

JGTSCA



John Gardner Traditional Small Craft Association

Welcome to the John Gardner Chapter of the
Traditional Small Craft Association

Visit us at the Community Boat House: Building #36 UCONN Avery Point
1084 Shennecossett Rd, Groton, CT 06340

Summer Fun in Rowing Craft
at UCONN Avery Point Boat house Building 36
and at in boats at Mystic Shipyard, East

Next Meeting: In Person Meetings will resume in Fall
Rowing and Sailing gatherings occur during the three seasons with special programs and visits planned throughout the year. All are welcome.

Local: www.facebook.com/JGTSCA and <http://www.jgtsca.org>

News from around the Chapter

Welcome to the John Gardner Chapter of the Traditional Small Craft Association! Visit us at the Community Boathouse, Building #36, on the University of Connecticut's Avery Point campus in Groton, CT. We invite you to attend one of our gatherings, go for a row, a sail or get involved in our next boatbuilding project.



John Gardner Small Craft Workshop: the 50th

All good sea stories start out the same: "It was a Dark and Stormy Night, and there we were, Green Water coming over the Bow..... Well, it was not quite like that, but close. Friday was one of those beautiful late Spring days you wait all winter for: sunny and warm with a light breeze. Those of us who live in the Northeast get a little wary during days like this. Way too

nice to last. Well, we were right. A real Northeaster blew in Friday night. Cold and windy with rain pouring down. For three days. Did that dampen the spirits of the assembled Traditional Small Crafters? Not a whit. We not only persevered but we thrived. The worse the weather got, the more we raised our voices in defense of traditional Oar and Sail.



It also helped that Mystic Seaport provided safe haven for our boats alongside docks floated in for the occasion, providing protected water along Australia Beach. And more to the point, we were allowed to warm our toes in the old Toy Boat Shop, (used to be called the “Annex”) which is really an extension of the John Gardner Boat Shop (folks used to call it the “Gray Boatshop”). We wisely left the portable tents outside, folded in amongst the Beetle Cats not yet launched. We forgot the usual “White Box” to communicate schedule. Instead we posted upcoming activities on notes on the door window. We threw out our carefully prepared plans, asking instead, “What would you like to talk about? What would you like to know more about? How to make your own Sails? Convert frame patterns to a set of plans and build a boat? Read a chapter from your upcoming Sea Novel?” We did them all, plus managed to squeeze in a few rows up and down the river and some afternoon sails.

We had folks and boats from all up and down the Coast. the Cocks, David & Katherine from Rockland, Maine (“Know where to buy a good, clear flexible batten? Home Depot in the Trim Section.”), Thad Danielson from the Massachusetts’ Berkshires with his new book “Wooden Boatbuilding, Always More To Learn” (excellent book!), Peter MacLearn and his wife Gwenn (thanks for the home-made banana bread, Gwenn) from Boston’s North Shore with a Wooden Boat Peapod in tow, Dick Sleeper and his wife Jeannie Steigler from Troy, NY with Dick’s father’s Chamberlain Skiff and the drawings to go with it, made from some builder’s patterns he found (and they sailed it with an ancient Dynamite Payson “Tortoise” (lateen) sail.) You should have seen that boat go when they rowed together, facing each other (“I like to see where I’m going.”, Dick said.), plus a real small craft designer, Tony Dias, with his “Sparhawk” sailing canoe design straight out of the “80’s (1880’s), with his friend and the boat’s owner, Irving Sheldon (the best of all worlds: design a beautiful boat, build it, sell it, be friends with the owner (who maintains it) and invites you to join him at small craft meets...).

