two hours each and that would give one man four hours off, (D: Mmmmm.) then to try to run three hours and get over-tired.

D: Yeah, what did you do with your four hours? Just lay down and rest awhile?

S: Yeah, mmmmm. (D: Mmm.) Well, the cook you see he had the cooking to do, the engineer had to check his engine, keep the boat pumped out, and course there's always a certain amount of deck work to do, always something to do if the weather was, but most of the time the

*Pubnico
Abbot's Harbor
Nova Scotia
Rockland*

weather was so bad you couldn't do too much anyway.

D: Oh yeah? Did you run into many storms?

S: Oh yes, oh yes. You see that's why I showed you that book, ah you take run in December and January and being in here ah, ah from three to five days between trips y-, you couldn't lay over very much.

(D: Mmm.) Sometimes you'd have to lay over one day for the load, but you'd, you'd just have to load when the, when that load was ready.

D: So you tried not to stay up there more than a day or two then?

S: No never stayed over there more than a day, no, no, no.

D: I see. Did you spend the night up there?

S: Sometimes, sometimes, but alot of times we'd go in and unload our crates and load our lobsters and come right out again. And when we come in here we'd unload, put our empty crates aboard and go right out again in the afternoon.

D: Hmm. So the whole thing took, what, about, about three days altogether then?

S: Well, it takes, it would take ah, we'll say we leave, we leave here at ah we'll say four o'clock in the afternoon (D: Mmm.) well at eight, nine o'clock the next morning we'd be over there. Well the time we get the customs, enter the boat, get our crates unloaded, and there'd be lobsters coming in by truck that we would have to put in the water because they'd come too far to put in, right aboard the smack, we'd have to put those in the water and those we wouldn't be able to load until the next morning. So the next morning we'd start loading and it would take us that day to load, most of the day. And we'd leave there you see, that afternoon, and we'd be in here

the next morning. Unload, load our crates and go right back out again and be over there the next day. (D: Hmm.) But generally we s-, alot of times we stayed over one night. But the most of the time we were in and out the same day.

D: How many days of the week did you work?

S: The o-, seven. (D: Woo!) See the only, the only day, the only, only night that I was home, here one season was ah Sunday night. I was home Sunday night for, you know, for the season, i-, each Sunday night I'd be home. That would be the only night that I'd be home.

D: Man that's a pretty rough job. (S: Yes.) My goodness. But the sum-, the summertime was a little easier though?

S: Summertime was easier, but December and January were hard months to be running that area.

D: Hmm. Many ships lost ah on the way to Nova Scotia?

S: There's been alot of ships lost, but ah I never happened to be on one. [Both Laugh]

D: Alot of smacks have trouble?

S: Not too many. (D: That's good.) Not too many.

D: Now what was this you were telling me about running for other companies and pounds?

S: The, the, the boat belonged, the, when the boat was built she was sixty-four feet, ten inches long. And we put eleven and a half feet in, (D: Mmhmm.) in the middle of her. So that made her seventy-six and a half, and ah when you get over sixty-five feet you've got to have a licensed captain and a licenses engineer and a licensed man on deck, you have to carry two life boats, one on each side, if you're carrying for hire. (D: Mmhmm.) But we didn't do that, we

did it yes, in this way. We would, we would ah, all the lobsters were consigned to A.C. McLoon Company, delivered to his wharf, then he res-, resold them to these other companies.

D: I see, but actually you were working for the other companies?

S: Actually, right. Actually, yeah, actually we was, I was carrying them for the, for five companies. (D: Hmm.) But they were all brought in under A.C. McLoon Company and then redistributed.

D: I see, now you worked for the other companies because they didn't have smacks of their own.

S: Right. Zahn, he didn't, he had a small smack, Charlie Dodge run a smack for Zahn at one time, (D: Mmhmm.) for several years, a small one.

D: That was the ah, the "Anne Sylvia" wasn't it?

S: "Anne Sylvia", right, mmhmm, yeah.

D: And what were the other companies?

S: The other companies was ah, there was Zahn, Rackleff and Witham, H.W. Look, let me, three, and ah Grapham [Grafam?] up to Rockport, and McLoon.

D: Hmm. Where were all these, let's see Grapham in Rockport, and Zahn in Bremen, and where are the other people located? Look was where here?

S: Look in Rockland, Witham was in Rockland, Witham was down where the ah Fisher Engineering is.

D: Down here in Rockland?

S: Down here in Rockland down at the public landing, he was right down in there, (D: Hmm.) he sold that place there to Fisher Engineer, and then, then he went down ah to ah Tenants Harbor. But of course

Tenants Harbor
Rockland
Bremen
Rockport

th-, then they sold out, Witham did, (D: I see.) to Harold Look.

D: Did you ever hear of Pearl Look? He used to run a smack didn't he?

S: Oh sure, yeah, oh sure.

D: Is he still alive?

S: He's still alive, yeah, he run a small, a small smack, quite a character.

D: Mr. Zahn told me I might, I might talk to him.

S: He lives over here on, ah let's see ah, the second street over here, (D: Hmm.) yeah. The second street over, you go up around this,

[Mrs. Sprague speaks: "He's not too well though."] What? [Mrs. Sprague answers: "He's not too well."] Not too well, no. (D: Hmm.) But he, he might [pause of four seconds] that boat right there is the one he was on.

D: Oh yeah that does look small doesn't it?

S: Yeah it is, but he didn't ah do too much running to Nova Scotia, he run some but he would only run when the weather was good. (D: Mmhm.) He didn't, he didn't [one word obscured as door slams] and, over and come right back.

D: Did you always run a dry smack? [Mrs. Sprague can be heard washing dishes---we are recording in the kitchen]

S: Did I what?

D: Dry well smack.

S: Did I want to?

D: Did you always run in one?

S: Up until 1947, always well smacks, that's all they had practically. This ah Pearl Look, he had Edna L. built, which was ah, oh I don't,

Nova Scotia

forty-six, seven feet long.

D: What was her name?

S: "Edna L." That was Capt. Pearl Look, that was the one he was on, and he ah, he operated that, he run to Nova Scotia, he run to Yarmouth and ah, but he only run for his brother and he only carried about ten thousand and he could come when the weather was good. But he only went over there in the summer, he didn't go in the winter.

(D: Hmm.) Cause the summer course, why most anybody can go.

D: Hmm. Were the ah well, the well smacks ah, let's now, you had a dry well and before it was the wet well, (S: Right, right.) but actually when you're talking about a well smack you mean a wet one.

(S: Wet one, right, right.) Didn't have any special name for a dry one then? (S: No.) Just a smack?

S: That's right, ah over to Nova Scotia they called them lobster carriers, freighters, (D: I see.) because they, they, th-, their boats over there they use them for freight, ah, any kind of freight, fish, lobsters, (D: Hmm.) any, anything, so they just call them freighters. (D: I see.) But ah these, these boats here course ah the, even the "A.C. McLoon" was built primarily for a lobster smack, to carry lobsters.

D: What does the word smack mean? Have you ever ah---?

S: I don't know.

D: Cause I've been thinking about that alot (S: Yeah.) and I can't come up with (S: Yeah.) like how it would originate you know.

