Hampton Roads Ship Model Society

Logbook!

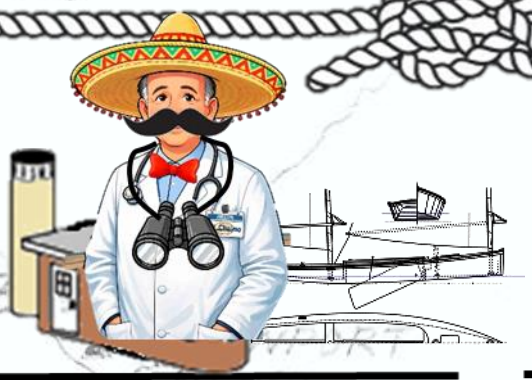


No. 485 November, 2026

Hampton Roads Ship Model Society

No. 485 WWW.HRSMS.ORG **November 2026**

View From The Bridge



Meeting Notice

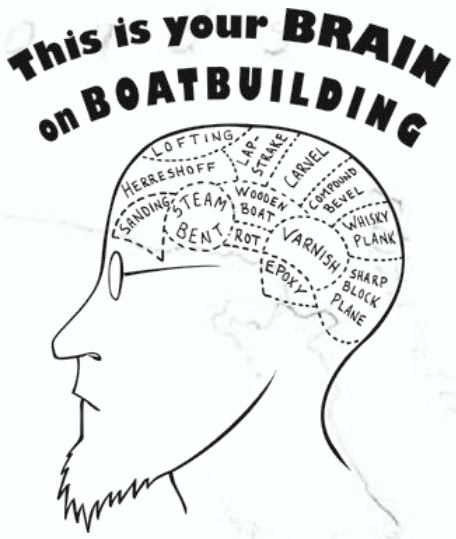
The meeting will take place at 10:00 hours

November 14, 2026



Captain's Log 11.14.26

I hope everyone was excited about their auction treasures from last meeting. This has always been one of my favorite club events, and I regularly use tools and materials from prior auctions. This year was a first for me. I brought a big box full of duplicate tools and kits I will never build and didn't bring anything home to replace them. I'm grateful to the many club members who donated items. Most years we have a significant donation from an estate to fuel the auction. This year it was entirely done with club members' contributions and was still a great event. I'm looking forward to seeing some of the kits as works in progress at upcoming show and tells, particularly the chicken kits donated by Greg. Thanks again to John who did his usual incredible job as auctioneer.



I wrote last month about how excited I was about our new members, especially in light of the recent passing of several of our long-term member friends. I'm really excited that we are able to include an article in this month's logbook that was written by Mark Groth and originally appeared in the IPMS Richmond Spare Parts newsletter. Mark is a tremendously talented plastic modeler who is building the Model Shipways Gunboat Philadelphia. He joined us by zoom for the auction and hopes to begin attending in person. It is a great article about his path from plastic to wood, and I think will resonate with a lot of club members.

I'd hoped to be able to share with everyone my maritime experience of cruising down the Danube with Fay to celebrate our 35th anniversary. We ended up having to cancel because there wasn't enough water in the river for the cruise ship to sail. While we have never covered this in any of our presentations (note to Kevin), apparently having water under the ship is important. Now I know why some of you display your models in dioramas with water. We've postponed and rescheduled to sail around Iceland next year, where there should be plenty of water. I got my hernia fixed instead. I won't say much about that here, other than it kept me out of the workshop for a week, then let me spend some extra time there the following week. I'll have some progress on the whaleboat to show at the December meeting.

I'll be in California for the November meeting, celebrating my father in law's 95th birthday. He was career Navy, but I don't think I can convince him to start building ship models. Thanks in advance to Kevin for running the meeting. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in December. It's my turn to give the presentation and I'm starting to put it together. I'm planning to cover making masts and spars, which I hope will be useful for everyone who needs to make anything that is long and round.—Dave.



Minutes



The HRSMS fleet gathered once again for its monthly meeting, this time with the promise of a little buying, selling, and perhaps a few bargains worth bringing aboard. The gathering featured the club's much-anticipated auction of model ship kits, books, tools, and assorted modeling supplies. For some members, it was an opportunity to clear a little space in the workshop; for others, it was a chance to add yet another project to an already crowded dry dock.

The meeting got underway with the usual club business, beginning with a hearty thank-you to Kevin for organizing the recent cookout. His efforts were appreciated by all, particularly those who managed to enjoy the food without having to stand watch over the grill. Several new members and guests were also welcomed aboard, including Mark Groth from IPMS Richmond and Megan Troup, an intern at the Mariners Museum. We were pleased to have them join our gathering and hope they'll find friendly waters here at HRSMS. Greg deferred the Webmaster's report until the November meeting, and the remaining agenda items were likewise sent overboard, or more appropriately, carried forward to the next gathering.

With business out of the way, the meeting shifted into its main event: the auction. John Cheevers took command as auctioneer, guiding the proceedings with confidence. The offerings included everything from small plastic model kits to larger wooden ship models, shipbuilding books, and a variety of tools and supplies. There was something for nearly every modeler's taste, and perhaps a few things some members didn't know they needed until the bidding began.

The merchandise covered a broad range of manufacturers and subjects, including several destroyer and ship kits. Prices were equally varied, with some lucky bidders securing items for as little as a dollar, while other treasures climbed to bids approaching $30. Clearly, a dollar can still buy something in this hobby, although the real cost may eventually be measured in countless hours at the workbench.

As the auction wound down and the newly acquired treasures found their way into waiting hands, attention turned toward next month's meeting and its planned Show and Tell. Members who picked up kits during the auction were encouraged to bring them along and share their progress. This should provide an interesting opportunity to see what has made it from the auction table to the workbench and perhaps discover whether anyone has actually started building their latest acquisition. We all know how quickly a new kit can find its way to the bottom of the project pile.



All in all, it was a productive meeting, with good company, a lively auction, and several new projects finding their way into the fleet. Now the real work has begun!

Letters to the Editor

From: Don Good
To: Editor

Feel free to use this for the upcoming holiday a little bay holiday tradition. Sourcing the Virginia Gentleman brought back a memory as when I was small my grandfather's farm was near the original distillery in Sun Set Hills now Reston Va. and he would by mash for cattle and hog feed.
I have a very old Christmas post card with a steamboat on it but I cannot find it in my collection will keep looking.
Don

Don
I did….look for "this" in Boat Drinks.
Ed.

From: Charles Landrum
To: Editor

Here is a link to a German website with photo coverage of a ship model competition in Taranto, Italy. There are four separate pages (Teil) and this link is to page one. There are links on the page to the other pages. Some amazing models here.

https://www.modellmarine.de/index.php/fotogalerien/215-ausstellungen/8010-modellisti-jonici-contest-2026-in-taranto-teil-1
Charles

Charles
Thanks for the heads up! You're right, there are some amazing models here.
Ed

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From: Dave Chelmow
To: Editor

please take a look at Mark Groth's article starting on page 9 of the attached Richmond IPMS newsletter. He is planning on joining HRSMS and coming to the meetings starting next month. He was on the zoom for the auction. I was wondering what you thought about reprinting the article in the logbook. He would be OK with it. I can put you in touch with him if you would like to include it and need it in a different format.
thanks! Dave

Dave
I should have room to include this in our newsletter. It would be my pleasure to include it; it's a wooden boat after all.
Ed.
Note: The article begins on page 16 of this Log. It's a nice read, It really speaks to the heart of our craftsmanship and art, and I couldn't have said any of it better. I hope you all enjoy the read. Now, let's get him piped aboard.



