

# The Windjammers of Maine

by Chiles T. A. Larson



*Schooner Lewis R. French*  
(Photo courtesy of Windjammer Association)

**I**t was the intermittent low muffled cadence of a boat's engine that pulled us out of our deep slumber. Stepping out onto the deck of our comfortable cottage in the pre-dawn light, I could make out a string of colorful lobster buoys just a stone's throw away, bobbing gently on the incoming tide. Moving slowly but resolutely, bee-like from pot to pot, was a small craft with a lone lobsterman checking the day's offerings.

This not unpleasant low drone served as our wake-up call for each of the three mornings during our stay at

*Cedarholm Garden Bay Inn. The sweeping views out over Penobscot Bay from our cottage were matched by an impressive display of perennial flower borders scattered with care all around this Eden-like landscape. Because we were not acquainted with the Inn prior to our arrival, this early stop turned out for my wife and me to be a relaxing surprise, as we reacquainted ourselves with the many scenic, cultural, and recreational facets of our Down East vacation.*

The numerous islands dotting the coastline, stretching between Rockland to

Sandy Point, serve to filter and calm the Atlantic waves rolling into the mid-coastal region of Maine known as Penobscot Bay. Gazing at the water for any length of time brings out the desire to test my sea legs. My first sailing experience in Maine was day trip out of Camden a couple of summers ago just down the road from the Cedarholm Inn. With the Curtis Island Light standing guard at the harbor entrance, Camden can truly lay claim to being one of the finest little harbors on the Atlantic Seaboard.

Camden is home to some 5,000



Schooner *Appledore*  
(Photo by Chiles Larson)

year-round residents and a large fleet of windjammers, including the 86-foot *Appledore*, the 55-foot schooner *Olad* and the classic 44-foot schooner *Surprise*, all of which provide daily, two-hour cruises from Memorial Day until mid-October.

*Surprise*, built in 1918, caught my eye because her smooth lines were likened to a scaled-down version of a Grand Banks fishing schooner.

Our day trip wetted our appetite for a longer cruise. It would be a three-day

adventure on board the *Louis B. French*, the oldest schooner in the windjammer fleet. The vessel is 101 feet overall, 65 feet on deck, with a 19-foot beam. It can accommodate 22 guests and a crew of three. Although the cabins are snug and its berths are a little like sleeping in torpedo tubes, the experience was memorable, if not restful. The cozy galley and bountiful meals provided more than sustenance. One marvels at the cook, who would wake up at 4:00 every morning to fire the wood-burning stove before cooking and serving hot breakfasts.

What made the cruise all the more notable was an onboard wedding. I was surprised, pleased and honored to be asked by the groom, Gerald “Jerry” C. Hill, to stand up as his best man. (I later discovered Jerry to be a fine marine painter.) Although a solemn occasion, the ceremony was very informal. While anchored in a quiet cove, the Captain held forth in front of the ship’s wheel. Ladies of the ship’s company, after a brief consultation and hasty rehearsal, sang several verses of “You are My Sunshine” and “Love Me Tender.” We were then all rowed, in turn, to a small isolated island, where we enjoyed a lobster boil, washed down with champagne and topped off with a wedding cake provided by Beverly Hill, the newly-minted bride.

A few miles on the other side of Camden, in the little watch-charm harbor of Rockport, is the homeport of the classic 65-foot schooner yacht *Heron*. Nigel Bower and Bonnie Schmidt offer daily lobster lunch, a lighthouse/wildlife, and a gourmet sunset sails onboard the *Heron*. Nigel, who sailed to the United States to from England on a tall ship in 1985, is a Master Shipwright. With a little help, he built this beautiful wooden schooner.

A final shipboard experience was on board the 151-foot, four-masted schooner, *Margaret Todd*, out of Bar Harbor, on Mount Desert Island. This classic vessel, with her distinct terra cotta sails makes three, 1½ to 2-hour, morning, after-





Schooner Margaret Todd

noon, and sunset cruises throughout the season.

Reflecting on the rugged, rocky coast of Maine with its thousands of islands of various sizes spread out all along its shoreline, with more lakes and ponds on the mainland, I can understand why it has been said that Maine is a state of mind. It certainly is a breathtakingly beautiful state, and for us it proved to be an exceptional vacation adventure, especially onboard a windjammer.

#### **IF YOU GO:**

Maine Office of Tourism

(888) 95MAINE or [www.visitmaine.com](http://www.visitmaine.com).

Windjammer cruises

(800) 807-WIND, [www.sailmainecoast.com](http://www.sailmainecoast.com)

Schooner Yacht Heron

(800) 699-8605 or [heron@midcoast.com](mailto:heron@midcoast.com)

[www.wodenboatco.com](http://www.wodenboatco.com)

Schooner Margaret Todd

(207) 288-4585 or [www.downeastwindjammer.com](http://www.downeastwindjammer.com)

Quarry Ocean Adventures

(207) 367-8977 or [www.oldquarry.com](http://www.oldquarry.com)

Cedarholm Garden Bay Inn

(207) 236-3886 or [www.cedarholm.com](http://www.cedarholm.com);

Camden Harbor Inn

(800) 236-4266

Fairfield Inn, Brunswick

(207) 721-0300

Island Vacation Rentals, Stonington

(207) 367-5095

The Birches Southwest Harbor

(207) 244-5182

Anchorage Motor Inn, Bar Harbor

(207) 288-3859

The Beach House, Kennebunk Beach

(207) 967-3850

Chiles T. A. Larson is a writer and photo-journalist. He is the author of *Virginia's Past Today* and *Barboursville Vineyards: Crafting Great Wines Inspired by Spirits from the Past*. The Virginia Historical Society and the Swem Library at The College of William and Mary exhibit several of his photomontage works.