S: I don't know either.

D: Hmm. Did the ah the well smacks, were they harder to handle than the, than the dry ones?

Nova Scotia

S: No, they were much wetter (D: Yeah.) you know, they threw more water because they were down in the water more, but actually I, I guess they were as about as good a sea boat as you could possibly get. (D: Hmm.) Because as long as ah you could keep them off the rocks they've never lost any. (D: Hmm.) and, and at the same time they were quite weak in the s-, middle. (D: Yeah, I'd think.) Y-, you know they would start leaking quite easily, (D: Mmhmm.) because you had the two bulk-heads and y-, then you had the all the length of the, the, the wet well on the sides, and that water washing around in there would ah put quite a pressure on them. (D: Hmm.) But we, we never, the only one we ever lost that come from McLoon ever lost was the one that run ashore over to Port Maitland, [one word unclear].

D: Which one was she?

S: "Louise McLoon", and that's how I happened to be over there the first trip. I went over to get the crew off from her.

D: Oh yeah. What did they do with her? (S: She--.) That was it?

S: That was it, she s-, stove up right there. (D: Hmm.) Mmhmm.

Well. (D: Let me see.) Course the Bay of Fundy is one rough bay. Because you get alot of tide and if the wind happens to go across the tide or against the tide, it makes it very, very rough.

D: Which was the hardest way, going out or coming back?

S: Well, I, I don't know as it, I couldn't, I don't know as I'd make it, it would be any different. (D: Mmm.) It ah, course it would all depend on whether the wind is with you or against you, (D: Yeah.) no matter, if, no matter which way, when your away from, you know, away from the shore a- where you get alot of wind, alot of tide it's always rough.

D: Yeah that picture you showed me with all that ice on the rigging

Bay of Fundy
Port Maitland

there, man that must have been (S: Yeah, mmhmm.) one tough (S: Mmhmm.) ah trip that time.

S: That's right.

D: That was pretty typical was it? Rough like that and icy?

S: Oh yes, oh yes, yeah we've been out in that "A.C. McLoon" when it's ah, the, the, the ah wind raged a hundred miles an hour at the lightship. (D: Woo! Hmm.) See, we was twenty-six hours getting in (D: Hmm.) averaging three miles an hour, [D: Laughs] galley stove right down on the middle of the floor.

D: Wow! Did you see many other vessels on the way usually?

S: No, no not too many. Oh some you know (D: Yeah.) ah course in the, in the, w-, in the spring you'd see alot of fishing boats, (D: Mmm.) but of course you have alot of fog too, so when you're running at night-time and it's foggy, rainy, why you just watch the compass and go. Now in 1951 when we got the radar we'd be going along and we'd swing out around boats, (D: I see.) before that we never knew they were there.

D: Yeah. Did you use your radio very much?

S: Not too much.

D: Just coming into port maybe?

S: Well we had, we had special times that we'd, we'd use our radio. (D: What do you mean?) And, well, ah for instance ah, we, we had a short wave here at home so i-, we'll say at eleven o'clock at night on my way home, I'd be out in the middle of the Bay of Fundy somewhere, I would call the lightship and talk with the captain of the lightship or whoever was on watch there cause I knew all those fellows, and my wife, she'd have her radio turned on here so she could hear the conversation and, and in the conversation I'd tell them the time I

expected to be home, so the next morning she would call the office and tell them what time I expected to be in.

D: I see. End of March twenty-first interview with Mr. Sprague.

Interview with Captain Sid Sprague

Interviewer: David Littleton-Taylor

April 13, 1973

S=Sid Sprague

D=David Littleton-Taylor

M=Mrs. SpragueS: Well, before my time they used to carry rum. [David laughs]

D: Well, probably a few of them did in your time too.

S: That's the-ur, well, the way they uh, ~~way~~ they used to do, see. Course, they used to carry liquor to the fishermen and, and some groceries, but mostly, mostly the boats out of Boston brought liquor down, (D:Um.) which you couldn't get in Maine. [Banging noise in background.]

D: Down to-up to Maine from Massachusetts. [Both talk at once.]

S: Yeah, [David says something unintelligible.] That's right, From, from from Boston, (D:Humm.) Massachusetts.

D: Haul a lot of ^{that} ~~it~~, did they? (S:Oh, yes.) How much would they hold in a-one ^{one} trip up?

S: Well, I, I, course, I don't know, because that was a little before my time, but ah- Because in 1923 that was about done with. (D:Yeah,yeah.)

When prohibition come on there, why that [D laughs] it all ~~xxx~~ together anyway. (D:Yeah.) Other than ah, we'll say the smack that ah, that run out of ~~xxx~~ out of here. We had a smack running and we had one run to Vinalhaven and they used to carry a small amount of liquor, a few cases or something, you know (D:Um,hm.) for the fishermen. But other than that there was no, no big business in it. (D:Yeah,what about-) And it was only commadation anyway at any time. It wasn't a, it wasn't a business, (D:I see.) that they did make money off~~off~~ (D:Yeah, just a-) Just to get the lobsters.

Boston
Mass.
Vinalhaven

D: Yeah. What about other fish cargos? Swordfish, or anything like that? Did they ever carry anything like that?

S: They, they didn't. No. No. See, swordfish down this area, you don't get them. (D:Um,hm.) Once in a while, but not too often, here.

D: Yeah. (S:Yeah.) So the smacks in Maine pretty much carried lobsters.

S: [Talks same time as D.] Pretty much lobsters, right. (D:I see.) Yehp.

D: Now what was the feeling among the ah, the smack men and the pound operators when, when the Bluenose Ferry was launched? What they think about that? [Pause.]

S: Well, at the time, at the time they ah,- Course, they had a good business and that was it. The trucking business took over just like the railroad. The railroad used to be the only thing in here, Rockland, for transportation. All the lobsters, [Loud banging noises in background.] all the freight in or out went by train. (D: Umm.) But soon as the trucking business took over, the railroad was out. (D:Yeah.) The express. And it, it was the same way with the ah, smacks at Nova Scotia. That one picture I showed you there of some mini smacks loading at, at one day in ah, Abbott's Harbor. Ah, that was ~~one~~ ah, the year before the Bluenose come on. And ah, you can see by the, ^{ah} my ledger thefe that in ah, 1954 we caddied a lot of lobsters.

D: Um,hm. In 1955 there was only eight thoudand pounds.

S: Yes, see. That's the ^{that's the} difference. It just closed it right up because your, your trucks, your trucks could carry them cheaper than the boats. Not only cheaper, but ah, you would call Nova Scotia and say, "Well, I need five thousand pounds of lobsters and ah, can you have them on the next boat." The guy had them, or could get them. You'd have them on the next boat. But when you send a boat like the A.C. McLoon over there, you always figured on getting [Banging noises again.] twenty-five, thirty-

Nova Scotia

thousand or more to a trip. Well, there's no one dealer ^{wanted} ~~worth~~ that many.
 (D:Um.) You cou-, you-, they couldn't handle them. (D:Yeah.) There was too many lobsters for one, one trip. Now when you run into pounds, twenty-five thousand is too many to put in a pound at one time. You ah, put twenty-five pounds of lobsters ~~in~~ a pound at one time, you throw off the damn and there right down on the bottom there. They don't get a chance to, to get away before you got more in on top of them. And you had, you have more shrinkage. (D:Um,hm.) By putting a bigger amount of lobsters in a pound (D:Yeah.) than you do if you put in five thousand, (D:Right,so-) ten thousand at a time.

