

Eben Manson & William Fernald Shipyard

Bottom of Oakland Street
(1852 to 1874)

At the foot of North Street, later renamed Oakland Street was the Manson shipyard. Eben Manson's shipyard constructed vessels from 1852 to 1875 and built almost forty vessels. Mr. Manson built some of the fastest vessels for their size, especially schooners. When working on a larger vessel most of the larger shipyards simultaneously built smaller schooners. Timber that was too small for a larger vessel, had a bad spot, or for several other reasons caused it to be unfit for use in the larger ships was cut down and used in the construction of a schooner. Occasionally when working on a large vessel the ship carpenters made a mistake that resulted in boards too short or too narrow, the timbers could easily be reshaped for a smaller vessel.

In early 1866, the Newburyport Herald carried an article about Mr. Manson's reputation as a shipbuilder: "Mr. Eben Manson can now be considered a veteran builder as he now has his twenty-third vessel on the stocks. His vessels have been noted for speed. His bark JEHU in the fruit trade in the Mediterranean holds a record for a fast round trip from Boston through the Straits of Gibraltar."

The schooners were used in fishing in Canada and along the Eastern Seaboard, the West Indies, and South American trade. Mr. Manson was so highly respected and successful that the accomplished Gloucester fishermen, a community south of Newburyport, came to the reluctant conclusion that Manson's fishing schooners were the fastest and ordered some for their own fleets.

After the Eben Manson's shipyard closed, in 1875, a silver factory made use of the remaining building, which had been a carpenter workshop. A few years later, the North End Boat Club took ownership of the land. The silver factory was torn down and a new road developed from Merrimac Street to the club. The street was known as Manson Road for many years.



Eben Manson shipyard where now the North End Boat Club is located.
On the left, the launching of the schooner Eustice, 236 tons, in 1862.
On the right is the partially completed ship Portlaw, 1280 tons.

References:

"Along the water's edge, by land or by sea", Clipper Heritage Trail, www.clipperheritagetrail.com

Maritime History of the Merrimac - Shipbuilding by Robert K. Cheney, Newburyport Press, 1964.

Newburyport Herald, 1866

Newburyport Public Library Archival Center www.newburyportpl.org

North End Boat Club History, <https://neboatclub.org/history/>