

PROVINCETOWN, MASS., THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1945

## Schooner Polly Brought To Home Port Full Load Of Cod And Waif Of Sea

Mystery Still Surrounds Finding Of Little Girl On Rock 145 Years Ago—Brought Into Provincetown For Happy Ending

Following is a true account of the finding of a little girl by the Schooner Polly, abandoned on a lonely rock, as written by Lillian May Small, only official woman marine observer in the United States at the time it was recorded more than 30 years ago.

Fishing schooner Polly, Captain Peter Rider, weighed anchor one spring morning in 1800 and sailed away from Provincetown. She was a staunch craft of eighty tons, bound on a fishing voyage to Chalcurs Bay.

Besides the captain there were on board Jot Rider, the captain's son; Ben Smith, broad-shouldered and strong as an ox; the two Larkin boys, ready to furl a gafftopsail in any weather; George Barnes, Tom Olsen, the Swede; Nick Adams, Bob Atweed, the cook and Ned, the "boy", a bright lad of ten years, Captain Peter's nephew.

This was Ned's first trip, and he thought himself quite a man until the Polly had rounded Race Point and began to roll about in the great green swell of the turbulent ocean; then he wished himself back in Granny Rider's kitchen, where the open fireplace kept a fellow dry, where the dishes didn't roll off the table, where things smelled good and clean, not like the nasty bilge water that washed about in the Polly's run, but where a boy could take off his boots when he went to bed, you know.

But he couldn't go back, with a quiet cry now and then, all by himself up in the bow of the Polly, where the men wouldn't see, he managed to brace up and help the cook down in the fo'castle, and pull on the main sheet and reef and furl, anything except steer; discipline aboard a "codder" was as strict as on a man-of-war and boys were not allowed to handle the tiller. Favoring winds wafted the boat eastward along the northern coast, past jutting, rocky headlands and surf-washed spits, to an anchorage on the fishing banks. Three months the Polly swung at her anchors, at times idly upon the smooth waters, at times pitching wildly with a sav-

those long weeks Ned had scored the mental calculation, "one day nearer home."

From his thoughts of home he was startled by a human cry.

Again he heard it coming faintly across the smooth water.

Rushing to where his uncle sat, tiller in hand, for the Captain would allow no one but himself to guide the Polly out of that "pesky hole," Ned sang out, "Did you hear that,

sheets to wind and jog around so you won't lose us."

The tide-ruffled waters splashed and sparkled as the oars, in the hands of the hardy fishermen, rose and fell in unison.

"There, I hear it again," exclaimed Ned from his seat at the stern of the boat; "it comes right from that rock."

The oars sent the boat straight toward the huge rock, on whose

devil wanted to get rid of her, and left her thar to drown."

"Well, I'd like to catch the chap that did it; either he or I'd go overboard," said Ben Smith.

Ned gazed wonderingly into the face of the little child, who now, somewhat reassured, lay smiling in the bunk where the crew had placed her after removing the water-soaked clothing.

### Quickly Adopted

"Well, boys," said Capt. Peter, after all that was possible had been done for the little charge, "We don't know whar this baby girl came from, and we ain't going to try hard to find out; we ain't very handy or well fixed for girl babies aboard the Polly, but, by hooky, we a nuff site more human than the critters that left that tot out thar on the rock to be killed piecemeal."

The summer winds blew gently on the Polly; homeward she sped. One bright morning the anchor dropped and the codder was home again in the smooth waters of Provincetown Harbor.

Little Ruth (so the crew of the Polly had named her) had fared well on the voyage, and when the boat had rowed ashore and the fisher wives and maidens had come down to welcome home their loved ones, great was their astonishment at what had come home with the Polly's fishermen.

Granny Rider, with her motherly face against little Ruth's cheek, as she received the charge from Capt. Peter, almost forgot to kiss Ned, so interested was she in the wondrous tale. Over and over again the story was told, and soon everybody knew of the baby girl that had come in the Polly.

Ruth was the joy of Capt. Peter and Granny Rider's home. Ned was never so happy as when playing with the little sea waif in Granny's kitchen. No one ever learned her history; no one apparently ever cared to do so. Those who go down to the sea in ships learn to leave many mysteries unsolved.

Summer passed into winter, winter into spring and again the Polly sailed. Ned kissed his little playmate goodby and turned to the duties of the voyage. Years passed, the boy became a man, Capt. Peter turned the command of the Polly over to Ned. Little Ruth had grown to womanhood. They no longer played together as children, but looked forward more eagerly to the homecoming as the years went by. One day in Granny's cozy home two happy hearts were joined, and on the sea of life their little bark sailed out on the summer sea of years.



age pull at the cable when the tempest beat down upon the stormy waters of that desolate coast.

### A Good Trip

But now the low-set hull told the story of a successful catch. The last basketful of salt had been "wet," the fishing lines were snugly coiled upon the reels. It was Sunday morning. Captain Peter was no autocrat, and it was his custom to have all hands down to breakfast in the cabin on Sabbath mornings.

"Well, boys," said Captain Peter, when all were gathered around the rough table, "we've got a putty good trip under hatches, so arter breakfast I guess we'll get the hook aboard and head the Polly for home."

If there was any one in that ship's company who felt his heart give a sudden pound of joyous anticipation, it was Ned. Every day of all

uncle? Somebody is crying for help out there toward that rock."

"Oh, nonsense, boy," replied Captain Rider, as he gave the tiller a sharp pull to bring the Polly up a point, "guess you was asleep and had a dream."

"No, uncle, listen; there it is again, 'tis a baby's cry."

### Strange Sound At Sea

"Bless my skin, boy, I believe yer right; my hearin' ain't extra good, but I do hear su'thin off thar to wind'ard. But what in the world could a baby be doin' out thar I don't see no vessel nor no boat. But we won't leave no martal round in this hole to drown."

"Here, George," he shouted, "you and Nick get the boat over and see if ye can find whar that distressed creeter is. And Ned, you kin go along to help. I'll put the Polly's

sides the tide lapped with a soft rhythmic swish, swish, gaining slowly, surely. Only a few feet of its slippery top remained exposed, and the water was creeping up inch by inch until soon only a swirl and a fleck of foam would mark the place on the hidden reef.

There on the shelving side of the rock, with the tide lapping her tiny feet, chilled from long exposure and crying bitterly, sat a little girl.

Rough but willing hands soon had the little waif safely in the boat. When they reached the side of the Polly, Uncle Peter stood ready to receive the strange charge.

"Well, by hooky, boys," he exclaimed as he received from Ned's arms the little dripping form. "How could she've got on to that rock?"

"There's only one way I can 'count for it," said George Barnes. "Some