

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

L.A. DUNTON

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: *L.A. DUNTON*

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Mystic Seaport Museum,
Route 27

Not for publication: _____

City/Town: Mystic

Vicinity: _____

State: CT

County: New London

Code: 011

Zip Code: 06355

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X
Public-Local: _____
Public-State: _____
Public-Federal: _____

Category of Property

Building(s): _____
District: _____
Site: _____
Structure: X
Object: _____

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: _____

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

L.A. DUNTON

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Commerce/Trade
Agriculture/Subsistence
Transportation

Sub: Fishing Facility
water related

Current: Recreation & Culture

Sub: Museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS: N/A

Foundation:

Walls:

Roof:

Other: Hull: Wood

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

The wooden, two-masted fishing schooner *L.A. DUNTON* (official number 221150) is a museum-restored, fully rigged, floating exhibit. *DUNTON* is owned by Mystic Seaport Museum, and is berthed in the Mystic River on museum property just opposite the visitor reception center. Lying on the north side of *DUNTON*'s dock is the steamboat *SABINO*, a National Historic Landmark.

Aboard *L.A. DUNTON* fishing schooner, history, construction, dory handling, fish preservation methods, shipboard life, and historical context are interpreted to approximately 400,000 visitors each year. Traditional "mug-ups" are prepared in her galley each day.

The fishing schooner *L.A. DUNTON* was built in 1921 in Essex, Massachusetts, at the A.D. Story yard, one of the well-known yards building the dory trawling "Gloucestermen." Her registered dimensions are 104.3' long, with a 25' beam and 11.6' draft and registered tonnage of 134 gross tons, 94 net tons.¹ She displaces 188 long tons and her overall length is 123'. The mainmast rises 112'8" above the deck.

DUNTON's lines are off those of Thomas McManus' *JOFFRE*, with a round bow, good sheer, raked transom, long overhangs, and fine entrance.² *DUNTON* was built and has been restored with the materials traditional to the Essex vessels: white oak, yellow pine, white pine, maple; interior joinery of sycamore and white pine; spars of Douglas fir. The yellow pine and white oak planks and the yellow pine ceiling were, and are, fastened with locust trunnels and galvanized ship spikes. Hackmatack knees and shelf and clamp give strength and support to the hull and white pine deck.

Outfitted in Gloucester, *DUNTON* is a wooden-hulled, two-masted schooner, fitted with topmasts and a bowsprit, designed for fishing under sail with dories, from the Georges Banks to the Grand Bank. She carried the typical fisherman's rig: mainsail, foresail, gaff topsails, fisherman staysail, forestaysail, jib, and jib topsail (ballooner).³ All running rigging is manila; hemp lanyards are rove through lignum vitae dead eyes; the shrouds are of wire rope, parceled, served, and tarred.

Although built with a shaft log to accommodate an engine, her design is that of the traditional Gloucester sailing fisherman of the early 1900s. About two years after her launch, *DUNTON* was fitted out with auxiliary power—a 100 h.p. Fairbanks-Morse C.O. engine.⁴ Her original outfit included a hoisting engine as it does today.

DUNTON's deck was laid out with the pawl post, windlass, foremast, hoisting engine box, forecastle trunk just aft of the foremast, a break (grub beam) just fore of the mainmast, a galley hatch (cheesebox), main and quarterdeck fish hatches, cabin trunk with tumble home, and the wheel box.

¹ *Fifty Fourth Annual List of Merchant Vessels of the United States*. Washington: Department of Commerce, Bureau of Navigation. Government Printing Office, 1922.

² Thomas, Gordon W. *Fast and Able*. Gloucester: Gloucester 350th Anniversary Celebration, Inc. 1973; Chapelle, Howard I. *The American Fishing Schooners 1825-1935*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc. 1973.

³ Historic photograph, Mystic Seaport Museum, number 63-6-39F.

⁴ *Fishing Gazette*. "Oil Engines Recently Installed in Fishing Vessels", April 1923.

Below decks the schooner was, and is, divided into the forecastle forward with bunks for fifteen; the fish hold amidships with pens and slaughter house; and the captain's cabin aft where five fishermen also bunked. The original cabin trunk and quarters for the captain were built by Ed Perkins, and the forecastle was most probably built by Jack Doyle, who also served as advisor to the Museum's interior restoration.⁵

In 1934, *DUNTON* was sold to Aaron Buffett of Grank Bank, Newfoundland—a common practice of the time.⁶ By 1944, under ownership of G. & A. Buffett, Ltd., her rig had been cut down, (technically making her a ketch) the bowsprit had been removed, three or four feet of the long stern overhang had been chopped off, a large wheel house built aft, and a 160 h.p. Fairbanks-Morse engine had been installed.⁷ No longer a sailing vessel, she carried only a shortened foresail and a riding sail.⁸ She fished from Newfoundland until 1955 when she was sold to Erik Piercy of Grand Bank and used for coasting. In 1960, her last commercial owner, J.B. Foote and Sons, Ltd., used her as a carrier of general cargo. The fish hold was altered, and most of her original joinery was removed to enlarge her for cargo capacity.

