

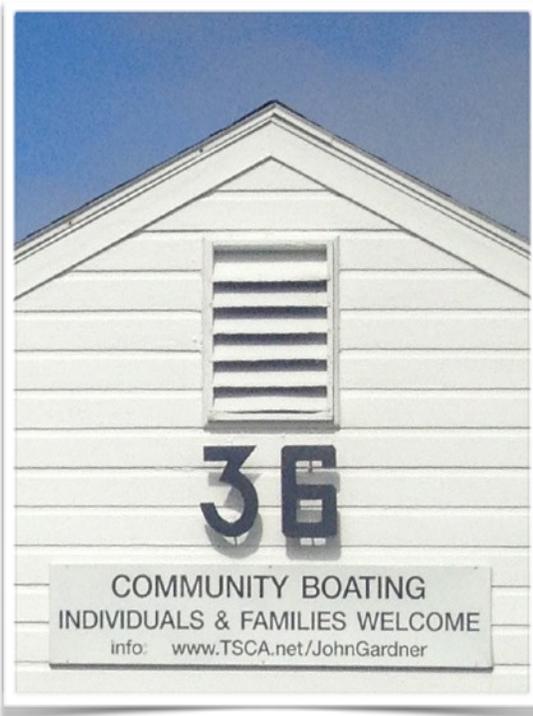
JGTSCA

**John Gardner Chapter
of
Traditional Small Craft
Association**

Traditional Boat of the Month: Boston Ship Chandler's Whitehall

Article by Sharon Brown

Small Craft Notes from Sharon Brown:
(ELYSEA, 1973) 16'3" x 4'5" (Accession. No. 1978.102; see Bray, M., B. Fuller, & P. Vermilya, Mystic Seaport Watercraft Catalog, 2001, p. 180).



*(2002 37 27 ELYSEA JoeP BryanH BenR SDB)
Boathouse volunteers Joe Pelletier, Bryan Hammond and Ben Ragsdale demonstrate ELYSEA during a 2002 Boathandling Class (Sharon Brown Photograph).*

**Friday, December 3, 2017
12:30PM
Potluck Luncheon and
Meeting at the New London
Customs House, 150 Bank
Street, New London, CT 06320**



Welcome to John Gardner Traditional Small Craft Association. Visit us at the Community Boat House, Building #36 at the University of Connecticut Avery Point We invite you to attend one of our meetings, go for a row, or get involved with our next boatbuilding project.

www.TSCA.net
<http://www.facebook.com/JGTSCA>

On Labor Day weekend 2006, Stewart Fisher, his wife and two children drove to Mystic from their Massachusetts home. At Mystic Seaport's Boathouse, they rowed ELYSEA, the boat that Stewart's great uncle donated. Laden with tugboat model kits made by volunteer Bob Watts and origami paper boats from Paula Peterson of Boatstuff, young Paige and Evan exclaimed, "Thanks for all the stuff!" Eleven years later, Boatstuff, once a local treasure trove for mariners has morphed into other commercial outlets, and memories of their visit have faded amid new volunteers, but the Fishers' unscheduled Boathouse adventure exemplifies the tenuous thread of historical continuity between those who care about and document, traditional small craft.

The 16-foot ELYSEA was donated by her owner, Donald E. Fisher of St. Michaels, Maryland in 1978 along with molds

and some construction patterns. Her old name plate dated her 1973 construction by Sam'l T. McQuay of Wittman, Maryland who followed the lines for a Boston Ship Chandler's Whitehall published in 1951 in Howard Chapelle's *American Small Sailing Craft* (W.W. Norton Co., NY, p. 199, Fig. 73). This design was used in Boston before 1876, according to Chapelle, and the plan made by Albert Green, a Navy Yard draftsman, was probably taken off the boat by him and used to design a pulling Whitehall for the Portsmouth Navy Yard. 'The Boston Whitehall was often fitted to sail,' wrote Chapelle, 'and was used by harbor fishermen in the 1840s, as well as by the various professional boatmen.'

