



# Wood and Water

The Oarlock and Sail Wooden Boat Club Newsletter  
Oarlock and Sail Wooden Boat Club is a Registered Society in the Province of B.C.

## Purpose of the club:

- To create the opportunity for people interested in small wooden boats to get together to socialize and exchange knowledge.
- To develop the small wooden boat community.
- To bring together resources to assist in the future development of a wooden boat centre,
- To foster interest in, enjoyment of and construction of small wooden boats.

Fall 2006

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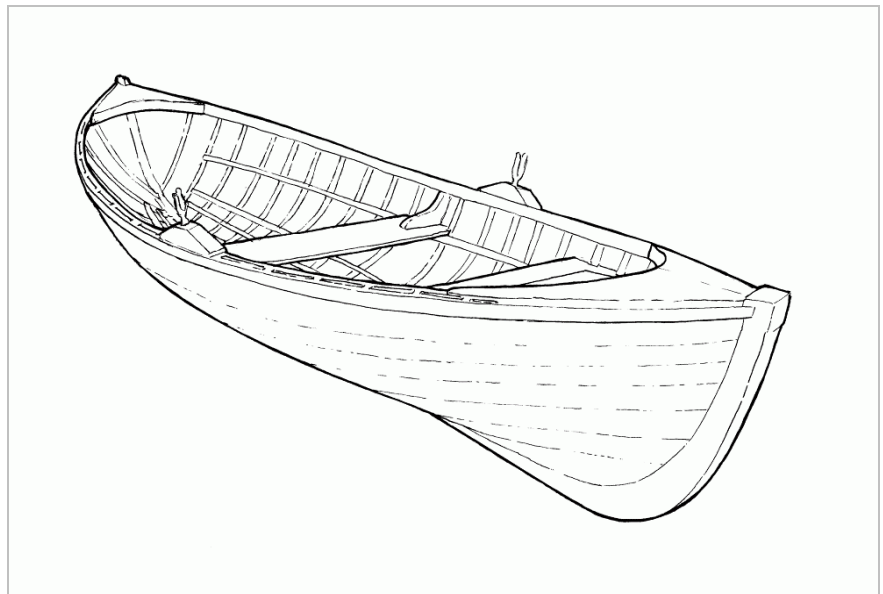
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(with luck)

**Back-issues available online.**



**A handliner built on Quadra Island in the late 1920s.**  
Drawing by Charles D. Moore

**This issue contains the first article in a five-part series by Marine Archaeologist Charles D. Moore, in which he looks at the prospects and the reasons for traditional boat replica construction in British Columbia.**

## The View From the Tiller

### By Gerry Stensgaard

I hope that all of you have had an enjoyable summer, and that you managed to enjoy some wooden-boat related activities during the long, hot summer. I had a good one, getting in some cruising and small boat sailing, as well as doing lots of boat tinkering and attending a couple of wooden boat festivals.

Summer is past, and autumn is now upon us. This is also the “autumn” of my stint as president of the Oarlock and Sail Wooden Boat Club. Indeed, this is my last “View From the Tiller”. After six years as president, I have decided that the time has come for someone else to take the helm. A fresh outlook never hurts an organization, and I need the time that I’ve been investing in club management for boatbuilding! I’ve got it in my mind to build an 11 or 12-foot, trailerable flat-bottomed catboat that can be sailed and rowed. I feel that such a craft would be very useful for exploring some of the beautiful stretches of water that one sees while driving around BC. So, once the home renovations are finished, I’ll be laying a keel.

As you know, Oarlock and Sail doesn’t have sit-down meetings during the summer, but nevertheless there were a few club-hosted activities during this period. In June, the club kicked off the boating season with a successful Midsummer Cruise on False Creek. The gathering point for this year’s event was the Heritage Harbour at the Vancouver Maritime Museum. Despite the presence of some threatening clouds overhead, several members launched their personal small boats for the occasion, and the club’s fleet was also pressed into service. The rain held off, and everyone had an enjoyable time trying out the assorted boats.

