

# WILSON MUSEUM BULLETIN

Fall 2018

Vol. 5, No. 18



## Row, Row, Row Your Boat

by Debbie Morehouse



Inspired by the building and “stocking” of the new small-craft boat shed now attached to the Wood Shop on campus, I began thinking about rowboats and decided to put my oar in. I have enjoyed rowboats since I was a kid. Back then, my definition of a rowboat was any small, single-person (but could usually accommodate a passenger) boat that was propelled with

oars. What stands out to me is that it was the first boat that I could go out in by myself. And, it was a learning experience that expanded my horizons! Richard Bode says in his book *First You Have to Row a Little Boat*,

We are creatures of the land and we respond to the conventions of the land. First, we learn to ride a tricycle, then a bicycle, and finally, when we come of age, we graduate to a car. But they all have one element in common: wheels that roll across unyielding surfaces of concrete or asphalt. Turn the wheels to the left and the vehicle veers to the left; to the right and it veers to the right. The convention of the wheel is ingrained in us at an early age and from that moment on we tend to apply it to virtually everything we do.

He goes on to point out that a rowboat works in exactly the opposite way. Pull on the left oar and a rowboat veers to the right; on the right oar and it veers to the left. Pull on one oar and push on the other and the boat turns sharply on its axis. A revelation such as that calls “for a fundamental adjustment of muscle and mind.”

## MISSION

*Building on the legacy of its founding family, the Wilson Museum uses its diverse collections and resources to provide learning experiences to stimulate exploration of the history and cultures of the Penobscot Bay region and world.*

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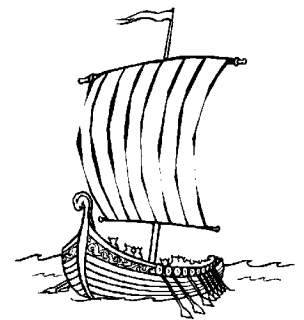


Resilient youth that I was, my coordination adjusted without my ever realizing the physics involved in the activity. Oars are held in place at a pivot point, called oarlocks, attached to the boat. This pivot point is a fulcrum for the lever of the oar. Not only did I acquire this skill oblivious to the science involved, but without any thought to the history or evolution of the boat itself.

Over the years I absorbed bits and pieces of information from word-of-mouth and through stories. For instance, I became familiar with a dory through *Burt Dow Deep-Water Man* by Robert McCloskey. Then, *Building the Cardboard Dory* by Sam Manning taught me the difference between a dory, a peapod, and a rowboat in a very kinesthetic way. This is a fun activity available in the Museum – stop by sometime and start your own boat project. Then, I heard about dinghies, and wherries, and skiffs – oh my. I began to long for the days when any little boat with oars was just a rowboat.



Historically, rowboats are ancient. Images abound of Phoenician, Greek, and Roman galleys, as well as Viking ships, all using several to hundreds of oars per vessel. It seems logical to assume that ancient boatbuilders started small and then increased the size of their vessels over time. They used materials at hand to meet the needs of the people in those long ago and far away places. Local rowboats were no exception. Countless variations on boats propelled by oars were developed to meet the needs of fishermen, ferrymen, and pleasure rowers along the Maine coast. Some of these designs were very location specific, such as a North Haven dinghy, and were created to best meet the intended use and local conditions the vessel would encounter. To this day, because there is no single, ideal rowboat that will satisfy every condition and possible use, traditional designs and their variations still abound. Here are some of my discoveries on a few common types of rowboats that one might encounter at the Wilson Museum and elsewhere in our area. Please feel free to email your thoughts, stories, or corrections to [info@wilsonmuseum.org](mailto:info@wilsonmuseum.org).



## Board Members Elected at 2018 Annual Meeting

On September 11, 2018, the Board of Trustees met for its Annual Meeting and election of officers and Board members (see side bar for complete list). Two Trustees were re-elected: Kay Hightower (2<sup>nd</sup> term) and David Wyman (3<sup>rd</sup> term). Two new Trustees were appointed: Steve Brookman to fill an unexpired term through 2019 of a resigning Board member and Harry Kaiserian for a three-year term.

**Steve Brookman** - graduated from the US Naval Academy and served as an airplane pilot in the Navy and later as a commercial pilot. An avid sailor, Steve and his wife retired to a farmhouse in Blue Hill where he volunteers at the Tree of Life Food Pantry as well as WoodenBoat School and the Wilson Museum's boat shed project.

**Harry Kaiserian** - served as Commander in the US Navy and was registrar at Maine Maritime Academy. He is active in many community organizations and has served three previous terms on the Wilson Museum's Board from 2007 to 2016. He and his wife live in Castine.