3D printed aircraft carrier, made and gifted to me by my neighbor



November Cover:

Anything worth doing, is worth overdoing….is how the phrase goes. That is the mantra of modeler Gene Berger. And he repeats that chant in word and deed. Now that he has embraced the dark side (3D printing), will there be a limit to his madness? What you see on this month's cover is a portion of the open bridge of the Reluctant, reluctantly overachieving in scale and detail. Inside that little 1/8" oval of the binnacle you can see a miniature compass rose. This one is static, but he assures that the next one will be illuminated. It remains to be seen if the compass itself will work and be calibrated correctly. Challenge accepted?—Ed.



The Three Unwritten Rules of Dad Jokes:

1.
2.
3.

Scuttlebutt



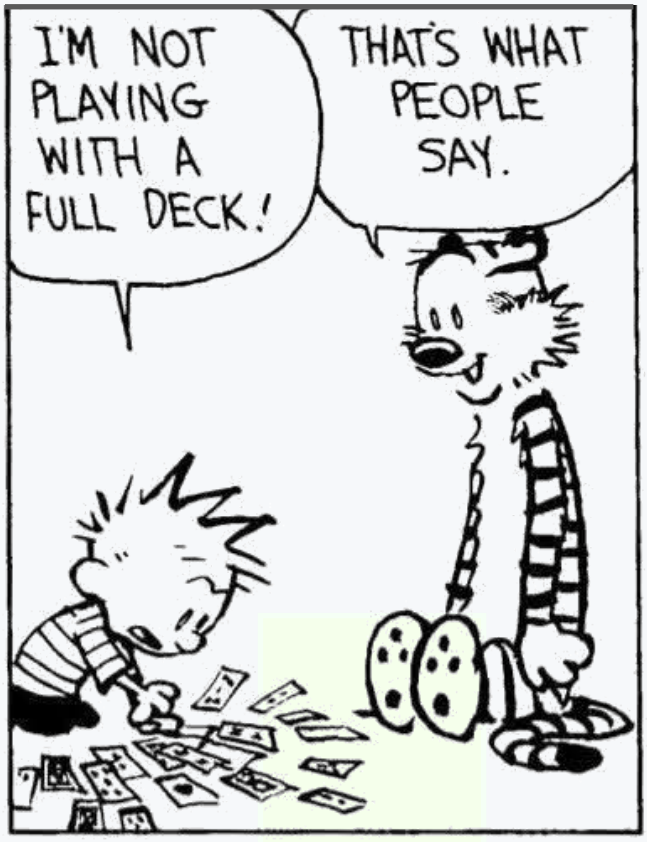
Nautical slang for October

"Half-Deck "

> A deck above the main deck, which does not run the full length of the vessel. The term usually refers to the later, larger square-riggers, and steamers, of the XIX century. However the term was seen earlier.

—Tin Wood.

> Not a full deck, a half deck. I'm thinking quarter deck or poop deck on an English 3rd rate 64 gun ship. I'm also thinking about a half deck of cards, like maybe a magician would use. Or better still, someone, like some ship modelers, who through the use of questionable chemical compounds during construction, might no longer be working with a full deck. You know who you are.—Ed.



Mystery Photo

If you know the answer, contact John Cheevers by mail, text, or Email

If you know the answer to the Mystery Photo below, by all means send in a reply. All answers will be blended into the solution and be presented as a colorful essay.

Also, If you would like to submit a photograph that asks these questions: who, what, when, where, and why, send it on to the Logbook editor for consideration. If you do, do not send an explanation with the photograph as I like to play the game too. After the photo is published in the Logbook, you can send in your explanation for inclusion in the defining essay.—Ed.



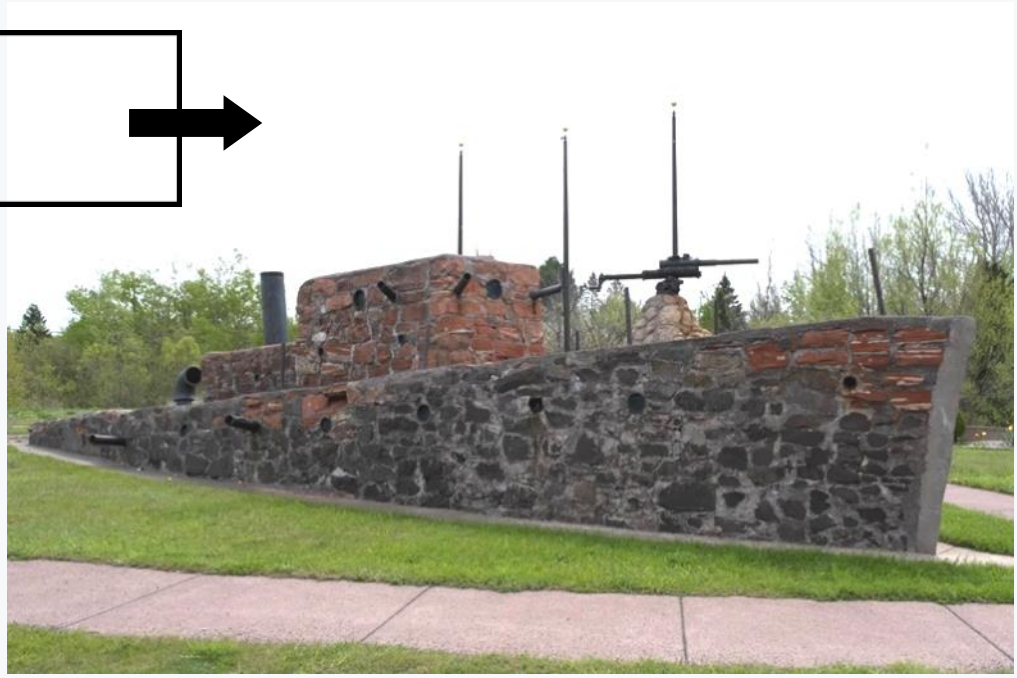
SEAWATCH BOOKS

These aren't your ordinary books…

Books for the Ship Modeler

www.seawatchbooks.com

Mystery Photo Explained



This month's Mystery Photo could be called a dromedary—a ship on land. That is kinda true, except that this is not really a ship at all. If you travel the United States, you can find all sorts of Americana or, maybe, just plain kitsch. On the surface this would be kitsch to me, but there is an underlying story to be told. And it is kind of like the chicken and the egg riddle—which came first.

We can cut right to the chase; this is not a ship, but a monument to one. This rock pile was built to honor the Navy's first USS Kearsarge. And if you know your history, you know that USS Kearsarge was the steam, screw Sloop-of-War that took on and defeated the Confederate blockade runner CSS Alabama. *("USS" and "CSS" are modern prefixes. USS did not become official until January 8, 1907 when Theodore Roosevelt signed Executive Order 549.*)



This battle has come to be known as the Battle Off Cherbourg. It was in 1864 that Kearsarge intercepted Alabama and they fought until the Confederate vessel offered her surrender and subsequently sank. It might not have been a fair fight as Kearsarge out gunned Alabama and was in better material condition. You can Google the battle or read about in in your favorite reference book.

