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JULY/AUGUST 2007

WoodenBoat

THE MAGAZINE FOR WOODEN BOAT OWNERS, BUILDERS, AND DESIGNERS



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FELICITY and An original 1902 Rushton,

David Baker (right, at a marker commemorating the site of the J. H. Rushton factory) died before completing his restoration of a 1902 Florida model Combination Row and Sail Boat. His widow, Scottie Baker (far right), had the restoration completed in time for a 2003 museum exhibit about Otsego Lake, New York, where she and David bought the boat in 1978.



by Mason Smith

Scottie Baker tells the story of herself and her husband, David, then much younger, visiting with the then-much-younger magazine publisher Jon Wilson, at a small-craft event in the early 1980s, and telling him about an old boat they bought in 1978 after it had been stored for years in an old barn on the shore of Otsego Lake, New York. They showed Wilson their photos: a lapstrake hull with a warped and twisted keel; a centerboard that folded in the manner of a fan; the large, four-sided mainsail and triangular mizzen lying on the grass with their spars. Although David and Scottie had done a fine restoration of a Thompson double-ended rowboat, David knew little about this new find. But he had recognized the type as special and felt a strong drive to research it. He learned that it was a 1902 Rushton Combination Row and Sail Boat, Grade AA (the best), made with the choicest wood, and furnished with copper air tanks, two pairs of spoon-bladed oars, caned seats, and a round-backed chair seat. The Bakers were going to restore it, they said, and Jon Wilson told them that when they did, he wanted to hear about it.

What with the long passage of time, this is somewhat more than the story Wilson has been waiting for. More than the Bakers could have foreseen, this boat changed their lives, launching them into an intense and lifelong passion. It entwined their lives with the lives of many other people—boatbuilders, sailmaker, paddlemaker, hardware-maker—who were there at the dawning of the wooden



boat revival and now have long careers behind them in the field. The restoration of this boat started and stopped, while the Bakers went on to restore many antique canoes. Dave Baker died in 2001 without coming back to the 1902 row and sail boat. In the end FELICITY, as Scottie named the finished restoration, brought all these friends together in its completion in 2004. What's more, they all participated

APPLE PIE and a reproduction



Although the 1902 Rushton boat FELICITY was restored for museum exhibit, she was judged to be too frail for actual use. Taking the 1902 Rushton as an inspiration, some of the builders who were connected with the FELICITY project built a new row and sail boat, APPLE PIE.

in building and rigging a brand-new reproduction of FELICITY, named APPLE PIE, launched in April 2006.

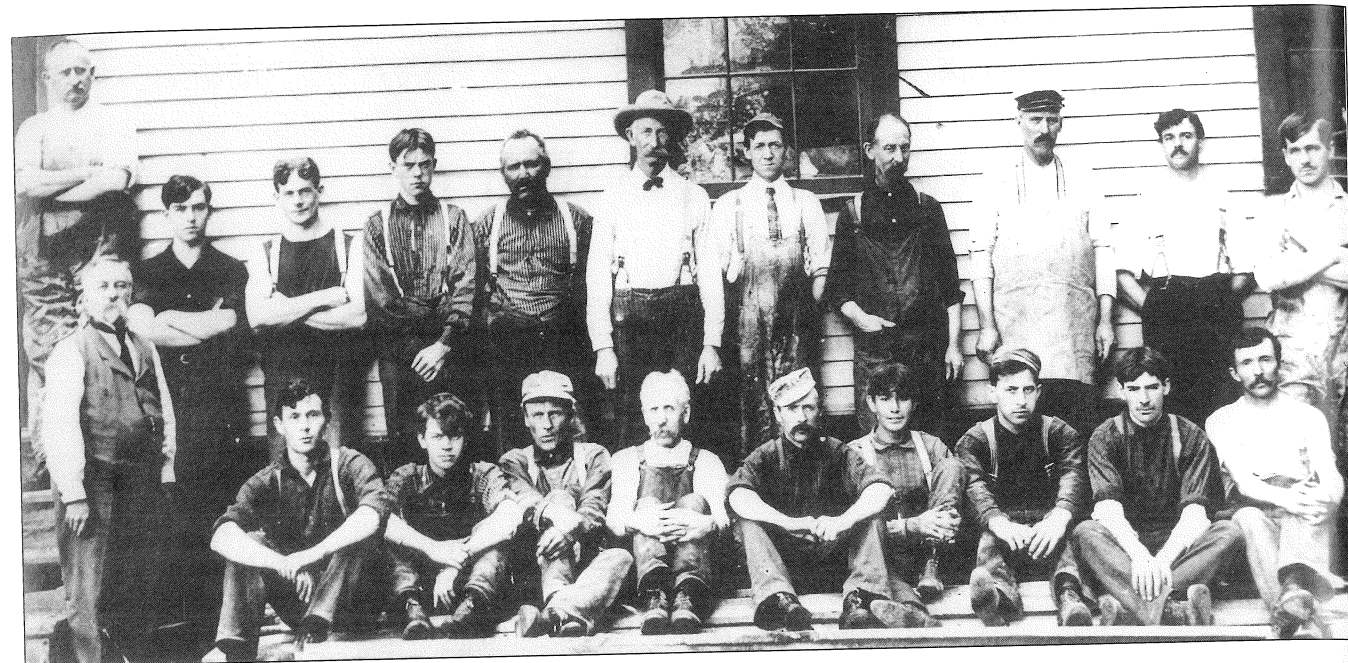
You could say that the magnet that drew these people together, and into wooden boats in the first place, was J. Henry Rushton. Rushton's boats have a special quality of their own, the product of Rushton's taste in lines as well as the disciplines of light weight and factory production. They charm a lot of people and now are especially valuable at auctions, estate sales, and the antique small-boat market. They are scattered far and wide thanks to Rushton's early prowess as a direct-mail advertiser.

