

Boat: Patches relay a unique story

Continued from Page A1

On impulse he wrote a note asking the owners if they had ever considered selling. He stuck the note in a plastic bag and left it on the boat. A few days later, the owners called and he bought the boat over the phone for \$600.

Built around 1907 or 1910, the John M came into being at a time when the iconic Columbia River gillnet fleet was converting from sail to power.

With sails, boats had to be rowed or sailed out and then towed, rowed or sailed back in — a time-consuming, tiring operation. When engines arrived in the early 1900s, the whole nature of the river fishery changed.

“You could easily get from point A to point B, quickly,” said Sam Johnson, executive director of the Columbia River Maritime Museum. “You could extend your fishing grounds immensely. You were able to draw and use bigger nets because you were under power.”

Boats could catch and deliver far more fish than before, an efficiency that contributed to the overfishing of salmon in the region, Johnson said.

A federal survey from Puget Sound to the mouth of the Columbia River in the late 1800s recorded over 2,000 sail-equipped gillnet boats. Just 100 years later, when the Columbia River Maritime Museum tried to find an example for its collection, the wooden gillnet boats that curved to points at both ends seemed to have disappeared entirely.

If the John M itself is an important piece of regional history, so too are the skills evident in the work done to rebuild it — craftsmanship that, like wooden double-ended gillnet boats, is vanishing from the North Coast.

Chuck Bollong, a kayak building instructor who teaches classes through the Columbia River Maritime



Kent Craford
Kent Craford's two sons take a ride on a rebuilt historic gillnet boat on the Skipanon River in Warrenton.

Museum, compares the kayaks he makes to building a model out of a box. What Lahti and Petersen do is very different.

“These guys start with raw wood and make every piece themselves,” he said. “There’s nothing pre-cut, no parts you took off the shelf. It all comes out of their hands and heads.”

He points to the John M’s combing, a ridge of wood that curves around the top forward section of the boat and keeps water from splashing in on the deck and helps guide the net. The combing is made of 12 foot sections of Oregon white oak that Lahti and Petersen steamed and shaped into a horseshoe.

“Let me tell you, that in itself, the steaming and bending with those complex angles and curves is an incredible skill,” Bollong said. “You don’t just go to anybody with a boatbuilding business and say, ‘Hey, do you do this?’”

Craford thinks of the John M’s ribs and planks. The ribs, which start at the bottom, the keel, and come up vertically to the boat’s deck, are fairly straightforward in the middle section of the boat. But at the ends of the boat, the frames have a lot of shape to them. They come to a point but they also flare, skinny at the water line and wider at the deck. Multiple curves must be created.

“If you just took a straight stick, you would have to take your top and bottom hand, twist in opposite directions and then bend it,” Craford said. “So imagine shaping

that out of a piece of wood. It’s incredibly difficult and yet Ric does it in his sleep at this point.”

That kind of skill requires an apprenticeship-type setting and years of time working on a variety of boats, Bollong said. It also requires a stash.

“The hardest part of all is getting the materials,” Lahti said.

Lahti’s storeroom is full of wood and components he has collected and set aside, pieces and odds and ends it can be difficult to find now, or are very expensive. Lahti is also well aware just how rare his skills and experience have become in the region.

“I have clients who dread the day I retire,” he said. Despite boat building schools like the Northwest School of Wooden Boat Building in Port Townsend, Washington, he doesn’t see a new generation rising quickly behind him.

Still, Johnson is optimistic. “It’s erroneous to say these crafts will go extinct,” he said. “They could but we’re talking wood and that’s a very versatile tool ... people can learn that again, and they do.”

Beauty

When you take a boat apart and rebuild it; when only 20 some pieces of the original boat remain; when the discarded remnants of water- and sun-faded wood that still hold a ghost shape of the vessel sink into the long grass and clover and something sleek and streamlined emerges in a shipwright’s shop — is it the same boat?

Well, said Johnson, after years of restoration, there’s probably not a single piece of original wood left in the famous USS Constitution, the U.S. Navy’s wooden-hulled frigate known as Old Ironsides that is the world’s oldest commissioned naval vessel still floating.

“And yet still that is considered a complete restoration.”

The John M is not a true restoration. While Lahti and Petersen salvaged original pieces and drew on traditional techniques and knowledge, they used modern tools and technology. They incorporated materials that may not have been available or widely used in the region in the early 1900s.

Absolute purists would say that the boat could not be called a replica unless it is exact.

“So what,” Johnson said. “That doesn’t matter.”