One interesting thing that came out of this battle was the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor to Seaman Joachim Pease. The medal was "first awarded in the American Civil War when President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill containing a provision for the medal for the Navy on December 21, 1861." For Pease, the listing in the Congressional Medal of Honor database says that he "exhibited marked coolness and good conduct and was highly recommended by the divisional officer for gallantry under fire." You can read more about him by Googling his name on line.

Kearsarge was launched September 11, 1861 at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, Portsmouth, N.H. The entry for her in Paul Silverstone's book Warships of the Civil War Navies state that she is one of two Mohican Class screw cruisers listed under Unarmored Steam Vessels. At 1,350 tons Disp. She was 198-6" long (bp), had one screw and two boilers.



Her compliment of 160 operated the ship and crewed two 11" smoothbores and four 32-pdr/42 guns. In 1864 this was augmented by one 30-pdr muzzle loading rifle and one 12-pdr smoothbore. You gun guys can figure out this weight of broadside. Also, not sure if this added firepower was available at the time of her battle with Alabama.

Photo # K-29827 USS Kearsarge sinks CSS Alabama, 19 June 1864. Painting by Xanthus Smith.



Kearsarge survived the Civil War but was in and out of commission through 1888 when she was last recommissioned. On January 30, 1894 she was wrecked on Roncador Reef off Central America. A salvage team "found that she could not be raised."

And why was the ship named Kearsarge? The Mohican-class Kearsarge is named after a mountain in New Hampshire. Ironically, the mountain sits in Merrimack County, NH. The name "evolved from an 1652 rendering of the native Pennacock tribal name for mountain, Carasarga, which it is surmised means, "notch pointed-mountain of pines." Kearsarge is a Monadnock, of moderate elevation. A "Monadnock is an isolated rock hill, knob, ridge, or small mountain that rises abruptly from a gently sloping or virtually level surrounding plain." Originally covered with pines, "the summit has remained bare since a 1796 forest fire." (*Notice all these names of Civil War Union navy ships? Is there a theme here?)*

The next question you should be asking yourself is why was our Mystery "rock pile" built to honor the Navy's first USS Kearsarge and where is it?

There is a little town located about 2 miles north of Calumet, Michigan named Kearsarge. The unincorporated community is little more than a wide spot in the road, as far as towns go. It does, however have its own post office and zip code. It was first settled in 1867, and was essentially a mining town supporting the copper industry there. "A post office opened on November 20, 1893 with Barnett S. Shearer as the first postmaster." The town "was named for the USS Kearsarge by a former naval officer who was an employee of the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company." There was a railroad stop there which explains the wide spot in the road. "During the Great Depression, workers with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) built a memorial to the 1862 naval ship out of stones, though the memorial bears little resemblance to the sloop it commemorates."

While researching for this Mystery, I came across a Facebook post at a page called "Quirky Roadside USA" and noticed a post from someone I used to work with at the shipyard. So I commented on his post. He replied and we enjoyed a bit of reminiscing.

He shall remain nameless for his protection, but you will be pleased to learn that this Mystery Photo was taken and submitted by our intrepid Michigander, Tim Wood. He just can't seem to stay out of the UP. Thanks for the kitsch, Tim





More pics of Tim's rock pile. Bet Gene could 3D print that gun or, maybe, the whole thing.



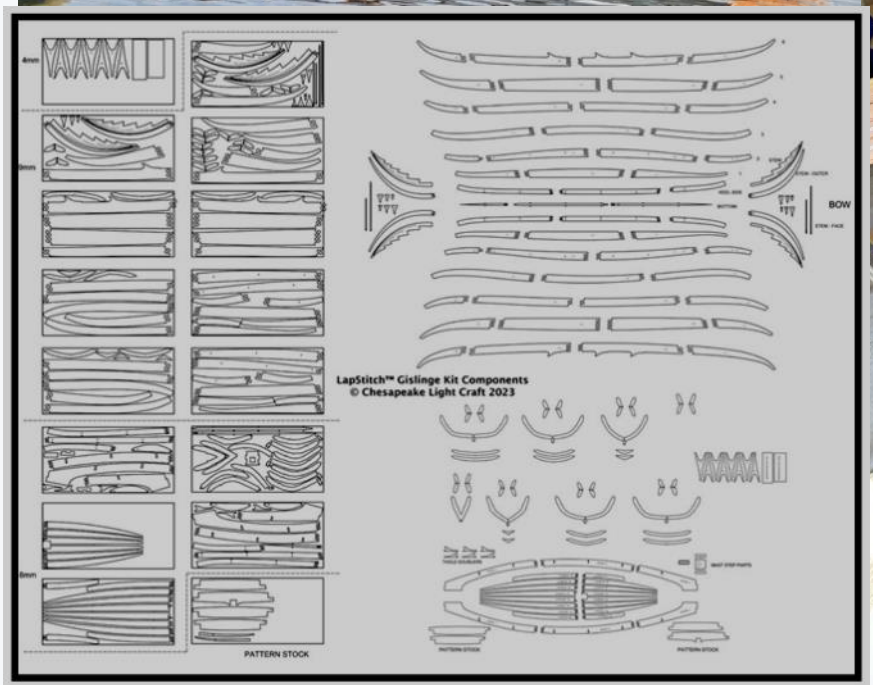
If you have a nautically flavored image that you feel would make a great mystery, send it in for consideration. —Ed.

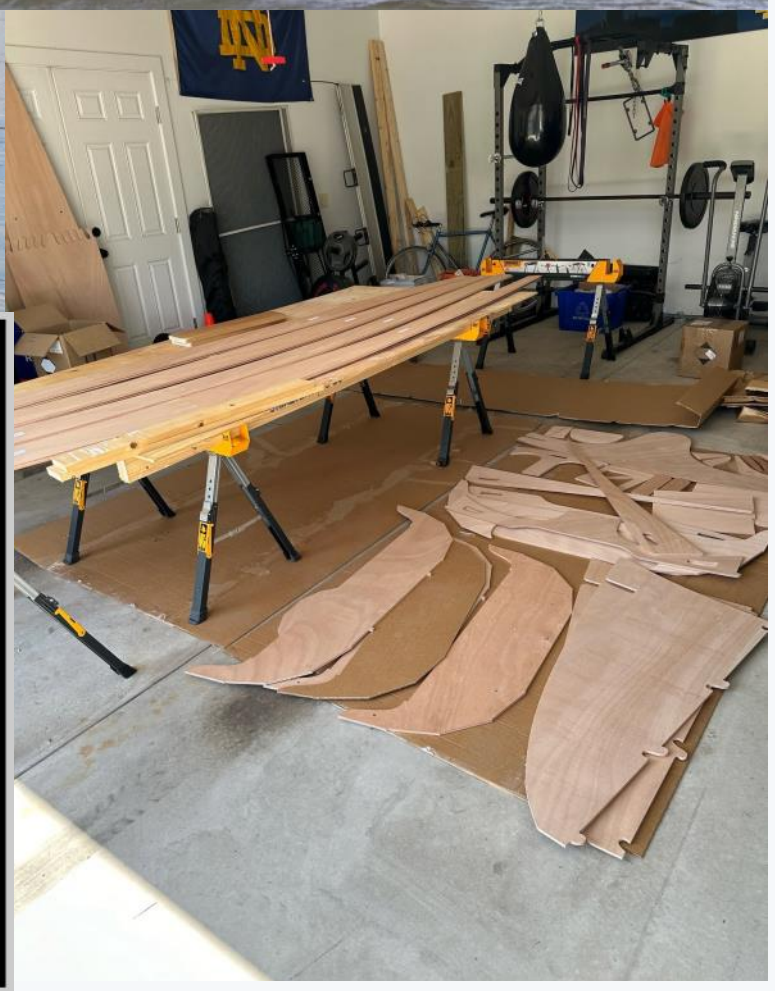
In this month's segment of **Ship Models are Where you Find Them**, we explore the joy of building in 1:1 scale. Building full size can be very rewarding. If your model is trailerable, it might as well be a full sized boat. Here is an opportunity to make shavings, learn some real boat building skills and techniques, and have a nice trophy at the end. So, how do you go about doing that?