D: It would be uneconomical for you to go up and get that-(S:That's right.) You couldn't uh, bring a small cargo down.

S: No. (D:Um,hm.) No. Three cents a pound your truck would deliver them here for three cents a pound, four cents a pound in Boston. That's cheaper than you can send a boat. (D: Yeah,yeah.) You can send a boat if you can get a load, sure. (D:Hmm.) But, you, but no dealer wanted that many.

D: Hmm. Did the, ah, smack men and the pound operators expect this to happen,did they see it coming?

S: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But the most of your pound operators are owned by the lobster companies. Very few, there is a few pounds that are owned by private people. Now Gus Hensler at Sunshine, he owns, he has two pounds, at Sunshine, Stonington. But he buys for ah, Durea ^{that's} in Montauk Point, New York. (D:Hmm.) So he's all set there. The other two pounds at Moose Island in ah, Stonington, they're, they're owned by ah, a company in Boston. So they, they don't have to bother with them. They, they're owned and hire men to run them. (D:Hmm.) Jonesport you have ah, Lou Kirby he has a pound there. Obie [Rook] he has pound there. the-, the-, they're private, you know, natives down there. (D:Um,hm.) They stock their own pounds. And, ah

*Boston
 Sunshine
 Stonington
 Montauk Point
 Moose Island
 Jonesport*

7540143

Carver, he has one in Beal's Island. I think there's another one down there, but I ~~don't~~ don't know who, who operates that now.

D: Then there's ah, Zahn over here in ~~Bremen~~ Bremen.

S: Zahn over in Bremen, he operates his own pound, but you see he's a dealer.

D: How's that work, what do you mean?

S: Well, the, the dealer he ships his own lobsters to restaurants. Anybody in Chicago wants lobsters, he'll ship them to them. (D:Uh,hm.) If a dealer wants lobsters, he'll, he'll sell them. But he does a lot of retail trade. Where the fellows ^{down} in Kennebunk and Jonesport and Gus Hensler, they're not retail.

D: They don't really have to worry about selling them (S:No, they're-) just shipping them down to the people that-

S: The, the, those fellows in Jonesport that own their own pounds, they have to worry because they financed their ^{their}, they stocked their pounds, hire a man to run it and they, they take a chance on what they can get for those lobsters when they take them out ^{in-the} in the winter and summer. (D:Umm.)

But there's very few lobster pounds that are owned individually. See, uh, Bay State Lobster Company ^{now} owns the four that McLoon had. Two at Bunker's Harbor, ^{we} ~~to~~ at Hewetts Island. So that's four pounds right there.

D: Do you think it's pretty risky business to own your own pounds?

S: yes. (D:Hmm.) Yes. You've always got the chance that you might lose them all. (D:Yeah, yeah.) Now there's a fellow down to, down to ~~Friend~~

Friendship that owns a pound. I think his name is-, it's on Island, I can't tell you his name. I've forgotten it now, but he owns a pound down there. And the other pound on ah, Friendship, it's owned by ah, Well, at the present time, it's owned by Louis Lobster Company, (D:Um,hm) in Portland. That was what Dead River had. (D:Oh,yeah,that's right.)

Bremen
Chicago, Ill.
Kennebunk
Jonesport
Bunker's Harbor
Hewetts Island
Friendship
Portland

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S: And the pounds at Dead River took over in a ~~8~~ they've gone back
 the original owner which is McLaughlin in

D: Hm. What happened to Dead River anyway? They just ah.-

S: Dead River had more-they spent more money ~~than~~ they were getting in.
 (D:Hm.) So they figured they better get out of there. Now the McLaughlin
 boys were going to buy the place, but I understand, they didn't have the
 money to put down cash. This Louis, Louis Lobster Company come down to
 Bangor and asked them what they wanted for the place. And they told him
 what they were selling it for and he wrote them out a check and says,
 "There's your money." Well, they'd rather had the cash, (D:Yeah.) than
 put it out on credit.

D: Yeah. I talked to ah, Zahn in Bremen and he said well, a couple years
 ago ah, maybe it was last year, I don't know, Dead River offered to buy
 his company. Said gee that ^{sounded} pretty good, gave him a good price, you know,
 but-. So he talked to his lawyer and his lawyer said, "well they may not
 have the money to really do it," you know. (S:Yeah.) Said, "well," he bet-,
 he thought he better hold on to it, in case they did-

S: So the McLaughlin boys, from Rockport that were going to buy out Dead
 River, I understand, they are in the process now of trying to buy out Rook's
 Lobster company down there. (D:Oh, really?) In a-, yeah and, and ah, Rook
 is moving his office, I believe, down to ah, Port Clyde, (D:Umm.) Where
 he has a lobster pound. And the McLaughlin boys are down here.

D: I see. Hmm. Which was the first ah, smack company to open up here in
 Rockland?

S: McLoon. (D:Um,hm.) As far as I know. (D:Yeah.) Now, now, before that
 well, maybe I can get back a little further, you- [Few words unintelligi-
ble, banging noises, tape turned off and back on.]

D: Seems like these steamers might have helped expand the lobster market,

Bremen-
Rockport

then, you know bringing them down to the Boston area-

S: They didn't, they didn't ah, carry lobsters. (D: They didn't at all?)

No, not at all. (D: Hm.) They only thing they carried was freight. ~~Same~~

Same as flour, groceries, anything in that line. But ah,-

D: But, I think it was probably the lobster factories ^{then} that ~~it~~, that expanded it, remember in the-

S: Well, the lobster factory, yeah, see- (D: Late 1800's) Yeah. (D: The canning factories-) This probably, this probably, if you find out, be probably tell when ~~Captain~~ Captain Archibault was born. (D: Um, hm.) Well, probably twenty-one years ~~from~~ from that time, ~~when~~ was when he was probably carrying lobsters from Swan Island. (D: Hm.) But I didn't, I, I think in here somewhere it's, it's, it gives when he was born, but I didn't happen to see it, running over it. (D: Yeah, probably-) See, that's one of the Boston boats right there. (D: Yeah.) It was the Camden and the Belfast, both alike. [Pause.] One was going to Boston tonight, leave Boston tonight from the, from here. The other one, just the other way. There was one going, one coming, ^{all the time}. [Rustle of papers, pause 7 sec.] Yep.

D: How would you describe the ah, the average smack skipper, if you had to do that. You must have known a lot of them.

S: Well, they're pre-, they're, other than when you get back down to my time, they're right, ~~they were~~ before that they was quite rugged. (D: How do you mean?) Well, (D: Physically?) Oh, yes. (D: Yeah.) Yes, they had to be, because they, it was ah, a lot of labor. See, they didn't have much power when the first started, it was mostly sail and that meant a lot of long hours. (D: Umm.) Now, the first Captain ^{that} I went with down there to McLoon's, Captain Gil Simmons, he told me about running to Nova Scotia when he first started. And he was so tired, that when he go there, that he went in and anchored and when he, he went to bed. When he woke up, he couldn't remember where he was.