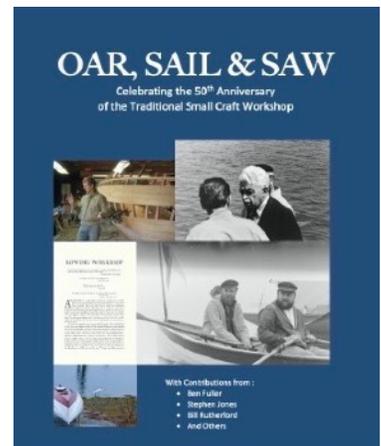


Tony also regaled us with a dramatic reading of a chapter from his upcoming book, “In the Forecastle”, read as we huddled in the basement of the Seaport’s Chandlery. A chill wind blew in the open door with (some spits of rain) as he took us into the forecandle of a 1910 fishing Schooner (think the Seaport’s “Dunton”), clawing its way off the coast, returning from the Grand Banks in a fierce winter storm. We were glad to return to the Toy Boat Shop and its hot coffee and donuts.



By far the hit of the show, however, was the Crew from the river Mohawk with their historical 20+ ft. replica of an 18th century River Bateaux. Handmade, with carved oars and a square-sail straight out of one of Ben Fuller’s Afjorsfaerings (“Cut the halyard and she comes down real quick.”). You should have seen them scoot right along in front of that Northeast wind coming down river Sunday morning after exploring of the source of the Mighty Mystic River. But they really came into their own in the warmth of the Old Toy Boat Shop as they shared the adventures of their annual week-long trips (unsupported) along the Mohawk and its tributaries. As they got to know us, the stories became more hilarious. Encounters with the “natives” (townspeople) along the way say nothing of rigging and carrying cannon to reenactments at the ends of their trips. All in handmade outfits ca. 1770. They were really having fun, as were we.

Prof. Steve Jones exercised his US Coast Guard experience to wisely call off (Gale Warnings) the planned Saturday morning Reenactment Row to the first “Small Craft Conference and Rowing Workshop” (1970). He, however, has in publication for release this summer a fresh book “Oar, Sail & Saw” (pronounced “Soar”) subtitled “Celebrating 50 Years of the Traditional Small Craft Workshop”. A fun compilation of remembrances, old photos and essays by folks who were “Present at the Creation” and active since. We’ll keep you posted when it comes out.



The planned activity (yes, we had one...) that was also a hit was touring the Seaport’s Small Craft Hall (formerly known as the Rossi Mill), jam packed full of traditional small craft in their as-donated condition (Want to match colors of paint? See how they half-dovetailed ribs at the centerboard case? How thick, really, were “Pete” Culler’s chine logs?). We had 23 folks in our group plus Sarah Clement, the Seaport’s new Co-Waterfront Programs Administrator as

well as our own Peter Vermilya, Seaport Small Craft Curator, Emeritus. We ignored them, of course and dashed off to view our favorites: Rushton Rowing Boats, Canoes, Catboats, Dorries as well as later pretenders like the original Laser Version 0.



Many thanks are in order to: Brian Cooper who led the Workshop, managed the waterfront and led the morning rows, to Phil Behney who delivered the JGTSCA Dorries and John Hacunda who joined us Sunday and helped Brian row them back to Mystic Shipyard East, to Mystic Seaport Museum's Co-Waterfront Programs Administrators Sarah Clement who helped us organize this whole thing and Nicolas Alley who joined us Sunday for a gam and rowed with us Monday, to each of the presenters in the Workshop and a special thanks to all the attendees who braved the elements to come join us have fun in Traditional Small Craft. See you next year!

Jeannie Steigler and Dick Sleeper ready for an afternoon sail in his Father's Chamberlain Dory

But, don't just take it from us, here is a report by Peggy Huckel, crew member of the Mohawk River Bateaux. From L to R: Mike Diana, Education & Programs Manager for the Schenectady County Historical Society, David Manthey, Kevin Richard-Morrow and Peggy Huckel



Peggy writes:

May 28-31, 2021: It was the 50th annual workshop, postponed a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Things have eased, and everyone, I'm sure, expected a pretty good turnout for the event. Unfortunately the weather was terrible - cold (40s), rainy, and worse yet, windy. But fortunately (as Red Green might tell it) we were all about boats. We were cozily ensconced in the back room of the John Gardner Boatshop at Mystic Seaport. It was just perfect for the small group of die-hards who turned out. The seaport had provided a floating dock for us to tie up to at the Australia Beach next to the Boathouse.



