

We are finished renovating the Wooden Boat Museum in Winterton. Come visit us!



Wooden Boat News

Volume 1, Issue No. 1, 2009

Building a motor boat in southern Labrador – from the keel up!

By Diana Quinton (www.storiesworthtelling.ca)

When the temperature hits 25 degrees below zero, many of us retreat to the comforts of home and yearn for milder days. Not Melvin Curl of St. Lewis, southern Labrador. This past winter, he was in his shed building a motor boat. He began in the fall by cutting wood for the keel, planks and timbers of the boat.

“The cold weather came and I put the timber in the shed,” explained Curl. “I have to season it for five months until the sap is out. You need good, dry timber to make boats. I took the stove out of the shed, because the warmth isn’t good for the timber while it’s drying. I worked with my long gloves on. It was too cold to go in the woods.”

Curl built his first boat in 1962, when he was 18 years old. He learned about the craft from his father and brothers while growing up in St. Lewis. Over the years, Curl has built around 25 boats: dories, motor boats, and speed boats.

“If I’m cutting firewood and I find some good timber, I bring it back for boat building. I mainly use spruce and fir,” said Curl. “I make my own molds. I work with the wood until I get the shape I need.”

Curl is well-known in his community for boat building. “He has the gift of turning a few old twisted tree limbs into a ‘she’ on the ocean,” observed Keith Hardy, manager of Coastal Labrador Fisheries Ltd. “He has the touch of a master with his keen eye for the twists and turns that make up a vessel from a number of vines.”

Hardy has spent the past 26 fishing seasons in St. Lewis. He knows a bit about the history of the Curl family. “Melvin stems from a large family that fished from here and Petty Harbour – a few heads north of St. Lewis,” explained Hardy. “Originally they fished from the creek – a rough and dragged excuse for a cove on the back of this headland. They built their own skiff to get them to the fishing grounds – a boat that

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brought them home safely with pounds full of cod!”

Fishing cod and salmon was Curl’s livelihood until 1992; he retired as skipper at the time of the moratorium. Since then he has been working seasonally in crab processing.

Curl intends to finish his motor boat before Christmas, and sell it to Coastal Labrador Fisheries Ltd.

“I don’t see anyone else on this coast – from Lodge Bay, Mary’s Harbour, Port Hope, Charlottetown or Cartwright – ever building another boat of this stature,” remarked Hardy. “In my opinion it will be the final motor boat cut, dried, framed and fastened in southern Labrador.”

After Curl completes this boat, he’s planning to make one more speed boat. “For the first time, I’ll use fiberglass to finish it,” said Curl. “This boat will be for me.”



Melvin Curl cut his own keel, timbers, and plank for the motor boat



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Wooden Boat
Museum
of Newfoundland
and Labrador

The Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador archives, conserves, and exhibits: our wooden boat history and its contribution to the province's economy and way of life.

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For more information, visit our website:
www.woodenboatnl.com

Membership:

Individual membership is \$20 and includes unlimited free admission to the Wooden Boat Museum in Winterton for one year (and 10 percent discount on guest admissions); 10 percent discount at the museum store in Winterton; and free subscription to Wooden Boat News.

For information on other membership categories and benefits, contact Beverley King. Phone: 709-583-2070, or e-mail bkingheritage@gmail.com.

