East Dennis Yard
Shiverick Works Produced Vessels Known for Speed, Cape Man Tells

By E. Milburn Carver

Part 1

RISE AND FALL

My purpose in writing this story is to present to the reader a sketch of the clipper era. I have for the most part omitted technical data in order to explain the purpose and function of the clipper ship together with a rather detailed survey of several Cape Cod-built clippers—those turned out at the Shiverick yard in East Dennis. There are nearly 200,000,000 people in the United States today. It is logical to assume that millions will never go to sea, never even see it, yet all of them know that it exists.

Knowledge of an existence and intimacy with the same thing are entirely separate subjects, however.

It is not unusual for a merchant seaman to receive mail addressed: "Care of U.S. Merchant Marines," as though the sender had some vague idea that the addressee belonged in some Government service. Actually the words merchant marine indicate a collective grouping of all ships, other than inland water vessels, for contract or hire.

Clipper Ship Origin

Since the beginning of civilization there have been merchants and at some very early date the more enterprising ones built boats, thereby utilizing waterborne transportation of their goods in large amounts.

The whole story is one filled with incredible loss of life at sea, and of never-ending storms and shipwrecks. Occasionally it is lightened with glimpses of great beauty, and this is where the clipper ship fits into history. It is well to place that statement here, for the clipper was a cargo carrier, a merchant vessel, exactly as a freighter is today.

In sifting the English vocabulary, the better to explain how the clipper came into existence, I believe it is simplest to just say that it grew up along the Atlantic.
Vikings on Cape?

Pohl Answers Theory Critic Upholds Bass River Shoring Site

(Editor's note: Dr. Frederick J. Pohl, a retired Brooklyn, N.Y., lawyer and amateur archaeologist, proposed the theory 13 years ago that Follins Pond on Bass River was the site of Leif Erikson's Vinland campsite.

On June 9, 1951, Mr. Pohl presented his evidence in Saturday Evening Post and Reader's Digest in 1951 and in two books by Dr. Pohl, "The Legend of the Vikings" and "Vikings on Cape Cod."

Dr. Pohl's theory was attacked by Roland Wells Robbins in his book "North American Indian," which devotes an entire chapter to the question. The following is Mr. Pohl's answer to Mr. Robbins.

By FREDERICK J. POHL

A recent letter from Dr. Maurice Robbins contains information which bears directly upon my Follins Pond theory: "You will recall that at the time the stakes of the shoring were recovered there was no thought, at least on my part, of using them in our washed carbon samples. Consequently, they were not protected in any special way from contamination. In fact, during several months which ensued between my taking them to the museum and sending them to you, they were immersed in fresh water to prevent shrinking and cracking.

It is now known that some would have tended to contaminate them with fresh carbon from the water or from dust which may have accumulated. I do not think that the carbon date as received by you in any way invalidates your contention that the stakes could have been of Viking origin.

Concerning the late material including nails, etc., which were removed from the excavations in the Follins Pond gully, Roland Wells Robbins surely must be aware of the fact that modern materials are often introduced into every strata by both frost action and human agencies. Extraneous materials can be made to tell strange stories unless one is capable of careful analysis."

Why should I answer a second time the charge repeatedly by Robbins in "Hidden America," written in collaboration with Evan Jones, that the stakes of the shoring at Follins Pond were above the water table and washed carbon samples, that was given by the quotation from Dr. Maurice Robbins which I published on page 56 of "The Vikings on Cape Cod," which book Robbins and Mr. Evans list in their bibliography. Dr. Robbins found the stakes below the water line of Leif Erikson's day more than at present. Less ice on land, more water in the ocean. That belief has been justified.

It is now known and positively established that there have been great oscillations in sea level. Our knowledge of sea level changes goes back 400,000 years, with fairly detailed accuracy during the last 10,000 years. It is based on the ages of fossil mangrove and barnacles, which can grow only between high and low tide levels, and of coral which grows only up to low tide level.

The "Report of Sea Level Changes" presented by Dr. Rhodes W. Fairbridge of the Department of Geology, Columbia University, on September 7, 1959 to the International Geographical Congress, in session at the UN, gave very important facts of great historical significance.

Sea Level Changes

For example, the sea level was 5 feet above the present about 250 B.C. and dropped to about 6 feet below the present at the time of the birth of Christ, which was a comparatively cool period. Between 500 and 800 A.D. it rose, and was again above the present level for several centuries. In the last 800 years it has been below the present level with three major oscillations.

