

WoodenBoat School

Waterfront Information and Safety 2026

This pamphlet is mandatory reading for anyone wishing to use our waterfront. In addition, one must attend our Monday waterfront orientation, which is held after lunch at the Boathouse, weather permitting.

Our waterfront is a treasure. It's an amazing place to learn about and enjoy boats. We love it, but we also worry about it. What follows is our best thinking on how to use this part of WoodenBoat School safely.

Some of what we have written here about safety and local conditions may sound dire. The plain fact of it is that boating is somewhat dangerous, and this is particularly true of small boats on the coast of Maine. But the rewards are great! This area is a fantastic place to explore by boat, and we have some great boats to do it in. So please don't let our cautions scare you away. Take advantage of this opportunity, but take it seriously.

There are a lot of details to learn and skills to master in order for you to make the best use of this facility and to use it properly and safely; but above all there are three concepts you should keep in mind:

- The water here is **COLD**, and will drain the energy out of a person quite quickly. Therefore, capsizing a small boat is very serious business.
- Except for our seamanship courses, our waterfront is not a teaching/learning situation. Boat use is always supervised, but users must be responsible for themselves, their crew, and our boats at all times. **KNOW THE LIMITS OF YOUR ABILITY, AND STAY WELL WITHIN THEM.**
- Our fleet of small craft was not chosen for its suitability to this sort of public use. These boats are not necessarily rugged, simple to use, or unsinkable. There are some interesting and lovely boats here, but they require that you **TREAT THEM WITH CARE AND RESPECT.**

RULES & PROCEDURES:

1. You must read this pamphlet before using any of our boats.
2. Life jackets are mandatory. By law they must be on board. Our policy states that life jackets must be worn at all times.
3. Our boat sign-out system must be observed. Whoever is going to be skipper signs the boat out and is responsible for the boat until it is returned.
4. Please have our boats back on their moorings 1/2 hour before sunset.
5. Be certain the boat has all mandatory equipment as appropriate to boat and proposed use before leaving the dock or mooring—chart, pump or bailer, anchor, compass, fog horn. Also take extra clothing.
6. Know your actual boating limits, the location of ledges, and the weather outlook.
7. Boats and equipment must be returned to their proper places, clean and tidy.
8. No alcohol or smoking allowed in our boats.
9. Before using our boats, please read the HYPOTHERMIA ARTICLE on our Boathouse bulletin board.

CONDITION OF USE:

We strive to match sailboat users' skills and experience with the boat and prevailing conditions. Therefore, we require that you obtain permission—for each use—from the waterfront staff member who is on duty.

Closed waterfront: From time to time our waterfront may be closed to all boating or sailing. This will be indicated by a sign at the Boathouse.

Boating limits: Folks may use our boats anywhere in the “Playpen”—an area bound by a line connecting the mainland to the eastern Torrey Island, Little Babson Island, Babson Island, the western tip of Hog Island, and back to the mainland at the southwest corner of Naskeag Harbor. Note that the entire area is ***within sight of WoodenBoat's dock***. Please do not venture around our bordering islands. See Chartlet.

Moorings: Please try to return boats to their designated moorings (they must be the same color you left from). Stow sails and gear as you found them. And please be sure your boat is secure on its mooring!

WATERFRONT FACILITIES:

Our waterfront is comprised of the Boathouse, wharf, and a wide array of small boats. On the main level of the Boathouse is a public gathering room and kitchen, and a private staff living area. There is a public restroom behind the boathouse. The lower level is where boat equipment is stored. Here you will find life jackets, weather radio, charts, and safety equipment, as well as oars, spars, rigging, bailers, pumps, etc. Our bulletin board and sign-out system can also be found in this part of the Boathouse. All this makes the Boathouse a pretty busy area, so we ask everyone to use an extra measure of care, neatness, and responsibility. Wi-Fi is available at the Boathouse.

To help us preserve order, as well as safety, we want our boats, after use, returned to the mooring they were on. Rigging and equipment should also be returned to their proper storage place on the boat or in the Boathouse. With so many folks using our waterfront, it is vital that each individual make the extra effort to help us preserve order.

