

A new Dark Harbor 17 graces Penobscot Bay

By Lynda Clancy

Staff Reporter

ROCKPORT (): With modest fanfare, a new Dark Harbor 17 slipped into the harbor last week, ensuring a future for this elegant class of daysailers, and, in general, for boat-building in Rockport.



Bill and Jane Saltonstall, new owners of the Rockport-built *Phoenix*, break the bottle beneath its bow, just before it is set into the harbor. "I never thought we'd been doing this in our 54th year of marriage," said Jane. (Photo by Lynda Clancy)

Built by Artisans Boatworks, of Simonton Corner, in Rockport, the *Phoenix* represents a forward step for Alec Brainerd, who is building his company's reputation as makers of fine wooden boats.

For new boat owner Bill Saltonstall, who, with his wife, Jane, commissioned the boat's construction four months ago, the *Phoenix* is a happy return to the type of boat they have enjoyed for years. This new one is fourth in a line of Dark Harbor 17s

they have owned over the course of a lifetime."You know what's special about the 17?" said Saltonstall. "The way the bow crinkles the water."

The 17 is one of the Dark Harbor gaff-rigged designs that emerged at the turn of the century on Islesboro, along with its smaller counterpart, the 12. Designed by B.B. Crowninshield in 1906, the 17, with its 26-foot length overall, grew in popularity in Maine harbors, where local clubs raced them throughout the summer.

But, over the course of a century, their wooden hulls began to deteriorate, and it is a new generation of boat builders and owners who are reinvigorating the class.

Artisan Boatworks and the Saltonstalls launched the *Phoenix* on Aug. 10, at mid-tide, in Rockport Harbor. With sails ready to be hoisted, the boat was then bound for Rockland to the Maine Boats, Homes and Harbor show held last weekend. After that, the *Phoenix* made its maiden voyage to the homeport of the Fox Island Thorofare.



Bill Saltonstall, with the *Phoenix*, as Artisan Boatworkers fasten the stays and ready the boat for its launching. (Photo by Lynda Clancy)



Artisan Boatworks owner Eric Brainerd, at right, and his fiancée, Erin Hoffman, just before the *Phoenix* is lowered into the harbor. (Photo by Lynda Clancy)

"I never thought I'd be doing this in our 54th year of marriage," said Jane Saltonstall.

But the Saltonstalls have been sailing throughout their marriage, and have named all their boats after birds.

"This is named for the first 17 we had in the family," said Saltonstall.

It is also the first 17 for Artisan Boatworks, which builds and rebuilds classic wooden daysailers, and is in the process of expanding the business. The Boatworks reproduced a Herreshoff 12 1/2, a Herreshoff Fish Class, and completed the design for a 24-foot William Fife inspired, cold-molded daysailer with a modern underbody.



The Dark Harbor 17, an elegant daysailer, is lowered to the water.
(Photo by Lynda Clancy)

Later this month, Brainerd will take his plans to the Rockport Planning Board to add on to his existing shop. Recently, he acquired another 3.5 acres of adjacent land, mostly field, which he did not want to see divided into two or three house lots.



And into the water the *Phoenix* goes. (Photo by Lynda Clancy)

Brainerd employs three workers full time and told the town in his expansion application, "We are proud to play a part in upholding the important Rockport tradition of boatbuilding, and to serve as active contributors to our local small business community."

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