

# JGTSCA

## John Gardner Traditional Small Craft Association



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

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

### Maintenance on Rowing/Sailing Craft

Fridays 3:30 - 7:00 pm at UCONN Avery Point Boat House Building 36

**Next Meeting: Quarterly Meetings at UCONN Avery Point Community Boat Building #361084 Shennecossett Road Groton, CT 06340?)**

Rowing and Sailing gatherings occur during all four seasons of the year.

Local: [www.facebook.com/JGTSCA](http://www.facebook.com/JGTSCA) and <http://www.jgtsca.org>

National: [www.TSCA.net](http://www.TSCA.net)



**MADE IT TO THE BEACH! CHRIS VARGAS AND DAN NELSON ON BUSHY POINT BEACH AT BLUFF POINT**

## Our Oar, Paddle and Sail Event a Success:

Our JGTSCA Bluff Point State Park/Poquonock River Row/Paddle/Sail met on **Saturday, September 13th at Peruzzotti Boat Launch** off Airport Road just south of Route 1 in Groton by Burrows Ball Park. Beautiful sailing on the protected waters in behind Bushy Point.

**Chris Vargas' Report:** "The low tide was rising. Dan launched his Eastport Pram into the River followed by Chris launching his Northeaster Dory. Thanks to Bill Rutherford for assisting the two sailors. Dan and Chris rowed under the railroad bridge. Once clear of the bridge, Chris rigged his mast and began tacking down river, fighting a rising tidal current, Dan continued to row until he passed the narrows. This turned out to be the smart move, as Chris struggled against the current in the sporadic light winds. After about two tacks and making very little down river progress, Chris dropped the oars into the water and rowed to and through the narrows. South of the narrows, the wind was steady and the two white and blue boats enjoyably tacked their way to the beach at the end of the Bluff Point peninsula. There, they met John Hacunda, who kayaked from Bluff Point State Park. After lunch, the three departed the beach. Dan and John rode the winds and tide back to their starting points, while Chris continued past the river mouth and sailed around Bluff Point then out and around Pine Island."

**This from John Hacunda**, the Paddler of the group: "It was great to get out on the water on Saturday. The weather was perfect. I posted a video and some photos about the outing on the JGTSCA website."

**See our Website Report:** <http://www.jgtzca.org/scuttlebutt/oar-paddle-sail-outing> which includes many more photos. Chris also managed to video a jet taking off across his bow...



**ON LEFT: CHRIS VARGAS' NORTHEASTER DORY CHASES DAN NELSON'S PASSAGEMAKER ACROSS THE SHALLOWS INSIDE BUSHY POINT BEACH, SHALLOW WATER BUT DAN ONLY CARVED HIS INITIALS IN THE SAND ONCE...ON RIGHT: CHRIS VARGAS DOWN RIGGING BACK AT THE RAMP.**

## Upcoming Events:

**Next Quarterly Meeting:** Early next month - watch your email for advance notice.

**Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival: October 3rd - 5th** at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, MD: Adam Blackwell is Committee Chair this year, who with Liz, Charlotte & Oliver assisted us so ably at our June John Gardner Small Craft Workshop. Karen Rutherford will be leading the Watercolor class, there is an overnight cruise to nearby Wye Island as well as rowing & sailing "Races" (including cardboard canoes). Tent camping on-site is allowed. Info at <https://cbmm.org/resources/cbmm-hosts-mid-atlantic-small-craft-festival-xlii-on-oct-3-5/>

**Our Pawcatuck River Fall Colors Row: 10 am October 25th** @ Bradford Boat Landing, 1 Alton Bradford Road, Bradford, RI. See Fall Colors at their peak. Contact Dan Nelson [here](#)

**Friday Evening Gatherings at the Avery Point Boathouse 4 pm to 7 pm:** Work on Ian Bradley's Culler Wherry and Maintenance on Club Dories - get them ready next season. Watch your email for notifications.