In 1963, Mystic Seaport Museum took official possession of *DUNTON*, embarking upon a project to restore the original schooner rig, deck layout, and paint scheme. Historic photographs, remnants of original joinery, related vessel types, men who fished her, Essex builders, and noted historians' records were all used to document the original interior and contribute to the restoration.⁹

PRESENT CONDITION AND APPEARANCE

The first phase of *L.A. DUNTON*'s restoration in 1963-65, returned the stern and the rig to the original configuration. Subsequent work restored the topsides planking and frames as needed, deck, deck framing, deck layout and furniture, captain's cabin, forecastle, galley and fish hold, windlass, and hoisting engine. The fish hold hatch now provides access for visitors. Ten dories are stacked on deck.

The forecastle contains bunks for fifteen with straw mattresses; the galley is laid out with dresser, cypress water tanks and pump, coal locker, hanging locker, dish lockers, and shipmate stove. The fish hold with pens, pen boards, and tubs of trawl has been altered slightly to allow visitors to pass through the slaughter house aft to the cabin. The cabin has been restored with six bunks, lockers, coal burning pot bellied stove, barometer, ships clock, compass, and harpoon log. *L.A. DUNTON* is now in good condition, exhibited with the black hull, gray deck, white deck furniture, and buff paint as launched.¹⁰

⁵ Story, Dana. *Frame-Up!* Mass.: Barre Publishing Company, Inc., 1964; Doyle, Jack. Correspondence with Barry Thomas. Mystic Seaport Museum archives.

⁶ Canadian Coast Guard Archives, Ottawa, Ontario. Correspondence with Nancy d'Estang, May 25, 1992. Museum archives.

⁷ Historic photograph, Mystic Seaport Museum, number 84.76 (1941).

⁸ Historic photograph, Mystic Seaport Museum, number 87-5-20 (1940s).

⁹ Current interior photographs, Mystic Seaport Museum photograph, numbers 87-5-168; 92-10-45, 54, 64.

¹⁰ d'Estang, Nancy. *Shipyard Handbook of The Restoration of the L.A. DUNTON*. Mystic Seaport Museum Shipyard. 1986.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X
Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B ___ C X D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E X F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 1, 4

NHL Theme(s): XII: Business
 A. Extractive or Mining
 L. Shipping and Transportation
 5. Fishing and Livestock

Areas of Significance: Architecture (Naval);
 Maritime History;
 Industry (Fishing)
 Transportation

Period(s) of Significance: 1921-1934

Significant Dates: 1921

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Arthur D. Story

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1921-built schooner *L.A. Dunton* is the last surviving example of the most common round-bow type of fishing vessel that sailed out of the principal New England fishing ports in the first quarter of the twentieth century. She is one of two remaining fishing schooners built at Essex, Massachusetts, in the A.D. Story shipyard, which launched about 400 fishing schooners between 1875 and 1930. *Dunton* was built on the lines of the schooner *Joffre*, designed by Thomas F. McManus, the most prolific and influential designer of fishing schooners. She reflects most of the design features introduced by McManus to improve the safety and performance of New England fishing schooners.

Although she was built at the end of the fishing schooner era, when reliable and economical diesel engines had begun to replace sail power to propel fishing vessels, *Dunton* represents one of the most important and enduring fishing schooner forms. The shallow-draft, broad-beam, heavily-sparred clipper schooners that predominated from the 1850s into the 1880s proved far too unstable for winter fishing. In the wake of heavy losses, a deeper-draft hull form emerged in the 1880s, finding a popular manifestation in the "*Fredonia*" model of the 1890s, as represented by the National Historic Landmark vessels *Ernestina ex-Effie M. Morrissey* and *Lettie G. Howard*.