Officers elected for a one-year term:

President Temple Blackwood ♦ Vice President Robert Downes  
Treasurer John Macdonald ♦ Secretary Kay Hightower

## Dinghy

Based upon a wide selection of dictionary definitions, it seems a dinghy is a somewhat generic term that usually connotes any small, light boat which is easily towed behind, or stored on, a larger vessel as a tender or a lifeboat. Design, style, and construction characteristics are conspicuously absent from the definitions. In recent years, dinghies have come to mean small inflatable boats used for the same purposes. In the case of the previously mentioned North Haven dinghy, its origin was a tender on the yacht *Gitana* owned by North Haven summer resident William Weld in the late 1800s. Someone put a sail on *Gitana's* dinghy and it is said to have become the model for North Haven's One-Design class racing fleet.



North Haven dingy. Photo by Benjamin A.G. Fuller, courtesy of Penobscot Marine Museum.

The *Ada Mae*, a 16' gaff-rigged, "sail and oar" boat built by Mace Eaton, was exhibited recently at the Museum courtesy of David Bicks and Ruthie Eaton. It was built in 1937 and is believed to be the prototype for the Castine Class sloop – a design that Mace capitalized on by building 20 in the 1950s and 60s. Like the North Haven dinghy, this Eaton boat is an example of a rowboat design that became a sailing legend.

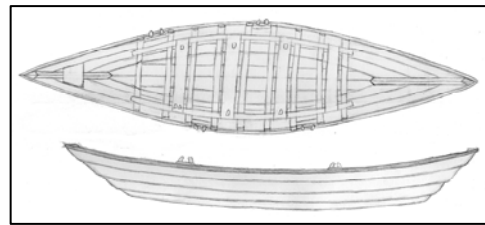


Sail and oar boat - "Ada Mae."

## Dory

As noted in *The Dory Book* by John Gardner (Mystic, CT's John Gardner, not Castine, ME's John P. Gardner), the term "dory" generally brings to mind the Grand Banks dory with its straight sides, flat bottom, narrow transom (sometimes called a

tombstone transom), and characteristic straight bow. Relatively light, simple to build, and stackable, they were often transported aboard large fishing boats, where they were sent off in all directions to fish during the day, returning later to the "mother" ship with their catch for salting and storage. As I've found with all rowboats, dories come in a variety of shapes and sizes and may have derived from French batteaus used in navigating rivers in northeast Canada and Maine. Since most dories are built using wide planks, it has been speculated that dories could only have been built after sawmills could produce fairly thin, wide, long boards. One of the earliest published mentions of a dory was in the *Boston Gazette* in 1726. This "doree" was large enough to carry five men and was in use at the Isles of Shoals.



Batteau - drawn by Jocelyn Willis.

The 16' *Dory of Glory* exhibited at the Wilson Museum was constructed by 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Adams School students during the 2011-12 school year with the traditional dory design including the flat bottom and narrow transom. Participants included Harrison Blake, Ben Burton, Dustin Colson, Hannah Flood, Grant Forbes, Margaret Goodson, Liam Griffith, Lucas Harman, John Hassett, Iain Henderson, Samantha Revell, Yvonne Rogers, Casey Spinazola, Jacob Witting, Morgan Zenter, and Phoebe Zildjian. The project was led by local boat enthusiasts David Wyman and Don Small. Its paint job is reminiscent of Burt Dow's *Tidely, Idley*. While it was on display outside the Wood Shop this summer, kids have been encouraged to hop aboard and let their imaginations carry them away!

Photos courtesy of Rosemary Wyman.



continued page 6



*"Florin" on loan from Maine Maritime Museum.*



## Collecting Castine 2018



*Drawing on loan from Ruthie Eaton.*

Monday evening, August 6, was a special evening honoring John P. Gardner as well as supporting Castine artists. With 100 generous donors, 19 artists, and John's family in attendance, the party included hors d'oeuvres and cocktails as well as an exceptional exhibit of original artwork.

The People's Choice was awarded to Susan Parish Adam for her portrait *John Gardner*. The People chose very well! This work is a gem and the Museum was proud to purchase it for the collection.

Then, a fast-paced, silent auction saw a third of the remaining artwork go home with excited buyers. An added bonus was a copy of the Final Shooting Script for *The Greatest Showman* autographed by Jenny Bicks, its co-author.

*Collecting Castine* was sponsored by Camden National Wealth Management, the talent of Castine's artists, and friends of the Museum. Please visit the galleries in town and continue supporting Castine's vibrant art community!



## Haley Griffin Hired



Executive Director, Patty Hutchins, is pleased to announce that Haley Griffin has joined the staff of the Wilson Museum as Education Coordinator.

