

Frank Brown was born on Pico Island in the Azores of Portugal in 1897. He emigrated to the United States in 1914 at the age of 17 and settled in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Frank joined the Portuguese fleet dory trawling on the Little Ruth out of Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Frank Brown at age 23 married Olivia Sears, age 25. Olivia was the daughter of Joseph and Emily (Alves) Sears of 5 Silva Court Gloucester, Massachusetts. They married at Our Lady of Good Voyage Church on March 25, 1920. They lived at 5 Silva Court, Gloucester, Massachusetts, in the house where Olivia had been born and raised.

On December 21, 1926, at age 29, Frank Brown became a naturalized citizen. At that time, he and his wife, Olivia had three children: Twins, Louise and Madeline, age 6 and Richard age 3. They continued to reside at 5 Silva Court, Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Captain Frank Brown traveled often to Essex, Massachusetts to see his fishing vessel being built. Her keel was laid on March 9, 1927 at the John F. James Shipyard in Essex, Massachusetts. On that day, the eighty-four foot hull of a durable wooden schooner began to take shape. When the fishing vessel was complete it's bdth was, 21.5 and depth, 10.2 with two master sails and 150 hp engine.

On April 4, 1927 Olivia Brown gave birth to her fourth child and he was christened Frank Brown Jr., named after his father. Frank Jr. would grow up to follow his father's footsteps and become a commercial fisherman.

The fishing vessel was launched on August 27, 1927 at 10:00 AM and was named for Captain Frank Brown's wife, Olivia Brown, who performed the christening.

On September 23, 1927 the Olivia Brown was hauled out on the Burnham Railway in Gloucester where she was fitted for dragging. On October 6, 1927, her maiden fare brought 17,000 thousand pounds of haddock, 12,000 thousand pounds of cod and 4,000 thousand pounds of mixed fish to the Boston Fish Pier. By October 26th of that year Captain Frank Brown and crew brought in over 170,000 thousand pounds of fish in only four fishing trips.

On April 22, 1929, at age 34, Olivia Sears Brown died suddenly of a cerebral embolism at Addison Gilbert Hospital in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Olivia was buried at Calvery Cemetery in Gloucester, Massachusetts on April 25, 1929. At the time of her death, she had four young children ages 2 thru 9 years.

On April 29, 1930 Frank Brown age 33 married Emily Mae Sears age 22. Emily was the daughter of Joseph and Emily (Alves) Sears and the sister of Olivia (Sears) Brown deceased first wife Frank Brown. Emily became stepmother to her deceased sister's four children. The family resided at 7 Warren Street Gloucester,

## **Massachusetts.**

**The Olivia Brown was one of the earlier draggers. Captain Frank Brown, known as a nonconformist in the fishing fleet, was a pioneer of the new method, which during the 1930s entirely supplanted the old system of the mother ship sending out dories to fish by handline. Dragging was made possible by the availability of engines of increasing horsepower and compact size. Olivia Brown was upgraded from the original 150hp diesel to 230-hp engine in the 1930s.**

**The Olivia Brown fished as a dragger from fall to spring, fishing off the Virginia Capes in the colder months and then coming north toward New York and ultimately to Massachusetts waters north of Cape Cod, following the fish. Dragging was done day and night when under way, under engine with a riding sail set as the Olivia Brown pulled her plate-like "doors" along the ocean floor - the doors keeping the mouth of the net open.**

**Summers were spent sword fishing. Brown's Bank off Nova Scotia and George's Bank off Cape Cod were waters where Captain Frank Brown maintained his record as high -liner swordfisher.**

