



Window Restoration 101, clockwise from top left: Joe in no-window window; restored windows after a coat of paint; fitting a new yellow cedar muntin; some of our Bulldogs glazing the rebuilt windows; and removing old glass before restoration. See website for final product.

Windows, Power, Paint and More

Using a Historic Preservation Fund Grant, leveraged with hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, we rebuilt and repaired all of the windows on the Japonski Island Boathouse. SMHS Director Carole Gibb led the work, ably assisted by master woodworkers Terry Perensovich and Joe D’Arienzo, window rehabilitation expert Brinnen Carter and dozens of volunteers,

This was made possible through the City of Sitka being a Certified Local Government: our Historic Preservation Commission means the City can act as a pass through for these federal monies.

Photos and step by step descriptions are featured on our website. The project involved first assessing and labeling all the windows, removing them, and steaming them to remove what was left of the old glass. “Faux” windows were put over the openings.

Most were in very poor condition, and one was missing altogether. Volunteers milled new yellow cedar muntins (the dividing bars) which were then cut and fitted, using traditional mortise and tenon joinery.

We had a wonderful complement of volunteers throughout; some did not know what a coped tenon was, much less that

they could make one, when they got up that morning.

Next, all windows were primed, then the glass put back in. We had to cut quite a bit of glass, to replace the broken and missing panes. Thank you to Janet Evans, who donated a stack of glass from her frame shop.

We had a group from the Sitka Fine Arts Camp’s Bulldogs on Baranof program to help glaze the windows (put glass in), in a cooperative project where we provided training, and they provided manpower in this exacting craft.

The last step was to reinstall the hardware, nearly all of which we’d managed to salvage and clean up, and to reinstall the windows, including one that volunteers built from scratch.

Getting ready for Lights and Power

Next, work parties documented and removed nails and hardware from the walls and ceiling, and cleaned the surfaces by the gentlest method that worked - rags, soapy water, and elbow grease - and repainting using paint that looks as close to what the original would have looked as we could muster.

The painting was in preparation for wiring and lights in this wing - see next page for more on that project - in order to achieve Occupancy status.

Let There Be Lights and Power

The Historic Preservation Fund grant is funding a big chunk of the wiring and lights project, but not all of it.

Your donation now can help us complete that project, and make this year's work a spring board for completion of the building.

We have submitted an application for next year to continue to work on the building, next summer, when we will tackle restoring some of the historic wooden doors, move the attached office, and repair the back wall.

This is necessary work in order to build a small addition onto the back of the building, that will have a bathroom and a handicapped-accessible entry.

All of our work on this really cool building is going according to our full construction documents, prepared in 2010 by NorthWind Architects.

All of this work, the donated labor, and fund raising, goes toward our completion of the building as a working, maritime heritage center, complete with wood shop, haulout, and hands-on exhibits.



Seafood Fest Demo

Sitka Seafood Festival, held in August, was the biggest and best yet (go to sitkaseafoodfestival.org for more information).

Our contribution was a hands-on exhibit, showing how wooden boats are caulked (pronounced "corked.") This age-old method involves pounding fluffy cotton into the v-groove between two planks, which makes the entire hull one tight unit, and keeps water out.

Joe D'Arienzo, a long-time shipwright who knows his way around a caulking mallet, showed visitors how it's done and let them try it out.



2014 Annual Meeting: Rich and Satisfying

Our Annual Meeting topic this year was Harvesting and Sharing Foods from Our Waters and Shores, and our panelists John and Roby Littlefield, Steve Johnson, Kellan Shoemaker, Florence Welsh, and Peter Williams gave us a gift in sharing their articulate and surprising stories about their experiences out harvesting wild ocean foods.

We're grateful also to the audience members who joined in to offer their tales about engaging in one of Sitka's most treasured family traditions. We appreciate the drama, insights and laughs you all provided. Accolades to our moderator, Eric Jordan, for his knack for helping create this unique evening of "community conversation," to Sitka Tribe Enterprises, for renting us such a beautiful space. And finally, lots of angel points to those who brought such tasty and varied foods to share.

