



July 2010
Quarterly

Maine's First Ship

Newsletter

Maine's First Ship - Shallop Project

By Board Member Merry Chapin

Welcome to a short piece on the very exciting MFS Shallop Project, supporting the work of 14 Morse High School 9th and 10th graders under the direction of Project Director, Eric Varney and shipwright, Will West. Howard Kirkpatrick, the owner of BFC-Marine has loaned his Bath waterfront site on the Kennebec River to MFS for the building of the shallop.



Students at work on the Shallop

The kids went through an application process, including a short writing piece about why they wanted to be a part of building a shallop. In return for their participation, they receive 2 summer school academic credits, a letter of recommendation that they can use as a job reference, a letter documenting their community service hours and an opportunity to be among the first group of apprentices in the building of Virginia.

The students begin at 8 AM with a sign in and attachment of name tags, made by one of our incredible volunteers, Gayla Pecci Teague. They set up chairs, get out their journals, and prepare for the "lecture" from Will and Eric. Sometimes they are asked a historical question, relating to the Popham Colony. Then they are off to work on the project that Will has assigned. Half models are finished and now they are busy working on the shallop. Each day one or two kids goes through a "historical overview" so that they are prepared to talk to the visitors who stop by and hopefully buy items that MFS has for sale. 2 or 3 students are the videographers for the day, working with Patti Irish who also works with the Maine Laptop Initiative and Apple Computer. She is training Cody and Amy to be the lead student videographers who in turn are responsible for teaching the video skills to the 12 other kids.

Our MFS program is really divided into 3 parts: working on the shallop, video and documentation and serving as the docents. Will stations the docents nearest the door so that they continue to work with their wood projects while keeping their eyes open for the visitors. Everyone works with wood every day.

We could not have better leaders than Will and Eric. Will has experience with boats, kids and museums. Eric is a science teacher at Morse and knows many of our students from his classes. Will and Eric work so well together. It is such a treat to watch them work as a team with the kids and volunteers.



Volunteers work on Museum Display

So very important to this entire operation is our group of volunteers. We have such amazing volunteers, including teachers, a retired naval architect, retired BIW employees, present BIW workers and those who happen to live in Eric's neighborhood. Marsha Conover, Meggan Henerlau, Allison Hepler and Orman Hines, long associated with the MFS organization are 4 of the volunteers. Orman volunteers 2 whole days a week besides being a sponsor and loaner of a needed fan and power equipment, Marsha is always busy sending email messages to the MFS Board, running off paperwork and

working Friday afternoons on the shallop. Meggan brought her visiting sister and helped organize our "for sale" items which are kept in plastic bins Meggan donated. She and Allison are 2 of our cookie bakers, as is Eric's mother and a student's mother. Allison loaned us her flag pole so that we can hang our new, smaller Fort Saint George flag, made by Eric's neighbor Joanne Luneau. Along with 2 Morse High teachers, Wendy Roundy and Justin Voldman, we have Abby Chandler, a professor at UMass-Lowell with a major concentration in 17th century! One of our volunteers is Bill McElman, a reenactor. Bill carries a pattern for 17 century shirts in his head and it was his idea that we make these shirts for our students. When this wearing of 17th century shirts was mentioned to the 14 students, I saw heads go down in disbelief. But when I asked for the first student volunteer to wear a shirt, Brandon raised his hand! Margaret Webb, a sophomore at Hartwick College, a reenactor, will soon be in period dress and sew the shirts in our "museum" area. Bill would also like us to have a blacksmith on site to teach the kids how to make nails. Because we are still collecting materials such as cloth, boom cameras, tapes, video cords, and raising money we have not yet had time to locate the necessary blacksmith.

Such interesting people have stopped by the Shallop Project! We try to sign them to volunteer on the project, or at least get them to put names, addresses and emails in the guest book. That's what happened when long time MFS supporter, Ed Benedict, stopped by. We signed him right up to work in the next few days. The architects, Theodore and Theodore, visited and we were immediately into discussion about their work with Bowdoin students in trying to preserve the shed, as it is the last remaining 19th century freight shed on the Kennebec River. That visit may lead to a new community project, of course involving kids! Chuck Mainville arrived by water with his 6 friends who rowed to the shop from Phippsburg. More potential volunteers!!! A marine contractor stopped by with an offer to get materials at cost! The Superintendent has made 3 visits, as have others.

In the background and trying to work regular jobs, entertain and keep family responsibilities going are several MFS Board members. Sharon Drake and Fred Hill have been busy trying to raise money for necessary materials and equipment that we have not been given or loaned. John Morse has given lumber and supplies as well as sawing lumber donated by the Bath Arborist. Bud Warren is the best of editors and gave a terrific presentation to the students and volunteers. The video crew was set up with 3 cameras to capture this event. We are so thankful for Bud and John Bradford for their perfect work on the display panels that we use in the "museum" part of the shop.

