

Daily Life Aboard a Marblehead Fishing Smack

By "D"

[1838]

Transactions on board of the schooner Mary of Marblehead, on a voyage to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland: William Goodwin, Jr., commander, William Goodwin, Sr., splitter; Joseph Dinsmore, Sr., salter; Joseph Dinsmore, Jr., splitter; Samuel Goodwin, splitter; Richard Dixey, header; Simeon Dodge, cut-throat; William Henry Goodwin, cut-throat. Owners of vessel, Capt. Jonathan Thompson, Peter D. Cloutman.

May 7, 1838, 10 o'clock A. M. All hands on board. Unmoored. Got under way and came to sea. Fine weather. Wind southwest. Saw a large number of vessels bound east. After getting out into the bay I was very seasick. Turned in before sundown. Had the middle watch. Turned out and settled my accounts with old Neptune. Steered my trick and felt much better. Sickness lasted about 10 or 12 hours.

8<sup>th</sup>. First part fine weather. Afterwards squally. Latter part moderate. Latitude by observation, 42.27.

9<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Wind east southeast. Unbent the best bower. Put the cables below. Latitude by observation, 42.24. Soup for dinner.

10<sup>th</sup>. Moderate weather. Stir pudding for dinner.

11<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Got sounding in one hundred and twenty fathoms water. Caught a few fish. Pork and potatoes for dinner. Latitude by observation, 42.40.

12<sup>th</sup>. Spoke a vessel belonging to Kingston. Latitude 42.40. Saw several vessels on the Bank. Fish chowder for dinner.

Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup>. Fine breezes from southwest. Spoke the schooner Eleazer of New Castle at anchor. Stewed beans for dinner.

14<sup>th</sup>. Wind south southeast. Squally. Thunder and lightning, rain and hail. Reefed fore and mainsails. Latter part let out reefs. Latitude 43.13.

15<sup>th</sup>. Begins with fresh breezes. Middle part foggy. Latter part clear, with fine breezes. Struck a porpoise. Latitude 43.17. Corned cusk for dinner.

16<sup>th</sup>. Fresh breezes from northwest and clear. Latitude 43.57. Pork and potatoes for dinner.

17<sup>th</sup>. Begins with fine breezes from the west. Single reefed foresail, 1 P. M. Handed foresail. Blowing fresh. Corned fish for dinner.

18<sup>th</sup>. Wind west. Running under foresail. 8 P. M. got soundings on Grand Bank. Seventy-five fathoms water. Fried fish for dinner. Saw fifteen vessels at anchor. As it was my young lady's birthday, treated all hands to rum punch.

19<sup>th</sup>. Came to anchor at 8 P. M. Caught a few fish. Wind northeast. Rainy. Spoke a Beverly vessel, who reported having spoken with Benj. Swasey with twenty-eight hundred fish. Latitude by observation, 44.24. Beans for dinner.

20<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Wind northwest. Spoke the schooner Superior of Salem, sixteen hundred fish. Unbent out mainsail and bent our balance mainsail. Baked halibut for dinner.

21<sup>st</sup>. Blowing a gale from northwest. Latter part moderate. Hove up our anchor and made a new berth. Spoke the schooner Palladium of Beverly. Baked halibut for dinner.

22<sup>nd</sup>. Moderate. Baked halibut for dinner.

23<sup>rd</sup>. Blowing heavy from northwest with rain. Latter part more moderate. Halibut for dinner.

24<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Spoke the schooner Superior of Salem.

25<sup>th</sup>. Rainy and foggy. Halibut for dinner.

26<sup>th</sup>. Rainy and foggy. Soup for dinner.

27<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Beans for dinner.

28<sup>th</sup>. Rainy and foggy. Pork and potatoes for dinner.

29<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Rice pudding for dinner with sauce made with vinegar and molasses.

30<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and clear. Halibut for dinner.

31<sup>st</sup>. Spoke the schooner Munroe with five thousand fish. Schooner Eliza Jane of Beverly. Schooner Fox of Marblehead. Bound home soon. Halibut for dinner.

