

The Many Lives of *Ernestina*

The schooner *Ernestina* is a ship of many lives. She did not start out with that name; she was christened *Effie M. Morrissey* in 1894.

The *Morrissey* was built as a fishing schooner, the first of many careers. On her first fishing voyage from Gloucester, MA, to the Grand Banks, the schooner brought back 250,000 pounds of salted cod.

In 1905, the ship began sailing out of Canada. Known for its speed under sail, *Effie M. Morrissey* was the subject of a ballad and part of a book.

After 20 years, the ship was sold to Captain Robert Bartlett. He had once skippered a boat for Admiral Peary on his search for the North Pole. That experience surely paid off, as the ship had no engine and often encountered icebergs under Bartlett's command.

Captain Bob, as he was known, charted a new direction for *Effie M. Morrissey*. After a diesel engine was added, the vessel was used for exploring the Arctic region for the next 20 years. One of these early trips was financed by George Palmer Putnam, husband of the world-famous flier Amelia Earhart. Other voyages explored the lives of Inuit people, as well as Arctic plants and animals. During World War II, the ship carried supplies to naval bases in the Arctic.

After being sold once again and surviving a fire, *Effie M. Morrissey* was purchased by Enrique Mendes. He renamed her *Ernestina*, after his daughter. The ship began work in the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of



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Senegal in West Africa. Now working as a packet schooner, *Ernestina* carried people and supplies around the islands. The schooner also shuttled to Rhode Island for 10 years, bringing many workers from Cape Verde to work in the cranberry bogs of New England.

Ernestina completed her final voyage as a packet in 1965. For a time, the Cape Verdean government took control of the schooner. She was repaired and given to the US government as a gift of friendship. After a complete restoration in 1994, *Ernestina* returned to US waters for use as a sailing school vessel.



COURTESY SCHOONER ERNESTINA