

Explore New England

MAINE



What it takes to float their boats

Bath Iron Works and Maine Maritime Museum showcase the state's seaside history and industry

BY JANET MENDELSON | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

BATH — Boat building, sailmaking, fishing, and global trade are among the marine industries driving this state's economy and shaping its character. And nowhere is the land-sea connection more apparent than at Maine Maritime Museum and its neighbor, Bath Iron Works, where ships have been built for the US Navy since 1893.

The museum's well-designed exhibits and hands-on activities bring to life a mariner's hard existence in days of yore, right down to scary dental tools for yanking out teeth, a last-resort pain remedy far from shore. But the museum doesn't just dwell in the past.

"One of our goals," said Amy Lent, executive director, "is to connect people with contemporary maritime industries through workshops and exhibits."

This summer's exhibit, "Net Worth," opening May 2, will examine the rise and fall of Maine's fin fisheries, and follow the social, political, and environmental impact on everything from working waterfronts to real estate.

"Shipbuilding is absolutely the number one influence on the economy and character of Maine in history and today," said Lent. It also creates some of the museum's most engaging activities. Part of the property is the Percy & Small Shipyard where four-, five-, and six-masted wooden schooners were built from 1896 to 1920. In five of the original buildings, the process is reconstructed from lofting to launching. Two vessels are especially popular with children: a hands-on tugboat and an authentically rigged 50-foot pirate ship.

A trolley tour of General Dynamics' Bath Iron Works is not to

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PAT WELLENBACH/ASSOCIATED PRESS/FILE (TOP), FRED FIELD FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Ships bound for the US Navy are docked in the Kennebec River at Bath Iron Works. Next door is Maine Maritime Museum, where Sierra Goddard of Rindge, N.H., looked back in history.

The art of being small gives Belfast a new frame



DAVID LYON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

By David Lyon
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

BELFAST — Some things, fortunately, never change. You can still get a dynamite cinnamon bun at Weaver's Bakery, where my best friend and I sometimes helped his father make doughnuts in the predawn chill before we went out on our paper routes. The sun still rises over the harbor, lighting up the dew on the town's lush lawns. And the rocking ocean still sets the hardware clanging on the boats at anchor.

Of course, when I was growing up here in the '60s, no one called Belfast one of America's "10 Coolest Small Towns" (as Budget Travel magazine did last year). Like many small Maine towns of that era, Belfast was a place where some kids were so eager to leave that they enlisted in the armed services at

the height of the Vietnam War.

Now Belfast is a magnet, especially for people with a bit of imagination.

"What makes the coolness factor," says fashion designer and installation artist Meredith Alex, a.k.a. madgirl, "is the diversity of artists who went away and came back, or retired here." She grew up in Freedom, one of the villages of Waldo County for which Belfast is the shire and market town, and escaped to the California Institute of the Arts. Years later, she's back, raising a family and creating new work.

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A couple prepare to cast for flounder from the Belfast footbridge built on the remains of the old Route 1 bridge.

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