June 1. Moderate and clear. Halibut for dinner.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Spoke the schooner Statesman of Marblehead with fifty-three hundred fish. Corned fish for dinner.

3<sup>rd</sup>. Spoke the schooner Benj. Franklin of Marblehead. Hove up our anchor and made a berth. Cod's head and pork for dinner.

4<sup>th</sup>. Foggy. Latter part blowing heavy from northwest. Heavy sea. Halibut for dinner.

5<sup>th</sup>. Gale from the west. Latter part more moderate. Halibut for dinner.

6<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Pork and potatoes for dinner.

7<sup>th</sup>. First part blowing fresh. Latter part moderate. Halibut for dinner.

8<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Spoke the schooner Madison of Marblehead with five thousand fish. Pork and potatoes for dinner.

9<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Hove up our anchor and made a berth. Corned fish for dinner. Spoke the schooner William Franklin with ten thousand fish.

10<sup>th</sup>. Clear weather. Spoke the schooner Stranger of Harwich from Sable Bank, ten thousand fish. Latitude by observation, 44.20. Flour and rice pudding for dinner.

11<sup>th</sup>. Clear weather. Fried fish for dinner.

12<sup>th</sup>. Foggy and rainy. Spoke the schooner Bold Runner of Marblehead, ten thousand fish. Hove up and made a new berth. Fried potatoes for dinner.

13<sup>th</sup>. Foggy and rainy. Hove up and made a berth. Tongues and sounds for dinner.

14<sup>th</sup>. Blowing fresh from northeast. Hove up and made a new berth. Pork and pudding for dinner.

15<sup>th</sup>. Clear weather. Spoke the schooner Louisa of Beverly, fourteen thousand fish. Fried fish for dinner.

16<sup>th</sup>. Foggy. Hove up and made a berth. Corned fish for dinner.

Sun., 17<sup>th</sup>. Foggy. Stewed beans for dinner.

18<sup>th</sup>. Blowing heavy from northeast. Spoke the schooner Madison of Marblehead, eight thousand fish. Fried fish for dinner.

19<sup>th</sup>. Cold weather. Blowing fresh from northeast. Baked halibut for dinner.

20<sup>th</sup>. Cold weather. Hove up and made a new berth. Latitude by observation, 44.45. Pudding for dinner.

21<sup>st</sup>. Clear weather. Spoke the schooner Good Exchange of Marblehead, eight thousand fish. Schooner Leader of Marblehead, ten thousand fish. Brig Aurelia of New Castle, England. Baked halibut for dinner.

22<sup>nd</sup>. Blowing fresh. Wind west. Heavy sea running. Spoke the schooner Two Sisters of Beverly, eight thousand fish. Schooner Bird of Marblehead, thirteen thousand fish. Halibut for dinner.

23<sup>rd</sup>. More moderate. Spoke the schooner Regulator of Beverly. Schooner Crescent of Salem. Corned fish for dinner.

24<sup>th</sup>. Pleasant weather. Spoke the ship Prince George of London. Fried fish for dinner.

25<sup>th</sup>. Rainy. Blowing fresh from southwest. Hove up and made a berth. Fried fish for dinner.

26<sup>th</sup>. Spoke the schooners Aurelia and Sarah of Beverly. Blowing fresh from southwest. Hove up and made a berth. Fried fish for dinner. In the first watch at night saw a large ship off our starboard side sailing directly for us, about one-fourth mile off when first seen. Made the usual signals by showing lights, blowing horns, etc. When within hailing distance, fired two balls into her, when she up helm and bore away, barely passing our stern. She proved to be a 74-gun ship under close reefed fore and main topsails, fore topmast, staysail and jib, going about 10 knots. A very narrow escape for us. I was keeping the single watch on deck and soon had all hands up.

27<sup>th</sup>. Rainy and foggy. Hove up and made a new berth. Fried fish for dinner.

28<sup>th</sup>. Clear weather. Made a new berth. Pudding and pork for dinner.

29<sup>th</sup>. Blowing fresh from southwest, with rain. Made a new berth. Corned fish for dinner.

