



Wooden Canoe Heritage Association

NORTHWEST CHAPTER

Northwest Chapter WCHA

Summer Newsletter

June 2023



"Meeting the Canoes" in the sun at Lost Lake, Shelton, WA. J. McElroy photo

The **Northwest Chapter's Spring Meet**, May 11-14, 2023, at YMCA Camp Bishop, at Lost Lake, had it all: sun on the lake, beautiful boats, and many old and new friends. Those who arrived on "work party day" (Thursday) were in time to help get camp cleaned and spruced up in preparation for the new Canoe House dedication on Saturday. Thanks to work by site manager Dan Weber and staff, camp looked beautifully clean already! YMCA staff, carpentry crew members and others who had worked on the canoe house joined chapter members in admiring boats and readying camp, with canoe movies that evening for the chapter. Friday included lake tours and trying out the tricky English Gate canoe maneuvers, with evening guest speakers Phil Miller and Pat Chapman giving an update on the Willits shop. Chapter members did "Meet the Canoes" Saturday morning, as camp slowly filled with visitors for the celebratory dedication of the new Canoe House that afternoon. Many visitors, especially those who were part of the carpentry crews, also admired the chapter's canoes and enjoyed the lake. That evening, the chapter enjoyed a gala potluck dinner featuring barbecued salmon provided by Vern Heikkila, and held the annual auction. It was a busy weekend, and hard to leave on Sunday morning!

Canoe House Dedication!



The 1947 Old Town War Canoe sits in front of its new home. Livdahl photo

The community gathered to celebrate Camp Bishop's new Canoe House on May 13, 2023, and it was truly a community celebration! The beginnings of this building trace back to the 20's and 30's, when the Red Cross focused water safety efforts in specific areas, including Gray's Harbor. John "Bus" Fairburn developed swimming and boating classes, did water shows, coached swim teams and carried out this water safety effort. When he retired, the canoes involved ended up stored at the Aberdeen Museum. Curious about those canoes, in the 1990's, Vern Heikkila discovered the 25' War Canoe, outside, covered in blackberries, in severe need of repair. It was eventually moved to his shop for storage, then, with support from the NW chapter, he and others began to restore it. The 1947 canoe was re-launched in 2013. But where would it live, and who would use it? Camp Bishop incorporated it in programs, but needed a canoe house for long-term safe storage!

Architect Will Foster was consulted to build a simple shed for the canoe, which slowly evolved into the curved, elegant light-filled structure dedicated today. Started by a community effort of in-kind donations of materials and labor, the canoe house features old growth red cedar curved sides from a log donated by the Middleton family. A \$30,000 grant from the Grays Harbor Foundation moved the project forward. Several years of Adam Pratt's carpentry program students at Gray's Harbor Community College constructed parts, and traveled to the site to work on the building, in addition to their regular curriculum. Many of the current and graduated students were able to attend the dedication and paddle the War Canoe! Some community efforts do take time, and the Canoe House will be an enduring gift to Camp Bishop and the YMCA.

What a satisfying community endeavor that will help to carry the original water safety mission forward for new generations of children! Thank you to the many people and groups who helped make this possible!



Opening the new Canoe House at Camp Bishop: (left) Adam Pratt, head of carpentry classes at GHCC, Will Foster, canoe house architect, Vern Heikkila, project facilitator, and Franzine Potts, YMCA executive director (right). Livdahl photo



The Canoe House features a crest built by Vern to a Lummi Tribal canoe design. M. Stein photo



Custom cookies for the Canoe House dedication featured canoes, and the Canoe House! Ellsworth photo



The War Canoe toured the lake many times over the weekend with carpentry class members, dedication visitors, and chapter members. Livdahl photo



Two canoe sailors paddle out for wind: Rick Lowthian and Geoff Harvey. Livdahl photo



Janice and Frank Gunness enjoy their Peterborough/ Livdahl photo



Eric Manroth and Kurt Schmidt paddle Kurt's 1917 Kennebec canoe. Livdahl photo



Pat Chapman (left) and Dick Cross (right). Livdahl photo

Friday Evening Program: Phil Miller: Inside the Willits Shop!

Phil Miller is a long-time Willits canoe owner and enthusiast. He organized last summer's Willits Rendezvous and Regatta, and closely followed the news of the Willits family decision to donate the canoe shop's records to the Tacoma Library, and the shop contents themselves to the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum. After talking with Museum director Brent Mason, Phil volunteered to help with the actual shop move.

