How Do You Build and Sail a Pelican?

The latest addition to the Hyde Street Pier fleet isn’t a 19th Century square-rigger or a ferryboat from the Roaring ‘20s. Although considerably more modest than the park’s historic ships, the latest addition has a different kind of significance – it was built by hand in 16 days from November through January by a group of San Francisco teenagers in the Maritime Education Center, a bayside workshop near the foot of Van Ness Ave.

The 16 students come from Downtown High School in San Francisco’s Potrero Hill neighborhood. In the words of Elizabeth Houston, one of the students, “There’s no art program at our school, so this program helps us get that kind of experience. If you don’t like sitting around, this is a different situation than the classroom – it’s more hands-on.”

The boat is a San Francisco Pelican. Designed in the 1950s with San Francisco Bay conditions in mind, the Pelican is a sturdy, simple, 12-foot-long wooden sailing boat that is relatively easy to build using basic carpentry skills.

Teacher Ed Cavanaugh described the class as “experiential education” that provides basic carpentry and mathematics skills in a team environment. Perhaps more important, it generates enthusiasm. “You get them out here and put tools in their hands, and they go ‘Oh, yeah!’”

John Heid, a 30-year-old woodworker with a passion for boat-building, is the lead instructor. “We’re trying to teach these kids some basic life skills so they can go out and get a job,” John said, adding that “It’s a platform for teaching them other things”, such as discipline, cleaning, being on time, and respect. A bonus for the students is getting a taste of sailing.

Jason Rucker, the assistant curator of small craft at San Francisco’s Potrero Hill neighborhood, “There’s no art program at our school, so this program helps us get that kind of experience. If you don’t like sitting around, this is a different situation than the classroom – it’s more hands-on.”

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Jason Rucker, the assistant curator of small craft at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park and the founder of the program, estimates that there are a few thousand Pelicans around the world and several hundred in the Bay Area. “The local fleet races once a month in different locations in Northern California, and the Maritime Park Association sponsors pelican races here every spring,” he explained.

This boat is only a temporary addition to the fleet. Unlike the other six Pelican boats built through this kind of class at the park in past years, Downtown High School will put this latest Pelican up for sale. Proceeds will help cover future Pelican boat class costs.

A few Pelicans built by past classes can usually be seen in front of the Small Boat Shop or in the water around Hyde Street Pier. Anyone interested in getting involved with this program can contact Jason Rucker at 415-556-4031.

The Pelican-building class is an ongoing program. Photo, top left: Laying the keel on a Pelican built last spring. Photo, top right: The launching celebration of the recently-built Pelican with students from Downtown High School. Photo, above: The maiden voyage. The mast, sail, rudder, tiller, and custom paint job, will be added later. NPS Photos.
If Ships Could Speak

An Introduction to Interpretation at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer docent at the park? This three-day training course will introduce participants to maritime history, the park’s historic ships and the art of presenting educational programs. Learn the stories preserved by the park’s collection of authentic 19th century vessels, and chart a new course as a steward of this unique “floating national park.”

The course will include tours of the historic ships, park library, and collections. Participants will learn how to prepare a compelling interpretive program. Once trained, docents will share their knowledge with park visitors through formal educational programs and informal contacts.

The training is presented over three consecutive Sundays: April 15, 22, and 29, from 10:30am to 4:30pm at the park. The course includes an additional eight hours of on-the-job training to be scheduled in May.

There is no charge for the training but reservations are required. To register, or for more information, contact: Terry Dorman, volunteer coordinator, at 415-556-1613 or Terry_Dorman@nps.gov

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Established in 1988, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park encompasses only 34 acres, but contains the most national historic landmarks of any unit in the National Park Service. In addition to the fleet of ships at Hyde Street Pier, the park includes the Aquatic Park National Historic Landmark District (Bathhouse building, urban beach, lawn area and bocce ball courts), a Visitor Center and a research library (in Fort Mason Center).