30<sup>th</sup>. More moderate. Spoke the schooner Constitution of Marblehead, 8000 fish. Halibut for dinner.

July 1<sup>st</sup>. Pleasant weather. Wind northeast. Stewed beans for dinner.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Continues pleasant. Made a new berth. Spoke the schooner Constitution, 8000 fish. Boiled pork and potatoes for dinner.

3<sup>rd</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Made a new berth. Spoke the schooner Senator of Marblehead, 14,000 fish. Sound bones for dinner.

4<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Spoke the schooner Senator. Fried tongues for dinner. Latitude by observation 44.11.

5<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Made a new berth. Pork and potatoes for dinner.

6<sup>th</sup>. Pleasant. At 12 o'clock, night, hove up our anchor. Baked halibut for dinner.

7<sup>th</sup>. First part pleasant. Latter part blowing fresh from northeast. At midnight came to anchor. Fried tongues for dinner.

Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup>. Gale increases. Heavy sea running. Stewed beans for dinner.

9<sup>th</sup>. Gale abated. At dark hove up our anchor. Spoke the schooner John Adams of Marblehead, bound home with 20,000 fish. Latitude by observation, 44.11. At 3 P. M., saw a spar on the water. Hove out our boat and got it. It proved to be a ship's topgallant yard with most of the rigging and sail attached. The old fisherman called it at first a "Nanewegin," if anybody knows what that is. Halibut for dinner.

10<sup>th</sup>. Blowing a gale from southwest. I was accused of raising the gale by my habit of whistling and was told to leave the habit off for the future. At 4 P. M. came to anchor in 30 fathoms of water. Boiled pork and potatoes for dinner.

12<sup>th</sup>. My birthday, 23 years old. Hove up anchor, made a new berth for the purpose of getting clear of halibut. At sundown hove up again. Spoke the schooner

Liberty of Marblehead. Halibut for dinner. 10 A. M., hove up our anchor. At 3 P. M. came to anchor. Boiled pork and pudding for dinner.

13<sup>th</sup>. Hove up and made a new berth. Spoke the schooner Sabine of Marblehead with 16,000 fish. Baked halibut for dinner.

14<sup>th</sup>. Hove up. Made a new berth at dark. Blowing a gale from east. Corned fish for dinner.

15<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Hove up and made a berth. Halibut for dinner.

16<sup>th</sup>. Rainy. Hove up and made a berth. Spoke the schooner Alpha of Beverly with 9000 fish. Halibut for dinner.

17<sup>th</sup>. Rainy. Hove up and made a new berth. Fried fish for dinner.

18<sup>th</sup>. Hove up and made a new berth. Boiled pork and pudding for dinner. In the middle watch at night, all hands called to pay out cable. Blowing a gale from northeast. Saw a ship under a heavy press of sail steering direct for us. Made the usual signals by showing lights, blowing horns, etc., when she bore away passing under our stern.

19<sup>th</sup>. More moderate. Hove up and made a berth. Tongues and sounds for dinner.

20<sup>th</sup>. Hove up and made a new berth. Spoke the schooner Perseverance of Beverly with 14,000 fish. Blowing a gale from southeast with thunder and lightning. No dinner today.

21<sup>st</sup>. Blowing fresh from southwest. Hove up and made a berth. Corned fish for dinner.

Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup>. Blowing fresh from southwest with rain. Stewed beans for dinner.

23<sup>rd</sup>. Moderate. Hove up and made a berth. Halibut for dinner.

24<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Made a new berth. Halibut for dinner.

25<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Made a new berth. Halibut for dinner. Spoke the schooner Odeon of Orland. Spoke the schooner Abigail of Marblehead sixteen thousand fish.

26<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Made a new berth. Spoke the schooners Coral of Castine, Favorite of Blue Hill. Pork and potatoes for dinner.

27<sup>th</sup>. Rainy. Made a berth. Tripped our anchor and drifted until sunset. Came to anchor in twenty-four fathoms of water. Halibut for dinner.