The sea level 1,000 years ago was 2 to 3 feet higher than today. Dr. Fairbridge has specifically stated this also in a personal letter to me.

While I no longer have complete confidence in mooring holes as evidence of the presence of the Vikings, because as I state in "The Vikings on Cape Cod," no one can prove when any particular mooring hole was chiseled. It is interesting to note that sea level oscillations put a new complexion on the mooring hole in the Follins Pond shoring and the wood.
Cargoes Varied
I would like to refer once again to the clipper ship belonging to the cargo class, for in the gold rush years cargo meant anything and everything. There is an instance of a shipload of ice carried around the Horn to San Francisco where it met a great deal of advertising while another involved a cargo of common nails which proved to be most valuable upon arrival in San Francisco. Incidents are recorded in which the entire construction cost of the ship plus a substantial margin of profit were earned on a single maiden trip to the West Coast.
There is no record of an average sailing time between the East and West Coasts of the continent. The sailing distance approached 16,000 miles from New York to San Francisco, but the courses covered included roundabout routes to gain favorable winds.
The fastest passages were made in 39 days, twice by McKay's Flying Cloud and once by Grimsby, and Stackl. The second time the Flying Cloud came into San Francisco, in that time, the captain Cresswell was feted by the city—and for the best reason in the world—by the ladies of the West Coast in under three months.

World's Largest
A census of 1850 showed Britain to have 14,000,000 tons of merchant shipping compared to 3,000,000 tons for the United States. I believe that by 1854 the United States had risen to first place among all the maritime nations of the world engaged in trade.
Within a few months after the discovery of California gold, this country was experiencing a shipbuilding boom never before approximated elsewhere in the world. Numerically, hundreds of new clippers were launched between 1853 and 1858 with an added trend upward in terms of individual tonnage.

Almost unlimited resources in the territories, abundance of hardwood, and the presence of_clipper shipyards, were responsible for the clipper ships which were actually goliaths in tonnage compared to the more conventionally constructed vessels of Europe.

Medium Clippers
There is another division of clipper ships, or perhaps it might be better to say a subdivision. Not all of these fine vessels were racing gravinghounds. The "extreme" hull was favored at the outset of clipper shipbuilding as speed was the number one criterion of all stages. As time passed, however, demands from California for manufactured goods from the East began to increase. The number of hull made its appearance. This was recognized as the medium clipper with ample cargo carrying ability and a more moderate speed. If one were to examine two clipper ship pictures side by side, one being the extreme type, the other the medium, it would be impossible to distinguish between them. The former carried its length over 5 times the amount its beam, whereas the latter kept that slight under a ratio of 3 to 1. All that means is that the medium clipper was wider, or broader in the beam, somewhat fuller in the bow and consequently incapable of sustained racing speed of 15 knots or better.

Speed Was Moderate
It was a compromise type of vessel able to be laden deep with merchandise but made up for a conserving top speed of 12 knots or so in a whole-sail breeze. Some clippers lasted into the 20th Century, and surely there is a point of regret here for they came to an inglorious end as coal barges and cannery bulks for fishing companies. No one did anything about preserving one for posterity.

There was trade in their passing for all were either wrecked, sold to foreign nation, and forgotten, or shamed into unfitness as storage hulks. These were the ships that made this country a great maritime power.

Part II
CAPE COD CLIPPERS
A small monument of a bas-relief on rock commemorating eight clipper ships built at East Dennis between 1848 and 1862. The site is the Shiverick shipyard and direction to it is as follows: From Route 6A, the Cranberry Highway, turn onto Bridge Street at the Players Pharmacy in East Dennis, proceed across the meadows to Sesuit Street and turn right. It will be necessary to drive slowly for a short distance to the highest point of the road overlooking Sesuit Creek. The monument is on the right side of the road at the top of the bluff. Its distance from the Players Pharmacy is 8 of a mile.

The Old Yard
More than a century ago, the old channel of Sesuit Creek made a veritable shipbuilding boom. It was at the foot of the bluff just below the jetties as the ships were launched into this channel in the Spring flood tide and then sent out into Mussachiott Sett Bay. Nothing remains of the shipyard now and Sesuit Creek was dredged as recently as 1956 so that anything which might haveabbursed up the yard was carried out. However, according to the bas-relief, a footbridge was once connected to Sesuit Side to which the workmen from Quivet village (East Dennis) could pass to and from.

