

The MSB Journal



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On the Cover

Danube III

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A Loose Cannon

By Gene Bodnar

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a "loose cannon" as "a person who cannot be controlled and who does or says things that cause problems, embarrassment, etc., for others." There is nothing in its definition that describes an actual cannon or carronade that has escaped from its tackle and caused destruction on board a wooden sailing warship, mainly because such an event has never occurred in real life. In the three-hundred-year-plus history of sailing warships, no evidence has ever come to light that the phrase was actually used by sailors, and there is no record of any ship experiencing such a disaster.

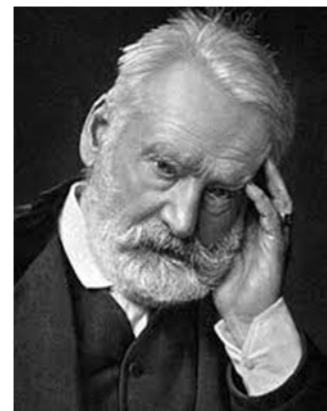


So what is the origin of the phrase? It belongs wholly to the imagination of Victor Hugo, a famed French author who described the fictitious event in his final novel called "Ninety-Three," which was published in 1874. An extraction from the novel has also been published as a short story under the title "A Fight with a Cannon," which is available as a free read on the internet. In this superbly written story, Hugo describes the destruction and mayhem caused by a 24-pounder carronade that, through the fault of the gun-captain, was not properly secured in heavy weather.

To quote a few passages from the story:

"The carronade, hurled forward by the pitching, dashed into this knot of men, and crushed four at the first blow; then, flung back and shot out anew by the rolling, it cut in two a fifth poor fellow... The enormous cannon was left alone. She was given up to herself. She was her own mistress, and mistress of the vessel. She could do what she willed with both."

"The cannon was rushing back and forth on the deck. One might have supposed it to be the living chariot of the



Victor Hugo

Apocalypse.”

“The four wheels passed back and forth over the dead men, cutting them, carving them, slashing them, till the five corpses were a score of stumps rolling across the deck; the heads of the dead men seemed to cry out; streams of blood curled over the deck with the rolling of the vessel; the planks, damaged in several places, began to gape open.”

Incidentally, it was the gun-captain himself who managed to eventually secure the carronade to safety. He was awarded a medal for his heroism, and then was shot for causing the problem in the first place.

The phrase “loose cannon” might have dwindled into obscurity by the 20th century, if it hadn’t been for President Theodore Roosevelt. William White, a journalist and friend of the president, wrote his autobiography published in 1944. In it, he quoted Roosevelt as saying, “I don’t want to be the old cannon loose on the deck in the storm.” The image remains in our minds today. Roosevelt must have read Hugo’s tale.

Many nautical terms are filled with romanticism and pure fantasy. A “loose cannon” is just one of them, thanks to Victor Hugo.

Behind the Tiller

Bill Edgin

Each issue of the journal will bring to you the stories of modelers who are making substantive impacts on our hobby. This month we are lucky enough to have Dave Stevens, of The Lumberyard for Model Shipwrights (<http://www.dlumberyard.com>) . Dave has a long and storied history with many aspects of modeling. He was lucky and talented enough to have Harold Hahn as a mentor and today carries the flag of the work Harold and his contemporaries



started. Dave is a talented modeler who is truly paying it forward. In 2012, Dave started publishing a step-by-step video collection on building the USS Gunboat *Caustic*. This free 36-part video, available both on this forum and on YouTube, provides a step-by-step demonstration of the techniques necessary to construct a true plank on frame model. His current project, the *General Hunter* is well documented under the MSB projects area as well as the NRG forum. The build log on the Hunter makes it crystal clear that Dave extensively researches a ship prior to starting a build.

The Lumberyard is one of the few US sites to provide ship model grade woods as well as semi-scratch kits of Plank on Frame models such as the *HMS Bounty*, the *USS Confederacy*, and the *Rattlesnake*. These kits bridge the gap between the standard plank on bulkhead kits available on other sites and a fully scratch built masterpiece.

For Dave, ship modeling is about the journey and taking his fellow modelers along. This is clear from his educational work as well his development and marketing models and materials to take kit modelers to the next level.

MSB: Thanks for taking the time for this Dave, to start, please tell us a bit about yourself.

Dave: My dad was a studio photographer who turned to graphic arts and the printing trade. I followed in his footsteps for 28 years. I quit the trade and went into the tree service business with my brother; when he passed away the business was sold and I took up working at the Lumberyard full time. Some form of art was always a part of my life - from painting custom

cars and motorcycles to ceramics, wood carving, drawing or whatever captured my interest.

MSB: Where do you call home?

Dave: From the start it has always been Cleveland Ohio, 67 years later it still is.

MSB: How long have you been building models?

Dave: I have been building for 63 years. My grandfather owned a 5 & 10 cent store and he would bring home little plastic ship model kits. At the age of 4, I used to sit with my grandmother and we built the little models. To this day I still have some of them.

MSB: How many models have you built?

Dave: Over my lifetime too many to count - I started out with plastic kits then my dad got into model railroading and we built models out of anything, wood, plaster, plastic, metal whatever worked for the project. I got my first wooden ship kit from Model Shipways in my early teens.

