

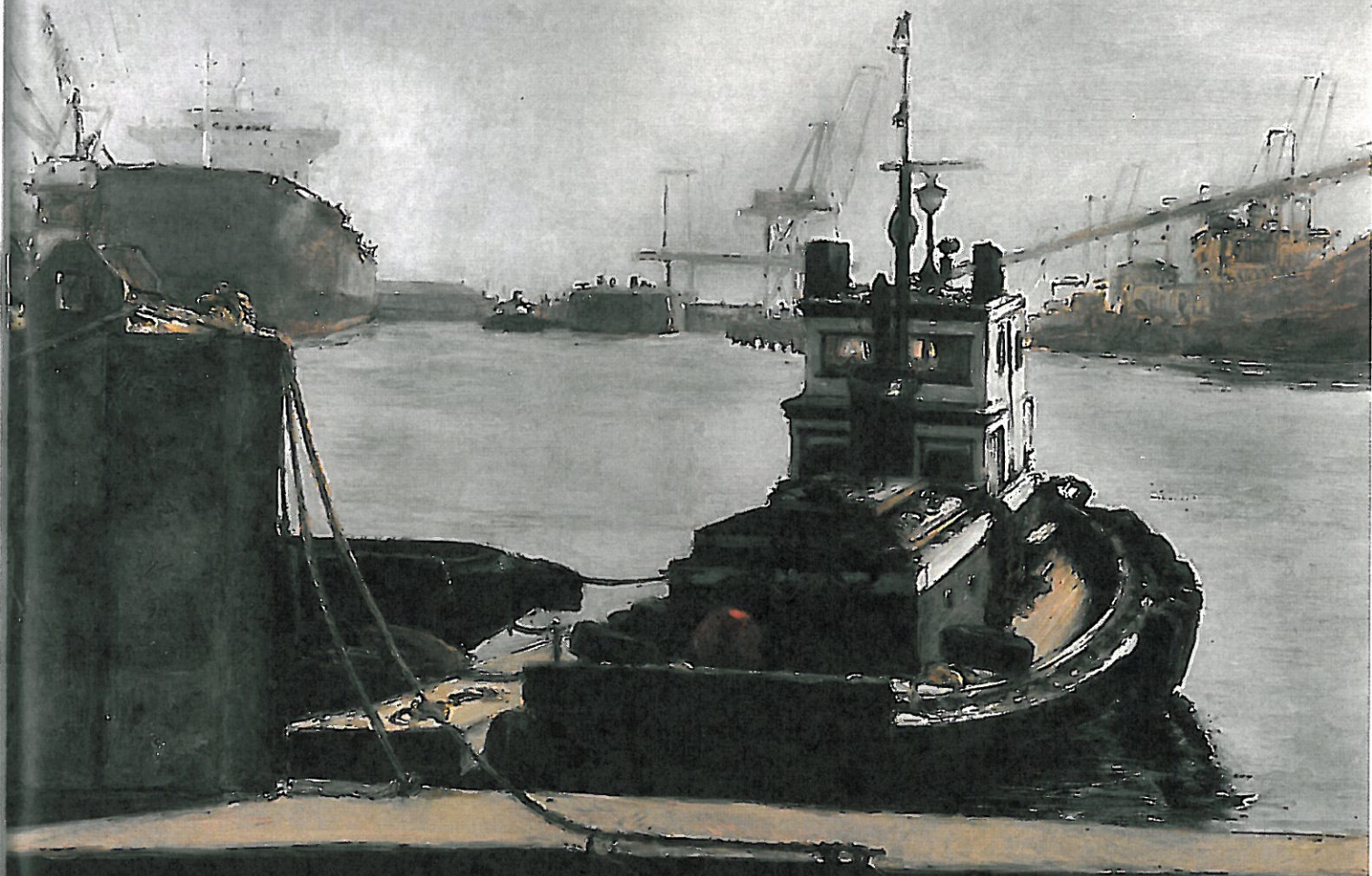
No. 133

NATIONAL MARITIME HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINTER 2010-11

SEA HISTORY \$3.75

THE ART, LITERATURE, ADVENTURE, LORE & LEARNING OF THE SEA



Activism through Art. Maritime Imagery by Christine Hanlon
Historic Ships and the National Historic Landmarks Program

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Chemical Warfare Leftovers on the Seafloor

Sea History for Kids

Reviews

Alone at Sea: Gloucester in the Age of the Dorymen (1623-1939) by John N. Morris, (Commonwealth Editions, Beverly, MA, 2010, 448pp, appen, gloss, illus, notes, index, ISBN 978-0-9819430-7-7, \$34.95hc)

