

FIRE ISLAND FLEET

Of Thirty Schooners Has Disastrous Season

Patchogue and Other South Bay Boats Experience a Number of Mishaps in Collisions and Storms

Though winter is here and boating on the bay is a thing postponed, though the yacht club house is all boxed up for rough weather and the hotels along the bay front are in a similar condition, you will find a whole lot of life down along Patchogue river. Its banks are lined with boats of every description and to these boats are tied other boats and to these still others, so that the rows of crafts extend in places almost out into the channel. And on these boats are men, overhauling and getting things fixed up for an early start in the spring. So you see, winter means slumber to the boat but not to the boatman.

Perhaps the most interesting of all these boats are the big schooners which run between South Bay and New York, Connecticut and even further. Some go up the Hudson, to Haverstraw for bricks or to Peekskill for gravel; others go to Perth Amboy for coal or to Georgia and further for timber; many carry fish and oysters to the Fulton market in Manhattan.

There are over thirty such schooners owned by parties along South Bay and seven of these are now laid up in Patchogue river. The smallest is of forty tons burden and they run as high as a hundred tons burden. This fleet of thirty schooners is known by seafaring men as the Fire Island Fleet and we are told that the past season has been a disastrous one for these boats.

Capt. Fred Bishop's schooner, Amanda Bishop, collided with a ferry boat in the Hudson river some time ago and the schooner's mast head was carried away, her cabin door smashed and her engine broken. Capt. Bishop sustained a fractured arm.

During exceptionally heavy weather two schooners belonging to Jacob Ocker of West Bayville, the Annie E. Edwards and the Annie G., were coming around Montauk Point when the high sea rose to the top of the davits on the former schooner, filled the small boat hanging there and the weight was too much for the davits which broke on dropping the small boat into the sea. The schooner was immediately anchored but could not ride the waves and her bob stay gave way, loosening up all the rigging and threatening to let the forward mast go by the board. Meanwhile the Annie G. sprang a big leak and both boats had to put into Greenport and be overhauled before they could proceed home.

Capt. Fred Smith's Patchogue schooner sustained serious damages in a collision with a tugboat in North river, and Capt. Forrest Burr's Oakdale schooner received \$300 worth of assorted damages during the past season.

Another casualty was reported by Capt. George Anderson whose schooner, H. W. Anderson, struck a submerged rock in Northport harbor and had a large hole knocked in her side. It cost the owners \$800 to put her in sailing shape again.

Of course, there were numerous small accidents that will never get out and many sailboats have been brought to the local ship yards for slight repairs.

The schooner season begins about March 15 if weather permits.