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# Letters From New England

October 5, 2009

*Maine Maritime Museum*



The fishing schooner Sherman Zwicker. Maine Maritime Museum

The *Maine Maritime Museum* is in *Bath*, just a day's sail from *Freeport* (some motoring may be required), or a half-hour drive by car. Our trusty Nüvi 670 took us right to the front door. We got there just before noon – in time to catch the *Sagadahoc* for a short cruise up and down the *Kennebec River*; with a side trip to *Hockomock Bay* via the *Sasanoa River*. (You don't have to know how to pronounce them to enjoy the cruise) From the *Sasanoa* you can view the Maine-made Osprey nests.



Maine-made Osprey nest

Turns out that the *Max L. Wilder Memorial Bridge*, that crosses the *Sasanoa* where it enters the *Kennebec*, was the summer residence of an Osprey family. But the bridge was scheduled to be painted that summer, as well. The birds complained, citing Federal migratory protection laws and the \$1.7 million project was put on hold while the case was reviewed. A compromise of sorts was reached and three artificial nesting sites were built by the Maine Department of Transportation – two along the *Sasanoa* and one on *Read Island*

in the *Hockomock Bay* – to the tune of about \$50,000 according to our captain. But that was just the down payment. You see, this is on the river and the going price for land is pretty high, so the final cost of the nests was around one million dollars! Sorry, not for the nests: according to our captain, that was the penalty that the State of Maine had to pay the painting company for the delay – a clause written into their contract.

Shipbuilding has always been a big business in *Bath* with a history going back some 400 years. From the *Kennebec* river, we got to see the business side of the *Bath Iron Works* shipbuilding facility. A fairly sophisticated looking



destroyer was undergoing construction. A pair of cranes towered over the ship as they facilitated the process. Impressive.

But the most impressive show was being put on by the atmosphere as layer upon layer of clouds filled the sky above us with alternating dark and light shapes.



Back at the museum proper we dodged a shower and talked to one of the museum guides while eating a wonderful roasted-beast sandwich in the shelter of a wooden porch.

The Museum itself is filled with historical artifacts. I found some background material for my next play *New England Trilogy* – especially the Maine segment – in an exhibit of a completely outfitted fishing dory, and in a book by Barry Fisher called *A Doryman's Day*: a book that I was able to purchase in the Museum bookstore. Perusing the book I was pleased to discover that it contained many photographs by Sidney M. Chase. Mr. Chase is the author of *The Measure of Content*: the Scribner's article that I mentioned in my first letter. The Museum has a fine collection of Mr. Chase's photographs. He was not only a writer but a photographer, illustrator and artist. He and N. C. Wyeth were good friends and it was Chase that helped convince Wyeth to buy a house in Maine where he did some of his best work.



We had reservations at the *Kimball Terrace Inn* in *Northeast Harbor* for the evening, so after a quick tour of the fishing schooner *Sherman Zwicker* – shown as the lead picture – we headed North for *Mount Desert Island*.

Garrett (with Ann)