**Have an idea for a Row, Sail or an interesting place to Visit?** Contact Phil Behney [here](#) , Ian Bradley [here](#) or Matt McKenzie [here](#) to set up an event or add updates. Visit our website's Events page at <http://www.jgt sca.org/events.html> Contact John Hacunda [here](#) to add events.

**Watch the Events page on our Website** for updates. Contact John Hacunda [here](#) to add upcoming events. Watch our Scuttlebutt page <http://www.jgt sca.org/scuttlebutt> for items of general interest. Thank you John for assembling all this!

## Avery Point Boathouse News:

**This just in from Matt McKenzie:** "With the resumption of classes, students have been back in the shop! I brought both of my classes through to talk about boatbuilding and to let students know about the TSCA itself. From those introductions, two students have joined me in continuing the restoration of the club dory, *Louise*. We did some spot epoxying, and am building up the forward starboard rowlock rail. We will be touching up epoxy runs etc., but will then be scuffing and painting the interior with a couple of coats. We'll then flip her over, scuff, and paint the exterior. **Along the way, students are reflecting on the history of dories and on skill acquisition** with an eye toward academic papers/presentations in the future.

There has been interesting stuff going on in the shop! Matt"

Plus, Ian Bradley's Culler Skiff just came in for final finish work. See below...

## President's Notes:

Hello fellow wooden boat enthusiast,

**I have some fun news to report:** the Pete Culler Wherry Skiff has arrived at the Avery Point Community Boat House. Her name is Moon Maiden She is a lapstrake cedar planked cat ketch skiff, 1/3 decked over fore and aft. She was built by Kevin Rathbone in 1975. Stored on the hard since 2014 she is thirsty for a taste of a swim. My brother and I moved her in during a beautiful sunset on Friday evening. We used the beach rollers from the shop to get the skiff easily from the trailer across the side deck through the garage door and then into the shop.

**Thank you to Phil for an impromptu visit** at the shop and helpful suggestions how not to crush anything important. **Matt McKenzie has been an incredible help** to me with the majority of the rehab work we've done on the boat so far. We had a lot of fun learning how to remove and replace copper rivets in 50 year old cedar planking and how to steam bend replacement oak frames! **The next steps for the boats refurbishing are:** to turn the boat over – I will need several helpers with this, sand/ paint center board, install new centerboard retracting line, reinstall centerboard, install bow eye bolt, flip the boat right side up. Then sand/ scrape & paint the floor board risers' mount to the hull, fasten the floor boards to risers, build a replacement thwart for the mid rowing station, remove the old varnish from the decks and revarnish, varnish thwarts. **I plan to work on her a few afternoons / evenings a week, with Friday grill outs a definite.** Please go to our [JGTSCA.org](http://JGTSCA.org) events page on Saturday nights to find more info for upcoming Friday shop grill-out schedule details. I will also email my full shop work schedule for each upcoming week on Saturday nights to any JGTSCA members interested.

**I invite you all to visit the shop to check her out,** and talk over some ideas/ plans, give some suggestions, enjoy some tasty delights from the grill with the group. Then it is splash test time!

**Looking forward to talking to you soon.** Ian Bradley, JGTSCA President - Ian's email: [here](#)



**ON LEFT, IAN'S CULLER SKIFF AS IT ENTERED OUR COMMUNITY BOATHOUSE. ON RIGHT, IAN EXAMINES THE FORWARD CABIN OF HIS SKIFF HUNTING DOWN AND VACUUMING ERRANT CARPENTER ANTS...**

**A PETE CULLER QUOTE: "SOME WILL SAY THAT BOATBUILDING IS ONE OF MAN'S NOBLER EFFORTS. MAYBE SO, IT'S A LOT OF FUN ANYWAY."**

## Mystic Seaport Boat Livery:

OK, so we have an amazing collection of classic small boat replicas for visitors to take out, see if they like them and possibly ask the age-old question, “Where can I get one of these?” Of course, we answer, “You can get a set of plans across the street.” but not all of our offerings can there be found. Enter Exhibit “A”, a recently donated a Ron Rantilla forward-facing rowing system. It can, however, now be taken out and exercised, both you and the machine, using leg power, arm muscles or both. Last Thursday, Volunteer Jim Morrow took it out for a spin and came back smiling. Come try it yourself. And if you like it, Ron can make you one. Take a look at <https://www.frontrower.com> . Ron used to come to our Small Craft Workshops and show off his style as he automatically feathered his oars while zipping along in a double-ender.



