

# ADVENTURES OF “FEARLESS FROGMAN”

Using a unique rubber suit, Capt. Paul Boyton was able to grab the attention of the world

BY H.L. MILLER

The surprising thing about Capt. Paul Boyton is that he is virtually unknown today. His name may live in the memories of a few historians and it crops up now and then in some books of his time period, but that is about all. It is almost as if this colorful and outrageous character never existed.

Yet Boyton, who died in Brooklyn

during 1924 at the age of 76 (or 75 depending on the source), was one of the great adventurers of the 19th Century. He was a lecturer and showman known to millions of people in the USA and Europe during his period of incredible popularity.

Huge amounts of words were written about Boyton in newspapers

and magazines. He was welcomed by crowds, often tremendous in size, wherever he appeared in his journeyings. He was an intrepid hero, an amiable, generous, fearless, handsome man who seemed assured of the kind of immortality bestowed on those who engage in exploits of great daring.

Knowing this, it is hard to understand why Boyton has been lost in a kind of collective amnesia. Perhaps his mode of travel helped to betray him. For, while other adventurers traversed strange terrains on foot or on horseback, by mule or camel, or climbed mountains or sailed dangerous seas or ventured into deserts and jungles, Boyton traveled on his back — literally!

Encased in a rubber suit and propelling himself feet foremost with a two-blade paddle at a 100 strokes per minute, he floated down the major rivers of Europe and the United States, as well as across the Zuider Zee in Holland, the English Channel, the Strait of Gibraltar, and the Strait of Messina (between Sicily and the top of the Italian boot), by his own estimate conquering some 25,000 miles of generally lonely and often dangerous waters.

Boyton's expeditions may seem ludicrous to today's digital society but nothing can really detract from his powerful achievements. He faced death scores of times.


For instance, when he navigated the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers from Glendive, Montana, to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1881 he encountered trigger-happy Indians and hunters who mistook him for a wild animal! He fought rapids, shoals and quicksand, eddies and collapsing river banks. He ran into huge fallen trees that threatened to snag him.

Once, he clung to a bush at a river's edge for an hour while a vast herd of buffalo swarmed across the stream ahead of him. He was tormented by insects, blazing sun, cold nights, and sudden violent storms. The distance he covered was 3580 miles and it took him 64 days.

Boyton never minimized the risks and neither did the public. He alternated his adventures with lectures and aquatic shows, at first simple demonstrations in a river or lake and, later on, more elaborate affairs employing a number of people.

His activities paid off handsomely

**WATERPROOF LIFE-SAVING DRESS.**



This is the Dress that is creating such a furore in Europe.

**CAPTAIN BOYTON**

went abroad to introduce this invention to all Europe.

The Queen of England has ordered the invention for her Yacht.

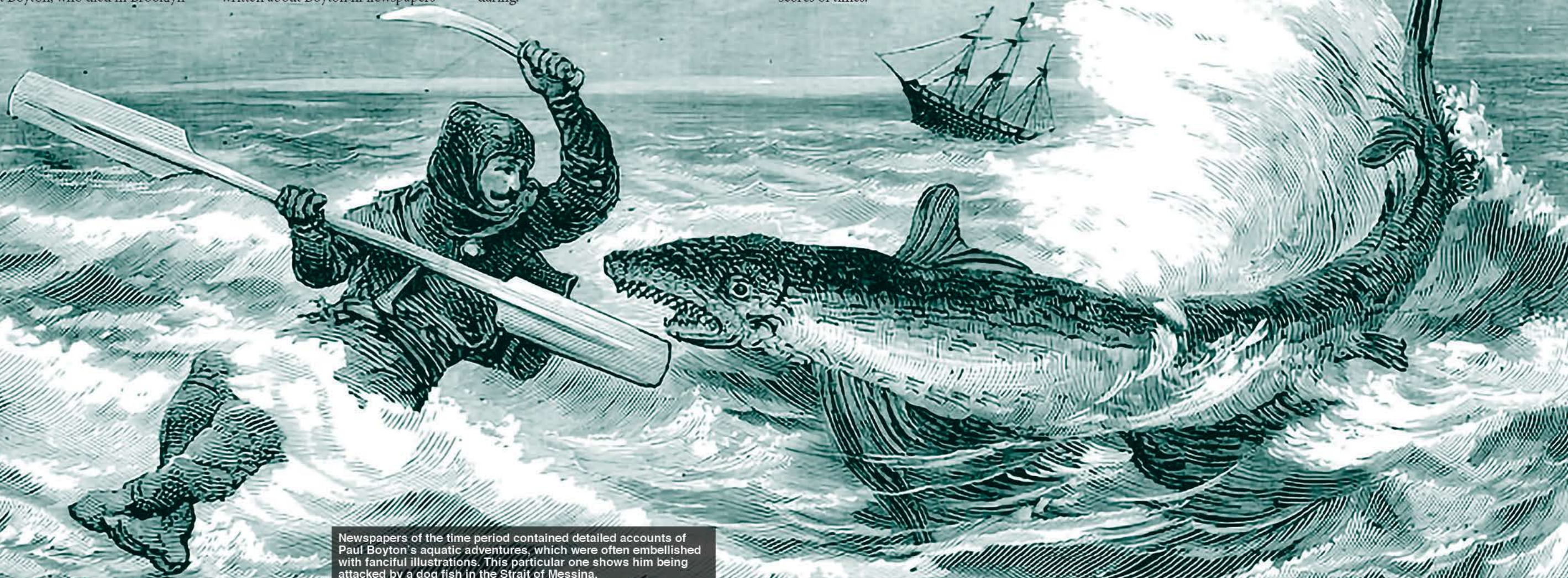
It has also been adopted for general use in U. S. Navy and Revenue Marine Departments.

For sale and for rent to tourists, at reasonable rates.

Address,  
**C. S. MERRIMAN, Patentee,**  
**16 Murray Street, N. Y.**

Please state that you saw this notice in FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER.

Advertisement for the “Waterproof Life-Saving Dress” from C.S. Merriman, who designed and held the patent on the outfit Boyton would make famous.



Newspapers of the time period contained detailed accounts of Paul Boyton's aquatic adventures, which were often embellished with fanciful illustrations. This particular one shows him being attacked by a dog fish in the Strait of Messina.