With the shop property sold, the volunteers were initially given one day to empty the shop! Plus, it had also been the extended family storage site for 65 years!

Fortunately, the buyer understood the shop's importance, and the crew, beginning work in September 2022, was given the time they needed. It took four months to photograph, list and move the shop items to a temporary storage area four times larger than the shop itself. Pat Chapman personally cataloged each item over a three month period. To Willits canoe fans, entering the shop must have felt like being the first visitors to enter an untouched Egyptian tomb!

Because of the Willits brothers' division of labor, building canoes via essentially two specialty shops, each brother had a separate domain. Lumber was stored in a lean-to on the south side of the shop, and milled planking was stored overhead in the shop, both upstairs and down. Earl, working downstairs, meticulously created all the component pieces for the canoes. He also handled sales, communications, did the photography, and type-set and printed instructions, price lists and company letterhead stationery. The downstairs of the shop contained the desk, safe, bathroom, milled lumber stores, and demonstration canoe, which was set up for sailing and rowing as well as paddling. Jigs and patterns were used for making every canoe part, and covered the walls. In the interest of efficiency, when making parts, multiple parts were cut at one time. Stored parts were sorted, often by color. Paddles, oars, sailing rigs and other accessories were on display. The shop phone was downstairs; if the call was for Floyd, a dumbwaiter system took the phone upstairs to him.

Floyd, upstairs, even more meticulously assembled the canoes, and did all the final finish work. The second floor had a sink, and 12' workbench with many, many handmade wooden drawers for tacks, screws of all sizes, and various fittings. Opposite the stairs, the back wall had another long bench, with the tack-setting machine the brothers invented: by pressing a lever, the machine oriented and pre-set each tack along a planking edge, precisely advancing the plank for each tack. (What a thrill to press that lever!) Then the plank would be reversed, to pre-set the tacks on the other edge. Once the plank was on the metal-covered assembly form, each tack was driven home and clinched in rapid succession.



Phil Miller takes the NW chapter members on a virtual tour of the Willits Brothers Canoe shop. Livdahl photo



The six nameplates used by the Willits brothers on their canoes. Pat Chapman believes the oldest nameplate is from canoe 2C1, built in Tacoma in 1908, before the purchase of the Wollochet Bay property and shop construction there. The shield design was used after the move to the Day Island shop.. Phil Miller photo

The second upstairs form, the bending form for the inner transverse wooden layer, could be elevated overhead to be out of the way via a counter-weight system utilizing a bucket of rocks. For the center part of the canoe, each inner plank with its custom bend was numbered from 1–20, with # 1 the center at the middle of the canoe. Numbers increased going towards each end. The inner planking for the canoe ends was done on special molds, creating nine custom-bent planks for each side, and duplicated for the other end of the symmetrical canoe. All these individually distinct parts were then combined to create the inner wood planking of the complete canoe.



Each plank piece for the canoe ends has a distinct, individual curve. Phil Miller photo



When Earl Willits closed the shop, parts for future canoes were still clamped in the bending molds. Phil Miller photo

The inside of the shop was lined with beadboard, which has been saved for the Museum display. On the walls hung bending forms for stems, coamings, and deck bending forms designed to bend two of each board at a time. Planking was stored sorted by both specific plank, and wood color. Boxes held completed parts, often book-matched parts. Secretly, each canoe also carried its own number stamped on the stem in domino dots. A trolley-rail and pulley system helped ease the finished canoes down the stairway.

Patterns in the shop included all four sizes of the slightly wider paddles when the shop was at Wollochet Bay, and the three sizes of narrower paddles after the shop was moved to Day Island. The shop held Q-tip car-top carriers, outboard motor mounts (including a spare wing-nut, just in case), rudders, paddles, three sets of oars, paper-wrapped seats, rowing seats, thwarts and sailing rigs. In drawers were supplies of many of the six versions of metal nameplates used by the shop until the end of production. Interestingly, the moving crew found a ¼ scale model of a 16' canoe which was perhaps contemplated but never built.