I was part of a crew of three, manning a student-built replica of a 1750s Mohawk River bateau (cargo boat) based in Schenectady, NY. The boat is one of two owned by the Schenectady County Historical Society, that we use for reenactments and weekly community rowing. We arrived on Friday, launched below the bridge and rowed up, found no one around, tied up at the dock and went off to dinner. It had just started to sprinkle.

The next two days were filled with friendly chatter, useful discussion, donuts and coffee, as we happily made friends and shared stories of our boat knowledge and experiences. It was a joy to meet folks with interests so similar to mine, who were familiar with my Dion Swampscott dory and welcomed my questions. I was equally interested in learning about the other boats there, the treasured, passed-down plans and drawings, the book recommendations, the trial-and-error adventures. I particularly benefited from a session on making a sail, with input from several very experienced and knowledgeable, even professional, members. Yet I felt they all spoke to me at my level of understanding, in ways that specifically encouraged and motivated me to try what I already had in mind. I came away more confident and with resources and contacts that will help me succeed. Can't wait to start!

The highlight of the weekend was our private access to Watercraft Hall, the engine and boat storage facility - the physical archives of the seaport's collection. Accompanied by Peter

Vermilya, the Small Craft Curator Emeritus, we had free run of the huge building, filled, to our delight, with every kind of old boat you'd ever dream of seeing, many of quite famous provenance. I couldn't stop grinning, and really would have spent many more hours there if I could.

On Monday it finally stopped raining and a strange glowing but fuzzy orb appeared in the sky. Although it remained chilly and mostly cloudy, we ogled a lovely sailing canoe that showed up just that morning along with a sweet CLC rowing craft with a sliding seat, then rowed in company with a couple other small craft up the river until it became too shallow, turned away from the wind, hoisted sail and slowly eased our way back to the museum, taking a spin around some of the larger vessels in the shipyard area before returning to the dock. After more chatting, we had to depart, rowing downriver to a boat ramp below the bridge, hauled out and headed back to New York.



We had a wonderful time, and so appreciated the welcome we received and the relaxed, flexible schedule. I even met people from my own home waters in NY. I'm already looking forward to next year, when the sun will shine and there will be at least twice as many small craft and their owners in attendance!

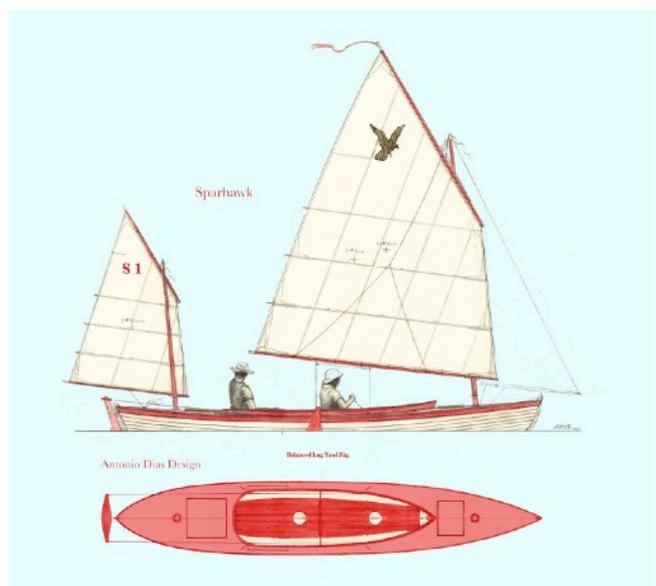
Peggy Huckel, Wilton, NY
 Dion Swampscott Dory, based near Catskill, NY on the Hudson River

Monday Morning we had another treat: Tony Dias, with his friend and boat owner, Irving Sheldon, brought their "Sparhawk" sailing canoe to launch and sail in company with us on the River. Tony shares his description:

"I designed SparHawk in 1992 for a couple in Greenwich CT. The design was inspired and informed by my experience building and sailing Ian Oughtred's MacGregor.