Well, the answer to that, and it's relatively easy, is to investigate **Chesapeake Light Craft.** Located in Annapolis, Maryland, they have the designs, and the kits, and the classes to get you building and out on the water. So I'll give them a shameless plug.—Ed.











Shop Talk

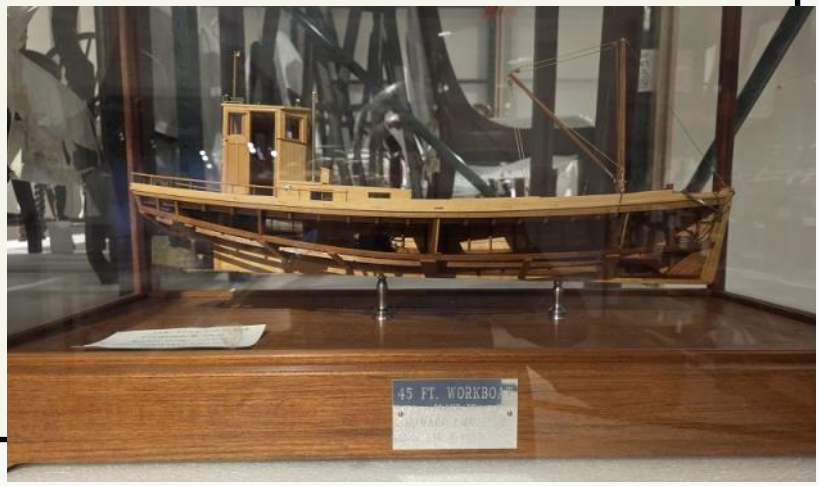
What's that old saying? "Gotta make sure it's...right!" Some guy nicknamed "Goose" down in the shipyard used to say that all the time. And he was right! He had attitude, and a proper attitude is what you need. A few days ago I took the time to really look at the model Chesapeake oyster buy boat anchored there on the Home Depot display rack in the Mariners' Museum. Have you seen it? If you took the time to really study it you would notice that something was off. It's not something that would have you running through the halls saying "Citizen's arrest" or the like, but something that I will quietly call to the Museum's attention.

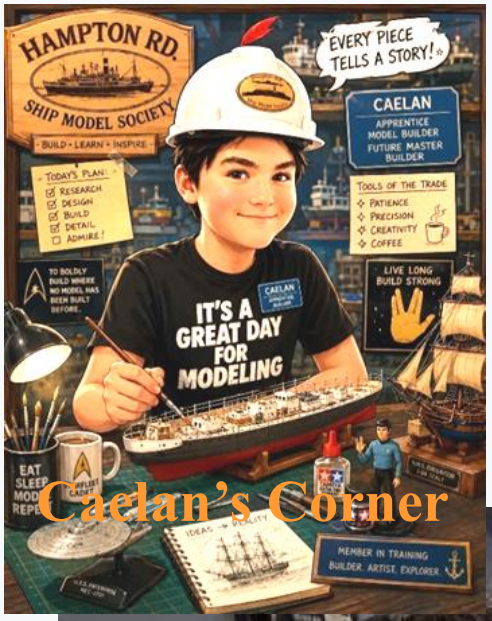
The model is one of those where one side is planked and finished and the other side is left open to show the construction of the real vessel. We get to see the construction side. If you notice the model's name plate at the bottom of the case, you can see that the presentation side of the model is intended to be from this side of the case. Now look at the model and tell me what's wrong with its presentation. Does the deck look too flat and do you think she is down by the bow? If you agree, you are halfway to solving the problem.

These boats had drag in their hull. The stern sat lower in the water to help the propeller "bite" better and to help keep the boat traveling in a straight line. We don't see that here.

What I think happened is that someone wanted to show the construction side and switched the boat end for end on its pedestals because of the label. Trouble is, the "now forward" pedestal is shorter and the boat does not sit correctly—it has a bad attitude. Oh the inhumanity. Give it the attitude it deserves.

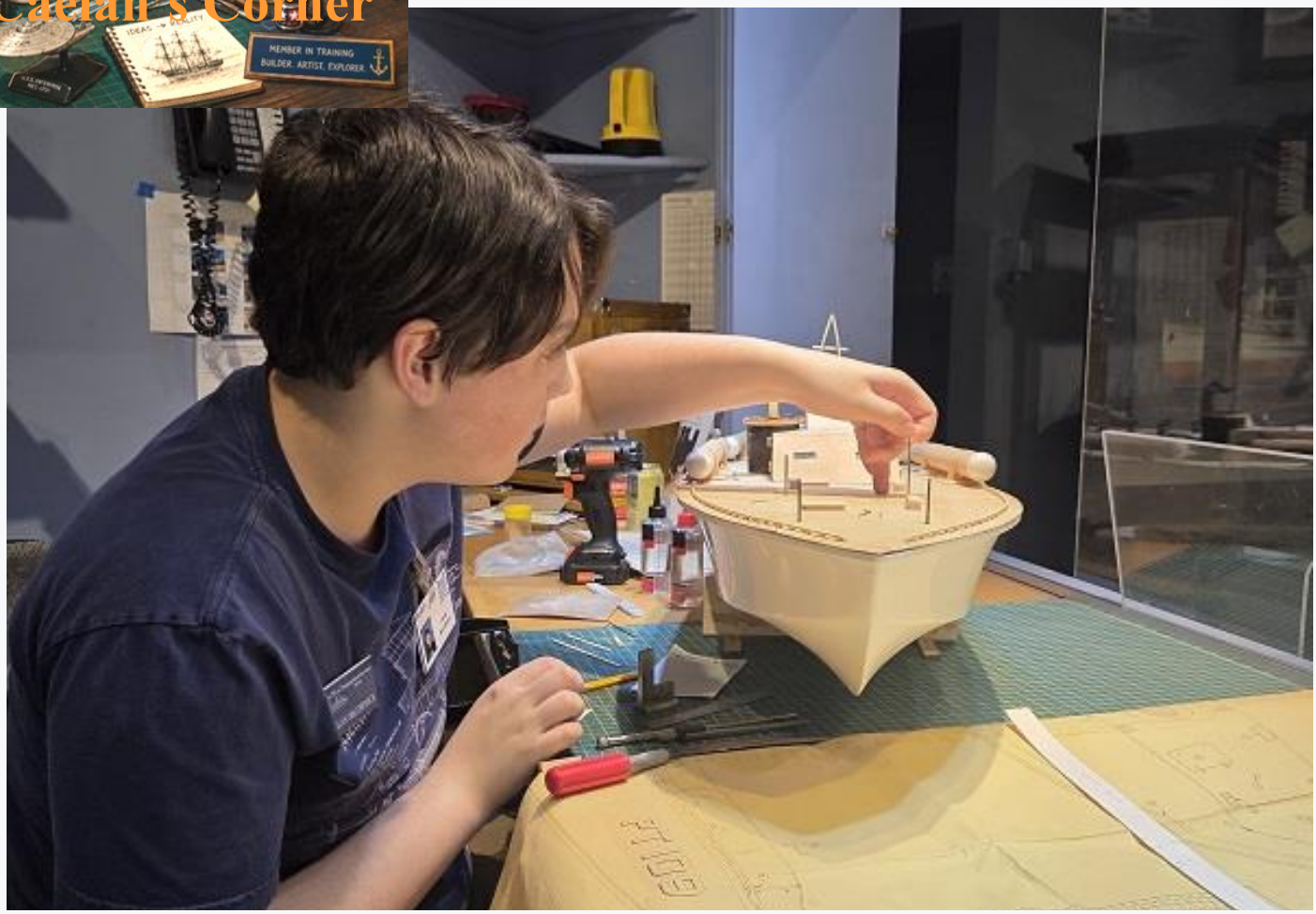
Stay modeling my friends...—Ed.