There have been two shipyards in the region. The first was located far up the old creek beyond its bend and was established there some number of years before 1820. A packet boat was launched one year which ran for a number of years between Boston and East Dennis. Five more vessels came from the old yard between 1855 and 1861, the most ambitious one being a small brig. These were all built by Asa Shiverick with the assistance of his two sons, David and James. Shipwrights were their main production. It might be noted that these were always a practical investment for the small-time shipwright as their costs were offset by selling shares in them to the townspeople.

The New Yard
A third son, Asa Shiverick Jr., returned to East Dennis in 1847 after employment in Maine and Boston shipyards. Apparently he came home with some rather startling ideas of renovating the business. While it is impossible to comment in any detail upon the effects which the Shiverick family council, it seems that Asa Jr.'s voice was probably the loudest. In any event the older idea did.
It could be that the senior member of the family, an old hand at shipbuilding, had cause to be disgruntled about the social ideas of David and James who had decided to build ships "with their bows turned inside out." Older shipwrights must have been aghast at the new crazy clipper design with its flaring bows and raked-back masts.
The old yard had to be abandoned for it was neither large enough for the new venture nor did it contain enough water at any time for anything other than relatively small-tonnage vessels. Financial problems of building a new yard required an imaginative and well-to-do patron-partner.

Captains Fared Well
Captain Christopher Hill was such a partner and it was he who financed the new yard, selecting its site, as is explained on the monument. The master of a Canadian packet, as these clipper ships were called, earned a salary somewhere around $100 a month. However, each skipper was allotted a quantity of cargo for his own personal speculation — be that more tea, spices, ivory or whatever the Chinese sold.
In addition, he received a percentage on all mail transport, a percentage of all passenger fares that might be aboard the ship. A clever captain, and they...
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This treatment would have tended to carbonate them with fresh carbon from the water or from dust which many have accumulated. I do not think that they can be dished, as you or I in any way invalidate your contention that the stakes could have been Viking origin.

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Why should I answer a second time these questions posed by Mr. Robbins in "Hidden America," written in collaboration with Evan Jones, that the stakes of the shoring at Follins Pond were above the water mark? I have the adequate answer to that was published by Dr. Maurice Robbins which I published on p. 56 of "The Vikings on Cape Cod," which book Robbins and Mr. Evans list in their bibliography. Dr. Robbins found the stakes below the water table.

Dug Ditches

He spent eight hours in the gulley at Follins Pond on May 10, 1943, in charge of the group of the Massachusetts Archaeological Societv which dug drainage ditches and uncovered the shoring, but Mr. Robbins saw the gully for the first time the next day and passed over or around the water table within five minutes of his arrival there, it seemed to several of the parties that he had made up before he entered.

A basis for his skepticism was no doubt his conviction that there could not have been a sufficient depth of water in the Bass River for Leif Erikson's ship to have settled in Follins Pond. He had observed, at the site of the Saugus Iron Works, that 300 years ago the sea level had been about 3 feet lower than at present. From this he concluded that the sea level had been rising 3 feet per century, and that 1,000 years ago, in Leif Erikson's day, it was therefore 10 feet lower than today.

He felt strengthened in his conclusion by Frederick Johnson's observation at the Boston fish weir, not realizing that there are circumstances which may vitiate the use of this as accurate evidence because the Boston basin is a sedimentary one and subject to compaction. Mr. Robbins is not the first archaeologist by whom I have been told: "In Leif Erikson's day the Bass River was only a brook."

Belief Justified

I dared hold to and publish my belief that there had been sufficient depth of water in Bass River for Leif Erikson's ship as well as other evidences from Greenland were the effect that the glaciers were retreats presented by Dr. W. G. Frothingham of the Department of Geography, Columbia University, at the International Oceanographic Congress in session at the UN, gave many facts of great historical significance.

Sea Level Changes

For example, the sea level was 5 feet above the present about 2500 B.C. and it dropped to about 6 feet below the present at the time of the birth of Christ, which was a 1000-year period. Between 500 and 800 A.D., and was again above the present level for several centuries. In the last 800 years it has been below the present level with three major annual phases.

The sea level 1,000 years ago was 2 to 3 feet higher than today. Dr. Frothingham has specifically stated this also in a personal letter to me.