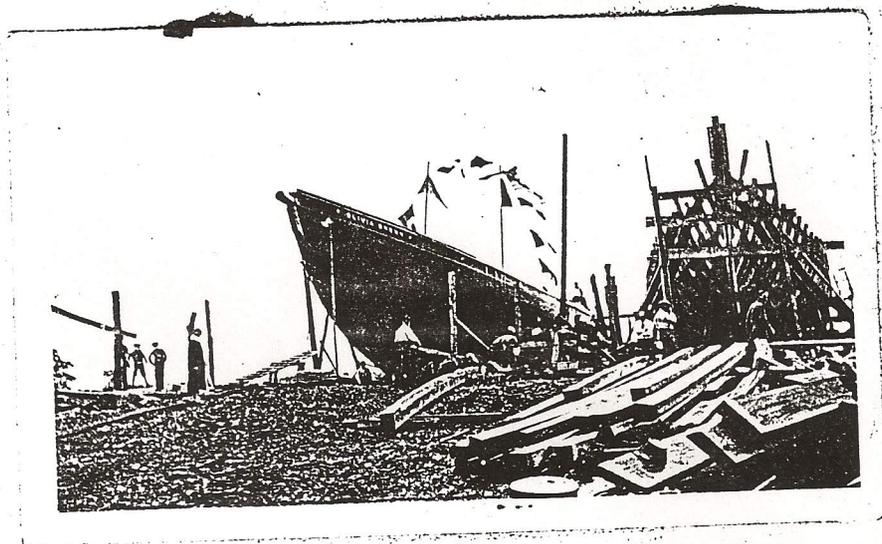
**In 1942 the Olivia Brown earned the name of "King of the Draggers" by breaking all existing records up to that time by stocking \$124,000 with each member of the crew receiving \$7,625 for the year's work.**

**In 1944 Captain Frank Brown sold the Olivia Brown to his first mate of twenty-years John Fragata. The Olivia Brown was lost July 4, 1953 while attempting to reach Halifax, Nova Scotia.**

**In 1944 Captain Frank Brown and others had a new fishing vessel built in Ipswich by W.A. Robinson, Inc. The fishing vessel had a hull of 107-foot hull and bdth of 24 and depth of 11. It had 400-hp. engine. Captain Brown's final command for his remaining twelve respected years at sea was the Emily Brown named after his second wife.**

**Captain Frank Brown retired from the sea in 1952. The fishing vessel Emily Brown was sold to John Burke, then to Phillip Filetto, then to John Francis. He and his wife Emily moved to St. Petersburg, Florida in 1955 and lived there until his death in 1968 at the age of 71 years of age.**

Olivia Brown	
1927	
Essex, Mass.	
84' Length 21' Beam 10' Depth	
Tons 88 Gross 56 Net	
230	Oil
Capt. Frank Brown	
Gloucester	



# THE OLIVIA BROWN: The Story Behind the Photograph on Page 13

by Robert L. McGlinchey

*The Gloucester fishing vessel Olivia Brown frequented the port of New York in the 1930s and early 1940s. Captain Frank Brown marketed catches of scup, fluke and sea bass at the Flagg Fish Company near the Fulton Fish Market in Manhattan. There, in 1939, McGlinchey photographed her with the Brooklyn Bridge in the background. This very old, preserved-like-yesterday composition on film is the start of a story in itself. Some forty-three years later his son set to work to uncover the story of the Olivia Brown, to tell it to his father and anyone else who might be interested....*

Her keel was laid on March 9, 1927 at the John F. James Shipyard in Essex, Massachusetts. On that day the 84-foot hull of a durable wooden schooner began to take shape. Her durability, especially for bad weather, was later to be proven in a terrifying hurricane at sea in 1940.

She was launched on August 27, 1927 at 10:00 AM, and named for Captain Frank Brown's wife Olivia, who performed the christening. Captain Brown's oldest son Louis, then seven years old, remembers anxiously waiting until the Essex River reached high tide for the launch. He went on to serve as crew member aboard from 1933 until drafted for wartime service in 1942.

On September 23, 1927 the *Olivia Brown* was hauled out on the Burnham Railway in Gloucester where she was fitted for dragging. On October 6, 1927, her maiden fare brought 17,000 pounds had-dock, 12,000 pounds cod and 4,000 pounds of mixed fish to the Boston Fish Pier. By October 26 Captain Frank Brown and crew brought in over 170 thousand pounds of fish on only four trips out!

