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

Maintenance on Rowing/Sailing Craft
at UCONN Avery Point Boat House Building 36 - check website for times

Quarterly Meetings at UCONN Avery Point Community Boat Bldg. #36
1084 Shennecossett Road Groton, CT 06340
Rowing and Sailing gatherings occur during all four seasons with special programs and visits planned throughout the year. All are welcome.

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

JOHN GARDNER SMALL CRAFT WORKSHOP ATTENDEES MIX AND MINGLE W/ WOODENBOAT SHOW VISITORS AT THE AUSTRALIA BEACH DOCK (PHOTO BY SHARON BROWN)

John Gardner Small Craft Workshop 2026

The JG SC Workshop was a fun event with lots to share. Ben Ellcome was at our table w/ info on his NL Community Boatworks. The New London Carrack Rowers joined us with their fabric-on-frame Carrack and gave people rides/rowing lessons. Pete Peters and Doug Oeller shared their “Captain’s Tricks” and the Young Family gave a stem-winding demonstration of leathering oars with twine. Steve Telsey had us gazing at the sky predicting weather from Clouds. All that action plus half price on TSCA T-Shirts, Hats and Stickers made for lots of activity at our TSCA booth on Australia Beach.

On the Water the “Sabino”’s backing whistles kept us on our toes, the Mystic Shuttle boat came and went while the Boat Livery’s Oar and Sail boats shuttled to and fro. Both mornings TSCA Rowers went exploring, Saturday, Up-RIver to the source of the mighty Mystic and Sunday, Down-River through both movable bridges to within sight of the Sound.

Thanks to all for the support, especially the Seaport’s Sarah Clement, the Seaport’s Director of Waterfront Programs, who shepherded us through preparations since February; Rosie DiMatteo, the Seaport’s Boathouse Supervisor, for welcoming us all on her busiest weekend of the year as well as sharing her Livery Boats for Morning Rows! Those livery boats were so popular that they all were taken Saturday morning. Folks then asked, “May we take the rigs out of the sail boats and paddle them??” Sorry, we have to have everything back and in place at the opening cannon for waiting visitors…

Saturday evening we had an off-site BBQ hosted by the Rutherfords led by Liz Blackwell & family. Musicians held forth on the front porch and neighbor Ed Werner, who is in the midst of building a strip-planked runabout in his garage remarked, “Your friends are amazing.The knowledge and willingness to share that knowledge is invigorating.” Thank you”

A good time was had by all! But Pictures, as they say, are worth a thousand words, so:

A CLASSIC ROWING DORY ON SATURDAY MORNING’S UP-RIVER RUN AND YOUNG OLIVER BLACKWELL IN “BARRY T”, A TEN FOOT CHAMBERLAIN DORY FROM THE SEAPORT LIVERY PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HEARN

CONNOR, A RECENT VMI GRADUATE, IS IN PERFECT SYNC WITH HIS DAD, ANDY WOLFE SO IT LOOKS AS HE IS ROWING TWO SETS OF OARS. NOT ALL BOATS WERE ROWING. HERE A LONE PADDLER STROKES AROUND LIGHTHOUSE POINT AND UP TOWARDS THE I-95 BRIDGE.
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HEARN

SUNDAY MORNING BROUGHT OUT BRYAN HAMMOND AND FAMILY IN THE SEAPORT LIVERY'S "IDLER". BRYAN GREW UP AS A BOAT HOUSE KID AS HIS PARENTS STAFFED THE LIVERY SUMMERS.

CERTIFIED MAINE GUIDE BEN FULLER DEMONSTRATING A BRACE FROM HIS KAYAK ON SATURDAY (PHOTO BY MICHAEL HEARN) AS WELL AS IN HIS CLASSIC SINGLE PADDLE MAINE CANOE ON THE SUNDAY MORNING ROW (PHOTO BY SHARON BROWN ON THE MYSTIC RIVER NEAR WILLOW POINT)

TO WRAP UP OUR WORKSHOP REPORT, HERE IS A CLOSE- UP PHOTO OF AN EYE-CATCHER WHICH BROUGHT MANY PEOPLE TO VISIT OUR FLOATING DOCK, MEMBER JOE BOZZA'S "ALASKA" DESIGN. JOE WAS GOOD ENOUGH TO SEND US A FULL REPORT - SEE DETAILS ON FOLLOWING PAGES.