28<sup>th</sup>. Rainy. Made a new berth. Spoke the schooner Odeon of Orland. Halibut for dinner.

29<sup>th</sup>. Rainy. Made a new berth. Beans for dinner.

30<sup>th</sup>. Foggy. Made a new berth. Halibut for dinner.

31<sup>st</sup>. Was spoken by the steamer Great Western 10 days from Bristol, England, bound for New York. Sent her boat aboard of us and got some fresh fish. In exchange, gave us some pork, beef, bread and some bottles of rum. We hoisted some stars and stripes and gave her a gun. They hoisted the red cross of England, gave us three cheers, which we returned, and parted. Latitude by observation, 44.20, longitude, 50. At 3 P. M. we came to anchor. Spoke the schooner Daniel of Harwich, 15,000 fish.

August 1. Moderate and clear. Hove up and made a new berth. Beef and pork for dinner.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Moderate and clear. Made a new berth. Halibut for dinner.

3<sup>rd</sup>. Moderate and clear. Made a new berth. Halibut for dinner.

4<sup>th</sup>. Came to anchor. Spoke the schooner Garland of Marblehead, 6000 fish.

Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Stewed beans for dinner.

6<sup>th</sup>. Blowing fresh from southwest. Halibut for dinner.

7<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Made a new berth. Pork and potatoes for dinner.

8<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and clear. Made a new berth. Fried fish for dinner.

9<sup>th</sup>. Blowing a gale from northwest. Heavy sea. Spoke schooner Ceres from Marblehead, two weeks from home. She reported all hands well and business brisk. Went adrift. Hove in our anchor and made a new berth.

10<sup>th</sup>. More moderate. Spoke the ship Arethusa of Hartlepool, England, schooner Undine of Kingston, schooner Garland of Marblehead. Hove up and made a berth. Fried fish for dinner.

11<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Hove and made a berth. Pork and beef for dinner.

12<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and clear. Made a berth. Stewed beans for dinner.

13<sup>th</sup>. Got our anchor. Blowing gale of wind from the south. Spoke the schooner Garland of Marblehead. Blowed our jib out of the bolt ropes. Laid to under two-reefed foresail. Saw a large ship to windward lying to. At sunset gale abated. Came to anchor. No dinner.

14<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Hove up and made new berth. Fried fish for dinner.

15<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and clear. Made a berth. Halibut for dinner.

16<sup>th</sup>. Moderate and clear. Made a new berth. Pork and beef for dinner. Latitude by observation, 45.13.

17<sup>th</sup>. Hove up and made a new berth. Bent our best foresail. Fish for dinner.

18<sup>th</sup>. Went adrift. Hove in our anchor and stood to the northwest under two-reefed foresail, balance mainsail and bobbed jib. At sunset gale abated. Came to anchor. Halibut for dinner.

Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup>. At 2 A. M. lost our anchor. Hove in the cable. Bent on a new anchor. Moderated toward night. Came to anchor. Spoke the schooner Abigail of Boston, 14,000 fish.

20<sup>th</sup>. Moderate. Hove up and made a berth. Halibut for dinner.

21<sup>st</sup>. Moderate and foggy. Hove up our anchor. Found a Frenchman's trawl hauled it on board and took from it several hundred fish and 600 fathoms trawl warp with hooks. Found we were nearing French brig, cut rope and drifted off in fog. Stealing a Frenchman's trawl is thought to be a fair game, as they were supposed to be injuring the fishing by their methods of fishing.

22<sup>nd</sup>. Moderate. Hove up and made a berth. Boiled pork and pudding for dinner.

23<sup>rd</sup>. Fresh breezes from the east. Hove up our anchor latter part of the day, unbent our balance mainsail, bent our whole mainsail and started for home. Latitude, 44 north, longitude, 52 west. Struck into a school of porpoises and got one of them. Halibut for dinner.

24<sup>th</sup>. Sounded and got sixty fathoms of water. Spoke the schooner Aurelia of Beverly, nine days from home. She reported business brisk.

