



Hudson River Maritime Museum  
KINGSTON, NEW YORK | www.hrmm.org

## HUDSON RIVER BOATBUILDING CHALLENGE

### FEATURING:

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visiting vessels

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children's activities

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**SATURDAY,  
JUNE 24, 2017**



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# HRMM's Riverport Wooden Boat School in 2017 Continuing the Course for Tradition on the Hudson

Ninety or so miles north of New York City or "Mannahatta" (as the indigenous peoples called it) lies the waterfront town of Kingston, nestled comfortably in Ulster County along the shores of the majestic Hudson River and the Rondout Creek.

Like many other towns that share this historic waterway, it can be said that Kingston has amazing resilience and ingenuity - much like the Hudson River Maritime Museum and its young prodigy, the Riverport Wooden Boat School. Together, along with the Kingston Home Port and Education Center, the museum's waterfront campus is located along the Rondout Creek with a protected deepwater port - making the property or complex a perfect complement to the downtown district.

The museum has its own story of evolution and "coming back", and if ever there were an organization which has seen it all -- changes in leadership and mission; rising waters and storm surges from the likes of "Sandy" and "Irene"; the profound impact from unsuccessful Urban Renewal attempts in the 60s - the drill is well-known by this museum.

But through all of the transition and growing pains, the Hudson River Maritime Museum has stayed the course - made it safely to port - while practicing the fine art of course correction.

The 2012 building of the Kingston Home Port and Education Center has since provided the sloop Clearwater with a winter home, allowing maintenance work to be done in a more conducive environment while the vessel is not plying the Hudson, spreading its environmental mission.

Among the many additional accomplishments of this museum that "tells the river's story" is its developing Riverport Wooden Boat School. This tremendous undertaking, beginning in 2015/16, has become a good example of meaningful transformation.

Much of this transformation occurred during the ten years or so tenure of now retired Executive Director (but still involved as Exhibits Curator) Russell Lange, who guided the museum through some of its most strategic phases. Through insightful vision amongst the leadership - a skillful combination of board, staff and volunteers - the museum has crafted a bona fide wooden boat school which now is engaged in educating and training both youth and adults in the revered tradition of woodworking and wooden boatbuilding.

Lange remarks, "The school has certainly enhanced the historic Rondout neighborhood, transforming the defunct restaurant next door into a bustling center for teaching woodworking to a new generation of artisans. Our Riverport Wooden Boat School is on a steady course, providing a reinvigorated creekside venue with first-rate classes and restoration work performed by some of the finest shipwrights and woodworking instructors this country has to offer."

The boat shop also restores vessels which have required extensive and painstaking restoration or those that some considered were beyond repair. The 2015/16 massive rebuild of



An adult student enrolled in the Riverport Wooden Boat School's "Building a Sassafras Canoe" class in August, 2016 works on the fine details of his canoe.

Photo: Lana Chassman, Hudson River Maritime Museum



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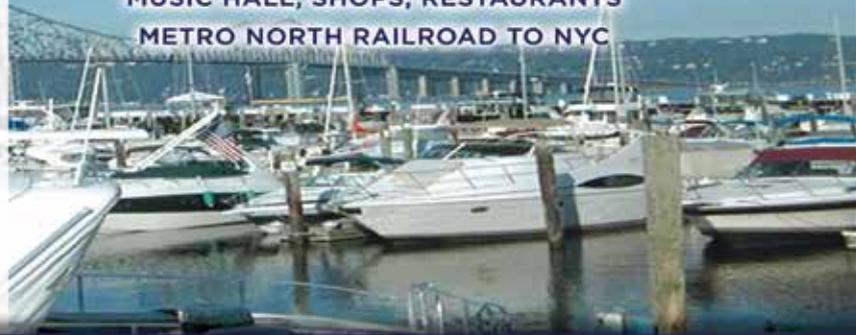
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the Hudson River sloop Clearwater and the current restoration of the Beacon Sloop Club's Woody Guthrie are just two examples of the caliber of vessels entrusted to the shipwrights of HRMM's boat shop.

Jim Kricker, shipwright and director of the Boat School and Shop, notes that this team has a "true passion for the long-held tradition of boatbuilding and masterful restoration. There's something about the rhythm of working with one's hands – even when guiding power tools in the shop – the mind directs the action but the soul guides the creativity."



Jim Kricker and Wayne Ford work inside the "Clearwater's" midship during its massive 2015/2016 rebuild and restoration at the Hudson River Maritime Museum

Photo courtesy: Jim Kricker, Hudson River Maritime

The museum, home port and boat school also maintain a symbiotic partnership with its burgeoning local community, working with other small businesses and not-for-profits to continue attracting locals and visitors from around the world, many who want to learn about Kingston, Hudson River history and its traditional industries.

Another key component of these accomplishments is perseverance. Museum board members like Jack Weeks, who took on this massive project after his retirement from the medical profession remarks, "The museum wanted to ensure that this Riverport Wooden Boat School would be a real investment in the local economy by impacting tourism dollars as well as having a positive focus on education and learning. I believe that we did our homework before opening the school yet we feel comfortable making modifications both to our facility and curriculum as needed."

Executive Director Lisa Cline adds, "The constant ebb and flow of activity in the Boat School is contagious, with offerings ranging from "Introduction to Drawing", "Old World Carving", and "Building a Sassafras Canoe" for adults.