Captain Frank Brown achieved high-liner status at both dragging and sword-fishing which meant he was tops in the Gloucester fleet. Born in the Azores in 1898, he came to the United States at the age of seventeen. Shortly thereafter he joined the Portuguese fleet dory trawling on the *Little Ruth* out of Gloucester.

The *Evelyn G. Sears*, built in 1926, was one of Gloucester's first vessels fitted for dragging—that is, scooping fish into a giant net towed by the ship. The *Olivia*, of similar design, was also one of the earlier draggers, the following year. Captain Brown, known as a nonconformist in the fishing fleet, was a pioneer of the new method which during the 1930s entirely supplanted the old system of the mother ship sending out dories to fish by handline. Dragging was made possible by

the availability of engines of increasing horsepower and compact size. *Olivia's* was upgraded from her original 150hp diesel to a 230hp engine in the 1930s.

She fished as a dragger from fall to spring, fishing off the Virginia Capes in the colder months and then coming north toward New York and ultimately to Massachusetts waters north of Cape Cod, following the fish. Dragging was done day and night when under way, under engine with a riding sail set as the *Olivia* pulled heavy plate-like "doors" along the ocean floor—the doors keeping the mouth of the net open.

Summers were spent swordfishing. *Olivia's* change over from dragger to swordfisher included removing the plug in the tip of the bow and adding a twenty-foot bowsprit. The foremast was extended higher than the mainmast and re-stayed to take the weight when the crew stood on the bowsprit pulpit to harpoon swordfish. Brown's Bank (off Nova Scotia) and George's Bank (off Cape Cod) were waters where Captain Brown maintained his record as high-liner swordfisher.

Dragging had its adventurous moments. In September 1939, after war broke out in Europe, Gloucester vessels had the American flag painted on their bows to let German raiders know they belonged to a neutral power. This stood *Olivia* in good stead when a German submarine surfaced alongside her off the Barnegat lightship, south of New York on the Jersey coast. "It was a bad night... heavy seas... and spittin' snow with northeast winds. They put the searchlight all through us," notes Louis Brown of this brief encounter.

On September 16, 1940 the *Olivia* met with near disaster while on Brown's Bank 2.50 miles northeast of Cape Ann. A hurricane caught her, racking the ship from stem to stern. The crew spent sixteen hours bailing her out with buckets to stay afloat. Winds up to 100mph broke her bowsprit in half, and broke off the

foremast extension and crossstrees. Louis Brown remembers cutting away the foresail with a swordfish knife. The ... then took it away, boom and all. Everything on deck was swept away, including five dories. The crew took shelter in the pilot house aft, and Captain Brown knelt on deck to say his prayers. He thought it was his final trip. Gloucester families, concerned about the fate of the *Olivia* were relieved when the *Evelyn G. Sears* (hit with minor damage) relayed the message that the *Olivia* was going to make it back. On the afternoon of September 21, 1940 she returned to Gloucester with all hands safe on board.

The *Olivia* was eventually sold to Captain Frank Brown's first mate of twenty years, John Fragata, in 1944. She was believed lost while attempting to reach Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1953 or 1954.

Captain Brown's final command, for his remaining twelve well respected years at sea, was the *Emily Brown*, which he had built in 1944 to replace the *Olivia*. *Olivia* herself died in 1929, and Captain Brown later married her sister Emily, who lives in Florida today.

Captain Frank Brown died in 1968 and is buried in St. Petersburg, Florida where he spent his retirement years. He went out in style with bronze casket and a new two hundred dollar suit. Burial in the Mt. Park Mausoleum rather than Gloucester was a final statement of his non-conformity.

A portion of this story is from old accounts reported in the *Gloucester Daily Times*. The Gloucester Fishermen's Museum brought pure encouragement for the story, as did the National Society.

On March 15, 1983, former crew member Louis Brown, (age sixty-three with jet black hair) viewed the photograph of the *Olivia* for the first time. After forty-three years the photograph was brought to life with a sense of historic closure. Let the circle be unbroken.

