Canoe Building Class Starts July 31

Alex Comb of Stewart River Boatworks (stewartriver.com) will be teaching a cedar and canvas canoe building class at the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum (WCHM) in the summer of 2016. The class will begin Sun July 31 and continue daily through Sat Aug 6.

In this group class, up to ten students will build one or two beautiful cedar and canvas canoes. On the first day cedar ribs will be bent over a solid canoe form and on the following day planking the canoe with thin cedar “planks” will begin. Once planked and the hull constructed, canvas will be stretched over the canoes. Finally, the canvas is filled with water-proof filler. In this hands-on class everyone will be invited to participate in the construction. By the end of the week the canoes should be ready for paint and varnish with seats, thwarts, yokes and gunwales installed.

The canoe building class will be limited to ten students so that each will have the opportunity for a real hands-on experience. Depending on the number of students there will be one or possibly two canoes built by the group. A lottery will be held at the end of the class to decide who may go home with at least one of the canoes for the cost of materials. The cost of the class is $700 for those enrolled before July 15th and $750 for those who enroll after that date. Interested students can enroll by contacting WCHM Executive Director Jed Malischke at 715-635-2479/info@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org.

MacKenzie Exhibit A Hit For Opener

The new WCHM 2016 annual display, an exhibit to honor the life’s work of consummate canoe craftsman and builder Tom MacKenzie, was the highlight of the museum’s most successful opening day event yet. “We certainly had the largest crowd we have ever had for an opening day,” explained WCHM President Rich Taylor, “and it was also the most financially successful opening day event we have had.” Despite predictions of rain and cold weather for the entire weekend, no rain fell in Spooner until after the show closed and was cleaned up by 5:00 PM.

The Mackenzie display features Tom’s last and favorite canoe he built, a Loon Works Nakoma, plus a life size photo of Tom paddling it at the Upper Great Lakes Regional Assembly in Shell Lake (WI) in 2014. Another portion of the display recreates his workshop in North Carolina, complete with a partially constructed canoe and video showing the museum visitor the various steps Tom took in constructing his works of art. In addition to the Nakoma, an early experimental craft of Tom’s that utilized Dacron aircraft fabric as a covering, and a Loon Works My Bug, can be seen overhead. The exhibit also pays homage to his work in promoting Free Style canoeing as an interpretive sport, and his organizational skills in creating the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association (WCHA) and the annual WCHA Assembly in New York.

The MacKenzie exhibit is expected to remain in the WCHM exhibit hall for several years. Additional photos of the exhibit can be seen on page 3.
Author Mike Elliott Coming July 22

Mike Elliott, author of “This Old Canoe: How To Restore Your Wood Canvas Canoe,” is coming to the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum (WCHM) in Spooner, Wisconsin, for a presentation and book signing on Friday July 22nd beginning at 8:00 PM. The book is a step-by-step guide through the process of transforming an old, forgotten canoe into a cherished, classic heirloom. Where other do-it-yourself canoe books concentrate mostly on building wooden canoes, this book is the only one available dedicated exclusively to the restoration of wood-canvas canoes.

In his presentations, Elliott, who has restored over 170 canoes since 2003, lets you in on the trade secrets of how to successfully return your canoe to its former glory. Using over 300 photos and 70+ plans and illustrations, this book is designed to simplify the many challenging tasks of canoe restoration including canvassing, how to weave rattan seats, and how to steam-bend wood. Elliott began restoring canoes as a hobby in 1995. That hobby bloomed into a full time career in 2003 when he opened Kettle River Canoes in Grand Forks, British Columbia, where he's been restoring wood canvas canoes ever since. His popular CanoeGuy’s Blog is read by over 5,000 canoe enthusiasts each month.

Mike Elliott will be at the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum in Spooner (312 N Front St) talking about wooden canoes and their people - the ties that bind them and the restorations that bring them back together again, as well as signing copies of his book which will be available for purchase. The presentation begins at 8:00 PM and is free and open to the public. For more information call 715-635-2479 or email to info@WisconsinCanoeHeritageMuseum.org. For nearby motel lodging we recommend the Best Western American Heritage Inn at 715-635-9770. For camping, travel, or other lodging information contact the Spooner Area Chamber of Commerce at 800-367-3306.

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News Briefs & Upcoming Events

Kennebec Salesman Model Travels To New York Assembly

The Wooden Canoe Heritage Association (WCHA) will be holding their annual Assembly on July 12-17 at Paul Smiths College in Paul Smiths, New York. This 2016 national event will feature Kennebec Canoes, and among their long list of events, demonstrations, and activities is a “Salesman’s model canoes display of rare model canoes, with discussions by Roger Young, Benson Gray, Zach Smith, R.C. Cross, Michael Grace, Robert Ross and Glenn Raiche.”