And in the downstairs shop, covered with a fitted canvas canoe cover, hung the last Willits canoe, #965. After Floyd's death, Earl and nephew Lon attempted to finish the canoe, but were unable to finish it to Earl's standard of perfection: the screws at one point did not precisely follow the curve of the stem line, and several additional tacks were used. Earl wanted to destroy the canoe, but was convinced to keep it on the condition that it never be sold, used or displayed. It remained covered in the shop for the next 65 years, and is a beautiful canoe.



Willits #965, the less-than-perfect canoe, is moved into temporary storage. McElroy photo

It is no surprise it took 4 months for a small group of dedicated people to move the shop, while taking the time to document and catalog all the contents. Professional movers were hired to move the huge bandsaw, the office safe, and the 800+ pound (upstairs!) metal clad assembly canoe form. Presently filling two ware-house rooms, the shop contents now belong to the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum.

The Foss Waterway Seaport has 7 Willits canoes, and will display these. Unfortunately, they have limited storage and exhibit space, and will be able to utilize only a fraction of the shop contents for their future Willits display. The shop display is unlikely to be a dedicated year-round exhibit, and will be limited, with no room for workbenches, etc.. Many of the shop contents not for display will be sold by the Museum via a silent auction (see "important Willits dates" to follow.) Remaining shop lumber supplies have been purchased by Rollin Thurlow of Northwoods Canoes, in Maine. Thank you, Phil, for a wonderful glimpse into a shop about which there is great interest!



Partial view of one of the warehouse rooms presently housing the shop contents. The demo canoe for customer trials is on the rack, to be joined soon by the final canoe. McElroy photo



Shop contents in the warehouse: note paddle patterns, home made measuring sticks with hand lettering, trim stock, new oars and sailing rig spars. McElroy photo



Shop contents in the warehouse: planking sorted by color. Notice the cubbies for "scraps". McElroy photo



Shop contents in the warehouse: milled planking stock. Form for bending midsection of canoe's inner planks in the background. McElroy photo

New Canoes from Willits Lumber!



A load of new lumber for canoes arrives at the Willits Brothers Canoe Shop 3 pm September 12, 1949. Earl Willits photo, courtesy of Pat Chapman

With the Willits shop contents conveyed to the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum, and in temporary warehouse storage, museum director Brent Mason knew some shop contents would be surplus to the Museum's needs. The large stock of new lumber from the shop was not needed for museum display, and Rollin Thurlow, of Northwoods Canoes, of Atkinson, Maine, arranged to purchase it. Brent and Phil Miller scheduled truck shipment of the lumber, and a group of NW Chapter members and Willits enthusiasts gathered April 26 to help load the truck (and get a personal tour of the shop contents!) With a two-hour window to load the truck, the group arrived early to first move the clear, dry, straight red cedar, teak, mahogany and other wood from the warehouse to the loading dock. Not a single knot was seen in all the stock! When the truck arrived, Craig Dupler supervised the tricky packing puzzle of the load; when all was packed in a compact solid rectangle, Bill Paine utilized corner protectors, custom strap guides and steel strapping to tightly secure the pile. Heavy tarps provided rain and dust protection, and additional strapping immobilized the stack. Six days later, the lumber arrived intact in Maine!



Clear red cedar boards await the arrival of the truck. McElroy photo



Loading the truck, while Craig Dupler makes the stack. Asbury photo



Bill Paine (left) provided the steel strapping and cushioning to protect and secure the lumber. Phil Miller photo



Unloading the lumber on a quiet road in Maine; the truck was too large to go up the driveway to the Northwoods Canoe shop itself. Thurlow photo

The beautiful clear wood originally ordered by Earl and Floyd Willits, and lying unused in their shop for the past 65 years, will finally be made into canoes. We look forward to seeing and hearing more about the canoes made from this special wood!

Important Dates for Willits Enthusiasts:

- **August 12, 2023. Willits Collection Silent Auction**

10 am—2 pm Saturday

Willits Storage Warehouse 2926 S Steele St., Tacoma, WA 98409

(this address is for the North Star Glove Company; the warehouse is around the side by the RR tracks.)

Parts, fittings, accessories, jigs, wood, etc.!

No RSVP required-- all proceeds support the new Willits exhibit currently being designed.

