



WCHM News

Newsletter of the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum



WCHM Opening Boat Show May 27

The Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum will celebrate Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Day on the Saturday of Memorial weekend from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. This free event marks the season opening of the museum and will include open house in the museum exhibit hall, ongoing activities in the canoe 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.

The 13th annual boat show is still the highlight of the day, with over 25 exhibitors 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 to display is Chris Parson from Park Ridge IL bringing his 1928 17 foot Kineo Special built by the Kennebec Boat Co in Kennebec ME and fully restored in 2002 by the McFarland Lake Canoe Co in Olympia WA. Megan Johnson from Pine City MN will be selling her handmade Megusta Paddles. David Steinke from Duluth will be showing his handcrafted 16ft Chestnut with hand tooled seats and bent shaft paddles. Jerry Karbon is returning from Madison and will have a 14 or 16 ft cedar canvas canoe to display.

Many other old and new watercraft are on the way, and 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.

Beer Garden Will Feature Blu Kanu

While the Canoe & Wooden Boat Show goes on through the day, the outdoor beer garden will once again feature food, beverage, and live music on the “back porch” stage. In 2023 we’ll enjoy the music and shenanigans of Blu Kanu along with burgers, brats, and beverages from Bent Paddle Brewery in Duluth.

“You can’t beat sibling harmony,” says Artie Anderson, one half of the award winning brother and sister singer/songwriter/singalong duo Blu Kanu. Artie grew up singing with his sister Rhoda on Rocky Ridge Lake in Northwest Wisconsin. They share strong roots to family as well as the woods and lakes of the region. They both attended Concordia College in Moorhead MN, then Artie went on to enter show business in Los Angeles and eventually Las Vegas in the Jubilee at Bally’s musical. Rhoda became a summer camp and school counselor and also spent time in the BWCAW as a canoe guide. “I used my guitar as a conduit to connections and song leading with the kids,” says Rhoda. “On each trip a poll was taken whether or not to portage the guitar. The guitar won each time.”

Blu Kanu performs crowd favorites from the 70s through present times. These two troubadours engage the audience and create an atmosphere where folks want to join in singing or play one of the many percussive instruments the duo shares. With a lot of positive energy when performing, they make the most of their “DNA harmonies.”



WCHM Completes Restoration of Forest Service Canoe

In 1968 Gil and Lucy Churchill paid \$76 for an old Forest Service canoe used in the Superior National Forest. Gil had been a Forest Service employee in Isabella, Minnesota. He knew that canoes like it had been used to patrol the lakes and rivers of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Rangers used canoes to contact campers to ensure compliance with camping and campfire rules, and work crews used canoes to maintain trails and portages.

In 2021 the Churchills donated the canoe to the National Museum of Forest Service History (NMFSH), a nonprofit organization based in Missoula, Montana, whose mission is to share the rich history and story of America's conservation legacy. The museum is in the final stages of a capital campaign to build the National Conservation Legacy Center, a world class cultural and learning center in Missoula. Construction is to begin in 2023.



The boat in question is a 17 foot canoe made by the Shell Lake Boat Company sometime in the 1940s. It was in pretty rough shape when the Churchills acquired it. Restoration of the canoe to something suitable for a museum would require new outwales, spliced inwales, repairing and replacing decks, seats, keel and stems, and of course new canvas, paint, varnish, and fasteners throughout. It would be quite a project. The NMFSH asked the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum (WCHM) for help.

In early 2023 restoration of the Forest Service canoe was completed by Jamie Dunn and the shop gang at the Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum. The restored historic craft was recently displayed in the WCHM booth at Canoecopia in Madison, Wisconsin. It will also be on display at the Canoe & Wooden Boat Show on Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Day on May 27 in Spooner, after which it will be delivered to the new Museum of Forest Service History in Missoula.