A big thanks to all the Volunteers who pitched in and made this event happen! Those who brought boats, shared them with show-goers & supported behind the scenes from pitching the tents, putting together presentations to bringing big bowls of potato salad! See you Next Year!

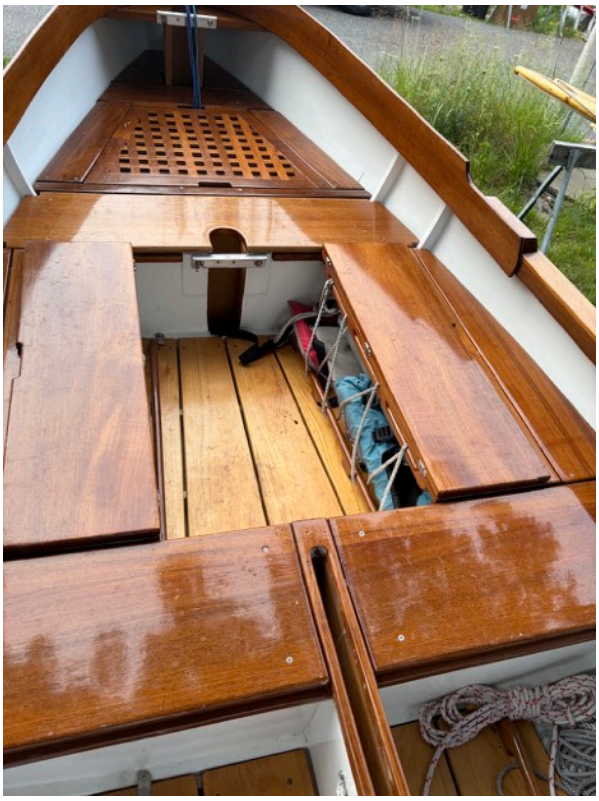
“Maryann”

by Joe Bozza

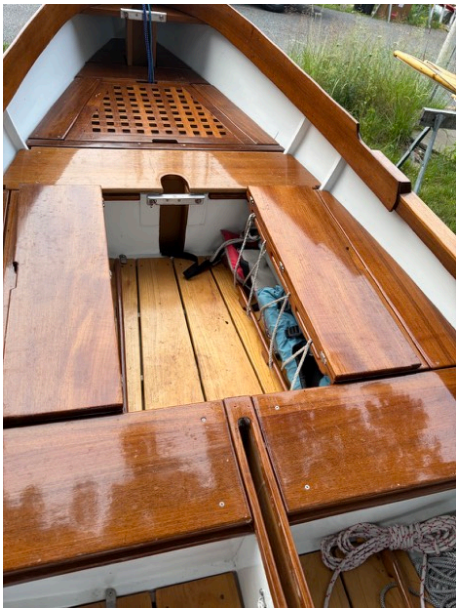
She is an 18 ft “Alaska” design Beach Cruiser by Don Kurylko based on the traditional Whitehall pulling boat. It rows like a dream and sails with a split ketch rig. An article from Boatbuilder Magazine got me hooked on this boat design. As Kurylko explains it, “Alaska is modeled on the working Whitehall skiffs that were commonly used in the 19th and early 20th centuries to carry people and goods about the great harbours of the American east and west coasts. They were remarkably seaworthy small craft and were capable of venturing far offshore in all manner of weather to solicit trade for local businesses from incoming sailing ships. Their highly developed lines allowed them to carry considerable weight, without unduly burdening their hulls, and were almost equally as fast heavily loaded as empty. These characteristics for load carrying ability, seaworthiness and speed make them great candidates for coastal cruising under oar and sail today.”

“This was borne out in the John Gardner designed 17-1/2’ Boston Whitehall skiff that my wife, Sanda, and I built and cruised along the B.C. coast. It was a fine sea boat, though we did find it somewhat lacking in the features that we thought would make it a really good beach cruiser. A three-month cruise around the Gulf of Georgia in the summer of 1979 ultimately inspired us to sum up our experiences and develop them into what was to become Alaska. As the name implies, that was to be the destination for this new design.” (Note: info and study plans available here).

This is what the interior looked like last year when she was launched, pretty bare bones daysailer.



