

# *The* Ash Breeze

Journal of the Traditional Small Craft Association

## FROM THE PAST

### *IN THIS ISSUE*

A Sweet Little Boat

The Year that Wasn't

Building a Canal Boat



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## Volume 41, Number 4

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The Traditional Small Craft Association, Inc. is a nonprofit, tax-exempt educational organization that works to preserve and continue the living traditions, skills, lore, and legends surrounding working and pleasure watercraft with origins that predate the marine gasoline engine. We encourage the design, construction, and use of these boats, and we embrace contemporary variants and adaptations of traditional designs.

TSCA is an enjoyable yet practical link among users, designers, builders, restorers, historians, government, and maritime institutions.

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*TAB Layout Design: Karen Bowen*

*Cover: A rendezvous of friends on Blue Hill Bay. Cover Photo by Tom Jackson.*

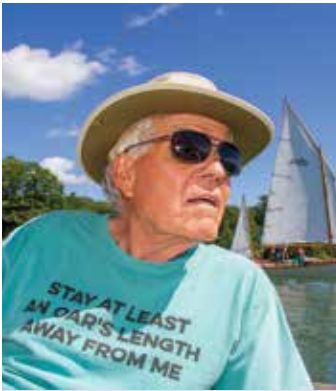


Photo by Rosemary Wyman

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*David Wyman*

This past boating season has had its challenges, but also its opportunities. Most recently on an early November day with the weather unseasonably warm, eight of my local Downeast TSCA friends gathered at a nearby lake for a day of rowing (of course keeping an oar's distance apart). Now that the weather is turning cooler, I find myself spending more time in my workshop refinishing boats in preparation for the next adventure. I also find myself thinking of new boat-related projects with which to occupy myself; my most recent project has been making new lighter weight oars.

The TSCA Council and Officers are continuing to meet monthly on Zoom with a good exchange of ideas. We are reviewing the status of the various chapters to ensure that they all meet the requirements in our bylaws. If your chapter has not responded to the request for information sent out by John Weiss, our Chapter Representative, please do so. We also have a new Secretary, Bill Rutherford, standing in for David Fitch who needed some time off. The history of the TSCA founding has also been an area of interest that you can follow in this issue of *The Ash Breeze*. I remember attending the 1973 John Gardner Small Craft Workshop at Mystic, Connecticut, which predates the founding of TSCA by a few years. If you have stories of the founding, please share them.

Getting out in small boats continues to be a joy, and my involvement with TSCA has continued to enhance that joy. I especially enjoy camp cruising in my traditional sail and oar-powered boats, and even though I have been doing this for most of my life, I still find it refreshing to learn about others' approaches. Recently, I reread Douglass Oeller's excellent and informative article entitled "One Sailor's Approach to Camp Cruising" in the previous *Ash Breeze* and then watched Steve Stone's Off Center Harbor video "Sail and Oar Camp Cruising, part 1, Dreaming and Planning." Both are excellent and well worth contemplating. I am not sure that I learned anything new, but just revisiting the ideas was stimulating. If you have some thoughts on traditional boating that you are willing to share, please write an article for publication in *The Ash Breeze* so your TSCA friends can appreciate and learn from them.



# ONE SWEET LITTLE BOAT



by Chris Callahan

For fifty years or so I dreamt of building a small lapstrake boat. I grew up in Swampscott, home of the famous dory. As a kid I would climb the steep stairs to the Swampscott Yacht Club, in the historic Fish House, and admire the old photos of the Yankee Dory sailing regattas and the gatherings at the bar. Even then, those days were long ago, but the beauty, tradition, and comradery those lapstrake dories inspired struck deep and stayed with me. Thankfully, there were folks who preserved and passed along the tradition of dory building, like John Gardner with his seminal work, *The Dory Book*, and later Jon Wilson, founder of *WoodenBoat* magazine.

To make a long chapter short—love, marriage, kids, career, college tuitions... About twenty-five years later when our youngest was off to college, I started studying my old *Dory Book* again. My subscription to *WoodenBoat* was renewed. I read about the Small Reach Regatta and desperately wanted to be one of those folks. My lunch hours were spent scouring the internet for a boat to build. Finding *Off Center Harbor's* gorgeous videos of families sailing and rowing small Nutshell Prams and Shellback Dinghies, my dream boat began to come in to focus. In the *WoodenBoat* store catalog was a model kit for Joel White's Nutshell Pram. Starting small made sense since I knew little about building boats and my hands were pretty soft from twenty-five years of sitting behind a desk.

So I placed my order and excitedly waited for the package to arrive.

The better part of a winter was spent putting together the Nutshell model from constructing the mold to roving the running rigging. I was quite pleased with myself. Close up photos of the model were sent to everyone on my mailing list. The experience was invaluable. This project taught me a ton about building little boats. It exposed me to all the steps needed to build a boat and instilled the confidence to attempt the real thing. I digress...but isn't that what TSCA members happily do when it comes to gabbing about boats?

Basking in the afterglow of my Nutshell model accomplishment, I was feeling like a boatbuilder. The Shellback seemed to check all the boxes, and the build was essentially the same as the Nutshell with the additional challenge of the pointed bow and its accompanying gains to bring the overlapping planks flush. It wasn't long before an 18-wheeler drove up the driveway and unloaded the 12' by 6' or so, box in the yard. I loved unrolling the plans and studying them. I read the building guide and watched the video over and over, particularly the part where Joel White quietly sails his boat. My workshop was the family room. I worked mostly on weekends, and my wife was very patient as the little boat slowly came together. (My family laughs when

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**Top:** Sweet Annie on George Head Island, Merchant's Row, off Stonington, Maine. Photo by Chris Callahan.



I say the boat slowly came together. It took five years, but there is enough there for another story.)

Let me tell you about my perfect little boat, *Sweet Annie*, Joel White's Shellback Dinghy. She is beautiful, with the lovely lapstrake curves and gorgeous shear of the Swampscott Dory. She sails like a little racing dinghy with her generous lug sail. Like a racing dinghy, she responds to skillful tweaks of sail trim and balance. She is an absolute joy to row, like a sports car, light, smooth, and nimble. Surprisingly, this little boat is also a workhorse, though that's not fair, she is too beautiful for the workhorse image. But like a Peapod, some of her beauty is in her capacity to handle loads. With two rowing stations, she handles three passengers easily. As long dreamt about, *Sweet Annie* is now the perfect dinghy with our larger family cruiser, reliably ferrying crew and a week's worth of groceries and gear. Under tow she tracks like an arrow, riding lightly on the crest of the wake's second wave.

