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Betsy Davis
NWWSB Executive Director
betsy@nwswb.edu

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From Wall Street to Water Street: Boat School Serves as Business Opportunity Incubator

Richard Johanson explains how he and Lee Symes, Class of '15, became co-owners of Philbrick Boat Works to revive a West Coast Brand that once rivaled Chris Craft and Hacker in the design and construction of classic wooden speedboats.

Logan’s Passage: You Can Go Home Again

Class of 2015’s Logan Sampson lands a job at John’s Bay Boats, a leading builder of traditional lobster boats in his home state of Maine.

Shop Talk: NWSWB Students Take on New Challenges

See what’s taking shape in the shop, from the hull of a human-powered submarine for the University of Washington to the replica of a 1948 Whitehall for San Francisco’s historic Dolphin Club.

Tradition and Relevance: A Chalk Talk with Chief Instructor Sean Koomen

Sean explains how the Boat School is evolving to address the skills and experience required at boat yards, while preserving traditional methods.

Amy Schaub: At Home on the Water

Class of 2005’s Amy Schaub met with Boat School students at Boat Haven, where her boat was hauled out, to share her experience as owner of the F/V Norsel and as one of only two female skippers holding a permit to seine for salmon in southeast Alaska.

Commissions with Character: You’re Not Just Buying a Boat, You’re Launching Careers

The ideal project gives students experience with all key aspects of the curriculum, and gives owners a high-quality boat with extra character — as well as the satisfaction of ensuring that traditional skills are passed to a new generation of boatbuilders.

What’s New on Water Street

Take the School’s self-guided tour, check out our library’s new online catalog, find out about NWSWB’s Strategic Plan, and learn about veteran-support resources.

On the cover: Senior Instructor Jeff Hammond and Kat Murphy, Class of ’15, bend frames onto a Catspaw Dinghy. Hammond retired as a full–time teacher in June 2015, but still stops by the School from time to time. Kat is working at the Shipwright’s Co–op in Port Townsend.
YOU NEVER KNOW WHO WILL WALK THROUGH the door at the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding. It could be a tourist drawn to the historic architecture of the waterfront campus. This time, it was Peter Kass, owner of the John’s Bay Boat Company, a leading builder and designer of high-end wooden boats based in South Bristol, Maine.

Logan Sampson, a student in the Traditional Large Craft boatbuilding class of ’15, saw a middle-aged man poking around the shop. “I thought he must be a tourist,” Logan recalls, “but he asked some questions about how we did things on the west coast and I realized he was wearing a John’s Bay Boat Company hat. I grew up seeing their boats, so I asked, ‘Oh, do you work there?’ ‘Yeah,’ he said. ‘I own the place.’”

Kass was not at the Boat School on a recruiting trip, just visiting his daughter who lives in the Pacific Northwest. But, he spent 15 minutes talking to Logan that day, realized he was a native of Maine, and offered him a working interview the next time he was home for a visit. Logan had already committed to a six-month extension at the Boat School as the first recipient of the Prothero Internship, but Kass wasn’t filling a particular opening at his boat shop — just scouting future talent — so they arranged for a three-day work visit the following December.

Kass was not simply trusting his instincts and first impression of Logan. One of his previous employees had been a NWSWB graduate and turned out to be a good fit in skills and temperament for his small team. In that sense, Kass was fishing in familiar waters.

“I was definitely nervous,” Logan recalls of the three-day work visit, “because it wasn’t something I could prepare for like a formal sit-down interview. I had no idea what I would be working on. I just knew they started early — Peter starts at 5:00 and the others start at 7:00 — so I made sure I was the first one there every morning.”

At the end of the working audition, he was offered a job — a chance to build the 50’ lobster boats he had grown up admiring off the mid-coast of Maine.

Logan arrived at the Boat School in the fall of 2014 with two bags, a backpack, and a violin, but no tools.

He had signed up for Traditional Large Craft Construction, one of three programs offered by the School, and started acquiring the 30+ woodworking tools he would need for the first quarter. He quickly discovered there is no end to acquiring boatbuilding tools, and eventually got a truck to haul them in.

“I had very little woodworking experience coming to the School. But, I had a lot of sailing experience and that turned out to be helpful. I knew the terminology and the purpose of what we were building — how the parts worked with the rest of the boat.”

The training was intense — 8:00 to 5:00, Monday to Friday — but it was exactly what he was hoping for and his skills grew quickly.

Ben Kahn, his instructor in the Traditional Large Craft program, describes Logan as one of those rare students with “the perfect blend of intelligence, skill, perseverance, and modesty. After 18 short months of working with Logan, the instructors considered him a peer.”