The club’s other big summer event is of course our participation in the Vancouver Wooden Boat Festival. As usual, we had a table in Market Square, and had several boats on exhibit. There was a good deal of interest in

Oarlock and Sail, and several new members joined our ranks after meeting us at the Festival. Member Jim Cooke ran the Festival’s Family Boatbuilding Project this year, relieving David Bradford of this rather strenuous task, which he has been in charge of since its inception. Five happy families launched their new Bevin Skiffs on Sunday afternoon. Congratulations to Jim on a job well done! The small boat races that take place in Alder Bay on Saturday were successfully orchestrated by Bill Boyd and myself, but suffered from a lack of entrants. Next year, there will hopefully be some hot competition in all the races (rowing, sailing and paddling). Start training now! Thanks are due to Bill Boyd, who went beyond the call of duty by bringing his Simmons Sea Skiff down from Bowen Island to serve as committee boat for the races.

If you haven’t seen the latest issue of WoodenBoat magazine (Sept. – Oct. 2006), pick one up and take a look in the “Relaunchings” section. Our “Vogler” skiff is featured in this section, with a very nice photograph taken by Trevor Mills. By the way, both “Vogler” and “Sam Mc” were recently rented to the movie production “Fantastic Four – 2”. When the movie comes out, look for them in the background of the “wedding scene”.

After a summer-long sales effort by Gary Mosier and others, our Bolger “Diablo” hull has finally been sold. “Diablo” will soon move out of the shed, which will clear the decks for the long-anticipated “D’Arcy” restoration project. “D’Arcy” is a 16-1/2 foot clinker pulling boat with three rowing stations. She is of historical interest as she was one of the last boats built by pioneer BC boatbuilder Derry Carter. Stand by for announcement of the start-up of this new project, and plan to get involved if you can.

The annual Woodworking Machinery, Tool Sale and Show takes place this year October 20-22 at the Cloverdale Exhibition and Rodeo Grounds, and Oarlock and Sail Wooden Boat Club will be one of the exhibitors. The plan is

to take our partially built Gartside clinker pram to the show, and demonstrate the art of lapstrake planking on site. The objective is to spread word of our existence and hopefully enlist some new members. Show hours are Friday, Oct. 20, 11:00 AM – 9:00 PM; Saturday, Oct. 21, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM; and Sunday, October 22, 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM. It's a worthwhile event to visit if you are interested in woodworking/boatbuilding. Drop by our booth (#109 in the Agriplex) if you attend.

president. Together we have greatly expanded the range of activities that Oarlock and Sail is engaged in. Some of our initiatives, such as the Oarlock and Sail Boat Users Group (OSBUG) have proven less successful than hoped, but others like the move to the Maritime Museum and the group boatbuilding projects that this facilitated have worked out very well. Trying to build a club like this has its ups and downs, but overall we are having more successes than failures. Long may Oarlock and Sail prosper!

In closing, I wish to express my thanks for your support during my tenure as club

GS

### Calendar of Wooden Boat Events Fall & Winter 2006

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>October 19</b>          | Regular monthly meeting, Maritime Museum, 7:30 PM. Program TBA.  |
| <b>October 20 – 22</b>     | Woodworking Machinery, Tool Sale and Show, Cloverdale Exhibition and Rodeo Grounds. Show hours are Friday, Oct. 20, 11:00 AM – 9:00 PM., Saturday, Oct. 21, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM, Sunday, October 22, 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM. For more information see the “View From the Tiller” in this publication and <a href="http://www.woodandtoolshow.com">www.woodandtoolshow.com</a> . |
| <b>November 21</b>         | Oarlock and Sail Annual General Meeting and Board of Directors election. A slide program on the 2006 Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival will be shown following the business meeting.  |
| <b>December</b> (date TBA) | Annual Christmas/Winter social at Alder Bay Boat Co. on Granville Island. This is a finger-food potluck, so plan to bring a plate of your favourite savouries or seasonal baking. Traditionally there is a Christmas Carol jam session at this event, so musicians are invited to bring along their instruments.   |



Traditional working boats found a place on the recreational waterfront of Vancouver in the early years of the last century. Left to right circled boats include a Fraser River skiff, a sailing gillnetter, and what may be a handliner (courtesy City of Vancouver Archives).