While no longer have complete confidence in mooring holes as evidence of the presence of the Vikings, because as I stated in "The Vikings on Cape Cod," no one can prove when any particular mooring holes were made. It is interesting to note that sea level oscillations put a new complexion on the mooring hole in the Follins Pond skerry and the mooring hole in the Bass River "Blue Rock."

Since both of these are considerably higher than the three or four feet above-water level which is the evidence of the mooring holes, the indication now is that both were made at a time when the tidal water level in river and pond stood two or three feet higher than today.

Leif Erikson's ship sailed up Bass River with several feet of clearance. Corroborated by the Massachusetts Archaeological Society's uncovering of the shoring hole, it could have been only for a Viking ship. The area of Leif Erikson's Vinland camp is still affording with plenty of water under the keel. As one of the leading New England archaeologists, he has thus said to me: "Your theory contains a look better as each new piece of evidence comes to light."

Cape Indians Made First Roads

MASSHPEE—The Indians found by the first settlers on Cape Cod were not nomadic tribes living in tepees but had a well-developed communal life.

Their communities were clearings in the forest composed of substantial individual dwellings. These villages were linked to others in the area by dirt paths that had been established along the easiest routes between the communities.

Cape roads follow the trails first marked out by the Indians. The early settlers improved these paths into horse trails, then wagon roads, and now some of them exist as modern highways.
were all clever, might earn $25,000 a year, and with a continual run of fair to good luck become a wealthy man after two or three China voyages. This, I believe, is how Christopher Hall was able to leave the sea and become a ship investor and businessman.

Description of the Yard

I am indebted to the late Captain Thomas Rand of the Shiverick Yard, which is described by the new Shiverick yard in the Yarmouth Register-Press in its issue dated Jan. 16, 1826, several paragraphs of which I will quote in full.

"In 1843 the three son of Asa: David, Asa Jr., and Paul closed the yard and constructed another and larger one directly below the spot where the monument now stands, with its launching dock eastward toward Sesuit Creek . . . Farther down the creek a wharf was constructed at the same time as the shipyard, part of the same enterprise. The safe convenient harbor which the wharf created presented almost as busy a scene as the shipyard itself. It was the home port of more than a score of vessels.

"A steaming plant at the shipyard, for preparing the timbers for bending, was located south of the road below the bluffs, a little to the west of the monument. The main shops were located north of the road. They consisted of a blacksmith shop, an inboard joiner shop, a general carpenter shop, a small block shop, and a coppersmith's shop at the foot of the hill and below the other shops.

"There is no way in which I could improve this description but I would like to add a bit more to it. My addition is relevant not only to the Shiverick yard, but to all shipyards of those times.

Timber Cut

The saw-mill standing on the monument's base"..."next to the ship on the ways was probably the place of the hardest physical work in the whole yard. Here the Maine timber (all timber came from Maine) was cut into planks to be used in the yards (siding) of the vessels. No powered carpenter shop of the '30s would be capable of making headway into a 12-...
Webfoot, largest clipper ship built at East Dennis, is depicted in this painting by Malcolm MacLeod of Chathamport. Built in 1856, the ship has double top sails characteristic of the later clipper ship period. Sailing under Captain Milton Hedge for 12 years, the vessel was later sold to Great Britain and saw continuous service for 30 years.

Running for the harbor of Apia in the center island, the Christopher Hall smashed into a hidden reef and sank. All aboard managed to reach Apia in the boats but they spent a number of months waiting for another lonely ship to reach the island and take them to England.

Ellen Sears

The Civil War completed the end of clipper ship construction, at least that part which remained after the depression had taken its toll. Too many of them had been built, California had become independent of their need, and many young men who had never heard of a man named Greeley went west anyway on their own account, away from the sea and so became immune to its lure.

Captain Crowell sold all his ships during the Civil War to English interests in India. He became the wealthiest and most outstanding citizen of East Dennis, although it would be fairer to say that both he and Captain Hall, who started the Shivericks in shipbuilding, shared that statement.

Both Captains Hall and Crowell had homes on Center Street, Quiet Village. They still stand and are located near the little white church there.

Cape's Last Clipper

Four years were to elapse between the launching of the Christopher Hall and the laying of the next and final keel in the Shiverick yard. In 1862 the Shivericks themselves financed the building of a 960-ton medium clipper. She was named the Ellen Sears and sold for $70,000. This was a good price for the times and an excellent one when it is compared to Enoch Train's regrettable mistake of selling the Flying Cloud for $90,000, a ship nearly twice the tonnage of the Ellen Sears.