They have been well documented, too. Atwood Manley published his important *Rushton and His Times in American Canoeing* (Adirondack Museum/Syracuse University Press) in 1968, with lines and offsets of certain models and a priceless appendix on Rushton's methods provided by Rushton's son, Harry. With the help of Manley's book, a few people were building reproduction Rushtons by the early 1970s. Soon came William Crowley's *Rushton's Rowboats and Canoes: The 1903 Catalog in Perspective* (Adirondack Museum, International Marine), published in 1983, a handy reference for identifying models and grades as well as rigs and hardware.

So when David Baker began to research his find,

resources were handy. He'd learned her provenance locally. For his new summer mansion on Otsego Lake, Samuel Strong Spaulding, a real estate, banking, and streetcar financier from Buffalo, New York, had ordered the boat from the Folsom Arms Company in New York City, a forerunner of Abercrombie & Fitch and a broker for Rushton. A plate identified the builder. A pencil inscription under the foredeck—"D.O. Rich, March 31, 1902 Canton, St. Lawrence Co., NY"—gave the date. Scouring the Adirondack Museum's collection of old Rushton catalogs, Baker found his exact boat described, down to the choices of woods that identified the AA grade. Farther north, Manley helped him find old shop photographs in the St. Lawrence Historical Association archives. One photo showed the entire Rushton staff, including a slender, mustachioed Dan O. Rich, the builder of the Bakers' boat. In another, a sailing rowboat fully rigged outside the shop, with Rushton and another workman aboard, could be his very boat.

Rushton is probably best known now for his wood-and-canvas canoes, especially the Indian Girl model, which were the staple of his business once the great Maine factories made the type, much cheaper than all-wood canoes, so extremely popular. Rushton himself much preferred