My PT boat is nearing the end of building, and frustratingly, but happily applying glue. (Basically reaching a milestone). The mufflers at the stern have been epoxied, however I don't like the way the last two mufflers were slightly crooked even though I used masking tape to secure it. Meanwhile, up on the deck, I have cutted and applied the hooking lines and the headlight at the tip of the bow. Next I'm planning to add the controls to the wheel house and finish the gun tubs before I receive the 3d printed guns themselves soon. After that, it will hopefully be a bit of priming and painting.

"El Modelador"
Caelan McCormick



Club gear:

If you need a shirt, hat, or name badge, be sure to see either Ryland Craze or Tim Wood. They have all the details on what's available; pricing and so forth. And I will say that most of the gear comes with our embroidered logo

Or you can search the website for info. Simply type "hat" in the search window...



Time for …….



It's November and we're cruising into the Holiday season. Let's do it right and build Don's favorite: **Weems Steamboat Line Eggnog**. Nothing better than having an "eggnog Making" party in time to ring in the Holiday Season. Do it in time to enjoy the brew for Thanksgiving. From Don Good...

Weems Steamboat Line Eggnog.

At Christmas time the Weems line steamers served a special eggnog from the Weems recipe.

12 eggs

1 ¼ pounds of sugar

1 quart of good whiskey such as Virginia Gentlemen (or your fav...Ed.)

½ pint of rum

½ pint of brandy such as Courvoisier

3 quarts of coffee cream

Beat the eggs until light add the first pint of whiskey drop by drop. This cooks the eggs and thickens them. The remaining pint of whiskey should be poured in very slowly. Add the rest of the ingredients and chill. Serve with a sprinkle of nutmeg.

Just a note I made a much smaller batch and enjoyed it. The eggnog was good but enjoy at your own risk. I went as far as to source Virginia Gentleman.

The Weems Line spans the covers nearly the entire history of steamboats on the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers. The Weems Line begins in Baltimore in 1819 when steamboats first appeared on the bay. The line was sold to the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1905 at the "Golden Age" of steamboats on the bay. The railroad will continue to operate the Weems boats until the 1930s until rail connections storm damage and obsolesce drive these boats off of the bay.

Mess Call



Eggnog has often been described as liquid ice cream. I never made that connection, but here is something that would pair exceptionally well with the holiday elixir.

Easy Apple Crumble Tart.

Ingredients

Crust

- 1½ cups (190 g) all-purpose/plain flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 1/6 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 tablespoons superfine/caster sugar
- 4/5 stick (90 g) butter chilled, cubed
- 1 egg yolk
- 1½ tablespoons yogurt or sour cream

Apple filling

- 2 pounds (900 g) apples
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Crumble top

- ½ cup (65 g) all-purpose/plain flour
- ½ cup (40 g) old-fashioned rolled oats
- ½ stick (60 g) butter softened, cubed
- 4 tablespoons (60 g) demerara sugar or light brown sugar Turbinado sugar
- 1/3 cup (45 g) pecans coarsely chopped
-

Instructions

Prepare apples: Peel the apples and cut into quarters. Remove the core from each quarter and cut each piece into 2-3 slices. Place in a medium sized pot along with the lemon juice, cinnamon and sugar.

Cook apples: Stir then cover and cook over a medium heat for about 8 minutes or until the apples have released their juices. Stir the mixture gently occasionally. Remove the lid and continue cooking for about 4 more minutes stirring gently but frequently. The apples should be softened but still hold their shape.

Cool apples: Remove from the heat and set aside to cool completely stirring gently once or twice.

TIP: If there is still juice in the apple mixture once it's cooled add a tablespoon of fine bread-crumbs and stir in gently.

Instructions (cont.)

Make crust pastry: To the food processor add the flour, baking powder, sugar, salt and butter. Pulse a few times until crumbly. Add the egg yolk and yogurt and pulse a few more times until the flour is no longer visible and the pastry begins to come together. Remove from the food processor and bring it all together to form a log (do not knead). The pastry will be soft and pliable. Place in the freezer for 30 minutes.

TIP: At this point preheat the oven to 425F/220C/200 fan/gas mark 7.

Make crumble topping: To the food processor add the flour, oats, demerara sugar Turbinado sugar)and softened butter. Pulse until the mixture starts coming together. Add the pecans and pulse just to incorporate. Make sure there are no dry ingredients visible. Set aside.

Make crust: Remove the dough from the freezer and coarsely grate over the bottom of your tart pan. Using your fingers and knuckles press this mixture into the bottom and sides of the pan as thoroughly and evenly as you can (don't worry, it doesn't have to look perfect).

Add apple mixture: Fill the tart pan with the apple mixture (once cooled completely).

Add crumble top: Cover the apple layer with the crumble topping mixture as evenly as possible without pressing down too much.

Bake: Place the tart pan in the center of the oven and lower the temperature to 375F/190C/gas mark 5. Bake for 1 hour. After 40-45 minutes cover the top and sides loosely with foil to prevent the tart becoming too brown.

TIP: It's a good idea to bake the tart on top of a baking sheet so you can safely remove it from the oven.

Cool: Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Yields 8 generous or 9 smaller slices.

Notes

Apples: Cook the apples as soon as you've peeled and chopped them (peeled apples brown quickly).

Cool the apple mixture before assembling the cake.

If your apple mixture still has some juice after it's cooled gently stir in a tablespoon of fine breadcrumbs before assembling the tart.