## Reconstructing Traditional Small Craft of British Columbia

### Part I

By Charles D. Moore

**There** is a welcome article in this spring's issue of *Maritime Life and Traditions* on John Gardner and the small craft revival. I am reminded how specific Gardner was in his chronological definition of traditional small craft. They were boats

of oar and sail that came to prominence in the last decade of the nineteenth century: "That period was one of immense technological progress in every area, and was the culmination of refined and perfected boat-building techniques

extending back over a period of centuries. There was a proliferation of small-craft types perfected to the ultimate for speed and convenience."

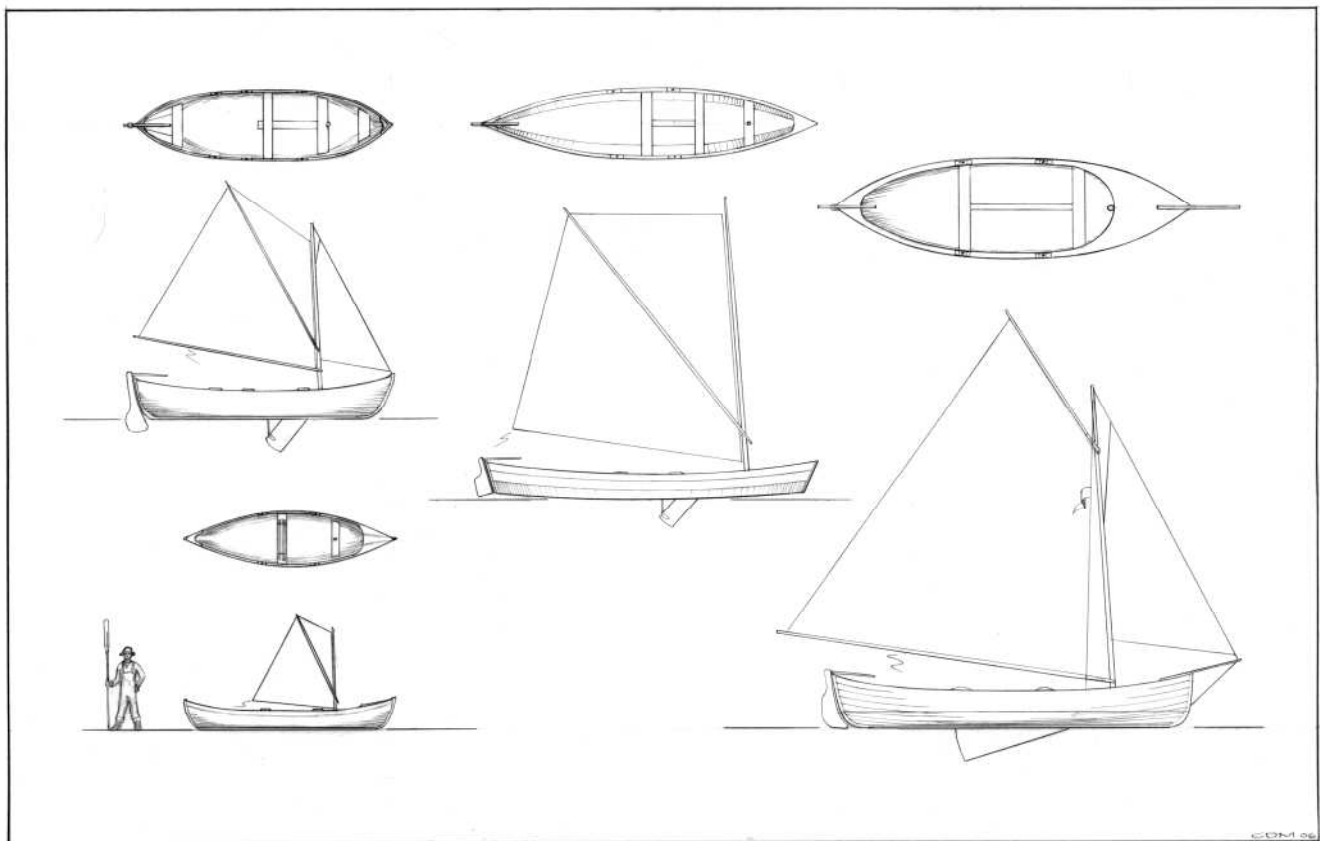
Gardner was born in Maine and spent almost all of his life working in New England. The key traditional small craft for him were the Hampton boats, dories, wherries, Whitehalls, peapods, bateaus and skiffs of that coast, as well as the Adirondack guide boats of its interior waterways. Given a little knowledge of traditional wooden boats most people would recognize these names, and have some idea of what these boats looked like and the kinds of work and environments they would traditionally have been employed in. These images have been built through books and articles not only by John Gardner, but by Howard Chappelle, Kenneth Durant, and other writers, as well as some artists including Winslow Homer.