MSB: What has been your favorite build?

Dave: I would have to say a model railroad from a long time ago because there were so many different things to model. As far as ship modeling goes, it is the current project because I bring everything I learned from past projects to the one I am doing now. Using skills learned from previous projects I can work a little faster, with a little more confidence, and with better skills and knowledge. Taking myself to the very edge of what I can do - and then taking one step forward is my favorite place.

MSB: Tell us about your workspace.

Dave: My actual build area is a 3 foot by 5 foot old oak drafting table and everything spreads out from there into a 12 x 16 room. Then a converted bedroom up stairs has a lathe, sander and drill press, out in the barn there are a band saw and thickness sander, and finally in the basement are a couple of scroll saws, a spindle sander, and a bunch of hand tools.

MSB: If you could change one thing regarding your workspace what would it be?

Dave: Putting everything in one area since it is spread all over the place,

up stairs, down stairs, out in the barn and in what was once the living room.

MSB: Tools are always an interesting topic among builders. First, power or hand?

Dave: Milling is done with a band saw and thickness sander. Most of the modeling is done with hand tools, but I do use a 5-inch disk sander and hobby size scroll saw. There is also an assortment of Dremel tools.

MSB: What tool would you be lost without?

Dave: That would have to be the band saw because you can do a lot with it from cutting down logs to fine millwork. When doing handwork I like using scalpels.

MSB: Now let's discuss your modeling. How do you decide which ship to build? Is there a particular period you favor?

Dave: I look at projects from a commercial kit point of view and which ones might have the largest appeal and ease of building. I also look for historical subjects. I did settle down with the maritime history of the Great Lakes from the start of ship building to the last of the wooden ships. That is a stretch from 1679 to about the 1880s and covers a wide range of subjects from very early ships, the biggest war ships ever built, to wooden tug boats, yachts and schooners.

MSB: How do you perform your research? What sources do you use?

Dave: First I select the subject, then find out who the shipwright was and his background, search town records, shipping records, shipyard records, shipwreck data. I will use maritime museum archives and libraries, historical societies, personal papers of shipwrights like the Joshua Humphries papers or the William Bell papers.

MSB: Do you have a favorite scale to build?

Dave: Everything I do is 1/4 inch to the foot (1:48).

MSB: How long do you typically take to finish a ship?

Dave: That depends on the project. If I am building a prototype to test a kit subject I do not take the time to do fine finishing. If I am building a model as a build log or video series it can take up to a year or more be-

cause a lot of video editing or writing is involved. I have built frames on commission and to build and cut out a set of frames for a ship the size of a frigate takes about 35 hours. I have also built small test prototype models of ships like the *Caustic* or *General Hunter* in less than 24 hours but mind you they are nothing pretty to look at. They are built just to test how it all goes together. In all the years I have been doing this I have yet to take a model from start to finish as a fine crafted display model.

MSB: What, if anything, do you find frustrating when building a ship?

Dave: Not much because I take each project as a series of problems to solve. One aspect I could say is a little frustrating is when you get to a part of the build where there is no research available and you have to rely on trial and error or sit there and try to figure out how something could have been done.

MSB: What is your favorite part of your builds?

Dave: I like the research and the design phase

MSB: What has been your most challenging build?

Dave: That one is yet to come and the challenge thus far is getting to it. I have my sights set on a plank on frame model of the 120 gun Pennsylvania.

MSB: Where do you display your models?

Dave: Under the worktable, piled in a corner or sitting on top of one another. This sounds odd but I do not consider the models for display, to me they are working prototypes and once I got to the point of "proof of concept" the models get set aside.

MSB: There are a number of new technologies entering our hobby such as 3D printing, CAD, CNC, LED lighting. What do you see as promising technology?

Dave: CAD and CNC are already well established in the hobby so I think the emerging technology is 3D printing.

MSB: What do you see as issues (if any) with these?

Dave: The biggest issue with all three is the learning curve in using CAD and CNC. Then a need is a service company that you can send your drawings to and they will cut to order. What is offered to the hobbyist like the

small laser cutters, CNC mills and lathes are expensive and not really affordable to your average builder.

The same is true with 3D printing. First is the steep learning curve to create the printing file. The low-end printers are not good enough (for models) so you need to send your files to a service using high-end printers.

MSB: Many of our readers know you have produced a series of instructional YouTube videos building the *Caustic*. How did you get into YouTube?

Dave: Watching forums and surveys, one of the issues brought up by builders was the lack of detailed building instructions. I thought of the video idea so a builder can actually watch a model in progress. My first thought was to produce DVDs so a builder can watch the building. Then with YouTube, it was so much easier to just publish the video on line.

MSB: What made you decide to choose the *Caustic* for the series?

Dave: This was again from forums and surveys. First, room to display a model was a concern with builders - big models take a lot of room. Second was ease of building so a first time builder of a plank on frame model can take on the build. The amount of time was a huge factor, many model builders did not like the idea of spending years on a model. The perfect model can be built in a matter of months.

MSB: Every builder has to decide on staying with a kit or jumping into scratch building. What is your advice for those looking at scratch building?

