

THE JERSEY SHOREMAN

These articles were written in 1874 and 1875 for the New Jersey Courier by James P. Ward, a Civil War veteran from West Creek. He was born in 1844 and died in 1920. The contents of a diary that he wrote detailing his experiences during the Civil War has been shared by his great, great grandson Edward W. Bartlett of West Creek.

After being mustered out of the Army at the end of the Civil War in 1865, James Ward returned to West Creek and was engaged in the business of selling clams and oysters. He later went to sea for two years, sailing on the schooner William F. Phelps out of West Creek hauling coal from Philadelphia to Massachusetts.

Beginning in 1874 James Ward was a correspondent for the New Jersey Courier newspaper and submitted at least 16 articles and original poems, including these stories — apparently the earliest known accounts describing the rich heritage and resourcefulness of the Jersey Baymen (Shoremen). He was instrumental in helping to pass legislation establishing Eagleswood Township from a portion of Stafford Township in 1874. James P. Ward later served as Justice of the Peace and taught at the public school in Eagleswood Township.

We would like to thank Edward and Anna Bartlett and Walter Bartlett (James Ward's great grandson) for all their help. Special thanks also to Elizabeth Morgan and Tom Williams for their diligent research efforts.

by JAMES P. WARD

The late Horace Greeley has said, that no community can thrive without a system of diversified industry. If this be true, the people of the shores should prosper, for their industrial pursuit, seem to be very much diversified. Probably not in the way the learned philosopher intended, however, by connoting every man to some certain trade, or business; on the contrary, the "Jersey Shoreman" puts his hand to a great variety of employments. His geographical position, and the nearness of the ocean, indoctrinate him to do this on the water of the bays and adjoining sea, contribute largely to his existence. The "Shoreman" is very often a sailor and in point of livelihood and enterprise is inferior to none. He plows the ocean at all seasons of the year, through storms and sunshine, heat and cold, and has carried eastward many tons of black diamonds and northward, many cords of Virginia wood; thereby furnishing the motive power required to turn the wheels of many factories. He roams the ocean far and near, and his sails whiten almost every sea; and in

that last day when the sea shall give up its dead, there will be many in the throng, who hailed from "Jersey Shore."

The shoreman is sometimes a farmer and when the season permits often produces good crops. While some do well in this business many others do not. Generally speaking, the farm on the shore is not a paying institution. There are several reasons why this is so; one of them is because more time is spent at the shore than on the farm.



Photo courtesy of Doug Lynch
Bayman, Hunting Guide and Decoy Carver Rube Corlies, Carvel Island Gun Club, Surf City, NJ,
Nov. 20, 1937 — "Repair Day"

The dweller by the seaside depends largely on the bay for the subsistence — he is as familiar with the channels, and tides of the bay as the fish that swim in them. He takes the young oyster from its native bed and plants it miles away, where it will grow faster and open fatter. His sagacity is wonderful; he seems to know what is better for the welfare of the bivalve than it does itself. He knows where to get mussels to fertilize his land and uses many boat loads annually for this purpose. He thoroughly understands the various modes of catching clams; sometimes he is seen tonging, and at other times raking and during the long summer days when the tides are low he may be seen diving for them. He is also well posted in the mysterious art of taking eels from their native mud with a spear and knows how to remove their covering in a skillful manner afterwards. He excels as a gunner, and knows the best place to lay for wildfowl; and woe to the unlucky goose or duck, that

gets within range of his gun. A little anecdote will illustrate their skill in gunning. Whether the anecdote is true, or otherwise, it illustrates the point.

The Parker boys are great gunners, and death is almost certain to ensue when they pull the trigger. Now a goose once thought he could pass through Egg Harbor Bay (by following the middle of the channel) in safety. He had only flown a short distance, however, when a Parker raised up out of the water, a few feet in front of him, and raised his gun. The goose says, "Are you a Parker?" The gunner answers "Yes." "Well" says the goose, "I'll come down, you need not shoot."

is generally intelligent, temperate and moral; and it would be difficult to persuade him that "murder in the first degree" was "death caused by blows inflicted in a moment of emotional insanity." His sympathies are easily enlisted, especially when a wreck comes on, and hastens to the scene of action, with the strong determination to be "in the place where he will do the most good." The surfmen of New Jersey are noted for their courage, address, and humanity; and some have lost their lives in attempting to save that of others. The shore has for many years enjoyed a great many bay privileges, and the inhabitants have depended mainly on them for their subsistence. But these privileges are gradually becoming exhausted as the population becomes more dense.