This last ship had a very short life span. She foundered somewhere in the Atlantic in 1867, in the third year of service, en route to Liverpool.

No further activity was carried out at the yard. The Cape had built its last clipper ship and although a few more medium types were built here and there, for the most part they had died entirely.
This plaque marks the location in East Dennis of the old Shiverick Shipyard. Inscribed on the plaque are the names of eight ships and four schooners built there between 1849 and 1883. The lower paragraph of the inscription says the plaque is “a memorial to nobility of character exemplified in acts and deeds that showered un-numbered blessings on this community while the actors lived: yet left a more precious heritage to succeeding generations in examples of high conception of human interest, of lofty beautiful ideals masterfully attained.”
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RISE AND FALL

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the clipper era. I have for the most part omitted technical data in order to
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It is well to place that statement here, for the clipper was a cargo carrier, a
merchant vessel, exactly as a freighter is today.

In sifting the English vocabulary, the better to explain how the clipper
name came into existence, I believe it is simplest to just say that it grew up
along the Atlantic Seaboard. No individual invented this type of vessel, for
many ship designers worked separately during periods of years to improve
the speed of sailing craft. Even the word “clipper” is of obscure origin. It
was probably applied to late 18th-century vessels which sailed better than
the average craft – which would mean that they progressed “at a good clip.”

Colonists Retaliate

The American Revolution was not caused by just an unfair tax on tea.
Another and more contributing cause was English monopoly on trade.
Colonials had built small ships and wanted to use them but were prevented
from doing so, by English law. In retaliation the colonists turned to
smuggling, for that is what commerce becomes when laws prohibit its
legitimate continuance.

A smuggler’s vessel had to be a fast one, considerably faster than an
English frigate waiting to intercept it. So it seems evident that the acme of
all ships, the clipper, as a least in its embryonic form during the latter part of the 18th Century.

A ship designer named John Griffiths had tried for several years to interest shipbuilders in a plan of his, to increase a ship's length to beam ratio by at least 5 to 1, sharpen the bow and stern section and carry still more canvas. His ambition finally was gratified when his Rainbow came off the ways at New York in 1845 and sailed to China as a clipper ship.

The following year his Sea Witch went into China trade, returning to New York with news of her own arrival in China. The clipper era had started. It would last but slightly more than a decade but that was enough to make the United States recognized as the greatest maritime nation on earth.

California Clippers

Tea clippers raced to China by way of Cape Horn and San Francisco, returning across the Indian Ocean and around Africa into an Atlantic coastal port. They did it in an average of seven months, sometimes less, fantastically circumnavigating the globe on a voyage which had required more than a year in the 1830s.

Clippers engaged in global navigation like this were called “sharp” or “extreme.” The bow was very sharp, a thrusting knife sweeping down in a tapering line from the sprit to the water. It was flared down from the deck line to sweep inward and downward to the keel, creating what was called a hollow water line. In every respect the design was the reverse of a full-bowed ship of the 30s and previous to that old mariners said that the clippers had their bows “turned inside out.”

The California gold-rush acted drastically on the ship building industry on the other side of the continent. Clippers had to be produced at a faster rate than ever required for tea trading. The ships had to be larger to accommodate an ever-increasing tonnage in heavy mining machinery, hardware and household goods. By 1851 the 750-ton Sea Witch had been dwarfed into obscurity.

Cargoes Varied

I would like to refer once again to the clipper ship belonging to the cargo class, for in the gold-rush years cargo meant anything and everything. There is an instance of a shipload of ice carried around the Horn to San Francisco where it netted a handsome profit while another involves a cargo of common nails which proved to be most valuable upon arrival in San Francisco. Instances are recorded in which the entire construction cost of the ship plus a substantial margin of profit were earned on one maiden trip to the West Coast.

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by the city – and for the best reason in the world. He had linked the East and West Coasts in under three months.

World’s Largest

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Medium Clippers

There is another division of clipper ships, or perhaps it might be better to say a subdivision. Not all of these fine vessels were racing greyhounds. The “extreme” hull was favored at the outset of clipper shipbuilding as speed was then considered the first essential.

As time passed, however, demands from California for manufactured goods from the East became insatiable and a new type of hull made its appearance. This was recognized as the medium clipper with ample cargo carrying ability and a more moderate pace in the water.