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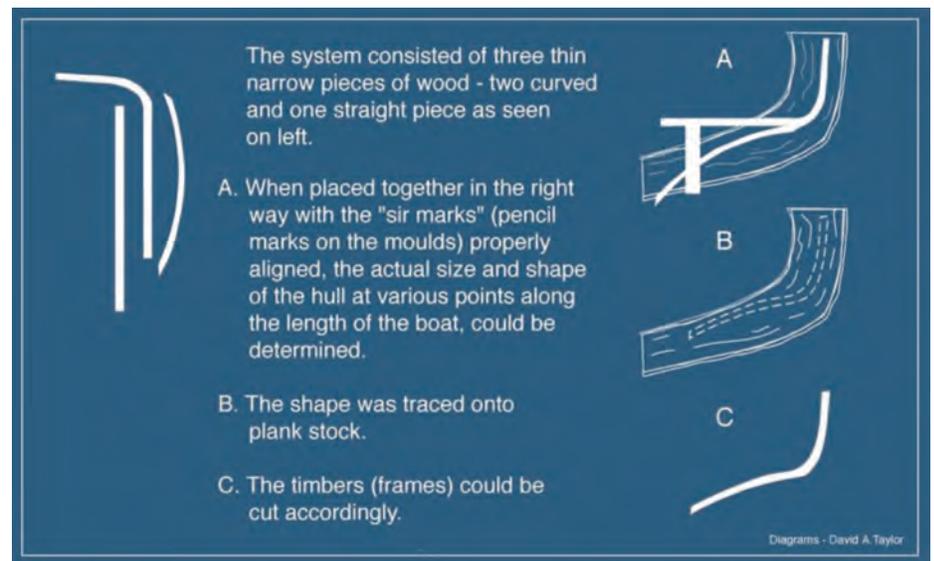
Learning about the three-piece mould method

By Jerome Canning, master boatbuilder

The three-piece mould is an old method for designing and building boats. A lot of the first boats to come off our beaches and take to the fishing waters were boats built with these curved sticks of wood. The method was widely used in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1800s. Moulds still survive in some communities; but mostly as items saved from the old boat sheds of our past builders.

Eric McKeewrites about this type of mould in his book: *Working Boats of Britain - Their Shape and Purpose*. He notes, "The three moulds can be used by anyone to get out the frames, which allow the master builder to keep control while others do the manual work. A set of three whole moulding aids can be used to produce a wider range of boats, either by changing the 'sir marks' (pencil marks showing the position of each piece to form different timber shapes) or even re-adjusting them by eye."

Sadly there are only a few (if any) boatbuilders who know how to use this method. This summer, I'll be figuring out how this old method worked. It's one of the more exciting aspects of my job as a boatbuilder in Winterton. Our old boat shapes may be lost to our generation but the three-piece mould could possibly be our songlines to those old shapes.



The three-piece mould was a method widely used in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1880s. Source: David A. Taylor

Thank you

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Recording the province's wooden boat heritage

This past May 24th weekend, about 20 dedicated enthusiasts involved in wooden boat heritage, gathered at the Marine Institute to learn a professional approach to recording the historic details of the province's wooden boats.

The course was part of a three-day program. Participants spent a day in the classroom preparing to head out to the field later this summer to document some of our most important historic icons: wooden boats that were once the backbone of the province's fishery.

Bruce Whitelaw, chair of the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador, led the course's development and delivery. He says the day started with a round of story-telling about the province's traditional wooden boats and their importance to our culture and heritage.

"It was a fitting way to begin, taking the time to look back and remind ourselves why this work is so important," he said. "There is no formal effort being made in the province yet to record our wooden boat history and unfortunately, time is critical. We have to get out there now before these vessels are lost entirely."

The course, the first in a series of Field Documentation workshops to be held over the coming years, featured four sessions.

Participants began the day with Kevin McAleese, curator of the Rooms (the province's provincial archives), to learn about Norse and European influences in our style of wooden boats.

Bruce Whitelaw and Aiden Penton generated discussion about boat building methods and how the language of wooden boats varies around the province. They stressed the need for a standard way to record construction details; and described methods of boat construction and means of translating design ideas into a boat shape. They also talked about the best ways to capture the hull form of an old boat.

Research professor Gerry Pocius, along with folklorist and well-known storyteller, Dale Jarvis, spoke to participants about capturing wooden boat heritage in words and images. Gerry shared tips on digital photography and Dale spoke about conducting an interview in order to record the stories of wooden boat builders. Participants witnessed the techniques

in action as Dale interviewed Fogo Island boat builder Aiden Penton.

