

F. Slade Dale and the *Emma C. Berry*



F. Slade Dale.

Who is F. Slade Dale?

Locals and visitors alike may recognize F. Slade Dale's name from the Slade Dale Sanctuary on maps of Point Pleasant, but if they gaze upon the glittering waters near the Bay Head Yacht Club, their eyes fall upon his unassuming yet monumental maritime legacy.

F. Slade Dale was a prominent boat enthusiast and experienced sailor who called Bay Head home and engaged in memorable sea voyages and bay races. He built his dream marina, the Dale Yacht Basin, on the banks of Barnegat Bay. Dale is credited for introducing the Jersey Shore to motors, which he used to power several Chris Craft boats he purchased and kept at the marina. Today, the Dale Yacht Basin is the current boat house known as the Dale Building at the Bay Head Yacht Club and is listed on the National Register as a contributing structure within Bay Head's historic district.

In 1925, Dale and a friend, Frank Coyle, sailed a pair of Barnegat Bay sneakbox vessels powered by small outboard motors from New York to Florida. They traveled on inland waterways as much as possible. The journey of 1,500 miles was completed in three months.

One of Dale's many awards was earning the Cruising Club of

America's Blue Water Medal in 1929 for sailing to Jamaica and back with Peter Jeness, Jr. in a cutter Dale designed named *Postscript*. The non-stop last leg of the journey, a 1,200-mile jaunt from Havana, Cuba to the Barnegat Inlet, took fourteen days and included spending seventy-two hours in a gale off Cape Hatteras.

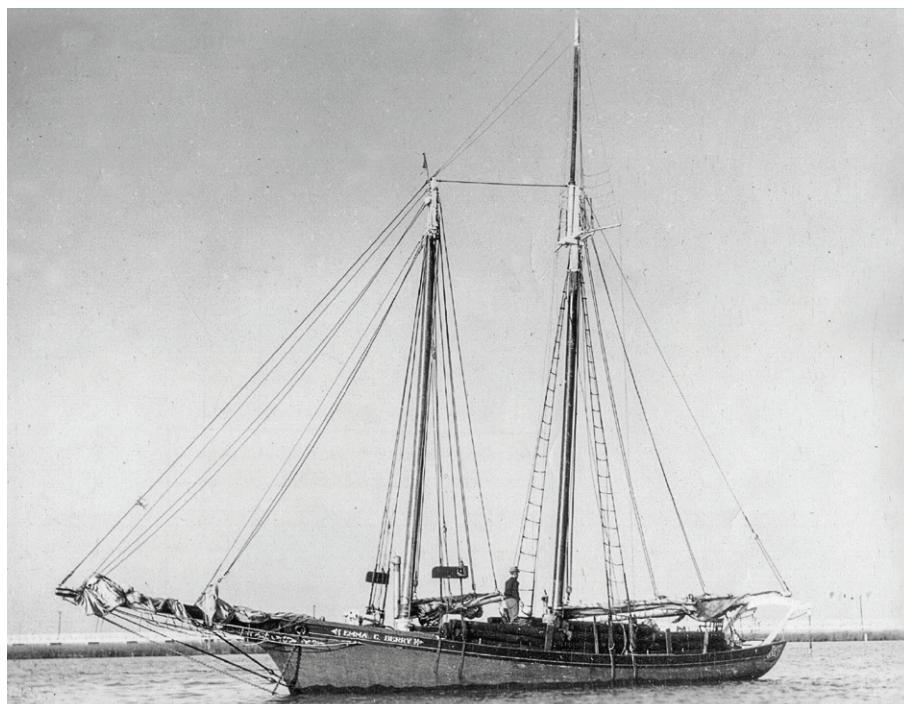
During World War II, Dale's boat-building experience and nautical expertise resulted in his appointment

as a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, where he supervised the building of submarine chasers and patrol torpedo boats. Locally, Dale was well-known as an avid promoter of all types of boating from the 1940s through the mid-1960s, and commonly cruised along the Jersey Shore's waters in vessels he built or restored by hand until his death in 1972 at seventy years old.