Questions? Brent Mason, Foss Waterway Seaport Museum brent.mason@fosswaterwayseaport.org

- **August 25–27, 2023. Willits Gathering and Regatta:**

Phil Miller is the organizer of this year's 2nd Willits Gathering and Regatta, a three-day event at the Gig Harbor airport. The specific agenda is still to be determined, but may include a Friday arrival and group dinner, canoe viewing. A group paddle is planned on Saturday, to Tanglewood Island, where Dr. Schultz ran a boys camp, Ta Ha Do Wa, in the 1950's to 1970's. Bring a picnic lunch! A possible visit to the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum is planned on Sunday. Last year's event featured 9 Willits canoes in the water, and 15 total for admiring, with more expected this year. The airport has facilities for washing the canoes after their salt water cruise. For more information, contact Phil at 253 651 4703 or seeeds@comcast.net



Steve Ellsworth and Phil Miller marvel at the "before" pictures of Dick Cross's 1919 OTCA. Livdahl photo



Skill and practice creates elegance on the water: Rebecca Ferwerda won the chocolate bars for making the English Gate sequence look simple and easy. Livdahl photo



Teddy Farmer takes a break from swimming, canoeing and fishing. Canoe meets are pretty fun! McElroy photo



Sue and Dick Cross get ready to try out the newly restored 1919 OTCA. Livdahl photo



Annie McElroy tries out the 20'6" Heikkila's Halal single racing canoe. D. Johnson photo

Meet the Canoes!



The NW Chapter admires the Ferwerda 16' Old Town HW (back) and Scott Christianson's 16' White 'Guide' (front) built by Scott at Jerry Stelmok's shop. McElroy photo

The twenty-plus canoes at this Spring Meet were an especially interesting group. **Seven of the canoes were Centenarian canoes, over 100 years old!** Steve and Joan Ellsworth brought two of these, including their first wood-canvas canoe, purchased from a Maine antique shop. The 1923 Old Town A grade Charles River showed a delicate yellow pin-stripe highlighting its older, faded green canvas, with varnish preserving its patina of age. Their second canoe, a 1921 Willits, is a custom-built model with book-matched colored striping highlighting the beautiful cedar planking.

Sue Cross brought her nimble 1910 Huron-type tribal canoe, looking like new in bright green, with a sporty yellow pin-stripe, restored by Dick Cross. Frank and Janice Gunness showed their 1923 Peterborough, with red cedar planking, restored by Des Winterbottom. Kurt Schmidt brought his 1917 red Kennebec, purchased as a restoration project by his father, and finally restored by Kurt after a cross-country move. The repairs included wood from both his grandfather's farm in the mid-west, and their Whidbey Island home.

Two of the 100-plus year-old canoes were being re-launched for the first time, at this Meet, ready for the next chapter in their adventurous lives. Dick Cross brought his most recent restoration project, a 1919 Old Town OTCA, gleaming in bright blue canvas, shiny wood, and double gold pin stripe. Sue told of picking up the project boat for him, then stopping very soon to buy duct tape to wrap the "bundle of sticks" to hold it together before continuing the trip to his shop. Geoff Harvey brought a familiar canoe, with surprising new information: Bill and Sandy Dengler's blue canoe, purchased from Sandy after Bill's death, was not an Old Town, not a Carlton as Bill supposed, but a Robertson courting canoe circa 1901–1921! (See Geoff's story of this canoe and the detective work involved!)

Also re-launching after a restoration was Mike Livdahl's 1967 OTCA, with new varnish, new stems, and new tough ballistic nylon fabric. Steve and Marlene Stein showed their Greenwood, with spruce ribs, cedar planking and Philippine mahogany trim. Greenwood canoes were built between 1939 and 1975 in British Columbia, with the shop sold shortly before Bill Greenwood's death in 1979. Steve also answered questions about the carved handgrip of his basswood paddle.

Mike Elliott came with a green Chestnut 'Pal', a circa 1960's project boat obtained from a client's barn. Craig Dupler brought the Atkinson Traveler he built in 2003, with ipe trim and outwales. Joe McElroy showed his grandsons' 1947 17' Old Town HW, given to the boys by Beth and Ray Arcand, "so they would have a good canoe." The canoe was given to Ray and Beth by Carl Hoth.

Martin and Rebecca Ferwerda's Old Town 16' HW 1927 CS grade was once a duck-hunting canoe in Wisconsin. Scott Christianson came with the White 'Guide' that he built in 1999 at Jerry Stelmok's shop. The only sailing canoe at the Meet was Rick and Kristina Lowthian's 18' Old Town, and the lake was breezy enough to show it to advantage during the afternoon.

