

REMEMBERING LYNN THE LOBSTER LUGGER

# MAINE

## BOATS, HOMES & HARBORS

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**ARTIST  
BJÖRN RUNQUIST:  
Busy Paying  
Attention**

**SYNTAX:  
Built to be a  
Head-Turner!**





The author's mother, Elizabeth Ann Duryea, was on hand for the launch of the *Lynn* at the original Webber's Cove Boatyard in East Blue Hill, Maine, on April 22, 1948.

# *When Lynn Lugged the* **LOBSTERS**

BY LYNN DURYEA

**T**HINKING big after he returned to his hometown of Montauk, New York, back from being one of the youngest pilots in the Pacific theater in World War II, my father, Perry B. Duryea Jr., was determined to build a large-scale wholesale operation, primarily selling lobsters. This was an expansion of the seafood business his father, Perry Sr., had operated on Fort Pond Bay after moving to Montauk following World War I.

During the war, Perry Jr. had flown amphibious PB2Y Coronados to drop off supplies and collect the wounded on islands in the South Pacific. He was used to the rigors of the sea and ready for the challenges that lay ahead as he built up a three-vessel fleet of transport boats to feed the needs of his growing business.

Sustaining a large wholesale operation meant sourcing lobsters much farther afield than the waters off Montauk. My father made several exploratory trips

to Maine, the Canadian Maritimes, and as far away as Newfoundland; and he determined that lobsters could be safely moved from north to south, even with the changes in water temperature, if the right sort of transport vessel could be found. His solutions were two-fold and evolved as he grew the business.

Working with Maurice "Cy" Cousins of Webber's Cove Boatyard in East Blue Hill, my father commissioned the 65-foot *Lynn*. The boat was named after me

Photos courtesy the Duryea family

and christened when I was a year old. I've been told she was the last wet-well lobster smack built in the United States.

Wet-well smacks, once common, had become more or less obsolete. A wet-well boat (also known as a live-well boat) had holds amidships with holes that allowed fresh seawater to circulate when the smack was in motion, keeping the lobsters alive. Once the *Lynn* was loaded, she had to move.

By the late 1940s, my father was transporting lobsters from Deer Isle-Stonington, Clark's Harbour on Cape Sable Island, and Arichat, Nova Scotia. He subsequently purchased property in both Clark's Harbour and Stonington and established a new company, Lobster Transport of Maine Inc.

***"When my father first started buying lobsters in Nova Scotia he was paying 25 cents a pound and selling them for 69 cents a pound to Long Islanders."***

To keep up with the growing business, he soon put two more boats into service. These were both converted World War II sub-chasers. First came a 110-foot boat, built in Holland, Michigan, which he had towed by the *Lynn* to Webber's Cove, where it was to be outfitted as a transport boat and renamed the *Perry B.* My father first saw the decommissioned ship in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and had her armor plate removed for a trial run. Because the *Perry B.* was a wooden vessel, there was concern that she would break apart due to excessive speed without the armor; subsequently ballast comprised of Maine granite blocks was placed in the bow and stern for stability and to moderate her overall speed.

Next, my father added the *Lynn II* to the fleet. She was not quite as long or as graceful as the *Perry B.* These transport boats were equipped with tanks, through which salt water could be circulated by a system of pumps and pipes. In this way, lobsters could be lowered into the holds



The *Lynn* and *Perry B.* leaving Montauk, New York for Maine, 1954.

## Memories of the *Perry B.*

BY PERRY "CHIP" DURYE A III

THE FORMER SUBMARINE CHASER, the *Perry B.*, was fitted with a refrigerated hold aft to carry 100-pound wooden crates of live lobsters. There was also a circulating seawater hold between the pilothouse and the fo'c'sle where large wooden tanks that held between 300 and 400 pounds each of live lobster could receive and discharge a constant supply of running sea water. This method of transporting live product was unique, and between the refrigerated hold and the forward live tank hold, the *Perry B.* could carry 25,000 pounds of live lobster, along with eight to 10 large swordfish from Canada.

Capt. George Torrey Jr. from Stonington, Maine, previously captain of the wet-well the *Lynn*, was recruited by Perry Jr. to be the master of the vessel; the boat also carried a cook and an engineer. The *Perry B.* was powered by two World War II-era Caterpillar diesel engines located aft; forward of the live-tank hold was a ship's galley along with four wooden bunks, two on each side, molded to the sharp bow of the vessel. The galley smelled like a combination of oilskins, diesel fuel, and homemade biscuits, and on the trips that I made north on the boat to visit Capt. George's two boys until the next return voyage, I could lie in a bunk at night and hear water rushing by the boat's green hull.

As I write this narrative I am looking at a black and white photo of the *Perry B.* given to me by my sister, Lynn. The *Perry B.* had beautiful lines—the graceful downward sweep from bow to stern of a sub-chaser, coupled with a relatively narrow beam for a 110-foot vessel. She could roll when facing a quartering swell, but her

Capt. George W. Torrey Jr. painted a portrait of the *Perry B.*, which he ran as well as the *Lynn*.



speed and ability to cut through the thick North Atlantic waves more than made up for the rocking motion. If the weather was unduly harsh, Capt. Torrey would rig lines from the fo'c'sle to the pilothouse (where his bunk sat aft of the ship controls) so the crew would not slip or, worse, fall overboard.