Some of life's happiest moments have been and continue to be with this little boat. Attending the Small Reach Regatta is a joy and privilege to be part of this legendary gathering. The annual Shellback Regatta, with the Shellback Family rotating between Brooklin, Lake Ontario, and Newport, is the gift of the warmest of friendships in the most beautiful of places. There is nothing like the contentment of simply day sailing or rowing, or both, on the lakes, rivers, and bays of New England, or the adventure of camping trips on Lake Champlain and the Maine Island Trail. These explorations are readily available as *Sweet Annie* travels nicely in the bed of a pick-up or small trailer.

This lovely little boat is also perfectly suited for her latest role, tender to our Southern Cross 31 cruising boat, *Truant*. Implying that she is subservient to the bigger boat

is misleading. They are a team, each contributing to the inexpressible pleasure of the adventure. Think how wonderful it is to settle in at a coastal anchorage late in the afternoon and to go for a peaceful row or sail in the gorgeous Shellback before or after cocktail time. My sweet little boat loves it all, and I adore her.

This kit boat is available from WoodenBoat, along with a step by step photographed instruction book and a video narrated by Jon Wilson showing Eric Dow building a Nutshell pram, which is the Shellback's smaller sibling.

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***Below:*** The author rowing *Sweet Annie* out to the family's Southern Cross 31, *Truant*.

***Bottom:*** *Sweet Annie* and *Truant* on the Hudson River on their way through the locks to Lake Champlain. Photo by Chris Callahan.



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*Sweet Annie under construction in the family room.*



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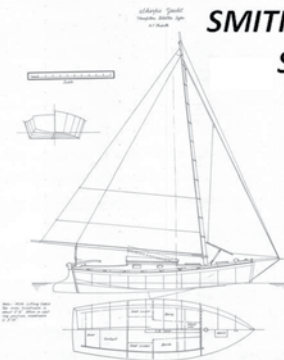
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Gerard Crowley has a team rowing around Ireland for charity ([www.rowaroundireland.com](http://www.rowaroundireland.com)). He writes about the Gaco oarlocks: *Hi John. We've hit some pretty rough seas and wind over tide situations along the NE corner and northern coasts of Ireland and the rowlocks are absolutely brilliant and great comfort from the fact that they always stay in position. I'll write you a great endorsement on them when finished.*





# THE LEAD STORY FROM THE INAUGURAL ISSUE OF THE ASH BREEZE, VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1, JANUARY 1978

## THE SMALL CRAFT REVIVAL

*by John Gardner*

Something momentous is stirring in small craft. Something is happening which previously no one anticipated or counted on. Just why or how is not entirely clear, but whatever it is that is taking place; It is new, exciting, and promising—to say the least.

This year hundreds of builders, owners and users of small wooden boats, particularly classic small craft; have discovered that they are not alone. There are others who like the same things they do and are doing the same things or want to do them.

This year has brought together for the first time, hundreds of small craft enthusiasts in gatherings which have exceeded all expectations. The West coast saw gatherings in Santa Cruz, Port Townsend, Seattle, and Olympia. The East Coast had meets in Christmas Cove and Mystic. Additionally, small craft assemblies are planned such as the Cape Cod meet this spring.

The turn to small, less expensive boats; to classic wooden craft which owners can build, maintain, and store in the backyard all is part of it. Certainly, there is more to it than mere economics, though economics is a big factor—nonetheless. More and more people are coming to realize what the few have known all along. It is not necessary to put a second mortgage on the family homestead in order to come up with the down payment for that great Hulk of fossil fuel plastic which the boating industry advertising has conned so many into believing is essential for fun on the water.

Plastic and aluminum boats are larger than need be and loaded with gadgets. The popular engines and their appetite for gasoline have grown as horsepower has increased with each passing year. Between expensive plastic or aluminum hulls and glutinous Motors—the common man and woman by this time would have been priced off the water, except for our heritage of sensible an inexpensive small craft.

Small craft never died out entirely. They were overshadowed, pushed into the background, and to a large extent, forgotten.

Speed, glitter, and gadgets promoted for profit, temporarily captured the public's fancy. But now the tide is turning. The obsession with speed for speed sake is beginning to wane. More and more are discovering that pleasure on the water does not increase in proportion to the amount of fossil fuel consumed whether in the form of thermal plastics for fiberglass hulls or petrol for oversized engines.

The return to wood and to the fine wooden boats of yesteryear marks a return to sanity and good sense long overdue. It is a part of a larger trend back to more sensible and responsible lifestyles.

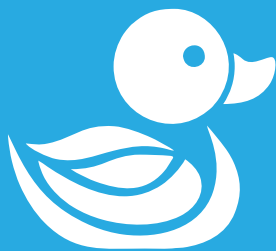
What is the role of TSCA in all of this? To begin with, is there need for such an organization as this? Most definitely yes! What has been accomplished already proves this and indicates all that remains to be done—much of which, if it's to be done well, or done at all, requires an organized effort.

What needs to be done involves three different, yet closely related levels of activities: social, political, and educational. We must find ways of acting effectively on all three levels. The following objectives list only a part of what needs to be done.

1. Protection of the boating environment. Guaranteed access to the water for small boats. Provisions of public landings and camp sites. Protection against excessive real estate development of the shores. Protection against pollution, contamination, noise, and excessive speeds.
2. Protection of the rights of the builders, owners, and users of small boats. Defense against excessive, unreasonable, and unnecessary regulations by federal, state, and local authorities.
3. Education for boating safety. Education of the public in the selection of worthy boats as distinguished from commercial junk, and their proper use and care.
4. Encouragement, initiation and organization of shared recreational boating activities, meets, regardless, conferences, voting festivals and cruises.

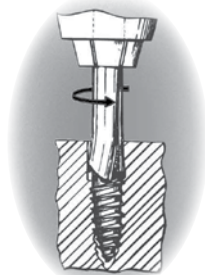


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# WE JOIN BECAUSE WE CARE

## FROM THE ASH BREEZE, VOLUME 3 #1 NOVEMBER 1979

*from the council by Paul Lipke*

### TSCA ORIGINS

There is a good deal of confusion as to what the origins and goals of this Association are, particularly among the newer members. Since this is a transitional issue, this is a good time to take stock.

In 1975, this Association was founded to spearhead an attempt to deal with the coast guard's impending (later successful) bid to include all traditional small craft in its revised regulations. Five newsletters were sent out to roughly 200 members between April of 1976 in July of 1977 each one was part of a continuing report on the technical and philosophical arguments in process.

Although we lost the battle for the complete exemption, the continued efforts of our president emeritus John Gardner and many others were successful in getting certain key requirements modified. Please note, (TSCA has never been against the Coast Guard. We have, in fact, wholeheartedly supported the Coast Guard on most issues. We have consistently argued that our problem is with certain regulations this applied to sub traditional small craft.)