Thomas F. McManus, a Boston fish dealer who became a naval architect, was responsible for introducing the round (convex) bow form with long cutaway forefoot and long stern overhang. His *Juniata* of 1898 introduced the form, which he modified in various ways during the next 25 years. The great majority of New England fishing schooners built during this time were either designed by McManus, who produced over 400 designs, or reflected his influence. With its long overhangs, short inclined keel, large amount of deadrise, and gentle curve to the bilge, the McManus hull form was very maneuverable, fast, able to counterbalance a large rig, yet slack-bilged enough not to stress that rig. With its forestaysail and foresail set to balance one another and its helm lashed to windward, such a vessel could sail itself to windward while the crew rode out the worst gales in their quarters. The British ketch rig, with its mainsail forward, is arguably safer than the schooner rig, with its largest sail aft. Yet, for fishing vessels, the type represented by *Dunton* is among the most seaworthy ever to fish in the stormy North Atlantic.

McManus's principal design refinement not represented in *Dunton* is the knockabout bow, which he introduced in 1902 to eliminate the bowsprit, sometimes called the "widowmaker" because fishermen sent out to furl the jib were too often lost by slipping off the icy footropes or being swept off by head seas. In the knockabout design, McManus increased the length of the bow and changed the proportions of the rig, allowing fishermen to handle a schooner's headsails without leaving the deck. The *Dunton* is actually a form sometimes called a semi-knockabout because, in comparison with the original round-bow form, her foredeck is elongated to bring the forestay down inboard of the stem head, and her bowsprit is shortened by the corresponding amount.

Typical of her period, *L.A. Dunton* was built by a syndicate of investors that included her captain. Another investor was sailmaker Louis A. Dunton of Boothbay Harbor, Maine, for whom the vessel was named. Her captain, Felix J. Hogan, was a native of Newfoundland who came south for better opportunities in New England fishing vessels before the turn of the century. As an avenue for immigrant employment, the New England fishing industry included a high percentage of immigrant labor and relatively few New England-born men. The crew of a fishing schooner like the *Dunton* represented the strong ties between New England and the Maritime Provinces of Canada, with many Nova Scotia and Newfoundland men. Fishing crews were assembled informally, without record keeping, so evidence is scanty, but it has been estimated that more than half of "New England" fishermen in the first decades of this century were, like Captain Hogan, natives of Atlantic Canada, with perhaps another 20 percent of Scandinavian birth. A

smaller fleet of similar schooners was owned and crewed by men of Portuguese descent from the principal Massachusetts ports.

Fishing was a highly competitive business with an unusual seagoing labor structure. The ranked hierarchy of naval and oceangoing merchant services was not found in the New England fishing industry. There, without benefit of subordinate officers, a captain commanded more by charisma, persuasion, and example than by respect for rank. Aboard a schooner like *Dunton*, the captain rarely had private quarters; rather, he bunked in the after cabin with five other fishermen and came forward to eat in the forecabin with his crew. Almost as important as the captain was the cook, who was, in effect, the vessel's morale officer.

Food was a motivating force at sea, and by the late-nineteenth century, fishing schooners provided exceptionally good fresh food for their crews and allowed them unlimited access to food between regular meals. During their "mug ups," or snacks, the fishermen replenished their calories between fishing tasks. This was their right because the costs of the food were assessed against the crew's portion of the income of the voyage. In *Dunton's* forecabin, museum interpreters prepare typical "mug up" foods during the off season.

Even the pay system aboard fishing schooners engendered competition. As a holdover from the cooperative financing of colonial fishing ventures, fishermen were paid a share of the profits of the voyage. Sometimes these were apportioned according to each man's catch, but by the *Dunton's* day they were more commonly apportioned equally. In either case, without a predictable wage the fishermen were encouraged to work unstintingly, with the hope of being the first to deliver a large catch to a market hungry for fish.

In an industry full of competitive factors, fishermen were a competitive lot. Competition between individual fishermen on a vessel could increase the vessel's catch. A faster vessel could return to port quicker, with the hope of obtaining higher prices for its fish. A captain with a reputation for fast sailing and productive fishing could attract the best fishermen. During the fishing schooner era, there were several organized races for fishing schooners, the best known being the international series between New England vessels and those of the expanding Nova Scotian fleet inaugurated in 1920. All-sail vessels were an anomaly by then in New England, but to the fishermen the series became an important test of national pride. When an American schooner won the first series of races, the Nova Scotians built their famous racing schooner *Bluenose* which easily defeated a traditional New England schooner. American fishermen countered with a series of highly refined schooners intended primarily for racing. Although Captain Hogan was not known as a racing skipper, his *L.A. Dunton* was suggested as a competitor during construction, and Hogan entered her in the American elimination races in 1922. Badly outclassed, she promptly returned to fishing.