Sometimes in the winter on the longer trip from Clark's Harbour, Nova Scotia, to Montauk, the deck and hold hatches would ice over, and the ice would have to be chipped away before the Montauk crew could access the live cargo. I would run down the dock to help unload and grade lobsters in the summer months, and at times the sheer size of the *Perry B.*, with running lights on and diesel engines thundering, would be a bit intimidating.

The *Perry B.* would come to Montauk twice a week in summer with 25,000 pounds per trip, and the smaller wet-well lobster smack the *Lynn*, commissioned by Perry Jr., would come twice also, with 15,000 pounds per trip. That's 80,000 pounds per week running through the Montauk plant between the two boats, with an annual tally of over a million pounds per year.

Unfortunately, the beauty and utility of the *Perry B.* would meet an unforeseen ending. When it became cheaper and faster to truck lobsters from Maine and Canada to Montauk, the boat was sold to several Montauk entrepreneurs, renamed the *Continental*, and used for offshore lobster fishing south and east of Montauk. After several years of this, the new owners made the unwise decision to take the boat to the Bahamas to fish for Bahamian lobster. The wooden hull of the *Perry B.* suffered from the warmer waters, and she was ultimately tied up and left to rot somewhere along the Miami River. ★

*Perry "Chip" Duryea III was the third-generation owner and operator of Perry B. Duryea & Son Inc. in Montauk, New York, until he sold the business and property in 2014. He added a very popular outdoor restaurant, Duryea's Lobster Deck, adjacent to the wholesale and retail business; it featured a famous lobster roll.*



Unloading the *Lynn* at Duryea's on Fort Pond Bay in Montauk, in the late 1940s. Capt. George Torrey is leaning out of the pilot house and Perry B. Duryea Jr. is on the dock, with his hands on his hips.

in the tanks and then the lobsters and tanks could be removed again once they reached Montauk.

Loading the original *Lynn*, which became known informally as the "little *Lynn*" was hard work: Lobsters were tossed into the holds by hand; once in Montauk they were bailed out with large wire or net baskets. Both the loading and unloading had to be interrupted so that the *Lynn* could move to circulate water in the well. This process, and the fact that the lobsters could be battered in the holds in heavy seas, meant there was some loss during transit.

Eventually, the *Lynn's* seetime was scaled back, and she was used in spring, summer and fall runs only. She ultimately was sold to a fisherman in New Bedford, Massachusetts, who "dried her out" and turned her into a dragger. Tragically, the *Lynn* was lost in a winter storm, along with her captain and two crew members.

What happened that night of Jan. 29, 1964, remains a mystery. There was a Coast Guard investigation, with officials

reporting that, "She remains missing without a trace and recommended that the case be closed." They added, "While weather conditions were without doubt strenuous and dangerous, the fact that five other vessels were faced with the same, and were able to contain the hazards and successfully come through, casts some doubt on the adequacy of



Duryea's Lobster Deck circa 2014.

(Below) Photo by Lynn Duryea (Above) Photo courtesy of the Dave Edwardes Collection, Montauk Public Library

security measures taken on the *Lynn*, the seaworthiness of the vessel, and her equipment.”

Some have suggested that the *Lynn* simply wasn't as seaworthy as a dried-out dragger as she was as a wet-well smack; the refit changed her sailing qualities. An informative article about the *Lynn*, by Vernal Hutchinson in the Aug. 9, 1973, *Ellsworth American*, has provided me with detailed information about my namesake. Hutchinson described a trip from Clark's Harbour to Montauk, during which the *Lynn* encountered heavy seas and gale winds. Radio contact was lost due to a blown fuse and there was no spare radio. Many thought the smack and her crew were lost, as larger ships were in distress during the blow.

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Gertrude, the wife of the captain at the time, Maurice Eaton, was notified. When she broke the news to the captain's father, Leslie Hutchinson, a veteran smack man, he said “*Lynn's* alright wherever she is.”

And she was. The *Lynn* turned up, “to the surprise of all except old-time smack men,” Vernal Hutchinson wrote.

In the late 1950s and early '60s, it was not unusual for a million pounds of lobsters or more to be transported from Maine and Canada to Montauk each year. At the busiest times of the year, two boats would arrive each week, the *Lynn*, with a capacity of 15,000 pounds or better, and the *Perry B.* carrying 25,000 pounds. The seafood business was different, and lobsters were cheaper then; when my father first started buying lobsters in Nova Scotia he was paying 25 cents a pound and selling them for 69 cents a pound to Long Islanders. My brother, Perry “Chip” Duryea III, joined the business full-time in 1974, although he recalls earning a quarter an hour working in the summers when he was 12 years old!



Launch day of the *Lynn* on April 22, 1948 with Perry B. Duryea Sr. standing on the right.

Those days and these transport boats are all a thing of the past. From the mid 1970s until the early 2000s, when Lobster Transport of Maine was sold, lobsters traveled exclusively by truck to Montauk. The smack era had sailed its course. ★

*Lynn Duryea moved to Stonington in 1974 and has lived on Deer Isle full or part-time since. She is a sculptor currently working in South Portland and on Deer Isle, inspired by the forms and features of working waterfronts.*

Besides details about the *Lynn* taken from Vernal Hutchinson's *Ellsworth American* article, Matt Cousins, the grandson of Maurice “Cy” Cousins and current owner of Webber's Cove, made available photographs of the boat from his files.

The original drawings and photographs of the *Lynn* are housed at the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport and are available online through the PMM web site.

Information and images can also be found in the Deer Isle-Stonington Historical Society archives.