Dave: Don't jump into a big project, like a 36 gun frigate, that will end up going on for a long time and either the builder gets bored with it, or frustrated with the amount of work it takes. I suggest starting with a timbering package, which takes a lot of the time and work out of preparing the material, plus these timbering sets are usually part of a published build log or monograph.

MSB: The Lumberyard seems like a work of love for you and your wife Ev. You are one of the few sites that actually has true plank on frame kits available as well as a wide assortment of woods. Tell us how you got into offering these?

Dave: It all started at a modeling club at the Inland Seas Maritime Museum where the core membership were professional model builders. All were scratch builders and building for museums or on commission. The club thought it was a good idea to purchase wood in bulk at a lower price than

share it among the membership. Some of the members were very active Nautical Research Guild (NRG) members. Bob Bruckshaw, Harold Hahn and Charley McDonald suggested I pack up my van and take the wood to a NRG conference. That worked so well I continued going to conferences with a load of wood for years. The NRG members, who attended the conferences, were for the most part, the same crowd. In time I got "nice wood this year, but I still have what I bought last year." The market became saturated and sales fell making the trips not worth the effort. In the early days the NRG was run more like a private club and the Lumberyard was something like an exclusive wood collection that supplied the membership. You could say the Lumberyard was created for and by the NRG. The NRG was a small part of the ship-modeling hobby and by itself could not support the business so the Lumberyard expanded with ads in Ship In Scale, and built a web site. Milt Roth had a ship modeling business called the Dromedary. We would talk for hours on coming up with a semi kit to bridge the gap between the scratch-builder and the cheesy so called "museum quality plank on frame" Euro kits. This was a tall order to fill. First you needed to draw plans - which at the time I did not know how to do - to figure out how to cut parts. Laser cutting at the time was quit young. I needed to work with laser cutters to learn how to create the cutting files and they needed to figure out how to cut thin wood.

Finally I needed to mill wood on a production scale. I went to Harold and asked him if I could use his plans to produce a kit. After much debate he agreed but on his terms. Harold considered model ship building an art and a kit which was assembled, destroyed the "art" and it becomes a run of the mill hobby kit. Term one was no fittings. Either the builder had to make them or source them from somewhere else. Term two, the material provided could not be finished. Unfinished dimensioned wood was all that could be provided. The idea behind this was the semi kit was just the basic materials. The builder would use the semi kit as a starting point to learn the art. Gluing bits and pieces from a kit together is not an art. The builder had to develop the skills of taking a rough piece of wood and shape it, This is organic in nature and teaches the skill of form and fit, and finish. This teaches how to bring a project to final form by your hand.

The timbering set came into being and evolved into the timbering packages you now see offered.

MSB: You were mentored by Harold Hahn. A legend in the model ship world. How did your mentorship begin?

Dave: It began at the club meetings where I first met Harold. From there Harold would come over to my house to get wood and I would go over to

his house to talk with him and watch him work. I also would visit Bob Bruckshaw in his basement where he worked. Bob, Harold, August Crabtree and none other than Howard Chapelle were a ship-modeling clique - they all went to visit each other.

Bob came right to the point "I am not going to waste my time with you unless you show me your serious about this." Harold knew I was a trained artist working in commercial art and he said "Well you do show a little rough talent." From there mentorship grew and they actually let me touch things and try doing things in their shops.

MSB: Since most of us have only read about Hahn can you tell us what working with him was like?

Dave: My first thought is intense - with a needle sharp focus. He was a man on a mission. Having served a four-year apprenticeship in commercial art, I recognized (and Harold made it quite clear) he was the master and you were the student. Harold was soft spoken with an endless amount of patience. He was such a gentle man with a desire to create. All we know him for is his ship models but his paintings, sketches, prints and woodwork- ing completes his entire body of work.

MSB: What was the single most important principle he taught you?

Dave: There is no detail too small. Master the small stuff and you created a work of art - that as long as someone looks at it the more they see.

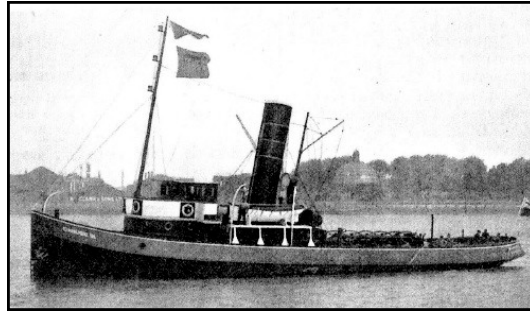
MSB: What advice would you give to someone building their first model?

Dave: Pick something small that you can complete in a relatively short time. Get a feel for the art see if it is something you want to pursue.

MSB: What is next on the horizon for you?

Dave: After the *General Hunter* will be the *Royal George*, a cruiser class war ship built on lake Ontario and the first war ship the British built. After the *Royal George* may be retirement and the drifting into obscurity and the business of model ship will become a personal hobby.