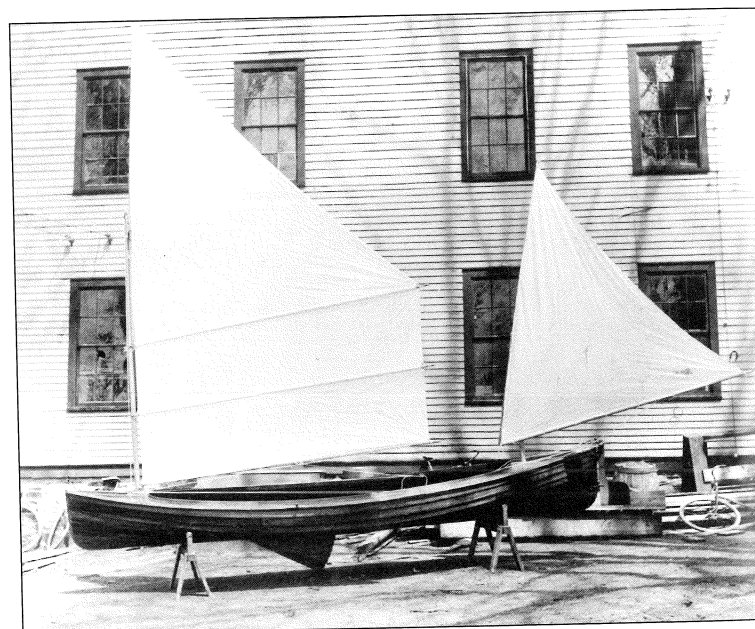


THE ADIRONDACK MUSEUM



FENIMORE ART MUSEUM, COOPERSTOWN, NEW YORK

Top—J.H. Rushton, standing at left in the front row of a 1903 company portrait, made his reputation by building shapely boats to high standards. Dan O. Rich, FELICITY's builder, is fourth from the right in the back row. **Right**—a Florida-model row and sail boat, very similar to FELICITY, stands in front of the Rushton factory in Canton, New York, in 1902, the same year FELICITY was ordered. **Above**—FELICITY's first home was Mohican Manor on Otsego Lake, New York.



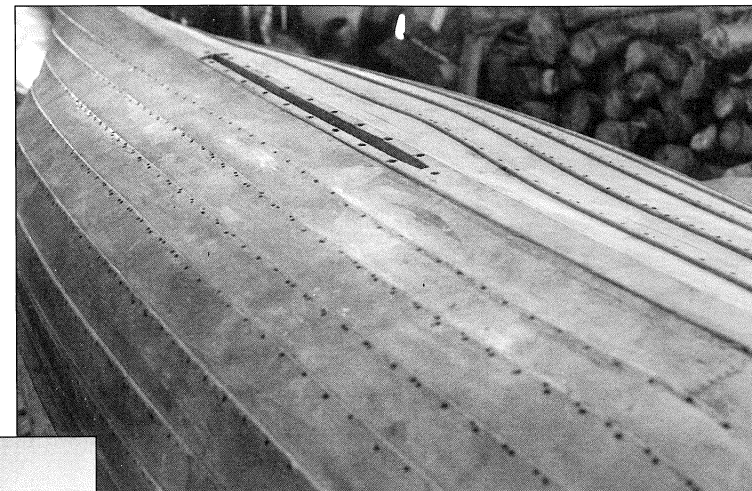
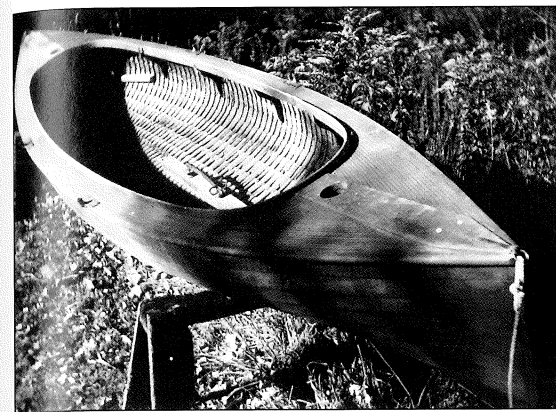
ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

his all-wood boats, including the small solo canoes made famous, along with Rushton himself, by the wilderness traveler George Washington Sears, alias Nessmuk. His decked sailing canoes, like the famous VESPER, were admired by the early yachtsmen of the American Canoe Association (ACA). But by far the most characteristic and numerous of his all-wood boats were the lapstrake, double-ended rowboats—the type of which the Bakers' found boat was a fancy sailing version. Until the wood-and-canvas canoes came on the market, Rushton's rowboats were among the cheapest good boats to be had.

They remain among the most desirable. They are light, strong, wholesome, fast, comfortable, durable, and always, in whatever grade from livery boat to little yacht, very pretty. Rushton's appealing style and taste shine through, reflecting a lot of things in concert: scantlings, proportions, materials, kinds of decks, the size and spacing of

ribs, the size and spacing of the copper clench-tacks that hold his boats together. Even the unfussy but accurate factory building is part of their happy effect.

