

Mystery boat: Original use difficult to tell

Continued from Page A1

Astoria, happened on the wreck several years ago when he was out at Trestle Bay with his family.

"We found it but I had never heard anything about it," he said. "There's hundreds of those, but they're all underwater."

Second, the boat is likely not a Columbia River gillnetter, a type of commercial fishing boat that was once common on the river and used in salmon fisheries. Modern versions can still be seen working in Youngs Bay and up Youngs River.

The boat appears to be built heavier than a typical wooden gillnetting boat, Schacher observed. The early gillnetters had been built for speed and the ability to operate in shallow waters.

Maybe this heavier wreck was built for some kind of industrial use, he thought.

But, he added, "there were a lot of one-off boats built for very specific things, God only knows."



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The boat is only accessible at low tide.

Another look

Last week, after hearing about Trotter's experience, Schacher decided to take another look. He walked out at low tide with Jon Norgaard on the phone. Norgaard operates the website "Historic Fishing," where he maintains an archive of photos of the West Coast fishing industry. Schacher considers Norgaard "one of the best local resources left on everything Astoria, especially fishing."

Together, they evaluated the boat remnants.

The boat, or what remains of it, is over 30 feet long — an unusual length for a standard Columbia River gillnetter. At the same time, it appears that concrete was poured in one area, possibly to act as ballast. There is a large bronze bolt on the starboard side that may have been used to support a crab davit, a piece of equipment used to pull crab pots from

the water.

This last feature was not unusual as some gillnetter boats pulled double duty, with fishermen shifting to crabbing in the winter to supplement their income, Schacher said.

With only a small portion of the boat preserved, it is difficult to tell what its original use was.

"My guess is that it had multiple uses over its lifetime and fell into disrepair and was abandoned at a dock and floated downriver to its final resting place in Trestle Bay," Schacher said.

Perhaps, he added, the partial removal of jetty stones in past years and the movement of sediment helped uncover it.

When he happened on the boat years ago, Schacher had notified the Maritime Archaeological Soci-

'IT PROBABLY WILL ONLY BE RECOGNIZABLE FOR A FEW MORE YEARS BEFORE THE STORMS AND SEA GROWTH FINISH CONSUMING IT.'

Mark Schacher | operator of Arrow Tugboat and Tour Co. out of Astoria

ety, a local volunteer-based group that investigates shipwrecks in the Pacific Northwest. Trotter, who has had past experience in archaeological work, hopes he can be involved in any future research and documentation of the boat.

But the society is unlikely to launch its own investigation any time soon.

They are already gearing up for summer work on another wreck, The

Stranger, a sternwheeler that worked with another ship to take passengers and freight between Salem and Vancouver in Washington state and that, according to local recollections, was tied up to be dismantled on the shores of Youngs Bay.

Costly

Boat investigations and removals eat up time and can quickly become costly. "Nobody has the money

to spend on wrecks that aren't really significant," Chris Dewey, the president of the society, said. Though he admits the question of significance is an open one.

There is the significance and mystique of wrecks like the Peter Iredale farther south on the beach side of Fort Stevens or the fabled Beeswax wreck in Oswald West State Park, or the estimated 2,000 other wrecks in the infamous Graveyard of the Pacific that stretches from roughly Tillamook Bay to Vancouver Island.

Then there is the significance of old but less dramatic vessels like the abandoned fishing boats and industry vessels so common around Youngs Bay. They tell the story of the region and reveal details about the people who lived and worked here, Dewey said.

But, in the meantime, the society, with its limited resources and long list of abandoned and wrecked vessels to explore, has to pick its battles.

The wooden boat in Trestle Bay has been there for years. It doesn't seem to be going anywhere. Dewey isn't even sure how feasible it would be to remove it from the bay.

Because of the bay's location and the fact that the boat is sitting almost right in the middle, accessible only at low tide and without easy vehicle access, removing the boat could cost thousands and thousands of dollars, he estimates.

To even go out and begin documenting it in an official capacity means the society's members would need a permit from state parks.

"Now, the permits are not too difficult to get normally, but since the (coronavirus) pandemic everything is slow," Dewey said.

Slow on the state's side of things, as well as for the society's volunteer members who, in some cases, have had more pressing personal concerns to address throughout the pandemic than vessel wreck research.

So for now, Dewey said, the Trestle Bay boat is "kind of one of the things where, yeah, we'll get to it someday."

Schacher is inclined to agree with Dewey. The boat will likely stay put for now. But he hopes they will get out soon to do some basic documentation.

"The wreck has weathered considerably since I last looked at it a few years ago," he told The Astorian. "So I'm guessing it hasn't been exposed until recently."

"It probably will only be recognizable for a few more years before the storms and sea growth finish consuming it."

Davis: 'I'm supposed to build communities and be with veterans'

Continued from Page A1

Davis said his goal is to teach caseworkers at the agency about his role so they know to refer veterans who may be eligible for benefits. He said that while his role is to help veterans obtain benefits, that is only part of the job. He wants to help create a more supportive community for veterans.

"And the VA (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs), as innovative as it tries to be, it's still the VA

and it's clinical," Davis said. "And it's sterile and there's not as much warmth there. So a lot of what we are seeing in the community is veterans are not, and their families are not, engaging in VA services. It's not that there's a lack of services. The services are there, but they're not engaging and they're not engaging in these services for a reason."

"As much as they have tried to augment different types of things, the framework is still there. They have

not changed the framework and they've not changed the culture enough to really, truly serve veterans and particularly vulnerable veterans."

Davis, who grew up in Columbia County and was deployed three times, said the North Coast is where he convalesced after returning from Iraq in 2005.

He began working as an advocate for veterans about eight years ago while he was attending Lower Columbia College in Longview, Washington.

"I knew that I wanted to do something that had to do with community building or community development or care, but I didn't know what yet," Davis said. "And so I was working on my transfer degree and I was always at the veterans information window at the registrar's office and there was always some kind of problem, like my pay was wrong or it was late or I got dropped from a class because the university didn't receive payment from the VA, but they know that

it's coming. And there was always constantly an issue."

Other veterans were having similar problems, and Davis found that part of the problem was that the information counter was short-staffed.

He began working at the information counter. He learned the system and helped create a framework to make it easier for veterans to get the information they needed. Over the next couple of years, he took on more responsibility and became

president of the student veterans club.

While receiving his degree in social work from Portland State University, Davis began working with veterans in Multnomah County and then became the county's veterans service officer.

"All of a sudden ... the fire started burning, and I was like, 'OK, this is what I'm supposed to do,'" Davis said. "I'm supposed to build communities and be with veterans."



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