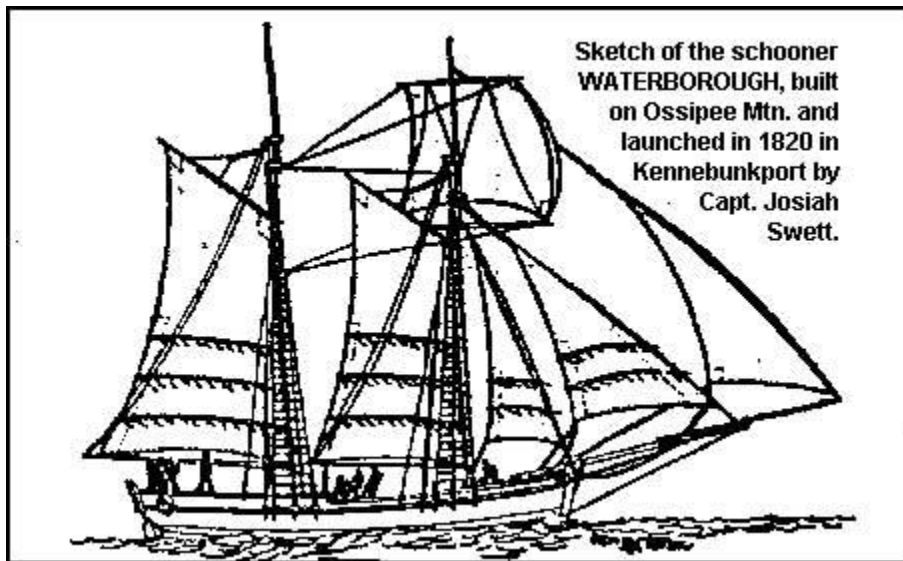


## The Waterborough (*Schooner*)

Condensed From An Article in National Fisherman By Steve Libby



### Sledge Ride Brings Ossipee Mountain Ship To The Sea

There was a ship called Waterborough, of 43 tons, which was built on the top of Ossipee Mountain here. She was launched in 1820, and in order for that to be possible, a sledge ride by 50 oxen was required.

### Great Expectations:

They called him Capt. Josiah Swett when he came here from Wells 175 years ago. In 1818, he confided to incredulous Waterboro neighbors that he was building a two-masted schooner to be named Waterborough, that he would take her to Kennebunk Landing overland, and would launch her there. His son, William, he said, would be captain of the vessel and he would sail the ship to the Indies.

That was precisely what Josiah Swett did. Waterboro was then largely an unbroken forest, and Ossipee Mountain was a place of winding roads and fine pine and hardwoods. On 250 acres of fine timber and farmland, the Swetts undertook the two year task of hand-hewing the logs and timbers necessary to build the schooner. The ridicule of the neighbors bothered Josiah and his son not at all. The dream ship shaped into reality high on the mountain, not far from where today's fire tower is.

### Well Stocked For The Trip:

By February of 1820 the ship was ready for its 25 mile trek to the sea. Those neighbors who had scorned the venture were now all present to watch "the ark", as someone had dubbed the ship, go down the mountain. Josiah Swett had planned well. He had built the Waterborough on a cradle constructed on huge wooden sleds and all preparations were made ready for the trip. Fifty oxen were manned by 30 volunteers. The hold of the schooner was stocked with hay and grain for the oxen against the three-day to Kennebunk, and there was food and rum, against the winter's cold, for the men.

**Perilous Trip Down:**

No part of the trip was more difficult than braking the sledded ship, behind the oxen, on its perilous trip down the side of the mountain. Cant-dogs were a necessity, if the ship was not to run over the oxen: and the hip deep snow made the traveling difficult, at best, as animals and man headed down the mountainside.

**Shaker Pond Reached:**

Once in Waterboro Old Corner, the oxen and Waterborough turned to the right along a road where, roughly, Routes 202 and 4 are now located. Their goal was the western edge of Shaker Pond, Alfred, the first night and they made it. A fire was built and food prepared on the shores of the pond. And at daybreak the strange procession continued, through Alfred and along the Plains Road (now approximating Route 35 and paralleling the Mousam River to Kennebunk). There the caravan halted to spend the second night, on the outskirts of town.

**Mansions Passed:**

On the following morning, Feb. 20, 1820, the Waterborough made its way along the hill of Kennebunk's Summer Street. From the stately mansions, housewives in their morning aprons waved their good wishes; tradesmen on their way to business cried out their hellos; and children pause on their way to school to express wonderment at this odd assortment of men, oxen and ship. It was now only a few short miles to Kennebunk Landing.

**Launched Sideways:**

There Josiah Swett's schooner Waterborough was put into the water for the first time - sideways, most records say - near Durrell's Bridge. The ship was rigged and 20-year old William Swett was made her captain. He sailed the Waterborough on her first voyage to the West Indies. The ship went off on her maiden journey to bring back rum, molasses and tobacco in exchange for various New England cargoes, mostly wood from Maine and New England ports. According to the book, "Waterboro History", the schooner did well for years in the Indies and coasting trades. The vessel was eventually sold to Boston interests and scrapped in that port. Josiah Swett, having prospered both as a farmer and shipbuilder, abandoned his log cabin on Ossipee Mountain and built a two-story farmhouse where he lived until it burned in 1849. The following year he built a large 14 room house which he later turned into a hotel known as Ossipee House - and he and another son, Charles C. Swett, became prominent hoteliers. Charles operated Swett's Hotel in Portland for many years and , later, a hotel in Rockland. The Ossipee Mountain operation served as a summer facility for both.