On the Cover



A contemporary full hull model of 'Danube III' (1924), a river and estuary steam tug. Constructed in the builder's style, the model is decked, fully equipped and rigged and mounted on modern display crutches. Built by Cochrane & Sons Ltd., Selby, Yorkshire, it measured 110 feet length by 27 feet in the beam and a tonnage of 233 gross. It was powered by a reciprocating steam engine of 900 horsepower producing a service speed of 11 knots. This tug was designed specifically for the handling of the large 2,000-ton hoppers and associated river plant in the confined waters of the river. It was employed in this capacity by the Tilbury Contracting and Dredging Company until the beginning of the Second World War. During the early part of the war 'Danube III' was employed in the ship examination service in the Thames Estuary, and as such, was manned by personnel from the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. Its career was short lived as it was sunk by a magnetic mine off Sheerness in October 1940.

Scale 1:48. Overall model: 382 x 758 x 173 mm; Base: 87 x 505 x 153 mm

Materials Used: bone; brass; cotton; glass; paint; varnish; wood

Source: rmg.co.uk

Selling a Model Ship

By: Gene Bodnar

If you become emotionally attached to a model ship that you've built and might even shed tears if you had to part with it, this article is not for you. If you love the ships you've built and truly enjoy looking at them and even have the storage space for them, this article is not for you. On the other hand, if you'd like some extra income and wouldn't be bothered with selling one or more of them, read on.

I have sold at least 75 scratch-built model ships, mostly plank on frame models, over the last 50 years or so to individuals, to businesses, and to museums. I can accurately state that every hand tool and power tool that I currently own, every book on ships, every piece of wood, every bit of the supplies and materials that I use, have all been purchased with other people's money. Of course, it doesn't bother me to sell my ships, because I can buy more tools, more books, and more supplies. I derive my pleasure from the process of building of the model, not from owning or viewing it after it's built. In fact, I could not care less what happens to it after it leaves my workroom, because I usually have another one on the workbench that gives me my desired pleasure and challenge.



**U.S.S. Constitution: Sold to the Constitution Museum
In Boston, Massachusetts**

If you think your models are not good enough to sell, you're wrong. Most people who buy models, with the exception of collectors, simply want a nice-looking model for their home or office, and they're willing to pay a reasonable price for one that looks good, not necessarily perfect. Most people are attracted to models that are generally colorful, are fully rigged, with or without sails, and contain lots of guns. Admiralty-style models are the least likely to be purchased by the average customer.

Most of the models I've built have been sold by one of three methods:

- 1) In hobby shops;
- 2) In antique shops; or
- 3) To private buyers through word of mouth.

In all three, you must become a good salesman. If you live near a hobby shop, they usually have completed models displayed in windows that are for sale. Develop a relationship with the owner of the shop; become their best friend. Get them to let you display your model for sale. Chances are, they will agree as you allow him to add 15-20% to your asking price for his own profit.



U.S. Brig Eagle: Sold to the Battle of Plattsburgh Museum in Plattsburgh, New York

Most of the ships I've sold have been through antique shops, especially those that have a heavy traffic of tourists through a fair-sized city. Tourists usually have wallets full of money, just waiting to be spent on something that catches their eye. One of my favorite places to sell models is an antique shop in Cooperstown, New York, the home of the Baseball Hall of Fame. The town itself only has about 2,000 residents, but every

summer about 300,000 tourists visit the Hall of Fame. Of course, most of the tourists tour the other stores as well, and out of that many tourists, there's bound to be a few who are interested in model ships and are willing to pay for them. A few years ago, one of my models that was sold there was to a man from Phoenix, Arizona.

Another way to sell ship models is through private buyers. In this method, it is best to distribute your calling cards to anyone who may be even remotely interested in models. On my own calling card, I state that I build custom models, too. At the bottom of the card appears my slogan "A model for every mantle". My antique shop store has several of my cards, which they pass out to interested parties. Once in a great while, I do get such requests, and these requests end up replenishing my stock of "other people's money." Furthermore, this is a good way to develop repeat customers, and even find collectors. I currently have two customers who have

purchased three models each, and both began their purchases by calling me from one of my calling cards.

Another potential way to sell a model is to tour museums to see what they have, and more importantly, what they don't have. As an example, I toured the Battle of Plattsburg Museum and found that they didn't have a model of the U.S. Brig Eagle on display. When I returned home, I knew that this would be my next model. Upon completion of the model, I brought it directly to the curator of the museum who obviously wanted it, but didn't have the money available. I agreed to have it displayed for 12 months "on loan" in the museum. If they didn't come up with the money within the 12-month period, the model would be returned to me. I received a check in the mail within 60 days of delivering it.



Bertha L. Downs: Sold to a commercial plumber in New York for display in his office

Advertising in a local newspaper is another way, but I haven't had much luck with this method. I've placed around 20 ads over the years, but I have only sold one small ship through this avenue.

Now, what's a fair price for your model? This is entirely up to you, but I can point out that you'll never get what your model is really worth, unless you're one of the top modelers in the country. In fact, you'll be lucky to get a dollar an hour plus the cost of material for your labor of love. But remember, what you do get is almost all profit, because the cost of material and supplies for building a model from scratch is really small. So if your model takes 500 hours to build, with say \$200 in materials, you could very easily sell it for \$700. Then you could buy more supplies, more books, etc., and still have money left over.

