

Gundalow Crossword Reference Sheet

A gundalow is a kind of boat. As early as the mid 1600s, this sailing vessel carried cargo up and down the Piscataqua River. It was known as the “workhorse” of the river. The gundalows were heavy flatbottom boats with strong decks to carry large loads of cargo such as bricks, clay to make the bricks, cordwood, and salt hay. The gundalows had flat bottoms so that they could sail in the rivers without getting stuck on the mudflats. The captains of the gundalows relied on the wind to power the large triangular sail. They did not have an engine. The sail was attached to a long mast called a yard. The yard was made out of a very tall, straight tree. The yard was hung at an angle off of a smaller mast called a stumpmast. The sail was hung this way so that it could be raised and lowered to fit under bridges.

A gundalow has a rudder in the stern or back of the boat to help steer, and a leeboard on the left side of the boat or the port side to help it stay balance din the water. Large oars called sweeps help turn the boat around. When a gundalow was built, a tool called an adz helped shape the boards for the hull or frame of the boat. There were no nails to hold together a gundalow’s frame, only wooden pegs called trunnels. There were 5000 trunnels needed to hold together each gundalow.

During the mid 1880s, Captain Edward Adams built the last “working” gundalow which he named the “Fanny M.” after his wife, Fanny Mae. A reproduction of his gundalow was launched in 1982 with the help of a team of oxen, the traditional means of launching a gundalow. This reproduction was named the “Captain Edward Adams” and is the last of its kind in the world. It is now docked at Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, New Hampshire where it is used for educational purposes.

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