



Maine's First Ship

Newsletter



Fall 2019

Special points of interest:

- *Virginia's* sails under construction
- "Beach Pea" peapod raffle supports launch
- Caulking makes *Virginia* watertight
- Spars and rigging
- Traditional shallops during the Popham era
- MFS volunteers sail on Portsmouth's Gundalow
- School groups visit MFS
- Summer at Freight Shed series continues with lectures and hands-on events

Women's shipbuilding day brings out talent and enthusiasm, as always



A sunny Sunday morning, following the extra hour of sleep due to clocks being changed (plus widespread power outages for some in the area), brought out nearly 20 participants for MFS's annual Women's Shipbuilding Day. Helped out by shipbuilding volunteers Paul Cunningham, Orman Hines, Gail Smith, and Elise Straus-Bowers, ship-

wright Rob Stevens led the many hands in marking, cutting, planning, shaping, and fitting deck planks on *Virginia*.

plank, it was clamped into place. More are ready for installation this week.

Shipbuilders spent the day cutting and shaping the white pine decking, which has been drying under cover for a number of years. After signing the underside of the first



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Publicity
Committee:
Roger Barry, Lori Benson,
Allison Hepler

Annual Appeal

Please contribute to the MFS Annual Appeal as you are able. We appreciate all donations and your support will help keep *Virginia* on schedule for a 2020 launch. Thank you.

Maine's First Ship: Reconstructing the pinnace *Virginia*

President's Notes



It has been nine years since we laid the keel for *Virginia* and it seems like yesterday. Next June 7th we are planning to make a big splash with the launch of our sturdy little pinnace, so save the date. Tentatively we plan to have speakers, music by Castlebay, reenactors from *Virginia*, and Shakespeare's ***The Tempest***.

If you enjoy history I encourage you to volunteer as a docent telling the story of the Popham Colony and

Maine's First Ship. There are so many wonderful connections: First Americans, European history, early shipbuilding and colonial history. You will not only gain a wealth of knowledge but meet people from around the globe who have similar interests. You don't need to be an expert. Just a little enthusiasm will engage visitors.

There is still much to do before

we launch, with a diesel motor and lead ballast to purchase, bulkheads to install, deck construction and a myriad of details to accomplish.

We have an amazing group of volunteers that will be bringing *Virginia* to completion. I hope that you will continue to support us as we move into a new phase of actually sailing *Virginia*.

Full sails and a following sea,

– Orman

MFS a regular participant at the Woodenboat Show



By Jim Parmentier

In June, Orman Hines, Jim Parmentier and Jeremy Blaiklock trailered *Jane Stevens* from Maine to Mystic Seaport Village, in Connecticut, to tell the story of Maine's First Ship at the 29th Annual Woodenboat Show. Each year this show brings together in-water and on-land boat exhibitors, expert skill demonstrations, and marine vendors from sailmakers, kayak dealers, and composite makers to persons selling exotic

hardwoods, woodworking tools, and adhesives.

Amateur-built boats in a display area entitled "**I Built it Myself!**" were a short walk from guided tours of the reconstructed-and-soon-to-be-launched *Mayflower II*, all displayed on the museum grounds of the historic and traditionally restored shipbuilding port of Mystic.

Aided by wonderful weather, and displays of models and items we brought from our exhibit in the Freight Shed we told the story of Maine's First Ship to a steady stream of visitors from all parts of the country. In our off time we toured special collections of watercraft that are not normally open to the public, visited nautical exhibits and art galleries in the museum, and watched the contin-

uous display of traditional smallcraft out in the harbor behind us.

Our presence at events such as the Woodenboat Show helps ramp up interest in and enthusiasm for the *Virginia* within the world of traditional boatbuilders, nautical historians, and the general boating public.



MFS raffling off donated 15' "Beach Pea" rowing and sailing peapod

By Jim Parmentier

Peapods, like dories, are sturdy double-ended boats between 15 and 20 feet long that developed in many parts of the world for use by fishermen who worked in ocean waters. They had to be reliable and trustworthy in big waves and also easy to row. They had to resist capsizing as heavy fish nets or lobster traps were hauled over their gunnels. Their oars and oarlocks often were large, and fishermen could row them in either direction and by sitting or standing up.

Peapods transported nets, bait, and catch to and from ships or to shore with speed and safety.

Doug Hyland, of Hyland & Brown – Boatbuilders, Brooklin, Maine, originally designed the Beach Pea Pod to be 13' long and to be built using modern glued lapstrake construction. In 2006 students in the Landing School, in Arundel, ME, built a 15-foot version

of the Hyland's peapod design.