This is indeed the greatest hobby on earth. It provides the greatest feeling of accomplishment that any hobby has to offer, and it doesn't cost you a penny in any way whatsoever if you're willing to take the time to sell your products to the right kind of people and the right kind of places.

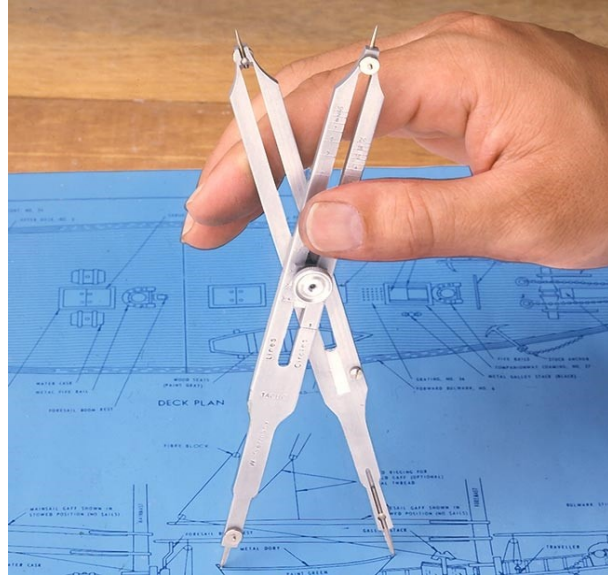


The Modelers Tool Chest

Proportional Dividers

Proportional dividers are very useful in model building. They are used for transferring measurements from one scale to another. This capability is necessary when drawings are to be made to a larger or smaller scale. They can also be used to divide lines or circles into equal parts.

They consist of two legs of equal length, pointed at each end and held together by a movable pivot. By varying the position of the pivot, you can adjust the lengths of the legs on opposite sides of the pivot so that the ratio between them is equal to the ratio between two scales. Therefore, a distance spanned by the points of one set of legs has the same relation to the distance spanned by the points of the other set as one scale has to the other.

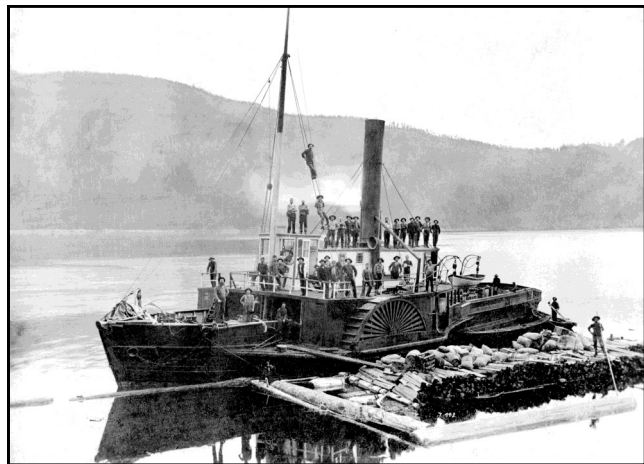


On the proportional dividers, a thumb nut moves the pivot in a rack-and-gear arrangement. When the desired setting is reached, a thumb-nut clamp on the opposite side of the instrument locks the pivot in place. A scale and vernier are provided on one leg to facilitate accurate setting. On less expensive models, the movable pivot is not on a rack and gear, and there is no vernier. The dividers may be set by reference to the table of settings that is furnished with each pair; they will accommodate varying ranges of scales from 1:1 to 1:10. However, it is better not to depend entirely on the table of settings. You can check the adjustment by drawing lines representing the desired proportionate lengths, and then applying the points of the instrument to them in turn until, by trial and error, the correct adjustment is reached.



S.S. Beaver

Beaver was the first steamship to operate in the Pacific Northwest of North America. She made remote parts of the west coast of Canada accessible for maritime fur trading and was chartered by the Royal Navy for surveying the coastline of British Columbia. She served off the coast from 1836 until 1888, when she was wrecked.



SS Beaver 1888, Archives item#: Bo P354

Beaver was built in Blackwall, England of British oak, elm, greenheart and teak, and was copper fastened and sheathed. Her length was 101 feet (31 m), and the beam over her paddle boxes was 33 feet (10 m). She was launched at Blackwall Yard on 9 May 1835 and left London on 29 August under the command of Captain David Home, and with the company's barque, Columbia, built at the same time and commanded by Captain Darby. Beaver was outfitted as a brig for the passage out, paddles unshipped, and came out via Cape Horn under sail alone. After calling at the Juan Fernández Islands and Honolulu, she arrived off the Columbia River on 18 March 1836 and anchored off Fort Vancouver on 10 April. Here the paddles were shipped and boilers and engines connected.

Beaver served trading posts maintained by the Hudson's Bay Company between the Columbia River and Russian America (Alaska) and played an important role in helping maintain British control in British Columbia during the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush of 1858-59. In 1862 the Royal Navy chartered her to survey and chart the coast of the Colony of British Columbia. She also provided assistance to the Royal Navy at Bute Inlet during the Chilcotin War.

Initially she had a rectangular boiler, generating steam pressure at under 3 psi, and was fed by seawater. Boulton and Watt engines are not pressure engines, rather they are vacuum engines. (Salt water feed was common in the early days and could be done with low pressure and frequent boiler blowdowns to prevent salt scale build up on the plates.) The salt water played havoc with the boilers as the salinity rusted the wall thickness of the boiler, which would rot out.



