

A Celebration of the Chebacco Boat



The Lewis H. Story. Photo by Len Burgess for the Essex Shipbuilding Museum

The craft used on the inshore banks, during the last half of the eighteenth century, were usually two-masted boats, fitted with the foremast stepped in the eyes of the craft and the mainmast placed just abaft midlength—the foremast the shorter of the two. . . . These small craft were employed in the inshore fishery and were not intended for more than a two-day operation; the crew was usually a man and a boy. . . . The Revolution practically destroyed the colonial

fishing fleet and capital was lacking to build schooner replacements . . . [so] the low-cost two-masted boats became very popular and were built in large numbers, particularly at Essex, then part of Ipswich, Massachusetts, and called Chebacco Parish. As a result, the two-masted boats became known as Chebacco Boats, or Jebacco Boats if pink-sterned (double-ended); Chebacco Dogbodies or Dogsbodies if square-sterned. The origin of this name is unknown.¹

The theme for this issue of *Chebacco* is “The Journey.” In keeping with this theme, the Mount Desert Island Historical Society has declared the week of July 15, 2013 as **Chebacco Week**. In 1761, Abraham Somes, his wife, and four young daughters sailed from Gloucester in a Chebacco to become the first permanent European settlers of today’s Somesville. In 2011 we honored that event as *Celebrate!250* in collaboration with several Island organizations. This year, in cooperation with the Essex Historical Society and Essex Shipbuilding Museum, we offer you the opportunity to experience a part of that historic voyage.

The *Lewis H. Story* is an authentic reproduction of a 32-foot Chebacco, built in 1998 at the historic Essex shipyard of Harold Burnham, an 11th-generation member of a family noted for turning out hundreds of schooners for the famed Gloucester fishing fleet. The *Story* will sail among several locations in Somes Sound, offering activities ranging from day sails to educational events to reenactments to general jollification. Please mark your calendars and plan to be here!

Bill Horner, M.D.
President

¹ Howard I. Chapelle, *The American Fishing Schooners: 1825-1935* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), 25-26.