25<sup>th</sup>. Commences with fine breezes. Wind west southwest. Saw a brig to leeward, steering southeast. Middle part cloudy, head wind. Latter part cloudy, head wind. Latitude 44.43, longitude 52.43.

Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup>. These twenty-four hours commence with fresh breezes from the westward. At 8 P. M. tacked ship to the southward. Saw a ship to windward steering east at 7 P. M. Tacked ship to the northward. Middle part foggy. Latter part cloudy. Latitude by observation, 44.32, longitude in 53.15 west. Head winds.

27<sup>th</sup>. These twenty-four hours commenced with fresh breezes, thick weather. Middle part squally, with rain. At 3 A. M. reefed sails. Heavy squalls from south. Lost our jib and square sail. Laid to under two-reefed foresail. Bent a new jib and double reefed the sails. Latter part moderated a little. Latitude by D. R., 44.44, longitude, 54.23.

28<sup>th</sup>. Commences with fresh breezes from northwest. Middle part blowing heavy. Latter part moderated some. Spoke the schooners John Adams and the Edward, five days from home. Latitude by observation 43.32, longitude 54.39.

29<sup>th</sup>. Commences with moderate breezes from northwest. Thick and cloudy. At 6 P. M., heavy squalls from southwest. Double reefed our sails. Middle part squally with rain. At 6 A. M., wind came from west, blowing heavy. Heavy sea running. Hauled down mainsail. Latter part more moderate. Set the mainsail again. Wind northwest. Latitude by observation, 43.37., longitude, 57.41. Variation two points.

30<sup>th</sup>. Commences with fine breezes from northwest and cloudy. Spoke the schooner Cyrene of Beverly, six days from home. Shook out all the reefs. Middle part moderate, wind east. At 9 P. M., hauled down all the sails to prevent them from thrashing to pieces. At 1 A. M., set all sails again. Latter part fine breeze from the east – a “fair wind and a flowing sheet.” Stowed cables below and cleared up decks. Latitude by observation, 43.37, longitude, 57.10.

31<sup>st</sup>. Commences with fine breezes from the east and pleasant weather. Middle part rainy. Latter part pleasant. Wind southerly. Spoke the brig Miranda of London, schooner John George of Marblehead, one week from home. Reported all of our friends at home well. They gave us a few apples, a great treat to us. Latitude by observation, 43.17, longitude, 60.05. One and one-half points variation.

September 1<sup>st</sup>. Commences with fine breezes from the south, and pleasant. At 6 P. M., blowing fresh from the west. Double reefed the sails. Middle part squally, rough sea. Latter part more moderate. Spoke the schooner Senator from Marblehead, six days from home. Reported all of our friends well. Latitude by observation, 43.01, longitude, 60.45. One and one-half points variation.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Commences with moderate breezes from the westward and clear weather. Shook out the reefs. Spoke the schooner Hero of Marblehead, six days from home. They gave us a few apples. Middle part squally with rain. Latter part squally. Wind southerly. Latitude by observation, 43.10, longitude, 62.02.

3<sup>rd</sup>. Commences with squalls from southward. At 6 P. M., handed the sails. Thunder squalls rising. Middle part becalmed off the Isle of Sables, bearing north northeast, eighteen leagues distant. Latter part rainy. Wind northeast. At 9 A. M., set the sails. Latitude by D. R., 43.22, longitude, 62.22.

4<sup>th</sup>. Commences with gentle breezes from northeast with rain. Middle part rainy. Latter part blowing fresh with rain. Got soundings on Brown’s Bank fifty fathoms water. Latitude by D. R., 43.02, longitude 65.19.

5<sup>th</sup>. Commences with heavy gales from east northeast. Double reefed the sails. At 1 P. M., handed the mainsail and jib. Scudding under double reefed foresail. Middle part gale increases with heavy sea. Starboard quarter stove in by the sea and decks swept. Latter part moderated. At 8 A. m., set the sails double reefed. Wind north. Latitude by observation, 42.21, Longitude, 67.17.

6<sup>th</sup>. Commences with fresh breezes from northward. Middle part clear and pleasant. Shook the reefs out, tacked ship and stood northeast. Latter part clear and pleasant. Latitude by observation, 42.25, longitude, 67.20.