Paul

Gamache, one of our MFS docents, was the financial advisor to the Landing School at the time, and decided to buy that boat. Paul, his wife, Claudette, and their dog

Poppy (...short for "Popham") enjoyed rowing and sailing their peapod for many years.

Now Paul has graciously donated his boat to MFS to be raffled off as part of our celebration, next June, of the launch of *Virginia*. The boat will be barn-stored over the winter and in the spring MFS volunteers will give it a fresh coat of paint and prepare it for a new owner.



MFS Educational Fund to support the many onboard projects and programs we have planned for *Virginia*. Thanks, Paul, for your generosity!

If you have any valuable nautical items that might be suitable for offering in the grand and glorious **Virginia's Launch Celebration Auction, Raffle and Yard Sale** please contact Jim Parmentier at jparmen@aol.com.

The peapod will be raffled off with two sets of oars and a complete sailing rig. Money raised in the raffle will go into the



This newsletter is always a joint effort. This issue is especially so. Thanks to Dorsey Harrison, Orman Hines, Kimberly Madden, Jim Nelson, Jim Parmentier, and Rob Stevens.
- The Editor

Virginia's sails under construction in Appleton, Maine

By Jim Nelson

While research and discussion is still on-going concerning the engine to be mounted below *Virginia's* deck, work is well underway on her true means of propulsion — her sails. Through a generous grant from the National Society Daughters of Colonial Wars, Maine's First Ship has been able to contract with a local sailmaker to build *Virginia's* six sails, and the first part of sail construction is already complete.

The sails are being made by Dayle Tognoni Ward, co-owner, with her husband Tom, of Tradi-



tional Rigging Co. in Appleton, Maine. Dayle's knowledge of sails came, initially, not from sewing them in a loft but from handling them at sea.

Prior to becoming a sailmaker she worked professionally as a crew member aboard traditional sailing ships, and has thousands of sea miles under her belt.

Dayle first went to sea at age 17, sailing in the ships *Niagara*, *Pride of Baltimore II*, and *Spirit of Massachusetts*, among others. After two trans-Atlantics and a European tour in *Pride II*, she moved ashore

and went to work at Bierig Sailmakers and then later for Nat Wilson of East Boothbay, the premier traditional sailmaker in the country.

The sail loft at Traditional Rigging Co. is committed to building historically authentic sails and is quickly becoming the go-to loft for many traditional vessels. Dayle has already built sails for *Mayflower II*, *Mary E.* and a number of other ships and boats.

Virginia's sails will be made from a fabric called Clipper Canvas, woven in the UK.

Clipper Canvas is a polyester cloth that's made to look and feel like natural canvas, but much lighter and more durable. Rather than the traditional white, *Virginia's* sails will be "tanbark", a brownish red hue.

Tanbark is a brew made from boiling tree bark, often oak, in water and it was used for centuries as a preservative for hemp or cotton canvas. When the sails were soaked in the tanbark solution they took on a reddish color, which the Clipper Canvas will mimic.

As with many things about our new *Virginia*, there is no way to know if the original ship's sails were tanbark or not, but there is every likelihood that they were, given how commonly that preserva-



tive was used.

The rig (that is the arrangement of masts and sails that *Virginia* will carry) is an unusual one even by the standards of traditional sailing ships.

She will carry three squaresails — the spritsail, under the bowsprit, and the mainsail and main topsail. The others, the staysail, the sprit and the lateen mizzen, are fore and aft sails, that is, they set parallel to the ship's centerline. This arrangement is dubbed the "deep-sea rig." Research into the design of the vessel led to the conclusion that the colonists might have re-rigged *Virginia* for her trans-Atlantic sail, replacing the simple, two sail "coastal" rig shown on the Hunt Map with the more complicated rig our replica will sport.

With the ship launched and rigged, and the sails bent on, we look forward to seeing how *Virginia* will handle when driven by the power of the wind. One thing, however, is already clear — she will be a dramatic and eye-catching sight.

Lecture series moves to summer; brings variety



The 2019 MFS Summer Lecture Series featured 6 presentations at the Bath Freight Shed on several Thursday nights from June to September. An average of over 40 attendees came to each lecture.