In many ways, the John M’s rebirth is true to the history of fishing vessels. Gillnet boats were work boats, Johnson said. They were built quickly and roughly. They were built to be repaired — Lahti has repaired his share over the years. The patches relay a unique story.

What also remains true is the boat’s lines: The measurements unique to each vessel that, if recorded, allow a shipwright to build an exact copy. The form of the John M holds.

And — crucially — the John M is a boat that is returning to the water. It will be out for people to see and appreciate. People are drawn to these types of old wooden boats, Johnson has noticed. There is an inherent beauty and elegance to them.

The museum maintains a collection of boats representing the evolution of fishing in the region. Few people ever get to see them. But they will see the John M.

“I do hope that it might inspire some others to restore some of the last few artifacts that are still seaworthy around the region,” Craford said.

Seaside: ‘We all agreed it’s better to get it done now’

Continued from Page A1

The estimated cost of the 22,000 linear square feet of facade is about \$2 million to \$2.5 million. Funds will be covered by project insurance.

Removal of existing brick and panels begins at the end of August.

Reapplication will take place in September and October. The last bricks will arrive in December, and the entire job is set to be completed in early to mid-January.

“We all agreed it’s better to get it done now given the whole COVID situation and use that vacated school time to get that removal and demolition complete,” Bubenik said.

At the former Heights Elementary School, now known as Pacific Ridge, repairs to the ceiling will require additional structural repairs, Bubenik said.

Movers are delivering furniture to the new Seaside High School and middle school campus this week and next, according to project manager Jim Henry, and administrative staff will start the week of Aug. 24. Teaching staff will be in the buildings starting Aug. 31.

The total cost of the \$131 million project requires a \$9 million loan from the school district, business manager Justine Hill said.

The school district is experiencing a revenue shortfall as a result of construction costs escalation, environmental delays and building reconfiguration, she said.

While district properties, including Seaside High School, Gearhart Elementary School and Broadway Middle School, have seen buyer interest and potential revenue, they “didn’t have the success like we had originally hoped, so we could take that money and push it back into the project,” Hill said. “We need a loan so we can finish the project and pay our vendors.”

Distance learning

During the week of Oct. 26, the school district will review Clatsop County and state data to determine if the county and district see declining trends in positive coronavirus cases and the rate of positive tests.

“This will give us the information we need to make an informed decision about reopening our buildings or to continue with distance learning,” Penrod said at the district’s board of directors meeting on

Tuesday.

Requirements for on-site learning include 10 or fewer positive cases per 100,000 population in the preceding seven days with 5% or fewer positive tests in the county in the preceding seven days.

A hybrid learning model will offer high school students instruction four days per week with four classes per day at 60 minutes each.

There will be recorded lessons, a class meeting, a homeroom or colloquium, Penrod said, with small group and full-group instruction.

Middle school students will receive instruction four days per week with five classes per day, 45 minutes each.

Elementary school students will receive instruction four days a week with a focus on community building and social and emotional development.

Students will receive whole group and small group lessons in core academic areas.

Music, physical education and guidance classes will be provided weekly.

“Seaside Online Thrive,” a 100% online program, will allow students to work at their own pace using district-provided curriculum. Staff will check in with students two days a week.

“If families find this isn’t a good fit for them,

they can switch at the trimester to either comprehensive learning or if there are schools, back in the building,” Penrod said.

Special education and English language development services will be individually designed.

‘Learning curve’

Staff will use Wednesdays for professional development to collaborate on the learning models.

“We know this will be a high learning curve for our staff and we want to make sure we support them and provide the learning that they need to be successful and provide a high-quality education for our students,” Penrod said.

Every student will be provided a Chromebook, she said. The school district will purchase wireless hot spots as needed.

Cannon Beach Academy will continue to build its own curriculum.

“We know that not being in person is a challenge,” she said. “It’s not ideal. Safety for all of our community, with making sure that our staff and our students are safe, continues to be our driving principle.”

Chickens: ‘You see chickens everywhere’

Continued from Page A1

city would also pursue zoning violations for the hens.

Garber and his neighbors have not been directly communicating. The neighbors admitted to unintentionally raising a rooster they said they got rid of after learning its sex and are challenging the nuisance fine in Municipal Court. They also claim to have gotten rid of all their hens, which Garber alleges have been hidden in their garage.

“All throughout Warrenton, if you drive through, you see chickens everywhere,” one of Garber’s neighbors said. “There’s chickens everywhere. I’m sorry, but our eggs helped every single one of our neighbors get through this pandemic, when no one could work.”

The situation sparked a longer-term policy discussion

among city commissioners, who wrestled Tuesday with the home economics of people growing their own food during the coronavirus pandemic with the concerns of residents like Garber.