Less obviously, the Rushton boats are superbly modeled for going through the water. I don't know of any other boats of the period that have finer ends, more hollow in the waterlines, more complete twist in the garboards. It is hard to replicate the underwater ends of his boats. Yet Rushton never fails to provide the necessary beam at waterline and above, for the needed degree of stability. The sheers are absolutely honest in these rowboats. The simple, plumb stems, with their curvature all under the waterline, accentuate the loveliness of the planking lines as they rise from the wetted bottom fore and aft. The boats are comfortable to row, with good seat height and freeboard, adjustable foot-stretchers, and featherable spoon-bladed oars.



COURTESY SCOTTIE BAKER (ALL)



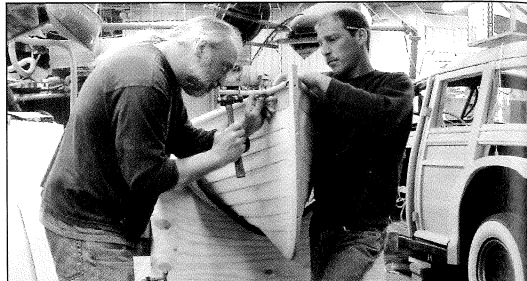
Top left—FELICITY was rescued by the original owner's daughter before Mohican Manor was torn down in the 1970s, and she ultimately sold the boat to the Bakers in 1978. **Top right**—In storage for many years, the hull was badly distorted. **Left**—Everett Smith (at right in photo), led the first round of restoration in the early 1980s. **Above**—One of the first steps in the restoration was to remove the deck in one piece.

By about 1902, Rushton began offering these truly pleasurable rowboats with sailing rigs. The Florida models especially, in lengths of 15', 16', and 17', with shallow-deadrise bottoms, firm bilges, and a beam of 42", had good sail-carrying abilities. They could easily be decked at the ends as well as along the sides and given the same folding centerboards he put in his decked sailing canoes and any of various sailing rigs he produced. The sailing potential, he says in his catalogs, "detracts little from [the boat's] convenience or value as a row boat."

Now, to begin the restoration, the Bakers needed someone to deal with that zigzag keel. Someone at the Adirondack Museum suggested my brother, Everett Smith, then working in a converted gas station in Parishville, New York. Everett and I had grown up with a much-loved Rushton Florida-model pleasure rowboat.

We had started building Rushton-style boats in 1973. We had in fact built a replica of Rushton's Vesper model decked sailing canoe for a young blue-collar mechanic from Springfield, Massachusetts, who would later become involved in both the rigging of the restoration and in the reproduction of the Bakers' boat.

Rushton's oak keels were probably cut from green wood. They are seldom straight in old boats. But this one was triply crooked from improper storage, and the garboards were distorted with it. Shockingly, Everett and David, who lived with the boat during this ordeal, utterly dismembered the precious hull, removing the whole circle of decking in one piece, then taking off the two sides of planking, separate but intact. Happily, the Adirondack Museum had acquired some shop journals of Rushton's. Labeled by Rushton, "Knowledge," they came to be called, "Books of Knowledge." They contained in Rushton's own



Top left—Dan Sutherland led the construction of APPLE PIE, the near-replica of the Bakers' 1902 boat. **Top right**—Sutherland and Dave Hizely set clench nails, surrounded by wooden boats and wooden cars. **Left**—Bob LaVertue shapes one of the blades of the fan centerboard. **Above**—APPLE PIE's builders and friends are, left to right, Dave Hizely, Dave Kavner, Fuat Latif, Randy Heinle, Steve Miller, Dan Sutherland, and Nick Watts.

hand the keel measurements, stem patterns, and offsets and spacings for the station molds of the boat. David and Everett were thus able to set up a strongback and molds, bend new stems, and rabbet a new keel to factory specifications. While Everett fashioned garboards, David located some red elm for the $\frac{1}{2}$ "-wide, half-round ribs. They fastened on the two sides of planking and ribbed the boat, and David took her home to Fly Creek, New York, to finish the restoration himself.