We were saddened to hear of the passing this summer of John Littlefield, who has given so much to the community over his lifetime. Our condolences to his family.



Summer Beach Picnic-Cruise

We had fun at the work parties, but also had fun-fun: we did the first-of-its-kind combination wildlife cruise and picnic, in July.

We toured around and looked at marine mammals and natural splendor, then landed on a Kruzof Island beach for a cook-out picnic. It was unforgettable.

Thank you to all who participated, for your contribution and for your good fellowship.

Memories of the Japonski Island Boat Shop

By Mary Bowen

My Dad was Robert Modrell, and many of my growing-up years were spent in that boat shop.

We came up to Mount Edgecumbe in 1948 on the BIA boarding school's training vessel, The Mount Edgecumbe. Dad taught boat building to students in the school and to veterans. The students built a fishing boat which was sold, and worked on the shore boat, the Arrowhead. I know that they learned how to lay a keel doing the keel for my Dad's sail boat. Believe it or not, he had the first and only sail boat in Sitka for years and years. Everyone thought he was nuts.

They gradually phased that program out but he was hired to keep the shore boats in repair and the Japonski Island Boat Shop was his territory. I spent hours there sweeping up shavings around all the machinery, making plugs on the drill press (OSHA would be horrified these days) cleaning brushes in the big tank of gasoline, etc. It was where we stopped on our way home from school after riding the shore boat from Sitka. We would have a chat with our Dad and then walk on home. After five o'clock many times friends would gather in the boat shop for a cup of coffee or a beer. When there were no government boats on the ways, government employees could haul out their boats and work on them, or renew the bottom paint.

There was a group of my Dad's friends, also government employees who would always be on hand to help when a shore boat had to be hauled out. It could be any time of the day or night as they had to use the high tides. The men would ride the cradle down the ways and as the boat was driven into the cradle they would all be at the various winches on the cradle to secure the boat before it was hauled up into the shop. Sometimes there was an emergency haul out when one of the shore boats had hit something and Dad wanted to check to see what damage had occurred and at the least put some fresh copper paint on the area. Sometimes it was a bigger repair.

As you know there are two parts to the boat shop - the side where all the saws and tools and work benches were and the side where all the supplies were stored. We didn't get to go in there often. It was usually kept locked. But it smelled wonderful, probably mainly of oakum and had hundreds of drawers and cupboards full of screws and nails, etc.

I also remember sitting on the workbench in the main

shop and drinking beer when I was home from college and old enough to drink beer. The cans were still steel and it was everyone's goal to bend the can in half and it took a lot of strength. I remember when I finally was able to do it. The things that stick in your memory.

I remember that Dad had a realistic plastic button hanging on the wall that had PANIC written below it. It was the big joke about when it was appropriate to push the panic button. He also had a collection of cartoons hanging on the lockers in the back room that eventually had a washroom in it. People would find cartoons related to boats and give them to him and he would tape them to the lockers.

Along the side of the boat shop was the steam box for steaming wood that needed to be bent. The steam came from the power house. I didn't help Dad with planks from that steam box but I helped him plank his sail boat in the hanger

that is now UAS. The steam box there was inside and when the planks were ready, we would grab them with rags in our hands and run with them to the waiting boat. He would screw them in place and then it was my job to put plugs over the screws. I had a terrible time telling the grain of the plug which was important, so poor Dad had to mark every plug with a line showing me the grain. Then when the glue had set a bit, he came along with a huge slick chisel and sliced the top off the plug level with the plank. If I put them in with the grain wrong, they broke unevenly, so I was under pressure to do it right. I remember ruining lots of t-shirts with glue.

The boat shop was a wonderful place for us kids. We were not allowed to just mess around - we had to be helpful and careful. But it was our second home.

After the bridge was built the boat shop gradually was used less and less. There was a work boat that the government still used for awhile. But the last few years my dad worked out of the carpenter's shop on Charcoal Island. I think he was difficult to work for and with as he had extremely high standards and a very short temper. I think over time he probably offended a lot of people. But he also had many loyal friends and there are many boats in Sitka still that he worked on in his spare time, when he wasn't at his nine to five job.

