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Whether they be young or old, short or tall, large or small, all of the New Bern mothers we'll be honoring Sunday have at least one thing in common. Each of them, at one time or another, has turned to another mother—Mother Goose—to provide delightful entertainment for the heavenly bundles delivered to them by the Stork.

Much of the advice that a mother gives to her offspring may be forgotten or disregarded in later years, but we oldsters seldom forget the rhythmic phrases of our early nursery rhymes. There have been poets far superior to Mother Goose, and yet it is doubtful that all of them put together have achieved the lasting fame that still adheres to her name.

Who was Mother Goose anyhow? Don't feel ignorant if you can't answer the question, since no one else can answer it either. Perhaps you've heard that she was a Boston widow named Elizabeth Goose, who made up the little ditties and sang them to her grandson. Grandmothers being the affectionate souls that they are, the story sounds pleasantly plausible.

According to the oft repeated version of how Mother Goose came into being, the father of the grandson referred to happened to be a printer. Impressed by the rhymes, he supposedly published them in a book at Boston in 1719, just nine years after New Bern was founded by the Swiss.

It's a good story, except for the fact that it is just as fictional as our Mother Goose characters that have stood the test of time. Not so much as one lone copy of the book has been found, although a great deal of research has been done in an effort to bring it to light.

This in itself is not conclusive. But even if we assume that there was such a book in existence, the story of Boston's Mother Goose falls through because long before then the same intriguing name was used in connection with folklore in France. Back in 1679 a French master of fantasy named Charles Perrault published a volume of fairy stories entitled "Tales of Passed Times, by Mother Goose."

One of the stories, called "The Master Cat," is the same yarn we know here in America as "Puss in Boots." Another is one of the great favorites with New Bern children of every generation—"Sleeping Beauty."

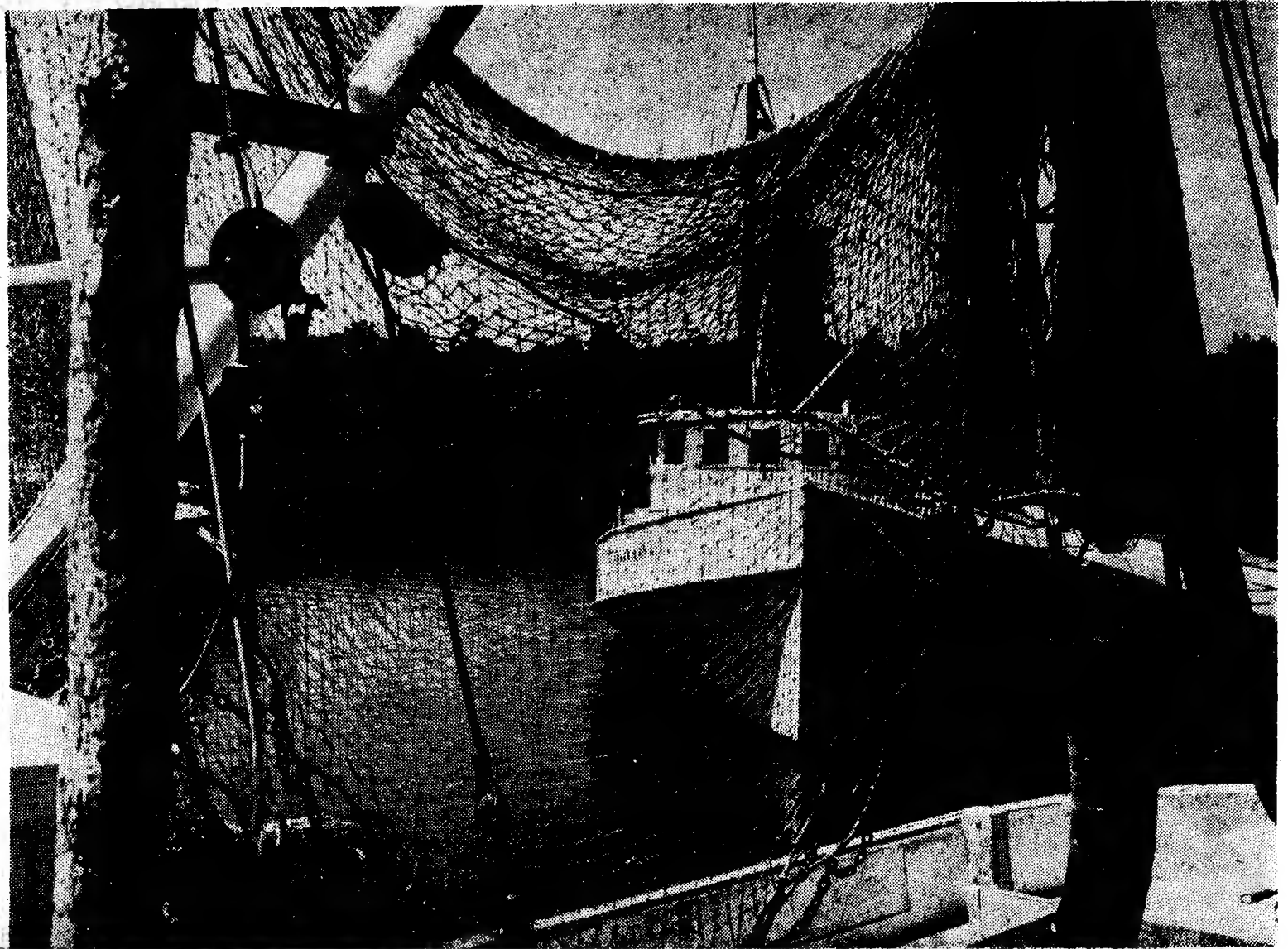
However, before these stories found their way to England, that staid old country had its own rhymes and jingles that had been handed down through the years. When and where they first began is lost in the annals of the past.