We also gained a good deal of insight through those first efforts. Having a tiny membership of several hundred weakened the force of our arguments. Secondly, Coast Guard enforcement waxes and wanes with the popularity of its lobbying relevant to the 200-mile limit, high speed powerboats, water scooters, "Thrill Craft," and so forth. Luckily for traditional small craft fans, these issues have kept the Coast Guard busy elsewhere at least until recently.

The fragility of the reprieve from enforcement and our limited membership led to the establishment of a regular more general newsletter. Richard and Laura Kolin, council members and representatives of TSCA Santa Cruz, bravely took on this task to bring *The Ash Breeze* into being. That was the fall of 1977. *The Ash Breeze* thrived, our roster expanded towards 600, and small craft meets increased in frequency and size. The traditional watercraft movement was taking off.

### RECENT ACTIONS

The last year or so has seen some settling and re-evaluations, perhaps because traditionalists are no longer trying to prove that there is a revival, but are deciding what direction(s) the

revival should take. In any event, the Kolin's have reassessed and moved to Anacortes, WA, choosing to devote their energies toward re-establishing themselves and their boatshop. When the council met this June, it became apparent that the Kolin's had done their job too well. *The Ash Breeze* had been running so smoothly that we had given no thought to a structure capable of sustaining it through a change in leadership. Additionally, there had been a few reports of active Coast Guard enforcement to shake us up, and TSCA liability for personal damages at its meets reared its ugly head. The council got busy.

A board of publications has been established, its membership consisting of those who volunteer to work on *The Ash Breeze*, subject to approval by the board's chairman. The chairman of the board of publication will be a council member and will serve as a liaison between the council and the board. He/She will not be responsible for the quarterly publication of the Journal, but rather the delegation of responsibilities. After consulting with the council and members of the board, the chairman will select from the board a publisher, editor, and two assistants. The editor and publisher will run the show and will be responsible for training the assistance as potential replacements.

The Coast Guard has established its facility for testing level flotation and other requirements, and a Cape Cod built Dory has already been through the mill and failed. From the Pacific Northwest, we have had word of strict enforcement of the capacity tag and other requirements. Ken Steinmetz, a recent addition to the council was asked (and agreed) to watch the Coast Guard and report to us all through *The Ash Breeze* as needed.

The old office joke that "someday we are gonna get organized" applies here, except "someday" may actually have arrived. Val Danforth, our stout heart and Secretary/Treasurer, is about to be freed from the tortures of membership lists by a computer. When the bugs are out of the system, we can make real efforts toward boosting our membership into respectable thousands. We need to do this in order to (1) strengthen our arguments on the regulatory front, (2) keep the cost of membership reasonable in the face of insurance premiums and rising costs for *The Ash Breeze*, and (3) reach more people so that we can



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get out on the water, talk, and enjoy our boats more. These last simple pleasures are part of the payoff we all receive as members in return for our vote, if you will. Remember, each of us is charged through the charter

... To encourage the construction and use of traditional small craft... this will include communicating with regulatory authorities, legislators, corporations, and trade associations to express the association's point of view ...

In this vein, members should note that in this charter it is also stated

“Traditional Small Craft” shall mean boats from designs developed prior to the gasoline marine engine, for sail or propulsion. Modern or historical variants or adaptations of traditional designs fall within this definition.

There are no references to materials used, or wood in particular. What possible benefit can the Association derive from excluding a fiberglass Whitehall or rowing shell? All that matters is a concern for quality boats and a willingness to support the council when and if it sees fit to stick its neck out.

### WHY TSCA?

Now if you are beginning to doubt whether it is worth being a member and if the prospect of a letter writing campaign turns your enthusiasm to mush, think about why traditional small craft and sticking ones neck out are important.

The true validity of traditional small craft in a society-wide context is not simply as a fun boat, beautiful boats, ecological boats, or historically representative boats. Their importance (what makes them worth all this fuss) is in the universal totality of their appeal. People with only minimal interest in any kind of boat are stopped by them; made to think. When

the tall ships gathered together, even landlocked landlubbers were excited.

And, if you are exposed to traditional small craft long enough, you begin to realize that there is nothing about them which does not raise the key questions surrounding the lack of quality today. Relatively speaking, traditional boatdom is a model case of integrity in product design, construction, and use. Traditional small craft make people aware of quality as an issue; they are catalysts for social change. Beauty, ecology, “fun-ness,” and historical importance—the entire tradition of quality—are simply contributing elements of that force.

Additionally, these difficult times make sensible alternatives the cutting edge of political/social change. Some have taken the stand that we must keep these crafts in use so that we know how to build, restore, handle, and maintain them when we need them as working vessels once again.

If the real importance of traditional watercraft is in the usefulness and politics, then being a member of TSCA means nothing more or less than being a responsible advocate for quality. That is not to dictate what quality is, of course. There are small craft enthusiasts of all styles and political persuasions. That is the beauty of it.

For example, some believe that professional boat builders should avoid the liability suits inherent in building boats that cannot pass unrealistic Coast Guard requirements. They suggest that each owner sign a contract stating for the record that the vessel in question is a replica or model for display purposes only. If the owner chooses to put the boat in the water and use it, that is strictly his or her affair. Others shudder at this logic and advocate a full-scale campaign ending aimed at changing the requirements for getting wholesale exemption for traditional small craft. TSCA membership does not say that you agree with one side or the other; It says you care enough to help the Association hash out the issue and work towards a solution.



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In 1999, TSCA created the John Gardner Grant program to support projects for which sufficient funding would otherwise be unavailable. Eligible projects are those which research, document, preserve, and replicate traditional small craft, associated skills (including their construction and uses) and the skills of those who built and used them. Youth involvement is encouraged.

Proposals for projects ranging from \$200 to \$2000 are invited for consideration. Grants are awarded competitively and reviewed annually by the John Gardner Memorial Fund Committee of TSCA, typically in May.

The source of funding is the John Gardner Memorial Endowment Fund. Funding availability is determined annually.

Eligible applicants include anyone who can demonstrate serious interest in, and knowledge of, traditional small craft. Affiliation with a museum or academic organization is not required. Projects must have tangible, enduring results that are published, exhibited, or otherwise made available to the interested public. **Projects must be reported in *The Ash Breeze*.**

Program details, applications, and additional information:

[tsca.net/john-gardner-fund/](http://tsca.net/john-gardner-fund/)



*"To preserve, continue, and expand the achievements, vision and goals of John Gardner by enriching and disseminating our traditional small craft heritage."*

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# FROM THE COUNCIL

# TSCA IN THE EIGHTIES

by John L. Roche

In June 1980, the Traditional Small Craft Association will celebrate its 5th birthday! It seems appropriate as we reach this milestone to reflect on where we have been, where we are now, and where we might be headed. This is particularly timely as we enter the new and somewhat uncertain decade of the 80s.