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Park Information
415-447-5000


The park shipshape; the gardener keeps the lawns trimmed with a mower that runs on 100% vegetable-based diesel fuel. Maintenance employees now use electric-powered cars to keep the park shipshape; the gardener keeps the lawns trimmed with a mower that runs on 100% vegetable-based diesel fuel.

Enjoy Your Public Lands

Use a new inter-agency recreational pass to visit the fascinating natural and cultural resources preserved in national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, and other federal lands throughout the country. ($80, good for one year from date of sale.) Or consider an annual pass exclusively for visitation to the magnificent ships at Hyde Street Pier. ($20, good for one year from date of sale.) Passes can be purchased at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. Please inquire at the ticket booth on Hyde Street Pier.

Visit the “For Kids” button on the left hand side. Come on down and enjoy a day of fun at the pier!

Two Fleets at SF Maritime

Maritime National Historical Park. Please inquire at the ticket booth on Hyde Street Pier, Aquatic Park Historic District and the Maritime Library. Enjoy your public lands. The new clean-burning fleet of park maintenance vehicles with the historic fleet of ships at Hyde Street Pier in the background. NPS Photo

Visitor Information

Dates and Hours of Operation
The Hyde Street Pier, located at Hyde and Jefferson Streets, is open 9:30am—5:00pm—last entry at 4:30pm (October 1–May 27), and 9:30am—5:30pm—last entry at 5pm (Memorial Day—September 30).

The Aquatic Park Bathhouse Building is located on Beach Street at the foot of Polk Street. The building was closed in July 2006 for major renovation work. For more information, call the Visitor Center, 415-447-5000.

The Visitor Center, located at the corner of Hyde and Jefferson Streets, is open 9:30am—5:00pm (October 1–May 27) and 9:30am—7:00pm (Memorial Day—September 30).

The Maritime Library, on the third floor of Bldg. E in Fort Mason Center (auto entrance at Buchanan Street and Marina Blvd), is open to the public by making an appointment: Monday–Friday (1pm–4pm), and one Saturday per month (10am–4pm). Call 415-561-7030.

No Fee Areas
Visitor Center, Hyde Street Pier, Aquatic Park Historic District and the Maritime Library (Fort Mason Center).

Boarding Pass (Entrance Fee For Historic Vessels): $5.00

Reservations/Permits
Reservations for school groups and other educational groups must be made at least two weeks prior to your visit. At least one month’s notice and application for Special Use Permits is required. Filming permits are arranged on an individual basis.

Contact Information
General Park Information: 415-447-5000
Maritime Store: 415-775-2665
Maritime Library: 415-561-7030

USS Pampanito: 415-775-1943
Park Website: www.nps.gov/safr
Association Website: www.maritime.org

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MUSIC
CHANTYE SING Saturdays, March 3, April 7 and May 5, 8:30-9:30pm. No fee. Aboard a historic vessel at Hyde Street Pier. Reserve by calling 415-561-7711 or email peter_kaiser@nps.gov. Sing traditional working songs aboard a historic floating vessel. Bring a mug for hot cider served from the ship’s galley. March is Women’s History Month and the March 3 sing will emphasize songs about women in maritime history.

MUSIC OF THE SEA FOR KIDS Saturdays, March 17, April 21 and May 19, 3pm. aboard Balclutha at Hyde Street Pier. Vessel admission (under 16 free). History comes alive for kids in this special program, where the songs are geared for younger ears and chosen especially for fun. Ages 7 and up.

DEBRA COWEN CONCERT Saturday, April 28, 2pm to 3:30pm. aboard Balclutha at Hyde Street Pier. Vessel admission (under 16 free). Debra Cowen is one of America’s foremost interpreters of traditional and contemporary folksongs. Join us for an afternoon concert of sea songs as this Massachusetts singer tours the West Coast.

WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH
EXHIBIT: WOMEN WHO CHANGED MARITIME HISTORY Daily, throughout March. In the Visitor Center, 9:30am to 4:45pm. Free. Photo exhibition illustrating the often overlooked impact women have had on maritime history.

