

SALISH CANOE
The Center for Wooden Boats
Seattle
King County
Washington

HAER WA-188
HAER WA-188

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SALISH CANOE

HAER No. WA-188

Location: The Center for Wooden Boats, Seattle, King County, Washington

Rig/Type of Craft: Sda'kwihl, modified Coast Salish Dugout Canoe

Trade: Fishing, resource gathering, recreation

Principal Dimensions: Length: 15'-7 ¹/₁₆"
Beam: 2'-9 ⁵/₈"

Date of Construction: Early 1900s

Original Owner: Not known

Present Owner: The Center for Wooden Boats

Present Use: Museum vessel

Significance Statement: This small dugout canoe represents typical Coast Salish design. A non-native family in south Puget Sound found the canoe and modified the craft for their own use. The canoe therefore not only exemplifies native design but also Anglo-American boatbuilding traditions through its modifications.

Project Information: The Center for Wooden Boats (CWB) used a grant from 4Culture to document the Salish Canoe and the R-Boat *Pirate* (see HAER No. WA-187) from the summer through the winter of 2009. The documentation produced on these two vessels will be used to create new interpretation onsite at CWB, build a connection between CWB and visitors celebrating the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition centennial, and enhance the center's mission to interpret the small craft history of the Northwest. In addition, the project fits into CWB's broader vision of becoming a regional maritime documentation center affiliated with the National Park Service. The primary consultant to this project is Todd Croteau,

HAER Maritime Program Coordinator. The project director is Heron Scott, CWB's Lead Boatwright, with assistance from CWB staff members Shelly Leavens and Andrew Washburn. Volunteers involved in the documentation include Tim Barney, Scott Rohrer, David Kennedy, and Paul Marlow.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History:

1. **Dates of Construction:** The canoe is believed to have been constructed in the early 1900s.
2. **Designer:** Traditional
3. **Builder/Contractor/Supplier:** Not known
4. **Original Plans:** None
5. **Alterations and Additions:** Visual inspection reveals that extensive modifications were made to the canoe after 1912, including the following:
 - i. Seventeen steam bent cedar ribs were added using clinch nails.
 - ii. Thwart risers and thwarts amidships were screwed.
 - iii. Inwales were added.
 - iv. Brass or bronze oarlocks were installed.
 - v. Sheet metal (brass or copper) was added at the bow and stern.
 - vi. Through bolt (steel or iron) was added at the bow.
 - vii. Two through bolts (steel or iron) were added at the stern.
 - viii. The canoe was covered with canvas.
 - ix. A metal strip was added at the gunwale.
 - x. A wood strip was added under the lip of gunwale, possibly to hold the canvas.
 - xi. A keel guard or keel strip was added; it was scarfed at the bow with a metal rub strip.

B. Historical Context: According to memory and vague notes in the CWB archives, the Shaw or Reed family, formerly of Salmon Beach in Tacoma, Washington, found the canoe in or around the Tacoma Narrows circa 1912. After an unsuccessful search for the canoe's owner, the Reed family retained possession and used it for years at their cabin on Salmon Beach. The family made significant modifications, alterations, and additions to the canoe, including adding seats, ribs, and canvas.

The form of the Coast Salish Canoe is the culmination of many thousands of years of watercraft design. This type of canoe served as the basis for other styles, such as the Northern-style canoes of the Tlingit, Haida, and other northern tribes. This particular canoe represents both traditional and Anglo-American forms due to its later modifications.¹

¹ See Leslie Lincoln, *Coast Salish Canoes* (Seattle, WA: The Center for Wooden Boats, 1991), and Roger Cushman Edwards, *Tacoma's Salmon Beach* (San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publishing, 2006) for additional information.

C. Operational History: The canoe was used for fishing, resource gathering, and recreation purposes.

Part II. Structural/Design Information

A. General Description: The Sda'kwihl Coast Salish Dugout canoe consists of a hull carved from a single cedar log that was later covered with canvas secured with a ½ round trim below the gunwale and a keel strip or worm shoe on the bottom. The shape of the canoe conforms to conventional Coast Salish hunting and fishing canoe design. For example, as is typical of Coast Salish canoes, the canoe has a split bow comprised of a nearly horizontal member tapering into a vertical cutwater. A groove, often mistaken for an added strake, runs along the shear mirroring an “out-flaring” that lends extra buoyancy.

Modifications have been made to the canoe. Oak frames were later added to the canoe's interior and secured with clamps on either side. A thwart seat was also installed aft of midship for a rowing station. A canvas covering was installed, probably by Anglo-American owners to make the boat more functional since age had likely caused the solid wood boat to check, causing leaks and structural failure. Canvas kept out the water, while the ribs and thwarts kept the canoe together. Seats provided additional comfort. These features were all common elements in the construction of wood-canvas canoes, a form developed by people of European descent in the northeastern United States around the twentieth century.

B. Mechanical Features: None

Part III. Sources of Information

Edwards, Roger Cushman. *Tacoma's Salmon Beach*. San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publishing, 2006.

Lincoln, Leslie. *Coast Salish Canoes*. Seattle, WA: The Center for Wooden Boats, 1991.

ADDENDUM TO:
SALISH CANOE
The Center for Wooden Boats
Seattle
King County
Washington

HAER WA-188
HAER WA-188

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001