In response to a 1990 inquiry by Donald Fisher's daughter Katherine, Ben Fuller, Mystic Seaport's curator at the time, responded, 'I know the boat well... I watched your father, Sam McQuay and Joe Liener build her when I was the curator at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum'. Indeed, she had a storied beginning. Samuel T. McQuay (1909-1979) married the daughter of Chesapeake Bay bugeye and log canoe builder John B. Harrison, working with him for 17 years starting in 1933, and continued in the business after Harrison's death with his son David (Line L. 1976 Oct.; Lipke Paul 1981 *Plank on Frame*, International Marine). According to Lipke, the elder McQuay used a special hand plane developed by retired master boatbuilder Joe Liener to fair the inner face of the stem of a 16' Whitehall. McQuay died not long after the interview for Lipke's book and one is tempted to believe this plane was used in ELYSEA's construction. Joseph Liener, retired in 1969 from the Philadelphia Naval Yard and moved to the St. Michaels area, where he volunteered for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, sharing his lifetime in boats with colleagues and visitors, while documenting the collections before his death in 2002.

Fisher brought ELYSEA to Mystic's annual Small Craft Workshop in 1976, and John Gardner included a photograph of her under sail in his September *National Fisherman* column. It was two years later, subsequent to his

participation in the 9th annual Small Craft Workshop, that Dr. Fisher donated her to Mystic, the same year that the late R.D. 'Pete' Culler's Rushton canoe, J. HENRY became part of the Museum's collection" (Brown, S. 2007. *Messing About In Boats* 24(23) March 15:13-17). Their owners had been swept up by the enthusiasm and emotion of the workshop (*Windrose* 9(4) Aug/Sept 1978).

ELYSEA's lapstrake hull is cedar planked with steam bent white oak frames, and copper rivet fastenings. The transom, sheer strake, trim and back rest are mahogany. The interior is oiled, and the thwarts and stern sheets are cedar (or possibly cypress). Topsides are painted white, and the sheer strake is varnished. ELYSEA was built with two rowing stations, each with a single thole pin and grommet to hold the oar against the pin. In practice, only the aft station is set up, and the boat load is balanced with the oarsperson more centrally located fore and aft. She is usually rowed with 7 1/2' or 8' spruce or ash oars, straight bladed or spoons. Since she can accommodate up to 5 souls and the family dog, the resistance her keel affords when a novice oarsperson tries to negotiate her in tight quarters, has in the past, been hard on the life span of dedicated ELYSEA oars. She takes potluck now on assessment of the dock attendants. While the thole pin may seem intimidating at first, it is very easy to row with, and for the novice the grommet acts like a closed oarlock. This may feel awkward when back watering, and the oar pulls against the grommet, away from the pin. For hot, steamy days, ELYSEA was equipped with a red and white striped awning, which may help to offset the effect of the dark interior which absorbs the heat but this has not been rigged in a long time.

A sailing Whitehall, ELYSEA has a centerboard, which sits to one side of the keel, and will affect the trim of the unwary if the oarsman centers on the centerboard, rather than the keel. ELYSEA has a small sprit sail main with boom and is loose footed. The rudder is fitted with a yoke and tiller lines. Perhaps under canvassed, she is sluggish in light airs, and requires some finesse to bring her through the wind on a tack

and crew help to see forward around the jib. Better suited for off the wind, and since she is long and sleek, it would do well to do a few practice tacks before trying to round up alongside the dock in a breeze. Whitehalls are attractive small craft, and while much has been written about them, their origins are yet vague. John Gardner's first published Whitehall articles were in the *Maine Coast Fisherman* in 1953 (June, Aug., Sept., Nov.) but his appetite had been wetted much earlier working during WWII at Graves in Marblehead alongside legendary old time boatbuilder Charles A. Lawton (1858-1957) who built fancy Whitehalls many years earlier on the Charles River for H.V. Partelow & Co. At Graves John also worked with Gerald B. Smith (1906-1994) whose father, Captain Charlton L. Smith (1869-1944) wrote from first hand experience about Whitehalls for *The Rudder* in 1943 (Aug.). Born in Chelsea near Boston when shipbuilding was a primary industry, the elder Smith spent his youth hanging around the yards and later while working on boats and in shipyards, he went to night school studying naval architecture. He corresponded with Howard I. Chapelle who wrote about Whitehalls in *American Small Sailing Craft and Boatbuilding* (1941, also by W.W. Norton & Co.). Smith also corresponded with W. P. Stephens (1854-1946) a working seaman, yacht designer and prolific writer who chronicled *Canoe and Boat Building For Amateurs* (1884) and *American Yachting* (1904), and his papers in the rare manuscript collection of Mystic Seaport's G.W. Blunt White Library include important notes on Whitehalls.