*Boston
Swan Island*

D: Hmm. He ran a smack to what he was-, used to tell me seventy-one?

S: That's right, seventy-one years old. Yeah, he's seventy-one years old. When he finally got ^{to get} through.

D; Hm. How long did these fellows stay as smack skippers, if it was such a ragged life? That's, that's quite a long time, til your seventy-one.

S: Well, they ~~didn't~~ didn't ah, ^{now.} now this Captain Gil Simmons, he ah, he started lobster fishing on ah, he, he was born in Friendship. He went lobster fishing on Island for a year or ~~two~~ two. (D:Um.hm.) Then he went lobster fishing out, out of ^{ah} Friendship . McLoon hired him, probably around 19-, well, I can't tell you when, but ah, but we'll say from ah, somewhere between 1915 and I should imagine about 1913, because, I think, ur, when I ah, 1913 I went with him 1923 the boat was ten years old and as far as I know he had been on her ever since she was built.

(D:Um.hm.) And he, and he was on her until 1934 when his health gave up.

(D:Umm.) At that time he was ~~seventy-one~~ years old. Now ah, ah, the other smack captains, they was fellows that ah, oh, might be there for a few years and then go. (D:Uh, huh.) Now Captain Jobie Cunningham, he was with them a long time, but he was with them before World War I. He left there and went on a ship during the war and he come back went, went, for McLoon. He went, went from a ^{from a} lobster smack to an oil tanker then back he went to sea again. At that ~~time~~ time he was the only, oldest skipper in the Merchant Marines.

D: Hm. (S:Ah-) Do these smack skippers have big reputations? Who's the one you remember most about ? Other than ^{ah} Captain Simmons?

S: Ah, oh, well, there was, course there was ah, Captain Lou Simmons, he was, he used ~~to go~~ / ~~to go~~ / ~~to go~~ / , he used to go on them island boats here that- ~~fast / short / of the / none of~~ just show Monhegan and those boats . And then he come to McLoon's and he was there quite a

Shoreline

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number of years. And his health gave out. (D:Hmm.) So ah, he quit in 1941. So ah, and he was sick probably for thr-, three or four years and he died. And it was kind of a sad ^{thing} ~~thing~~ his family. He lost his ah, he lost his ah, wife, his son-in-law, his daughter. Then when he was taken sick, they all died ^{withah} ~~of~~ TB. (D:Hmm.) And he was a carrier, and they didn't know it until he was taken sick. (D: Hmm, pretty-) And they claimed ~~he/ah//he/~~ that he was the, ah, he was the one that , that gave it to . Now I went ~~with~~ with him one, on those boats and ah- Nice man. And of course there was others who- course we didn't get it, but his own family, they all died of it. (D:Hm.) They claimed he was the carrier. He was a TB carrier. But ah, course Captain Lou Kirby down Jonesport; Captain Guy Carver. Course they were quite prominent men.

D: Would you say there was alot of pride in being a smack skipper?

S: At ~~that~~ time there was, yes. (D:Were the ladies-) Because ah, you see, in, it didn't make any difference if it was Boston or Nova Scotia. The only thing they had was a poor boat and just a gasoline engine in the most of them and a compass. No radio, no radar, no nothing, see? They ^{they} had to know where they were. (D: Um,hm.) If they ~~didn't~~, they had to find out. (D:Yeah.) They didn't have anybody to ask. So they had to be good men.

D: They had a lot of pride in their seamanship.

S: They had a lot of pride in it, that's right. (D:HMM.) Now the fellow I was ~~with~~ went with, this Gil Simmons , he ah, he could do things that I couldn't do because I wouldn't even try it in the first place. He, he, he never write down his courses, never write down his time, which I did. (D:Yeh) He never bothered to take the course off of the chart.. Well, if I wasn't sure, I, I get my chart out, see? But he never did. He'd get to a certain place and he'd change his course and he said when he, that compass come off that that was the course. And that's the way he went.

*Jonesport
Boston
Nova Scotia*

(D: Um,hm.) Well, there's very few that can do that. And ah, he might be going across the bay here and for some unknown reason , he'd say, "Well, (D: Huh.) I'm not allowing enough for the tide." Change the course a little bit, and get where he was going.

D: Hm. How'd you learn navigation, just ah, running on the smacks, picking it up? (S: um,hm, yeah, um,hm,) Most people learn it that way?

S: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. This Captain Lou Simmons, he ah, he learned me more than anybody I ever went with. (D:Hm.) Because he was willing to show you, which a young fellow needs. (D:Yeah. You're right.) Well, Captain Gil Simmons, he ah, he wasn't the type that would show you because ah, he couldn't, because he didn't, he didn't do it himself. He did it his way. (D:Yeah.) Where Captain Lou Simmons, he would ah, say well take the course off the chart for so and so, see? Well, give you a lot of practice.

D: Who else did you go with besides these two guys?

S: Oh, Gil Simmons, Lou Simmons, Captain Jobie Cunningham, Captain Linc Simmons.

D:

S: Yeah. (D:Um,hm.) Yeah. Well, up until 1934, (D:Yeah.) Then of course, I took the Silas til 1947 then I had the A.C. McLoon ^{for} ~~from~~ that time until 19-, the end of 1970.

D: Hm. Now a young man at that time ah, ah, what type of a command be like to get the most prestige, I know, say compared to being a smack skipper. What would be ah, maybe higher than that? What would be more desirable?

S: Well, we'll take when World War I started. (D:Uh, hm.) Course, I was just a kid then. And I hadn't started going ~~on~~ on boats then. That make, back in 1917. See, I was fourteen years old. And ah, up there in the post office, they give a course in navigation. Well, a lot of these people

and I done alright, yoy know, financially by doing it, so. I got so I d-on't have to work anymore, anyway. [Both laugh.]

D: Yes, that's good. If you'd been a lobster catcher, you'd still be out there probably.

S: I'd still be out there probably. (D:Yeah.) Um,hm.

D: Did you get a commission on the lobsters you carried back from Nova Scotia? (S: No.) Di-you got paid how?

S: I got paid by the month.

D: Now what about these other guys? Did they get a commission, the ^{other} ah, other companies?

S: The-, now the private, the fellow that owned his own boat same as ah, Captain Lou Kirby, Ladd Simmons, those fellows, (D:Yeah.) They got so much a pound for what they could carry. The more they carried, the more they made. (D:Um,hm.) But,the fellows that were working for these companies, whether it was the Comsolidated Lobster Company, McLoon, or who, They, they got so much a month. And then so much a trip for each trip to Nova Scotiaa.

D: I see. I don't know if it was ah, may have, may have been before your time, but I've heard that some ah, skippers for some of the Boston companies got commissioned and so if they went up to Nova Scotia they could, ah, kind of cheat the fishermen and ^{kind of} cheat the company too on what they reported t-hey paid the fishermen.