The hardnosed truth is that TSCA was formed as a reaction to an emergency situation created by the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971. By the spring of 1975, it had become obvious that the standards set by the act with regard to weight capacity, numbers of persons, etc., had the potential of putting some traditional boat shops out of business. Further, it had become obvious that the public's right to own and use "traditional boats" would be seriously abridged if the aforementioned standards were strictly applied.

In June of 1975, at a public meeting at Mystic Seaport, a steering committee was authorized to make preliminary plans for the formation of an organization which would voice the views of designers, builders, and users of traditional small craft. The efforts of this committee comprised of John Gardner, Robert C. Lee, Jr., Robert A. Pittaway, N. A., Sydney S. Whelan, Jr., and Jonathan Wilson, resulted in the acceptance and adoption of the bylaws of the Traditional Small Craft Association on June 6, 1976.

At the time that TSCA was formed, the membership was highly conscious of the emergency conditions which had created the need for such an organization. This is clearly reflected in the statement of purpose contained in Article III of the bylaws. There can be no doubt that the founders of TSCA felt the need to provide a responsible, serious minded, and articulate voice to speak on matters related to the design, construction, use, and regulations of traditional small craft.

With the passage of time, and with the apparent relaxation of the emergency brought on by the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971, there has been a decided shift away from the original purpose of the TSCA. To the new member it might appear that Article III is limited to the encouragement of the

construction and use of traditional small craft. In the eyes of some, the Association has been lulled into a position of complacency with regard to the specifications of the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971.

Some of the concerns of the council on this issue have been addressed by Paul Lipke (November 1979 issue of *The Ash Breeze*). Recently, we all read with great interest the information provided by Ken Steinmetz (January 1980 issue). Further, Arthur Krieger's response to Paul Lipke's remarks (January 1980 issue) adds a dimension to the council's continued concern about the purpose and direction of TSCA.

So, where do we go from here? Obviously, that is a question to be answered by the membership. It seems, however, that the council has the responsibility to raise questions as well as carry out the voted wishes of the members. A tentative list of such concerns—without priority—might be:

What about the need to ensure a continued awareness of the original purpose of TSCA without appearing or becoming solely reactionary?

What about the issue of modern materials, e.g. Fiberglass, with respect to the definition of "traditional small craft?"

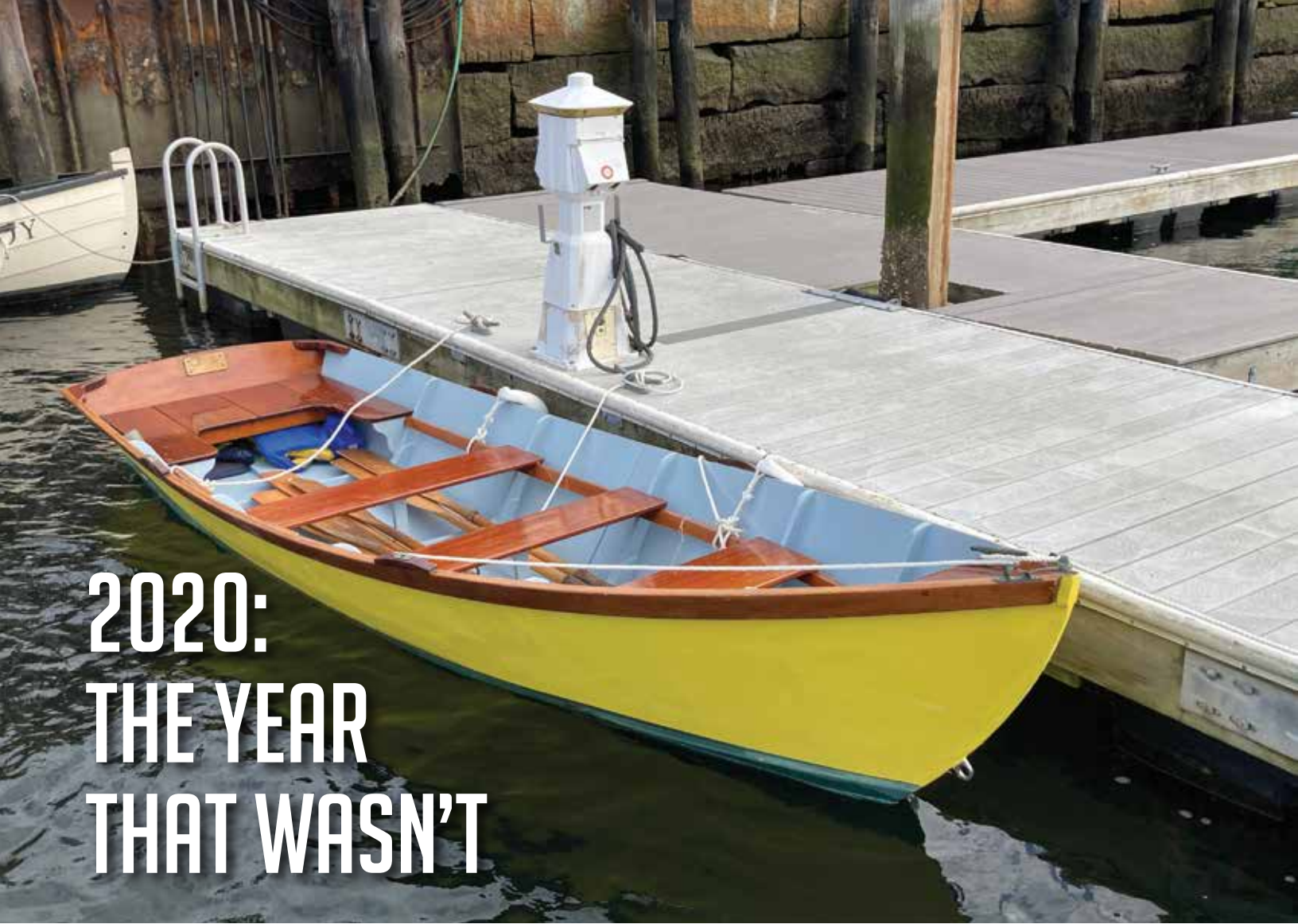
What about the relationship between the national TSCA and the rapidly increasing numbers of local groups and chapters?

What about the relationship between TSCA and the individual professional builder?

What about the relationship between TSCA and the amateur builder?

