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Above Shipboard Chart Tables**

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↓ **Future Fishermen in Sou'westers
Ride a Dory on Wheels**

These boys move in procession from church to docks to take part in the benediction. Crowned and gowned like Our Lady, the girl holds a schooner model and the Child. Gloucestermen seldom use dories today.





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Kodachrome by Lulu Marden, National Geographic Staff

A Ship on Her Arm, an Illuminated Statue of the Virgin Welcomes Fishermen Home





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with prayer and fragility, venturesome Deepwater fishermen
Ask the Protection of Our Lady of Good Voyage

BY LUIS MARDEN

With Color Photographs by the Author

LET him who knows not how to pray go to sea."

Devout Portuguese fishermen of New England's old port of Gloucester, Massachusetts, who daily face the dangers of deep water, well know the truth of that old proverb. These men who wrest a hard living from the sea rely on Our Lady of Good Voyage, as well as chart and compass. And once a year, in early June, the vessels of Gloucester's Portuguese fleet gather at the State Fish Pier to be blessed (page 80).

Our Lady, a patroness of seafarers and travelers, has her own church, of Azorean style, built high on a hill. Between twin cupolas stands an 18-foot statue of the Virgin (page 79). Homeward-bound fishermen, approaching by night, often radiotelephone to shore and ask that the statue be lighted; then the crew crowds the rail to catch its glow on the horizon, first landfall as they stand in for Gloucester (page 84).

A smaller figure of the Virgin—a wood-carving from Portugal—goes to the annual Blessing of the Fleet on the shoulders of proud fishermen (page 77). Four men from each vessel's crew take turns carrying the beautiful figure to the water front as the church's carillon rings out.

A Model Ship with Silver Spars

Gloucester's first Blessing of the Fleet took place in 1945. Three years later the present statue, which had been carved from Brazilian cedar in Porto, arrived from Portugal aboard the hospital ship *Gil Eanes*. Like all carvings of Our Lady of Good Voyage, she carried a fishing vessel in one hand.

Portugal's Ambassador to the United States at the time, Dr. Pedro Teotonio Pereira, himself a lover of the sea, noticed that the little silver vessel was of Portuguese, rather than Gloucester, rig. Sending plans of a Gloucester schooner to Portugal, he ordered a new wooden model with silver spars and rigging. This is the one the figure now holds.

Portuguese settled in Gloucester as early as 1842, but long before Columbus the Portuguese, then as now among the world's most skilled seamen, fished as far away as Iceland,

New England Yankees, were the true pioneers on the world's richest codfishing grounds.*

Some early Portuguese settlers came from the mainland, but most came from the Azores. Even today there are many in Gloucester's Portuguese colony who hail directly from the Azorean island of Pico.

American whalers of a century ago used to touch at the Azores to take on a crew. Starvation diet, poor wages, and liberal use of the belaying pin made many of these men go permanently ashore at the home port of New Bedford. From there many made their way to Gloucester to become fishermen.

Sons Prefer a Landlubber's Life

Men have fished out of Gloucester since the 1620's, when the first cargo of salt fish was sent to Bilbao in Spain, but today relatively few of the original Yankee names are heard aboard Gloucestermen. Well before the turn of the century old-timers began to dissuade their sons from going to sea, because of the danger, hard life, and small remuneration. Sons of the men who sailed the famous old schooners came ashore to less arduous and more profitable occupations, leaving the field to foreign-born fishermen.

Of Gloucester's present-day fleet of 202 vessels, not more than 30 still are run by native Yankees. Thirty-two are Portuguese, 100 Italian, and the rest divided among Nova Scotians, Newfoundlanders, Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns.

Ironically, the cycle seems about to complete itself, for today a few Portuguese captains, still erect, "able-bodied seamen" when past 70, are beginning to advise *their* sons not to go to sea. But so far there has been no shortage of willing and able men to work and captain the Portuguese draggers.

Early Gloucester fishing was done from sloops and ketches, but in 1713 a different vessel slid down the ways. Her fore-and-aft rig enabled her to sail fast close to the wind. The story goes that, as the vessel was launched, a man watching cried, "See how she scoons [skims]!" Her builder, Andrew Robinson, heard him, and so called the vessel a "scooner." Except for the spelling, all her

descendants took the original vessel's name.

For two centuries the schooner was supreme, and before the end of the 19th century Gloucester's fleet totaled 500 sail.