Vern and Jan Heikkila brought three very different canoes. The long, slinky and "sensitive" Halal tribal single racing canoe-- 20'6" long, with an 18" beam and 3/16" planking-- amused the group throughout the meet, as various paddlers tried it out with mixed success. Vern obtained the plans while consulting with tribal members on the building of a 6 person outrigger racing canoe. The most successful paddlers of the single canoe listened to Vern's advice, to brace with both knees, paddle with short strokes, and to steer by switching sides rather than using conventional steering strokes. Only Chip Asbury was bold enough to try it at the cold, rainy 2022 spring meet, but the sunny weather this year inspired more people willing to risk a swim . . .

Vern showed their light blue 12' Huron, built sometime between 1930 and 1960, by the Baptiste brothers of Montreal. Vern restored multiple broken ribs in the little canoe, and it looked like a new boat. The Heikkilas also brought another restoration project, although few people would recognize it. Some years ago, a family donated two project canoes to the chapter for the auction, in great need of restoration. To help the chapter, Mike Wootten purchased one, and Vern bought the other, each for \$100. Now, Vern's sleek white canoe gleamed in the sun, an 18' 1942 'Guide' canoe, with figured maple new decks and glowing varnish. Two other canoes on site were also restored by Vern: "Huey" the Old Town Ideal owned by the Aberdeen Museum, and of course, the 1947 War Canoe, also owned by the museum, used in Camp Bishop's programs. The War Canoe made many tours of the lake this Meet, carrying the camp visitors associated with the dedication of the new canoe house.



"Meet the Canoes" group admires the Ellsworth Willits. M. Stein photo

NW Chapter Meeting

President Mike Livdahl convened a brief NW Chapter meeting prior to the evening auction. He thanked Joan for work as Treasurer, and Mary for the newsletters.

- Joan Ellsworth gave a treasurer's report: we have \$4,695.47 in the treasury. This includes the deposit we have made for Manning in September, but not the income and/or costs of this spring Meet. (later: after reimbursing the Heikkilas for salmon, insurance and event permit, paying for Camp Bishop, and adding camping, dinner and auction income, our final balance is **\$4545.74** in the treasury.)
- After discussion, the group voted to return to Camp Bishop for spring 2024, citing the advantages of the covered lodge, kitchen/dining room and cabins. Camp Bishop has a new complex price structure, including fixed fees for Covid-mandated cleaning requirements. The fees will increase for next year.
- Joan will contact Lutherwood on Lake Samish about costs and accommodations for a possible future meet.
- The group voted to empower President Mike to raise the per-night fee if needed to cover Meet costs for next year's Spring Meet.
- **We will meet at Manning September 13–17, Wednesday to Sunday this year.** After discussion, Manning seems to have the ideal lake access and parking for campers we need; so far, no alternatives as nice have been found. Returning to Manning in 2024 was decided by consensus.
- Geoff Harvey will contact Camp Sweyolaken about a possible return visit to their camp, but that location would exclude a number of members, so not ideal for a full Meet.



Vern Heikkila's restoration of the donated 18' 1942 'Guide' canoe. Livdahl photo

Meeting Addendum: June 14, 2023: Virtual Meeting called to order by Mike Livdahl 7:35 pm PDT.

Present: Mike Livdahl, Mary Norton, Joe McElroy, Steve and Joan Ellsworth, Geoff Harvey.

- Adding an additional signer to our bank account has been advised. Laura Schmidt is willing to do this. Geoff moved, Mary seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously to add Laura Schmidt as a signer to the account.
- We need to decide Manning dates for 2024, as the dates must be reserved prior to the 2023 Fall Meet. Mary moved, and Joe seconded, that we reserve the Lone Duck campground at Manning for September 11–14, 2024. Motion passed unanimously.
- At the Spring Meet, Red Galvin offered his **Willits canoe #459** for sale. The Ellsworths purchased the canoe as a possible chapter fundraiser/donation by Red, for \$500. The canoe needs restoration, but all parts are present and complete, and the canoe is in good condition. Geoff has offered to refinish the canoe; Pat Chapman and Michael Sullivan might have interest in using it for a video they are making. Mary moved and Geoff seconded to reimburse the Ellsworths the \$500 for the canoe purchase; the motion passed. After further discussion about the Willits market—to sell the canoe “as is” or restore it and offer it for a higher price to a likely more limited market—it was decided that the Ellsworths would initially offer the canoe for sale “as is” at this year's Willits Gathering in August. If it doesn't sell then, Geoff's offer of restoration will be considered. Thank you to Red Galvin for making this chapter fundraising opportunity available, to Steve and Joan for their quick purchase action, and to Geoff, for offering to restore the canoe!
(later) After viewing photos of the canoe, Michael Grace noted its good condition, and that it includes a Willits backrest, an uncommon and valuable accessory. He will help spread the word that it is available for sale.
- Joan moved and Geoff seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm PST.
Mary Norton, secretary

