



# WCHM News

## Newsletter of the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum



### WCHM Opening Boat Show May 29

The Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum will be re-opening its doors on Saturday May 29, 2021. After cancelling its opening day events last year and remaining closed throughout 2020, the museum is now making plans to celebrate Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Day by opening to the public once again on the Saturday of Memorial weekend from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The free event will include open house in the exhibit hall, activities in the workshop, live music and food and beverage outdoors in the beer garden, a silent auction and canoe raffle, and of course the Canoe & Wooden Boat Show in the street in front of the museum.

The 11th annual boat show will be the highlight of the day. Over 25 exhibitors are expected to display wooden boats of all shapes, sizes, and designs, both classic and modern, as well as all kinds of classic and vintage water and paddling related items. Already registered is Bob Buss of Waupaca, bringing four paddle or rowing craft. Jerry Karbon of Middleton is bringing a 14ft wood and canvas canoe of his own design plus various handmade seats, paddles, and thwarts. Alex Comb of Stewart River Boatworks in Knife River MN plans to have several of his craft on display. Steve Hegna from Black River Falls will be displaying 1915 and 1933 Old Towns he has restored. Many other watercraft, old and new, are on the way. There is always room for more. Booth space is free, and reserving a space is easy. You can find a link to an online registration form at [www.WisconsinCanoeHeritageMuseum.org](http://www.WisconsinCanoeHeritageMuseum.org). You can also request one at [info@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org](mailto:info@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org)

### Music In The Beer Garden May 29

When the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum re-opens on Saturday May 29, and while the Canoe & Wooden Boat Show goes on in the street out front, the outdoor beer garden will once again feature food and beverage and live music on the “back porch” stage. Three groups, all scheduled to perform last year when the event was cancelled, will be on hand this year with music running from 10 am to 4 pm.

Brave Cowboy, featuring Jason Rabuck on harmonica and guitar and Eric Schubring on banjo and guitar, is a museum favorite. They provide an inspiring and vibrant blend of folk, rock, blues, and originals. They will be joined by Tom Draughon from Ashland. Raised in the mountains of Virginia and West Virginia, there is no finer performer of traditional Appalachian music than Tom Draughon. A consummate instrumentalist, Tom renders authentic fiddle tunes, banjo songs, and flat and finger-picked guitar styles, combined with clear vocals, to bring the mountains to you. And Les Fils du Voyageur brings the fur trade era to life through songs of the voyageurs. Performed a capella in four part harmony, and portrayed in authentic period costume, Les Fils du Voyageur present an extensive collection of paddling, working and playing songs that paint an exciting historical overview of the life and times of a voyageur.



# THE BIRCH BARK CANOE

AVAILABLE MATERIALS, PRIMITIVE TOOLS,  
ADVANCED DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

## New Exhibit Tells The Story of Birch Bark Canoe Building In Words, Pictures & Goode Canoe

When the museum exhibit hall opens on May 29 there will be a new exhibit based on the birch bark canoe and the work of Ferdy Goode of Woodruff, Wisconsin. Goode built his first birch bark canoe in 1979. Since then he has built a total of 76 birch bark canoes, all while retaining traditional Native American building traditions. In addition to his vast sum of knowledge that he has learned from previous master builders, he has assembled photos and materials about collecting and working with native materials, use of traditional tools, traditional canoe designs, and past generation masters such as Marvin Defoe and Earl Otchingwanigan. Along with this body of knowledge the new display features an Eastern-Cree Crooked Canoe built by Goode, and text from the 1983 book "The Canoe" by Kenneth Roberts and Philip Shackleton.



### PRIMITIVE TOOLS



"He never uses power tools. He uses a froe, an axe, an awl, a crooked knife - and with the last three alone could build a canoe. The crooked knife is the finishing instrument, the tool whose ten thousand touches yield the artistry he seeks."

—John McPhee (writing about Henri Vaillancourt), *Survival of the Bark Canoe*, 1982

"He dreams of walking into a forest with only a knife and paddling out in a birchbark canoe."

—Jeff Dean (writing about Tom MacKenzie), *Canoes and Different Drummers*, *Wisconsin Trails Magazine*, 1979.

### SPLITTING & BENDING

"The young boys were told to build two big fires. Then the canoe-maker showed them how to split cedar planks for ribs. With his prized crooked knife he was adding to the pile at his side. Each was about five feet long, two inches wide and a quarter of an inch thick."



"The old man nodded towards the fires, one burning fiercely over a pile of stones and the other in a bowl-like hollow in the rock. The youths raked the fire out of the depression and filled it with water, then immersed the cedar laths, keeping the water near to the boiling with stones from the other fire."

"From time to time they hooked out a couple of laths and took them to the old man for bending. He flexed the first two together against his knee, shifting the pressure up and down their length until they were bowed into a flat U shape. Then he tied their ends together to hold the curve. The ribs diminished in size to conform to the narrowing shape of the canoe, and he sprang each new rib inside the previous one so they nested together tightly."