The Gloucester schooner reached the peak of design in the *Gertrude L. Thebaud*, built in 1930, which represented the United States in the International Fishermen's Races with the *Bluenose* of Nova Scotia. Her slender black hull heeling to a cloud of canvas was a glorious sight. I sailed in her when Capt. Ben Pine contested the last Fishermen's Races in 1938. In February, 1948, while running cargo in the Caribbean, she broke up on the breakwater of La Guaira, Venezuela.

So passed the last Gloucester schooner to work under sail. All have been lost at sea or converted to power, with diesels in the hold, topmasts removed, and bowsprit cut to a stump, a mere support for the forestay.

So many old schooners were available for conversion that it is only in the last five years that new draggers have been built from the keel up in the Essex yards.

The Gloucester fishery was founded on King Cod and associated groundfish—haddock, hake, cusk, and halibut. When the early shore fishery became depleted, schooners ran out to Georges Bank, and later as far as the Grand Banks off Newfoundland. Once on the banks, fishermen left the anchored parent vessel and fished two in a dory, setting trawls—buoyed and anchored lines more than a mile long, armed with 500 to 1,000 hooks. The trawls, of French origin, were set in water 150 to 200 fathoms deep.

Stout Dories Have Crossed Atlantic

Dories, flat-bottomed, double-ended boats about 16 feet long, have been called the world's most seaworthy small craft. Several times men have rowed and sailed them across the Atlantic.

The advent of the otter trawl, a purselike net fished by dragging along the bottom, helped deplete the shore cod fisheries, because the net took so many fish at one sweep and raked up the bottom, destroying fish food. Incidentally, with the coming of the tin can, eating habits changed, and people ate less salt fish.

But draggers (so called in Gloucester to distinguish them from the early hook-and-line trawlers) use the otter trawl for most of the fishing done out of Gloucester today, though they rarely drag for groundfish. Setting the nets higher for free-swimming school fish, draggers take enormous quantities of ocean perch, or rosefish (*Sebastes marinus*).

up about 50 percent of the Gloucester catch.

Through long custom, New Englanders still prefer their cod, haddock, or mackerel. But ocean perch find ready markets in the South and Midwest; the smaller fish more nearly resemble fresh-water varieties long eaten in the Midwest, and the small fillets are just right for the popular southern fish fries.

God Shares in the Catch

Portuguese and other Gloucestermen fish on a lay basis, ship and crew sharing proceeds of the catch. At the end of each voyage the crews of Portuguese craft set a certain amount aside as "God's share," to be given to the Church for charitable works.

Early Gloucester skippers sailed by "compass, soundings, and personal judgment" alone. Today the draggers use radiotelephone, radar, depth indicators, and even loran, the long-range electronic navigation system that traces invisible streets and avenues on the ocean's gray wastes. Yet, despite power and modern navigational aids, the sea still exacts a heavy toll.

Few fishing families of Gloucester have not paid tribute to this hard mistress. From Gloucester's beginnings as a fishing port until the present time, more than 1,000 of her vessels and 8,000 of her men have been lost at sea.

Men were washed overboard; schooners went down in northeast gales. Thick white fog took many lives when men in the dories lost sight of the parent vessel and could not find their way back, despite mournful blasts of the schooner's horn. Some lucky few rowed to land, their fingers frozen round the oars.

The danger of anchor cables parting added another hazard to winter fishing on the banks. Men peering through swirling snow would sometimes see the gray ghost of a drifting vessel bearing down on them. Then the man standing by the anchor cable had to swing his sharp ax instantly, for if a drifting schooner crashed into an anchored vessel in rough seas, both were almost certain to go down.

Many fishing vessels were simply never heard from again, victims, perhaps, of a hurricane, the screaming wind that the tough men of Gloucester called an "August breeze."

At a Blessing of the Fleet, the Most Reverend Richard J. Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, said:

"The natural virtues of a fisherman are two—trust in God, and perseverance. Toiling on the sea has taught them both."

And so, despite all hazards, the men of



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Gloucester, Massachusetts, Fishermen Take Turns Carrying Our Lady of Good Voyage

Once a year Portuguese-American fishing crews select teams of four to transport the statue to the water front for the blessing of the fleet (page 80). Chosen ones consider the task a high honor.





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Fishermen and Their Families Hear Mass Before the Yearly Blessing of the Fleet
Carved in Portugal, the Madonna stands in the aisle. Murals depict Gloucester (left) and Lisbon.
Right: The statue leaves the Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage for the dockside ceremony.