Influenced by these scholars, John continued to write about Whitehalls incorporating much of his research into his first book *Building Classic Small Craft Vol 1* (International Marine, Camden, ME) discussing the origin of the Whitehall and for some time in the mid 1970's considered writing a book on them alone. However, like Stephens before him, he had multiple interests, too many to see it through. Characteristic models usually have plumb stems, fine wine glass shaped transoms, full length plank on edge keels, carvel planking

(though not always), and frames laying perpendicular to the keel. Frequently the sheer was of oak, bright finished and overlapped the next or binder plank with a decorative bead along the bottom edge. They ranged 16' to 21' in length and not more than 4' in beam. They were work boats but kept in good working order, harbor taxis run by crack crews and called on by their businessmen owners to provide services in haste to large vessels entering busy ports like N.Y., Boston and San Francisco in the mid 1880's. They were often raced, and usually for significant cash purses (Gardner, J. 1973. *Log of Mystic Seaport*, Summer). The intriguing history of their origin, remains an issue, where and when and if indeed there is a type. W.P. Stephens thought they were in N.Y. as early as 1820, Chapelle thought that they were in mass production in N.Y. boat shops in the 1840's whereas Smith thought the Whitehall first appeared in Boston in 1870.

Since 1988 and ELYSEA's inclusion in The Boathouse livery fleet, she has carried thousands of people on waterborne excursions into Mystic River waters, putting them in touch with their maritime heritage in a practical manner, teaching them immediately about thole pins and grommets, and the tracking qualities of Whitehalls. ELYSEA's sweet transom haunts memories. "Boathouse moments," all different, would not be possible were it not for the generosity and forethought of those who steward small boats and offer them to Mystic Seaport Museum, which in turn assumes their care and in some cases longevity through use.



(2006 09 02 ELYSEA FISHER rental Funk SDB)

Boathouse staff Nate Funk oversees the Fisher family rental of ELYSEA on Labor Day Weekend in 2006 (Sharon Brown Photograph).



(2017 02 09 ELYSEA JMcGuire P1240019 SDB)

During winter maintenance in February 2017 Boathouse staff Jim McGuire finishes repairs to the ELYSEA's thole pin pads (Sharon Brown Photograph).