TEA WITH THE LADIES AND SURFRAGETTE MARCH Saturday, March 10, Noon. In the Ark houseboat and Hyde Street Pier. No fee. Turn back the clock to 1910 and experience a costumed living history reenactment of a suffragette and the support of votes for women. Later, join a salon of Victorian women as they discuss issues ranging from cure of sexually oriented writing to the women’s suffrage movement. Come voice your opinion!

WENDY THE WELDER WOMEN BUILDING LIBERTY SHIPS IN WWII Sundays, March 11 and 18, 1pm. In the Visitor Center theater. Free. During World War II, a shortage of men brought women into the workforce building Liberty Ships. Hear fascinating accounts of their contributions in this slide presentation.

SHIPPING OUT, THE STORY OF AMERICA’S SEAFARING WOMEN Sunday, March 25, 2pm. In the Visitor Center theater. Free. Meet award-winning filmmaker Maria Brooks as she presents her extraordinary documentary film (56 minutes) that traces the complex history of women at sea. Shown nationally, this film offers intimate portraits of contemporary women working in a variety of maritime occupations. A 14-minute edited version is daily throughout March.

Music, Tours, Events, Living History and Film

ASIAN/PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH
CHINESE CANNERY WORKERS Sundays, May 6, 13 and 27, 11:00am. Meet on Balclutha’s maindeck at Hyde Street Pier. Admission (under 16 free).

On this walking tour of Balclutha, you will learn about the lives and cultural contributions of Chinese laborers who sailed from San Francisco to Alaska (in less than luxurious conditions) for the great salmon runs.

CHINESE SHIPM JUNK GRACE QUAN RAISES SAILS Saturdays, May 19 and 26, 11:00am. Meet on Hyde Street Pier Free. Grace Quan is a replica of 19th century San Francisco ship junk. Learn about the history of the ship and watch her sail being raised. Come aboard and haul a net, explore the crew’s cabin, and take a turn at the tiller.

MORE PROGRAMS
CALLING A SEAM Sunday, April 15, Noon, 29, Noon. aboard Balclutha at Hyde Street Pier. Vessel admission (under 16 free).

More programs are planned throughout the month, including a costumed living history reenactment on Saturdays, March 10, April 14 and May 12, 11:30am. Tour at the gangway.

EUREKA ENGINE ROOM TOUR Saturday, March 24, Sunday, April 22 and Sunday, May 27. Meet on the gangway on the Pier. Vessel admission. Take a tour of the return fireboat Eureka’s engine room and get a close-up look at what makes a steam ferry run.

HERCULES ENGINEERING TOUR Sundays, March 25, April 22 and May 27, 3pm. Meet at the gangway on the Pier. Vessel admission. Tour includes climbing moderately steep ladders and entering cramped spaces. Explore the machinery that builds and learns about steam engine technology and its effects on the working environment of the marine steam engineer.

THE OCEAN: BARRIER OR HIGHWAY? Sundays, April 29 and May 23, 2pm. In the Visitor Center Free. Was the ocean a barrier or a highway for the vessels Balclutha, Thayer and Hercules? Join a ranger for a thirty minute slide presentation to examine this question.

CRUISE OF THE SHENANDOAH Saturdays, March 11, April 28 and May 19, 1pm. In the Visitor Center theater. Free. This illustrated program describes the 1864-65 cruise of the C.S.S. Shenandoah in the Pacific Ocean during which she almost completely destroyed the San Francisco based Pacific whaling fleet. Join a Park Ranger as he traces the 27,000-mile cruise of the Shenandoah.

SACRAMENTO: PORT OF GOLD Saturday, April 21, 6pm. In the Maritime Library, Building E, Fort Mason Center. Fee: $5 ($4 Library Friends and SFMNP) reservations: 515-561-7040. H. Alan Sims, maritime historian and archivist, will tell the story of the development of the Port of Sacramento beginning with John Sutter’s dream of a large maritime-based agricultural empire on the Sacramento River. Follow the port’s history through the Gold Rush to the golden age of steam boats to the construction of the new Port of Sacramento, with time reserved for the re-creation of the city’s old waterfront.