Logan was chosen as the first recipient of the NWSWB Prothero Internship, named for School co-founder Bob Prothero. This allowed him to tackle more challenging projects and get additional experience as a boatbuilder.
It’s really nice to know that whatever breaks can be repaired. You can take a plank off and put a new plank on. That’s not exactly possible with a fiberglass boat.

He spent the first three months of his internship working with his instructor, Ben Kahn, on the 36’ motor sailer that had been started by the Class of ’14 in the Traditional Large Craft program. Once the Class of ’16 finished the basic woodworking phase of their training, he became a teaching assistant to them as they worked on the boat. Although he’d had some experience teaching children to sail as a high school sophomore, teaching boatbuilding was a new challenge.

“I got a lot of ‘how do I do this?’ questions,” says Logan. “But part of what intrigues me about boatbuilding is that there are many ways to do one thing. It’s a little more complicated than first you do A and then you do B and then C. It was more about giving options and discussing the pros and cons of different ways to get the same result. In some cases, you’re teaching someone who has a lot of construction experience how to apply what they know to boats. With them, it was a matter of giving the big picture — explaining how one particular part works with the rest of the boat.”

Karen Naulty, a student in the Boat School Class of ’16, describes Logan as “an amazing TA. Whenever I needed help, he was there. He’d listen, offer guidance, show me how to do something, or suggest options on different ways to complete a task. He’d come back throughout the day to check on my progress. He knows a lot about boatbuilding and troubleshooting and is willing to share his knowledge. His positive attitude and high energy set the tone for a great learning experience.”

Although Logan’s first love is sailing, he is drawn to the aesthetics, seaworthiness, and repairability of all types of wooden boats. “It’s really nice to know that whatever breaks can be repaired. You can take a plank off and put a new plank on. That’s not exactly possible with a fiberglass boat.”

Of the wooden lobster boats he will be working on at the John’s Bay Boat Company, Logan cites an additional advantage: “Fishermen in Maine are going back to wooden boats because they’re more seaworthy. They can go out farther. They can fish on rough days. And they can fish more comfortably because wooden boats are easier on their bodies. Fishermen in their 40s and 50s end up with knee and hip problems because of the engine vibrations on fiberglass boats. Wooden boats dull the vibrations.”

Logan started his new job in April, a few weeks after finishing his internship at the Boat School. The move brought Logan full circle, back to mid-coast Maine where he’d grown up looking at John’s Bay boats from the deck of the American Eagle schooner. “My boss always pointed them out from the water,” Logan recalls. “He wasn’t one to give out compliments, so it meant something when he said, ‘Those are real nice boats.’”

Today Logan is building those boats and learning from some of the best wooden boatbuilders in the business.

“Looking back, I couldn’t be happier about the year and a half I spent at the Boat School. The next step is to get a few years of woodworking experience under my belt where I can be confident doing most things myself.

“I’m low man on the totem pole to start off,” says Logan, “but I’m one of only three who do woodwork on the boats, and one of them is the owner. It’s a small company and that’s a big positive for me. I’m excited to have that kind of access to the experts and that kind of learning opportunity.”

Logan’s path to professional boatbuilding began at age 12 when he embarked on a seven-year stint working on the American Eagle, a historic 90’ schooner that sails out of Rockland, Maine, 15 minutes from his hometown of Lincolnville. In 2011, Logan enrolled at Lewis and Clark College in Oregon, intending to study environmental law, but eventually decided it wasn’t for him. Instead, his thoughts turned to boatbuilding.

“There’s a strong connection between the schooner fleets in Maine and Port Townsend, so I knew a lot of people who had gone to the Boat School (NWSWB). Between talking to them and the reputation of the School, I thought it would be the place for me.”

There were four things that influenced Logan’s decision to attend the Boat School:

**THE INSTRUCTORS:** “I had heard great things about the instructors — particularly Jeff Hammond, who I caught in his last year at the School. He was very particular about doing it right. We must have spent a week talking about how to set up the shop and get ready to build the boat.”

**THE COMMUNITY:** Not just the Boat School, but the boat community in Port Hadlock and Port Townsend is unique. “You can’t throw a stick in Port Townsend without hitting someone in the boat community. That’s something I’m going to miss.”

**THE VARIETY OF PROGRAMS:** Small Craft, Large Craft, and Contemporary. “There was no question I would focus on large craft, because of my background with schooners. I knew I wanted to be able to fix things on that kind of boat. But seeing all the different kinds of boats being built was really appealing to me.”