The above list is far from complete. Some items may be more important than others. Still others must be added to the list and that is where you, the member, come in! As annual meeting time draws near—our 5th birthday—the council would like to hear from you. Won't you take the time to put your thoughts on paper and forward them to the council through the editors of *The Ash Breeze*? Let us hear from you!





# 2020: THE YEAR THAT WASN'T

by Rock Singewald

The year 2020 started out just great here in Warren, RI, and our Chapter members were all ready to enter two boats in the Annual Snow Row in early March up in Hull, MA, when things shut down due to the pandemic. It was a big disappointment, but it was an understandable decision for the safety of all. So we were not able to do any racing this year nor our Learn to Row day nor our rowing sessions for the town's summer camp, but we were able to do a lot of other things, so here's a short report.

Members Kathy Sullivan, Carol Meeker, John Mensinger Ann Kathrin Weldy, Paul and Erik Attemann, Kathleen Byrnes, and Don Betts formed pods to row regularly together in our pilot gig and stretch dory keeping masked distance by adding oar ports on both sides so they could row every other seat. Mostly they had three in the six-oar gig and two in the four-oar dory.

There were also new boats added to the fleet at the Town Wharf. Kathy Sullivan found a very light and responsive skiff, named appropriately *Silver Lining*, and fixed it up and made it available to all. Don Betts did a beautiful restoration job on a 14-foot John Gardner design row/sail skiff named *Uncle Frank*. The boat was originally built in 2001 by Frank McCaffrey, a relative of Don's wife, Martha Antaya. He built it for his sister Pat and her young family as they grew up on Prudence Island. Now it is back in use and looking very stylish indeed.

New chapter members Ed Guy and Alden Bumstead are getting close to finishing their build of a tandem Annapolis Wherry. The color scheme and paint job are beautiful, but even more impressive is the sliding rigger assembly that Ed is designing and building. We can't wait to see it in action.

In other restoration action, your correspondent worked long hours to tighten up all the seams and planks on an old

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**Top:** 14-foot John Gardner design row/sail skiff named Uncle Frank, originally built by Frank McCaffrey, restored by Don Betts.



skiff, *Cap'n Henry*, that he rescued a few years ago despite it having no bottom. However, in keeping with the relentless nature of the bad news that 2020 managed to inflict upon us, he could not stop the leaks. He did, however, have one moment of success this summer, when he completed a 25 mile row from Providence to Newport to commemorate Roger Williams making the row in 1672 at age 70 to get to a debate with the Quakers. I am indebted to Ed Geyh for letting me use his open water single Stubby so this 70 plus year old could wander around Narragansett Bay, followed by Curtis Betts in his Dyer Glamour Girl launch. We are planning to do the trip again in two years with an armada of boats for the 350th anniversary.

One other piece of good news came from Brown University where a group of students built a Peapod as a class project last year. They were looking for a good home for their creation and decided that our Chapter would be a good place for it to tie up. We are taking this as a sign of better things to come, and we look forward to next year as we continue to mess about in boats.

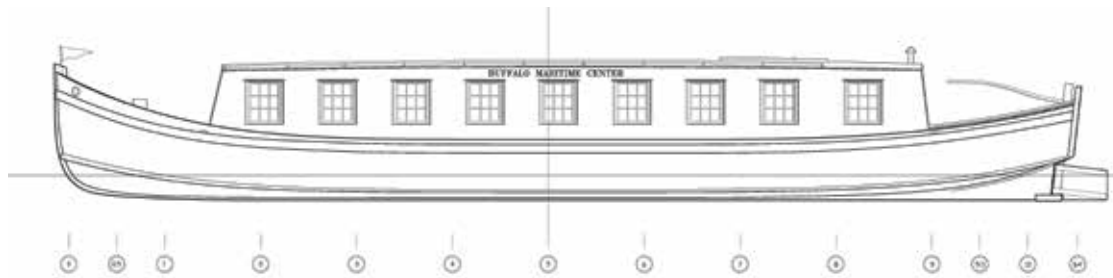


*Right Top: Student-built Peapod that was gifted to the chapter.*

*Right Bottom: Newport*

*Below: Tandem Annapolis Wherry Ed Guy and Alden Bumstead are building.*





# THE SENECA CHIEF

by Roger Allen

TSCA members John Montague and Richard Butz were two of the founders of Buffalo Maritime Center (BMC) as a program of the Buffalo State College Technical Arts Teacher's program in the mid-80s. Most *Ash Breeze* readers will recognize their names from two of the most popular boatbuilding manuals published in the last 30 years, *Building the Six-Hour Canoe* and *Building the Weekend Skiff*. Without exaggeration, I believe it is not far off to say that thousands of these boats have been built all over the world, and that hundreds of community boatbuilding programs have used the designs without the authors receiving a plug nickel.

I've known John for over 30 years, and for at least a quarter of a century, he's been talking up the idea of an accurate replica of a canal boat of some sort on the Erie Canal. When I moved to Buffalo almost 10 years ago to become director of BMC, the conversation had become more specific because the Bicentennial of the first spade cuts to build the Canal was coming up in just a few years, 2017.

John and Dick thought about raising several millions and getting a local shipyard over in Albany to build the boat. After several years of working with our impressive crew of Buffalo Volunteers, I posed the idea of us raising a lot less money (since I was responsible for raising most of the money anyway) and building the boat in Buffalo with our own crew. Since I would head up the project, because I also served as the BMC Master Boatbuilder (their title for me), John pretty easily agreed, and we set to work telling everyone that we were going to build a replica packet boat in time for the bicentennial. Dick retired at about that time and moved back east.

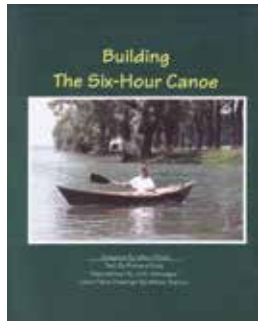
Our constant conversation (and everyone agrees that John and I can do that) did not fall on deaf ears. We developed

a sweet working relationship with Lockport Locks Heritage Committee. They found funding for us to hire Steve Dalzell and Steve Lambert of Fast Forward Boats as naval architects to combine the information from years of research into a plausible replica design for an Erie Canal Packet Boat. The proposed Packet Boat was to be built for the famous Flight of Five locks in that historic town.

Stephen and Steven may be familiar to readers as they spent several years as instructors at the Landing School, Kennebunkport, ME. The design they produced was developed for a 65' round bottomed canal boat with a 10-foot beam and about 2 feet of draft. The dimensions came from 1823–1825 period documentation when the Canal was finally opened and were pretty much for the biggest boat that could fit in all the locks first built for the original "Clinton's ditch," as detractors of the day labeled the proposed Canal.

