

**TAYLOR ALLEN AND ROCKPORT MARINE: BUILDERS OF LYNX**

*Lynx* was the largest ship building project ever undertaken by Rockport Marine in Rockport, Maine - and was the first square-rigged vessel built in the area since 1885.

Located about one-third of the way up the western shore of Penobscot Bay in midcoast Maine, Rockport Marine was incorporated in 1962 by Luke Allen - a legendary Yankee boatbuilder - and is now owned and operated by his son, Taylor.

"Since the beginning, we have focused our efforts exclusively on wooden boats," said owner Taylor Allen, "and mostly on yachts rather than commercial boats. *Lynx* is unlike most boats being built today. You don't find much call for Baltimore Clippers anymore and we've enjoyed the opportunity to build this boat. We've always been inspired by custom projects, but this one has been on a much larger scale."

Planked with *angelique*, a dense hardwood from Surinam, *Lynx* has been far more physically demanding than previous

projects. "It was a labor of love -- with an emphasis on the hard labor," quipped Taylor Allen. "We don't often use an overhead crane to run planks through the planer, but for this boat we did."

It was the combination of Rockport Marine's stellar reputation with wooden boats and its dedicated crew of workers that convinced Woodson K. Woods, executive director of Project *Lynx*, to select Rockport Marine to construct the 80-foot privateer clipper schooner.

Rockport Marine employs a year round crew of 35 skilled craftsmen, versatile in all aspects of wooden boat construction and repair. They are carpenters, painters, mechanics, metal fabricators and electricians. Sail-making, electronics and other trades vital to modern wooden boat building are all in the area.

"It was immediately apparent to me that Taylor was very enthusiastic about building the schooner," said Mr. Woods. "He thoroughly evaluated all of the challenges of constructing a vessel the size of *Lynx* and had good answers to all of my concerns."

"Woody is a terrific owner from our perspective," said Mr. Allen of Mr. Woods. "Woody's a demanding owner, which I happen to like. He's clear about where he wants to go and is clear

about the quality of the effort. And that inspires us to keep the quality of our work high. It makes it easier for us to achieve that.”

When Mr. Woods met with the men and women who would be building *Lynx*, he knew she would be built with pride and care. He also knew that the crew at Rockport Marine could not only meet the challenge, but would exceed it.

“The fact that they love their work is obvious in their craftsmanship,” Mr. Woods said. “After six months and regular visits to Rockport Marine, I also became aware of a unique camaraderie that exists in the shop, a deep mutual respect that exists between Taylor and his crew.”

He continued, “There was no doubt that this place would create a wooden schooner with a soul. These men would not only physically build this ship with talent and understanding of classic wood construction, but I also felt that they would bring more: they would match the dream. And they did.”

“Each boat, whether new construction or restoration, poses unique challenges that attract and keep the work interesting for the crew,” said Mr. Allen.

Among the challenges for Mr. Allen was to add 20 feet of shop to accommodate the length of *Lynx*. He also purchased a

neighboring building to manufacture the spars.

“From the beginning, forethought has been effective in anticipating possible problems,” noted Mr. Woods. “Under Taylor’s leadership, this quality has smoothly guided the *Lynx* project.”

“Wooden boat restoration and repair have been our primary focus. Over the years, dozens of fine yachts, mostly private sailboats, have been restored in our shop,” said Mr. Allen. “Over the past 10 years, we have been able to apply our skills to new wooden boat construction so that it is becoming an increasingly large part of our business. Depending upon the intended use of the boat, we employ a variety of building techniques, each with its own advantages.”

Since *Lynx* was designed to be used as a sailing training vessel, Mr. Allen was further determined to realize the project. “I enjoy being involved with educational endeavors,” said Mr. Allen, who recently completed six years on his local School Board. “The *Lynx* program, teaching seamanship on this privateer, celebrates a unique piece of maritime history.” When not busy at Rockport Marine, Mr. Allen also works with the Boards of The Landing School of Boatbuilding and Design in Kennebunkport, Maine and Mystic Seaport in Mystic, Connecticut.

Mr. Allen is very grateful to Woods Maritime for allowing him and the crew at Rockport Marine to build *Lynx*. "It's been a terrific project," he said. "Both the owner and the architect have been demanding, yet responsive to our suggestions, and the design has enabled our crew to fully utilize their skills. It's the sort of project that makes good boatbuilders like working here - and makes us want to keep building boats. *Lynx* has been the project you hope for - and we've enjoyed being a part of her history."

# # #