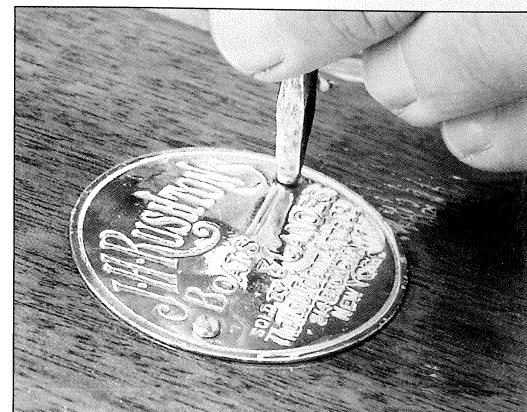
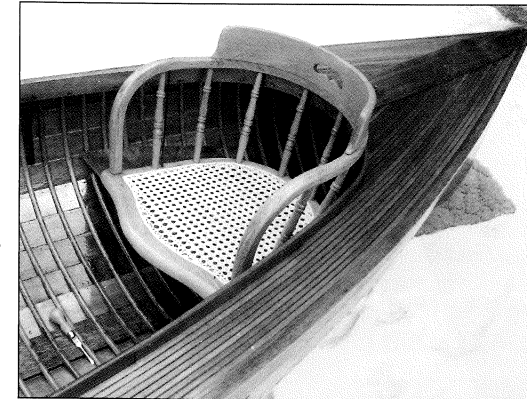
He had all the hardware replated. He asked Douglas Fowler, then a relatively unknown sailmaker in Ithaca, to replicate the Bailey mainsail and lateen mizzen. The Bakers had met Fowler at the antique boat show at Clayton, New York, in 1981, where they had seen the Egyptian cotton sails Fowler had made for his own prize-winning antique Rushton. But after the trauma of dismemberment, Baker was at a stand on the hull itself. He put it in his barn and went on to other boats, over the years restoring many rare and beautiful canoes and becoming at different times the historian and the president of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association. (The Egyptian cotton sails Fowler built for the Bakers' Rushton were kept

in a gently heated bread-box in Baker's shop, and were in perfect condition when bent on their spars more than 20 years later.)

A big, affable man who lived with much pain—from a back injury years earlier, and then deteriorating knees—David traveled with Scottie to wooden boating events all over the Northeast. They became acquainted with many of the Rushton cognoscenti and followed their careers over the years. Dan Sutherland and his partners in North River Boatworks, of Albany, New York, built several Rushton pleasure rowboats, repeatedly copying the narrower (36") Model 109. Fuat Latif, a Saranac Lake boatbuilder who would eventually turn his skills to Adirondack guideboats, appeared at boat shows with prizewinning all-wood Rushton canoes and a Skaneateles skiff. Fowler became more and more the sailmaker of choice for antique sailing canoes. And Bob LaVertue, the unlikely customer who had ordered that Vesper in 1974 from Everett and me, had become the leading restorer and manufacturer of antique small-boat hardware and the designer and maker of a simplified version of the antique Radix folding centerboard.



Above—Fuat Latif completed FELICITY's final restoration in time for a 2003 museum exhibit. **Top right**—A caned seat, part of the boat's original equipment, was reinstalled on FELICITY, but the owner decided against it for the replica. **Right**—One of Latif's final tasks was to reinstall replated original hardware, including the Rushton builder's plate.



These fellows and their families, along with admiring friends like the paddlemaker Dave Kavner, of Keene, New York, composed what I came to think of as the rat-pack of the Northeastern small-wooden-boat community. They showed up at every boat show and regatta with their antique and reproduction, decked and undecked sailing canoes built by Old Town, Peterborough, Rushton, and others, including early 20th-century racing antique 16 x 30s with self-bailing cockpits and more modern leg-o'-mutton sails. They played hard with their boats, and they made an entertaining spectacle racing, capsizing, trading boats, breaking each other's spars. Usually operating on thin margins, they camped together in nearby campgrounds and stayed up late around the cooler. LaVertue, in particular, was informal perhaps to a fault. He tended to crash the WoodenBoat Shows, sailing in from somewhere outside the grounds and tying up alongside of somebody (me, for instance) who had paid (very little) for dockside space. Altogether these enthusiasts made a huge contribution to the wooden boat scene, as well as to the body of skills and knowledge.

David Baker had died. The 1902 Florida Row and Sail Boat was still in the barn, unfinished, her sails still in the bread-box. But in 2003 the New York State Historical Association, at Cooperstown, New York, not far from Fly Creek where the Bakers lived, announced a three-year exhibit called "Otsego Lake: Past and Present" and called for lake-related artifacts. This motivated Scottie to honor her late husband and their mutual enjoyment of old boats by completing the restoration. All the people she needed to help her were by now good friends. She

asked Latif to put the decking back on the boat, slot the keel, fit the Radix, and refinish the hull. LaVertue helped to figure out what piece of plated hardware went where, and bent on the sails.