But what of traditional small craft on the West Coast? How many of the several boat types used along the coast of British Columbia at the turn of the 20th century are recognizable today, even to wooden boat enthusiasts? We don't know them, despite the fact that these boats were probably more critical to coastal settlement over the first 50 to 75 years of this province's existence than the horse was for settlement on the prairies. The traditional craft of this coast, planked boats at least, have not worked their way into our collective memory through oral history and songs the way boats of the Maritimes and Newfoundland have on the Atlantic coast. We have had no Gardner or Chappelle, and Emily Carr painted trees and totems.

Perhaps because of their absence from the popular culture of the West Coast, historic small craft almost never "turn up" in someone's barn or shed out here the way they seem to on the East Coast and around the Great Lakes. It has not helped that official interest in small craft across Canada has consistently lagged behind the U.S. for well over a century. When there were still many traditional boats around in the 1930s, hundreds of them were recorded south of the border thanks to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Historic American Merchant Marine Survey (HAMMS). The data collected at this time provided the core data for Howard Chappelle's work though the 1950s and 1960s at the Smithsonian, which in turn helped provide the historical underpinnings to Gardner's programming at Mystic Seaport. No similar programs were instituted in Canada in the 1930s, or after. Even in the 19th century, the U.S. showed far more official interest in recording working boats. The U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries (later the Bureau of Fisheries) had agents like G. Goode, R. Rathbun, Zachary Tanner, and above all Joseph Collins, who demonstrated in their reports a deep interest in the rowed and sailed fishing boats that were then at their apex of development. Their contemporary counterparts in Canada, to the loss of historians of technology if not marine biologists, were far more interested in the migratory and reproductive habits of fish than in fishing technology. Finally, in Canada there was no equivalent to Henry Hall's 1884 *Report on the Ship-Building Industry of the United States*, a survey that included numerous small craft types as well as ships.

Now that so many opportunities to preserve or record our traditional small craft have been passed by, is it too late to reproduce these boats in 2006? I am going to suggest it is not. Without a substantially intact original it is impossible to produce a true replica. Yet it may be possible to "reconstruct" facsimiles of these boats, first on paper and then in wood, by collecting and carefully analyzing the data, however limited, available from a variety of historical sources. For example, the photographic record for the West Coast, especially for the salmon canning industry, is quite rich. A wealth of detail and simple proportional information can be gleaned from photographs. While it is time-consuming (or expensive), it is also

possible to work up measured drawings from photos provided you have the critical overall dimensions from written sources that enables you to "calibrate" your work. Photographic evidence of sufficient quality and quantity can serve as reliable physical evidence, in the absence of a surviving boat, to supplement oral and written history. Some comparative analysis of relevant material from outside the region should also be included in what may be described as an archaeological approach for reconstructing traditional boat types from fragmentary bits of information threaded together to create a "best fit" of reasonable historical accuracy. An additional and critical advantage in carefully surveying a spectrum of data



