

Professional Shipwright Apprentices

Where are they now?

Building wooden boats, especially large working boats for the Chesapeake region, is a time-honored, traditional craft proudly passed down through generations. Some men and women are shipwrights to continue a treasured family tradition, while others acquire their passion. Either way, shipwrights aren't just practicing a craft; they are perfecting an art form. The professional shipwright apprentice program at the Museum provides the hands-on experience necessary to transform novice builders into skilled professionals, capable of spearheading projects, interacting with the public, and building and restoring wooden boats to their glory.

The prestigious apprenticeships are awarded to deserving applicants using a rigorous interview and selection process. Once accepted, apprentices engage in restoration and maintenance work, as well as training to interact with the public. During their Museum apprenticeships, this knowledge is put to the test and nurtured, as the Museum's master shipwrights share established skills and explain the nuances of transforming wood into a maritime work of art.

Upon completion, shipwrights move forward into successful boat-building careers and other related professions. Over the years, these young shipwrights spread their knowledge of Chesapeake boatbuilding techniques all over North America, sustaining and promoting an integral part of this region's cultural heritage.

by Tracey Munson

Dave Youngs (2005-2006)

Gloucestershire, England

Dave Youngs first came to the Museum in 2004 from his native England and briefly volunteered with the Museum's boat donation program. During a return trip to England, Youngs helped a friend plank and frame a 25 foot boat and the course was set for Young's return to the Museum as a boatbuilding apprentice.

While at the Museum, Youngs worked mostly on *Old Point* and helped build smaller boats like the Pete Culler designed "Good Little Skiffs" in the Apprentice for a Day program, (AFAD) which he managed in the summer of 2006.

"It's very rare to see big wooden boats," commented Youngs.

"My work at the Museum really helped open the doors for many other opportunities."

After his apprenticeship, Youngs went on to work at Ashmar Boatworks in Cambridge, MD, and Choptank Boatworks in Denton, MD, before enrolling in the Landing School in Kennebunk, ME. He is a graduate of their small boats program and is currently enrolled in their marine system's program.



Anne Needham (2003-2004)

Annapolis, Maryland

After graduating from the Northwest School for Wooden Boatbuilding in 2003, Anne Needham joined the Museum and worked on several AFAD skiffs, as well as on other larger vessels. She worked on the bugeye *Edna E. Lockwood's* pushboat re-engine and restored the planking and mast partner on a privately-owned skipjack.

"My one-year apprenticeship at the Museum gave me a lot of confidence in the skills learned at Northwest," said Needham.

"The exposure to a wide range of tools and techniques, plus the history and modern-day experience of boating on the Chesapeake has served me well in my chosen home and career."

After taking a hiatus to help her brother open a bed & breakfast in Puerto Rico, Needham went on to work at a boatyard in Annapolis, before transferring her boat carpentry skills into a career in home renovations, where she still works today.



Heron Scott (2002-2004)

Haines, Alaska

Prior to his apprenticeship, Heron Scott attended the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding in Port Hadlock, WA. During his time at the Museum, Scott worked on *Old Point* as well as several privately-owned skipjacks.

"The Museum gave me great exposure to large craft restoration, which is unique today," reflected Scott. "For someone like me making a career in non-profits, my apprenticeship was a great benefit."

After his Museum apprenticeship, Scott moved to Seattle and began working as the capital projects manager and lead boatwright for the Center for Wooden Boats.

During his tenure, he also served as the interim executive director for a brief time in the summer of 2010. Scott has most recently started his own consulting business with a focus on project management of heritage boats.



Chris Sanders

(2008-2009)

Newport, Rhode Island

Chris Sanders has carried his love of sailing vessels from a very young age. Living along the east coast his entire life, Sanders comes from a family of craftsmen. His grandfather was an accomplished carpenter, who passed on many of the tools used by Sanders today. Before applying to the International Yacht Restoration School (IYRS) in Newport, RI, Sanders was encouraged by the school's program director to gain some hands-on experience. Following this advice, Sanders worked as an apprentice alongside the Museum's Boat Yard Program Manager Dan Sutherland in building *Vita*, the 9-1/2' tender for the 1888 racing yacht *Elf*.

As a shipwright apprentice, Sanders worked on several projects, including removing and replacing the patent stern of the *Edna E. Lockwood*. He also assisted Vessel Maintenance Manager Marc Barto with the day-to-day preservation of the historic fleet of Chesapeake Bay boats.

"The greatest advantage I have is being taught by the best. I really value the proficiency with tools and the confidence I gained in working in the boatbuilding process," says Sanders.

After his one-year apprenticeship, Sanders enrolled at IYRS in September 2009, where he continues today in his second year. He is pursuing a degree in proficiency and yacht restoration construction. Sanders expects to graduate from the school in June, 2011.



Mark Donohue

(2002-2004)

Short Hills, New Jersey

Mark Donohue sailed and raced many different boats long before he knew how to build them—including Bluejays, Lightnings, M-scows, Lasers and Catboats. By the time he turned 13, Donohue was working at Johnson Brothers Boatworks in Point Pleasant, NJ, admiring the hand tools the old timers used to plank boats.

Taking a semester off from the University of Vermont, Donohue served as a shipwright and rigger apprentice at the Museum and worked on a variety of boats including several privately-owned skipjacks and *Old Point*. Restoration work on the former U.S. Presidential yacht, the 1925 Trumpy *Sequoia* and the 1951 Owens Cruiser *Nomad*, for the Museum's At Play on the Bay exhibit rounded out his Museum apprenticeship.

"Learning from a master shipwright and a master rigger was a great experience," reflects Donohue. "I gained skills that enabled me to grow as a person and as a boatbuilder. It was a great and influential part of my life which continues to this day."

Since that time, Donohue has worked as a shipwright, rigger and caretaker at various places throughout the mid-Atlantic region, including the Virginia Maritime Heritage Foundation, Sea Island Boatworks, and the Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia, PA. Now living in Virginia Beach, VA, Donohue is working through the Coastal Heritage Alliance as a rigger and shipwright on the skipjack *Caleb W. Jones*, currently berthed at the Museum.

Photo by Nikki Davis



Karnell Hillscan

(2003-2004)

San Francisco, California

With a certificate from the Arques School of Traditional Boatbuilding in Sausalito, CA, Karnell Hillscan soon became as much a teacher as a boatbuilder during his apprenticeship. He went from working on skipjacks and the Museum's *Old Point* to teaching schoolchildren during field trips about small boats and leading participants and volunteers in the AFAD program.

As an AmeriCorps representative, he led a group of high school students in an after-school program, where they built a railbird gunning skiff over a two-week period.

"Most of the boat shop tours with kids usually came to me," recalls Hillscan, who considers his work managing volunteers as one of the most valuable experiences in his apprenticeship. "My training allowed me to get a job without a degree and opened many opportunities for me in my profession."

After his apprenticeship, Hillscan spent some time traveling the world and running a Meals on Wheels program, which included managing a cadre of volunteers. He now works in the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park's boat shop and small craft department, maintaining and restoring more than 100 boats.