If one were to examine two clipper ship pictures side by side, one being the extreme type the other a medium type, it would be impossible to distinguish between them. The former carried its length over 5 times the amount of its width whereas the latter kept that slightly under a 5 to 1 ratio. All that means is that the medium clipper was wider, or broader in the beam, somewhat fuller in the bow and consequently incapable of sustained racing speed of 15 knots or better.

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PART II

CAPE COD CLIPPERS

A small monument of a bas-relief on rock commemorates eight clipper ships built at East Dennis between 1848 and 1862.
The site is that of the Shiverick shipyard and directions to reach it now follow: From Route 6A, the Cranberry Highway, turn onto Bridge Street at the Players Pharmacy in East Dennis, proceed across the meadows to sesuit Street and turn right. It will be necessary to drive slowly for a short distance to the highest point of the road overlooking Sesuit Creek. The monument is on the right side of the road at the top of the bluff. Its distance from the Players Pharmacy is .6 of a mile.

The Old Yard

More than a century ago, the old channel of Sesuit Creek made a “U” turn at the foot of the bluff just below the monument and ships were launched into this bend in the Spring flood tide and then worked out into Massachusetts Bay. Nothing remains of the shipyard now and Sesuit Creek was dredged as recently as 1958 so that anything which might have remained is covered up or though the yard was on the Sesuit bank. However, according to the bas-relief, a foot bridge across the creek connected the Sesuit side to the other so that workmen from Quivet village (East Dennis) could pass to and fro.

There have been two shipyards in the region. The first was located still farther up the old creek beyond its bend and was established there sometime before 1820. A packet boat was launched that year which ran for a number of years between Boston and East Dennis. Five more vessels came from the old yard between 1835 and 1845, the most ambitious one being a small brig. These were all built by Asa Shiverick with the assistance of his two sons, David and Paul. Small schooners were their main production. It might be noted that those were always a practical investment for the small-time shipwright as their costs were offset by selling shares in them to the townspeople.

The New Yard

A third son, Asa Shiverick Jr., returned to East Dennis in 1847 after employment in Maine and Boston shipyards. Apparently he came home with some rather startling ideas of renovating the business. While it is impossible to say exactly what transpired in the Shiverick family councils, it seems that Asa Jr.’s voice was probably the loudest. In any event the elder Asa retired.

It could be that the senior member of the family, an old hand at shipbuilding, had cause to be disgruntled about the wild ideas of his boys, who had decided to build ships “with their bows turned inside out.” Older shipwrights must have been aghast at the new crazy clipper design with its flaring bows and raked-back masts.

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There is no way in which I could improve this description but I would like to add a bit more to it. My addition is relevant not only to the Shiverick yard, but to all shipyards in those times.

Timber Cut

The saw-pit appearing on the monument’s bas-relief next to the ship on the ways was probably the place of the hardest physical work in the whole yard. Here the Maine timber (all lumber came from Maine) was cut into planks to be used in the wales (siding) of the vessels. No powered carpenter shop of the ‘50s would be capable of making headway into a 12- or 14-inch log. all heavy planking was whipsawed by hand using a two-man saw, one man standing on the log, the other in the pit below.

This planking was attached to the ship’s ribs by “trunnels” (a contracted form of tree-nails) which were hexagonally-shaped wooden pins slotted in one end. These were pounded into augured holes bored into the plank and rib and then a wedge driven into the slotted end. Ships might tear their bottoms out on unchartered reefs but nothing could undo the fastening of the planks.
Particular ingenuity was required to launch these ships with tonnages so large that floating them posed a problem. Only the seasonal high tides permitted such an undertaking and even then there was a time element of but 30 to 40 minutes to get them off the ways into the creek's bent at peak flood. Sometimes several days were required to work them down the creek between tides and so out into Massachusetts Bary.

The first two ships, Revenue, 556 tons, and Hippogriffe, 671 tons, were launched in 1850 and 1852, respectively. Both were jury rigged at the yards with masts already stepped but without top-masts. Under courses (lowest sails on a square rigged ship) they sailed to Boston for the completion of their rigging.

The Revenue was owned outright by Christopher Hall and the Hippogriffe was owned jointly with Captain Prince Crowell, who had come ashore to assist Captain Hall with the new yard.