Research was critical in coming up with a design because, while there is plenty of information about the Canal, its locks, aqueducts, shore structures, and building, it turned out that there was very little in the way of lines plans or drawings of the boats themselves. The only "plans" commonly available seemed serious at first glance, but after critically scrutinizing them and digging up the back stories, we learned that they were produced by a serious Canal enthusiast, non-boatbuilder over one hundred and twenty-five years after our targeted period. Some important elements of those plans of construction and form were nonrepresentative.

While no period builder's plans or half models have come to light, there are artists renditions of various sorts, and good verbal descriptions in period documents. Recently an 1825 request for bids has been found for several canal boats to





be built to specific scantlings and dimensions for the newly opened canal. There is also one faded but tantalizing copy of a blueprint of a lines drawing taken from a now lost engineer's treatise on developing lines. I worked for almost a year with Fast Forward to incorporate our historical ingredients with what the architects and I believe to be near common building methods for carvel construction of that time. I think we've come pretty close to a typical hull shape and building method for a boat of this period and this type.

The timing and available funding to build the 65-foot Lockport canal boat didn't coincide, and that project was temporarily shelved. When we proposed building a replica Durham boat for near a tenth of the price of the Packet Boat, they were able to find enough financial support for a project (at that price), and we went to work.

George Washington famously took a rag tag Colonial army across the ice choked Delaware River in a fleet of Durham boats to retake Trenton, NJ, during the American revolution. Durham's were roughly built, very tough, stretched bateaux. Ideal for carrying bulk cargoes first on the shallow upper reaches of the Delaware between Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the type spread north to the Mohawk River of east central New York and on to the St. Lawrence and Niagara rivers. When sections of the Erie Canal opened as early as 1823, Durham boats were quickly put into service to carry cargoes of all sorts from wheat to newly arrived immigrants. The basic flat-bottomed shape, minimal deck structures, and total lack of internal furniture allowed for the greatly reduced price.

The *Erie Traveler*, as the new Durham boat was christened, was built over the winter of 2014–2015 by a crew of “community boatbuilders.” Since 1978, when I started the Workshop on the Water at the old Philadelphia Maritime Museum, I have done a lot of community boatbuilding projects, but nothing I've done previously prepared me for what happened when we put the word out that we wanted a crew to help build the *Erie Traveler*.

At the night of the first call for crew about 40 people showed up. That was a surprise. What was even more surprising was that by the end of the project TSCA member Chris Andrie, historian and lead carpenter for the boat, had an additional 8 hands pushing planes after the whiskey plank was pinched into place. For the most part, most of them are still involved

at BMC, too. That's saying something, and the project has given us a nucleus of experienced crew for the next project.

*Erie Traveler* came in under budget, 2 feet longer than we proposed, and ahead of schedule. She now floats in the second lock of the Lockport Flight of Five and continues to do her job demonstrating how locks work and how a big cargo could be moved so easily by man and mule on the Canal.

The success of the project had an immediate impact on the narrative John and I were telling about building a Packet Boat replica for the Erie Canal bicentennial in 2025. We'd built an historically accurate, pretty impressive 50-foot boat with volunteer labor in the public eye—under budget—ahead of schedule!

Not long after, John was talking to anyone who would listen at a cocktail party and happened to be overheard by Mark Somers, a great reporter for our local *Buffalo News*. Their conversation over martinis turned into articles in the paper about how Buffalo should take the lead in organizing the Canal Celebration that should be taking place in 2025, and that BMC should be building a Canal boat next to the mouth of the Erie Canal in the heart of Buffalo.

Our research had led us to one boat in particular, the *Seneca Chief*, and she would become the rallying cry. Built in 1824–1825 by Thaddeus Joy, she was, according to her surviving registration, 73 feet with a 12-foot beam, drawing

about 2 feet 6 inches. Several newspaper articles describe her as being finely appointed with a polished interior. Wall hangings, raised panels, glazed windows, a galley, drapes, and a mural are detailed. The record is so complete because Governor DeWitt Clinton, the man above all others who sought completion of the Canal, made the inaugural trip floating serenely in her from Buffalo to New York City to celebrate the opening with a “Wedding of the Waters.” That celebration involved dumping a barrel of Lake Erie's unpolluted fresh water into New York Harbor showing that the two bodies were now “married” because of the Canal. The event may have presaged the many environmental catastrophes that accompanied the Industrial Revolution as it certainly was a beacon for industrial expansion into the American heartland.

Books and numerous articles have been written explaining why the Canal is an engineering marvel of the age. It truly is and makes for an interesting read. What is less understood is how the Canal literally tied everything west of the Appalachian Mountains securely to the fledgling United States, still in





# In a nutshell, BMC is building a 73-foot replica of a circa 1825 Erie canal boat called the *Seneca Chief* as a community boatbuilding project in downtown Buffalo next to the real mouth of the original Erie Canal.

1825 mostly squeezed into a comparatively small land mass between the eastern mountains and the Atlantic seaboard. Everything that moved between the coastal plain, up and over the mountains to the Midwest prior to the opening of the canal had to be in bundles small enough for a man or beast to carry on their backs.



Because of the tenfold increase in shipping capacity carried by canal boat, the Great Lakes became the maritime superhighway bringing shiploads of raw material and midwestern grains much of the way back east to the grain elevators and warehouses at the Erie Canal terminus in Buffalo. From there it was on to the ever-expanding docks of New York City port. Emigrants and their belongings rode in westbound canal boat holds next to manufactured goods bound for the new markets opening in the west.

If this east west flow had not happened, those raw materials would have ended up on the docks of New Orleans instead. The flow of people and goods northwards would have of necessity awaited more dependable steam power to push north back to the heartland against the south flowing Mississippi. That steam

fed technology was not readily available for another decade or more. Politics of the time being what they were, a second new Euro-American country, where Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase sprawled out across tribal lands (by treaty) of the First Nations of the Midwest, would have spread from its southern capital in New Orleans. The water powered infant industrial giant of the New England states would have gone undernourished.

A local history buff and successful businessman, Dave Rogers, read the articles about the canal and our proposed replica *Seneca Chief*. He thought our proposal sounded reasonable and called the office at BMC to ask Brian Trzeciak, our director, if he could come talk with us about our funding.

As I mentioned, I've been doing this a long time, and I've never had a call from anyone who seriously ended up being a "big donor," but if you're a curious "boat being," John and I will give you a tour of BMC. We'll tell you all about the place and the work we're all doing here. We'll show you the library upstairs, the bronze foundry, the runabout shop, the sailboat shop, kayak alley, any one of the forty-five current new boat building or restoration projects, the model shop, soon to be



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Dave was enthusiastic, so it took longer, but we finally ended up sitting in the library. John had just launched into the history of the Canal when Dave turned to me and quietly said, “I read in the paper that the replica *Seneca Chief* is to cost around \$350 thousand dollars. Is that right?”