The topics ranged widely, including a history of

navigation at sea by **Mark Phillips**, early interactions with Wabanaki by **Ken Hamilton**, and a history and description of the shipyard Bath Iron Works (BIW) by **Nick Nichols**. The shipyard is Maine's oldest and fourth largest employer. Begun in 1856 as the Bath Iron Foundry, it has since produced more than 425 ships, including 245 military ships. Today, over 5,000 people work in the BIW shipyard, building and repairing ships.

Another talk by **Jim Parmentier** discussed the physics behind global weather patterns and described how to make short-term predictions about local weather patterns through an understanding of cloud formations and their movements.

Gayle Bowness of the Gulf of Maine Research Institute described changes in New England's coastal environment. If you missed this presentation you can go to the following weblink to find more information about this topic: <https://gmri.org/news/blog/gulf-maine-explained-sea-level-rise>.

The series was jointly sponsored by MFS and our non-profit partner, the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (KELT).

MFS is now planning our 2020 Summer Lecture Series to be held again on Thursday nights in the Freight Shed. Look for announcements on our website www.mfship.org and via email. We hope you can join us.

MFS Presents Summer at the Freight Shed 2019

The volunteer crew at Maine's First Ship offered a second Summer at the Freight Shed program with the 2019 schedule including lectures, previously offered in the springtime. New activities joined several events that appeared in 2018, the first summer of the series.

The Solstice Soiree was a festive evening with music, dancing, and a bonfire. MFS Volunteer Phil Helgerson opened and closed the season's daytime offerings with two sessions of "Now You're Caulking," with a chance for folks to have a go at 17th century caulking

techniques. Lori Benson presented on "17th Century Sailcloth" for which she experimented with creating a tanbark solution, used to prolong the life of the sail. Woodworking and knot tying returned, as did the estuary program with our friends from the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust; and Castlebay treated us to "Ballads from the 1600s." Shipwright Rob Stevens gave a guided tour of *Virginia* and MFS President Orman Hines led a site visit to the Popham Colony. Other events were the 6th annual Fiber Day at the Freight Shed and a

visit from the USCG Auxiliary Flotilla 25 out of Boothbay Harbor.



Maine's First Ship: Reconstructing the pinnacle *Virginia*

MFS welcomes local classrooms

When you think of Maine's First Ship you probably think first of *Virginia*, under construction by the volunteer shipbuilders. Is your second thought the educational programs—from maritime heritage to colonial history—

MFS provides around this project?

In addition to the interpretive displays that are part of the Jane Stevens Visitor Center and the lectures and hands-on programs offered to the general public, MFS volunteers host hundreds of local students on field trips to the Bath waterfront.

The middle of October and the early part of November we had six visits planned from three schools with two other schools in the process of planning. The 5th grade from the Har-

riet Beecher Stowe School in Brunswick booked

four consecutive Wednesdays (that's two classrooms each week), sharing one day with their Brunswick neighbors St. John's Catholic School and also Phippsburg Elementary.

If you know a classroom, or other group, that would like to visit please contact the office.



Gundalow *Piscataqua* offers MFS volunteers sailing and educational opportunities in New Hampshire

By Jim Parmentier

Members of the MFS Board got a chance to experience first-hand what it is like to take an educational cruise on an historic ship. They boarded the gundalow *Piscataqua* at the dock of the Jackson Estuarine Laboratory, located on the edge of the Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge in the upper

reaches of the Piscataqua River in New Hampshire.

The 65-foot lateen-rigged *Piscataqua* is a reproduc-

tion of the many gundalows that moved with the tides up and down the Piscataqua, transporting hay and horses, and agricultural as well as manufactured products of all kinds from the farmlands of New Hampshire to the shipping ports in Portsmouth and Newburyport.

The gundalow ride introduced us to the excitement as well as the organizational structure necessary for developing our own educational program for *Virginia* once she is launched next summer.

The original gundalows

were propelled only by the wind and/or the tide, and occasionally by oars. The operators would tie off along the bank when the tide switch unfavorably, and it sometimes took two or more tidal cycles to reach their destinations. Our more modern model had an on-board diesel engine, and we made it back to Portsmouth Harbor in about two hours.

The memory will last quite a while, and will help inspire us as we develop our own plans to sail *Virginia* on the Kennebec.



Photo: Strawberry Banke Museum



Virginia becomes watertight and ready for the sea



Virginia became more watertight over the summer with oakum, which is traditional hemp and pine tar, and cotton (which would not have been used in the original ship). MFS hired shipwright Andros Kyragoras for the work, which is nearly complete. MFS volunteers assisted Andros in his work, which included spinning the oakum and painting the finished oakum to prevent it from "walking out" and from leeching oil out of the seam compound, which will be paid over the seams.