This year I added forward and aft thwarts with hinged planks. Open, they provide a seat with a footwell and closed they become part of a 6 ft. deck that can be used as a sleeping platform.



I also added tie-downs on all of the thwart risers and floorboards for lashing gear and dry bags (I am hoping that the dry bags will double as flotation.) Let me know if there is anything else you would like to know. Look forward to messing around in boats with you again soon! Joe.

A Poem from Duncan Wright:

"Tacking Ship Offshore"
Walter Mitchell

(*Joanna Colcord, who was born on her father's ship in the south Pacific and grew up at sea, says that no better account of the operation of tacking "was ever written than the sailorly verses of Walter Mitchell, in 'Tacking Ship Offshore'"(Sea Language Comes Ashore* (1945).

Walter Mitchell was a minister who published a book of his poems in 1860 to raise money to furnish a chapel. (This is an excerpt from a draft of an anthology, *Seamanship in the Days of Sail.* Duncan Wright, cdwright95@gmail.com)

“The weather leech of the topsail shivers,
The bowlines strain, and the lee shrouds slacken;
The braces are taut, the lithe boom quivers,
And the waves of the coming squall blacken.

Open one point on the weather bow
Is the light-house tall on Fire Island head;
There’s a shade of doubt on the captain’s brow,
And the pilot watches the heaving lead.

I stand at the wheel and with eager eye
To sea and sky and to shore I gaze
Til the muttered order of 'FULL AND BY! '
Is suddenly changed to 'FULL FOR STAYS!'

The ship bends lower before the breeze
As her broadside fair to the blast she lays;
And she swifter springs to the rising seas,
As the pilot calls, 'STAND BY FOR STAYS!'

It is silence all, as each in his place
With the gathered coils in his harden’d hands,
By tack and bowline, by sheet and brace,
Waiting the watchword, impatient stands.

And the light on Fire Island head draws near,
As trumpet-wing’d, the pilot’s shout
From his post on the bowsprit’s heel I hear,
With the welcome call of 'READY! ABOUT!'

No time to spare! It is touch and go.

And the captain growls, 'DOWN HELM! HARD DOWN!'
As my weight on the whirling spokes I throw,
While heaven grows black with the storm cloud's frown.

High o'er the knight-heads flies the spray,
As we meet the shock of the plunging sea:
And my shoulder stiff to the wheel I lay,
As I answer 'AYE AYE SIR! H-A-R-D A-LEE!'

With the swerving leap of a startled steed
The ship flies fast in the eye of the wind,
The dangerous shoals of the lee recede
And the headland white we have left behind.

The topsails flutter, the jibs collapse,
And belly and tug at the groaning cleats,
The spanker slats, and the mainsail flaps,
And thunders the order 'TACKS AND SHEETS!'

'Mid the rattle of blocks and the tramp of the crew,
Hisses the rain of the rushing squall;
The sails are aback from clew to clew,
And now is the moment for 'MAINSAIL HAUL!'

And the heavy yards, like a baby's toy,
By fifty strong arms are swiftly swung;
She holds her way, and I look with joy
For the first white spray o'er the bulwarks flung.

'LET GO AND HAUL!' 'Tis the last command,
And the head-sails fill to the blast once more:
Astern and to leeward lies the land,
With its breakers white on the shingly shore.

What matters the reef, or the rain or the squall,
I steady the helm for the open sea;
The first mate clamors— 'BELAY THERE, ALL!'
And the captain's breath once more comes free.

And so off shore let the good ship fly;
Little care I how the gusts may blow,
In my fo'castle bunk in a jacket dry,
Eight bells have struck, and my watch is below."

Upcoming Events

New London Community Boatworks at the CT Maritime Heritage Festival

Saturday, September 12, 2026 and Sunday, September 13th from 12:00 PM 4:00 PM and Sunday, September 13, 2026 New London, CT. (map)

Ben Ellcome reports: “We’re building a 14 foot skiff with the public over the two days at the festival. Would love to see you there.

New London Community Boatworks

ben@nlcboatworks.org

nlcboatworks.org

And this just in from Member Chris Vargas:

I would like to propose an TSCA event.