As expected, FELICITY, with her tall rig, became a centerpiece of the Farmers Museum exhibit. Latif had not felt that FELICITY was strong enough for sailing, and Scottie made the decision that she would not be used. Here was a classic sorrow. Nostalgia hurts! There was already one Rushton Row and Sail Boat, a 17', gaff-rigged Florida model with forward-facing rowing hardware, on exhibit in the Adirondack Museum: irresistible, but as you might say, terminal. You ache with the desire to sail and row it. In such cases, John Gardner, Mystic Seaport's famed boatbuilder and historian, advocated accurate reproductions, which could teach us what the originals had to say both in building and in use. Everybody felt that FELICITY should be copied and sailed.

As it happened, another member of the pack, seeing FELICITY in Latif's shop, had decided to do it. He'd been sailing an Old Town Otca model, PLANET, for years. He'd built, with Sutherland's help, a strip-built reproduction of Sutherland's Bailey-rigged Peterborough. But he wanted to sail, and he wanted to cruise, and he wanted to be comfortable. He liked the rowing option. The Rushton spoke to him, as they do. And before the exhibit closed, the reproduction was under construction.

The "Books of Knowledge" might have come in again here, for they contain not only the data for molds, keel, and stems, but most interestingly the "spilings" as Rushton called them—the offsets of all her planks, nine per side, exact to $\frac{1}{16}$ ". I have always wished that somebody would



DAVE KAVNER

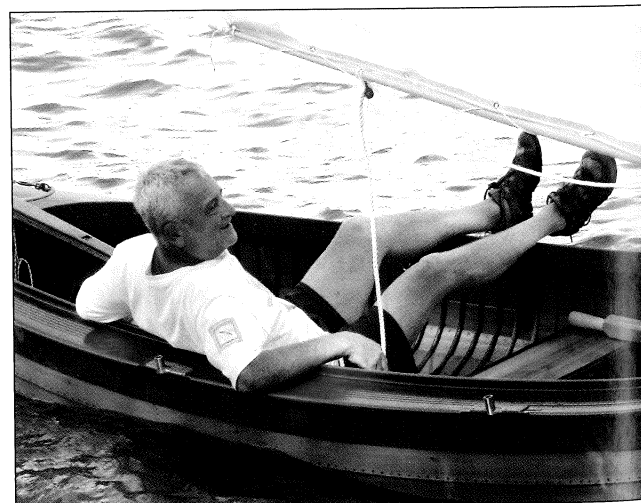
The split rig configuration gives APPLE PIE versatility under sail, and she balances well sailing downwind wing-on-wing.

Over the following months, they set up the molds, bent the oak stems, laid on the keel, and lined her out, with a batten at each lap-edge. Kavner, in a down vest, smoking his pipe, planked the hull in almost-clear Atlantic white cedar resawn on Sutherland's huge band-saw. And then Latif came down from the Adirondacks to help install the ribs, an interesting job because with a rib hot from the steambox you have only 90 seconds or so to get in all 22 tacks before the cooling elm will turn the points of the tacks before they come through to the backing iron.

They did it easy as could be, I guess, for Kavner named the boat APPLE PIE. Once she had her inwales and outwales on, in April 2005, he brought her home to his

own garage in Keene to complete. An excellent craftsman himself, with 320 fine models of Adirondack guideboats to his credit, under glass in "great camps" and cottages all over the Adirondacks, Kavner decked and trimmed her and made her spars. Fowler built her sails, and LaVertue made her folding centerboard, mast tubes, and escutcheons, tiller fittings, brass tip-up rudder, and copies of Rushton's jam-cleats for sheets, halyards, and reefing lines. All the topside stuff was plated. She was another Grade AA, minus the chair seat.

She's not a copy, exactly. FELICITY is 15', APPLE PIE 16'. The "Books of Knowledge" call for $\frac{3}{4}$ " rocker, APPLE PIE's keel is straight. FELICITY has a Bailey mainsail and a lateen mizzen, APPLE PIE's rig is Improved Bailey on both masts, meaning that her sails are five-sided, sometimes called "batwing" sails; and they are "Egyptian cream" Dacron,



DAVE KAVNER

Dave Kavner, APPLE PIE's owner, elected not to have a caned seat so he could keep his weight low in the boat while sailing.