S: That's right. That's right. They, they, they did. Ah, some, some of them would have their scales fixed so that they could get more for a hundred pound than they were supposed to. Before, previous to that when they was counting them, they would miscount. And when they were tallying them they'd, they'd, they would forget to put one down once and a while. But when they came in to the, where ever they sold them they got paid for

Nova Scotia

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what they had.

D: Just the- Did the skipper get this-? (S:Yes.) or did the whole crew, or? they was

S: No, the skipper. (D:Um.hm.) And when he would ah, we'll say, run the smack out of Boston, from Boston to Block Island, the skipper he, he bought his lobsters by the pound, and they paid him for what the delivered.

D: How much ^{of a} commission would he get?

S: I don't know. I, I really don't know. But I, I think it ah, Since Captain Ladd Simmons, Lou Kirby they got from three to five cents a pound, on the boats that run from Nova Scotia. Well, the, the smacks would carry ah, eighteen, twenty thousand pounds so that be we'll say, twenty-five pounds, that be six-, six hundred dollars. (D:Yeah.) It didn't cost him too much for his crew, a couple of men and ah, his running expenses would be ~~that~~ very great from Nova Scotia to Friendship or Portland, or even Boston. And ah, he could do alright, because he, he might get three cents a pound, that be six-hundred dollars for twenty-thousand pounds but if they were paying thirty-five cents a pound, or forty cents a pound we'll say for the lobsters delivered in Boston, maybe he paid thirty-five, and he'd get forty. Well, if he could get four, five hundred pounds extra, see, he could make himself fifteen-hundred, two thousand dollars extra.

D: Right. I see. Well, what got me thinking about it was what Charlie Dodge told me, he said he went to which was pretty far east at the time. (S:Yeah.) And another fellow went ah, down that way but not quite as far, and Charlie, I don't know what it was, say he paid ten cents a pound, (D:Yeah.) And the other fellow, that's what he did pay. (S:Yes.) And the other fellow paid about that, but he told the company he sold for in Boston he paid, I think, fourteen cents. (S:Yes.) And he made the difference. (S:That's right.) But he was probably an independent guy than.

Boston
Block Island, N.Y.
Nova Scotia
Friendship
Portland

S: He was an independent fellow. (D:Um, hm.) Right.

D: Now, that was th-, ah, that fellow from Friendship we talked about before, I think.

S: Yeah. But Charlie Dodge, Charlie Dodge was ah, on, on wages and he we'll say, bought his lobsters and ~~not~~ paid ten cents a pound. And so, he just let them go right that way. (D:Yeah.) He probably paid for those lobsters. Probably he had the cash and paid for them just like the other guy did. (D:Yeah.) But he happened to be an honest fellow, so he let them go for what he paid. He just took his wages and that was it. Well, the other guy, he see a chance ~~a chance~~ to make a fast buck, so he did, he did it.

D: Hm. Was this restricted to just the independent owners or did company men do that too?

S: Some company men did it.

D: Hm. Eh, pretty widely practiced, pretty common, do you think?

S: Well, quite common. (D:Yeah.) [pause.] Fact, we've had them right down to McLoon's that would ^{ah} take lobsters from Nova Scotia to Boston come back here. Maybe go down to the pound to get triple orders to take them back to Boston; back to Rockland. Lock the well. I've seen the boss go right down and say, "You got any lobsters in that smack?" "No, haven't got any." So he'd take a look and they were there. (D:Hmm.) And my boss would say, "My money bought them." He-, the captain would say, "Those are my lobsters." ,he say. And Mr. McLoon would say, "My money bought them. Take them out." (D:Umm.) So he'd take them out.

D: What would he have ^{ah} done those?

S: He would have ^{ah} sold ~~sold~~ them he'd sold them to some other company. See, if he went to Boston the next trip, he'd, he'd have taken out what he was supposed to have taken out for McLoon, then he, he'd gone over to some other company and ^{and} sold the rest of them.

Friendship
Nova Scotia
Boston
Rockland

D: Um, Hm. So a smack skipper had quite a lot of freedom then. (S: He had a lot of freedom.) Like, like you were telling me, if you had, what ah, several thousand dollars with you ah, no one would really watch what you did with it.

S: No. And especially, now, now when we , when I was running down east here. You might buy for two or three days on thirty cents. (D:Um,hm.) Maybe on the last day you was done there, they'd go to thirty-five cents. Well, if the lobsters hadn't gone up before, well, ^{then} you had that one day, we'll say, at forty cents. The other ones might have been thirty or thirty five, but it was up to you, how many you turned in for that thirty cent price or how many you said, "I paid forty." for.

D: Yeah. I see. What kind of records did you keep?

S: Just had a book just like that right there, and just didn't put down the fisherman's name. Just the amount you bought, twenty pounds, thirty pounds, forty pounds, a hundred and forty pounds , or what ever. And, down at the end of the page, add them up, price up there-so much. ^(D:Um) But there was always, there was always the possibility that a company could always find out. (D: How's that? They went out and --) That's right. That's right. (D:Hm.) If they happened to go down ^{there} themselves and check, they could, they could find out, and it's caused a lot of people a lot of trouble. [Pause.] You know, you can only be crooked about so long before they catch you anyway. [Laughs.] (D: I suppose.) Sure. [Pause.] Well, this fellow, this, this ah, one fellow down to Jonesport, Beal's Island and ah, he used to take lobsters from his father-in-law. (D:You mean buying or taking?) Just, ah, his father-in-law hired him to take these lobsters to Boston, get him so much a pound, (D:Yeah.) for taking them. (D:Yeah.) So he took extra weight. So when he got in Boston, he took out what he bought from his,-what he had from his father-in-laws, suppose to have. He had all these lobsters left

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over, so he just took them over to another company and sold them. His father-in-law went to Boston and the company^{that} he was doing business with says, "Well, he didn't take them all out here, he took some over to so and so." So he went over there and checked and found out that he did. And his father-in-law wouldn't let him take anymore lobsters. [D chuckles.] I know that because his father-in-law told me because we were down there to take lobsters from his pound. (D: I see.) And, and they were all doing it, he was doing just like he did in Nova Scotia and he'd gotten that habit, so he did it to his father-in-law. (D:Hm.) Which wasn't a smart thing to do.

D: [Laughs.] No, I wouldn't think so. Part of your family like that. (S: that's right.) Yeah. [Pause.] What about the fishermen, now did they ah, did they feel cheated when people did this, or did they have any chance to find out about it?