—Kenneth G. Roberts & Philip Shackleton, *The Canoe*, 1983



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# News Briefs & Upcoming Events



## Canoe Shop Is Open

Work has once again begun in the workshop of the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum. One of the first projects to recommence is the restoration of a 75 year old Hayward Rowboat, a project begun over 14 months ago by Wayne Johnson of Anchorage AK. A couple other projects that have been waiting out the pandemic should be cleared out soon, and Josh Tolkan will be starting his cedar strip building class the latter part of May, wrapping up just in time for the class to display their work at the May 29 boat show. After that the shop will be taking applications for new projects. For information about using the WCHM shop for your project, contact Jed at 715-635-2479 or [info@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org](mailto:info@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org).

## 2021 Raffle Canoe Nearing Completion

The 2021 WCHM Annual Canoe Raffle is underway, although the actual raffle canoe is not quite ready (but very near completion). "It is a 16 foot cedar canvas canoe built on a Jerry Karbon mold following a Rushton Indian Girl design," explains volunteer builder Mike Johnson, "and we'll have it ready for display on opening day May 29." Raffle tickets are now available. The drawing will be Sun Sept 26, 2021 during the second annual Canoe & Brew event in Spooner. The holder of the winning ticket will have choice of one of two canoes, either the 16' previously described or another 15' cedar canvas canoe yet to be determined.



## Virtual Booth at Virtual Canoecopia a Virtual Success

WCHM had a "virtual booth" at the 2021 virtual Canoecopia on March 12-14. Usually held in Madison (WI), Canoecopia claims to be the largest canoe and kayak event in the world, and their virtual event this year lived up to the hype with thousands of attendees perusing the 80+ presentations and the 70+ exhibitors. WCHM also had a successful event, recording 688 "visits" to its booth and signing up 222 new members through the online promotion. We hope many of these new supporters will stick with us in the coming years. For more information about Canoecopia visit [www.rutabaga.com/canoecopia](http://www.rutabaga.com/canoecopia).

## WCHA Annual Assembly Will Be Virtual

The Wooden Canoe Heritage Association (WCHA) has announced that its 41st Annual Assembly, previously scheduled for July 13-18 in Paul Smiths, New York, will instead be held as a virtual event on July 12-15. The virtual event is entirely free and open to WCHA members and non-members alike. Registration is now open and you can get more information at [www.WCHA.org](http://www.WCHA.org).



## WCHM Receives Grumman Canoe Donation

The Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum recently took possession of a 17 foot Grumman aluminum canoe with hull #438B-5-17. Originally purchased by their father, the canoe was a donation from Steve Vizanko of Bayfield WI and his sister Debbie Kaminski of Saint Paul MN. Built in Bethpage NY, which puts it prior to 1952, it is a typical post-war piece, constructed just like an aircraft with thousands of flush rivets and airtight bulkheads. One unusual feature is an original cedar floor insert that is still in remarkable condition, as is the entire craft. All in all, it is a fine example in the timeline of canoe history. WCHM thanks the Vizanko family for their donation of this canoe and its story.

## WCHM Director Jim Czajkowski Passes

WCHM Board member Jim Czajkowski passed away peacefully on Friday, April 2, 2021 at his home near Prairie du Chien following a valiant battle with lymphoma. Jim had served on the WCHM Board of Directors since his election in 2017 and again in 2020. His previous legal experience as a lawyer and a judge was invaluable to the organization and he was a leading proponent of a building expansion. Jim was a self-trained woodworker and his favorite pastime was building and paddling wooden canoes. He built five wooden canvas canoes and four wooden kayaks, ensuring that he built a vessel for each of his immediate family members. Jim was also an avid conservationist, and in addition to WCHM he served on the Mississippi Valley Conservancy board, the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, and the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway board, a position to which he was appointed by Governor Evers.



## Museum Exhibit Hall Seeks Volunteers For Summer Duty

The Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum (WCHM) in Spooner is seeking volunteers to join its team of Keymasters. "These are the folks that dedicate three or four hours every couple of weeks during the summer to open the museum exhibit hall to visitors," explains WCHM Executive Director Jed Malischke, "No special knowledge or skills are required, just a friendly attitude and a willingness to be prompt and responsible."

The museum exhibit hall is a pleasant place to spend your time while helping keep this Northwest Wisconsin institution open. The exhibit hall opens for each summer on Memorial weekend, when the WCHM celebrates Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Day and puts on its annual Canoe & Wooden Boat Show. After that date the exhibit hall is open from Wednesday through Saturday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and on Sundays from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. Keymasters work either half a day or a whole day, whichever they wish, and set their own schedule of days. Inquiries for more information can be made to Jed Malischke at 715-635-2479 or by writing to [jed@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org](mailto:jed@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org).

### Thank You to These Supporting Members

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### Contact WCHM

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