**THE LOCATION:** “I wanted to move back to Maine eventually, that was always part of the plan, but being at Lewis and Clark gave me a taste for the big mountains out here. I wanted to spend more time in the Pacific Northwest.”
NWSWB Students Take on New Challenges

Building a Human-Powered Submarine

NWSWB took on a new challenge this year when it constructed the hull for What Sub Dawg, the University of Washington’s entry in the European International Submarine Race. Competing teams must design, build, and race submarines piloted by a scuba diver who is fully enclosed within the boat’s hull. All propulsion during the race must be human-powered.

This project was a historic build, combining cutting-edge technology with fine craftsmanship. The UW team finished second last year, so their decision to partner with NWSWB was strategic. They determined that a sleek wooden hull would give them the hydrodynamics to be top dawg in this year’s competition — just as a sleek wooden racing shell carried a UW team to victory in the 1936 Olympics.

Red cedar was used for the first layer of the core. The first challenge was to figure out the ever-changing tapers on the ends of the strip planking. From there, the big challenge was to fair the hulls in preparation for a layer of 1/16th Khaya. All the veneers were carefully fit to eliminate visible glue joints between the veneer edges. All the veneers were applied under vacuum pressure.

The project has been really engaging for students, staff, and visitors, most of whom can’t imagine what kind of animal, uh, person it takes to race a vessel like this.

School-Built Whitehall Joins the Dolphin Club Fleet

The Dolphin Club, a historic swimming and boating club in San Francisco, maintains a stately fleet of Whitehall rowboats. Designed for speed and to track straight in choppy water, the boats were first made in the U.S. at the foot of Whitehall Street in New York City, where they were used to ferry goods, services, and sailors to and from boats coming into New York Harbor.

Faced with growing demand for the traditional wooden boats, the Dolphin Club asked NWSWB to create a replica of the Don Baggiani, a 14’ Whitehall built in 1948, working from lofting diagrams and the boat itself, which they ferried up to Port Hadlock to serve as a model.

“It was a challenging build,” says Small Craft Instructor Leigh O’Connor. “The frames, stem, and keel are all quite small. Instead of having a skeg, the boat is planked down, making the garboard plank a tricky fit, but giving the boat an elegant shape. The centerline and transom are bolted together with custom-made 3/16” bolts. All scantlings — the weight and size of boat parts and fasteners — were designed to limit the overall weight of the boat. This project kept students on their toes and taught them the intricacies of lapstrake boatbuilding.”

The finished product, christened The Commodore, was unveiled at a launch event at The Dolphin Club in San Francisco on August 6, 2016.
TRADITION AND RELEVANCE

A Chalk Talk with Chief Instructor Sean Koomen on Boat School Curriculum

WHEN CHIEF INSTRUCTOR SEAN KOOMEN ATTENDED NWSWB IN 2003, the campus was located where the Port Townsend Foundry is today. He remembers it as a simpler time with fewer students, one curriculum instead of three, and a very traditional approach to boatbuilding.

“For one thing, there was almost zero epoxy in the shops,” Sean recalls. “This was consistent with traditional boatbuilding values, but not with boatyard practices. Students would go from the Boat School to the boatyard and their employer would say, ‘You just went to boat school for a whole year and you can’t even mix a batch of glue?’”

As Chief Instructor, Sean is balancing the imperative to preserve tradition with that of preparing students for today’s workplace. “We’re not going to do all glass and plywood boats,” he says, “but we are going to give students relevant experience, based on what boatyards are looking for in entry-level employees.”

The Boat School routine hasn’t changed much since Sean was a student in 2003. Each day begins with a chalkboard lecture and continues with hands-on time in one of the shops. To ensure a smooth transition when Jeff Hammond retired from the Chief Instructor position, all of Jeff’s lectures were videotaped—not for publication but to capture the information that can’t be found in any book and to preserve those chalkboard drawings that look like architectural blueprints in their artful precision.

Sean has no plans to swap out chalkboards for dry-erase boards, but he is incorporating new technology (like Rhino modeling software) into the curriculum and experimenting with shorter lectures paired with demos and practice to make the information a little easier to digest. “For example, I did a lecture on steam bending and we went outside and bent frames. They got to see it and then do it and I think it helped them understand a little better.”

Being on a waterfront campus with shops spread out across six acres is a facilities challenge, but offers opportunities for more experiential learning and daily exposure to a wide variety of boats. “If we’re talking about interiors, we can bring a boat down and people can crawl around on it. They can take out the livery boats, and see a variety of different boats. It’s easier to connect the dots.”

Looking Ahead

There is something very satisfying about building a traditional wooden boat from lofting to launch, and that won’t change for Boat School students. But there is also something very satisfying about landing a boatbuilding job straight out of school. With that in mind, the Boat School curriculum is evolving to address the skills and experience required at boatyards, where the majority of work is repair and restoration.

