

From: <mailto:buckley@rumford.com>Jim Buckley
To: <mailto:strickler@mindspring.com>Darryl J. Strickler
Cc:
<mailto:dianne@pocockclassic.org>dianne@pocockclassic.o
rg ; <mailto:sbchapin@msn.com>'STEVE CHAPIN'
Sent: Friday, July 06, 2007 7:16 PM
Subject: Re: FW: Spam: Pocock Section for review/addition

Darryl,

Good story. Seems about right but I don't have the time this afternoon to check facts. For now I have just added a correction or two **in red** in your text below.

Best,
Jim Buckley

At 1:37 PM -0700 7/6/07, Dianne Roberts wrote:

Jim and Steve,
Could you please review the attached article, make any changes/corrections and send them directly to Darryl Strickler?

For some reason his emails keep bouncing to my Junk folder-I just rescued this one and I have to run out to yet another meeting. I will read it myself later this afternoon and send him my 2 cents worth as well.

Thanks,
Dianne

Dianne Roberts

Photographer/Publicist
Pocock Classic Cedar Singles

Northwest Maritime Center
380 Jefferson Street
P.O. Box 82
Port Townsend, Washington 98368

Home/Office: 360-385-4691

Mobile: 360-531-1235

<<http://www.pocockclassic.org/>>www.pocockclassic.org

From: Darryl J. Strickler [mailto:strickler@mindspring.com]

Sent: Wednesday, July 04, 2007 2:52 AM

To: dianne@pocockclassic.org

Subject: Spam: Pocock Section for review/addition

Importance: High

United States Boat Builders

Pocock Racing Shells

George Pocock 1891-1976

The Man

The clearest, most direct link between wooden racing boat building in England and America was in the person of George Y. Pocock who first set foot in North America in 1911. George had learned the trade from his father, Aaron Frederick "Fred" Pocock, who was general manager and head boat builder at Eton College at Eton-Windsor, England in the early years of the twentieth century. Other Pocock relatives--including William Pocock who some say built the first racing shell--were racing boat builders at Putney and Cambridge and professional scullers as far back as the 1840s.

George was not only an accomplished builder of racing boats, but also an eminently successful professional sculler himself who had

many English titles to his credit. One such win netted him £50 which was a huge sum in those days and more than enough to fund his and his brother Dick's passage to Canada. Dick had won the coveted Doggett's Coat and Badge Race on the Thames in 1910. George's dream was to make a quick fortune in the New World by cutting down trees, then return to England in 1912 in hopes of qualifying for the Doggett's race--a dream that would never be fulfilled. In fact, the brothers' early days in North America must have seemed more like a nightmare!

The Brothers Pocock arrived aboard a cattle boat in Halifax, Nova Scotia on George's twentieth birthday in 1911. The first job George got was as a timber cutter in Vancouver completely on the other side of Canada. Shortly thereafter he got a better paying job at a Vancouver shipyard, but being totally unfamiliar with power tools, he managed to cut off two fingers of his right hand. With those two fingers went his dreams of winning or even rowing in the Doggett's. He was sure his life had come to an end, but fortunately did not give up. He continued his sculling, and was proud of the fact that, in time, his right hand became as good as his left.



(George Y. Pocock, circa 1912)

Shortly after they arrived in Vancouver the brothers approached the Vancouver Rowing Club with an offer to build racing boats, but were given the cold shoulder. They did, however, manage to purchase one of the old Vancouver RC boathouses for \$100 that was due to be demolished when the new facility was completed, but were forced to move it to and moor it out in Coal Harbor. They were eventually commissioned to build a number of racing shells for Canadian rowing clubs, but their experience in Vancouver unfortunately did not hold many happy memories for the brothers.

In 1912 the brothers were enticed (more like "conned") to build twelve, eight-man racing boats by University of Washington (Seattle) Coach Hiram Conibear, who by then, was a legend in his own time as well as in his own mind!. Shortly after they agreed to the offer from the man they called "Connie" (there's a clue!) they got a letter stating that he was actually only able to raise enough money to build *one* eight! George stayed behind in Vancouver while his brother Dick and his father, Aaron, came to Seattle to build the first eight which was named *T Rogers* after the man who donated the \$200.00 required to build it. When *Rogers* was launched, so was the Pocock Legend!



(Tokyo Tea House used as boat building shop by George and Richard Pocock)

The Pococks were given few commissions for new boats and a less-than-adequate workshop in a building that formerly served as a tea house, but they soldiered on for almost four years while "The War to End All Wars"(right!) broke out in Europe. Aaron Pocock had his fill and returned to England and never came back to America. In 1916, after Coach Conibear fell out of a plum tree in his back yard and died, the brothers were unsure of their future at the University of Washington so they both took jobs at the newly founded Boeing Airplane Company. At Boeing, they were able to leverage their boat-building skills to build the pontoons for seaplanes. George eventually became a foreman at Boeing, but Dick followed his own dreams and took a position as boat builder for Yale University in 1922, where he remained through the 1950s.