S: At that time, they had no way of finding out. We, we, we'd start out from here in the-, say the price was thirty^{thirty} cents. We'd stop in Jonesport, and ah, find out what they were paying there. Whether they were paying thirty cents there, Ok. But maybe they were paying thirty-five cents there. Well, ordinarily, if they were higher there, then we'd go ashore, whether I was captain or the other fellow, call the company and say, "Well the price at Jonesport is, we'll say thirty-five cents. What do you want me to do?" Well, they'd say, "You got to pay Jonesport price." Then they knew, see, what we were up against. (D:Um,hm.) Then when we went down fifteen miles f^ruther, which would be Machias Bay, we'd start in and pay just what they did in Jonesport. Because it's so close, that before the week was up, they would find out anyway. They didn't have any, any ah, they had telephone, land telephones, but they didn't have any telephones on the boats. (D:Hmm.) But somebody would use the land telephone and call

Boston
Nova Scotia
Jonesport

Jonesport to find out what they were paying up there. Well, if we weren't paying what they were ~~was~~^{are} paying, they'd find out when the price changed. Then whoever was buying those lobsters would be in trouble because they'd say, "Well, you said you stopped in Jonesport. And they started paying, paying price on such and such a day. (D:Hmm.) How come you didn't pay it?" (D:Yeah.) So you ^{you} really had to be quite honest with those fishermen in order to get the lobsters.

D: Yeah. If you wanted to come back-(S: If you wanted to come back again, that's right-) Again. I would think so. What about the Canadian skippers, were they any more honest or dishonest, or any, any different than you were?

S: Uh, years, years ago there wasn't any ah, Canadian smack running lobsters,

(D:Uh, hm.) over here. They was all American smacks. And the American smacks that run over there, they paid about what they wanted to. They'd say, "Well, we can pay so much," if they had a lot of lobsters and they were still catching lobsters and knew where to put them, they'd have to sell them. (D:Yeah.) Then it was up to that captain to tell whoever he was taking them to, what he paid for them or say, "Well, how much will you pay me for a trip of lobsters? What's the limit?" And they might tell him, he had a limit of, let's say five cents above what they figured the price was down there. And he'd have to ~~go~~^{go} pretty much ^{by} that.

D: Hmm. You mentioned rum running. Was there, was there much of that in the smacks?

S: No, no, no, not too much. (D:Yeah.) No. On-, only just, ah, you know, ~~you know~~ for the, you know for the fishermen. Now the fellow that I went with, I started with in 1923, he used to carry it when he ^{was running} ~~went~~ to Boston and he told me that's the only way he could buy lobsters. (D:Hmm.) But time with, I went with him, he'd knocked off drinking. He was a tea-toteler; never touch it; never carry it.

Jonesport

D: How do you-why do you say that was the only way he could buy lobsters?

S: The fishermen-well, it'd be ~~four or five fishermen~~ uh, three or four other buyers in, in the same harbor. And if they had liquor and he didn't, they sell to those, the ones that use liquor would sell to the fellows where they'd get the liquor. (D: Oh, I see. Yeah.) Course they didn't, they wasn't all drinking men, but you find generally half of them.

D: Hmm. How did a new ah, area open up for buying lobsters? Ah, smack
(S: That's right.)
would go in by itself and talk to the fishermen and-like that? Then
^
pretty soon another company would go in there? (S: Yep.) Which was the b-, which were the good companies to work for and which were the bad companies here in Rockland?

S: In Rockland? I think they're all good. (D: Um, hm. Well that's good.) Yeah. Yeah. I think they're all good. Because ah, ah, one dealer might cut the other dealer's throat, (D: Yeah.) But he wouldn't cut the throat of the fellow- (D: Go all the way) [Laughs.] that's, that's bringing his lobsters in to him. (D: Hmm.) One dealer might say to the other dealer, "Well, I, I, lobsters are, market's bad and I'm going to sell my lobsters for so much." So they'd all decide on that. (D: Yeah.) But the first thing you know, one guy, he's got too many lobsters so he drops his price a couple of pennies and he get rid of his lobsters leaves the other guy holding his. (D: Yeah.) That was, that was done all the time. But other than that, they were all, they're pretty nice people.

D: Yeah. Must have been alot of competition with all-[A few words said by David are lost because S interrupts.]

S: -lot of competition. But Ra-, ah, Radcliff Whitham, they were nice people. One of the Whithams live right over there, another one of them lives right up here in this white house, two, two brothers. (D: Yeah.) And ah, Lena, where do Radcliffs live? Right, right up here, didn't he? Sure.

Rockland

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Right up here.

M: No, ah, oh, ah, on the, I mean ah, Pacific. (S:Yeah.) I don't know- [Not very clear. Hard to hear her.]

S: So they were in together (M: name was Radcliff, but I don't know-) [She rattles on but cannot be distinguished.] Yeah. ^{look} Hal Rook, he run a place down here. He lived just down the end of Pacific Street. McLoon, he lived up on Grove Street. And, ah, J.A., J. A. Young Lobster Company, yeah, there's another one that's here. The ah, Ralph Hanscome, he lived up on ah, Gray Street, Masonic Street. So they all, they all lived right here together and, and ah, if they were any ~~Kwan Kwan~~ Kiwanias or anything like that, ~~course~~ why they course, all met together, so on and so forth. So they, they pretty much had to get along, you know. (D: Yeah, all neighbors and-) Oh, sure, all neighbors. That's right. All trying to make a living.

D: Right. So, yeah. You couldn't ah, couldn't get away from them really, and (S: No, if-) you might as well be friendly.

S: If one man, ^{if} _^ one dealer didn't have any lobsters, and he had a order he wanted shipped real bad, he could always buy them from another dealer if that dealer had them. (D:Umm.) So that way, they were, they were, they were alright. They were very nice people. (D:That's good.) So when we started running over there with the A.C. McLoon in 1947, we carried lobsters for five companies. Well, in order to carry lobsters for five companies, you got to be quite friendly with them.

D: Yeah. I would think so. (S: Yeah. Yeah.) Hmm. Everybody kind of depending on everybody else--

S: That's what they were. That's what they were. ^{um, hm} _^ But ah, --

D: So all the smack skippers were your neighbors too then weren't they?

S: They were all- That's right. Um, hm. Yeah. Some of them were re-, re-related to one another, and some wasn't. But they were all very, very good

people. (D: Hmm.) Now, not all the McLoons skippers lived in Rockland. Now, he had, he had ah, one that lived in Vinalhaven. He had one lived in Stonington. He had one lived in Tenants Harbor. And ah, course this Captain Gil Simmons he lived in Friendship until he moved when he got - he working here and he liked it. ^{why,} ~~And~~ he decided to move his family here. But ah, then ah, Captain Linc Simmons, he , he was a Beal's Island man, Jonesport man. John Crowley, he run smack for them. He was from Beal's Island . And, you know, them were pretty much all around. Lester Alley, he was from Beal's Island. He was in the Silas before I was. He had her when she was new, when she was practically new . His father had her when she was new then he had her after his father. ^[pause] But they were, you know, nice, nice people. (D: It's ah, well, that's-) It's a pity they're all gone now.

D: Yeah. I was going to say all that's all gone now. All the corporations-

S: [Interrupts.] Look, when I, when I got through, when I got through at McLoon's, there was not one man alive except, well yes, one man was alive but he's ~~gone now~~ isn't now, he's gone now, that when I got through they was all dead. (D:Um.) I was the only one alive, except Lester Alley, which died this last winter. Didn't he Lena?

M: I can't, I don't think- I guess Mitchell told me. [Said faintly.]

S: Yes, Mitchell told me, yes. (D:Hm. Well, y-) But , but (D:Yeah.) They're all dead.