When: October 9, 2026 depart the dock at 9am

Where: Hartford Riverside Park

What: Row to Wethersfield Cove. Walk to Old Wethersfield for some food and coffee and take in the Halloween decorations. Row back to Riverside Park. Distance is about 7 km one way. I did a similar row last October.

If interested, reach out to Chris Vargas here or Ian Bradley here
Sounds interesting. Wethersfield Cove is a beautiful spot…

For up to date info on events, visit http://www.jgtsca.org/events.html Thanks, John Hacunda!

Notes from our President

Ian Bradley

I hope your summer is going very well. During the Small Craft Workshop we had a good group of folks sharing our tent space. Both Saturday and Sunday I enjoyed several hours of good conversations with the people that stopped by the tent. A few of them I had met before but ninety percent of them it was the first time meeting. All were good people. Andy Wolf, his Son Connor and I had a nice field trip through the nice new layout of Mystic Seaport's Watercraft Hall. I had not been inside there since spring 2022 and it is pretty impressive!

Welcome new member John Dal Santo. We had a good conversation during the Small Craft WorkShop and then he decided to become a member of our chapter. John is a long time member of the national TSCA and is a member of the New Hampshire/ Vermont Chapter. He visits Stonington and Mystic during the summer for work he has locally. John is looking forward to joining us at an upcoming sail or row outing soon!

Thank you everyone,

Ian Bradley~~~JGTSCA President

Mystic Seaport Activities

At the Boat Livery: During WoodenBoat Show over 600 people went out in Livery boats! Remember, boat “rentals” are free with admission. It’s stacking up to be a great season!

Events around Campus: The International Sea Glass Festival July 25-26 10 am - 5 pm

Late Breaking News: The Wells Small Boat Hall just received a matching grant for $1mil so your contributions during the month of September will be doubled! Think about it - Small Boats, Historical, Traditional and in our own backyard! Here is a website page describing the Wells Boat Hall as well as a link to the donate page Here

Knowing that we are a Hands-On and Crafty group, click this Link for the **Spring/Summer 2026 issue of the Mystic Seaport Museum Magazine which highlights the historic trades** as demonstrated by staff in the Seaport Village and the Henry B. du Pont Preservation Shipyard. It includes work of the woodcarver, cooper, printer, ship-smith, sailmaker, shipwright, cook, Captain, and more that shaped 19-century life along the coast and at sea.

Mystic Seaport Ship Modelers

Meetings are 10 am the second Saturday of the month upstairs in the John Gardner Small Craft Boatshop. Ask for Bob Andrle or Chris Wojtcuk. Currently they have they have an excellent and very popular display of models on the first floor that range from historic sail to classic power to modern Radio Control (R/C). Staffed by volunteer members they are very open, friendly and informative. This summer, member John Huff is leading a group of R/C’rs that meet at Australia Beach 1pm Saturdays. Both power and sail are welcome. The new email for the group is: mysticseaportshipmodelers@gmail.com

From the Mailbag

This just in from long-time member Carl Kaufman: An honor is coming my way at the Wooden Boat Show: my 40' yawl “Therapy” is going to be on display in the water. Tom Townsend usually displays one or more of the lobster yachts and sailboats he rebuilds -- as you know, he is a master and wins all kinds of awards. This year he did most of the refinishing on Therapy and made this 56 year old wooden boat look new, so he has asked my son Eric and me, co-owners, to tie her up along the north pier. I am flattered by this praise for my backyard boatbuilding effort. I will be on the pier a good bit of the time ... in a wheelchair. I am still recovering from the fall in February that broke my neck, so I need a caregiver to help me get around... and not fall overboard.” Late note: Carl was too modest to say, but this from Sharon Brown after the Show: “Carl’s boat won Best in Show! Congratulations, Carl!”

From the Side Deck

Greetings! Hope this finds you Happily Afloat on some Scenic Backwater… Chesapeake Light Craft gave TSCA an unsolicited testimonial with good words, beautiful photos and lots of hot links in this recent post from John Harris on the Chesapeake Light Craft website: https://clcboats.com/blogs/news/meet-the-tsca Very complementary! Thank you, John!

Locally, join us at https://www.jgtsca.org/join-us.html Meanwhile, enjoy the Summer and send us your thoughts, insights and travel logs. Fair Winds! Bill & Karen Rutherford smallcrafter@gmail.com