George might easily have worked at Boeing for the rest of his life and comfortably retired some years later with a sizable pension, but (fortunately for the rowing world!) his own dreams of building racing boats remained alive and well. He was enticed back to the University of Washington by his friend, the newly appointed crew coach, Russell "Rusty" Callow, in 1923 and began a career that lasted fifty-three more years.

Almost immediately after he returned to University Station in Seattle, the Pocock Legend began to grow. It started with the first of many National Championship wins in 1923 by the University of Washington Crew rowing in a Pocock eight named *Husky*. And as the (somewhat flawed) reasoning of many coaches and rowers seems to go, "it must have been the boat" since few of the Eastern rowing powerhouses at the time would have expected the University of Washington "Huskies" Crew to win anything except perhaps a dog-sled race. But win they did! It was the first time that a "Western Crew" had ever won a national collegiate championship, the first of many.

Between 1925 and about 1975, almost every college, university, high school and club program in America and some programs abroad would have had wooden racing boats and oars built by Pocock. And in every national, world and Olympic championship, including the Berlin Olympics in Berlin in 1936, there were always Pocock boats in the winner's circle. At both the Intercollegiate

Rowing Association's annual regatta at Syracuse, NY and the San Diego Crew Classic 1966, *all* of the boats and oars were made by Pocock! This was probably the *only* time in the history of rowing that all the equipment was essentially equal and it was only the rowers' performance that made the difference!

Speak to any college or club rower who rowed anytime up to about 1985, and virtually every one of them will recall with great fondness, the look, the feel, the "swing" and even the *smell* of the Pocock boats in which they came of age as rowers. Pocock and the boats he built truly had "the stuff of which legends are made!"



During the latter years of his life, George concentrated on what was most likely his first and longest-lasting love: building racing singles ("Cedar Speeders"). This was an art and craft at which he truly excelled, and which he passed on to his son Stan Pocock, and a score of other racing boat builders who worked at Pocock over the years. In the years before his death in March, 1976, George had his own personal shop on the second floor of the boathouse that was dedicated solely to building racing singles.



(George Pocock 1891-1976, American Rowing Legend, *photo by Josef Scaylea*)

George's son, Stan, who ran the business after his father retired once said (at a time before there were many women in the sport):

"Technique and conditioning are things that every oarsman has... so they become relatively unimportant. We know that men respond to rowing in a beautiful piece of equipment, and we try to give them shells that will raise their spirit a little above their competitors'."

Stan Pocock 1923-

The Son

Stan Pocock was born shortly after his father George re-launched the Pocock Legend at the University of Washington in Seattle. He virtually grew up in the University Station boat-building shop, so it was only natural the he follow the Pocock family tradition and

apprentice in the craft of building wooden racing shells with his father. Stan was an oarsman on the Crew of the University of Washington, where he graduated with an engineering degree.

Not surprisingly, Stan became a highly skilled wooden racing boat builder, and a well- respected coach who helped turn out numerous winning crews. In addition to coaching at the University of Washington from 1947 through 1955, he was the first coach at Lake Washington Rowing Club which was founded in 1958. He also coached several medal-winning crews that competed in the 1956, 1960 and 1964 Olympics in Melbourne, Rome and Tokyo, respectively.

In 1956, Stan began to experiment with using fiberglass in the construction of racing shells. He replaced the wood ribs with a fiberglass sandwich skin, which was quite an extraordinary innovation for the time!

Eliminating the ribs was, indeed, an important Pocock innovation but it happened much earlier and had to do with the pre-steam bent skins. See below under "boats". In 1961 Stan built a fiberglass wherry, and a few years later he developed a center-seamed, fiberglass training single, many of which are still in use today

Here I would add something about the gold metal win of the straight four at the Rome Olympics in 1960. Stan built the boat, and selected and coached the crew that won - the only (and dramatic win) gold metal for the US crew in that Olympics. Details at <http://www.pocockclassic.com/Hohsummary.html>