D: Yeah. Yeah. You're telling the story and, ah, it sounds like a pretty good to me.

S: Yeah. But you know, they were, they were, the most of those fellows were older, you see, than I was . I was ah, just a kid when I went there.

(D:Yeah, yeah.) So the fellows, were, that were there when I went there are all dead now. (D: Hmm.) Every one of them.

Rockland
Stonington
Vinalhaven
Tenants Harbor
Friendship
Jonesport
Beal's Island

D: But, ah, I don't know . It's too big a question to ask you what it meant to you, because you did it for so long. Was it forty-three years, wasn't it?

S: Forty-six years. (D:Yeah.) It, it meant a lot. But do you know- well I went down east with John McLoon. This was in ah, March or April and I would have been sixty-four in August. And he says to me, going on the way down, he was my boss then his father had died. (D:Um,hm.) "Well," he said ah, " I wish Roy Mank would get through. And I wish Roy's boss, which is his brother-in-law, mind you, I wish he'd get through. Cause they can't do what they should do." Because they were sixty-five years old. (D:Um,hm) And ah, I would have been sixty-four in August, see. [D laughs] He said, "I wish they'd get through. I got a man take their place.", he says. "Smart man". So on the way back from down there, I was thinking it over, you know, and kinda wondering what I was going to say to him when he got, when I got a chance. I knew I was going to say something to him. So, on the way back he said ah, he ^craised back going about sixty miles an hour and he says, "Well, Sid,"he says, "You know, you know what I'm going to do?" And I said, "No, I don't know, John." He said, "Well, I'm going to work until I'm seventy-two." [D laughs] And then he says,"I can make all I want too, and the Government can't, can't take a goddamn thing from me." [D laughs] "Well," I said," John, you're planning different then I am." "What do you mean." "Well," I said,"I wasn't going to tell you this until the twenty-fourth day of August." He says,"What's the twenty-fourth day of August?" I said, "I'll be sixty-four years old and I was going to tell you then, that I'd give you one year to get somebody to take my place, cause I'm getting through when I'm sixty-five." "Oh, you don't mean that!" I said,"Yes, John, I says," I'm about in the same beat these fellows

"Well," He says, "You're different, see. You're

different." Course, I was acting as the Marine Superintendent down there and going Captain of the boat, have charge of all the repair work, everything. And he ^{he says,} says, "Oh, alright. ^ You don't mean it." And I said, "Yes." Well, I think that really starved him about getting ready to sell, because he found out that he couldn't get anybody, (D:Um, hm.) to do all those jobs. To haul the boat, do the repair work on the pounds, do the repair work on the wharfs, and run the boat besides. He couldn't get them. Well, I kept going and it come when I was sixty-five and called in the office well, I didn't get no more money and he said, "Well, you ah, you're not planning on quitting." And I said, "Yeah, when you get somebody." And he didn't get anybody until 1970, September 1970, Chet Lendfester. (D:Um, hm) Now, Chet Lendfester is a nice fellow, but he didn't know a thing about what he's doing, he doesn't know. To be truthful.

D: Yeah. Well, he ^{hasn't got} ~~doesn't have~~ that forty years that you had.

S: Oh, he di-, you see, he went with me three months, then I quit. I got through. (D:Yeah.) See, cause, I got through on the boat the last day of November, but I stayed another month round the doack to finish out that year. ^(D:Um, hm) Well, they decided they were going to haul boats, but the insurance company wouldn't insure the railway, with Chet Lendfester hauling the boats. Because the insurance man-, I was right there when this happened, they asked him, "Have you ever hauled boats on a railway like this?" He says, "No, I never have." So, the insurance man told me a week later, that, "I wished you'd had stayed there and hauled those boats for him." I says, "Why?" "Well," He says, "We couldn't insure that railway to haul boats with a man that never done it before." (D:Umm.) "Sup-, suppose he upset one. We'd have to pay for it. We, we wouldn't do that." So he wouldn't insure them, so they can't haul boats. So, it's now been two years and a half, pretty near, and they havn't hauled a boat since I left there. Every-

thing's going to pieces. (D:Umm.) I was down there the other day and they bought three or four sets of scales and they cost about three hundred dollars a set. (D: Phew! Yeah.) I, I used to repair all the scales. Now, a good set of house scales, galvinized scales, the only thing you'd need, if they're five years old, or even ten years old, is new pivots, new pins, new pins, and you can make new scales out of them as long as they're not broken. (D:Um, hm.) So the scales got slow and they ^{ive} condemned them, and bought new ones. In one year~~s~~, these new ones are going to be right where the old ones are. They're going to need overhauling, new pins, see, new pivots. But he doesn't know what to do to fix them. (D:Yeah.) It isn't his line, he isn't-, see what I mean? He's never done it. (D:Yeah.) He's a nice fellow, but he's never done it, so he doesn't know. So, he buys new. But in one, one year those new scales are going to be slow and they're going to need to be repaired, and he can't do it. And the ones they, they have condemned are better scales than these new ones~~d~~ they bought. These new ones are tinny. (D:Um,hm,) Much cheaper than the older ones, not galvinized just painted; black iron painted. In salt water they won't last anywhere near as long as those galvinized ones. And they got nice galvinized scales there and they've condemned them.

D: It's as hard for you to get away from the company as it was for Mr. McLoon, isn't it?

S: But when I got through there, when I did get through there, I had been planning on it for three years and I knew they was on the verge of selling. The last year I was there, the only thing that I'd say to John McLoon was, "We should do this. We should do that." "Well, can't you just re-, fix this up. So that, you know, because I'm going to sell, now, now", he says, "I'm talking with Bay State and I'm talking with ah, ah, Dead River, Lewis Lobster company, and these other companies. Now ^{He says} one of them's going to buy,

Now," He says, "Can't you just re-, fix it up^{just}, you know." And I says, "Oh, sure." So that's what I did. I fixed it up and I could take you down there now and show you, why the floor is going down there in the shop. They haven't done anything under the building. Some of the timber is wrapped right down over the piling and they're not doing a thing about it. The piling are going ; they're not replacing any. I used to replace those pilings as fast as they went. They, they're not doing it anymore. Well, it's a question of how long it's going to go before they're not going to have anything, not going to have a wharf to go on.

D: Um, hm, Yep. It's sad to see that happen, isn't it?

S: It is. Now as far as going on that boat, it doesn't bother me, because when I take a look at her, I want to get right away from there because they are letting her go down. They're not keeping her up, and everything else is going to pieces down there. So, I, I, I feel happy to get home here. (D: Yeah.) As far as if I could go down and see that boat go out, I'd say, "Good let her go." (D: Yeah.) It doesn't bother me a bit. But if I had ah, gotten through probably the day^{that} I was telling Mr. McLoon that I was giving him one more year after the twenty-fourth of August, it probably would have bothered me at that time. But it hasn't bothered me since I got through there.

D: Um. Well, you know the good hard years you put in there.