↓ ↓ ↓

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Emily Sears  
1906

Gloucester

63'6" x 18'1" x 8'3" 44 Gross 22 Net

24

Gas

Joseph Sears, Gloucester

7  
1  
Wife is present

Emily Brown  
1944

Ipswich

W. A. Robinson Inc

107'3" x 23'8" x 11'

400

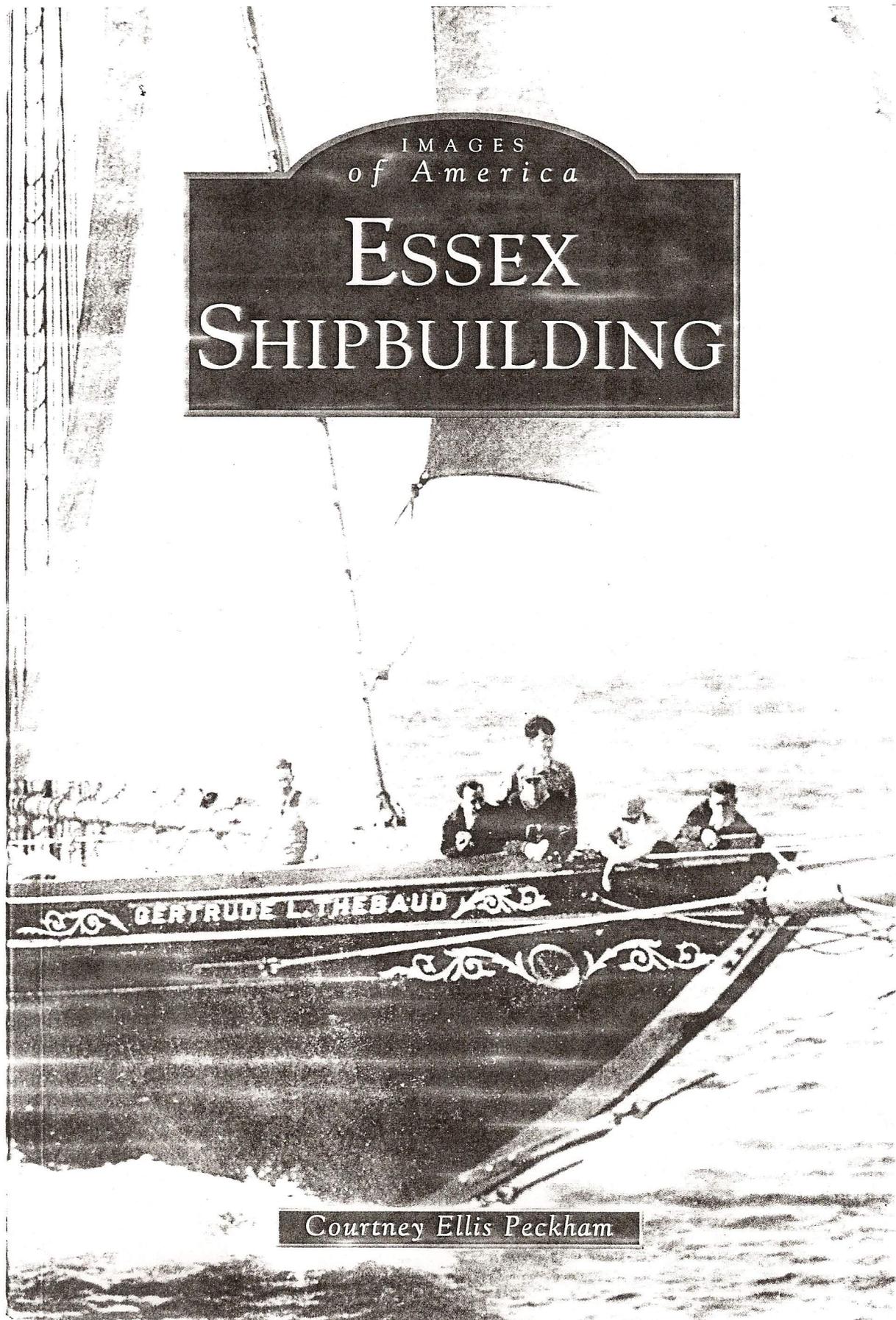
Oil

Frank Brown & others

Information in master mariners book at Library  
Length 107'  
Breadth 24"  
Depth 11"  
H.P. 400  
Built in Ipswich  
1944