Haley fell in love with the Castine area seven years ago when she attended Maine Maritime Academy for a degree in International Business and Logistics. During her time as a student, she sought opportunities to develop lasting relationships which included being a mentor at the Adams School. Haley looks forward to rekindling existing relationships, developing new ones, and using her energy and love for the Castine area to provide beneficial programs to students and learners of all ages.

## Home & Away - Monthly Homeschool Programs

If you are a homeschool family looking to bolster your sessions and make new connections, the Wilson Museum is hosting a monthly program just for you. From



tours of the Perkins House and the Museum's main hall encompassing a world-wide collection, local history, hands-on activities, as well as an inspiring setting in the Hutchins Education Center, the Wilson Museum has a lot to offer.

Our homeschool sessions are scheduled for the second Friday of every month, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., beginning October 12. The initial session will have two parts: one part for "in-the-classroom" Maine History (structured into groups for varying learning levels) and one part for a local field-trip. The two sections will be separated by a break for lunch. Bring your lunch and the Wilson Museum will top it off with a sweet treat and cider. All ages are welcome.

We are excited to kick-off this new program on October 12! If you plan to attend, please help us best serve you by calling 207-326-9247 or emailing [info@wilsonmuseum.org](mailto:info@wilsonmuseum.org). We encourage you to share the information on this free program with other homeschool families.

## Collections Conversations

Abby Dunham

One artifact on exhibit that consistently raises the curiosity of Museum visitors is the "Reeco" Ericsson Pumping Engine, on display in the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Tool Room. It's always a fun story to tell because of people's surprise that it is a hot air (caloric) engine not a steam engine as many suppose. The machine is based on the designs of



John Ericsson (1803-1889), a Swedish-American inventor. His most recognizable work for many today is the Civil War steamship *USS Monitor*, but he developed a host of other inventions, including a model for a solar powered engine.

This particular engine was used at a home in Blue Hill to pump water and was given to the Museum by Leslie S. Pearl in 1965. A recent gift to the Wilson Museum from James Carey helps tell more of its past. A photograph of the outbuilding where the engine was housed provides a greater understanding of the place where the pump was used. A wrench that hung next to the engine indicates that minor adjustments were perhaps needed from time to time. An unused replacement part might indicate that, while the owners were prepared for some repair work, the machine remained reliable.

These related objects help create a fuller account of an already fascinating story. In some cases, what is of most interest is an object's specific history, and it is the context of the object and its use that can illustrate much of this history. Some artifact histories can only be told through the situation of their location or other artifacts. Museum visitors and researchers alike interrogate these contexts, though they may do so in different ways. Preserving contexts when they are known, as well as preserving the artifacts themselves, is an important concern of museums.



## Peapod

Peapods, like dories, were originally the sturdy working boats of fishermen. A peapod is heavier than a dory, has a keel and curved bottom, and is double-ended (pointed at both ends so it doesn't matter which way it is rowed). The design is thought to be derived from the seagoing canoes used by the Passamaquoddy Indians.

Another boat that may be viewed in the Museum's boat shed is a peapod built by Mace Eaton on Little Deer Isle in the 1920s. This 14' peapod with two rowing stations is cedar lapstrake on oak frames. Interestingly, every second frame is continuous across the keel. It was restored by the donor, Lawrence R. Eaton, Mace's grandson, prior to being gifted to the Museum.



*Peapod - gift of Lawrence R. Eaton.*

## Skiff

A skiff is a small, flat-bottomed rowboat, usually for one person, with a pointed bow and a square stern. This dictionary definition is the closest I have found to the rowboat of my youth and is just the type of rowboat that was being built in the Wood Shop this summer. The skiff project, spearheaded by Don Small and David Wyman, made use of volunteer talent such as Ed Vaupel as well as casual visitors who stopped by on Wednesdays and Sundays during July and August. The boat has taken shape, but there is still a lot to be done on it. The crew estimates that it is about half completed, so they will resume work on it next summer. Stop by to see the progress or lend a hand.

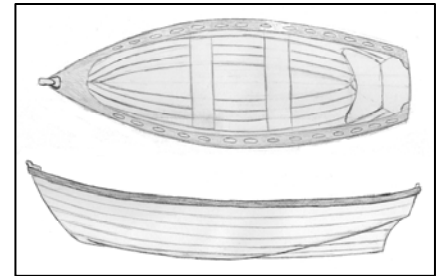


*Grant Forbes, David Wyman and Steve Brookman working on the skiff.*

Raffle tickets were sold this summer and will continue to be sold until the boat is complete. For a chance to become the lucky owner of the Museum's first ever boatbuilding project, a ticket may be purchased for \$10 or 6 for \$50. Raffle proceeds will be used for the next boat project.