That boat shop is an old old friend.



Robert Modrell with the fishing vessel Abby in the cradle.
Modrell family photo.

SITKA MARITIME



HERITAGE SOCIETY

Goods

Pigment-dyed T-shirts with woodcut shore boat Donna on the boatshop ways or Davis Boat: \$25 for long sleeve and \$20 for short sleeve shirts, or \$20 and \$16 for members.

Large, heavy-duty natural cotton tote with boathouse image \$20, or \$16 for members.

27-minute **DVD of Sheldon Jackson School in the 1930s**, filmed and narrated by Les Yaw, is \$10.

See details online at www.sitkamaritime.org.

Members receive **20% discount on shirts and hats**. To buy goods call 747-3448, or send a check (include \$2 postage per item) to the SMHS, P. O. Box 2153, Sitka, Alaska 99835.



See Us at WhaleFest

We'll have artifacts, activities, and pictures and information about our work on the building at our table at Sitka WhaleFest, **November 6-8th, 2014**.

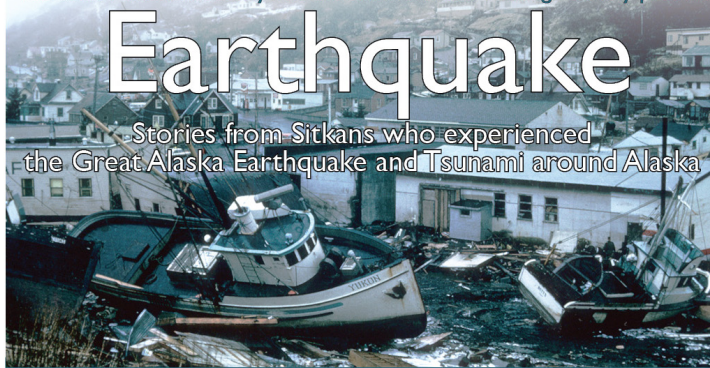
We'll also have t-shirts for sale, and copies of the Sheldon Jackson dvd, with footage from the late 1930s, including boatbuilding and sawmill action.

At 5:36 p.m., Friday, March 27th, 1964, Prince William Sound was the epicenter of the largest earthquake ever recorded in North America. 131 Alaskans died, nearly all of them in the subsequent tsunami.

The Sitka Historical Society and the Sitka Maritime Heritage Society present

Earthquake

Stories from Sitkans who experienced the Great Alaska Earthquake and Tsunami around Alaska



Earthquake Panel

On March 27th 2014, the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Alaska Earthquake, we hosted, with the Sitka Historical Society, a panel of people who experienced it. This proved to be fascinating, from the dramatic story of the enormous losses in the Gulf of Alaska communities, and Bob Allen's direct involvement picking up the survivors of a village that had been wiped out, to the real story of the impact in Sitka, from Willis Osbakken and Larry Calvin. Bill Davis was in charge of civilian rescue in Anchorage, where almost miraculously, few were injured or killed.

We had a tremendous turnout, and are working to get these stories on line.

A few days earlier, Nancy Yaw Davis, who is married to Bill Davis, presented at Kettleson Memorial Library about her work with those survivors and others evacuated from their demolished villages. She pioneered the field of Disaster Anthropology, more and more relevant today as we look at what makes a community resilient in the face of our contemporary environmental challenges.



Our Director

January 2014 also saw a new director for the SMHS, Carole Gibb. Formerly of Pelican and Juneau, Carole has worked in commercial fishing, grant-writing, property development, marketing and program planning. She has a love of oral history, especially on maritime topics, and authored a book,

Fishing for Courage, featuring true stories from her salty island-dwelling neighbors.

She has been ably leading the SMHS, organizing events and our files, window repair, cleaning, and now lights and power, and applying for the next round of historic preservation grants!

The Board of the SMHS

The board of the Sitka Maritime Heritage Society is comprised of: Mike Litman (President), Rebecca Poulson (Vice President), Joe D'Arienzo (Treasurer), John Dunlap, Brinnen Carter (Secretary), Stan Barge, and Hayley Chambers.