In the future, we are looking at changing the sequence of our classes by folding the curriculum that’s covered during the summer into the School’s three primary programs: Small Craft Construction, Large Craft Construction, and Contemporary Boatbuilding. This would better integrate the timing of Interiors and possibly Repair and Restoration projects, and extend those primary programs from six months to nine months. In parallel, we are exploring adding a new Systems and Propulsion Program to teach skills that employers are prioritizing, such as electrical, fuel, water, sanitation, refrigeration, and steering systems; engines; and mechanical systems. We are also looking at adding a six-month extended Repair and Restoration program. We will be developing these programs in close coordination with our Accreditor, the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), to ensure that the new programs reflect the best practices of our industry. We will ensure that these new programs reflect our traditional core values of teaching craftsmanship, with integrity and quality, and retain a commitment to a personal approach that supports each individual’s learning.

These changes are laid out in more detail in the NWSWB Strategic Plan. For a full copy, please contact Betsy Davis, Executive Director, at betsy@nwswb.edu or 206-390-0381.
PROFILE: AMY SCHAUB
At Home on the Water

“A lot of us say, ‘Wouldn’t it be great to own a fishing boat,’ but Amy went out and did it. She was willing to change her entire life to make it happen. She started saying yes to all kinds of jobs in unfamiliar places and situations. She was in action, in motion. She fished for squid in California, she fished for prawns in southeast Alaska. She packed up and moved to Alaska to make deeper contacts and connections. She spent the winter in a net shed in Kodiak making and repairing nets. Sounds chilly, doesn’t it? But all these jobs were leading to a greater end — more skill, more experience, more contacts. A lot of people talk about it, but Amy is so brave. She went for it. It’s totally inspiring.”

That’s how MB Armstrong explains Amy Schaub’s steady progress from Boat School student to becoming owner of F/V Norsel and one of only two female skippers holding a permit to seine for salmon in southeast Alaska.

MB has known Amy since 2007 when MB was captain of a schooner and hired Amy to crew on trips she was sailing in the Puget Sound and San Juan Islands. MB works at the Boat School now, and asked Amy if she would give women students a tour of the F/V Norsel when it was hauled out at Boat Haven earlier this year.

The tour started with a discussion of tradeoffs relating to repair and maintenance — and how Amy’s experience at the Boat School has made her a more informed boat owner. “I could probably save time and money if I caulked the boat myself,” she explained, “but there are other parts of the boat that need attention. I have to prioritize and I had to learn to delegate.” In the end, Amy made the same choice as the previous owner: Spend money on the hull and the mechanics — the engine, the power block, the net, make sure all the structural pieces of the boat and the fishing equipment are really high-quality, and defer work on the deckhouse if you have to. The tour continued with a look at the fish hold and the engine room …

Amy graduated from NWSWB in 2005 and then worked as a boatbuilder for three years before realizing she missed being on the water. She found work on a purse seiner in 2009 and worked her way up from deckhand to driving skiff to buying her own purse seiner in 2015.

Owning a commercial fishing boat was the last thing on Amy’s mind when she graduated from college in 2000 with a degree in photography and limited job prospects in her chosen field. She’d never spent much time on boats, but growing up in Milwaukee she’d made friends with people whose stories of seining for salmon, crewing on ore freighters, and sailing tall ships captured her imagination. While working at uninspiring jobs to pay off her student loan, she signed up for an evening class in wooden boatbuilding and volunteered on the Denis Sullivan, the world’s only re-creation of a 19th-century, three-masted Great Lakes schooner. The schooner’s builder, Rob Stevens, would become her boatbuilding mentor.

Three years later, Amy had earned her 100-ton Master Captain’s License and knew she wanted to attend boat school to learn to build and repair the kind of boats she’d been sailing. She chose NWSWB partly by reputation, but also because she had never been west of the Rockies and it “felt like the right place” when she flew out for a visit.

Amy moved to Port Townsend a few months before the start of Boat School in the summer of 2004 and found work with Ernie Baird at Baird Boatworks (now Haven Boatworks). When school started, she worked weekends at the Shipwrights Co-op.

“The skills I learned at Boat School — working with hand tools
“The anticipation, the excitement, the not-knowing-what-you’re-going-to-get. Being out on the water. Being away from town. Waking super early in the morning. Talking to my radio buddies. Bringing in a load of fish. I just feel at home when I’m out on the water.”

and power tools and seeing how the construction all comes together — that was a huge asset for me,” says Amy.

