

Wilbur & Wheelock

CANADIAN PADDLING CANOE

MEASURED DIMENSIONS

LOA 15' 1/4"
 BEAM INSIDE 29 3/8"
 DEPTH 10 1/4"
 STEM HEIGHT 21 1/4"

PRESENT OWNER: EDWIN M CLUTE
 AGE: UNKNOWN

CONDITION: SOME PLANKING AND RIBS REPLACED
 RESTORATION NOT COMPLETE
 MEASURED AUGUST 1983, DRAWN FEBRUARY 1985
 BY JAMES RITTER

HISTORICAL NOTES

THIS CANOE IS LISTED IN THEIR 1897 CATALOG AS A "CANADIAN PADDLING CANOE". OF THE TWO STYLES BUILT, THIS CANOE COMPARES WITH STYLE "B". THE DIFFERENCE BEING THE TYPES OF WOODS USED IN FINISHING AND TRIM. EVIDENCE OF THE BUILDERS PLATE ON THE BOW THWART.

STEMS ~ WHITE OAK. TWO PIECE CONSTRUCTION
 INNER STEM IS 1" WIDE AND FLAIRS TO
 1 1/2" AT KEEL. CUTWATER IS MOLDED 3/4"

DECKS ~ CHERRY, TWO PIECES WITH AN ASH
 COVERING BOARD. TWO BRACES
 UNDERNEATH. DECK PIECES APPROX.
 1/4" THICK. COVERING BOARD IS 2" WIDE
 AND 3/16" THICK.

THWARTS ~ CHERRY. 3/4" THICK, SHAPED
 AS SHOWN. TOP OF THWART IS
 2 1/2" BELOW SHEER. ATTACHED
 WITH A MOUNTING BLOCK

GUNWALE ~ OUTWALE, CEDAR, SHAPED
 AS SHOWN. SECTION AT STEM IS
 HALF ROUND. TAPER STARTS AT
 STATION THREE. 3/4" x 1/8"
 INWALE, BEECH. BENT TO FORM
 COAMING AROUND DECK. FASTENED
 WITH SCREWS AND TACKS ALTER-
 NATELY. 7/8" x 1/4"

RIBS ~ WHITE OAK, 4" BENT FROM GUNWALE
 TO GUNWALE. PAIRS SPLIT.
 MOLDED 1/4", SIDED 1/2". 3" BETWEEN
 RIBS

KEEL ~ CEDAR, 1" THICK, LENGTH 13 1/2"
 KEEL EXTENDS 3/8" BELOW PLANKING. ENDS
 ARE THINNED TO FAIR INTO STEM

PLANKING ~ CEDAR, BEVEL LAP FOR SMOOTH SKIN CONSTRUCTION.
 3/4" LAP. LOWER TWO LAPS ARE NAILED FROM INSIDE
 AND OUTSIDE, GARBOARD IS ALSO CLENCHED TO RIBS
 AT MID-WIDTH. FIVE PLANKS PER SIDE. PLANK LAPS
 SHOWN ARE ACTUAL.

OFFSETS

STA 0

SCALE 3/4" = 1'

SCALE 3/16" = 1'

STA 0

STA 1

STA 2

STA 3

STA 4

10" BUTT

8" BUTT

6" BUTT

4" BUTT

BASE LINE

SHEER 10" WL

4" WL

6" WL

2" WL

50 YEARS AGO

by R.D. Culler

With the renewed interest in classic small craft of wood, both rowing and sailing, it's hard to realize it was not so long ago that these were a common thing.

I speak of my youth in Southern California, when such craft were still a way of life. Even then, there were many signs that these craft were being laid aside for something better (?), tho' of course I, and many others, had not yet come to realize it. Things were different then in all ways; I give you a picture of how it was — no doubt the changes are as vast wherever you go today.

The wooden steam schooner was still very much around; the sight of one or more passing thru Santa Barbara Channel on the way to southern ports was common — Squarehead Navy, and lesser terms of endearment were used to describe them, no offense meant. Some sailing schooners still carried boards across the Pacific. Alaska Packers fleets were still hanging on to an extent. The Hicks, Frisco Standard, and Union gas or distillate engines were commonplace. Fishing craft were more or less handsome, instead of the rather ugly tin boxes now common to both coasts. The rumrunner was in full flower. Yachts were not many, but tended to be large by present standards, and to my eyes, at least, better looking. There were no man-made or improved harbors for modest size craft, tho' some were in the dream stage.