Some discrepancy exists between the building dates appearing on the monument and the dates given in books about clipper ships. In all instances I have employed the dates given on the monument for that would indicate the time of launching. Some time would have to elapse, several months in fact, between the ships' launchings and the completion of their rigging, for the riggers' work was extremely detailed and painstaking.

All the Shiverick-built ships belonged in the category of medium clipper.

Hippogriffe

Hippogriffe, the second ship, had a name derived from an old English word supposed to denote a fabulous creature of hermaphroditic origin having the head and wings of an eagle but the body of a horse. The name made good sense for a ship for it would indicate she would be fleet in sailing with the working capabilities of a horse for Captains Hall and Crowell.

The Hippogriffe has been called an unlucky ship and there are accounts to explain why. There was a story of a mutiny which was quelled, and another of being dismasted in a storm in the Indian Ocean. I would choose to say that she was financially successful, having been sold to the British in 1863 for 70,000 Indian rupees, a sum representing more than her construction costs.

An interesting report is recorded for the Hippogriffe for the Spring of 1858. The ship struck a rock in the Java Sea, was refloated and proceeded to Hongkong where examination showed the rock tip to be broken off and embedded into the hull, plugging its own sizable hole. The rock site was entered on navigational charts as Hippogriffe Rock.

Belle of the West

The third ship out of the yards was the Belle of the West, 936 tons and launched in 1853. She has been referred to as “one of the loveliest ships ever built on the Cape – or anywhere else.” Part of this eulogy stems from Captain Thomas Hall’s fondness for the “Belle.”

She was one of the few transition rigged vessels to be produced, having double top sails but with the upper topsail having about half-the-hoist of
the lower top sail. All subsequent ships built by the Shivericks employed lower and upper top sails with relatively the same area.

The “Belle” was designed by Samuel Pook, who had laid down the plans for the famous Red Jacket built at Rockland, me., the only other clipper ship ever built which equaled the speed turned out by McKay-built clippers. The Cape clipper was very handsome but not as sharp as the Red Jacket and never logged a 14-knot pace as did the other.

Belle of the West was owned jointly by Christopher Hall and Glidden and Williams of Boston. She made two passes to California and then for the rest of her life was consigned to trade in the East Indies. She was sold in India in 1864 and foundered in the Bay of Bengal four years later.

There is an element of mystery in this ship, for she approached closely the near moments of a sharp clipper and yet there are no outstanding runs of achievement to her credit. In all probability specific instructions were issued not to drive the ship too hard and thereby tear her to pieces like so many clippers.

Kit Carson

Kit Carson, 997 tons, was the fourth ship, launched in 1854. This one was owned by Prince Crowell who by then had assumed most of the management of the Hall enterprises. The vessel carried the split topsails, lower and upper, like all the others which followed.

Of notable interest in the Kit Carson’s career was a voyage to San Francisco requiring 147 days in 1857-58. Thirty days were spent battling around the “Horn,” with every day filled with screeching gales. Whatever westing was made one day would be lost the next. Her again is dubious evidence of an unknown factor associated with a ship, which for lack of a better name, may be termed luck, only this time hard luck. A voyage like this did not place a ship in disrepute, although expenses in maintenance and storm damage mounted up – rather some merit was gained for the ship to have been strong enough to get around Cape Horn despite nature’s worst weather.

The Kit Carson lasted until 1870 only, then to be burned off Rio during a Brazilian uprising.

Wild Hunter

Only a romanticist could think up a name like Wild Hunter, applied to the Shivericks’ fifth ship. Launched in 1855, she was 10 feet longer than the Belle of the West but totaled 1,081 tons. She spread double top sails and three skysails and was a very handsome craft.

The owners of this one were Christopher Hall et al. I imagine the “et al” represented share investments in the ship which were sold locally on the Cape. The vessel was soon sold to Bush and Wildes of Boston.

Wild Hunter is credited with a San Francisco voyage of 108 days, an achievement of considerable merit for there is a special listing of clipper ships was passages of 110 days or less. She as a long-lived ship, in her later years being converted into a bark (removal of square sails from mizzen mast) and hauling guano. Her name was listed as late as 1875.
The Wild Hunter had a reputation for being a show boat in the Orient and its adjacent waters, with everything about her immaculate and freshly painted.

Webfoot

Cape Cod’s largest ship was the Webfoot, the sixth Shiverick clipper of 1,091 tons, launched in 1856.