Commissioners agreed there should be no roosters to avoid noise. But they differed on hens.

“My concern is for the people who are feeding their families, and they are,” Commissioner Tom Dyer said. “Just like people who do rabbits, too. And rabbits stink a lot worse than chickens, normally. I have a tough time not letting someone feed their family.”

Commissioner Rick Newton wanted to limit urban chickens to four per property, with a process to resolve neighbor complaints.

Mayor Henry Balensifer argued it’s not a high priority for staff, but something the city needs to find a conclusion on.

“I get more people asking about how can they get chickens next to their house and what’s the rules related to them as I do people who said, ‘I have a problem,’” Balensifer said.

He noted another nearby nuisance fine in Hammond against a woman he said later decapitated and hung the body of a rooster from her fence in protest. The property still has numerous roaming hens.

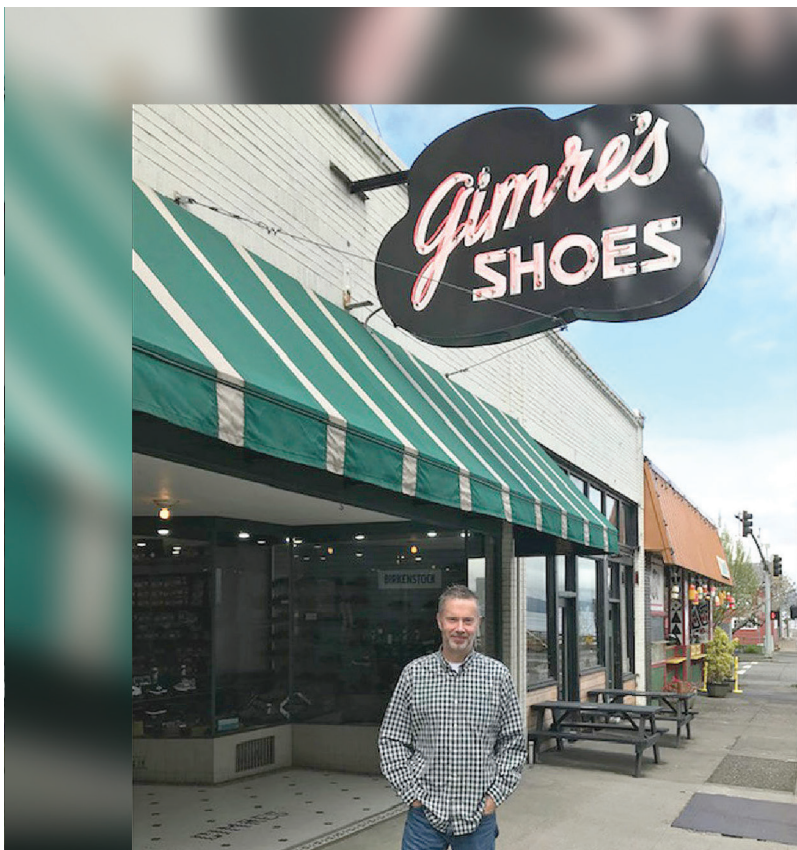
Commissioner Mark Baldwin took a harder stance, calling on the city to inform people chickens aren’t allowed and need to be removed.

“I’d like to make a blanket statement,” he said. “Put it in the paper. Put it in a mailer. Do whatever and say, ‘Everybody has 10 days. Get rid of your farm animals.’ Period.

Because if I was dealing with this — he’s dealing with it a lot nicer than I would. I would be making some chicken dinners.”

Commissioners agreed it likely wasn’t a good idea to spend police time wrangling illegal chickens. Balensifer, noting the struggles of other cities in approaching regulations around urban chickens, called for a virtual town hall to collect people’s opinions.

“I’ve probably fielded a good five or six of these every year,” Balensifer said of complaints about chickens on properties of less than 1 acre. “... Because there are so many people who do have it. Some people think of them as pets. Some of them do it for food. Some both. If the city’s going to go out there and start chasing chickens, and going to go cut them up, I have to be a little sensitive.”



Thank you for all of your help.

“I see real opportunity and have taken advantage for Gimre’s Shoes in the digital advertising that The Astorian offers. For only \$100 monthly I get online exposure plus a free link to Gimre’s Facebook page. I need to watch where every dollar goes more now than ever in this new world and I feel this is one of the best values in marketing my business.”

Peter Gimre, Gimre’s Shoes

- Gain Exposure.
- Drive More Business.
- Find New Customers.

the **Astorian**

Marketing assistance from the print & digital experts. Talk to our customer success team today.

503.325.3211