Auction!

Happily for the NW Chapter, Kurt Schmidt brought a friend, Eric Manroth, to the Meet. Eric is an experienced auctioneer, and just the person the group needed to convert a curious and eclectic collection of auction items into cash! Certainly our auctions are the place to be for amazing bargains in woodworking tools and boatbuilding materials. Kurt and Eric sold beautifully clear 20' cedar boards, a sapele plank for keels and trim, along with chisels, planes, books, wine, a tent, a Hudson's Bay blanket, a muscle trigger point massager, a dry bag, WCHA hats, a Peterborough canoe seat back, and many more must-have items. If Eric didn't know what the item was, he sold it anyway! Thanks to competitive bidders, \$425 was raised for the chapter treasury. Thank you, auctioneer Eric! We hope to see you next spring!



Kurt Schmidt and Eric Manroth conduct the auction, while Joan Ellsworth tracks the winning bids. Livdahl photo

Camp Kirby War Canoe News

Chapter members may remember the discussions of a 1960's War Canoe in need of repair, surplussed from Camp Fire Samish (Bellingham)'s Camp Kirby, and rescued by Michael Davidson and Ginger Fortier during Covid. Both Camp Sweyolaken (Camp Fire) and Camp Bishop (YMCA) were potential homes considered for this War Canoe. As it turns out, the canoe needed more intensive work than originally thought, with planking holes, broken ribs, and such corrosion from salt water that all fasteners will need to be replaced. Further, Camp Kirby would like their canoe back! The War Canoe, "Heart's Desire," is presently in Vern Heikkila's shop, and when fully restored, will return to Camp Kirby. Thank you, Vern!



Red Galvin, Livdahl photo



Backrest, seats and thwarts of Willits # 459, made available as a fundraising opportunity to the Chapter by Red Galvin. Livdahl photo



Martin Ferwerda, Mike Elliott, Steve Ellsworth and Dick Cross discuss canoes. Ellsworth photo



Lowithian OTCA sailing canoe crosses the lake. J. McElroy photo



Chapter canoes and canoe house with Lummi-inspired custom crest in background. J. Ellsworth photo



Teddy Farmer helps paddle the canoe he and his brother were given. Thanks, Beth and Ray! L. McElroy photo



Annie McElroy enjoys the Heikkila 12' Huron-type canoe. D. Johnson photo



Loading canoes for home: Dylan Johnson, Vern Heikkila, Scott Christianson and Steve Stein carry the Stein's Greenwood. M. Stein photo

Bill's Canoe by Geoff Harvey

Believe I only met Bill Dengler once. He was there at the first meeting I ever attended to the Northwest Chapter's Fall meeting at Manning Provincial Park British Columbia. I remember the man only vaguely and did not remember the wood and canvas canoe that was his pride and joy. Later, I learned Bill believed his canoe was a Carlton and he had his reasons. Evidently, some others doubted his assessment, but were polite enough not to argue the issue. Regrettably, Bill passed on shortly after that meeting at Manning.

Understanding, Bill's opinion goes back to his history with the craft. Bill was a career man with the National Park Service. He was assigned to Arcadia National Park during the sixties. He always wanted a classic wood and canvas Old Town Canoe. He went to the factory in Old Town Maine to buy one, but by this time the company had moved on to fiberglass and ABS. A wood and canvas canoe was a special and very expensive build. His default was the "seconds" shop, where used or repaired canoes were for sale. Bill found and purchased the wood and canvas craft he always treasured.