The next phase of the program includes on-site field documentation of several historic wooden boats: a Jack boat in Arnolds Cove, a Bully boat on Change Islands, a traditional punton on Fogo Island, and some of the historic punts located in Battle Harbour.

Boat building dictionary

**Do you know these boat building terms?
Do you agree with them?**

Binding Strake: The top most strake of planking, so-called because it acts to "bind" together the timber pairs at the top edge of the hull. ¹

Keel: The main longitudinal strength member of a boat hull, which is scarfed to the stem, forward, and the stern post, aft. ²

Limber: A hole or channel that allows water to drain to the lowest point in the hull. Limbers can be through frames, usually at the keel or other longitudinal, can also be cut through longitudinals. ³

Plank: Any one of a series of boards which make up the outer skin of a boat hull. ⁴

Timber: A wood transverse member, made up in pairs, which is fastened to the keel and the planks. ⁵

Sheer: The line described by the upper edge of the hull of a boat. ⁶

1: David A. Taylor, Boat Building in Winterton, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland
2: David A. Taylor

3: Glen-L.com, Glossary of Boat Building and Boating Terms

4: David A. Taylor
5: David A. Taylor
6: David A. Taylor

We need your help!

We are looking for boat building words to add to our dictionary! Do you have one to contribute? E-mail Beverley King at bkingheritage@gmail.com with your word and its meaning. It may show up in our newsletter or on our website!



Participants learned a professional approach to recording the historic details of the province's wooden boats

Annual Wooden Boat Conference

Our annual Wooden Boat Conference will be held in Winterton on October 23-25, 2009!

For more information, e-mail Beverley King at bkingheritage@gmail.com

What's happening?

Boat building workshops offered this summer

Masterboatbuilder Jerome Canning is offering workshopson "Building a Rodney". The workshops are running each Saturday until August 29, 2009 at the Wooden Boat Museum in Winterton. The cost per workshop is \$60.00. Members receive a 10 percent discount. For further information or to register, please call 709-583-2070 or email bkkingheritage@gmail.com.

Lottery tickets for sale

We are selling tickets on a 16-foot traditional wooden punt. Tickets are \$2.00 or 3 for \$5.00. To purchase, e-mail Beverley King at bkkingheritage@gmail.com.

Update on Henry Vokey film

Springwater Productions and Axis Consulting are actively seeking funding for a film to document Henry Vokey's life work and the building of his news schooner. The Gill Ratcliffe Foundation is donating \$10,000 to the project; and Alan Doyle of Great Big Sea has confirmed his interest by a in-kind contribution by way of hosting the program and perhaps helping with the soundtrack.

Inventory of Newfoundland and Labrador Boat Builders and Model Builders

Howard Cooper, research assistant of the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador, is continuing his research and documentation from last season. To date, he has identified over 160 active boatbuilders in the province and 40 active modelbuilders. If you are a boatbuilder or modelbuilder, Howard would love to hear from you - please call him at 583-2065 or email hwr.cooper@gmail.com.

Facebook group started

We have started a group on Facebook "Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador"; and we are in the process of adding pictures and articles.

New website!

Our new website will be up and running in Fall 2009! The site will feature boat building resources, dates for upcoming events, photos, and more!

The address is www.woodenboatnl.com



Bruce Whitelaw, chair of the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador, talks with Alison Highsted, Marine Institute at the Lewisporte Boat Show, held on June 19-21, 2009.

Members!

We need your help to encourage new members to join.

Thank you for becoming a member of the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador. Your contribution will help us preserve the wooden boat culture in our province. Do you know someone else who would like to join? We are offering a Free Mariner Membership to the member whose sign up the most new members by December 31, 2009.

For more information, contact Beverley King. Phone 709-583-2070, or email bkkingheritage@gmail.com