Following Boat School graduation, Amy got a job offer from her mentor Rob Stevens who was building a 116’ replica of an 1850s schooner for the Discovery World Museum in Milwaukee. Amy called it “the flying schooner,” MB recalls, because it was going to hang from the ceiling in the museum, and it conjured up this image of a fast, mystical creature.

When that job ended, Amy googled “boatbuilding without borders.” There is no such organization, but the internet search led to three months of volunteer work at the Tsunami Volunteer Center in Thailand, building small boats for fishermen who’d lost their boats in the December 2004 tsunami.

From there, she circled back to Port Townsend and found work at various boat yards over the next three years including Haven Boatworks, Taku Marine, and Freyja Boatworks. Her skills and experience were growing, but she missed being out on the water. “I didn’t want to be a tall ship sailor again,” she recalls, “so I started looking into other options.”

Of the three options she considered — running a tender, crewing on a troller, or crewing on a seiner — the seiner seemed like the best fit. “I don’t know why exactly,” says Amy. “Maybe because there were more people in the seiner than on the troller (five vs. two) and fishing was more appealing to me than driving the tender.”

Whatever the reason, it was a prophetic choice, because crewing on the F/V St. Janet in 2008 led to a deck boss position on the F/V St. Janet in 2009, which led to driving skiff on the F/V Norsel in 2010, which led to buying the F/V Norsel in 2015.

Because fishing is seasonal work, Amy was able to pair it with work as a marine tech for the U.S. Antarctic program. In the five years before she became a skipper, she typically spent June to September fishing for salmon in southeast Alaska; October to November fishing for salmon in the Puget Sound and Hood Canal, squid in California, or prawns in southeast Alaska; then December to March working as a marine tech on icebreakers in the waters off Antarctica.

Despite the long days and hard work, Amy loves everything about fishing: “The anticipation, the excitement, the not-knowing-what-you’re-going-to-get. Being out on the water. Being away from town. Waking super early in the morning. Talking to my radio buddies. Bringing in a load of fish. I just feel at home when I’m out on the water.”
FROM WALL STREET TO WATER STREET
Boat School Serves as a Business Opportunity Incubator

RICHARD JOHANSON WAS DESTINED TO BE A BOATBUILDER. His parents had a place on the New Jersey Shore where he grew up sailing and fishing. His grandfather, who worked in construction, always had boats. And his great-grandfather, the shipwright on a clipper ship, emigrated from Sweden in the 1890s with a fully-rigged ship tattoo on his chest.

But Richard got sidetracked by a first career on Wall Street that took him around the world and eventually to a senior VP position with a bank in the greater Seattle area. It took a heart attack in his mid-40s to steer Richard to NWSWB and a second career in the boat business. Today, Richard Johanson, NWSWB class of ’15, is co-owner of Philbrick Boat Works, where he and classmate Lee Symes are reviving a west-coast brand that once rivaled Chris Craft and Hacker in the design and construction of classic wooden speedboats.

“After the heart attack, I started thinking about something I could do with my life that would be more fulfilling,” Richard recalls. “In banking, you’re only as good as your last deal. I wanted a career where I would have something to show for what I accomplished. I’d always loved boats and one morning I woke up and told my wife, ‘I’m quitting my job and going to boat school!’”

It was May of 2014, almost too late to apply for the NWSWB class of 2015, but he went on a School visit and was struck by the confidence of the students. “That class had only been at the School for seven months, but they looked and talked like professionals. They seemed to know what they were doing. I was amazed they could learn so much in such a short time.”

When Richard began his first quarter at NWSWB in October of 2014, he was knowledgeable about boats — had even lived on sailboats at times during his career in financial services — but not about tools. “The family joke was that I couldn’t hang a picture,” says Richard. “I was an academic, a spreadsheet guy. If I needed something fixed around the house, I hired a handyman. There was definitely a lack of skill and lots of self-doubt when I became a student. My family thought I was crazy. But I was committed to having a second career as a boatbuilder and I gravitated to other students who had the same intensity.

“There was a core group of us — one guy in his 20s, one in his 30s, me in my 40s, and one in his 50s,” he recalls. “We put up a tent behind one of the little cabins across the street from School where one of the guys was living, and started our own boatbuilding project on weekends and after school — a 12’ wooden rowboat, called a Heidi skiff.” During the last quarter at NWSWB, which focused on repairs and restoration, the foursome purchased and brought in a 1926 18’ motor launch. They paid for the materials themselves and practiced what they were learning at school on their own boat. “My goal was to learn as much as I could while I was at the Boat School.”

As Richard’s confidence grew, he probably annoyed some of his fellow students with his outspoken style. “Coming in with a business background, I had in mind from day one that I was going to start a boat business, and I used to tell other students, ‘This is a job interview. I’m potentially a future employer.’ I’m cocky that way, but it turned out to be true.”