**ON LEFT, VOLUNTEER JIM MORROW COASTS BACK IN USING ARMS ONLY. ON RIGHT, VOLUNTEER TOM WONDER AND BOATHOUSE SUPERVISOR ROSIE DIMATTEO LIFT THE UNIT OUT OF THE CANOE.**

## Mystic Seaport Ship Modelers:

The Mystic Seaport Ship Modelers meet **monthly at 10 am the second Saturday of the month** upstairs in the John Gardner Boat Shop. Current member projects are discussed with time set aside for a technical presentations. The group exhibits models during the summer season downstairs in the John Gardner Building as well as in special shows in various venues around the Seaport campus like the Tugboat Show March 20th to the 22nd planned for the Masin Room of the Thompson Building at the north end of the Seaport. Andy Small and the train gang will be displaying the narrow-gage On30 also in the Masin room on Father’s Day weekend. Several members are working on creating an MSSM sailing group, with a specific design R/C sailing model to use for casual sailing, fleet sailing, and perhaps casual racing around the buoys, in addition to demonstrating R/C sailing to visitors and perhaps giving visitors a hand at it. Come join in on the fun; next meeting is October 11th. for more information, reach out to Bob Andrie at [mysticseaportshipmodelers@gmail.com](mailto:mysticseaportshipmodelers@gmail.com)

## **Mystic Seaport Museum Activities:**

### **Foodways and Fisheries**

#### **October 4**

Celebrate the flavors of fall—past and present—along the Museum's waterfront. Explore the rich traditions of maritime foodways—from farming to fishing—how food was grown, harvested, caught, and cooked. Step inside the Buckingham-Hall House for a historic cooking demonstration. Visit the *Fish and Forest* exhibit to learn how modern fishing families are adapting to a changing New England. And, stop by Home Port to create your own fish-themed craft to take home.

Purchase **tickets**.

### **Expand Your Maritime Skills with a Fall SeaClass**

Single-day and multi-day classes in September, October, November, and December. Space is limited

Find your sea story in a Mystic Seaport Museum SeaClass! This fall, explore 19th-century skills in blacksmithing, open-hearth cooking, letterpress printing, sailmaking, navigation, and wood carving in authentic historic spaces with master craftspeople as your guides. Make original items to take home and enjoy. A variety of on-campus evening and Saturday classes are available for every skill level. Learn **more**.

### **Charles W. Morgan Walking Tour**

Saturdays through October 11:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Step aboard history with a guided walking tour of the Museum centered on the legendary whaling ship *Charles W. Morgan*. Explore the captivating story of New England whaling, visit historic buildings tied to the trade, and descend into the ship's hold for an unforgettable glimpse of life at sea aboard the Museum's iconic flagship.

Purchase **general admission tickets** and add tour tickets from options presented in Shopping Cart.

### **What Lurks Beneath: Get Your Tickets Now!**

October 17, 18, 24, 25, 26 | Timed entry

This Halloween, wander through eerie indoor and outdoor spaces where ocean legends come alive in *What Lurks Beneath*. Enjoy fanciful performers, towering sea creatures, crafts, and Halloween-themed food and drinks. Brave adults and older kids can join a haunting guided tour through the Museum's shadowy corners of the town of Greenmanville.

### **Fall Music Cruises: Mondays on SABINO**

### **Boathouse Operations: August 25–October 13 Weekends and Holiday Mondays**

11:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Free with Museum admission. Take a boat out!