Beaver Wreck 1888, Archives: AM54-S4-: LGN 673

Beaver had to have a new boiler every seven years or so and went through multiple installations over her career. Over time the boiler pressure was upped, and 36 inch diameter cylinders replaced the original 42 inch cylinders.

Beaver played roles in the establishment of coal mines at Fort Rupert, and later in 1853, Nanaimo. She helped the Hudson's Bay Company establish Fort Victoria as a post in 1843. She would also ferry dignitaries such as the Governor back and forth between the Colony of Vancouver Island and the mainland, which until 1858 and the establishment of the Colony of British Columbia had come to be known as New Caledonia after the Oregon Treaty of 1846.

In her later life Beaver burned coal and would hire young men of the Skw̓w̓w̓mesh (Squamish) people of North Vancouver to work the holds as coal passers. The Hudson's Bay Company finally sold her in 1874.

A consortium that became the British Columbia Towing and Transportation Company in 1874 purchased her and used her as a towboat until 25 July 1888. On that day an inebriated crew ran her aground on rocks at Prospect Point in Vancouver's Stanley Park. The wreck finally sank in July 1892 from the wake of the passing steamer Yosemite, but only after enterprising locals had stripped much of the wreck for souvenirs. The Vancouver Maritime Museum houses a collection of Beaver remnants including the boiler and two drive shafts for the paddle wheels, one raised in the 1960s and the other returned from a collection in Tacoma, along with the boiler. A plaque commemorates the site of the sinking. Divers surveyed the wreck in the 1960s. However, when the Underwater Archaeological Society of BC did so in the 1990s, they found she had mostly disintegrated due to rot and currents.

Sources: Wikipedia, Vancouver City Archives

How Much Detail Is Too Much?

By Bill Edgin

There was an intriguing question recently raised on one of the model ship forums - How much detail is too much? This is an excellent question and one we each must be ready to answer as we build our models. While many factors inform this decision there are a few key points I think should factor into our success in executing a model.

We all have been there, a power high magnification lens strapped to our head adding a small detail, and then burying it under additional layers of rigging or decking etc. knowing full well that it will be difficult or impossible to see in the final model. Why then spend the time, effort and resources to add something that does not, at least at first blush, add to the model? Here are my thoughts.

Always leave them wanting more!

A good illusionist has a performance that does not break down whether the viewer is in the front row or the back. A model ship should offer the same experience. When someone approaches a model something catches their eye that they then follow deeper into the model. This may start with a yardarm then their eyes follow the lines down through the blocks to a pin rail and the coils of line looped over the pins. Hopefully they can picture a sailor coiling that line. A line, block or deck fitting that is out of scale, that seems to defy gravity by falling at an odd angle, or a finish that is too shiny or too brilliant will break the illusion and the viewer starts seeing the art of the modeler rather than feeling the illusion of looking into a ship.

My goal as a modeler is to provide an experience where the viewer runs out of the ability to focus on a detail because it is too small before they run out of details to see. Grabbing a magnifying glass should not break the illusion. This is the goal - sometimes achievable, sometimes very difficult, and yes, sometimes - impossible.

Scale tips the Balance!

We should always be cognizant of the scale of the model. There are many tools we have available to assist us in staying in scale. I print out Excel spreadsheets with typical sizes in the scale so I can quickly glance up and see what a dimension would be either real dimensions to scaled or vice versa. However, whatever we build must look realistic to the scale and sub-

ject matter. This can be challenging and requires an honest internal assessment of our skills. For a modeler this is not static level since our skills get better as we build and push our limits. However, the level of granularity to which we can effectively work is what dictates the level of details we can add to a specific model regardless of that model's scale.

As an example of why this minimum is important for us to know let me refer to – water. When I was a kid I loved watching the old black and white World War II naval movies. I have always loved ships and seeing the great sea battles recreated was and is still fascinating. However these moviemakers all faced the same problem. Ships are expensive props. So builders were brought in to build the largest model that the budget would bear. However no matter the scale of the model, water still follows the same laws of fluid dynamics. This is the reason many times these old movies look fake. The way the models bob on the water and the look of the water droplets in the spray break the illusion of scale. This is the reason most modern movies either build large sets (James Cameron built a Titanic model that was 90% of the original size) or use CGI to create the effects. They know water sets the limit on how they can effectively scale ship models for special effects.

If the model's scale sets the rules for the illusion, your skills set define the universe of details from which you could choose. Let me explain. If I know the smallest thing I can effectively and comfortably work with is about 1mm, then I know the level of granularity I can build. Looking then at a specific scale I can assess what possible details I can build in keeping with my limitation. 1mm at 1:24 scale would equate to 1". So I know I could effectively model details that on the real ship were 1" or larger.

However at 1:76, 1mm equates to nearly 3" so I know going into the scale that I should not try building anything less than 3" unless I can learn to work with something smaller than 1mm. Building something grossly out of scale, even if it is really small, will still break the illusion.

Treenails, Spikes and Rivets – Oh My!