John was still talking about the Appalachian wall when I responded. “Yup, the boat itself is to cost about that much, and we think we’re going to use a temporary building down at Canalside in which to build her that we have to fund as well. What’er you thinking?” I asked thinking he was going to talk about doing T-shirts or selling subs at the Boatshow.

Dave said, “Well, I’m thinking that I can do the \$350 thousand in two checks, but I’d like you to see if you can do the build down at Canalside as you’ve described it in the articles. That’s where it should be done. Don’t you think?”

John was about to go into how the ability to produce Portland cement was critical to the building of locks, but I said, “John.... John, hold up.” I turned to Dave Rogers and said, “What did you just say???”

When we were able to tell the Buffalo News that a very generous, wonderful, rich guy had donated the building cost of the boat, the editorial staff got behind the project with a “Build the BOAT” campaign. The immediate effect was the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp (ECHDC) calling for a meeting with us.

ECHDC is a quasi-public redevelopment authority of New York state responsible for figuring out what to do with a harbor that stopped servicing six or seven Great Lakes grain and ore carriers a day back in the ’60s. I had dealt with them for years, and it wasn’t always pretty. They had a knack for hiring front people who could find no lingua Franca to answer questions about docking boats in the harbor, for example.

Fifteen minutes into the meeting, and for just a moment, both John and I were speechless. It was Brian who could not stop asking questions for a change because they’d shocked us with news of building a \$6.5 million replica of an historic long shed building. It was to be on the site where the original building stood, adjacent to the mouth of the Erie Canal, where we could BUILD the BOAT.

Eventually, we were asked to do meetings with the building department because the proposed building needed variances. Justification for those had to be presented at many community meetings to explain what we were doing with our Boatbuilding “Of the People, By the People, and For the People.” There were meetings with the Buffalo Common Council and other City Officials because the property for the building had to be transferred to ECHDC by the City.

There were countless meetings with the architects, and I admit they were difficult for me. It was mostly because Brian, who had replaced me as director when I retired a year before,

and who was now my boss, restrained me from physically attacking them when they tried to take almost a third of the building’s interior “for some nice offices and maybe a little boutique.” There were additional meetings about trash handling, floor finishes, windows, doors, ingress, egress, mezzanine capacity, and programming.

When Governor Cuomo’s representatives got involved and were heard saying “build the boat” behind closed doors, right after there was an administrative shift at ECHDC, there was a sea change for the whole effort. It is amazing what can happen when everyone gets on the same page.

Brian, John Montague, and I, with the occasional input from many of our amazing volunteer crew, successfully wrote additional grants to the New York State Canal Corp and the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund. The additional funds have been awarded for new woodworking machinery for the absolutely incredible “Long Shed” that ECHDC built. (Eat your heart out when you see the stuff we’ve purchased.) Our agreement for use of the building allows us to do public programming, including the building of *Seneca Chief* until the 2025 Bicentennial and the grants have also made it possible to cover the expenses of that expanded schedule.

In a nutshell, BMC is building a 73-foot replica of a circa 1825 Erie canal boat called the *Seneca Chief* as a community boatbuilding project in downtown Buffalo next to the real mouth of the original Erie Canal. We’ve put out a call for crew, gotten more responses than Covid-19 will let us handle right now in November 2020, as planned, but we have begun limited safety training and basic woodworking classes, which are mandatory for the volunteers. We’ve hired boatbuilder Greg Dudley, who was to be my assistant because of his limited actual boat building experience, but who quickly became much more because of his brains, willingness to work hard, craftsman-like work ethic, and damned fine eye-hand coordination. We’ve set up our machine shop to make 800 or more bronze bolts, drifts, and studs, and I’ve ordered some more thousands of dollars of other bronze fasteners. I’ve sourced out and purchased about \$35,000 of large white oak timbers for framing stock, and nearly the same amount for some beautiful planking stock. (If you’re looking for beautiful cypress, let me know.) We have additional orders out for Larch (hackmatack, tamarack) from mills down in Pennsylvania too.

Almost a year ago, some of our crew built a nearly 65’ dead flat lofting table up in the loft at BMC, and Captain Phil Sullivan (USCG Retired) has pushed a fine crew through to the point where we have patterns for frames. Stem patterns will follow shortly.

Lofting the boat up was made a little more complicated, beyond the need to just draw 65’ long perfectly straight lines for the grid (go ahead, try it! Tip: use a laser) because the Fast Forward plans were for a 65’ by 10’ boat and *Seneca Chief* is 73’ by 13’. If you want to know how we did it, stop by BMC.





From original oil painting 2010

John Montague

# Erie Canal Packet Boat

Buffalo Maritime Center



Additionally, our volunteer crew has partnered with the Buffalo Harbor Museum to produce some exhibits that are planned for a mezzanine space in a balcony above and to the side of the shop floor in the Long shed. We hope to, at various times, tell the story of the Canal, of the building process, and of canal boats themselves.

As we researched that part of the project, we discovered a new partner when we approached representatives from the six nations of the Seneca Confederacy to talk about our use of the name *Seneca Chief*. We don't know why Thaddeus Joy gave her that name, but we wanted the Nation to weigh in on this sensitive issue. The consensus as expressed by Joe Stahlman from the Haudenosaune Museum was that the original boat was called the *Seneca Chief* and so should the replica be. The conversation has continued and evolved into a planned exhibition that specifically elucidates the impact the Canal had on the original settlers of the Niagara frontier.

Covid-19 hit us in all sorts of ways. The Long Shed building schedule was bumped. Suppliers are unpredictable. Training crew is difficult because of limits to group sizes and requirements for closing schools. But we have purchased, assembled, and installed a massive 1915 L. Powers Ship Saw at BMC to get out the boat's 60 frames. Our chief engineer, Walt Manallio, has installed most of the new equipment in the beautiful new shop space down at Canalside. Greg and I, with

a few crew, got out the big oak timbers to scarf the 70' keel together and set it up on keel blocks that Walt has built for that job. And finally, on October 14th the lieutenant governor, our senator from Washington, a local state senator, and sixty dignitaries gathered at socially acceptable distances just inside the massive shop doors to cut the ribbon on the Long Shed.