IMPORTANT:

The bulletin board in the lower level of the Boathouse will have up-to-date waterfront information. It is also the site of our sign-out system. You will find the necessary form on which to record the boat you are taking; the crew going out with you; the time departing and returning; and other information. File it in the OUT box and, on returning, be sure to complete the sheet and place it in the RETURNED box.

CRUISING AREA:

Our location is stunning. Eggemoggin Reach, as it spills into Blue Hill Bay and Jericho Bay, is truly a worldclass boating area. It is the inside route to and from Penobscot Bay; and, because it is aligned northwest to southeast and the prevailing summer breeze is southwest, sailboats can often comfortably sail along it in either direction (which is why it is called a Reach). The happy result is often a parade of sailboats off our waterfront.

In addition to all sorts of yachts, passenger schooners, and workboats, the Reach is also used by all manner of wildlife. Keep a sharp eye out for seals, osprey, harbor dolphin, bald eagles, and, possibly, a pilot whale. Half of the islands within sight of our waterfront are uninhabited.

Beaching on the islands during evening sailing is not permitted.

THE WEATHER:

These coastal waters demand *respect*. Tides run swiftly, fog can roll in rapidly, and sudden wind shifts, while rare, can happen.

Most summer days are quite decent. The prevailing wind is Southwest, often increasing during the afternoon to Force 4 and going flat calm in the evening. On our waterfront, this is an onshore breeze, and while it can get a little choppy, it is generally great sailing.

Occasional cold fronts leave clear days with brisk northwest winds in their wake. These north westerlies are often gusty and vertically unstable, and can be quite deceptive from our vantage point. They blow offshore over the trees, and it is difficult to see or feel their true power until you are out there. The months of September and October usually usher in strong breezes from the north and northwest. Think seriously about reefing, extra clothes, and additional crew in all of these conditions.

Warm fronts bring winds from the northeast to south, as well as rain and fog. A southeasterly breeze, in particular, is the harbinger of fog, and the occasional gale from that quarter requires special attention at our location. We have seen 4-foot seas on our shore and our float dancing madly!

Temperatures on the water can be, and usually are, markedly cooler than ashore. It is a very good idea to have extra clothing to layer on. Temperatures in the water are brutal. Even in summer our water is frigid, and hypothermia is a real danger. Statistics vary, but the saying around here is: 50yrs old, 50-degree water, maybe you can swim 50 yards. Take that to heart.

TIDES:

The tidal range is 8-10 feet, and we have two highs and lows per day. The ebb runs out the Reach to the east, the flood west. It is not particularly strong except at a couple of bottlenecks like the passage just north of the Torreys, but in a small boat you can certainly benefit by knowing what the currents are doing and using them strategically. There is a tide table in the Boathouse, and lobster trap buoys will give you a good measure of actual currents in a particular spot.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Please don't ever drag any of our boats on our "beach," or get into a boat that is grounded there. The rocks are much too abrasive and sharp.
- Please do not leave oarlocks set up when coming alongside another boat or leaving a boat at a mooring or the float. Oarlocks in the set position damage the topsides of other boats and can cause injury in the event of a fall.
- When leaving a boat at the float, trail it off to leeward tied with a bowline. Give it a few feet of painter, and make certain that it cannot swing into BABSON's outboard.
- When leaving a boat, make sure everything is snug and secure. Imagine a squall with the wind trying to work everything loose and the boat bouncing like a cork—will the boat and gear survive?
- One more reminder—make sure you are familiar with our sailing grounds. Take a chartlet with you whenever you go out in one of our boats. There are ledges, rocks, and shallow areas that you need to avoid.

HERRESHOFF 121/2's - WE 3, SEAL, DOVEKIE, PINTAIL

Length: 15' 11"

Beam: 5' 10"

Draft: 2' 6"

Rig: Marconi Sloop

Designer: N.G. Herreshoff

Builders: WE 3—Herreshoff Mfg. Co., 1938; SEAL—Herreshoff Mfg. Co., date unknown;

DOVEKIE—Quincy Adams Yacht Yard, 1947 Construction: Carvel planked, cedar over oak

Usual location: Mooring—all equipment on board



Comments: Joel White, in *Wood, Water, and Light*, says: "The Herreshoff 121/2 is probably the best small boat ever drawn. Only sixteen feet long and twelve and one-half feet on the waterline, it has a large comfortable cockpit that can seat four in regal style for an afternoon sail. The boats are seaworthy, good looking, well built, and long lasting. They seem much bigger than they really are—and very, very safe. One can hardly ask for more than that in a small boat."

