

Boatwright chosen for shallop replica project

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BATH

Maine's First Ship, the group raising funds to build a replica of the 1607 Popham Colony's signature vessel, announced Monday that it has found a shipwright to lead an upcoming side project.

As Maine's First Ship continues raising money for a reconstruction of the pinnace Virginia, it has plotted a summer project in which local high school students reconstruct a historic shallop. On Monday, the group announced that William West of Whitefield will lead the shallop project.

Maine's First Ship representatives hope more shallops can be built during future summers as well.

"The shallop project allows us to present history to students and adults, using the boat as a living history tool," said Morse High School science teacher Eric Varney, who will serve as West's principal assistant, in a statement. "Once completed, the shallops will help promote the building of the Virginia, will be used to train students in small boat handling, and to shuttle people from shore to ship once the Virginia is completed."

The 18-foot, European-style, 17th century boat can be used for sailing or rowing. The English explorers who established a colony in what is now the Popham section of Phippsburg used a shallop, according to accounts of historians and archaeologists who continue to study the short-lived coastal settlement. The Popham Colony lasted only a year, but in that time, the settlers built the nearly 50-foot-long Virginia, the first English ship constructed in the New World.

Maine's First Ship continues to raise money for the construction of a replica Virginia. In the meantime, West will spearhead the shallop project, relying on labor from a select group of area ninth- and 10th-grade students.

Merry Chanin, former

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Maine's First Ship

place inside Bath's last remaining 19th century freight shed, located on the waterfront side of Commercial Street near the base of Lambard Street.

Property owner Howard Kirkpatrick donated the space for the project. West will supervise the work of as many as 12 students in the mornings, and continue to work with a smaller adult crew in the afternoons. The project is expected to wrap up in about 10 weeks.

According to a Maine's First Ship announcement, West most recently served as an instructor and boatwright for the Boothbay Harbor Shipyard, where he organized and supervised the Maine State Apprenticeship Program at the local high school. Prior to that, he served as an instructor in the apprentice program of the Atlantic Challenge Foundation.

West previously served as museum manager and small craft curator for the Newburyport (Mass.) Maritime Society, where he also established a volunteer work force, and as boat shop manager for the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath.

"We are thrilled to have a boatbuilder with such outstanding skills and experience," said Fred Hill, president of Maine's First Ship, in a statement. "With Will in charge, all the students and all volunteers will have a terrific summer."

Monetary donations to Maine's First Ship's projects can be sent to P.O. Box 231,