Although Richard knew he wanted to start a boat business, he didn’t know what the focus would be. “Then, out of the blue, my wife noticed a boat business for sale,”
he says. It was the historic Philbrick Boat Works in Oakland, California. They went down for a visit, made an offer for the company, and moved it to Port Hadlock, where they could leverage the network of maritime businesses in the vicinity of the Boat School. Although only two of the original Boat School foursome became owners of the company, all have remained involved in the business in one way or another.

The new owners, who came up with the tagline “A West Coast Original,” look forward to evolving the historic brand while preserving the classic look of the originals. “Philbrick boats have a unique shape, a unique styling,” says Richard. “We want to keep the styling but evolve the underlying technology. Move from manual systems to electronic or hydraulic. Replace the car engines with modern boat engines. Eventually move to a completely cold-molded hull to get more durability.”

Within months of purchasing the company, they had negotiated a commission with NWSWB to have the class of ’16 build the hull of the first Philbrick runabout constructed since 2002. The project is a unique collaboration between Port Townsend yacht designer and former instructor Jim Franken; students at NWSWB, under the direction of Olivier Huin; and the crew at Philbrick. Franken worked from the original line drawings by Don Philbrick, importing the hand drawings into Rhino 3-D modeling software and creating a design that was true to the original but adapted to allow for modifications of materials and technology. “It’s a pleasure to work with a team of people who have the vision to bring a classic from the past back to life,” says Franken. The students are crafting the hull from African sapele and Honduran mahogany. The Philbrick team will install the engine, interior, and finishing touches, including the distinctive chrome work and other classic touches.

The building process, leveraging Boat School expertise and outside designers, is one that Richard hopes to replicate every year. “We’ve set up an opportunity incubator that harnesses the collective knowledge and skill of the community. I’m proud of the association with the Boat School. The students get relevant experience and, for some, a pipeline to future employment at Philbrick Boat Works.

A few months after re-launching Philbrick Boat Works in Port Hadlock, Richard got a call from a historic building restoration company based in Fort Worth, Texas. The company was restoring a building for a TV program on The History Channel and discovered an old wooden runabout in the weeds behind the property. They wanted to include it in the show, but didn’t have the expertise to repair the boat themselves, so they called NWSWB. The School can’t take on rush projects like that, but Sean Koomen, chief instructor at NWSWB, referred them to Richard at Philbrick. “We jumped at the chance,” said Richard, as he was packing for the three-month on-site renovation project in Fort Worth. “It’s great exposure for the company.”

As Sean’s referral illustrates, “One highlight of the School that people don’t focus on enough are the connections you make,” says Richard. “We can pick up some of the same relationships the School has with suppliers. They know we have the training, that we’re serious about boatbuilding, and that we’ll bring more business to the area.”

Following his Boat School graduation in October 2015, Richard was offered the School’s first Hammond Fellowship, and spent five months working on the business side of School operations, including the financial forecast, strategic plan, compliance reporting, and employer/alumni relations. The fellowship gave him the opportunity to expand his professional network and deepened his commitment to the School. He now serves on the NWSWB Board of Directors, heads up NWSWB’s Boat Sales program, and serves as Interim Admissions Coordinator — in addition to his full-time job at Philbrick Boat Works. “I’m very happy and very honored to work in all these different capacities with the School,” he says. The feeling is mutual.

Richard says he will never forget the experience of building that first Heidi skiff with his Boat School friends. “We sold it to a couple who have three little children. They’ll be able to enjoy that boat for many years to come. To me, that’s the essence of what we’re doing: building something that lasts. I’m happy to do everything I can to contribute to the Boat School because it was a total transformation for me. It changed my life.”

“One highlight of the School that people don’t focus on enough are the connections you make...”
Commissions with Character
You’re not just buying a boat, you’re launching careers.

IN A PERFECT WORLD, the small, large, and contemporary crafts under construction at the Boat School are built on commission. An owner has signed a contract, put down a deposit, and is patiently waiting to take delivery of a meticulously built boat that preserves a traditional West Coast wooden boat design.

Students are more engaged by commissions than if they are building a boat on spec, because they feel the owner’s excitement as the boat takes shape. Owners have the satisfaction of knowing they didn’t just buy a boat, they launched a few dozen careers.

But not all commissions are a good fit for the Boat School. If a boat is too large, students won’t be exposed to all aspects of construction. If a customer wants a flat-bottom, flat-sided plywood boat, students won’t be exposed to all the techniques they need to learn in contemporary craft construction.

The ideal project gives students experience with all key aspects of the curriculum, is simple enough to complete in six months (or 12 months, in the Large Craft program), and contributes to the preservation of a traditional West Coast design.