Traditional small craft clockwise from bottom left include a handliner, a seal-hunting boat, a Fraser River skiff, and a Fraser River sailing gillnetter.

related to one type is that it insures against building a "replica" based on a single secondary source of information. Unfortunately, there have been too many unhappy illustrations of how flawed the information from single secondary sources can be.

In a series of articles over the coming months I will present four traditional working boats used on the BC coast in the era of oar and sail. I will review the sources available for building reconstructions or replicas of each these boats. I will also touch on the relevant history to illustrate how each boat was important to BC's history in the 75-year period between 1865 and 1940. The boats examined will include the Fraser River skiffs used to set gillnets in the nascent years of British Columbia's salmon canning industry on the Fraser River; the pelagic seal hunting boats that were launched from schooners from the late 19th century until 1911 when the pelagic hunt was shut down; round-bottomed sailing gillnetters sometimes misleadingly called Columbia River boats which began to replace the skiffs in the 1890s on the Fraser River and continued in use alongside skiffs on the north coast into the 1930s; and the handliner, a small boat used by single fishermen to troll for salmon, and used from about 1900 to 1940.

In the coming years, if there is to be a traditional wooden boat sailing centre anywhere in coastal British Columbia, boats of these types should provide the core of the fleet. They have great historic significance to the region. Just like back East, European settlement of this coast was built on fur and fish. These boats were critical to accessing those resources and are important aspects of what Anthropologists call

"material culture" produced in the cultural intersection of settler and First Nations communities.

From a programming perspective these boats will provide a range of boat-building and boat-handling experiences. Sizes between 4 m (13 ft) to 8 m (25 feet) in length are represented. Flat-bottomed as well as round-bottomed hulls can be built from lapped, strip, and conventional carvel construction. Replicas already built of handliners provide a clear demonstration of how beautifully these boats move with one or two people rowing. At the large end of the scale, the Fraser River sailing gill-netter is similar in layout and nearly as large as the Bristol Bay boat which is now queen of the Seattle Centre for Wooden Boats fleet and extensively employed in on-the water programming for groups, including children, youth at risk, and people with disabilities.

These four boats are not the only traditional small craft known to our region of course. My selection is based not only on the range of boat size, but also on the number of the boats that were produced, reflecting not only their significance in a general way but also the likelihood that they have left a sufficient imprint on the historic record to allow reconstruction. This selection leaves out a variety of other craft used in BC around the turn of the last century, including all craft built specifically for recreation. From a maintenance perspective today, traditional working boats are simpler and less expensive to build and maintain. They are built of locally available materials, and properly fitted out with a minimum of metal components and finished with paint not varnish.

For those who argue that purpose-built recreational craft might be more suitable for rowing and sailing pleasure today, I offer the photograph of the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club in 1905. Examples of three of the boat types I will be looking at are tied up at the club float. These boats, particularly the Fraser River sailing gillnetter, played a critical role in the early development of recreational boating in BC. Not only is there a

prospect for "Living History" programming based on the building of traditional small craft significant in BC, but these same types should offer excellent recreational potential on the water.

Next issue we will look at the Fraser River skiff.

CDM

## **Coal Harbour History**

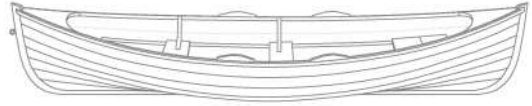
I am looking for anyone with information about the history of the businesses and workers of Coal Harbour from the 1880s to 1970s. I have published two articles in Pacific Yachting about Coal Harbour: "Turners Boat Works" (February 1996) about the history of John Turner, his boatbuilding business and the wooden boats that owners still love today; and "A Coal Harbour Sketch" (October 1999) about Coal Harbour when it was warren of shipyards, engine works and outfitters. I am looking for first-person or passed down stories, photos, and anything else that should be preserved. While researching these articles, I made contact with a Coal Harbour workers association, that I would like to re-contact, if anyone has information about members of this group, I would appreciate that as well.