If it appears that I have employed a great many tonnage figures throughout this chronicle, they have been given for comparison with the steamer Martha’s Vineyard, now berthed in Hyannis. She is of approximately 1,100 tons register. I cannot visualize the Martha’s Vineyard even floating in Sesuit Creek as it is today, newly dredged and relatively wide.

Apparently the old channel of Sesuit Creek was a good deal larger but the Shivericks must have held their breath when each new ship, larger than the one before it, went plunging into the creek.

By 1857 a general depression had set in among the shipping magnates. The Webfoot went out into this depression, to roam the world looking for cargo the entire time she was registered under the American flag.

Voyages Described

Two noteworthy voyages of the ship are important enough in contrast to mention. One occurred in 1858, while the ship was still new and relates of a 30-day battle to get around Cape Horn, making the west coast voyage only four days short of five months.

Damage to the Webfoot on that passage amounted to $3,000, a considerable amount for the times and probably multiplied by 10 or 12 to equal the standards of today.

The other was a year later, after repairs had been effected, when she raced home from Calcutta to New York in under three months, one of the best passage times recorded for any clipper ship, extreme types included.

Until 1864 the Webfoot was owned by Captain Crowell et al. She ran hard aground on Dunkirk then and was sold outright to the British, who got her off and ran her for another 20 years. In 1886 she broke into pieces by running aground on Cape Flattery which is in Queensland, Australia, on the Coral Sea.

Christopher Hall

After the launching of the Webfoot another keel was laid for a smaller ship of 745 tons, to be named the Christopher Hall. She was launched in 1858 but too late for her namesake to have seen her completed. Captain Hall died soon after construction began.

The business was now carried on entirely by Captain Prince Crowell, who continued to manage ships and captains with the same lenient attitude practiced by Captain Hall. Perhaps this was the only way to manage, to let ships and masters cruise the world for payloads, for depression years were upon the clippers.

Some of this will now read like a combination of Pinafore and Robinson Crusoe in reverse. Captain Addy of the Hippogriffe married Persis Crowell,
daughter of the owner, and assumed command of the new ship, taking his bride on a honeymoon voyage. They sailed off to China with a cargo of coal to be discharged at Hongkong.

Loads Guano

Here they found no return cargo, yet company interests, hard times, plus honeymoons all added up in the operating expenses. Captain Addy decided to load guano at Howland Island, an extremely unromantic cargo consisting of bird fertilizer accumulated during the centuries until it was many feet deep. Clipper ships often loaded it at various islands in the Pacific in order to eke out their expenses and stay afloat, long after their zenith had passed.

The loading was satisfactory, for guano was free for the taking, and the Christopher Hall sailed for home with Captain Addy deciding that fresh vegetables and fruit could be found enroute on some of the South Sea Isles. One of these was the Samoan group which lie roughly in latitude 14° south and longitude 178° west. Running for the harbor of Apia in the center island, the Christopher Hall smashed into a hidden reef and sank. All aboard managed to reach Apia in the boats but they spent a number of months waiting for another lonely ship to reach the island and take them to England.

Ellen Sears

The Civil War completed the end of clipper ship construction, at least that part which remained after the depression had taken its toll. Too many of them had been built, California had become independent of their need, and many young men who had never heard of a man named Greeley went west anyway on their own account, away from the sea and so became immune to its lure.

Captain Crowell sold all his ships during the Civil War to English interests in India. He became the wealthiest and most outstanding citizen of East Dennis, although it would be fairer to say that both he and Captain Hall, who started the Shivericks in shipbuilding, shared that statement.

Both Captains Hall and Crowell had homes on Center Street, Quivet Village. They still stand and are located near the little white church there.

Cape’s Last Clipper

Four years were to elapse between the launching of the Christopher Hall and the laying of the next and final keel in the Shiverick yard. In 1862 the Shivericks themselves financed the building of a 960-ton medium clipper. She was named the Ellen Sears and sold for $70,000. This was a good price for the times and an excellent one when it is compared to Enoch Train’s regrettable mistake of selling the Flying Cloud for $90,000, a ship nearly twice the tonnage of the Ellen Sears.

This last ship had a very short life span. She foundered somewhere in the Atlantic in 1867, in the third year of service, enroute to Liverpool.

No further activity was carried out at the yard. The Cape had built its last clipper ship and although a few more medium types were built here and there, for the most part they had died entirely.
[On back of this clipping is one “Vikings on Cape? Pohl Answers Theory Critic”.]