## Wherry

Like a dory, a wherry has a narrow, flat bottom and is thought to have evolved from the English river wherry. According to Wikipedia, it is generally long and narrow, with a straight bow, a wineglass stern, and usually carvel planked (smooth sided). Its flat bottom allows the boat to ground out in an upright position and serves



*Penobscot Wherry - drawn by Jocelyn Willis.*

as a shoe for dragging it up and down the beach. Along the coast of Maine, wherries became the preferred boats for use in the salmon fishery. Did you know that during the 1870s the most productive weir of Hancock County was at the entrance of Castine Harbor, which produced, in one year, more than 1,600 pounds of salmon? This is a pertinent rowboat style that the Museum would love to document. Does anyone know of an historic Castine- or vicinity-built wherry still extant?

## Just a Rowboat?

The 13' carvel planked rowboat with a curved bottom on display in the boat shed was given to the Museum by Maine Maritime Academy. Lore has it that it was built by Jake Dennett in the 1920s. If this is true, then it was probably built in Dennett's



*Rowboat - gift of Maine Maritime Academy.*

Wharf loft (the building next to The Wharf restaurant) on the Castine waterfront. An illustrated, July 1914 *Yachting* magazine article discussing inboard engines versus outboard motors on yacht tenders states, "Any man who has experienced the trials of taking care of a

14 or 16-foot power tender on a boat under 45 feet in length, and who has found that the trouble more than offset the usefulness of the outfit for a boat of this size, might find a solution of his problem in a well-designed and lightly-built rowing tender equipped with one of these portable motors.” There are several photos in the article that look similar to the Dennett rowboat and show the telltale evidence of an outboard’s clamps on the stern. All of these little clues actually prove nothing. The Museum’s rowboat may have been built as a tender or it could be just a rowboat built along the lines of earlier tenders. If anyone knows more about this lovely little boat, please contact the Museum.



*Tender from 1914 Yachting magazine article.*

### A Rowboat Story or Two

In 1870 Nautilus Island resident Rufus Coombs Ames reported in his journal that “...during the winter I made up my mind that I had better leave the Island for my Children were getting large enough to go to school. I reviewed a number of places over in my mind and concluded to go and see Camden and see what there was there for me. So I took my row boat in

March and rowed to Long Island [Islesboro] halled acrost [sic] what they call the carry and arrived in Camden less than 5 hours from the time I started.” Wow, a trip from Castine to Camden across Penobscot Bay in less than five hours! I’m getting blisters just thinking about it.

Islesboro seems to have been a popular destination of Castine rowers. A delightful story of fiction from Don Small’s *Salt Water Town* tells the story of a young man and a day’s rowing adventures. If you don’t have a copy of *Salt Water Town*, give us a call or go to the Museum web page Shop and order a copy.

### In the End

Though I like knowing the particulars of a thing, in the end, it really doesn’t matter the type of rowboat you prefer. Stop by the Museum next summer and see the display and variety of local rowboats, then find a way to get out on the water and go for a row. As Rat from the children's book *The Wind in the Willows*, by Kenneth Grahame, says, “Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing — absolutely nothing — half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.” You can trust he knew what he was talking about since he was rowing at the time.



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### IN MEMORIAM

We remember the following members of the Wilson Museum who believed in the Museum’s mission and gave of themselves to further its outreach.

*Their legacy will live on.*

**Katherine Bailey**  
1935-2018

**Leni Mancuso Barrett**  
1926-2018

**John Alton Boyer**  
1926-2018

**Alice Trowbridge**  
1936-2018

Additionally, the Museum has received generous donations in memory of the following:

A. Marie Porter  
Alice Trowbridge

WILSON MUSEUM  
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**WILSON MUSEUM**

May 27-September 30  
Weekdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Saturdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.

**JOHN PERKINS HOUSE**

July & August  
Wednesdays & Sundays  
Hour-long tours at 2, 3 & 4 p.m.

**THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH  
& WOOD SHOP**

July & August  
Wednesdays & Sundays 2-5 p.m.

**BAGADUCE ENGINE CO.**

May 27-September 30  
Same hours as Wilson Museum

**The Chairs Are All Tricked Out  
Thank You!**



With your help we were able to scare up and name 50 chairs for the Hutchins Education Center while honoring many of our devoted friends, past and present, at the same time. Thank you so much for making this project a chair-raising experience! Sit for a spell. We know you will enjoy your chair or your neighbor's chair for years to come.

*p.s. Happy Halloween!*