I can be reached at:

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## Vancouver Wooden Boat Show Small Boat Races

By Bill Boyd



As usual, the Oarlock and Sail conducted three small wooden boat events at the boat show on Saturday, August the 26th. The Alder Day Classic rowing race, the Oarlock and Sail Regatta, and the Wooden Canoe Challenge were all held, in the sunshine, in Alder Bay on the south side of Granville Island in False Creek.

In past years the races have been reasonably well attended, although participation has dwindled in recent years. This year, however, involvement has fallen off to an all time low.

In this years events, the name "McLean" features prominently. A few years back, the McLean family participated in Family Boatbuilding at the Vancouver Wooden Boat Show, constructing a classic Bevin Skiff. They did a fine job finishing her, christened her "MR. CALF", and have since participated in a number of Oarlock and Sail "on the water" events. It was this boat that took the Alder Bay Classic rowing race this year.

Unfortunately, no other row boats were entered, so to make a race out of it after young Cam McLean powered up the course, his dad, Fraser, and the race officials, Gerry Stensgaard and Bill Boyd, took their turns at the oars. After all the calculations were complete, Cam McLean easily bested the "old guys" and won the event. Well done Cam!

The next event was the Oarlock and Sail Regatta, where again, Steve Kilgour was the only entrant. Crewed by long time OLAS member, Darrel Klassen, Steve skillfully manueouvered the course in the notoriously fickle winds of Alder Bay. Steve sails a 16 foot, Brendlemeyer designed sailboat rigged with only a single mainsail. He also sailed the same boat to victory last year, so Steve needs some competition as well.

The Canoe Challenge again featured the McLean family. Fraser had his latest boat-building project, a finely crafted skin kayak, on display at the Oarlock and Sail booth this year. This beautiful kayak turned out to be the sole entry in the canoe race. Cam McLean, himself an accomplished competitive canoeist, characterizes his dad's skin kayak as "a bit of a barge". However, he tracked it nicely down the course and skillfully paddled around the distant marker, returning without cracking a sweat. Fraser also ran a heat but was slightly more out of breath as he crossed the finish line. Although the judges could not be persuaded to give it the fragile kayak a try, a young lady, practicing in her own high-tech canoe in Alder Bay that afternoon, was a good sport and ran the course in the skin kayak as well. Again, after all the sorting out of the times, Cam McLean was declared the winner.

By the end of the afternoon, the McLean family, Steve, Darrel, an anomomous young lady and the two judges, had fun on the water, messing around in small wooden boats. With a little more effort by Oarlock and Sail members, as well as some of the larger wooden boat owners at the show, I'm sure we can make this a much more meaningful event next year.

Congratulations to all the 2006 winners.

BB

## Modified Malyea-Thomson Handliner

By Burt Fidler

Those who have had the pleasure of rowing a proper row boat know that there is no greater pleasure than a well designed boat intended to be propelled by oars. Rowing is an excellent form of exercise that when done in the right kind of boat can be a most enjoyable experience indeed.

It is a sad thing that most people have never had that pleasure, but have only suffered the cumbersome agony of rowing boats intended to have an outboard hanging off the transom. Most of what pass for row boats these days were never intended to be rowed any distance at all. Proper hull design is essential for achieving the desired effect when rowing, and one such design that manages the task very well is the Georgia Straight Handliner.

For recreational rowing in our waters, the handliner probably comes closest to being the ideal type of row boat. This 14 foot double ended boat is proportioned just right to match a wide variety of uses as an all purpose modern day recreational boat. With the choice of two rowing positions, it can be rowed in a variety of conditions and trimmed to match almost any imaginable situation. Large enough for up to three adults (or two adults and a couple of kids), it is perfect for family outings. It even has enough room to make a great beach camping cruiser for one or two, yet it handles well as a solo row boat, and is a pleasure to row for hours with an impressive ability to cover some amazing distances.