7<sup>th</sup>. Commences with fresh breezes from northwest. Middle part clear. Latter part clear and pleasant. Latitude by observation, 42.27, longitude, 68.12.

8<sup>th</sup>. Commences with gentle breezes from southwest. Clear weather. Middle part clear with fine breezes from northeast. Bent the best bower. Latitude by observation, 42.42, longitude, 69.45.

9<sup>th</sup>. Commences with fine breezes from northeast. Middle part calm. Latitude by observation, 42.47, longitude, 70.10.

10<sup>th</sup>. Commences with calm and warm weather. Middle part fine breezes from southwest and clear. Latter part fine breezes from southwest and cloudy. Latitude by observation, 42.57, longitude 70.37.

11<sup>th</sup>. Commences with gentle breezes from southwest. Thick weather. Middle part the same. At 4 A. M., made the lights on the Isles of Shoals, bearing west northwest three leagues distant. Tacked ship and stood off. Latter part calm and warm. Latitude 42.51, longitude 70.38.

12<sup>th</sup>. Commences with gentle breezes from the east. At 3 P. M., made Thatcher's Island Light bearing southwest by south. Heavy weather. Middle part gentle breezes from northeast.

At 7 P. M., made Eastern Point Light, bearing southwest by west, two and one-half leagues distant. At 8 P. M., made Baker's Island lights bearing west by south one-half south, distant four leagues. At 8 P. M., made Marblehead light on the Neck, bearing west by south, five leagues distant. At 10'clock midnight came to anchor in Marblehead harbor.

*[This rare journal is from the Salem Evening News, December 23, 1926, Frank C. Damon, ed. The author of the journal, "D," appears to be Simeon Dodge, "cut-throat" (sometimes called a "throater"), born in 1815. The year following this fishing voyage (1839) he married Betsey Goodwin, daughter of William Goodwin, the skipper. The Mary was of 81 tons, 76 feet in length, built in Amesbury back in 1818. She was one of 75 Marblehead schooners that went to the Grand Banks in 1838.*

*The Mary left in late spring, long after many Marblehead schooners left for their first fare in March. The Mary's trip to the Grand Banks took 11 days (about 1000 miles), with a pause on a fishing bank, but the return trip took 20 days, with gales and contrary winds, and against the Gulf Stream. The Grand Banks range from 42.5-47 degrees north latitude; Marblehead is at 42.5 degrees north latitude. The Mary spent 129 days at sea, just exceeding the four month requirement for the Federal bounty (\$327).*

*When on the Grand Banks, the Mary had 21 days of fog, resulting from the cold Labrador current, and 9 days of gales, even though it was summer. "Gales" contrast with "fresh" and "heavy" winds, and probably range from what we call gales through storm force winds, enough to blow out sails and stave in the schooner's rail. She changed her berth 54 times, and spoke 44 other fishing schooners, 18 of which were also from Marblehead, and 11 from Beverly, about one every 3 days. She also saw larger vessels crossing the banks, and was nearly run down twice by ships at night and during a gale, requiring the Mary to give light and horn warnings, including shots at a 74-gun ship of*

*the line to get its attention and avoid a collision! The crew stole a French trawl line which they considered injurious to the fishing. A trawl line is a long line with many hooks, and many Newfoundlanders also opposed trawl lines because it caught too many of the wrong age and kind of fish. The use of trawl lines was outlawed in France because of the danger of men becoming lost in the fog in their dories, but this could not be enforced on the banks. Marblehead crews uniformly fished by hand line from the schooner.*

*Most of the Mary's crew apparently were not regular fishermen, and she caught only 522 quintals (a quintal is 112 pounds) of dried fish in four months, according to the fishing agreements in the National Archives. Schooners that fished for the norm of six months with two trips to the banks caught over 1000 quintals in 1838, showing it was a good year for fish. Note © by John R. H. Kimball, author of Disasters &c., The Maritime World of Marblehead 1815-1865.]*