In the late 1960s, management of the company, Pocock Racing Shells, fell on Stan's shoulders, thus allowing his father time to concentrate exclusively to his first love: building cedar racing singles. Stan was fortunate to have inherited the services of a highly skilled and experienced staff of wooden boat builders. Always an innovator, Stan continually experimented with new methods and materials that could be applied to boats and oars. He was first in many areas, including the development of a successful wood and glass laminated composite oar, molded seat tops and adjustable oarlock height spacers. Impressed with innovations in composite engineering from aerospace industries, and adding his own experience to that of the Boeing engineers, he developed the

first line of all carbon fiber monocoque racing shells in 1981. One of those shells is still rowed at the University of Washington. In 1985 Pocock Racing Shells came under the capable leadership of Bill Tytus, a long-time Pocock family friend who as a curious kid used to "hang around" the Pocock shop. In his early days at Pocock, Bill mastered the 27 steps required to make chrome-plated, bronze oarlocks. Bill is also winning oarsman who knows what it takes to stay ahead of the pack, and under his direction the company turned its focus to the emerging market for composite racing shells. Only Bob Brunswick, the last builder of the wooden racing singles at Pocock, remained at the new company after it moved to Everett, Washington. Brunswick built the occasional racing single until the close of the Twentieth Century.

Transition could be helped by saying Stan and Bill donated the "remaining stock of wood, fittings and building forms, jigs and molds for the Pocock singles" to the WBF because of the skill they recognized in Steve Chapin. See <http://www.pocockclassic.com/donation.html>

Much of the remaining stock of wood, fittings and building forms, jigs and molds for the Pocock singles is now at the Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation, in Port Townsend, Washington. So the legendary "cedar speeders" have gained an extended lease on life and *may* be built again to live in infamy. The first wooden Pocock single, built by Steven Chapin, with the guidance of master builder, Bob Brunswick, through the Pocock Classic Cedar Single Project, was launched on May 3, 2007 at the Seattle Yacht Club. The first of many more to come...

The Boats

Between 1923 and the mid 1980s, Pocock Racing Shells under the direction of George, then Stan Pocock would have built literally *thousands* of wooden racing eights, fours, quads, pairs, doubles and singles-all with the Pocock trademark steam-bent, western red cedar hulls. Many had washboxes and some of the framing made from a species of extremely clear-grained Alaskan Yellow Cedar that grows at high altitudes in mountains along the coast of British Columbia and Southern Alaska. The availability of excellent cedar

lumber in the Pacific Northwest is in many ways what made these boats "Pococks"--as they were fondly referred to--and what made Pocock so successful as a builder of wooden racing boats.

Yes the western red cedar and other woods were much better than the European woods but the Pococks were innovative early on while still in England in that they pre-steam bent the skins. This allowed the shells to be built without ribs which made the shells lighter and free of the unfairness characteristic of boats with skins bent over ribs. See, for example, our very nicely built [Staempfli triple](#).

Of the wooden single sculling boats built by Pocock, only a very few of wooden training wherrys are still in existence. The western red cedar that was used in the hulls, although quite light weight and tight-grained, is unfortunately a relatively soft wood, and, thus, not very durable in the long term. The dearth (and death!) of wherrys is also due to the fact that they were used as training boats by novice rowers who are notoriously (if not intentionally!) unkind to such equipment.



(Author's Pocock "Standard" racing single named *Stan:By Me!* -and Pocock sculling oars.)

It is the Pocock racing singles, both the 'Standard' for rowers 150-200#, and many fewer of the lightweight "Teardrop" singles built for rowers under 165#, that have done the most to continue the legacy of wooden Pocock shells into this century. While many of the eights, fours and pairs are long-gone from club and university boathouses, there are still a fair number of Pocock wooden racing singles in use today--and for good reason! Their functional elegance and classic good looks on and off the water make them a favorite of rowers and non-rowers alike. Despite the soft wood used in the hulls, many of the singles have been well looked after by their owners, and have arrived in this century in reasonably good condition.

The "Standard" single is best suited for scullers around 175 pounds, although there is a urban myth around (likely started by George himself!) that if a heavier rower, say a 220-pounder rowed one of the standard singles, the keel would bend ever so slightly in the middle so that the bow and stern remained above the water! (Really!)

The "Teardrop" single was originally developed by George Pocock in the early years of the Great Depression when there was little else to do. One of the first Teardrop singles was built for Joe Angyle who was U.S. Lightweight champion sculler prior to, during, and after WWII. He was also the only sculler ever to beat Joe Burk, famous U.S. sculler (later University of Pennsylvania Crew Coach until 1969) when Burke was in his prime. Angyle claimed to have won fifty-one races in the same boat.

The teardrop design was further adapted for Joe Burk. Joe's boat was somewhat wider than the lightweight-size version, the concept being that the broader width forward would give better support for Joe at the finish because he, and many scullers at the time, tended to "lay in the bow" while the boat ran out between strokes. The lightweight Teardrop singles are best suited to a rower between 130 and 160 pounds. These boats have a distinctive Teardrop shape with greater circumference and width in the forward section of the boat than in the stern section.