The *Emma C. Berry* Fishing Smack

The *Emma C. Berry* fishing smack was built at the Palmer Shipyard in Noank, Connecticut in 1866 by James A. Latham and named after the daughter of Captain John Henry Berry. A sloop-rigged wet well smack for the mackerel fisheries, the *Berry* was launched on June 5, 1866 two miles south of Mystic, Connecticut at the mouth of the Mystic River. Captain Berry sold the *Berry* in the fall of that year, and it continued as a fishing vessel in the waters of Southern New England.

In 1887, the *Berry* was rerigged as a schooner, which made for easier handling by a smaller crew. She continued as a fishing vessel under several different owners from 1919



The *Emma C. Berry* fishing smack, December 1940.

courtesy of Thomas J. Lauria

to 1924 when her primary catch was lobster, which could be transported in the wet well. She remained active until 1924, when she was left on the flats of Beals Island, Maine. In 1926, she was used as a coaster freighter sailing between Maine and Massachusetts by Milton Beal.

As a child, Dale stayed with a local Bay Head family and listened to many local "old salts," who would tell stories about their days at sea and the vessels they loved. When he decided to purchase a vessel in 1931, serendipity led him to the *Berry*, which sat derelict in Massachusetts. He saw the boat's name and immediately recognized it from stories he heard during his youth and purchased it on the spot.

After restoring it to her former glory, the *Berry* spent almost the next forty years of her life in and around the Barnegat Bay area with Dale at her helm. In 1969, Dale donated the historic vessel to the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut, where from 1987 to 1988, she was rerigged to her original sloop design. In 1994, she was designated a National Historical Landmark. Today, she appears as she did when originally built and serves as an integral part of the largest maritime museum in the United States.

The Emma C. Berry Boat Model

The Bay Head Historical Society decided to restore a boat model of the *Emma C. Berry* in their collection to reflect the same boat Dale



The Emma C. Berry boat model on display at the Bay Head Historical Society Museum.

had rescued from Maine in 1931 as a way to further memorialize Dale's contributions while helping to educate museum visitors about his life and legacy. "I have found that each restoration undertaken requires many hours of research to select just the right craftsman to do the work," said society president and museum curator Cathie Coleman.

She found renowned model ship craftsman Thomas Lauria of Massachusetts, who was charged with the task of refurbishing the model to how the *Berry* looked when Dale

owned it because it spent most of its life in the Bay Head area.

The model, built from a kit, had been crafted without particular attention to historical detail. Transforming a model from a recreational piece to a historical piece was a challenge Lauria welcomed. "As for problems in restoration, that's the name of the game," he said. "You are always looking for ways to solve the problems of repairing a broken ship model."

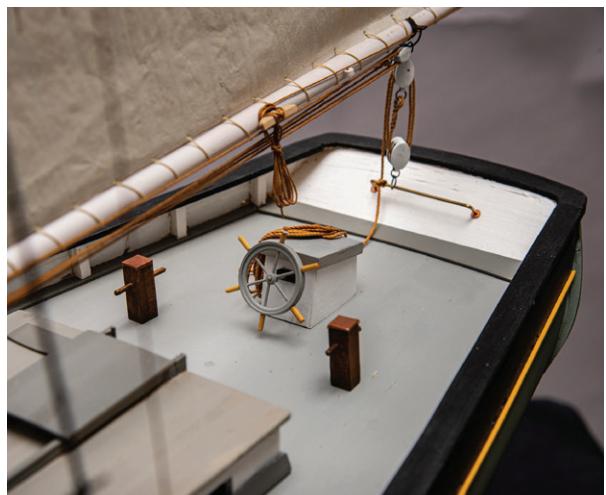
However, the restoration project caused Lauria to face an ethical dilemma

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courtesy of Thomas J. Lauria

Details of the The Emma C. Berry model.