Recent Donations

The SMHS is grateful for some great donations recently: Harry Jimmy donated more boatbuilder Andrew Hope artifacts, including planking stock for a rowboat, and a spiling machine - a wooden jig for making a pattern for a boat planks.

Rich Dangel donated a WWII lifeboat flare gun. It is solid brass, and is quite a beauty.

And Sabra Jenkins donated a 14-foot Davis-boat style rowing boat, built in Sitka in 1991. Thank you!



The Tom & Al on the beach at Sitka, some time after 1907, photographed by E. W. Merrill.

The Tom and Al

Lynne Chassin recently donated a print from the 1980s of an E. W. Merrill photograph, of the fishing vessel **Tom and Al**, careened on the waterfront of current-day Katlian Street.

In the background is Japonski Island, which at the time was a military reserve. The two large buildings there are for storing coal for government ships. The one on the left still stands. This photo was made some time after 1907, which was when the radio towers visible in the background were constructed.

According to the “King and Winge Shipbuilding Company” page on Wikipedia, the **Tom & Al** had been built as the **Ragnild** in 1900, and later acquired, and renamed by the company.

The **Tom & Al** is a sort of sister ship to the famous **King & Winge**, a classic halibut schooner built by the King and Winge yard in 1914. The yard’s owners were Thomas J. King and Albert L. Winge. The yards, and the fishery, were dominated by Scandinavians, most of them immigrants: Albert Winge was a native of Norway.

The **King & Winge** was a classic, dashing, modern halibut schooner. Her first voyage was an arctic expedition, where she also picked up survivors of the **Karluk** expedition from Wrangell Island. The **King and Winge** was a fishing boat, then possibly a rum runner, a Columbia Bar pilot boat for three decades, and finally a fishing boat again from 1962 until sinking in the Bering Sea in 1994.

The **Tom & Al** was used for a short time as a whaler in the early 1960s, and she sank in 1980, while packing shrimp from Kodiak to Homer. But in this photo she was probably a halibut fishing schooner.

In the heyday of the cod and halibut fisheries, the men went out in the dories – flat-bottomed boats we see here stacked on deck – to fish, and would return to the mother ship with their catch. Eventually, the schooner itself was used to set and pick up gear, the way it’s still done today: the boat sets out long lines with baited hooks attached.

The halibut fishery did not take off in Alaska until we had regular steamship traffic and cold storage plants. Then Alaska stocks were rapidly depleted, just as the more southern stocks had been.

Several of the classic halibut schooners, built a century ago as the latest in marine technology, are still actively fishing. These include the **Republic**, built in 1914, the same year as the **King & Winge**. She is home ported here in Sitka and looks ready for her next 100 years of service.

The survival of halibut schooners is a testament to the stout construction standards of the yards, and to the seaworthiness of the vessels.

But it is also testament to fisheries conservation, and the rebuilding of the stocks, so that we have a viable fishery today.

Japonski Island Boathouse Rehabilitation

The Sitka Maritime Heritage Society is working to restore the historic Japonski Island boat shop as a working boat repair facility and museum. Your support also leverages grant funding.

As a member, you will receive the newsletter and a 20% discount on t-shirts and other goods, and you will be a part of preserving Alaska's maritime heritage.

The SMHS is a 501(c)3 nonprofit so your donation is tax deductible.

If you would like to join or renew, please fill out the form below and return it, along with your check, to:

Sitka Maritime Heritage Society

P. O. Box 2153

Sitka, Alaska 99835

**or, use your credit card to donate
online at www.sitkamaritime.org**

If you received this newsletter by mail, your most recent membership expiration date is above your address. If there is no date, your membership expired more than one year ago.

I would like to get my newsletter by email regular mail

Name _____

Address _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

- \$15 Students and Elders
- \$30 Crew member
- \$40 Entire Crew (family)
- \$50 Mate

- \$100 Navigator
- \$250 Captain
- \$500 Pilot
- \$1000 Old Salt
- Other _____

In addition to my membership I would like to make a donation of \$_____ to the building fund.

Thank You!

Sitka Maritime Heritage Society

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