HAVEN 121/2's - ALLENE, CONNIE

Length: 15' 11"

Beam: 6' 1"

Draft: 1' 6" board up, 3' 4" board down

Rig: Gaff Sloop

Designer: Joel White & Nat Herreshoff

Builder: WoodenBoat School students, '90 & '91

Instructor: Eric Dow

Construction: Carvel planked, cedar on oak

Location: Mooring—all equipment on board



HAVEN 121/2's - FOX and CRACKERJACK

Length: 15' 11"

Beam: 6' 1"

Draft: 1' 6" board up, 3' 4" board down

Rig: Gaff Sloop

Designer: Joel White & Nat Herreshoff

Builder: WoodenBoat School students, 2000 through 2004

Instructor: Brion Reiff, Ellis Rowe and Drew Maples

Construction: Cold-molded, western red cedar veneer

Location: Mooring—all equipment on board

Comments: In getting underway, hoist the mainsail before the jib, and take up on the peak halyard until diagonal wrinkles appear, running from peak to tack. The jib halyard should be just tight enough to not cause the forestay to go slack. In lowering the sails, drop the jib before the mainsail; it's an indication of good seamanship and helps prevent the boat's bow from blowing off downwind after you've picked up the mooring. Note: Use this same procedure with the Herreshoff 121/2 and the Biscayne Bay Sailing Skiff.

FENWICK WILLIAMS CATBOAT - SHENANIGANZ

Length: 16

Beam: 7' 9"

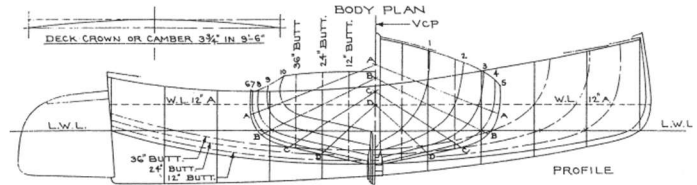
Draft: 1' 9" board up 3' 6" board down

Designer: Fenwick Williams

Builder: Maynard Lowery, 1983 at Tilghman Island, Maryland

Construction: Carvel planking cedar over oak

Location: Mooring— all equipment on board



Comments: Fenwick Williams gave his friend, Maynard Lowery, the plans for this boat just before Fenwick went into a nursing home, saying it reminded him of his youth in Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was the smallest catboat he ever designed. She's a sturdy, weatherly and extremely stable shoal-draft centerboarder that's fun to sail.

WHITEHALL TENDER - AMERICAN BEAUTY

(Out for yard work)

Length: 14' 10"

Beam: 4' 2"

Draft 14"

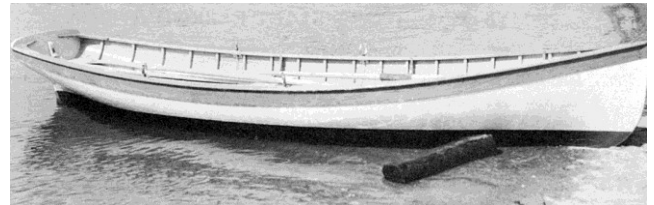
Designer: Rice Brothers, East Boothbay, Maine

Builder: WoodenBoat School students, '93 & '94

Instructor: Greg Rössel

Construction: Carvel planking with northern white cedar over white oak ribs

Usual location: Mooring



Comments: This lovely rowing boat was taken from the lines of an old tender (ca. 1910) by Rice Brothers and is now in the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath. This boat's construction was altered to that of a classic working Whitehall and building her this way yielded the first-hand experience and photos needed to produce an authoritative book on the subject (at Mystic Seaport Museum). The Whitehall has always been a favorite of amateur builders and many, many plans of this boat have been sold.

NUTSHELL - BIG AND LITTLE

Length: 7' 6" and 9' 6" Beam: 4' and 4' 4"

Weight: 90 and 100 lbs.