Auxiliary gasoline engines were first introduced in inshore fishing schooners in 1900, and after 1910, safer and more economical crude-oil engines became available. By the time *Dunton* was built, auxiliary engines were routinely installed in new schooners. Launched during the post-World War I recession, *Dunton* was built with a shaft log and engine bed to accommodate power, but she did not have an engine for at least two years. She did, however, have a gasoline-powered hoisting engine on deck, a feature first introduced in the fishing fleet in 1910.

Dunton represents the New England offshore fishing technology of the period from 1865 to about 1925. On the shallow fertile banks on the continental shelf from Georges Bank and the shoals east of Nantucket to the Grand Bank east of Newfoundland, fishermen sought bottom-dwelling fish, principally cod, haddock, and halibut, which had drawn European fishermen to North American waters as early as 1502. After centuries of using simple handlines to catch these fish from the rails of their vessels, New England fishermen adopted the European trawl method of fishing between 1845 and 1865. A typical trawl consisted of an 1,800-foot groundline which was anchored along the bottom. At intervals of a few feet along the groundline, short lines called

gangings attached as many as 300-500 baited hooks along the groundline. Buoys attached to the trawl anchors marked the location of the trawl as it lay hundreds of feet below the surface.

In order to tend such complicated gear, fishing schooners became mother ships to a fleet of small catcher boats. In New England, flat-bottom, flaring-sided, nearly double-ended beach boats called dories were adopted for this form of fishing at sea. The dory is generally considered to be the first mass-produced American boat, turned out by the thousands to meet the demands of the fishing industry. *Dunton's* ten dories, stored in two stacks on deck, allowed her 20 fishermen to set and haul their trawl lines and transport their fish back to the schooner. This form of fishing gave rise to two-man work gangs, called "dory mates," which became one of the principal units of labor aboard a fishing schooner.

At Mystic Seaport in summer, appropriate fishing gear is exhibited in *Dunton's* dories, and the boats themselves are lowered into the water and demonstrated.

Dunton's deck, which has been restored with the proper bait-cutting boards, knife becketts, and other fittings for the processing of fish, was where the fishermen gathered to clean their catch. Through the 1880s, salt was the most important preservative for fish caught on the high seas, and the fish, principally cod, had to be thoroughly processed by splitting gangs of three men, each with a different manual skill. Especially skilled men worked in the fish hold applying the optimum amount of salt to dehydrate and preserve the codfish. In season, museum interpreters demonstrate this process on *Dunton's* deck.

The use of ice to preserve fish in fresh condition had been perfected by the 1840s and, as shoreside transportation of fresh fish improved, more and more vessels began to carry ice to sea to meet the market demand for fresh fish. Shortly after 1900, the fresh fish landings at Boston began to exceed the salt fish landings at the principal fishing port of Gloucester. *Dunton* occasionally caught and salted cod during her ten-year U.S. fishing career, but most of her time was spent catching fresh haddock in winter and halibut in summer, delivering the catch to the great fresh fish market of Boston. Such fishing was typical of her period.

In 1905, the European method of dragging a conical net bag behind a steam-powered vessel was introduced in New England. This form of fishing, called otter trawling, proved to be twice as efficient as hook-and-line methods. Within six years of *Dunton's* launch, the growing fleet of modern otter trawl vessels, using economical crude-oil engines rather than steam engines to drag their otter trawls across the bottom, first surpassed the catch of the dory-trawling schooners. The use of nets continued to increase, supplanting dories and trawl lines, until *Adventure*, the last dory-trawling schooner, was retired in 1954.

L.A. Dunton's U.S. fishing career ended in the early years of the Great Depression. Captain Hogan retired and *Dunton* became one of numerous surplus fishing schooners. Typical of New England fishing schooners, after about ten years of service, she was sold out of the New England fleet. Purchased by Aaron F. Buffett of Grand Bank, Newfoundland, she entered the more traditional Newfoundland salt cod fishery, catching cod on the Grand Bank of Newfoundland, preserving the fish with salt, and occasionally carrying a cargo of salted cod to Portugal returning with a load of salt.

As a vessel type, *L.A. Dunton* is an essential element in the 350-year history of the New England fishing industry. Representing as she does the end of sail-powered vessels using hook-and-line methods, the details of her story illustrate many themes of the great transitional period in New England fishing during the first quarter of this century.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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L.A. DUNTON

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency: National Archives & Records Administration
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository): Mystic Seaport Museum Archives

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than 1/4 acre

UTM References: Zone	Easting	Northing
A	19 251880	4582580

Verbal Boundary Description:

All the area encompassed within the area defined by the extreme length and breadth of the vessel.

Boundary Justification:

The entire vessel's area is encompassed within the boundary.


11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Ms. Nancy d'Estang, Shipyard Research Supervisor, and
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