At the official keel laying two days later, and for several days afterwards, hundreds of people braved the Pandemic, donning their masks, to come down to the new building site. They first stood looking at a small section of the Canal, walled in with blocks of Medina sandstone but open to Buffalo Harbor and the rest of the world. Then they walked past a wonderful bronze bas relief of DeWitt Clinton and friends at the 1825 Wedding of the Waters. The bronze art was produced by BMC artist in residence, Henry Schmidt, and poured at the BMC foundry. Finally, our visitors stepped into the spectacular new Long Shed. There they became part of the six hundred mile long, two-hundred-year-old story by signing the keel of what will in a few years be a new Erie Canal Packet Boat towing east to commemorate what is still one of the greatest engineering feats in American history, the opening of the Erie Canal. From that day forward, *Seneca Chief* will travel the waterway, working for communities in the Canal Way to help them talk about the Canal's past, and contribute to an ongoing conversation about the Canal's future.



# WAITING FOR SPRING



*A 10.5 foot strip-built decked canoe designed and built by David Wyman. Photo by Rosemary Wyman.*





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# GARDNER GRANT 2020 AWARDS

*from David Cockey, Chairman*

The John Gardner Grant Committee recommends and the TSCA Council approved John Gardner Grants be awarded to:

1. North House Folk School: Herring Skiff (Grand Marais, MN) \$2,000.
2. LCYC Community Sailing & Education Foundation, Inc. Support for a Spurling Skiff (Cranberry Isles, ME) \$840 for two sets of oars.

Since its inception in 1999, the TSCA has awarded over \$50,000 in grants awarded competitively. If you would be interested in serving on the Grant Review Committee, please reach out to the committee Chair, David Cockey by email: [davidcockey@gmail.com](mailto:davidcockey@gmail.com).

MANY EVENTS HAVE BEEN CHANGED OR CANCELLED, SO WE WILL NOT BE INCLUDING A CALENDAR OF EVENTS IN THIS ISSUE.

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# NORTH CAROLINA REVEALS

## SECRET ACTIVITIES

*by Haw River Don, TSCRaleigh*

*Last names are omitted to protect family identities.*

I suspect this will be a “same story different location” type of article. Traditional Small Craft of Raleigh in North Carolina entered 2020 similar to many of our chapters with a list of planned events and high expectations of waterborne adventures. These expectations and adventures soon floundered in the storm called Covid.

We started, as has been our habit, to meet during the winter months, such as they are in the old north state, at members’ home shops. These shop tour events provide the opportunity to check out current boat projects, swap ideas, learn a new way of doing something, provide an extra hand, and, of course, share a meal.

January started out at Don and Diane’s beautiful lakefront home for chilli and a peek at the Chesapeake Skipjack RC model project. One lucky member (yours truly) went home with a Jimmy Skiff hull that became this year’s project.

The February shop tour cancellation was the first sign of events that, by the end of the year, would be all too familiar.

By the March shop tour at Don and Liz’s (different Don), there were warnings recommending only small group gatherings, so the turnout was small. We completed the steam bending of the gunnels and inwales on the modified Jimmy Skiff. We observed the annual burning of the socks ritual and sated our palette with a delicious gumbo provided by my beautiful and talented first mate.

As spring came in, mainstream events like the Beaufort, NC, Wooden Boat Show were postponed and eventually cancelled. Then even the Wooden Boat Show at Mystic Seaport fell to Covid.

Our monthly meetings at Brixx’s were cancelled as the towns shut down waiting out the storm. We found ourselves making runs out in our small craft to check the conditions only to find most of the local launch sites closed, and the ones that were open were over capacity as boating was emerging as a “social distance” friendly activity, except at the boat ramp.

By August, enough salt had accumulated to drive a mutinous boat shop protest at Dean and Susan’s. The quarantine flag



was hoisted and rallied around for a Oughtred Elf flip and grilled grub. This provoked plans for a Raid on the Pamlico River. A rendezvous site and plan of attack was agreed upon.

Sadly, in September twice our attempts of a Pamlico Raid were soundly trounced by wind and rain, the remnants of Gulf Coast hurricanes.

It was mid-October when a new boat joined our fleet, Bobby and his Welsford Pathfinder, transferring from Maryland. Lifting our spirits to get out on the water again, we eagerly fell in-squadron with him and had a good run on Jordan Lake.

The first Saturday in November broke clear and warm. Our annual Lake Wheeler Muster found the winds light and much "Ash Breeze" was applied effectively. Team Don and Diane took first place in the race in a skin-on-frame Classic 12, giving them first pick off the prize blanket. Brunswick Stew, Gumbo, and Lazania were in plentiful supply. This event proved to be a good time for all and an encouragement to persevere.

Welcome new members—Brian who completed his lake drifter, a modified quick canoe, this year, and Bobby with his Pathfinder. Also completed was my modified Jimmy skiff and Glen's excellent workbench. Dean's Elf is almost done and a few others are in the works promising a brighter new year, but we are still learning to sail within the whirlwind.



*Left page: Lake Wheeler. Below: Steam bending. Above: Jordan Sail.*



# DOWNEASTERS MAKING THE BEST OF IT

by Steve Brookman. Photos by Tom Jackson.

Our Downeast Chapter made the most of this year by getting out on the water and complying with CDC guidelines, maintaining an oar's length while messing about.

While we hunker down during the winter months ahead, let us hope and plan for some normalcy in 2021. Here are some photos of Downeasters making the best of a year we'd like to forget.



**Top Left:** TSCA row in early November... Rare warm day for Maine's Quantabacook Lake.

**Top Right:** Low tide offered a perfect picnic spot for lunch.

**Bottom Left:** Steve Brookman ghosting in Blue Hill Bay.

**Bottom Right:** Paul LaBrie and Steve Brookman pulling Peapods.



Late in August, Ben Fuller, standing in a Pete Culler designed Good Skiff on Quantabacook Lake, Maine, demonstrated his skills with the sculling oar. If it looks a bit shaky, it is...

*The Ash Breeze* spring 2021 issue will have a feature story by Ben titled "A Dip in the Pool..."—a capsized can be a big deal of trouble if you don't know what to do.

*Photo by Tom Jackson*



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## The Ash Breeze

Spring 2021 Volume 42 Number 1

**Editorial Deadline: February 1, 2021**

**Articles:** *The Ash Breeze* is a member-supported publication; members are welcome to contribute. *We strongly encourage you to send material electronically.* Send text in an e-mail message, or as an MS Word attachment. Send photos as e-mail attachments, in TIFF or JPG formats, as large and/or as high-resolution as possible. Please give captions naming people, places, and to whom photo credit should be given. You may also submit photographic prints, clean line drawings or *typewritten* material by U.S. Mail. *Please contact us IN ADVANCE if you must submit handwritten text, or material in another word processing or image format.*

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