WELLS FARGO & CO. ON THE WATER SUNDAYS IN W W II Saturday, May 6, 13, 20 and 27, 10:00am-Noon. In the Maritime Library, Building E, Fort Mason Center. Fee: $5 ($4 Library Friends and SFMNP) reservations: 515-561-7040. Wells Fargo has long been associated with galloping horses pulling a stagecoach, but as a Gold Rush era banking and express firm, Wells Fargo first rode the paddle wheel steamers that linked New York and San Francisco by sea. Bill Sander of Wells Fargo Historical Services will tell the story of the company’s maritime heritage on the West Coast, including the riverboats that raced each other to Sacramento, the ships that served the coastal communities in the early 1900s, and the establishment of regular sea routes across the Pacific.

PARK RESEARCH LIBRARY The library is open to the public by making an appointment. Monday -Friday (1-4pm), and the third Saturday of the month (10-4pm). It is often possible to call on the same day you would like to visit. Please call Bill Kooiman, 415-561-7033, or Ted Miles, 415-561-7009. Ted_Miles@nps.gov

WILL YOU LIKE TO GET INVOLVED AS A VOLUNTEER? At San Francisco Maritime our volunteers provide a variety of services that include on the exhibit shop, ships division, small boat shop, maritime library, historic documents department, and interpretation and education. We have the perfect challenge for you! Call the Volunteer Office at 415-556-1613, or visit www.nps.gov/sal/supportsudoarvark/ volunteer.htm

AGE OF SAIL The San Francisco Maritime National Park Association’s Age of Sail education program is booking programs for the school year. These programs offer hands-on, student-centered learning, and take place aboard the park’s historic vessels at Hyde Street Pier. Programs range in cost from $25 to $64 per student. For information call Lucas Lineback at 415-561-6662 ext. 30, llineback@maritime.org or www.maritime.org

WWII SUBMARINE USS Pampanito Open daily. At Pier 45, Fisherman’s Wharf. Fee: adults, $9; 6-12, $4, under 6 free; adults, over 62, $5, active military duty, $4; family ticket, $20. Information: 415-775-1943. The museum, a U.S. Navy submarine (SS-183), is a museum and memorial owned and operated by the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association, and is located at the end of Pier 45. The museum is open daily during the day. Information includes a self-guided audio tour. The Balao-class USS Pampanito, (SS-383), wrecked historic vessel at Hyde Street Pier. reservations: 515-561-7040.
Sometimes the crew could not help but be charmed by way. One captain rigged a swing on deck for his young children entertained, safe, and out of the crew’s reach. Parents faced the endless challenge of keeping their babies dressed without any diapers at all. When the child had to “go,” he or she just went . . . a situation that gives one mother recalled trying to catch her four year old son who had become so good at climbing in the rigging that he got away from her by “going aloft” in his own personal jungle gym.

Returning to life ashore was often a big adjustment. One of Balclutha’s captains, Alfred Durkee, told a story that shows just how different these children were from those born on land. He was in port when he saw a child take her first steps on solid ground: “…when she came ashore . . . she would take a step, then apparently wait, with her foot up, for the floor to roll so she could steady herself before taking another step. She was [on shore] quite a number of days before she could walk like other children.”

Cleaning diapers was another challenge. Freshwater was precious and saved for drinking. Bathing and cleaning clothes was put off until it rained. So how could these families wash diapers? One solution was to tie the diapers to a line and then drag them behind the ship. Unfortunately, when the diapers dried, the salt in the water made the diaper feel like sandpaper, and no one liked to wear scratchy underwear! One mother made her own disposable diapers by lining them with dried sea moss that could be tossed overboard when it got dirty. If a child was old enough to crawl, he or she could use the mattress, attaching the child’s clothing to the outer layer of the mattress.

Parents faced the endless challenge of keeping their young children entertained, safe, and out of the crew’s way. One captain rigged a swing on deck for his young daughter. One mother used a washtub as a playpen. Sometimes the crew could not help but be charmed by their young crew mates. Children who grew up at sea remember carved toys made for them by the sailors.