Naturally, this setup a half century ago required small boats; these had to fit the waters and uses of the times. There were still some ship yawls in use, and Whitehalls were around, tho' most showing age. Flat-bottom skiffs were around in numbers, and some of large size, notably those for the big (for then) power

seiners. Most of good model by present standards — some of them were excellent. Dorys were around my area, but not in great number. Both Swampscott and Banks type were well liked. Some of these were imported from the East, just why, I don't know. There were men around quite capable of building.

There was a fine 22' Frisco whitehall "Crimp boat," the real thing, then owned by a well-to-do fishing fleet operator. She was in yacht condition and lived in a bottomless shed on a wharf so she could be afloat when wanted. She hung in falls. A handsome sight when she went out skillfully handled by her owner. Her sprit-sail and jib were totally clean cream color, and her paint and varnish perfect — besides all this, she could go!

Rum being a big thing, there was a type of skiff developed to suit the trade. Known to us boys as a "whiskey skiff," this type was apparently a Coast invention and much suited to the conditions. I think most were built in the San Pedro area where some yards

catered to the rumrunners. These craft were intended for surf work with a load, at least a load when bound in. They had the flare and sheer of a Banks Dory, but were very much wider. With a wide tombstone stern, the ends raked about like a dory; the sheer was a product of the flare, both being great. The bottom was very heavily rockered with stubbed up forefoot like an Oregon Beach Dory. For the same reason — didn't stub your toe on hitting the beach. Being oar powered, most of the rocker was aft and the freeboard was great. The point of it all was, tho' the boats were expendable if you got into a jam, they could take a big load, survive the surf, and with the big rocker on the bottom, they were fairly easy to turn around in the sand for a quick getaway. She was a craft much suited to her trade, and therefore very unhandy for other uses. They felt the wind when light, and in this condition, hobby-horsed badly due to the excessive rocker. An interesting type, developed for one use, and now gone, never to return



Pete Culler enjoys a relaxing paddle in his bateau, "Otter." This photograph was taken of Pete at the Mystic Seaport Small Craft Workshop in June 1977. (Ken Steinmetz photo)

A WILBUR AND WHEELOCK CANOE

By Phyllis Ritter

It is inevitable that whenever we go on vacation, no matter how short a vacation, Jim finds a canoe that he just has to measure. Our August 1983 trip to the Adirondacks was no different. So after receiving permission from the owner, Ed Clute, we proceeded to raid our friend's basement for sawhorses, clamps, level and compass. Four hours later, Jim had the measurements of a shapely canoe whose identity was a mystery.

The following August found us at the Thousand Island Boat Show in Clayton, New York. It was kismet that Richard Rybinski should be there with his Wilbur & Wheelock canoe. Jim's excitement grew as he examined Rybinski's canoe and noted the details that were identical to Clute's canoe. After taking pictures to be compared later, Rybinski was kind enough to offer Jim a test paddle, and he didn't have to offer twice. She was a honey all right, cutting through the water so quietly and gently.

The history of the Wilbur & Wheelock Company is sketchy. We know that Wilbur was the foreman of the St. Lawrence River Skiff, Canoe, and Steam Launch Company, Clayton, N.Y. When the company moved, Wilbur and Wheelock formed their own company in Clayton, building St. Lawrence River Skiffs and canoes. There is in existence a 1897 Wilbur & Wheelock catalogue with which Jim was able to more closely identify Clute's boat.

Editor's Note:

Jim Ritter's drawing of the Wilbur & Wheelock Canoe was especially drawn for the Commemorative Issue. For more information about the WWC and building plans, contact Jim Ritter, P.O. Box 697, East Hampton, New York 11937.



Interior view: Note the slender ribs and the continuous inwale which forms the deck combing. Drop thwart were used instead of seats. (Photograph by Phyllis Ritter)



Taking the lines of a Wilbur Wheelock canoe in the parking lot of a garden center. (Photograph by Phyllis Ritter)