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Virginia is also one step closer to sailing the seas with the near completion of her masts. Fred Gosbee and Stu Gillespie shape the spars with traditional tools such as axes, planes, and drawknives, as well as the good old traditional chain saw!





Maine's First Ship
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 Ph: 207-443-4242
 Visit *Virginia* and the Jane
 Stevens Visitor Center at
 27 Commercial Street
 (on the water side of the
 Bath Freight Shed)

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 progress on the web**

www.mfship.org

Maine's First Ship: Reconstructing the pinnacle *Virginia*

Wabanaki Shallops of the Northern Colony

By Rob Stevens

There were many boats mentioned in the Davies Journal of the North Virginia Voyage. Two types were canoes and shallops in the possession of the Wabanaki. By August of 1607 the Wabanaki would have had 100 years of experience with European boats. On July 31, 1607, the *Mary and John* met a "spanishe shallop" with 8 "Salvages" and a boy who approached but could not be enticed to trade. After a while they "boldly" approached the ship and 3 of them stayed on board overnight. The next day a different "Biskay shalloppee" came with three women with beaver skins to trade. By labeling these shallops "spanishe" and

"Biskay," Davies appears to be making a distinction between these shallops and the larger ones (I believe based on capacity) brought by the Colonists.

Sometime in the 1500s, if not earlier, Basque whalers and cod fishermen had been coming to the Northeast coast from Spain in June and returning by early January. They brought with them partially disassembled chalupas to be used as whale-boats. These chalupas were rarely brought back to Spain

and it is estimated 100s were left behind yearly. These would be submerged in ponds and lagoons, like birch bark canoes, to secure them and prevent them from drying out. These chalupas were expected to last three years. Sometimes the Wabanaki would buy one, or often they would just take them when the whalers returned to Europe. When the whale harpooners returned they would recover it if possible and it was not considered a big deal that it had been used. Harpooners who did not return would rent their chalupas

to other whalers and if it was lost, there was no compensation because a rent had been paid. The Basque chalupa was built in Europe, about 26 feet long, round bottom, curved stem and stern, lug sail, 6 crew.

In the 1500's there are numerous references by Europeans and Natives



MFS shallop Jane Stevens

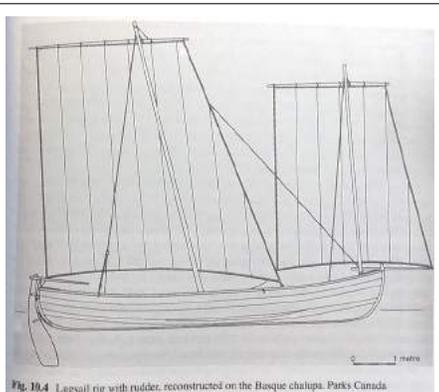


Fig. 10.4 Lugsail rig with rudder, reconstructed on the Basque chalupa. Parks Canada

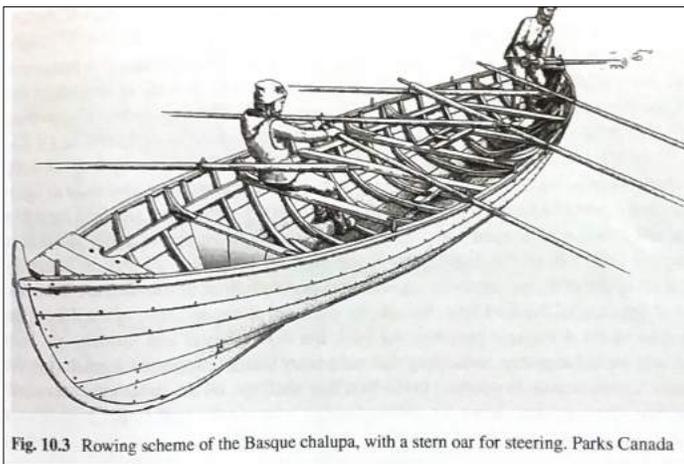


Fig. 10.3 Rowing scheme of the Basque chalupa, with a stern oar for steering. Parks Canada

using boats. Europeans often commented on how confident and competent the indigenous peoples were in using these European-style boats. For example, the "Salvages" the Popham colonists met told of their chief Mes-samouet, an influential Mi'kmaq chief who built shallops, spent one winter in France, and would sail his shallop off shore to meet the Europeans so as to control the trade between Europeans and Indians.

Stay tuned! In the next newsletter I'll write about Wabanaki canoes and English boats .