*(2017 05 09 ELYSEA
tholepin grommet
P1290162 SDB)*

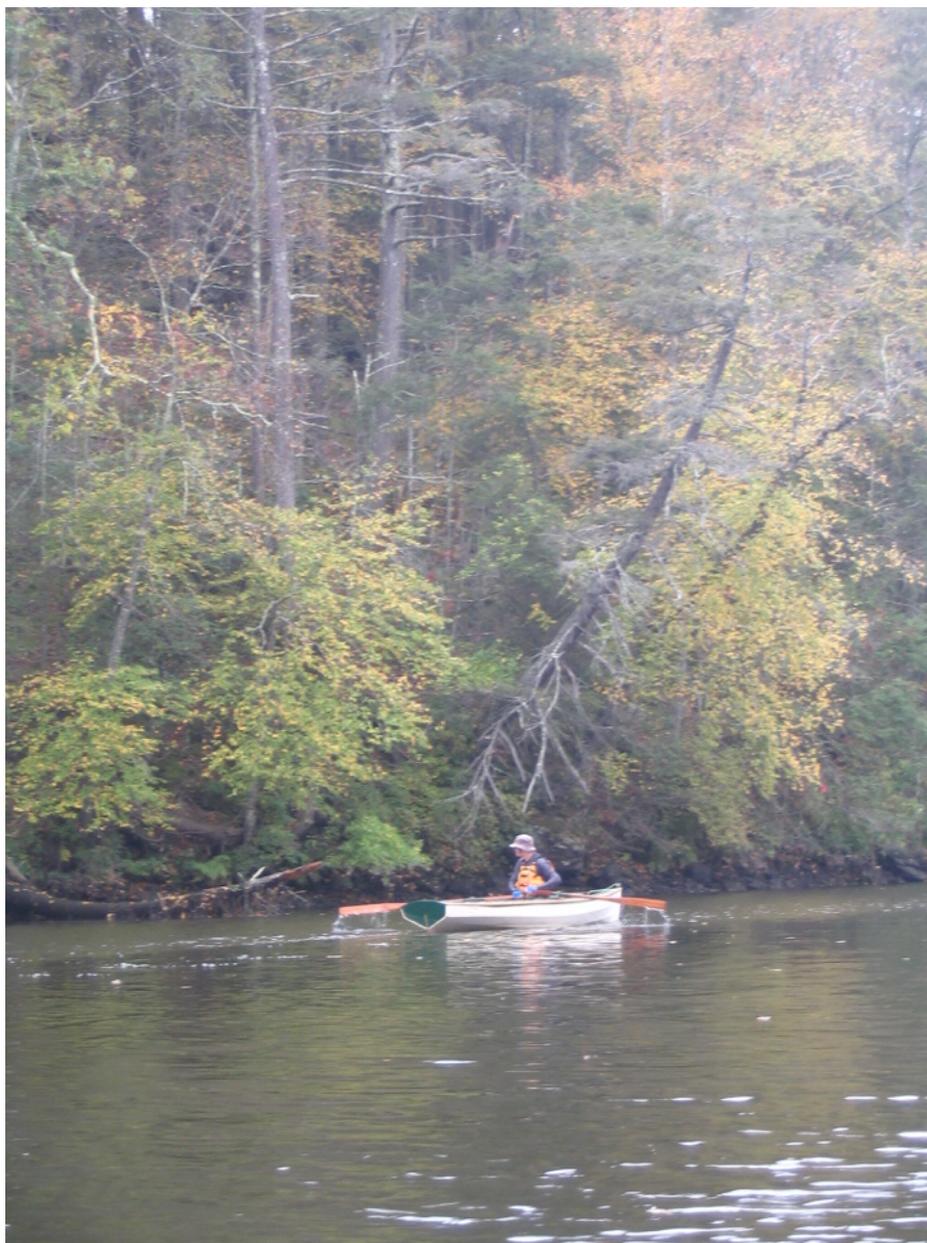
A close up of a thole pin and grommet shortly after the May 2017 commissioning of the Boathouse fleet (Sharon Brown Photograph).



*(2017 08 29 Elysea
Hammond Grommet
Facetime P1380862 SDB)*

During a break from skippering BRECK MARSHALL in August 2017, professional mariner, Bryan Hammond fashions a new grommet for ELYSEA with facetime skill appreciation from Tia D'Alessandro (Sharon Brown Photograph).

The Salmon River Row:



Dan Nelson reports that it was a misty day Saturday October 14th on the Salmon River as he led the annual Fall Row and Paddle. In keeping with this issue's Whitehall theme, here is a photo of member Brian Cooper rowing his new skin-on-frame Whitehall. Quite a change for the leader of the Connecticut Sea Kayakers but he seems to be managing nicely. Beautiful boat, Brian, on a beautiful river. Thanks, Dan, for your leadership on this now annual outing.

Message from our President:

The Customs House has been reserved for the Annual Holiday Potluck/Monthly Meeting, Sunday December 3rd from 1230 until approximately 1500. Tentatively, Matthew Phillips is going to do a talk about his very special boat that he had at the Small Craft Workshop. If that falls through, I can assemble a slideshow on research vessel missions/operations and do a Q & A. Any other speaker/presenter ideas are welcome.

Matthew McKenzie, UCONN faculty, is very eager to try to get some hands-on shop experience for interested students. This will begin in mid-January, if anyone enrolls. Essentially, it will be students doing independent study that includes a hands-on component, provided by JGTSCA. Details will be provided as they come available.