In the year 1780, a publisher in London by the name of John Newberry lifted "Mother Goose" as a signature from the aforementioned French fairy tales, and transferred it to the nursery jingles and rhymes that have since borne the name of this mythical authoress.

To give you an idea of just how old the Mother Goose rhymes you read to your child really are, it is a historical truth that the "three blind mice" are mentioned in a poem that was published in London in 1609. And, believe it or not, "Sing a song of sixpence" appeared in a play that was written in Shakespeare's time.

"Tom, Tom, the piper's son" inspired a song published in 1719, and it is to be hoped that it was less mournful than our own "Tom" song of recent years, "Tom Dooley." Come to think of it, "Tom Dooley" is as old as the hills too, and was all but extinct until its modern revival.

Somebody most certainly had to be the original Mother Goose, but after that she became not just one rhymester but several. Any number of amateur poets probably had a



COASTAL CHARM—For those of us who find beauty in even the simplest waterfront scene, this familiar sight will have special appeal. A placid stream, a boat at anchor,

and a net drying in the early morning sun. They add up to a picture of peace in a sorely troubled world.—Photo by Billy Benners.

## Chessman's Death Saddens Number of Local Citizens

New Bern's most talked about news story of the week didn't happen here, but occurred thousands of miles away within the green walls of a California gas chamber.

To local citizens, Caryl Chessman was more than a name in print and a photo on the front page of their morning newspaper. Physically unattractive though he was, and guilty of vicious crimes, he had caught their fancy and aroused their sympathy.

Few in their deep feeling of regret over his belated execution knew the full story of his acts as a redlight bandit who brought terror to Los Angeles 12 years ago.

What they did know was that here was a man who had been on San Quentin's death row for a dozen years—a man who had been saved from the grave no less than eight times by a stay of execution.

Typical was the comment of one New Bernian, who said, "I think he has suffered enough during all those years on death row, no matter what he did." That was on the morning when his demise in the name of justice was only hours away.

It is safe to say that the majority of New Bernians took the same attitude, especially women. The feminine sympathy for Chessman was ironical, since his victims were women, and one of them went hopelessly insane afterwards and is

hand in putting the jingles together.

At any rate, New Bern parents and New Bern children can do worse than remember Mother Goose, along with other mothers, on Mother's Day.

still confined behind bars in an asylum.

Lurking in the minds and hearts of a goodly number of citizens here is the feeling that the famous

convict was innocent. They based their conclusion not on facts, which leave less than no doubt whatsoever of Chessman's guilt, but on the theory that any man

spared as many times as he was probably was unfairly arrested and convicted.

It's the old story of America's compassion for the underdog, and in the public's mind the image of Chessman as a mistreated and wronged individual had long since become firmly fixed. He, of course, had been largely responsible for creating the image through his best-selling book, "Cell 2455, Death Row", and subsequent volumes that came from his rather remarkable pen.

Not only did his books attract a following in these United States, but around the world as well. In their basic sense of fairness, whether in this instance it was badly misplaced or not, fellow human beings cast Chessman in the traditional role of the "good man" and at the same time made those who had captured and convicted him the "villains" in the grim real-life plot.

As is inevitably the case when major crimes are greatly publicized, the Chessman cause picked up a lot of cranks and screwballs. However, there is no denying that a great many highly intelligent people ended up on his side too.

They not only ended up on his side, but went to extreme lengths in an effort to save him from his fate. One of his most ardent defenders was Steve Allen, who is one of television's most talented and apparently most enlightened personalities.

What appeared to be the motivating force in Allen's crusade to save the redlight bandit from legalized death was not his innocence  
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