The instructors have identified 15 boat designs that meet these criteria. Sean Koomen, Chief Instructor explains, “All of these boats have aspects of construction that hit all parts of the curriculum — lofting, backbone, framing, planking — and there’s enough of each type of work that all the students can get involved.”

Although he wants to prepare students for working in a commercial boat yard, Sean is clear that Boat School commissions can’t compete with boat yards on schedule. “It’s a self-selecting process,” he says. “If an owner is impatient, we’re not a good fit. Most owners come to us because they want to support the School and its learning process. We’re not in competition with the boat yards. In fact, we send a lot of business to them. On the last couple of big projects, we subbed out all the systems work and the finish work to multiple boat yards and sub-contractors right here in Port Townsend.”

Owners who commission boats from NWSWB can also expect a boat with a certain personality. “We put out a very high-quality product,” Sean says, “but it’s going to have its quirks — like pencil marks on the inside of the planking. The evidence of teaching and learning are on the boats. And that gives them extra character.”

For more information, please contact Richard Johanson at (360) 385-4948 ext. 307 or boatsales@nwswb.edu.

POULSBO: Named for the port town, this small inboard- and outboard-powered fishing boat is designed for stability on the unpredictable waters of Puget Sound. The swooping lines give it a signature shape.

SID SKIFF: Master Boatbuilder and NWSWB instructor Ray Speck drew the lines for this classic Puget Sound small craft while working as a boatbuilder in Sausalito, California. Ray saw harbormaster, Sid Foster, using a sweet little 12’6” lapstrake skiff to row around Richardson Bay. With Sid’s permission, Ray took the little skiff’s lines and developed them into a range of skiffs from 13’ to 18’.

GRANDY ROWING AND SAILING SKIFF: Our lapstrake Grandys — available in lengths from 11’6” to 14’6” — are built to the lines of skiffs produced for more than four decades by the Grandy Boat Company.

WHITEHALL: Our 16’2” Whitehall rowing boat is a replica of the Alderbrook, built in 1906 and now in the San Francisco Maritime Museum.

DAVIS: These 13’7” double-ended or round transom rowing boats, originally built by a family in Southeast Alaska, are believed to be modeled on Pelagic sealing skiffs. The lines were taken from an original Davis in the Center for Wooden Boats in Seattle.

Photo credit to The Center for Wooden Boats.
Our Sweet Spot
If you want to commission a boat that combines owner benefits — such as grace, quality, seaworthiness — with teaching benefits — construction that aligns with our curriculum — consider one of the boats on this list. We’re also open to custom commissions. Contact the School for more information.

Traditional Large Craft

FOLKBOAT: Sometimes described as the nautical version of a Volkswagen bug, this 25’ sailboat was designed to be fast and seaworthy. There is a fleet of Folkboats in San Francisco, where the boat’s heavy-weather performance is appreciated.

TRUANT*: A 25’6” day-sailer in the classic tradition, the Truant was designed locally by Ed Louchard and created to deal well with the chop and tide rips found at the mouth of Port Townsend Bay.

PETE CULLER FANTAIL LAUNCH: Culler was a Cape Cod wooden boatbuilder known for honest boats with little varnish. This 24’ mini tugboat is called a “fantail” because the stern comes up like a fan.

GARTSIDE CENTERBOARD SLOOP: Designed by Paul Gartside, this 18’ gaff-rigged day-sailer has plenty of room for family and friends.

HANSON SKIFF: This 16’ round-bottom boat is ideal for fishing and crabbing. It sports a traditional west coast design, is constructed from cedar on oak, and is carvel planked. This skiff can also be modified to accommodate an outboard motor.

Contemporary

PT-11: This versatile dinghy rows, sails, motors, and nests for easy storage. It’s one of the strongest, lightest boats of its kind.

GRANDY LITE ROWBOAT: A strong, lighter-weight version of the traditional 11’6” Grandy rowing boat, the Grandy-Lite is a cold-molded, glass-sheathed version that uses the same basic lines.

SENTINEL 24 SLOOP*: This sloop combines classic lines with a modern underbody design and state-of-the art rigging, representing Stephens Waring Yacht Design’s signature approach to fun and high-performance sailing with graceful styling.

SHELLBACK DINGHY: A 12’ sailing dinghy designed by Joel White, this beautiful and versatile boat can be used as a tender for larger boats or as a small recreational boat.

HADLOCK 23*: Designed by Paul Gartside to be as beautiful as she is efficient, the Hadlock 23 is cold molded of western red cedar and African mahogany.