(1962 Pocock Joe Burke model heavyweight "Teardrop" single)

The hull of the Pocock wood single is made from 3/32-inch, steam-bent and book-matched western red cedar planks-one on either side of the keel. The beading, cheeks and washboards are made from Alaskan Yellow Cedar or in some cases Sitka spruce. The keelson, gunwales and frame are made from sugar pine, and ash is used for the shoulders where the riggers bolt onto the boat. Many of the parts for the Pocock singles were roughed out at the same time and stockpiled until they were needed. One or two singles were built at a time, and would have taken an experienced builder like Bob Brunswick somewhere between 80-100 hours to build one

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the long-term success and lasting appeal of the Pocock singles was the fact that they basically remained the same from post WWII until the least ones built-unlike some other builders who continually refined, revised and generally "messed with" the design of their boats-just because they *could!* But beneath the surface appearance, each Pocock boat *was* designed and built to the owner's particular specifications and requirements. In addition, the Pocock staff continually experimented with new building techniques, fastenings and finishes, and always

stayed abreast of and incorporated the latest technology into their boats.

Some of the other post-war builders would have been well-advised to follow Pocock's example, yet it *did* have its draw-backs as well. With regard to the rigging, it was "George's (or Stan's) Way" or the highway! If you ordered one of their boats the rigging would be built to their specifications-including a narrower than normal span, and non-adjustable spread (distance between oarlocks)! The narrower span requires the use of shorter-than-standard sculling oars (about 292-294 cm) or adapting of the original rigging to increase the distance between the oarlocks. The other recommended option is to row these lovely craft with a pair of beautiful Pocock wooden sculling oars that were made in the same era as the boat...a winning combination from both a biomechanical and aesthetic standpoint to be sure!



(Laminated seat, leather clogs and "iron back" sculling oars in 1982 Pocock "Standard" racing single)

The Owner (Patricia Prendergast, Arroyo Grande, California USA)

I'm confused. Did Patricia or Darryl write this article and who's boats are pictured? Seems at least that the captions are mixed up. The picture immediately above identified as a 1982 Pocock has a double wheeled seat which more than likely makes it older - maybe Joe Burke's 1962 teardrop? The one identified as Joe's has a single wheel seat so is probably newer. Anyway, we are trying to keep track of "the fleet" at <http://www.pocockclassic.com/fleet/index.htm> so I would like permission to add these two shells.

My husband, Bill, began rowing sweep-oared racing boats at the Shannon (Ireland) Rowing Club in the late 1940s. Now, some sixty years later, he still rows sweep with the Limerick Masters' Rowing Association at the Castleconnell Rowing Club every summer when we are in Ireland. The rest of the year, we live on the Central Coast of California, far from any established rowing clubs, so it is impossible to find seven other eighty-year-olds to put together an octogenerian eight-which is why we became interested in sculling. We decided we could get into sculling without any club, just the two of us.

Bill needed a wooden scull of course; no mere plastic one would ever do for him! He found a well-used Pocock single and brought it back to life with a little advice and support from some other local wooden rowing shell crazies. After slathering paint remover over the varnish in which it was set, Bill was able to peel the gossamer fiberglass layer off the Pocock's hull in one piece. After a couple of patches had been made to the hull, a new 1.5 oz fiberglass (as delicate as a silk scarf) was set in the varnish like the original. New Port Orford cedar saxboards, and a few other bits and pieces, and a bright yellow polyester deck (to increase the likelihood that the fishermen would see the Pocock as their bass boats screamed across the water much too fast for comfort) completed the refurbishment.

Now the only problem was that Bill had a lot of experience pulling a sweep oar, but none at all sculling in a racing single. He didn't take to sculling very well, so I gave it a try, and I really enjoyed it. Thus, the lovely Pocock single became mine, and Bill began restoring a

Pocock straight pair-without coxswain. He still has the idea that he will feel more at home pulling a sweep oar in the pair, with me pulling the other oar.

I think about the prospect of rowing a straight pair with my husband of fifty years as I scull my beautiful Pocock single. I suspect that it may be in the best interest of our marriage to stick to sculling my lovely single, and encourage Bill to find someone else to pull the second oar in his newly refurbished Pocock pair.

(Octagenarian Patricia Pendergast in her fully restored Pocock lightweight racing single.)

Cheers!

Darryl Strickler

The Bauhaus Boathouse

1615 Riverside Avenue

St. Charles, IL 60174-4367

USA

t: + 1 630 513 8349

m: +1 630 660 0757

f: +1 630 443 8010

strickler@mindspring.com

www.rowableclassics.com