IMAGES  
of America

# ESSEX SHIPBUILDING



Courtney Ellis Peckham

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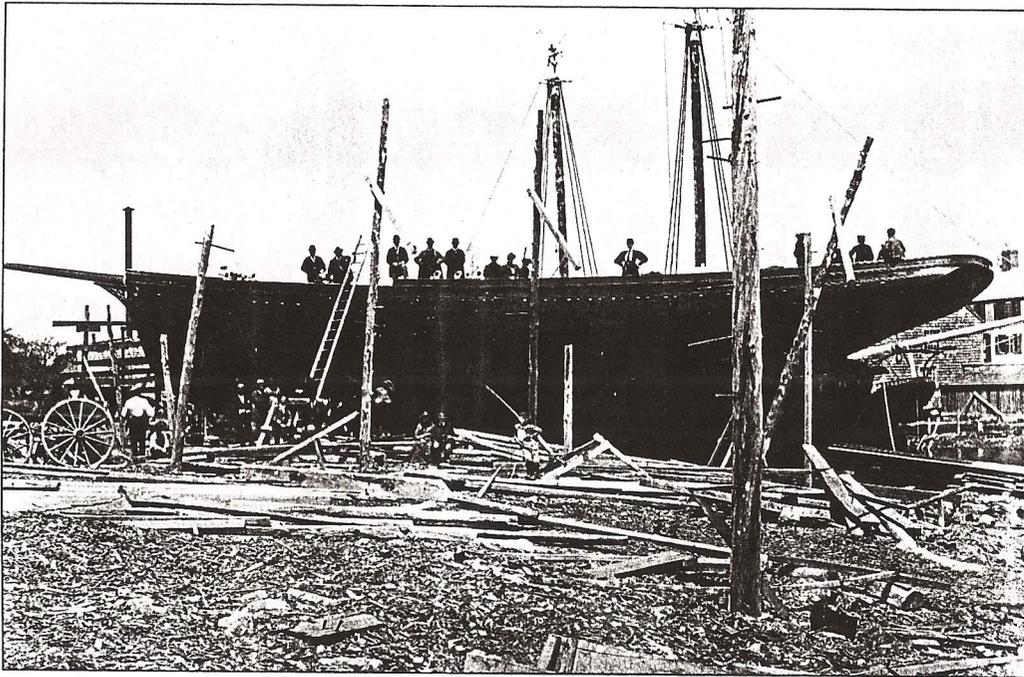
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The schooner *E.C. Hussey* nears completion at the A.D. Story shipyard in 1895.