Pastry: The quickest way of making the crust pastry and crumble topping is by using a food processor, but you can also make these 2 components by hand.

Do not knead the crust pastry. Rather bring the mixture together in a dough.

Crumble topping: Make sure the ingredients are evenly coated in butter, so you don't end up with a powdery crumb.

Serving: For best results cool the tart completely before serving (it will cut better and won't crumble as much).

This crumble tart with apple is best served at room temperature within 2 days (but it will still be delicious for another 2 days or so). Once it's cooled cover loosely with tin foil to keep it moist. Refrigerate the next day.

Freeze for up to 3 months.



Modeling a

Revolutionary War Gunboat

By Mark Groth

Down the Rabbit Hole… Again (*Ed note: It's interesting that this comment for IPMS concerns modeling in wood, while for HRSMS—Gene— it means modeling in plastic and goop!—Ed.)*

While surveying my model closet a few weeks back, I came across several wooden ship kits that I'd acquired over the past decades. I'd made attempts in the past to build wooden ships, but all ended in disaster as I grew tired of failing at carving hulls, planking hulls, and rigging ratlines. That, coupled with the always present newest sparkly plastic kits, quickly dropped the wooden ships to the bottom of the stash.

But suddenly I've found myself wanting something different, something "more." So, I dove into the depths of my stash closet, looking for an answer.

The "Why"

Besides the difference in medium, transitioning from plastic modeling to wooden ship modeling represents an evolution in crafting that speaks to personal growth, a desire for deeper artistry, and an aspiration to explore timeless techniques. While both hobbies share similarities in creating intricate replicas, wooden ship modeling adds layers of complexity, historical richness, and a connection to traditional craftsmanship. Pursuing this change might reflect wanting to challenge myself further or a longing for an intimate connection with the materials and history of maritime design.

One compelling reason to switch to wooden ship modeling is the natural aesthetic appeal and authenticity of working with wood. Unlike plastic, which is manufactured and can often feel less organic, wood carries a warmth and character that evolves with your craftsmanship. The grain patterns, tonal variations, and texture of different types of wood enable your model to take on a unique personality. This interaction with natural materials fosters a stronger sense of reward as you see the ship take shape, knowing that your hands played a direct part in breathing life into raw wood.

Additionally, wooden ship modeling often requires studying traditional shipbuilding techniques and maritime history, turning the hobby into an interdisciplinary journey. With wooden kits or scratch builds, you'll explore intricate details like planking, rigging, and sail design, all of which mirror the methods used by shipbuilders centuries ago. This can deepen your appreciation for the craftsmanship of the past and provide insights into historical engineering and design. As each ship model represents a vessel from a specific era, you might find yourself immersed not only in the technical aspects but also in the historical narratives surrounding the ship and those who sailed her.

Moreover, wooden ship modeling provides a greater sense of accomplishment due to its challenges. Unlike plastic kits, which are often pre-molded for easier assembly, wooden ship models require more precise cutting, shaping, sanding, and fitting. You may need to use specialized tools and techniques, including crafting bespoke parts and devising creative solutions to problems. This level of craftsmanship encourages patience, problem-solving, and skill development—qualities that increase satisfaction when the project is completed.

Finally, switching to wooden ship modeling represents a shift toward embracing craftsmanship as an art form. While plastic modeling is undeniably creative, wooden ships bring an element of timeless artistry to the practice. Many enthusiasts display their finished models as prized heirlooms or works of art, owing to the natural materials and detailed handiwork involved. With wooden ship modeling, each piece you create has the potential to be unique, a testament to your personal touch and dedicated effort.

For years, I've been snipping tiny plastic parts off their sprues like a deranged squirrel harvesting acorns. I've inhaled enough paint and glue fumes to qualify as a minor industrial hazard. I've chased decals across



the table as they curled themselves into microscopic taquitos. And at some point—probably around the time I glued a road wheel to my thumb—I realized it was time for a change.

So, for now, I'm switching to wooden ship models. Why? Because I want a hobby that respects me enough to let me sand something. Wooden ship models, though? They're warm. They smell nice. They whisper things like, "You are a craftsman," even when you're sitting in sweatpants surrounded by sawdust that looks suspiciously like the aftermath of a hamster explosion.

And let's talk about rigging. Plastic models give you decals. Wooden ships give you rigging—tiny ropes that require the patience of a monk and the dexterity of a caffeinated spider. You don't just attach rigging; you earn it. You tie knots so small they make Boy Scouts weep. You stretch thread so thin it could double as dental floss for ants. It's the final boss of model building, and I'm ready to fight it.

So yes, for now I'm leaving plastic behind. I'm embracing wood, rope, and the kind of tools that make me feel like I should be wearing a leather apron and shouting "Avast!" at random intervals. I'm becoming a shipwright—at least in 1:24 scale. And if my first ship looks more like a floating potato than a majestic vessel, that's fine. I'll just call it "historically weathered."

The Kit

From the bottom of my stash, I dug out Model Shipways gunboat Philadelphia, a 1:24 scale model of the oldest surviving American fighting vessel. It's a large model: over 26" long by 14" wide by 24" tall. But—one mast, little planking, and manageable rigging with no true ratlines. This kit is more approachable than many larger warships thanks to CAD-assisted, laser-cut basswood parts (multiple thicknesses from 3/32" to 1/8"). Fine basswood is also used for hull and deck planking. One feature is that the hull is planked both inside and out—an unusual detail that makes the build especially rewarding and authentic. Those of you who attended our last group build got to view the skeleton of the gunboat's hull under construction.

The kit includes a comprehensive set of fittings: cast metal guns modeled after the original armament; correctly scaled brass nails, eyebolts, belaying and split rings; photo-etched (can't get away from it) brass sheet with fine details, hardwood deadeyes, blocks, and bullseyes; and six diameters of rigging plus ample sail material.

It also includes a seventeen-page instruction manual, six sheets of plans, and a parts list with identifiers. I also ordered sixteen sheets of plans for the original vessel from the Smithsonian. Every detail of construction and rigging is noted in great detail.

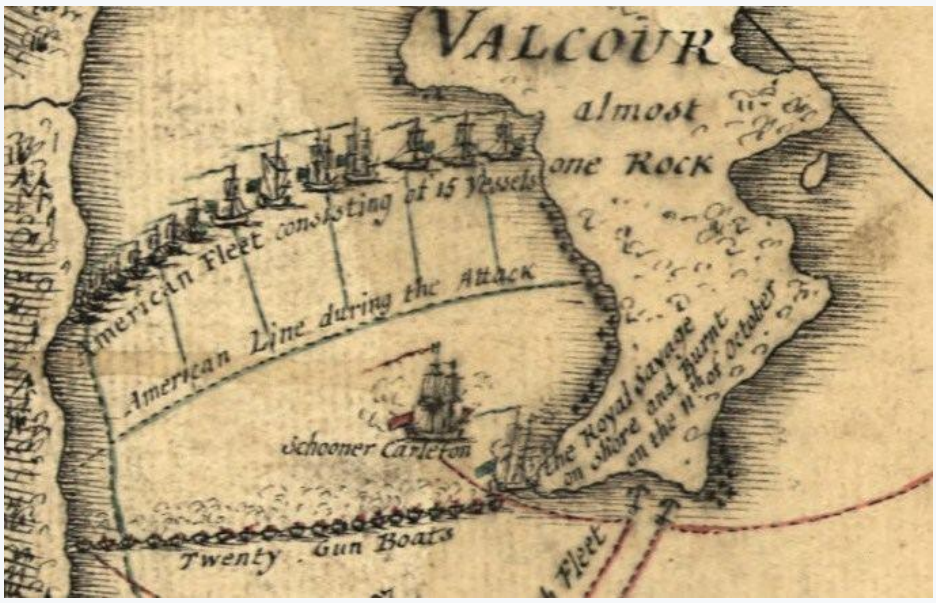




The History

Built hurriedly in 1776 for the defense of Lake Champlain, sunk in battle the same year, and recovered in 1935 with much of its original equipment intact, the boat's biography mirrors the larger American story at a moment when time, terrain, and improvisation proved as decisive as firepower. Today, conserved and interpreted by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the Philadelphia anchors a narrative that stretches from the Continental Congress's emergency naval buildup to modern conservation science and digital documentation.