Treenails can be a very important detail or a nail in the model's coffin (pun intended). Treenails, spikes, or rivets that are over scale, too few in number, or too obvious, make the viewer see the art of the modeler rather than the illusion of the ship. Again the scale you are building at makes a difference. On a 1:76 scale ship, a 2" treenail would be 0.67mm. On my current ship I use brass to represent the iron spike heads used through out the ship. Luckily I have documentation on many of the sizes of spikes used in the various areas. There have been areas where the size of the brass

spikes were ultimately so small that at my scale that they disappear completely in the grain of the wood. These details were in the ceiling planks below the berth deck. It would be impossible to see them even with magnification. If I had trouble finding them using my magnifying headset I decided not to add them. So they will not break the illusion not being there but would break it if I made them large enough to see.

However, I am also guilty of adding details that no one will probably ever see. Some modelers refer to this as "Building for God". These are put in because we want to. We enjoy the challenge and use it to enhance our skills learning to create details that can make something come alive. I know I am not alone in this. How many of us have painstakingly added detail after detail on a Brodie Stove that is then buried under a deck so it can barely be glimpsed through a grating? However we know if someone *does* get the correct light, the perfect position, and has eagle eyes, they will be able to see details and know that there are more details to be seen. The illusion does not break before their ability to see them does.

Wherefore Art thou Illusion!

Some modelers have made parallels between ship modeling to that of impressionist painters. I disagree. Recently I was lucky enough to go to the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam to see a huge collection of his and other impressionists' paintings. His work gives the viewer the *feelings or emotions* he was experiencing looking at his subject - his "impressions" of the subject. Subject details are unimportant and indeed the illusion falls apart when viewing the paintings up close. There you can see the art of the painter when applying the right colors with just the right brushstrokes to make it look like a field of sunflowers when viewed from a distance. No one would look at "Starry Night" and say that looks exactly like the view he saw out his asylum window in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. It is neither realistic nor meant to be. However we do feel the wonder, beauty, and hope he felt when looking to the stars from the fantastical manner he painted it.

I rather feel ship-modeling would fall more in the photorealism genre - paintings that look like photographs. You see greater details as you move closer to the work. On the same trip I had the opportunity to go through maritime museums in Amsterdam and Lisbon and see some of the world's finest examples of model ships. The models show an amazing amount of detail. While I did not get a sense of what the artist was feeling when he looked at the ship other than respect for the subject. I did feel what it might be like to look down at a real ship from an omniscient perspective. On some ship frames were left exposed so I could appreciate the art of the

ship's construction (notice I did not say the model's construction). On others the focus might be on the armament and sail control.

To further illustrate my point while at the Van Gogh museum most patrons would spend a few minutes up close with the artwork, while the greatest part of their time viewing the paintings from 6 feet or more away. In the Maritime museums people would look at a model from a distance then spend the majority of their time as close as possible looking at all the details. As in all great models, nothing broke the illusion of scale. I felt I could have spent hours looking at a model and still not seen everything in them – or at least that was my “impression”.

A Posse Ad Esse - *From possibility to being*

So how much detail is too much? Still a difficult question, however, knowing the granularity you can effectively work and the scale of the model with will help you in defining the catalog of those details that you *could* add. Then it is up to you to decide what you *will* add– it is after all, your model!

Heraldic Ship Badges



HMS Richmond Royal Navy

Motto:

A Deo et Rege
"From God and the King"

Ordered: December 1989

Builder: Swan Hunter, Tyne and Wear, United Kingdom

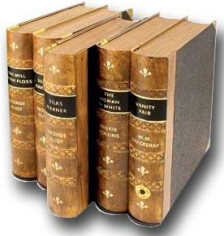
Laid down: 16 February 1992

Launched: 6 April 1993

Sponsored by: Lady Hill-Norton

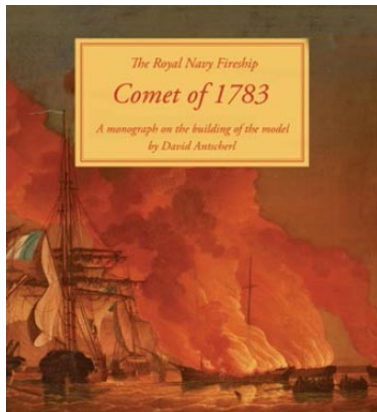
Commissioned: 22 June 1995

Status: in active service, as of 2015



The Book Nook

Books of interest for the Model Ship Builder and nautical enthusiasts



The Royal Navy Fireship COMET of 1783: A Monograph on the Building of the Model

by David Antscherl.

Published by Seawatch Books, 2013.

8 1/2"x11", 160 pages, case bound with jacket, color section, 6 sheets of plans.

ISBN-13: 978-9904041012

Fireships were naval vessels intentionally set on fire and launched against an enemy ship in order to burn it. At their prime in the age of sailing warships, they could wreak havoc like no other vessel. The *Comet* (1783), one of 9 fireships of the *Tisiphone* class, was a contract built sloop, ordered in 1781 and launched in 1783 by the builder, Moses Game. She served from her commissioning in 1793 until she was expended as a fireship at the attack on Dunkirk in 1800. Fireships represent a unique subject for the model shipbuilder, and David Antscherl has provided the scratch builder with a wonderful guide to completing a ship with fine lines and unique construction details.