Courtesy of Thomas J. Lauria



Jill Ocone

The Bay Head Historical Society Museum/Loveland Homestead and Slade Dale Cottage with the Emma C. Berry tender.

ma. "In agreeing to undertake this project, I was going to irreversibly alter another model builder's work and intention," he said. Since the model in front of him was constructed from a historically inaccurate kit, he decided that altering it would be beneficial because it would become more educational and bring increased awareness to a piece of local history. He remarked, "I strongly believe that changing the focus of this model, in this case specifically, served a much greater good than if it was displayed in its original configuration and condition."

With a sizable collection of archival photos of the *Berry* provided by the Bay Head Historical Society, Lauria had little trouble focusing on the vessel's specific details. He eliminated the cabin between the vessel's masts, which was added sometime after Dale's restoration, and installed a cargo hatch instead. Other revisions Lauria chose to make for accuracy purposes included correcting the transom to overhang the sides of the boat, crafting and installing decorated trailboards, nameboards, and transom decorations, and placing the masts in the correct locations.

"With any large project, I always give the client a photo and text document detailing everything I did, my reasons for doing them, and the materials I used," Lauria said. He regularly provided updates about his progress to the Society and kept meticulous notes about every step of the restoration.

It took Lauria approximately one

hundred hours to fully restore the *Emma C. Berry* model, which returned home to the Bay Head Historical Society's museum just in time for their 2022 season. She is home inside The Slade Dale Cottage (circa 1923), located on the historical Loveland Homestead, with the ten-foot *Emma C. Berry* tender boat just outside the

cottage's entrance.

F. Slade Dale's enormous contributions to the local maritime community, one which he helped build, will never be forgotten thanks to the efforts of the Bay Head Historical Society and the **craftsmanship** of Thomas J. Lauria.

—Jill Ocone

Editor's Note: The Bay Head Historical Society Museum/Loveland Homestead is located at 1643 Bay Avenue (on the corner of Bridge and Bay Avenues) in Point Pleasant. The Loveland Homestead houses artifacts, memorabilia, photographs, furniture, decoys and other treasures from the early years at the head of Barnegat Bay. Worthy of note are original Gerard Hardenburgh paintings and carved decoys by Kenneth Loveland, the Birdsall family, and many others. The museum's wonderful collection of photographs, contributed by William C. Schoettle, is particularly noteworthy for its comprehensive look at the head of Barnegat Bay as it was in its heyday (the mid 1880s to about 1940). The Slade Dale Cottage is a tribute to a man who, as a youth, was a noted sailor in this area and who continued throughout his life to engage in memorable sea voyages and bay races. On display are several boat models that represent his life of adventure as well as the *Emma C. Berry* tender. The museum and Slade Dale Cottage are open to the public June through December on Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. For more information and current hours and exhibits, visit www.bayheadhistoricalsociety.com.

About The Craftsman: Thomas J. Lauria

Thomas J. Lauria was born in the Bronx, New York in 1952. He started building kit models when he was about seven years old and was hopelessly hooked. When he was in his early twenties, he met William Quincy, a master model builder at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. Mr. Quincy patiently answered all of Lauria's questions on a host of model related topics, and it changed the way Lauria thought about models and building them.



Shortly after, he joined the Nautical Research Guild and eagerly devoured all the information contained in their quarterly journals. Numerous trips to all the maritime museums in the northeast furthered his modeling education. He started restoring half hulls for the Larchmont Yacht Club in New York, and in 1987, moved to Nantucket where model building became a fulltime job.

In 1994, Lauria and his family moved to Cape Cod, where they live today. He is still accepting commissions and is an active member of the USS Constitution Model Shipwright Guild. Being a Guild member has been another important step in Lauria's life. The Guild has such a wide range of members with so many varied interests and knowledge that it has proved an inexhaustible resource for anything nautical or model related.

To learn more, visit Lauria's website at www.tjlauria.com.