BYLAWS:

So far i have received -10- votes on the bylaw changes as follow:

For = 8 votes

Abstain = 1 vote

Drain the Swamp = 1 vote

Therefore, to the best of my knowledge, the changes to the bylaws have been approved by the general membership.

See you at the Shop; Plenty to do these days. There are three dories being worked on, with a variety of tasks to be completed.

We plan on running an oar making workshop this winter to outfit our boats with custom oars and to allow members to make some for themselves.

That's it for now,
Dan Nelson

Our Saltwater Row:

Mid-day September 16th was a beautiful day to be on the water as the sun shone and the breeze filled in. We launched from the ramp at the Baseball Field just before the railroad underpass on the road to the Airport. Lots of parking, no line at the ramp; it's amazing what a low railroad bridge does to keep the bass fishing boats at bay. We launched at 10 am: Dan Nelson in his Southwester Dory, Renè Boelig and I in the Peapod and the Meiers (Bill & Kris) in their double paddle kayaks. We rowed/paddled under the rail bridge, alongside the airport runways and through the old trolley bridge abutments to a sandy spit to stop, raise masts and set sails.

Then we were off, racing against the falling tide (and losing - leaving a bit of bottom paint on the high spots). We made it all the way to the end of the beach area and out into the harbor, only to meet the bass fishermen cruising back in, so, on a failing breeze, we turned back to our protected lagoon. There, both the wind and the tide came up and we cruised on back to the ball field for a pullout and late lunch.

It was good fun; put it on your calendar for next year.

Yours in Oar and Sail,
Capt'n Cleat



Dan cruises by to say hello to Bill and Kris.



Renè steers with his right ear as he adjusts his first loose-footed sail.

Around the Shops:



At the Seaport Boathouse, David Moore applies the final coat of Cetol to Elysea's rail.



In the Seaport John Gardner Boat Shop Bill Littell and Len Mierzejewski roll & tip the topsides of a Beetle Cat.



At our TSCA Avery Point Boathouse, Bill Armitage and Brian Cooper replace some siding to celebrate UCONN AP's 50th Anniversary.

John Gardner TSCA 2017 Calendar

NOVEMBER:

- ◆ **Friday, November 3rd:** Potluck at 5:30pm with Meeting to follow
- ◆ Club dories repair in shop
- ◆ Tour local shop - Member's or Professional

DECEMBER:

- ◆ **Sunday, December 3rd:** Pot Luck Holiday Party at 12:30pm, New London's Custom House
- ◆ **Meeting and Presentation to follow**
- ◆ Next boat in queue into shop
- ◆ Possible Visit to Newport Mansions

Note: See also our Calendar on <http://www.tsca.net/johngardner/schedule.htm> which includes additional events of general interest including Boat Shows, Competitive Rows and gatherings like Sail Boston and Sailfest New London.

View from the Side Deck:

As the sunset moves up an hour and most boats are out of the water, our thoughts turn to reflecting on summer outings, enjoying the crisp fall weather and stocking up on boat hardware and plans catalogues. Off the water and into the shop. And diving into the stack of boating magazines piled up by that easy chair.

Before you put the boat away, remember Phil Behney's annual Solstice Row. A chance to breathe in some bracing winter air followed by drinks at a waterfront pub. Watch for Phil's email.

Kudos to George Spragg and Kate Weinberger: they were seen pitching a tent at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival. Kate was Karen Rutherford's star pupil at the Watercolor class and you'll have to ask George what it was like waking up in the middle of the night in a partially deflated air mattress, dreaming he was being swallowed by a giant marshmallow.

For those of you web cruisers looking for a little entertainment this winter in front of the fire, Ashley's Book of Knots is now in the Public Domain (<http://archive.org/details/TheAshleyBookOfKnots>) and you can download NOAA's Booklet Charts for free at (<http://www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/staff/BookletChart.html>). Good luck learning new knots and enjoy planning next year's cruises.

Hope to see you all at the Custom House on December 3rd! Until then, Fair Winds and Clear Skies.

Bill & Karen Rutherford

This month's Nautical Quote:

"The best boat is a small boat and a large hotel room", Jesse Diggs