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News Briefs & Upcoming Events



2023 WCHM Canoe Raffle Is Underway

The 2023 WCHM Canoe Raffle is underway (the first tickets were sold in March at Canoecopia). However, our previous newsletter (Winter 2023) had an error in the list of prizes. The drawing will still be Sunday September 24, 2023, during the fourth annual Canoe & Brew event in Spooner. The holder of the winning ticket will still have choice of one of two canoes. The two canoes, however, will be the originally described 16' cedar canvas built on a MacKenzie-Yost Duet form in the WCHM shop this past winter, and an 18' newly restored 1946 Old Town Guide Canoe complete with original manufacturer's build sheet. To find how you can get tickets contact WCHM at info@wisconsincanoeheritagemuseum.org.

New Video Released On Mendota Dugout Canoes

In 2021, a 1,200-year-old canoe was discovered in Madison's Lake Mendota. Its recovery made worldwide news, and it has since been selected as one of the top ten archaeological discoveries in the world for 2021. In the fall of 2022, a 3,000-year-old canoe was found in the same location. It is the oldest canoe in the Great Lakes and the second oldest in North America.

The Forest History Association of Wisconsin has just released a new video entitled "The Mendota Dugout Canoes: Discovery, Recovery, and Ongoing Research." The presenter is James M. Skibo PhD, the Wisconsin State Archaeologist with the Wisconsin Historical Society. His presentation recounts the discovery and recovery of both dugout canoes and describes the latest ongoing research on the canoes being done in collaboration with the Ho-Chunk Nation. You can find the video on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/G8aomKEWBOo>.



Wild Rice Push Pole & Knocking Stick Workshop Completed in March

Over three evenings in March about a dozen folks, including Bill and Jackie Smith (pictured), carved out a set of ricing poles and knocking sticks in a recent WCHM workshop. The Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum teamed with Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary to sponsor the class. The participants used traditional hand tools and techniques to fashion the ricing equipment out of tamarack, maple, and white cedar. Gary Dunsmoor guided the participants in crafting the ricing tools from raw materials harvested by the late WCHM collections manager John Haack. John's wife Valerie came in one evening to teach about harvesting and processing rice. WCHM volunteer Darwin Karl gave a presentation about the museum and Darcy Lilla spoke about Hunt Hill. Happy ricing everyone!

37th Annual Voyageur Rendezvous in Shelby Indiana

On May 20th and 21st you will be able to travel back in time to the 18th century, when the Canadian canoe men, called Voyageurs, came to trade goods with the indigenous people for their valuable furs. See the canoes arrive, hear the fife and drums, and listen to a story. Kids can do a scavenger hunt that they can later use as currency to "trade" for goods. Enjoy hot food and cold Sarsaparilla. More information at <https://www.facebook.com/events/102324302822276>.



Czech Republic Visitors Tour Museum

The Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum was still six weeks away from its annual opening when it hosted its first tour group of 2023. The Rice Lake International Friendship Association brought a dozen folks from their sister city of Žamberk in the Czech Republic to visit several sites in Spooner, including the exhibit hall of the WCHM. “We have an active high school student exchange program that has been successful, and this was the 30th anniversary delegation to renew our relationship for 5 years,” explained the RLIFA tour host Mary Thoreson. “We also have a sister city relationship with Miharu, Japan.”

Northwest Wisconsin is experiencing an unusually cool and snowy spring, but the Czech visitors were well bundled against the cold conditions in the unheated exhibit hall. A few of the group spoke English and served as interpreters for tour guide and WCHM Executive Director Jed Malischke. The group also visited the State Fish Hatchery and Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary where they had the opportunity to try out dog sledding.



Thank You to These 2023 Supporting Members

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Steve & Mary Hegna, Black River Falls WI

Tim Reedy, Spooner WI

2023 Board of Directors Election Announcement

The Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Museum will hold its annual general membership meeting and election for the Board of Directors later this year. The membership meeting will take place online via the Zoom meeting app on a date yet to be determined. The election will take place by mail with ballots mailed to members along with the summer newsletter (around Aug 1st).

Four current board members will complete their three year terms this year: Dan Miller (currently serving as President), Benson Gray, Jamie Dunn, and Liz Vollmer-Buhl. New board members will begin their three year terms immediately after the election, and the new board will meet in entirety to elect its officers (president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary). Anyone interested in running for an open seat on the WCHM Board of Directors should contact election committee chair Ed Peters at 715-437-0614 or edw.peters@yahoo.com before July 1st.

Contact WCHM

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