DAVE KAVNER

APPLE PIE's rig is an "Improved Bailey," an option offered in the Rushton catalog. The rig has an additional spar on each sail set at 45 degrees to the mast.

The three-segment Springfield fan centerboard stands up higher than the old seven-segment Radixes, so APPLE PIE is not a sleep-aboard cruiser. But she is a beautiful and comfortable camp-cruiser, easily carrying everything a couple would need to sleep ashore. Her mizzen is virtually self-tending upwind, and Kavner can sail in balance much of the time and steer with either sheet. With her side decks and round-the-cockpit coaming, Kavner says she has yet to take a pint of water.

He photographed her lovingly. He took her to the annual Assembly of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association, held that year on Keuka Lake; then to The Antique Boat Museum's Festival of Oar, Paddle, and Sail at Clayton, New York, on the St. Lawrence, where she scampered all over the river in company with numerous decked sailing canoes. By September, the well-adjusted APPLE PIE was ready for a longer ride on her antique Tee-Nee trailer, to the Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, Maryland.

In attendance there with her, again and predictably, were LaVertue and his wife and sons and their boats: a William Clements-built, Iona model, decked sailer with a Bailey yawl rig; a decked Peterborough with the same; and a 16 x 30 from the 1910s. LaVertue, coincidentally, launched his brand-new Herreshoff Coquina, its dark blue, glued-lapstrake hull built for him by Geoff Kerr and finished out by LaVertue, with sails by the usual propulsion specialist, Fowler. Together with yet another new Coquina and Kerr's omnipresent Caledonia yawl, the new Florida model Combination Row and Sail Boat APPLE PIE joined the loveliest fleet of yawls Chesapeake Bay can have seen in 60 years.

For FELICITY, meanwhile, the "Otsego Lake: Past and Present" exhibit closed in 2006, having perhaps inspired an "Otsego Lake: Future" in some young museum visitor's dreams, and the restored Rushton went back into Scottie Baker's barn, at least until her next museum appearance. By February 2007, Kavner and Latif were trailering APPLE PIE and Latif's kayak south to cruise together in the Everglades. John Gardner would approve, and Rushton himself would be proud. 

not cotton. Both Bailey rigs are kindred to the sliding-gunter, but with one or two horizontal spars or battens parallel to the boom. To bring the yard, the uppermost spar, tight to the mast and to raise it high, Rushton used a double-halyard system with swiveling gear on the mast-head, a sliding ring below that with eyelets for the standing parts of the halyards, and a fitting with three sheaves a side on the yard—complicated to describe, but charmingly simple in use. When you haul on the doubled halyards, the yard rises from the horizontal to the vertical and climbs the mast at the same time. And if you then belay one halyard to a cleat on each side of the coamings, you can dump the rig fast from either tack. It falls quickly and easily onto the boom, nestled within the lazyjacks. Those old ACAers knew a thing or two.

FELICITY steers by a line running around the boat from the wooden yoke on a standard Rushton wooden rudder. For APPLE PIE, Kavner and LaVertue fashioned something more like Rushton's typical decked-sailer steering, whereby the rudder is turned via chains from another yoke, with tiller attached, on a swiveling fitting just forward of the mizzenmast. The rudder itself is a piece of work, brass with a drop-blade, and pintles and an elegant curving yoke like those he had made for his Vesper decades before.

APPLE PIE had her trials in April 2006 on Lake Colby, near Saranac Lake, where she proved sweet-handling and swift in light airs and lovely to row. Whereas a decked sailing canoe with this rig would benefit from a sliding (hiking) seat, APPLE PIE's shape permits her to be sailed English-style (ideal for a pipe-smoker), and Kavner shortened her tiller, took out her stern seat, and padded her interior aft so he could sit comfortably deep in the boat. He decided to skip the lazyjacks on the mainsail, so he could drop the bundle of cloth and spars down into the cockpit beside him for rowing.

Mason Smith is an occasional contributor to WoodenBoat. He builds and restores small boats at Adirondack Goodboat, HC01 Box 44, Long Lake, NY 12847; 518-624-6398; <www.adirondackgoodboat.com>