* Designed specifically for NWSWB.
What's New on Water Street

**Boat School Library**
Searching the Boat School library just got easier, thanks to an investment in library catalogue software (ResourceMate) and its deployment by our intrepid and boat-knowledgeable part-time librarians Karen Wyman and Rachel Aronowitz.

You can now go to the Boat School website, choose Library Catalog, and search for books by title, author, or keyword. If there's a match, you'll see the book's call number, which is how you can find it on the shelves.

Stop by and check out the new, improved, and ever-expanding Boat School library – now including a shelf of instructor-recommended books and a shelf of new acquisitions.

nwswb.edu/library

**Strategic Plan**
During 2015, the School completed a strategic analysis to define its plans for the next five years. For a full copy of the Strategic Plan, you can contact the School’s Executive Director Betsy Davis (betsy@nwswb.edu). She's likely to ask for your input and ideas.

Or, for an overview, you can check out an Executive Summary of the plan online.

nwswb.edu/strategicplan

Self-Guided Walking Tour
In 2004, the Boat School moved to the Port Hadlock Heritage Campus, a six-acre facility that includes historic buildings dating back to 1891. If you’re passing through the Port Townsend area, stop by for a visit and take the new self-guided walking tour, which includes a museum-style audio track you can listen to on your phone.

nwswb.edu/audiotour

Creating a Veteran-Supportive Campus

MILITARY PERSONNEL RETURNING FROM COMBAT zones in Iraq and Afghanistan may face unique challenges transitioning to civilian life and/or navigating the medical, educational, and financial benefits available to them. Because military veterans typically make up 20-25 percent of our student body, the NWSWB staff has made it a priority to address their needs. The Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs has designated NWSWB a Veteran Supportive Campus. This designation is awarded only to those campuses that have demonstrated a commitment to serving the needs of military personnel, and specifically meet eight key criteria aimed toward helping veterans achieve their higher education goals.

For example, we have staff members dedicated to veteran support. The School holds quarterly lunch meetings where veterans can get together with Veteran Support Staff (Rita Frangione and Jon Ferguson) for an informal check-in. Rita and Jon facilitate referrals to VA or community-based resources as needed.

There's also a dedicated Veterans lounge, equipped with a computer with Skype and wi-fi access, a printer, phone, and a bulletin board with VA and local resource information.

Rita Frangione, who serves on the NWSWB Veteran Support Staff, is the Veterans Outreach Coordinator for Vet Connect, a local veteran service group. She has over 30 years of experience as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. She is retired from the US Department of Veterans Affairs where she counseled disabled veterans in their planning for education, training, and employment.

Jon Ferguson, class of ’15, is a military veteran who found a welcome sense of mission and camaraderie in the Boat School environment. “One of the things I miss most about my military life is the camaraderie, the group effort, having a mission and everybody moving that mission along, accomplishing it together. And that’s exactly what happens here at the Boat School. The people, the staff — I couldn’t ask for a better hand to help me get back into my community.”
40TH ANNUAL WOODEN BOAT FESTIVAL

September 9–11, 2016
Port Townsend, Washington

WOODENBOAT.ORG
Photography by Mark Saran
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APPLY
Enrollment begins in January for October start

BOAT SCHOOL GRADUATES ARE PROVEN IN BOAT YARDS AND BUSINESSES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY:
- Areys Pond Boat Yard, South Orleans, ME
- Ballenger Spar Systems, Watsonville, CA
- Betts Boats, Anacortes, WA
- The Boat Company, Port Orchard, WA
- Cache Creek Canoe, Fairbanks, AK
- Cape George Marine Works, Port Townsend, WA
- The Center for Wooden Boats, Seattle, WA
- Cunningham & Stringham, Port Townsend, WA
- Custom Wood Interiors, Seattle, WA
- Haven Boatworks, Port Townsend, WA
- Jensen Motor Boat Company, Seattle, WA
- John’s Bay Boat Co., South Bristol, ME
- Mervin Manufacturing, Seattle, WA
- Miller & Miller Boatyard Co., Seattle, WA
- North Shore Yacht Works, Vancouver, BC
- Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding
- Pacific Northwest Timbers, Port Townsend, WA
- Philbrick Boat Works, Port Hadlock, WA
- Schooner Creek Boatworks, Portland, OR
- Shipwrights Co-op, Port Townsend, WA
- Spindrift Rowing, Port Townsend, WA
- Stones Marina & Boatyard, Nanaimo, BC
- Taku Marine, Port Townsend, WA
- Van Dam Custom Boats, Boyne City, MI

This Sentinel 24 Sloop, Azulita, designed specifically for NWSWB by Stephens Waring Yacht Design, was built by students in the Class of 2013’s Contemporary Program.