Both boats are inspired by the decked sailing canoes of the 1880's and '90's. My first look at examples of these boats was during visits to Mystic Seaport and warehouse crawls through the Rossy Mill with Ben Fuller and Peter Vermilya.

<https://antonio-dias.com/portfolio/sparhawk/>



Nat Wilson built SparHawk's sails in Egyptian Cotton. He also built the sails for my 14' Little Cat sailing dinghy, Harry. It's been an honor to have sails by the same loft that built a suit for the USS Constitution!



I've been fortunate that SparHawk's moved to Rhode Island and it's been my great pleasure to be befriended by her current owner, Irving Sheldon. I could never have imagined back in Gardiner New York in the winter of '92-'93 that we'd be bringing SparHawk, now the Katherine M, to the fiftieth John Gardner gathering at Mystic all these years later!

I want to thank you again for all your help and for keeping this event alive. I look forward to getting involved with future activities and with deepening my relationship with fellow, southern New Englander small boat people! Tony [Antonio Dias antoniodias@mail.com](mailto:antoniodias@mail.com)



And here is a photo of Tony and Irving Sheldon rigging "Sparhawk" for the road, with dinghy dolly atop the trailer! Actually, it worked well, getting the boat in and out of Seaport grounds on the dolly while the trailer waited outside.

Upcoming Events

Steve Jones has scheduled a Row around Mason's Island for this Sunday (6/6/21) morning. This will in part replace his planned row up the River last weekend. This just in from Steve:



“Leave 9:00 Sunday morning from #120 School Street, West Mystic (his Boatyard), park trailers nearby, to row around Masons Island. Lunch in nearby sandwich shop after.”

Note that his yard is just a short row from our Dories at Mystic Shipyard, East. If trailing your own boat, coordinate with Steve as to where to park your trailer and car. He will have people to direct you.

If planning to attend, please let Brian Cooper (cooperbd@yahoo.com) know.

Steve's Original “Egret” built by Barry Thomas w/ a real Egret (photo by Sharon Brown)
Hope you make it. Beautiful Weather promised....

For Sale

So, immediately drop everything and go re-read Chapter IV “Keeping Her Where You Want Her” in Roger Taylor's “Elements of Seamanship” (all good stuff) which includes “Most any vessel deserves more than one anchor, most deserve three and often a choice of four is put to good use.” (pg. 35). Enter Paul Morris (paulmorris15@charter.net) with this buying opportunity:

“We would appreciate it if you could post these anchors in the newsletter. I looked up prices at Defender and we would greatly reduce the price to:

Danforth CQR 20 lbs \$150.00

Danforth fluke 20H \$120.00

Danforth fluke 12H \$90.00

Danforth fluke 4 lb. +chain \$40.00

From the Side Deck

It stays light at Building 36 until almost 8:30 in the evenings now, the BBQ is fueled up and the view of the River is beautiful as the sun sinks in the West. Let's plan an outdoor gathering to celebrate the season. Let's gather at Mystic Shipyard East and give those Dories some exercise. Give us some times and dates and we'll gather again. Reach out to Brian Cooper or any Officer with ideas. Think about leading a Row or Sail. Visit our website to keep up to date.

In the meantime, take some photos to share on your next outing. Send them along and we will share with others. This is the time to use our boats. Remember the WoodenBoat Show August 20-22 and our Oar and Sail Outing September 18th. Happy Fourth!

Fair Winds, Bill and Karen Rutherford