Draft: 5" board up (both) and 21" board down (both)

Designer: Joel White

Builders: Joel White and Eric Dow

Construction: Glued lapstrake mahogany plywood Usual location: Mooring or at float.

Rigging, rudder, tiller, daggerboard all stored in Boathouse



Comments: Excellent rowing and sailing dinghy for beginners on up. As in this size, trim is very important; try to keep her level fore and aft, perhaps a little bow high when going to weather. When rowing with one passenger aboard, use the forward rowing station.

most boats

SHEARWATER

Length: 16'

Beam: 4' 5"

Draft: 6" board up, 24" board down Weight: 150 lbs.

Rig: Lug

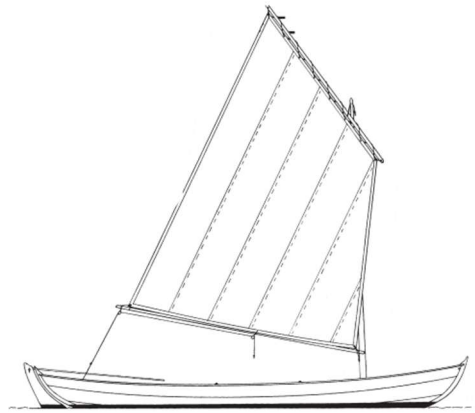
Designer: Joel White

Builder: WoodenBoat School students '87

Instructor: Tom Hill

Construction: Glued lapstrake mahogany plywood

Usual location: Mooring— rudder, tiller, and rig in Boathouse



Comments:

A very fast boat, as well as, an exciting sailboat. Ideal for two rowers. With her light weight and narrow beam, she accelerates remarkably well. Joel based this design on a Norwegian workboat.

SHIMMER - BISCAYNE BAY SAILING SKIFF

Length: 14'

Beam: 5' Draft: 1' board up, 3' board down

Rig: Sloop

Designer: N.G. Herreshoff

Builder: Eric Dow, 1987

Construction: Mahogany plywood Usual location:

Mooring—all equipment on board



Comments: Very responsive and quick. Take along a couple of cushions to sit on for more comfort. Construction of boat was featured in WoodenBoat #96, #97 & #98.

SHELLBACKS - ARETHA, RACHEL and HUMDITTY

Length: 11' 2"

Beam: 4' 5"

Draft: 6" board up, 2' 3" board down Weight: 115 lbs.

Sail area: 56 sq.ft.

Rig: Standing lug

Designer: Joel White

Builders of RACHEL: Matt Murphy, Rich Hilsinger, Rob Dwelley, and Jim Miller, '93-'94;

Builders of ARETHA: Pat Lown, Michaela Baldwin, and Marion Wright, '95

Construction: Glued lapstrake mahogany plywood

Usual location: Mooring or at float (rudders, tillers, daggerboards, and rigs are stored in the Boathouse.)



Sailed correctly, Shellbacks are very quick and responsive. For comfort and safety, adult sailors should sit on the floor, not thwarts, when under sail.

BEETLECAT - WHIMSY

Length: 12'

Beam: 6'

Draft: 8" board up, 30" board down

Rig: Gaff Cat Sloop

Designer: Charles Beetle

Builder: Concordia Co.-WoodenBoat School cold- molded over the original hull in 1993.

Usual location: Moorings



Comments: This is the classic yacht club racing boat and wonderful craft to learn the art of small boat sailing. A good-size sail makes it a fun boat to sail. Take along a couple of cushions to sit on for added comfort. She sails best with the gaff well peaked up.

SATURDAY COVE SKIFF - WINSLOW

Length: 13' 6"

Beam: 3' 11"

Draft: 10"

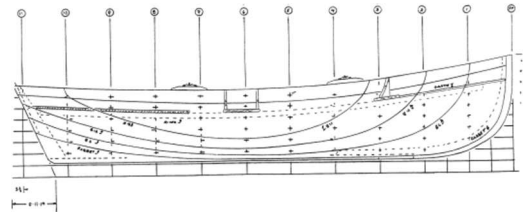
Designer: Unknown

Builder: WoodenBoat School students '98 & '99

Instructor: Greg Rössel

Construction: Carvel planking with northern white cedar over oak ribs

Location: Mooring



Comments: Just who built the original design and when are not known for sure, although it is reputed to have been built about 1880 at Northport, Maine, by a member of a Northport boatbuilding family by the name of Drinkwater. It shows a strong resemblance to boats used for recreational rowing in the 1880's on the Charles River in Boston. The skiff is not heavy for its size and is a very speedy rower, although a bit tender.