BIW gave us an incredibly generous gift of safety equipment and a demonstration by Laura Mathisen, BIW director of Environmental, Health, and Safety. Equipment includes electrical cords, ear protection, eye wash, and heavy duty gloves. Jim DeMartini, Manager of Communications, BIW videographer Mike Nutter, Dixie Steadman, Barbara Leeman, who was the instigator of this safety gift and the connection between BIW workers who have become volunteers, all were at the shop for the safety demonstration. Laura even returned the next week with a gift of donuts and muffins! BIW workers, Steve Donahue and Kevin Welch are with us in the mornings and then go to work second shift at the yard. Bill Guertler is one of our afternoon workers who has worked with Will and Eric after the kids leave. Clint Matthews, a retired BIW worker, also has helped out in the afternoon.

We are so grateful for the support of all of you who have supported this effort, volunteers, donors of the gift of time, materials, equipment, ideas and money. The Shallop Project is such a really wonderful project, keeping kids busy, mentoring them into becoming leaders, helping them learn skills and giving them opportunities that they would not have had without Will, Eric and Patti and without your support. Please check out the website that the kids have worked on. It is wonderful and hard to believe that young students can do such great work!

http://www.pirish.com/The_Shallop_Project/Welcome.html

Merry Chapin is VP of Education for MFS and has volunteered endless hours on this project.

News from the Popham Colony Holes

By MFS Board Member - Orman Hines



Dr. Jeffrey Brain, Alex King,
John Bradford & Pam Crane

"What happened at Ft. St. George this summer?" is the question some have asked me. "I thought we finished the digging in 2005". Well actually we have only dug about 10% of the area that the Hunt map describes as being part of the fort. Luckily Dr. Brain was able to obtain permission from the gracious new owner of the Freeman property. If you remember the Freeman property sets to the east of the State Park area on a small peninsular. This piece of land housed some of the Popham Colonist and in the front yard the Smithy.

Dr Brain, John Bradford & I started by trimming back the overgrowth and looking for the old datum markers at the end of May. After laying out about 10 one meter units, the digging got under way June 1st with a lot of familiar faces turning up each day. Tim Dinsmore, Nancy Wienberg, Alex King, Nicia Gruener, Peter Hutchinson, Gordon Compton, Pam Crane & Peter Morrison and Jacob, Judy Dunsford, Mary Concannon, Fred Madio, Kathy Bugbee, Myron Beckenstein, and Fritz & Christa Mueller. It seemed like old home week.

As the dig progressed we were split into two teams by the natural topography of the site with one crew on the North West side of the house and the other on the South East side. Very little of interest was turning up on the South East side of the house and we were getting a little flak from the good doctor especially when Bellarmine started turning up on the West Side in the Sergeant Majors House area. So there was some friendly ribbing of the usual "LOOK WHAT I FOUND" for the two teams.

Peter Hutchinson started in a very unproductive unit that had brick and 19th century artifacts right to the bottom (200 cm) on the South side. Although some units are barren of 17th Century artifacts they can tell us a lot by looking at the profiles of the soil. Peter's unit profile showed that we had a major outwash running through several of the units on the south side.

John Bradford started coming down on a lot of daub (a mixture of clay and straw used on the walls of buildings) in his unit. There was a little quandary as to whether or not the daub was low fired brick. Brick and daub both being made of clay and the fact that Ft. St. George was probably burned by the Colonist to prevent the French from taking the fort after they left. Not long after finding the daub, John started finding some strange looking iron slag material. That same evening John & Dr. Brain did a little research and found in Rick Faulkner's "Pentagonet" the same slag material associated with a forge. Faulkner's publication also showed a roved nail the same shape and size of the ones we were finding on the south side. Faulkner attributed these nails to a bellows. "WOW" this was getting exciting for the South Side crew.



17th Century Coin

Not to be out-done Diane Weggel & Bob on the North West came up with the first coin ever found associated with the 1607 Popham Colony. A 12 Shilling piece was worth two days wages in the 17th Century. This coin had the likeness of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth the 1st on one side.

Well that coin would be pretty hard to beat, but give it a try we did on the South side finding a beautiful little clay pipe bowl, over one hundred pieces of a case bottle, a post hole with four musket balls, a shell heap with Native American pottery, and three forges.

Needless to say everyone was very pleased with the results of this years chance to add to the Popham Colonies data base, and we are looking forward to Dr. Brains report.

2010 Annual Membership Meeting

Maine's First Ship will hold it's Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday August 21, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held in the Linden Tree Room at the Phippsburg Congregational Church (1/3 mile down Parker Head Rd. from Rte 209).

In-kind Contributions

Sailmaker Nat Wilson will be making Virginia's sails, and Andy Vavolotis of Robinhood Marine Center has offered to store her for the winter. Howard Kirkpatrick of BFC Marine has donated the use of his 19th century freight shed on the waterfront in Bath for building our Shallop. The Shallop Project has also received generous donations and support from Bath Iron Works, Bath City Hall, Hammond Lumber, Frohmiller Construction, Poole Brothers, Rogers Ace Hardware and RSU 1. Inkind contributions are a great way to support Maine's First Ship. We are currently seeking donations toward boat building tools for the students working on the Shallop.

Please contact us at mfs1@mainesfirstship.org if you would like to make a donation, or mail to: Maine's First Ship, PO Box 231, Bath ME 04530.

The coming months promise to be a very busy and productive period for us. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions, need any information, or wish to make a further donation to the campaign.

*Regards,
Fred Hill
President
Maine's First Ship*

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