In a few years, a change of policy will have to be made, and it will be necessary to copy after the example of the more eastern states by tilling the soil more effectively and engaging in commerce and manufactures. The shore has many peculiar advantages in favor of these branches of industry. There is land enough capable of being cultivated profitably to sustain a hundred times the population it now contains. And the near vicinity of the bay affords an opportunity of procuring fertilizers that the farmers in many places do not have. Bay mud, seaweed, moss bunkers and mussels are plentiful, and in some countries would be carefully collected and made use of. Commerce

JERSEY PIRATES

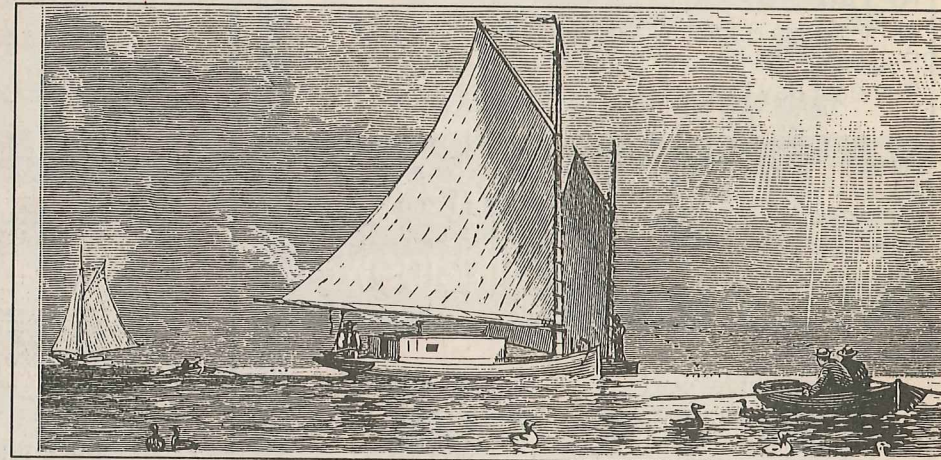
By JAMES P. WARD

Many erroneous fallacies are being gradually exploded. Among them is the idea that the "Jersey Shoreman" is a thief and a pirate. A few weeks ago, the schooner "Helen A. Locke," of Southport, Maine, loaded with oranges, was wrecked at Little Egg Harbor Inlet. The men on board were rescued by the crew of the United States Life Saving Station No. 23, stationed on Short Beach (Tucker's Island).

Instead of falling among murderers and pirates, they fell into the hands of the good Samaritans. The following letter sent by them, since their arrival home, will show their sense of gratitude, to the people who so kindly entertained them:

SOUTHPORT, ME., JAN. 12th, 1875

may be profitability pursued and the most of the well to-do citizens have gained their wealth in this way. Although we have no very deep harbors, our nearness to the great seaports of New York, and Philadelphia, overcome this difficulty. Having communications with these cities by rail and telegraph our distance from them seems to be no great detriment (except in these times of railroad strikes) to our commercial interests. As the fishing banks of Newfoundland is the nursery for the New England seaman (and has been encouraged by government for this purpose) so the fishing skiff and the oyster boat is the school for New Jersey seamen. The boy on the shore is skilled almost as he begins to wear trousers, embarks in his fishing skiff, and soon learns to handle her in all weather with a dexterity



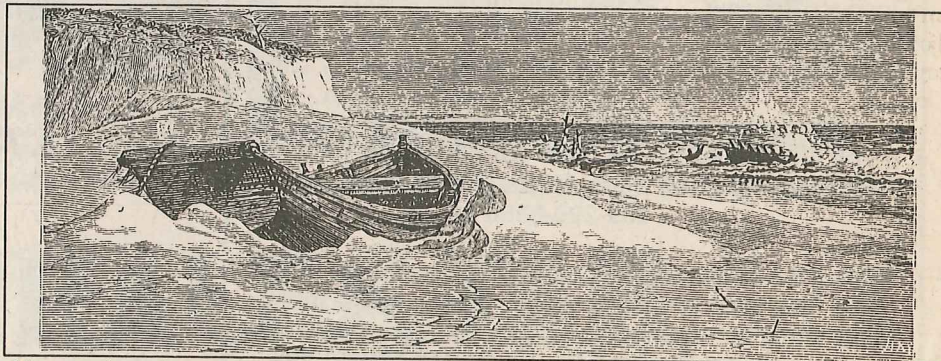
Dear friends of Life Saving Station No. 23
Short Beach, Little Egg Harbor, N.J.:-

We, the crew of the wrecked schooner, Helen A. Locke, arrived safely home on the 7th of January. The Tuckerton Railroad Company, gave us free pass, and we went as far as Boston, free of charge. After that we were obliged to pay our way. The Railroad Officials would not notice our tale of distress. The nearer we go home, the worse we were used. A gentleman on the train, going from Tuckerton to Sandy Hook, gave the captain five dollars, to get us something to eat with. And the captain of the Sound

steamer gave us a free pass, our suppers, and berths to sleep in. We had often heard of the "Jersey Pirates," but they were the only gentlemen we met on our travels. And we shall never forget the good usage we received at the United States Life Saving Station No. 23 also at the (Tucker's Island) Lighthouse, and in Tuckerton.

Yours, very truly,
BENJAMIN H. LOVE
Southport, ME.

This article was published in the
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Masses of wreckage were strewed all along the shore.