In the spring and summer of 1776, American leaders feared a renewed British thrust from Canada down the Lake Champlain–Hudson River corridor—a natural invasion route that, if controlled, could split New England from the mid-Atlantic colonies. To buy time and blunt that advance, the Continental Congress authorized a small fleet on Lake Champlain, including the 54-foot, roughly 29-ton gunboat later known as the Philadelphia. Brigadier General Benedict Arnold, then a charismatic and still-trusted commander, directed the crash program from Skenesboro (renamed Whitehall), New York, and other lakeside yards. The result was an improvised flotilla—gondolas (also termed gunboats), row galleys, and a few sailing craft—manned by a patchwork of soldiers, sailors, and carpenters marshaled from several colonies.



The Philadelphia belonged to a class of shallow-draft gondolas built for inland waters—fast to construct, nimble in confined channels, and able to mount a few substantial guns. The boat carried a forward 12-pounder cannon, two 9-pounders, and swiveling guns positioned to rake small craft or repel boarding parties. Such armament gave a sting, not staying power; the design philosophy prioritized strategic delay over definitive control. In a lake environment hemmed by islands, peninsulas, and shoals, that tradeoff made sense: smaller boats could exploit cover, maneuver close to shore, and force a larger enemy to proceed cautiously. Philadelphia and her sisters were thus tools of time—meant to slow, harass, and canalize a British offensive until winter and American mobilization could shift the balance.

On October 11, 1776, Arnold arrayed his embryonic squadron in Valcour Bay, a narrow pocket on the west side of Valcour Island off the New York shore. The constricted waters blunted British numerical superiority and forced their larger ships to engage on American terms. The British brought overwhelming firepower—one floating battery alone reportedly mounted multiple 24- and 12-pounders—but the Americans inflicted damage, absorbed punishing returns, and, crucially, forced a deliberate, grinding battle rather than a quick rout.

The Philadelphia's fight was brief and brutal. Badly damaged in the action, she sank about an hour after the initial engagement ended, a 24-pound iron ball—recovered with the wreck more than a century and a half later—having helped seal her fate. Over the three-day engagement that followed, including a daring American night withdrawal and a running fight toward Crown Point, most of Arnold's flotilla was destroyed or scuttled. Tactically, it was a defeat. Strategically, it was the hinge. The battle delayed the British campaign, pushed their main effort into the following year, and contributed materially to the conditions that produced General Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga in 1777, a turning point that helped secure French alliance and international recognition. In this sense, Philadelphia and her consorts achieved exactly what they were built to do.

Philadelphia rested on the bottom of Lake Champlain for 160 years, preserved by cold, low-oxygen freshwater that slowed decay. In 1935, civil engineer Lorenzo F. Hagglund located and recovered the sunken wreck, which surfaced astonishingly intact, accompanied by fittings, tools, and the cannon ball that hastened her sinking. For years Hagglund exhibited the boat in the Champlain region as a tourist attraction, an early instance of private initiative rescuing and interpreting underwater heritage. He died in 1961 but ensured by will that the vessel would pass to the Smithsonian, which received it in 1964, just as the National Museum of American History opened to the public.

The move from regional display to a national museum transformed Philadelphia from a remarkable curiosity into a touchstone artifact. Situated in Washington, D.C., the gunboat could be contextualized alongside documents, weaponry, and narratives that frame the nation's founding. At the same time, its authenticity—gritty timbers, iron fastenings, scars of combat—cut through abstraction. Visitors encountered not a diagram of strategy but a survivor of it.



Wooden ships are living puzzles even after they stop sailing. Having spent decades underwater saturated with minerals, then decades on display in ambient air, Philadelphia began to show the stresses typical of excavated waterlogged wood: shrinking timbers, iron corrosion, and the slow, silent pressures of temperature, humidity, and vibration. In response, the Smithsonian launched a multi-year conservation and research initiative that re-opened the gunboat's story to both experts and the public.

The current project brings conservators and maritime archaeologists—partnering with specialists from Texas A&M University's Nautical Archaeology Program and Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation—into a purpose-built workspace visible through gallery windows. The team is stabilizing structural elements, assessing the chemistry of wood and iron interactions, and refining environmental controls to prolong the artifact's life.



The Philadelphia is more than a relic; it is a compact argument in wood and iron about how nations are made. Built in haste, sent into a fight it could not win, and yet instrumental to a strategic success that echoed into the American victory at Saratoga and beyond, the gunboat translates abstract strategy into tangible form. Her recovery and careful stewardship continue that translation for new generations. Visitors can still see the scar that sank her—the 24-pound shot—beside the timbers it pierced. In that juxtaposition can be read the larger story: sometimes the vessels that fail in the moment are the ones that win the future. —Mark



Windage and Elevation

...doesn't count for much if you're on the receiving end of the shooting, real or accidental. I'm sure that the subject of this essay would agree. Do you see the story coming?

If you Google "USS Niagara Live Fire Demonstration" you will be treated to a video where members of the USS Niagara Museum shoot a naval smooth bore cannon at a mock-up of the brig USS Lawrence. Watch the video and see the devastation the cannon ball brings to the side of the ship as it tears a big hole in the hull and bulwark. Also you can see what happens to the gun crew as they're pelted with shot, spall, and other debris as the cannon ball tears through. Graphic descriptions of this are sprinkled throughout the Master-and-Commander and other book series about British Naval Captains as they fight their sea battles. And it never gets any better when you read accounts of naval gun battles in the Pacific during World War Two. Man cannot stand up to iron and steel. But how about wood?



Well, the guy who supplied last month's cover, Doug Studer, knows from experience that being hit by cannon fire is not a lot of fun. You see in the first week of October he and his wife Shirley celebrated their wedding anniversary. Cheers for them! He posted about it, but his post had an ominous notation: "I have another anniversary today, not as pleasant or festive, but commemorated nonetheless." I was starting to wonder if he had rung the bell or something, but I found the answer to the riddle in the comments—and it made national news.

This all took place at Fort William Henry in Lake George, New York back in 2009. The fort is much older than that and was constructed and began operations with the British army in 1755. It guarded the lower end of Lake George and played pivotal roles in the French & Indian and Revolutionary Wars . The lake is located north of Albany.