Responding to a special request from the WCHA, the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum (WCHM) is sending one of its most valuable pieces from its Collections, a rare 100 year old Kennebec Salesman’s Model. The model is over five feet long and was recently appraised at between $15,000 and $18,000. “It has been quite a process of carefully packaging this item and evaluating possible shipping options,” says WCHM Executive Director Jed Malischke, “we are being extremely cautious with this irreplaceable antique, and grateful to Craig and Judy Kitchen for its delivery to New York and its return via Marquette Michigan.”

The WCHA show has also received commitments from some of the finest and rarest samples known, including an Ontario Canoe Company “vertical rib” sample, plus Peterborough, Rice Lake, and Chestnut Canoe models from circa 1900. There are expected to be many more on display. Roger Young, the curator of the model display, says that “We are planning to document all models on display, photograph them and eventually create a book on the history and use of these sample models.” The appearance at the show is expected to add to the provenance and collector value of all the models included.

On the way home to Spooner from New York, the WCHM Kennebec model may also stop off in Marquette Michigan to be displayed as part of the “Century Circle” at the Upper Great Lakes Regional Assembly on August 19-21 (see previous article). For more information about the WCHA Assembly in New York visit their website at WCHA.org.

Photos of the 2016 Tom MacKenzie display currently in the WCHM Exhibit Hall.
River Alliance Plans Trip To WCHM Sept 24

They’re calling it “Heritage Boats and a Wild River Float.” The River Alliance of Wisconsin, an organization whose mission is to advocate for the protection, enhancement and restoration of Wisconsin’s rivers and watersheds, is planning a trip for paddlers to the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum (WCHM) and the Namekagon River. The River Alliance website describes the trip like this:

“Calling all boat geeks! Bring your homemade, vintage, or unique boats (all boats are welcome) on our special trip on the Namekagon River. We’ll start our day at the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum. WCHM executive director, Jed Malischke, will give us a personal tour of the museum. After the tour we’ll depart for a twelve mile trip on the Namekagon River. We’ll be guided by River Alliance board member and St. Croix River Association executive director, Deb Ryun. After the event, you are invited to return to the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum for their end of the season celebration. Lunch will be provided. Participants will need to provide their own boats and paddles, life vests, water and other outdoor necessities. Advance registration is required.”

To register for the trip, or for more information contact the River Alliance of Wisconsin at 608-257-2424 x116 or email them at info@wisconsinrivers.org. You can also visit their website at www.WisconsinRivers.org. You’ll find the Heritage Boats trip on their events page scheduled for Sat Sept 24 from 10 AM to 4 PM.

Two New Members Join WCHM Board

WCHM recently held its annual general membership meeting on Friday May 25, the eve of opening day. One of the items of business on the agenda was the annual election for the board of directors. Four positions were filled, two by incumbents and two with new board members, for three year terms. The returning board members are Rich Taylor and Dick Butler. The newly elected board quickly convened a meeting to elect officers, and named both Rich and Dick to continue in their positions of President and Vice President respectively.

The two new board members include Debbie Koehn and Larry Stelter, both from Spooner. Debbie is a retired city clerk and town treasurer. She moved to the Spooner area in 1994 after previously living in Houston, Texas, and Green Bay, Wisconsin. She says there is nothing better than living as close to the outdoors as possible. She has back packed The Wind Rivers as well as The Grand Canyon. She also enjoys canoeing the BWCA, Namekagon, and various area flowages.

"After volunteering at the front desk of the museum last summer, I gained a new respect and perspective on the art and treasurers held by the WCHM. People come from all over to see the canoes and the enthusiasm of their experience is quite enjoyable. They make me feel good about being a part of the whole adventure." Larry Stelter has been involved with the WCHM since its conception. As a Spooner city councilman for twelve years he has been an advocate for the museum from its first discussion at a committee meeting to the present. Larry supports the mission of the museum and says he is proud to have been a part of bringing this collection to northwestern Wisconsin.

Retiring from the WCHM board are Jill Dean and Charlotte Shover. Both have served admirably for many years, Charlotte as an officer and secretary of the board, and Jill as a foundering member of the museum, member of both the WCHM Collections & Acquisitions Committee and the Exhibits Committee, and donator of the original canoe collection that started the institution. Both will remain active with the museum, Jill in an advisory capacity and Charlotte as one of the museum’s volunteer “keymasters” that keep the exhibit hall open.

Thank You to These Supporting Members

Jim Hart  -  Mark Adams
Jill Weber Dean & Jeffrey Dean
Kurt & Susan Sroka

Contact WCHM
www.WisconsinCanoeHeritageMuseum.org
info@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org
PO Box 365, Spooner WI 54801
715-635-5002, 715-635-2479