Following a brief history of the *Comet*, Antscherl guides the builder through completion of the model starting at the point when the model is fully framed, and the middle deck and hull are planked over. As he explains in his preface, in order to avoid redundancies with his earlier [The Fully Framed Model, HMN Swan Class Sloops 1767-1780](#). Chapter One describes the fire deck, perhaps the most unique and interesting aspect of these vessels. The forward two thirds of this area is dominated by the fire room, which the author describes as a "huge incendiary device."

The following chapters describe the Weather Deck, Lower Counter and Bulwarks and Decks, Headwork, Quarter Galleries and other decora-

tion. Each chapter includes a variety of black and white photographs along with simple line drawings. A series of color photographs of the model are included which provide additional detail of this beautiful vessel.

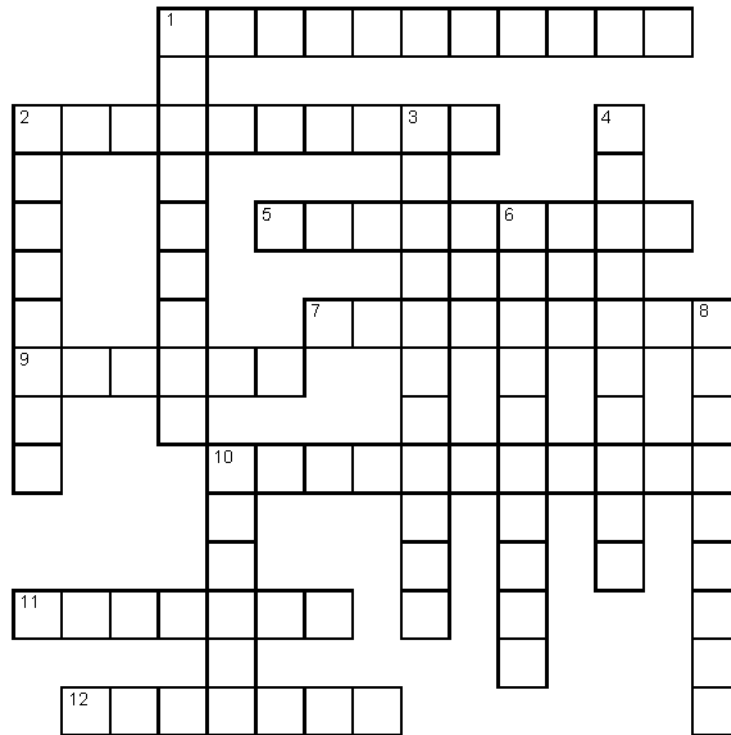
The book includes a set of 6 sheets of plans on mylar. Plan sheets include the Lines (Sheer, Half-breadth and Body Plan) based on the Admiralty plans; Fore frames, two sheets of Aft frames, the Framing plan and Planking layout for the weather deck. All plans are drawn to 1:48 scale.

In summary, this is another remarkably detailed and thoroughly researched book which, when combined with the *Swan* series, provides the model shipbuilder with an additional set of tools to apply to either scratch building or kit bashing and is well worth the cost.



Gene's Nautical Trivia

Nautical Phrases



Across

- 1** From the forward end of the bow to the rear of the vessel
- 2** Steer toward a destination
- 5** Significant distance between two vessels
- 7** Last segment of a rope
- 9** Present for duty
- 10** Repeat an order
- 11** Push off when landing in a boat
- 12** Let go

Down

- 1** Make haste
- 2** Determine the depth of a body of water
- 3** Steer directly into a wave
- 4** Secure, as hatches
- 6** Well-balanced, as a vessel
- 8** In front of a vessel directly along its centerline
- 10** Steadily slacken, as a line



Daffynitions

1. This is what your spouse will do to you after discovering how much money you have spent on the boat without first obtaining permission.

2. A device similar in nature to a mousetrap, in that it will drop down on your head or hand without warning. Also an opening for admitting water into the boat. _____
3. The part of a vessel near the side used for supporting one's midsection while one is engaged in the practice of heaving. _____
4. A stopping device for your boat. It works by contacting the bottom of the water body you are in, thus inhibiting forward motion. _____
5. A method of moving about when the anchor is deployed. _____
6. A shipboard method for eliminating lunch when seas become rough.

7. What you feed your spouse in order to obtain funding for additional boat-related purchases. _____
8. An area of a waterway in which you are prohibited from waking people who may be sleeping. _____
9. A long pole that allows you to be pulled overboard while trying to moor a boat. _____
10. Getting up to check the anchor at 0300. _____



Put on your thinking cap

The solutions to these puzzles may vary from those you propose. There may indeed be multiple solutions, but you are given one likely answer for each solution.

1. A captain of a sailing ship looks over the taffrail and throws something. Thirty seconds later, the captain dies. What could he have thrown, and why would it have caused his death?
2. Two men are sitting in a room by themselves. One looks at the other, and then realizes he's going to die. Why?
3. A man is found dead hanging from the center of an otherwise empty locked room. A puddle of water was found at his feet. How did he hang himself?