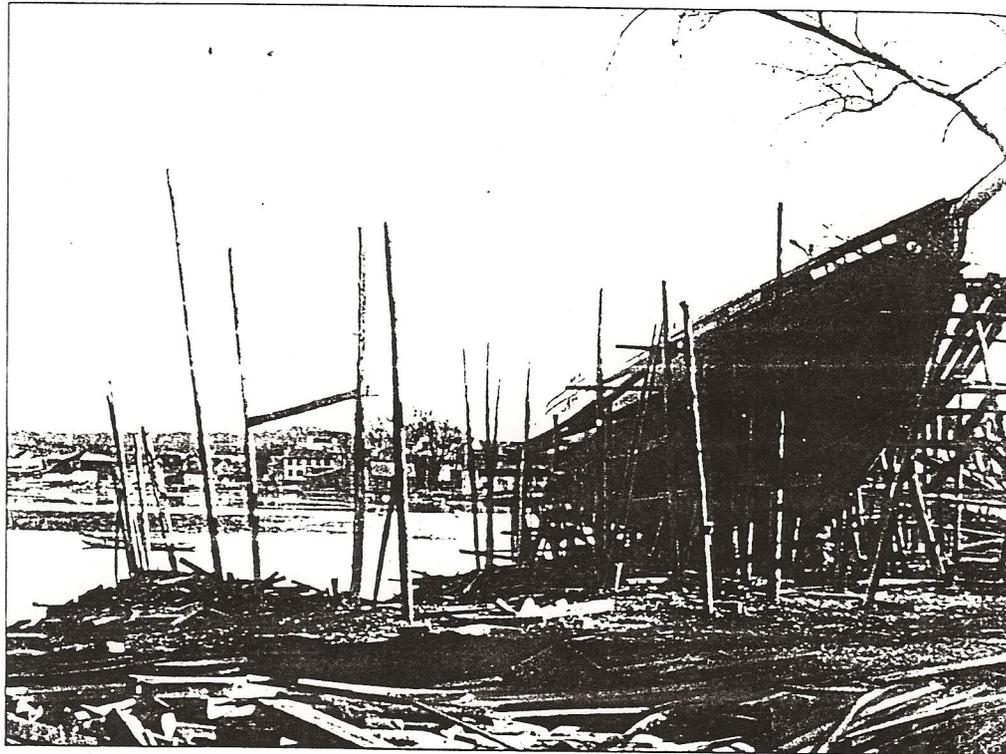
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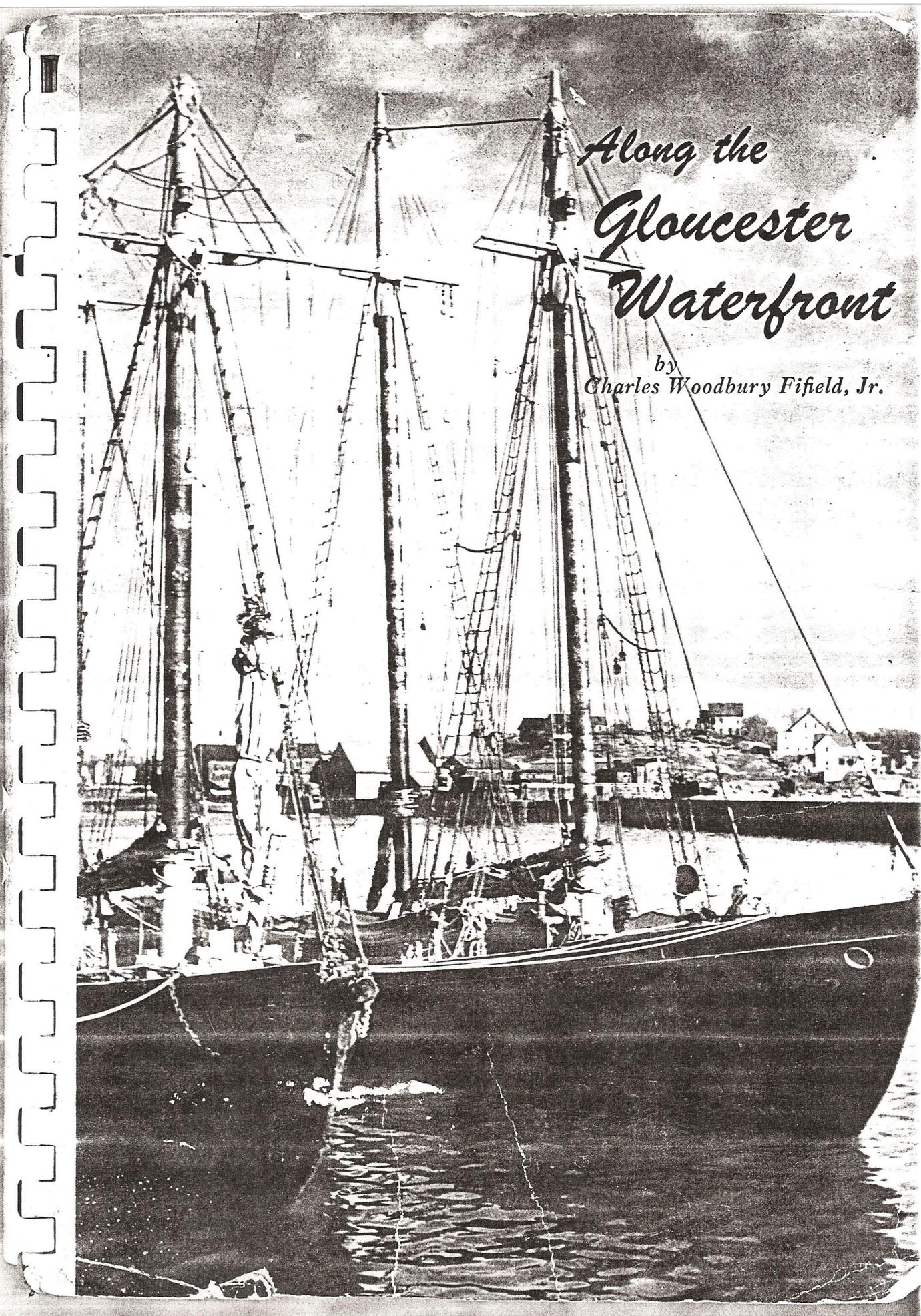
## Epilogue