## From the Mailbag:

From long-time participant in our John Gardner Small Craft Workshops, Mike Magee: “Hi Bill, As a retired carpenter I have spent a joyous time giving away old tools and building materials to the young. I would also like to find a home for my probably complete collection of **Wooden Boat Magazines**. I also have a lot of “**Boatbuilder**” issues. Free to a good home. I would prefer that someone young be the new owner and get use them as a resource. Before I advertise broadly I thought I’d start with the John Gardner chapter of TSCA. Your help would be appreciated.”

Contact Mike [here](#) or email your editor at [smallcrafter@gmail.com](mailto:smallcrafter@gmail.com)

## In the Home Shops:



It’s always hard to part with a boat, particularly one you have studied and sailed for years. Peter Vermilya just did so. Here is a photo of Peter and Peggy with Adam and Oliver Blackwell as they hitch up Peter’s Delaware Ducker and head on down the road towards St. Michaels, MD to transfer ownership to “Ash Breeze” Editor, Andy Wolfe. The boat was built by the Delaware River TSCA Chapter, during which Andy had a major hand. The boat’s future will be on a mountain lake in South Carolina.

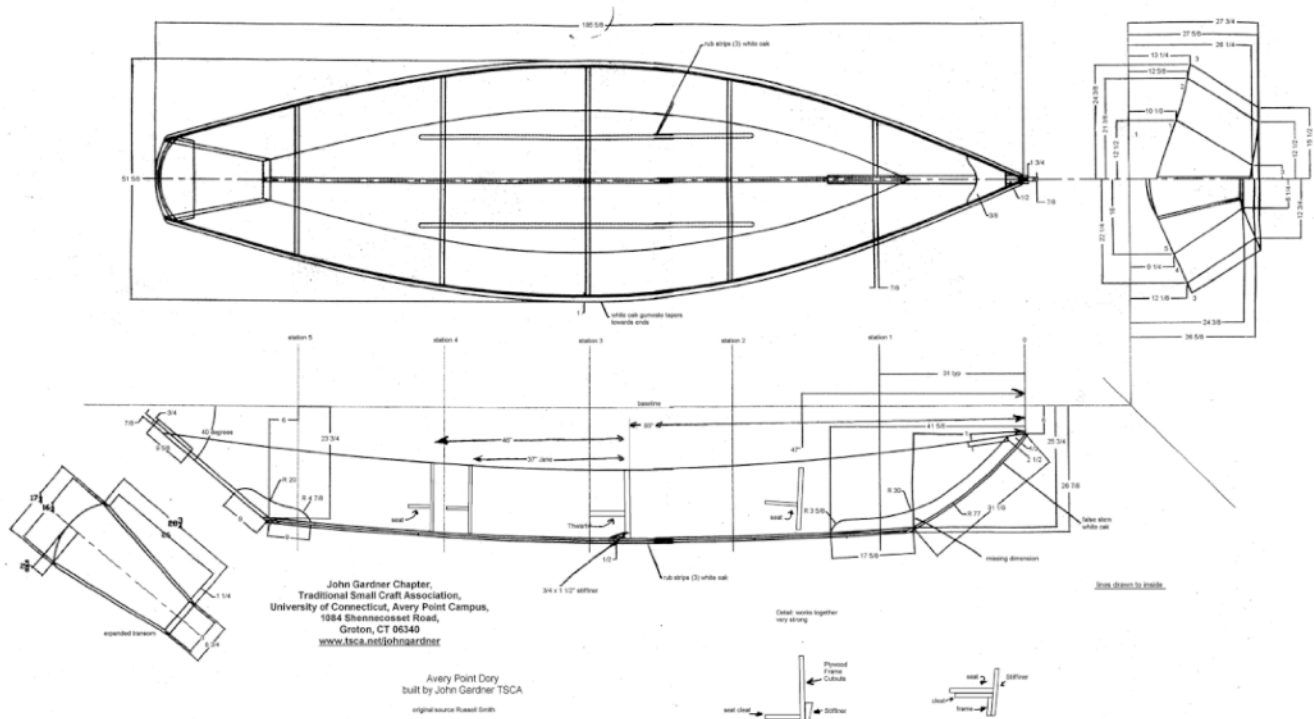
## JGTSCA and National TSCA Websites:

Check out this link to the back story as well as detailed building directions and plans for our iconic JGTSCA Dory: <http://www.jgtasca.org/avery-point-dory.html>

**Building the Avery Point Dory** from notes supplied by Warren Dolphin

“Hull #1 was named *Jane* in 2004 and was built from measurements taken from a decaying boat obtained by Russell Smith in Niantic, CT. The boat had originally been constructed in Noank a number of years earlier. JGTSCA members were impressed with its rowing characteristics and decided to built several dories for the club based on this prototype.

Over the years the Avery Point Dory has become a utility craft for the club, being used in rowing outings, competitive races, and for demonstration at the Small Craft Workshop.”



On the National TSCA website at <https://tsca.net> note the latest in the 36 inch Bevin's Skiff Pond Yacht development at <https://tsca.net/free-bevin-skiff-36-plan-sheet/> and free plans at <https://tsca.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Bevin-Skiff-36.pdf>

Do we have a team interested in building a few for friendly competition? We could do a group build. They will be sailing them at this year's Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival October 4th & 5th in St. Michael's Maryland. I'll bring back some photographs. [smallcrafter@gmail.com](mailto:smallcrafter@gmail.com)

### Advertisements:

**Catboat "Rascal" built by Member George Spragg 14 ft**, trailer available for delivery contact Kate Wells at (860) 772-2805

Plus a **Rob Pittaway** built fabric on frame ultralight double paddle canoe

And a **15 ft. Bolger Harbinger Catboat**. Contact Bill Rutherford at [smallcrafter@gmail.com](mailto:smallcrafter@gmail.com)

#### Two Canoes for Sale - Peggy and Peter Vermilya

Not Your Average "Banana Boat"

**For Sale: 16'6" Mad River Kevlar "Malacite" tandem canoe, yellow**, wood trim, cane seats, seat back + paddles. Excellent condition. \$1,950.00. 860-535-3623. Stonington, CT

#### Ye Olde Green Canoe for Sale

15' x 3', a classic in good condition, but needs new center carrier bar (not structural) if desired.

Cushioned seats. Tan interior. Aluminum trim. \$500.00 860-535-3623. Stonington, CT

## Remember your Dues:

This is the time of year we receive lots of reminders to “remember to renew your annual memberships.” We are different - Ellie does not bug you with reminders, however, she would still like to hear from you as she closes out 2025 and readies for 2026. Same with National...

**Send \$15 to Ellie Czarnowski** for LOCAL CHAPTER JOHN GARDNER TSCA dues:

Use the On Line Join & Renew form at [www.JGTSCA.org](http://www.JGTSCA.org) click on “More” and “Join or Renew” and Mail in the form with your check to the following: JGTSCA Treasurer, Community Boat Building #36, UCONN Avery Point Campus, 1084 Shennecossett Road, Groton, CT 06340

**And \$35 for NATIONAL TSCA MEMBERSHIP** (remember, they pay our event Insurance):

Join and Renew Online at [www.tsca.net](http://www.tsca.net) and receive a copy of the “Ash Breeze”. Click on “Join and Renew” to either join on line or print a form and mail in with your check. Thanks.

## Quotable Quotes:

A Maine Lobsterman on the proposed US Coast Guard buoy removals as quoted in Maine, Boats, Homes & Harbors: “A veteran Maine lobsterman who looks to the buoys when electronics falter and “the bony bottom comes up hard and sharp and fast,” the Coast Guard plan is “Baffling; You might as well take down all the street signs,” he said, “since we all have GPS.”

## From the Side Deck:

**The UCONN/CT River Estuary Messabout was not on for this Sept. 12th.** Hopefully they will bring it back next year. Stay tuned for next year...

