



2017-04

Durham Boats

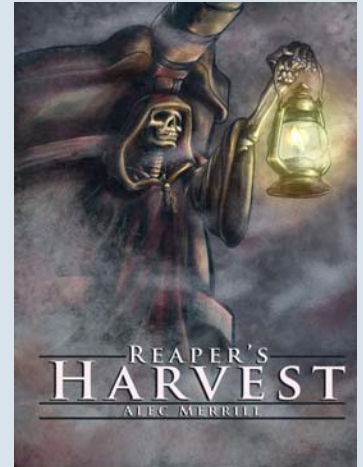
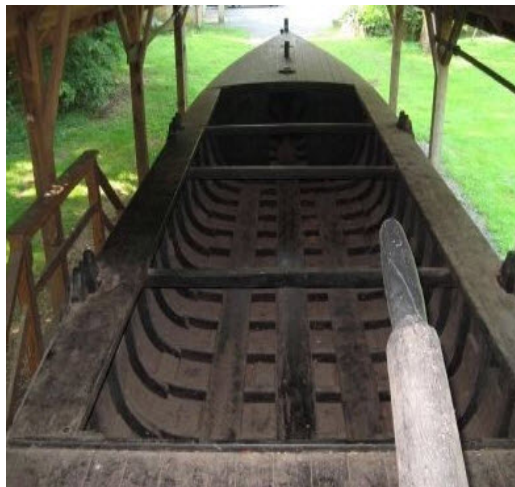
In colonial America a great deal of the cargo moved inland in shallow waterways by locally-made boats. Initially, canoes carried much of this cargo. As the amount and type of freight changed, many saw the need for more robust boats for canoes were inherently fragile and ill-suited for heavy cargo. By 1728, iron ore or iron ingots manufactured at small blast furnaces were transported in increasing quantities from the Pennsylvania interior to Philadelphia for shipment to other customers. Durham Pennsylvania had a blast furnace and needed better boats to transport their products. The result was the introduction of the "Durham" boat.



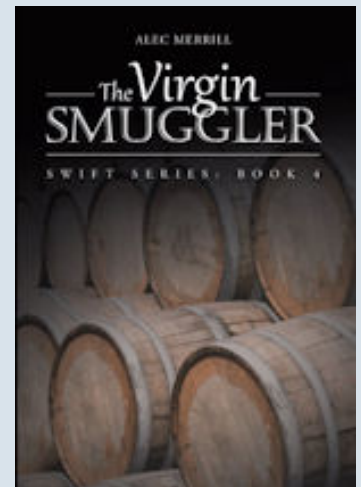
The Durham boat was a double ended boat with a very shallow keel and high sides. A deck was inserted near the keel to provide a flat space for cargo. No specific plans for a Durham boat still exist. The boats altered by manufacturer, ranging in length from 35 to 60 feet. The beam (width) varied as well from 6 to 8 feet. The boats varied in height as well. The double ended feature of the boat allowed the crew to ship a tiller at either end. A crew of 3 to 5 men was common. One man handled the tiller, and the rest poled or rowed the boat. In shallow water long poles were used. In deeper water, oars propelled the boat. Larger Durham boats had a mast in the center of the ship on which a yardarm with attached sail was used. For those boats that poled, a narrow plank was installed on the inside of the gunwales so the men could walk.

According to various records, the Durham boat could carry up to 17 tons of cargo downstream. Heading upstream against the current was far more difficult, so only a fraction of the cargo was carried, usually less than 2 tons.

Durham boats carried the bulk of cargo inland until being superseded by canal boats and ultimately the railroad. In the mid 1700s over 1000 Durham boats plied the Delaware River. Numerous other boats of similar construction ferried supplies on the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers.



Download your FREE copy of
Reaper's Harvest at
www.alecmerrill.com



Alec's new book now available
The Virgin Smuggler
www.alecmerrill.com