



PORTSMOUTH MARINE RAILWAY

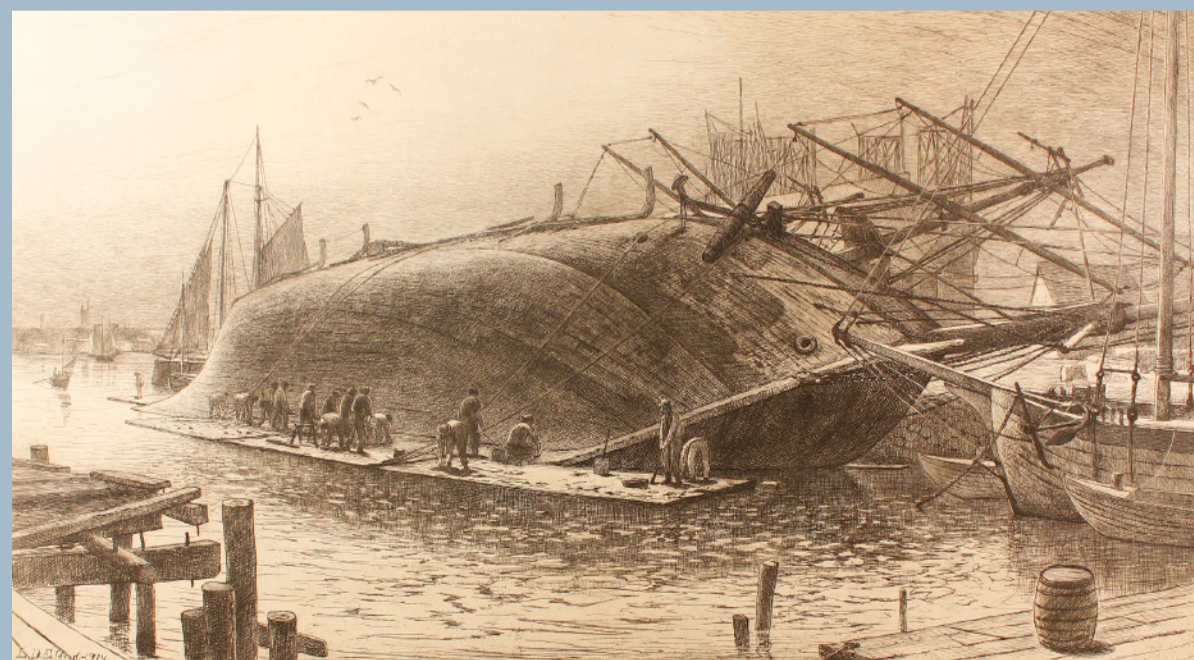
IN 1833 A GROUP OF PROMINENT Portsmouth merchants organized The Marine Railway Company and installed a set of tracks from the water to the brick machine house still standing today near this site. When coupled with two horses, the machinery could, as the owners proclaimed, “draw vessels of 500 tons and upwards, entirely out of water, placing them in a situation where any part of their hulls can be inspected or repaired with great dispatch.” The Portsmouth Marine Railway Company continued to operate until the mid-1850s. Thereafter the wealthy merchant Leonard Cotton bought it and ran it as a private venture. The railway ceased operations sometime around 1875, though the tracks remained in place well into the 1980s.



THREE MASTED SCHOONER ON THE GLOUCESTER MARINE RAILWAY

This image from the 1800s, while not of the Portsmouth Marine Railway, is typical of marine railways of the time. It frequently was necessary to repair the damaged hull of a ship, to clean it of barnacles, or to recopper it.

Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), *Three Master on the Gloucester Railways*, 1857, Oil on canvas, 39¼ x 59¼". Courtesy Cape Ann Museum, on deposit from the City of Gloucester.



A "CAREENED" SHIP

Before the invention of the marine railway, ships were “careened” (beached on their sides) in order to provide access to their hulls. This was done by attaching lines to their masts and rolling the vessels onto one side so that the opposite was accessible for work at low tide.

Lemuel D. Eldred, *Hove Down*, 1914, etching, 23½ x 35¼". Courtesy New Bedford Whaling Museum.



HEADHOUSE OF THE MARINE RAILWAY

This structure housed the machinery associated with the Marine Company operations. In subsequent years it has served as a private dwelling, a fish store, and a theater company.

Photograph of The Players' Ring Theatre, located in what was once the headhouse of the Portsmouth Marine Company.

SHIPS ALONG THE PORTSMOUTH WATERFRONT

A forest of ships' masts circled the Portsmouth waterfront through most of the 1800s.

Thomas P. Moses, *Charles Carroll*, oil on canvas, 41½" x 54", showing the ship *Charles Carroll* out of Rockland, Maine, "On the Piscataqua from North end of Noble's Bridge. . . Portsmouth, N.H. The fall of 1875."



WALLING'S 1850 MAP

In the 1800s Portsmouth's waterfront was lined with commercial wharves. This map from the 1850s shows at least 37, most of which were named for their owners. The largest, not far from the marine railway, was nearly 400 feet long.

H.F. Walling, *Map of the City of Portsmouth*, 1850, C.W. Brewster Publisher. Courtesy of Portsmouth Athenæum.



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