The canoe had been repaired by the Old Town shop. One can clearly see the patched break in the bow stem. Evidently the previous owner had steered it into a substantial obstacle at a substantial speed. The shop however, did not stop at the stem repair. Sixties era old town seats and similar age center thwart were installed in the obviously much older craft. One can imagine why the owner would not pay the repair bill for the substantially altered canoe. The craft was consigned to the seconds store where Bill found it.

Sometime after his purchase and a repaint to dark blue with a white keel, Bill researched his craft. He found it to have a serial number below those in the Old Town records. The craft's heart shaped decks and those seats and center thwart persuaded Bill the craft was of the Old Town lineage, but older, hence he settled on the possibility, but never entirely, that the craft was a Carlton. The designation did not explain the capped gunnels that clearly were original equipment. Along the line Bill transferred to Rainier National Park bringing his beloved canoe to the Pacific Northwest.



Bill's Canoe

A few years after he passed, Sandy Dengler was downsizing and reluctantly put his canoe up for sale as a Carlton. Always interested in any Carlton in the neighborhood, I asked for pictures. The pictures did not convince me of the advertised pedigree, but clearly under those sixties' era additions was a much older craft. The canoe was in remarkably good shape. In need of a project to fill the shop, I took a chance on Bill's canoe.

The first order of business was to identify it. Sure enough, the craft had a serial number lower than the Old Town records and heart shaped decks. As I was quickly instructed by Michael Grace and Benson Gray, who were remotely assisting my efforts, a lot of older canoes have heart shaped decks. Since many of the records of early builders are lost, a low serial number is not much of a clue. One of the

others viewing the canoe suggested it might be a Charles River, built along that storied river's shore and since it had an Old Town like line, possibly a Robertson. If so an inspection of the much older front and back thwarts should bear the distinctive "JR Robertson, Auburn Mass" stamp in the wood. A good deal of viewing through a magnifying glass, macro lens photographs and chalk treatment of the area finally revealed the stamp and proof this was a Robertson. Only after all that close inspection did this observer realize the distinctive wood that bore the stamp was birds eye maple, a sure sign of the high-grade Robertson likely built between 1901 and 1921. Unfortunately, none of the Robertson records survived. When the paint Bill put on the stem bands was removed another hallmark of a high-grade Robertson appeared, nickel plated stem bands.



Bird's Eye Maple Thwart with JR Robertson Auburn Mass stamp



Nickel plated stem bands

Once Bill's canoe was identified, it could be faithfully restored. The Old Town seats and hardware were removed in favor of hardwood mahogany seats. The original Honduran mahogany being nearly impossible to find in proper size, Sapelle mahogany made a near faithful substitute. The center thwart was removed and after some agonizing not replaced. This is a Charles River Canoe built by a master Charles River builder. Anybody who has studied that tradition knows that the fair maiden was seated on plush underpinnings, parasol in hand behind the front thwart, facing her suitor paddled a safe distance away on the rear seat. A center thwart would make the woman's seating arrangement difficult. Hence, no center thwart no matter how difficult it would be to carry the craft solo. A greater challenge was presented by the Old Town shop that drilled holes in the red spruce gunnel covers and hung the seats with old town hardware. Repair required some hole enlargement to hang the seats from threaded rod with a thin enough and large enough nut to replicate the L-bolts that could neither be located or practically mounted without even more disturbance to the gunnel caps. Once in place red spruce veneers were glued to cap the holes created long ago by the Old Town repair shop. Not perfect, but with stain and spar varnish blended in as well as possible, passable. Spar varnish does cover a multitude of sins.

The rest was a simple repaint of the canvas still in good shape. The canvas is either the original canvas or more likely a recanvassing by the Old Town Shop. The dark blue gave way to russet, but the white keel was retained. Nickel plated O-rings mounted through a stainless-steel eye tab bolt were installed as a sturdier alternative to painter rings. As a final touch, a small wooden paddle shaped name tag that was once Bill's was glued below the bow deck and spar varnished, so Bill can go on at least in spirit with the craft he loved.



Restored Robertson



Cruise on Hayden Lake

Fall Meet: Manning Park, B.C., September 13–17, 2023 Wed—Sunday
Mark your calendars, bring woolies and toques!



