

NY CULTURE

# Sherman Zwicker Serves Up History—and Oysters

Mark Firth's Grand Banks Meets the New Draft Collective's Installations

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The main bar of the Grand Banks restaurant *Andrew Lamberson for The Wall Street Journal*

Floating off the edge of Battery Park City, past the miniature golf course and beach volleyball courts on Pier 25, is a new home for old history of the New York waterfront.

Her name is the Sherman Zwicker, and in her service as a schooner, she has traveled the Eastern Seaboard since 1942. With the boat's looming masts and a hold big enough to store 320,000 pounds of catch, its original purpose was fishing for cod. Now, it is a museum and a restaurant with a mission to fulfill.

"We're working with people putting out interesting responses to maritime history. Not just the state-park model of representing it with a plaque but filtering it through a lens to make that history something you can actually feel, that can have a presence," said Alex Pincus of the Maritime Foundation, the group behind the vessel's move to its new home.

The deck of the ship is now occupied by [Grand Banks](#), an open-air oyster bar and seafood restaurant run by Mark Firth, the founder of Diner and Marlow & Sons restaurants in Williamsburg. Underneath, down a ladder into the hold, is an unconventional museum space where many tons of cod were once assembled. In their place is an exhibition by [New Draft Collective](#), a group devoted to answering the mandates of both history and art.

"The history of the Sherman Zwicker is really rich," said Libby Pratt, one of the collective's two main members, "so when the Maritime Foundation asked us to put together an exhibit, we thought: how?"

They have responded with a mix of archival materials and new creations to evoke the boat's more than seven decades of lore. One bay beneath the deck includes an

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illuminated display of 150 pounds of salt, to show how cod were preserved. Another features vintage photographs of the boat and its crew. Yet another features a sort of sculpture made from rope.

"Rope hasn't become obsolete," said Michi Jigarjian, New Draft Collective's other founder. "It's one of the only materials that was on the boat that is still viable and not taken over by some sort of technology."



New Draft Collective's Libby Pratt with Alex Pincus of the Maritime Foundation *Andrew Lamberson for The Wall Street Journal*

When it was built in Nova Scotia, the Sherman Zwicker—touted as the largest wooden vessel now floating in New York—was a sister ship to the Bluenose, a famously fast schooner memorialized on the back of the Canadian dime. It spent the prime of its life fishing for cod and ferrying the fish for sale to South America, before taking up as a historical museum boat for decades in Maine.

When in need of a new home, the boat was gifted to Mr. Pincus and his brother Miles Pincus, who had collaborated before on the sailing company Atlantic Yachting. They struck a deal with the Hudson River Park to dock it at Pier 25, as a not-for-profit historical attraction supported by a for-profit restaurant on board.

"I don't know what the answer is, but it seemed like an interesting question to approach presenting a historical and cultural narrative through a more experimental, curatorial lens," said Alex Pincus. "I was interested in creating a certain atmosphere that brings forth life on the water."

In addition to the exhibition space and the restaurant, there will be talks and lectures during Sherman Zwicker's residency through the end of October. A pre-opening trial run last week featured Paul Greenberg, author of "American Catch: The Fight for Our Local Seafood." During a dinner devoted to salmon, he talked about risks attending world-wide fisheries while attendees descended below deck to check out the art and history in the hold.

"That was the most spectacular setting I could ever imagine," Mr. Greenberg said.

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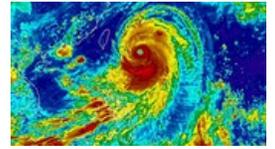
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