**A big thanks to Peter Vermilya for his donations as he downsizes his home Boatshop!**

Dan Nelson accepted some fine gear and tools which are now on display in the Avery Point Boathouse including yellow boat rollers for floatation and beach access, fresh life jackets for our Dory fleet and miscellaneous tools as well as boat parts like original cotton canvas for traditional deck covering. Please thank Peter in person when you see him.

**Rob Pittaway passed - a guiding light to TSCA and draftsman for many John Gardner’s measurements in the Seaport’s Ship’s plans of Small Boats.** He was an inspiration to us all in a cheerful, positive way. We worked closely together on the crew building our Chapter’s 12’ Atkin skiff sharing boatbuilding skills as well enjoying as lots of Chinese food. A fixture at the Seaport Boat Livery and the Small Craft Workshop he was welcoming to all. He will be sorely missed. His friend Cameron Taylor is putting together a remembrance for us to display at our Community Boathouse. We have a draft on the next page. Help identifying the boats will be welcome...

**Meanwhile, enjoy the Fall Colors October 25th, come visit the Boathouse and go Boating!**

Fair Winds, Bill & Karen Rutherford [smallcrafter@gmail.com](mailto:smallcrafter@gmail.com)



Stonington Pulling Boat



# Robert (Rob) Alexander Pittaway

February 5, 1941 - August 11, 2025

**R**ob Pittaway was born Feb. 5, 1941, in New York City to Adelaide Lathrop Ketchum and Rudolph Alexander Pittaway. He died Aug. 11, 2025, at the Lawrence + Memorial Hospital in New London.

Rob grew up in Cambridge, Mass. As a child, he was known for his sunny temperament and very blond hair. He graduated from Colorado College majoring in zoology, but

influenced by summers spent sailing at a camp in Maine and family vacations in Westport Point, Mass., he switched to naval architecture attending graduate school at the University of Michigan.

In 1965 he married Louise Davis of New York and settled in Stonington where they sailed their Herrshoff Fish Class. He worked for the Mystic Seaport mentoring under John Gardner. Louise directed the Stonington Lighthouse Museum and curated exhibits featuring early New England farm equipment.



Herrshoff Fish Class

Rob's passion was to design and build small craft. A stickler to the rules of traditional design, he loved to experiment and designed the seaworthy Stonington Pulling Boat launched to much celebration from Don's Dock in Stonington April 20, 1980. His halfhull models of sailing ships are on exhibit at the New London Maritime Society's Customs House Museum where he was board member and regular volunteer, and could expound at length on a lighthouse's fresnel lens.

An active member of the John Gardner Boathouse in early 2000s, Rob assisted on all projects and led the workshop in oar construction. As a student of John Gardner he was a handy resource for Gardner lore.

Rob was known for his humor, exactitude in all things, rich vocabulary, curiosity in understanding how things work. However, at age 30 he suffered a stroke caused by a reaction to his heart medicine partially paralyzing his right side affecting his vision, speaking, writing and walking. His resilience in the face of the many



health challenges endeared him to many.

~ Rob's Ship's Bell ~

May it ring often and resound across the seas and through the ages to salute Rob and boatbuilders everywhere.



I'm sailing away  
Set an open course for the Virgin Sea  
'Cause I've got to be free  
Free to face the life that's ahead of me  
On board, I'm the captain  
So climb aboard  
We'll search for tomorrow  
On every shore  
And I'll try, oh Lord, I'll try  
To carry on

I look to the sea  
Reflections in the waves spark my memory  
Some happy, some sad  
I think of childhood friends  
and the dreams we had  
We lived happily forever  
So the story goes  
But somehow we missed out  
On the pot of gold  
But we'll try best that we can  
To carry on

A gathering of angels appeared  
above my head  
They sang to me this song of hope,  
and this is what they said  
They said come sail away, come sail away  
Come sail away with me, lads  
Come sail away, come sail away  
Come sail away with me

~ Lyrics by Dennis De Young (Styx) ~  
(Stephen Lamb's tribute to Rob at Legacy.com)



Rob's half hull model of ???