For the amateur boat builder who might want to build one of these little boats, there is a new set of plans that authentically represent the type. Larry Westlake has drawn up some very detailed plans of a 14 foot Modified Malyea-Thomson Handliner. Larry did a wonderful job on them. As a collector of small boat plans, I am impressed with the detail, especially the notes regarding the

background of the boat, and changes Larry has made from the original sail. Everything a builder would need to know is there, including drawings for all spars and a nice set of oars. An extensive materials list is helpfully provided too. The detail of these plans far exceeds what is often included in a set of plans. Construction of this little beauty is of traditional strip plank, making the boat a very doable project for the amateur to build. This type of construction is both economical and durable. It is entirely possible to build this boat without using expensive epoxy and other modern day goop.

One thing that might puzzle those who are not familiar with the handliner type is the complete absence of centre board or rudder for sailing. This is not an omission on the part of the designer. Handliners in their day were used as working fish boats, and did not have these features because they were not needed. Intended as row boats first, they are intended to be sailed off the wind where they can be easily steered under sail by adjusting the weight of the sailor forward or aft, or in tight quarters by using an oar. I have done this and it is much easier in practice than it sounds because these little boats are so perfectly balanced. I understand that a brief explanation of this is planned for the next printing.

If you are thinking of building a small pulling boat or want something that will give you years of pleasure on the water, this little boat is well worth considering. As an authentic handliner type, it is a true representation of the historical Georgia Straight Handliner designed for B.C. waters.

For more information contact Larry Westlake at 4676 Whitaker Road, Sechelt, BC, V0N3A2, [plans@westlakeboats.ca](mailto:plans@westlakeboats.ca).

BF

*(Editor's note: Another set of plans for a heritage Handliner is available from the Sunshine Coast Museum, Gibsons, BC. Contact the museum at 604-886-8232.)*

## **NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS:**

Newsletter submissions are welcome. To see the requirements, go to the website "Newsletters" page at: [www.woodenboatclub.ca/newsletters.htm](http://www.woodenboatclub.ca/newsletters.htm) or contact the editor (see below).

The guest speakers at our meetings have consistently been very entertaining and informative, and many have provided historical or technical insights that are rarely available. However, because we have no reporter free to write up these talks, they are regrettably ephemeral.

Many of the talks, if written up, would make significant contributions to the historical record and help to perpetuate the knowledge and appreciation of wooden boats. Once included in our online newsletter, the articles would constitute a permanent resource that is available to the world.

If there are members who like to write, and who would be willing to take notes and report on the guest speakers, I would welcome your contribution.

**ARTICLES** for the newsletter about Wooden Boats, associated skills, or related events and activities are welcome.

Members who are interested in writing should contact the editor, Larry Westlake at [info@westlakeboats.ca](mailto:info@westlakeboats.ca).

## **ADVERTISEMENTS:**

If you have a wooden boat, boat equipment, boatbuilding tools, or materials to sell, this is a great place to advertise them. Submit short, classified style ads to the newsletter editor.

The cost for ads is...

- \* free for personal ads by members
- \* \$10 per personal ad for non-members
- \* \$20 per issue for commercial ads

## **Oarlock and Sail Wooden Boat Club MEMBERSHIP:**

New members are always welcome. Pass one of these forms to a friend if you think they may be interested, or bring them to a meeting to test the waters.

Three newsletters are published annually, with optional email notification of all meetings and events.

Clip the form, write us a cheque, and send them now!

please indicate if this is...

- Membership Renewal  
 New Membership

Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

- I am enclosing \$20.00 for one year's full membership dues.  
 I am enclosing \$15.00 for one year's associate membership (available only to persons living outside of the greater Vancouver area).

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_