The fort is now a museum and part of its mission is education. And part of that education is live fire demonstrations. The public sees an interpretation of the loading and firing of a smooth bore muzzle loading cannon from the early 18th century. It's not clear from what I read if the cannon is loaded with shot or just powder and wadding. But I would guess from the forts location and the amount of development



around the fort that no shot is used. That seems fairly certain.

Enter my friend. He and his wife made a stop at the fort as part of their trip to see the fall foliage to celebrate their 31st anniversary. From their interview with NBC news, we learn that" They were eating lunch on a concrete wall along the lake's southern shore when a gust of wind blew away their food container. As [he] got up to retrieve it, a cannon was fired at the nearby fort. Something hit his legs, knocking him to the ground. [He] soon realized he had been hit with a wooden ramrod about the length of a broomstick. The ramrod also struck his wife in the lower back, causing a bruise.

"Police and an ambulance soon arrived, along with a fort employee dressed in an 185th century British soldier's uniform. 'I thought it was a long time to hold a grudge, he joked.

"The ramrod was used to load the cannon. According to fort officials, it fell in front of the barrel just as the cannon fired, sending it hurtling through the air."

An arms specialist at the West Point Museum has his doubts. He thinks its more likely was inadvertently left in the barrel prior to firing. "That would explain the distance the ramrod covered."

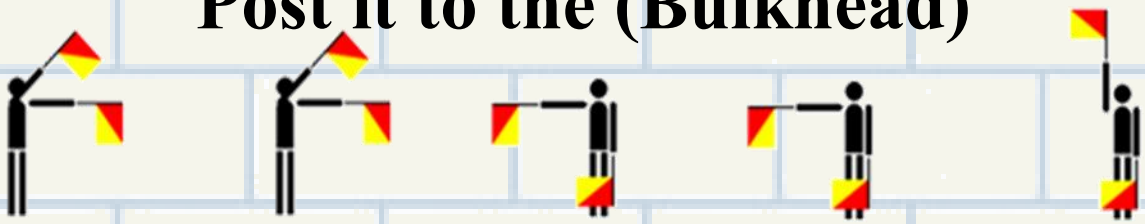
Doug was lucky in that he only suffered a fractured tibia just below the knee. Now he "understands the value of physical therapy and appreciates his tolerance for pain."



Strange things happen all the time. All I can say is that Doug and Shirley were very lucky to avoid more serious injury.

So, we'll drink a tot to your good health, Sir, the next time we pipe "Up Spirits."

Post it to the (Bulkhead)



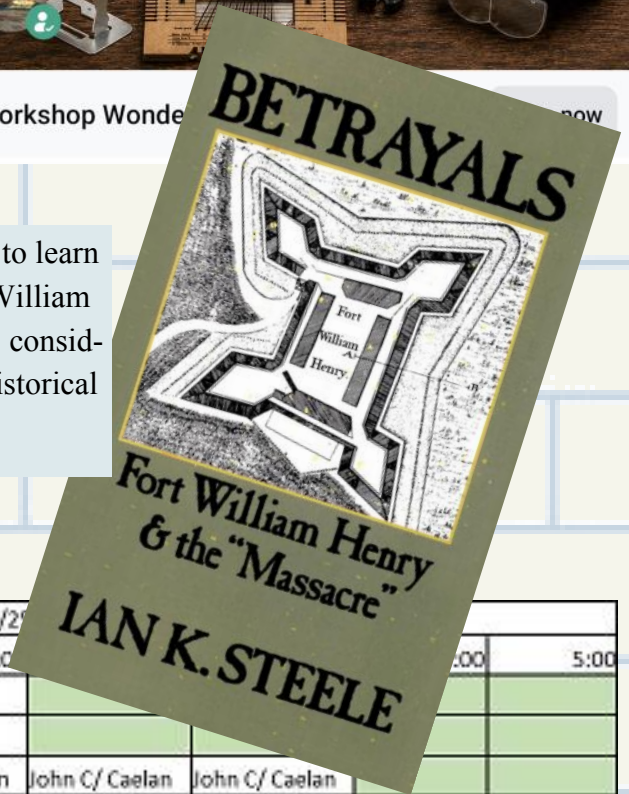
Model Expo continues its great sale. You might want to take advantage while it lasts….





The Wall can be used for news, or to post things you want to sell, or things that you are in need of...It is your page for announcements!

...And if you want to learn more about Fort William Henry, this book is considered a definitive historical analysis



Taco Stand usage and schedule - as of 08/2

	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:0		:00	5:00
Sunday (odd)	Ron	Ron	Ron	Ron	Ron			
Sunday (even)	Tim/Warren	Tim/Warren	Tim/Warren	Tim/Warren	Tim/Warren			
Monday	John C/ Caelan	John C/ Caelan	John C/ Caelan	John C/ Caelan	John C/ Caelan	John C/ Caelan	John C/ Caelan	
Tuesday	Tim/John C	Tim/John C	Tim/John C	Tim/John C	Tim/John C	Tim/John C	Tim/John C	
Wednesday	Ron	Ron	Ron	Ron	Ron	Ron	Ron	
Thursday	J Cork	J Cork	J Cork	J Cork	Stu	Stu	Stu	Stu
Friday	Kevin	Kevin	Kevin	Kevin	Kevin	Kevin	Kevin	Kevin
Saturday	Dave Kern	Dave Kern	Dave Kern	Dave Kern	Dave Kern	Dave Kern	Dave Kern	Dave Kern

The Deckplate

JANUARY 2026
10 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Nomination of officers
Presentation: Ron Lewis—Earth will not see such ships again

FEBRUARY 2026
14 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
7 National Fettuccine Alfredo Day
Election of officers
Presentation:

MARCH 2026
14 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
14 **π** Day
14/15 Battle of Hampton Roads Weekend at the MM
Presentation:

April 2026
11 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
22 Earth Day / 26 Arbor Day
26 Model Boat Show, Deltaville ?
Presentation:

MAY 2026
9 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
21 Talk like Yoda Day
Presentation: Ryland Craze - stropping Blocks—The Chuck Passaro Way

JUNE 2026
13 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
27 Night at the Mariners'
Presentation:

JULY 2026
11 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
250—baby!
Presentation: Rope Making by Kevin Ritten

AUGUST 2026
8 **HRSMS** Monthly meeting:
528 National Bow Tie Day
Presentation:

SEPTEMBER 2026
12 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Picnic Newport News City Park
19 **Talk like a Pirate** Day
Presentation: **Picnic At Newport News City Park….Shelter**

OCTOBER 2026
10 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: **Auction**

NOVEMBER 2026
14 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation:

DECEMBER 2026
12 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation:

WATCH, QUARTER, AND STATION BILL



Skipper: Dave Chelmow (804) 316-2648
1st Mate: Kevin Ritton (757) 232-9421
Purser: Ryland Craze (804) 739-8804
Clerk: Gene Berger (757) 850-4407
Historian: Tim Wood (757) 639-4442
Logbook Ed.: John Cheevers (757) 876-7466
Columnists: Ron Lewis
Tim Wood
Caelan McCormick
Webmaster: Greg Harrington (757) 218-5368
Photographer: John Cheevers (757) 876-7466
Presentation Coordinator: Kevin Ritton



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