Canoe class on Lightning Lake, Manning Park. V. Coquet photo



On the beach at Manning Park. M. Stein photo

Northwest.wcha.org

Joan Ellsworth	<i>Treasurer</i>	Bellingham, WA	(360) 756-7577	lakesamishfarm@gmail.com
Colleen Hovey	<i>WCHA board rep</i>	Elnora, Alberta	(403) 357 4645	colleen.hovey@gmail.com
Claude Delisle		Elnora, Alberta	(587) 679 2456	cdn.claude@gmail.com
Joe McElroy	<i>Newsletter</i>	Snoqualmie, WA	(425) 502 2050	maryjoe4813@gmail.com
Geoff Harvey		Hayden Lakes, Id	(208) 449-3185	whitefish48@yahoo.com
Martin Ferwerda	<i>Webmaster</i>	Brightwood, OR	(503) 622-6031	mferwerda111@frontier.com
Mary Norton	<i>Sect'y/Newsletter</i>	Snoqualmie, WA	(425) 443 1417	maryjoe4813@gmail.com
Michael Davidson		Port Townsend, WA	(253) 820 5973	mdexvotos@gmail.com
Ginger Fortier		Port Townsend, WA		gingerfortier@hotmail.com
Kurt Schmidt		Langley, WA		lkschmidt@sbcglobal.net
Laura Schmidt		Langley, WA		lkschmidt@sbcglobal.net
Craig Dupler	<i>Past President</i>	Snohomish, WA		craig_dupler@gmail.com
Patra Moore		Carnation, WA	(425) 333 4246	bpmb@live.com
Mike Livdahl	<i>President</i>	Seattle, WA		michael.livdahl@gmail.com



(seated) Scott Christianson, Steve Ellsworth, Mary Norton w/ Duff, Joe McElroy w/ Sean, Mike Livdahl, Joan Ellsworth, Xavier Tolbert. (middle) Dick Cross, Martin Ferwerda, Rebecca Ferwerda, Frank Gunness, Janice Gunness, Marlene Stein, Steve Stein, Janet Heikkila, Vern Heikkila, Bill Paine. (back) Kurt Schmidt, Craig Dupler, Eric Manroth, Mike Elliott, Sue Cross, Geoff Harvey. (not in photo: Red Galvin, Courtney Codrington, Rick and Kristina Lowthian, Lin McElroy, Stephen, Charlie and Teddy Farmer, Annie McElroy, Dylan Johnson, Donny and Carter Kassach, Jim Cullins, Pat Chapman, Phil Miller.) Livdahl photo

Bob Podesta is selling this early 60s (est.) **Chestnut Prospector (Voyageur 18)** (see attached picture). Fully restored, paddled once when completed and once when used in a movie, otherwise stored in my shop. Asking \$2000 (CAD) currently about \$1492 (USD). Please respond to me via email at bpodesta@shaw.ca Canoe is in Mission, BC



Thanks to Red Galvin, the Northwest Chapter will have **for sale Willits #459**, to be shown at this summer's Willits Gathering in "as is" condition, as a chapter fundraiser. The canoe is complete, and in good condition, but needs refinishing for minor scratches and gouges, and to be put back together. The canoe includes all its authentic Willits trim pieces, and includes a Willits custom backrest. See it at the Willits Gathering, or contact the Ellsworths for more information.

President's Message!

It was great seeing all you folks this spring at Camp Bishop.

If you weren't there, you missed a fascinating update from Phil and Pat on the Willits shop, and seeing the tribute to Vern and the others who put together the new canoe house for Camp Bishop.

I am glad to report that spring attendance reaffirmed that we would still be able continue to meet at venues like Camp Bishop with only some small changes.

Next spring we will need to make some adjustments like new rates around cabin occupancy to reflect how the camp bills those charges and possibly adjust for the price of salmon.

This fall we will have an extra day at Manning Park, Wednesday through Sunday. Arrive early and explore the area. The official program will start Friday afternoon/evening. There will be an event chocolates prizes on Saturday.

As before, \$10 per person per day.

And start preparing your jokes to share around evening fire! And songs and stories too!

If anyone planning to attend can bring a Canadian certified propane fire pit, please let me know. We got lucky last year, but it is good to have some insurance.

Happy Paddling

Mike Livdahl



Northwest Chapter President Mike Livdahl, M. Stein photo

Fall Meet: Manning Park, B.C., September 13–17, 2023 Wed—Sunday
Mark your calendars, bring woolies and toques!
See you then!