The *Ralph Brown* was launched in January 1914 for a member of Gloucester's Portuguese community. Portuguese families, mainly from the Azores, had been settling in Gloucester in large numbers since the 1870s. By the early 20th century, they were investing in their own schooners with money pooled by family and friends.



In the early 20th century, Gloucester's Portuguese became the leaders in the city's fishing industry. Their reputation as skilled fishermen and shrewd businessmen gained them the respect of the civic community as well. The *Olivia Brown* (pictured) was built at John F. James & Son in 1927. Brown was the Anglicized version of the Portuguese surname Brum.



*Along the  
Gloucester  
Waterfront*

*by  
Charles Woodbury Fifield, Jr.*

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CHARLES W. FIFIELD, JR.

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*Curing fish at a Gloucester wharf*

ALL, LAURA GOULART, EDITH G. ROSE, EVA M. MARTIN, EVELINA M. GOULART, ELVIRA GASPER, LEONORA C., EDITH L. BOUDREAU, RUTH LUCILLE and MILDRED SILVA.

The 84 foot schooner OLIVIA BROWN, Capt. Frank Brown, built in Essex in 1927 has had her share of good fortune together with the bad breaks. While fishing 45 miles off Seal Island, Nova Scotia, in September, 1940 she ran into a hurricane with the wind hitting 90 to 100 miles an hour. The blow struck so quickly that the skipper gave orders to cut the halyards to drop the sails. Two dories were blown from the deck and thrown 100 feet into the sea. The propellor shaft housing was leaking so badly that the crew were forced to bail the engine room with buckets for two hours as they were unable to operate the deck pumps. The engineer was hit in the head by a flying block and sustained two black eyes. The skipper ordered the vessel headed into the wind where she was held by two auxiliary motors and after several hours she successfully rode out the worst of the storm. The skipper, who had been through many harrowing experiences at sea, stated the storm was the worst he had encountered in his 25 years of fishing. The boat put into a Nova Scotia port for temporary repairs and later proceeded to

Boston to dispose of her catch of 5200 pounds of swordfish. In September, 1942 this schooner ran into more hard luck when in a calm sea she was in collision with a United States patrol boat and her bow was smashed to splinters. She had been dragging at the time and was able to limp into port with her 18,000 pounds of redfish and later put on the marine railways for repairs and lost several weeks of valuable fishing. Despite the fact that she was laid up for three months during the year, the OLIVIA BROWN earned the name of "King of the Draggers" in 1942 by breaking all existing records up to that time by stocking \$124,000 with each member of the crew receiving \$7625 for the year's work.

The 71 foot schooner PORTUGAL, Capt. Edward Fragata, built in Essex in 1932 was swordfishing in the vicinity of Georges in September, 1941 and were on the way home after she had ironed 60 swordfish. Homeward bound the vessel ran into foggy and nasty weather and to make matters worse she started leaking badly by the stern post. They spoke to the schooner PAOLINA from Gloucester, who was nearby, advising them of their trouble, who in turn notified the Coast Guard by radio telephone. The PAOLINA towed the distressed vessel to Georges Bank so