

## WORKING WATERFRONT

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Article  
Sunken sardine carrier going nowhere  
by Steve Cartwright

Visitors to the Rockland breakwater might see a curious site at ebb tide. Not far from shore is the wheelhouse of a 65-foot fishing boat that sank some 18 months ago.

The Lauren T., formerly known as the Novelty, sits on the bottom, neglected, a reminder of an era when sardines were big business and vessels such as this carried the herring to canneries up and down the coast. It was a coastwise freighter of fish.

Rockland harbormaster Ed Glaser said the owner claims he has no money to raise the 65-foot wooden sardine carrier. Fishermen acquainted with the old boat say it was for years owned by Stonington Packing Company, and Lauren T. was a familiar site around Penobscot Bay.

Besides carrying herring to sardine canneries, the vessel was reportedly used as a lobster smack, carrying live lobsters from islands to dealers on the mainland.

Glaser said he has been unable to find sources of state or federal help. The Lauren T. poses no immediate threat to navigation, as it sank in what's known as a mooring field just inside the massive granite breakwater. Still, it might not be something you'd want to run into some dark night.

"She is a nice old boat," he said, suggesting someone could still salvage the vessel. Otherwise, "she will eventually disintegrate."

Southwest Boat Corporation launched the wooden vessel in 1944, formerly the Chester Clements yard, in Southwest Harbor. According to U.S. Coast Guard documents, the 41-ton motor vessel has a 15-foot beam and draws 6 feet. Her carrying capacity was estimated at 80 hogsheads.

According to author John Gilman, who researched carriers for his book *Masts and Masters*, Novelty was first operated by Burnham and Morrill, bean and fish packers in Portland. There are gaps in her known history. In 1992 she was reportedly sold to North Lubec Packing Company.

Capt. John Foss of Rockland, skipper of the passenger schooner *American Eagle*, said he doubts the Lauren T. is worth salvaging. "The

only purpose would be to clear the harbor," he said. "It's certainly well beyond the situation where she could be rebuilt. It's too bad."

Foss said he thought Lauren T. should be removed from the mooring field.

The current owner of record, according to Glaser, is Everett Watson of Lincolnville. Messages left on his answering machine were not returned. Previous owners, documents show, were Sandra Sharkey and Everard Dodge.

Capt. Neal Parker of Rockland, who has owned and sailed windjammers, said Novelty was often in Rockland Harbor, and in the 1990s appeared to be a well-maintained boat. "The Novelty was gorgeous," he said.

After sitting on the bottom, the vessel would need a major overhaul if raised. But it could make someone a good boat, he said.