S: Yep. Because^{on} I got through there the, the last day of December, they sold the oil department in April, the lobster department was sold in ~~December~~^{September}. The, ah, the lobster department was sold in April and the oil was sold in September. So, now, it's all, all different, all different fellows working down there. Where they used to go down there, and, and, and go in if they were ten minutes late, OK. If they went, wanted to go home fifteen minutes early, OK. Now there's a time card there to punch. (D: Umm.)

And that bothers them more than anything. (D:Yeah. yeah.) The lobster shop, every window in that lobster shop is boarded up. You, (D:Yeah.) see that? (D:Yeah.) Now, I was down there yesterday, the water's shut off in the tanks, no water in the tanks. Nothing! Just going to pot. [pause.] The oil department, they're building a new office in there. But they haven't done a thing about the framing under the office which is going down. They've put up nice panelling, but they, ah, I told Billy when they first started repairing those, changing the offices over, and putting in wall to wall carpeting, I said, "Billy, you're getting the cart before the horse." W "What do you mean?" I says, "You should have a couple of carpenters go down under the building first put in some new timber before you do this, because the timber is gone." But they're not doing it. (D:That's too bad.) The A.C. McLoon's getting rotten wood in her, and they don't do anything about it. They're not taking it out. Leav-ing it. (D:Umm.) [pause] Well, you can't ah, you can't operate too long that way.

D: Yeah. You got to have, you got to know what's going on. You got to have pride in what you're doing, I guess.

S: Umm. Now, they, they ordered ah, all new timber for the railway. They was going to do a big job over there. Well, it's just as well they didn't do it, because if they had of it would have floated. [D: laughs] See? Because tje, it's railroad track. [Clock chimes once.] And the timber we use, we use green oak. (D:Umm.) Because it's heavy. (D:Yeah.) And it doesn't take very much to sink it. And after it once gets under water whx it'll never, never get any lighter. It always gets so it, you know, if you ever have to renew a piece of it and if you drop it overboard, it sinks anyway. (D:Yeah.) And ah, some of it, some of it will sink before you can get it in there, even though it's new. Because it be so, so wet. And ah, they put spruce and hemlock. Where we used eight by eight for cross timbers,

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and eight by ten for fore and aft, they're using ten by ten and twelve by twelve spuree and hemlock. (D:Um, hm.) Well, it would float the whole thing up. So it's just as well they didn't do it, because they wouldn't of had anything anyway. (D: Yah, uh.) [pause] I was down there, down there the other day and ah, one of the oil companies' buildings that they carry- put the case of oil in, the whole corner of the building, there isn't a thing under it. See the, (D: Huh.) the, the corner post is gone. It was, I think it was a cement post, (D:Yeah.) a granite post. It fell out and they haven't even put it back in.

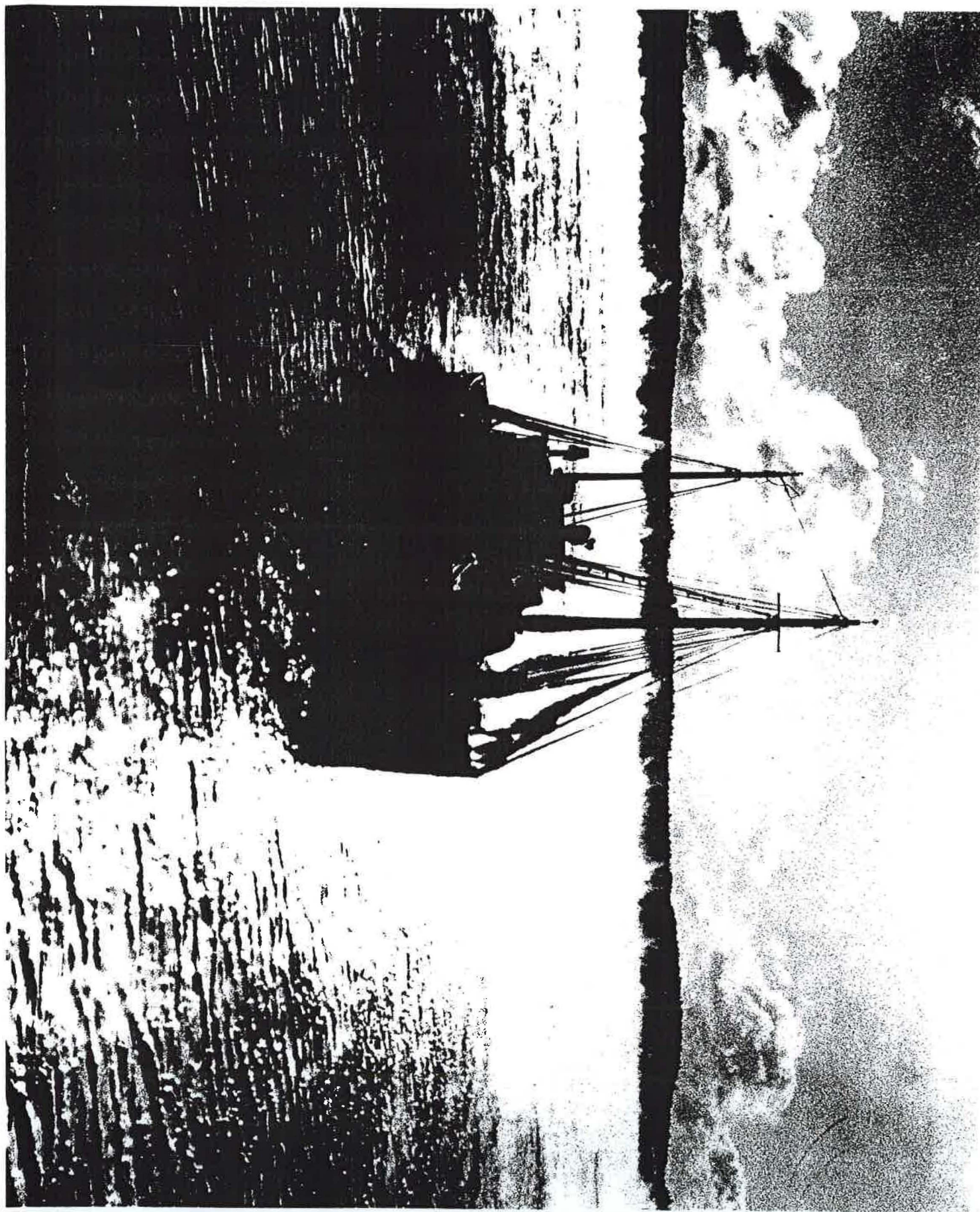
I don't know

D: People are to busy making money to think about the future, I guess.

S: Well, it, it looks that way. It looks to me like they're trying to make a buck fast without spending any. And you can't do it. You, you, you're better off to ah, to spend a couple thousand dollars round your plant every year than it is to try and run it for four, ~~or~~ five years and say "Well, I can get by four, ~~or~~ five years and I'll only spend five thousand dollars." But, but that's not the way it works. Any rotten wood you leave in there is going to make more rotten wood. (D:Yeah.) The quicker you get it off, the better you are off. But they're not doing it. When you leave here, I'd like for you to take a ride down there. I'd like to show you, I'd like to show you what I mean.

D: Ok. Why don't we stop right there then. (S: Alright.)

[End of Interview, end of tape 754.3]



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