John Morris's *Alone at Sea* is about a place, a dangerous labor-intensive, exhausting way of life, and the effect of hundreds of years of history on both. The book's theme is built around the Gloucester dory, a small flat-bottomed slope-sided boat, an uncomfortable platform floating on unpredictable seas upon which fishermen labored. Dories were the critical tools of the fishing schooners that for centuries sailed from the port of Gloucester, Massachusetts, to offshore fishing banks in the North Atlantic, and they were home for immigrants from many countries as well as old-line Yankees. Rather than a melting pot, Gloucester was a mosaic of disparate cultures held together via an cohesive bond—the fishing industry. “The sea [was] where [fishermen] made their living, but it was land where [they] lived [their] lives. When [they] came home the whole family celebrated.” Divided into five books, from the genesis of dory-boat fishing through its zenith to its unfortunate nadir, *Alone at Sea* is like a diminutive Old Testament.

Alone At Sea chronicles the perils, triumphs, and tragedies of the Gloucester fishing industry in great detail. In the long history of fishing out of Cape Ann, dory fishing had little significance until after the Civil War and lost its importance after World War I. This was a tough and barely profitable business, whose market shifted from salted to fresh to frozen products over time, but it did have its colorful side—the International Fishing Schooner Races of the early twentieth century.

Morris has written a marvelous, scholarly, and detailed compendium about the fishing industry, the fishermen and fishery workers as well as their families. Rather pedantic in style and tightly focused upon the history of Gloucester, fishermen and fishing, the book traces American history along with its influence upon the fishing industry. It also presents insights into this highly specific economic entity and the

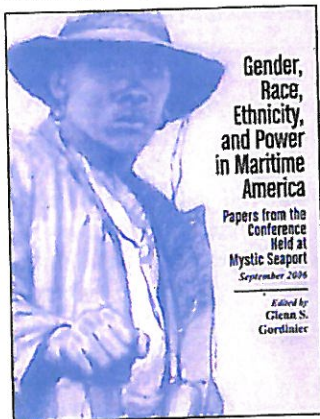
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tight society that lived through its frequent vacillations. The audience for this book may be limited, but it is an important contribution to maritime history and in particular to those interested in the history of the fishing industry and New England.

LOUIS ARTHUR NORTON
West Simsbury, Connecticut

Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Power in Maritime America: Papers from the Conference Held at Mystic Seaport September 2006 edited by Glenn Gordinier (Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, CT, 250pp, illus, notes, index, ISBN 978-0-939511-27-3; \$16.95)

In 1993 Mystic Seaport stepped up to address the pressing issues of race and ethnicity in American society. The expression of this commitment was the first National Conference on Race, Ethnicity, and Power in Maritime America in 1995, followed by a second conference at Mystic Seaport in 2000 and a volume of selected papers in 2005, *Perspectives on Race, Ethnicity and Power in Maritime America*. A third conference was organized by the Frank C. Munson Institute of American Maritime Studies at



Mystic Seaport and held in 2006 with the added subject of gender, and a more global approach to the main themes. The result is the collection of twelve chapters by authors from a variety of disciplines that form this very diverse and engaging book.

Sowande Muskateem's introductory chapter focuses on the Middle Passage, drawing from accounts of merchants, government records, and from those who served aboard slave ships. The experiences of slaves who escaped bondage in British North America are investigated by Charles Foy. He examined the records of over 7,500 mariners of color, the “maritime maroons,” of the Atlantic in the eighteenth century. For these mariners, the ship represented many things: the stage for the horrific Middle Passage, a vessel of slavery and exploitation, and for many slaves, employment in conditions far better than those ashore, with the added opportunities for escape.



Kevin Dawson's examination of enslaved underwater divers reveals that African divers were better swimmers than their European contemporaries. They had advanced capabilities for breath holding, diving, and swimming derived from experiences in their homelands. Slave divers worked hard to gather pearls and sponges or in salvage operations. Their skills also made them unique and not easy to replace, often resulting in better treatment.

Freedom could be expressed various ways, but Bryan Sinche's examination of some of the writings of Frederick Douglass directed that focus to a single document and image. The seaman's protection certificate carried the symbol of the American eagle and was, for Douglass, his ticket to freedom. “I have a paper with the American eagle on it, that will carry me round the world.”

Black sailors served in the US Navy during the War of 1812, earning accolades,

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