MACKINAW BOAT- MAC

Length: 18' 8"

Beam: 6'

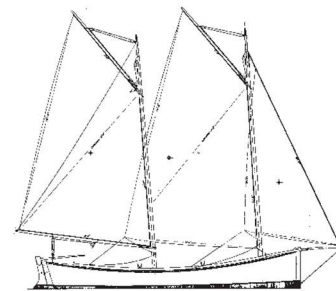
Draft: 1'6" board up, 2' 1" board down

Designer: Nelson Zimmer Builder: Doug Hylan Sail area: 242 sq. ft.

Displacement: approx. 3,000 lbs.

Construction: carvel planked - cedar on oak ribs

Usual location: Mooring



Comments: This is an historically accurate 18' version of the well-known, reputed Mackinaw boat, a sailing and rowing shallop type that was popular on Lakes Michigan and Superior in the late 1800's. Being long-keeled, she won't tack very quickly, but with the right breeze, she'll provide a good turn of speed. This roomy, shoal-draft boat will give a good account of herself in a broad range of wind and sea conditions, and with a variety of loads.

MAINE COAST DORY - WILD ROSE

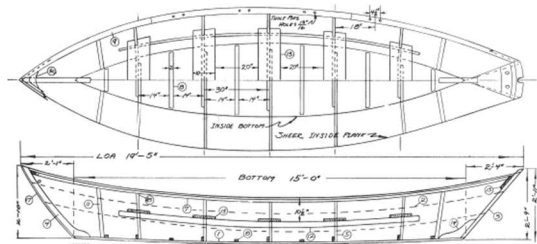
Length: 14'

Beam: 4' 8"

Draft: 8"

Rig: none

Designer: Robert Elliott



Comments: this particular dory is a hybrid between the straight-sided Banks Dory and the round-sided Swampscott type.

SKYLARK - SKYLARK

Length: 14'

Beam: 5' 8"

Draft: 3' 4" board down

Weight: 550 lbs

Rig: Standing lug

Designer: Paul Gartside

Builder: WoodenBoat School students & alumni '03, '04, '05

Instructor: Greg Rössel

Construction: traditional clinker planking over oak frames

Location: Mooring—all equipment on board



Comments: This handsome dingy is an ideal family daysailer. It is stable, will carry up to four people, sails well, and will provide plenty of delight to all on board.

CATSPAW DINGHY - JESSE

Length: 12' 8"

Beam: 4' 6"

Draft: 6" board up, 20" board down

Rig: Spritsail

Designer: Joel White adaptation of Nathaniel Herreshoff design

Builder: WoodenBoat School students and Alumni, 2014–2016

Instructors: Greg Rössel, Wade Smith, Warren Barker, Bill Thomas

Construction: Cedar carvel planking riveted to steam bent oak frames

Usual location: Mooring—rudder, tiller, oars & rig in Boathouse



Comments: JESSE is an all-purpose boat. Safe, stable; she's easy to row and makes a nice sailing dinghy to boot. She goes best under fairly sizable oars—7 1/2' or better and has two rowing stations.

FRIENDSHIP SLOOP - BELFORD GRAY

(Out of rotation this year)

Length: 28' 6"

Length on Waterline: 23' 2"

Beam: 9' 6"

Draft: 5' 4"

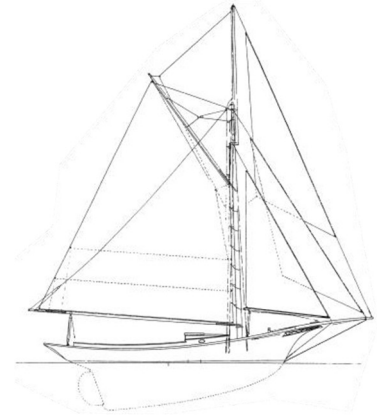
Sail area: 636 sq.ft.