Our education team along with volunteers and staff has done a marvelous job crafting the direction of the school. We have worked closely with the local Ulster County BOCES and their Transitional Occupation Program or TOP" which meets three mornings a week.

This spring the museum started its Riverport YouthBoat after-school program for local teens, many of whom are from the neighborhood. YouthBoat provides high school students from diverse backgrounds to be part of an alternative education program designed to empower youth, build character and foster aspects of teamwork through the traditional craft of boatbuilding and on-the-water activities.

These students, who went through an application and interview process with our education department, are putting STEM skills to work as they follow building plans, use specialized tools and materials, and solve building problems. Shop, water and boating safety are emphasized.

Ultimately, these students will build full-sized traditional rowing and sailing boats that will be added to the museum's growing fleet of small craft. Riverport YouthBoat students will then use these vessels as they learn to navigate the waters of the Rondout Creek and Hudson River. They are continuing the tradition of wooden boatbuilding and water skills while also developing a keen sense of self-confidence and practical skills for life.

#### First Annual Hudson River Boatbuilding Challenge @ Hudson River Day

Another related activity has been added to the museum's ever-expanding roster – the 1st Annual Hudson River Boatbuilding Challenge will be the featured attraction at the museum's annual "Hudson River Day" which encourages everyone to Get Out on the River! Saturday, June 24 is the date for this free, family-friendly event which is the museum's way of saying thank you to our community for their support.

From 11:00 am until 5:30 pm, there will be fever-pitched activity under the big tents directly across the street from the museum. Ten two-person teams will compete to

build the best 12' Caroline bateau within four hours. Afterwards they must successfully row their boat in a rowing regatta against the other competitors.

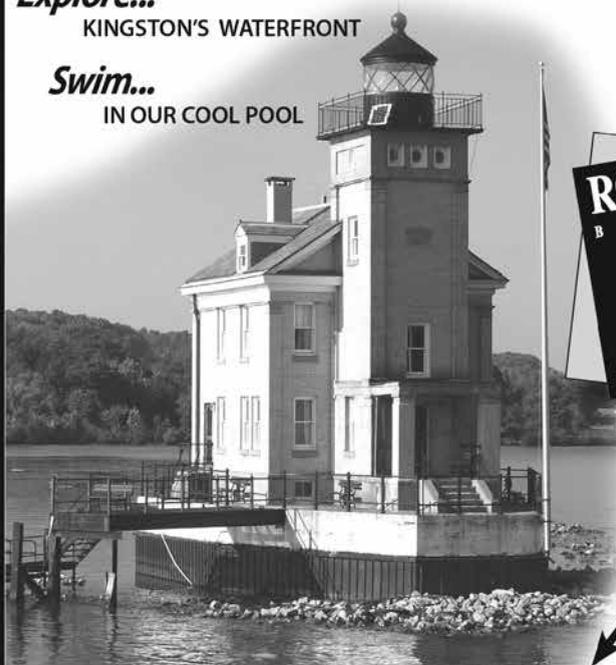
The Kingston event is marked as a qualifying event for the fastest boatbuilder in the world. Award-winning teams of builders

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will be traveling to Kingston to compete, including winners from previous challenges such as Bobby Staab, winner of the Beaufort, NC challenge. Staab intends to prove HE is the fastest boatbuilder on the Rondout waterfront in downtown Kingston!

HRMM Executive Director Lisa Cline comments, "This is quite an honor to be involved with an elite national boatbuilding challenge which has been run successfully in historic seaports like Beaufort, NC; Belfast Harbor, ME and Georgetown, SC. Thousands and thousands of visitors have been drawn to some of these ports. And, by using these proven boatbuilding challenge event models, we have no doubt that Kingston's 1st Annual Hudson River Boatbuilding Challenge will attract a significant number of visitors to our community as well."

Ten business-sponsored 2-person teams will build 12-foot Carolina Bateau rowing skiffs in less than 4 hours and produce 1 boat each which will then be raced in a rowing competition on Rondout Creek. Boatbuilding speed, craftsmanship and seaworthiness are requirements for winning. A practice build on Saturday, June 3 will spark community pride and enthusiasm.

So it will be "2 / 4 / 1 – build!" when that start whistle blows. The day's challenge will take place under a huge tent, amongst the docked vessels, with music, food, family and children-



Beaufort, NC "National Boatbuilding Challenge". Team #14 – No Power Tools. Vic Fasolino, Bob Bailey, Tim Eisenberg.  
Photo: Beaufort, NC National Boatbuilding Challenge.

friendly activities and water-related demonstrations all assembled for the museum's boatbuilding challenge as a headliner of HRMM's annual "Hudson River Day".

Project Manager and HRMM board member Dan Proctor adds, "We are looking now for Sponsors: Event, Team and General as well as boatbuilders, some of whom may be in one profession by day but a master boatbuilder or talented woodworker by night! Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, clubs, military veterans, community organizations and businesses are all invited to participate, sponsor or just come out on June 24 with family and friends, and have a great time on the waterfront by observing two Hudson River traditions: boatbuilding followed by a competitive rowing regatta."

Cost of a team's participation is \$200. Cash prizes will be awarded. For more info about sponsorship and participation, please visit [www.hrmm.org/boat-building-challenge](http://www.hrmm.org/boat-building-challenge) or call 845.338.0071"