

The Lowell Boat Shop

Point Shore



Originally known as Bayley's Neck, this land was first granted by the town of Salisbury in 1640 to John Bayley. The land remained in the Bayley family for three generations. Joshua Bayley, who received the land from his father John Bayley, Junior in 1679, was probably the first owner to reside here. In 1700 Joshua Bayley sold his house and all of his land to John Webster of

Newbury, who relocated here. By 1731 John Webster had divided his land between his sons John and Israel Webster. In the 1730's and 40's they began selling parcels of land on the riverbank to shipwrights and related tradesmen, including John's two shipbuilding sons Daniel and Stephen Webster. By 1760, then known as Webster's Point, the one mile stretch of riverbank contained a dozen shipyards. For a century this area was one of the most active shipbuilding centers in New England. During the second half of the 19th century shipbuilding gave way to boatbuilding as the principal occupation of the area, of which Lowell's Boat Shop is a rare surviving example.

Established in 1793, Lowell's Boat Shop is the oldest continuously operating boat shop in the United States and is cited as the birthplace of the legendary fishing dory. Lowell's is the only remaining survivor of the area's world-renowned dory manufacturing industry that produced in excess of a quarter of a million dories over a period of two centuries. Building more than 2000 boats in 1911, this business was one of the first in the nation to employ practices resembling assembly line manufacturing.

With the founding of his company, Simeon Lowell made radical innovations to traditional boat design. Known for their efficiency, durability, and sea worthiness, Lowell's dories became the heart and soul of the Gloucester fishing fleet. In the waning days of the great fishing industry, recreational boaters turned to Lowell dories for the same qualities that attracted the fishermen. Rowing clubs, hunting camps, the Boy and Girl Scouts and the Lifesaving Service all sought Lowell dories and skiffs for their maritime experiences.



Conveyed through seven generations of the Lowell family, Lowell's Boat Shop was passed to the Odell family in the 1980's, and then to the Newburyport Maritime Society in the 1990's. In 2006, Lowell's was purchased by Lowell's Maritime Foundation, an independent non-profit group with the mission of leading this National Landmark and Working Museum through its third century of wooden boat building.

In its third century of operation, Lowell's Boat Shop is now a working boat shop and living museum, and the preservation of each distinct part is essential to our mission. We continue to build dories and skiffs in the time-honored tradition as the seven generations of the Lowell family that owned and operated the Boat Shop. Its rich history is conveyed through boat building, model dory and apprentice classes, onsite programming for scouts and local schools, and interaction with at-risk youth groups.

Located on the picturesque banks of the Merrimack River, LBS is the sole survivor of the industries for which the Merrimack River Valley region was known. From George Washington on, Lowell's has prevailed through every US presidency on the property purchased by founder, Simeon Lowell, in the 1700s. It was here that Simeon originated the legendary fishing dory, and his grandson, Hiram, developed the renowned banks dory that became a mainstay of New England's fishing fleets. An historian remarked, "The dory was to the fisherman as the hammer was to the carpenter." Hiram's novel form of assembly-line production made Lowell's the world's preeminent dory manufacturer of its day, and it is said to have greatly influenced Henry Ford's approach to mass production.

Within these buildings, remnants of past generations speak volumes of the rich history that lives on here; ancient ship's knees, stout and sturdy support beams, and two centuries of accumulated paint are the backdrop for our exhibits.

The oldest buildings on the site are combined Greek Revival structures that were built in the 1860s. In this, a cross-beam bears annual production figures, branded into the wood from 1897 through 1919, record that an astonishing 2,029 boats were built here, by hand, in 1911. This remarkable boat shop is one of one and proudly stands as an icon of New England ingenuity and integrity.