Designer: W.A.Morse and Joel White

Construction: Carvel planked - northern white cedar on white oak frames

Builders: WoodenBoat School students, '87 to '92 Instructor: Gordon Swift

Usual location: Mooring



Comments: Jon Wilson found small- scale drawings for this vessel in a 1907 issue of Boating magazine (no relation to the contemporary magazine). Taken with the lines, Jon published the original plans in WoodenBoat #2 and later asked Joel White to create working drawings. These were eventually given to builder Gordon Swift and WoodenBoat School for actual construction. Upon completion, the boat would become a “floating classroom” in the school’s seamanship program.

CALEDONIA YAWL—SWIFTY

Length: 19'6"

Beam: 6'2"

Draft: 11"

Sail area: 170 sq.ft. (gaff)

Displacement: approx. 340 lbs,

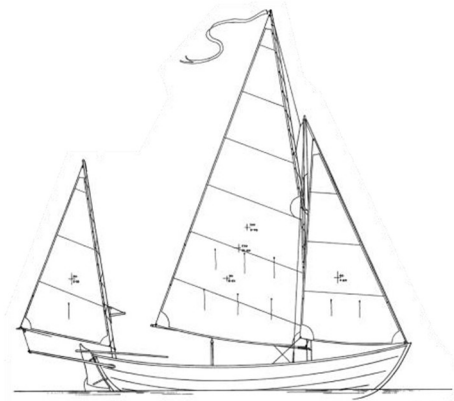
Designer: Iain Oughtred

Builder: WoodenBoat School students, 2014

Instructor: Geoff Kerr

Construction: Glued-lapstrake plywood construction

Usual location: Mooring



Comments: This handsome double-ender is one of Iain’s most popular and versatile designs and is guaranteed to turn heads on any waterfront. With well-balanced, relatively high ends, this lean and long yawl shows considerable reserve buoyancy above the waterline throughout her length. She’s comfortable to sail in a stiff breeze and dazzles in light air and to windward. In steady winds she’ll safely sail heeled over, her crew central and sitting up to windward. Set the mizzen first and it will keep the boat squarely into the wind while you raise the mainsail. To assure positive tacking, simply back the mizzen to the inside of the turn as you come about. The push/pull tiller may take some time to get used to but it works perfectly. Pulling the tiller forward will turn the boat to port. This boat was named in honor of Gordon Swift, an outstanding boatbuilder and long-time instructor at WoodenBoat School who passed away in 2013.

WOODENBOAT SCHOOL - PROPER RIGGING OF A SAILBOAT:

To properly get a sailboat ready to sail, the following tasks should be completed in this sequence:

1. Check the bilge - pump if required
2. Lower the centerboard
3. Release the tiller lashing
4. Remove the sail covers and sail ties
5. Release the main & jib sheets
6. Always start aft when raising sails to keep bow into the wind - jib is last
7. Attach main halyard to head of the mainsail and raise the main out of the boom crutch - please, don't place the boom on the transom
8. Remove the main boom crutch
9. Attach jib halyard to the head of the jib and raise the jib
10. Plan your departure
11. Drop the mooring

No sailboat should leave the mooring until ALL sails are raised and ready to sheet. ALL sails should remain flying until the boat is returned securely to its mooring. The jib on sloop-rigged boats is to REMAIN FLYING for the entire sail. It may be necessary to help properly steer the boat.

RETURNING TO THE MOORING:

1. Approach mooring from downwind - boat should be slowed enough to not over- shoot the mooring
2. Secure painter to the foredeck cleat and get the line into the bow chocks
3. Always lower sails starting forward - this will help keep bow into the wind - jib is first
4. Lower the mainsail - boom into the boom crutch - please, don't land the boom on the transom
5. Move jib halyard to inboard end of jib boom, secure halyard & jib sheet
6. Secure main halyard and mainsheet
7. Furl main w/4 sail ties and jib w/2 sail ties; put the covers on
8. Coil and hang the mainsheet
9. Lash tiller with a clove hitch and secure with a rolling hitch.
10. Raise the centerboard
11. Check the bilge - pump if required

Sailing Boundary – “The Playpen”

