



Wooden Boats: In Pursuit of the Perfect Craft at an American Boatyard

Michael Ruhlman

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There are fewer than 10,000 wooden boats in America, but the circulation of **WoodenBoat** magazine exceeds 180,000. What is it about these boats that has captured the popular imagination? With his "lively blend of reportage [and] reflection" (**Los Angeles Times**), Michael Ruhlman sets off for a renowned boatyard in Martha's Vineyard to follow the construction of two boats-Rebecca, a 60-foot modern pleasure schooner, and Elisa Lee, a 32-foot powerboat. Filled with exquisite details and stories of the sea, this exciting exploration of a nearly forgotten craft and the colorful personalities involved will enthrall wooden boat owners as well as craftspeople of every stripe, nature enthusiasts, and fans of compelling nonfiction.

Wooden Boats: In Pursuit of the Perfect Craft at an American Boatyard Details

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From Reader Review Wooden Boats: In Pursuit of the Perfect Craft at an American Boatyard for online ebook

Rob Loflin says

interesting but a little technical at times.

Steven Lancaster says

Book was interesting discussion of craft and those who perform. I am somewhat familiar with wood working, boats, and sailing; yet, this book used a lot of technical jargon that made it hard to follow. Probably not the best book for you if do not have knowledge in this area.

Ebee4 says

Relays the passion, reward and reason behind building wooden boats through the iconic Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway on Vineyard Haven.

Kevin A. says

Ruhlman is a food writer, so he has a bit of the zeal of the new convert about him. Overly romantic, but still a good book. And the first boat mentioned is the restoration of an Alden Malabar Senior, the kind of sailboat my grandfather owned 1957-1968.

Joelle Anthony says

I found this way more interesting than I expected to. I picked it up for research for a book I'm writing but got right into it for the most part.

Robin says

I enjoyed reading this book even though I really don't know anything about boat-building (although I certainly know more now than I did before reading the book). I was fascinated to learn about the history of interest in, and the actual process of modern-day boat building. I also was interested to learn about the people who do this work and I certainly gained an appreciation of what they do and how they do it. Another well-written book by Michael Ruhlman.

David Stanley says

I am, unashamedly, a fan of Michael Ruhlman. I also love boats. I grew up around sailboats, several of them wood, and I appreciate power boats as well. Ruhlman, again, brings all his skills of observation, description and writing craft to Wooden Boat. Ruhlman reminds us why craft and the "old ways" are so important to us in this modern age of disposability. This book, if you care about boats and the masters of their craft, will make you both sad and glad while it makes you think about the direction our 'modern craftsmen' might have to head.

Matt Danner says

Very good. This book is equal parts discussion of the boats themselves, the techniques for building and repair, the culture of wooden boats, and the people who make and use them. It goes into the technical parts enough to give an appreciation without becoming too deep. At times Ruhlman overly romanticized the community and the boats themselves, but those who appreciate the spiritual aspect of these boats won't mind. Overall it's an enjoyable read. I only wish there had been a few more pictures.

Gay says

I am a fan of "dying" arts such as wooden boat building. This book follows the lives to two die-hard wooden boat builders on Marthas Vineyard, MA. They are characters themselves, surrounded by more characters. They learn the trade and they become experts at fitting a complex wooden boat together with reverence for the stresses involved in sailing the open seas and the need for perfect logs with which to form the keels, planking, etc.

The wood comes from Suriname and is picked especially for each boat. The journey of the fellow who supplies the wood and searches for the perfect sized logs from many different species of trees is a delightful side story. The hardware is not 'off the shelf' so each unique ship has unique, made to order hardware. The sails are sewn above the boatyard in a loft.

There are ups and downs in this journey as we follow Nat Benjamin and Ross Gannon on their pilgrimage to build two magnificent ships. We all should find a passion that gives us such pleasure and appreciation from clients (and disappointment... customers who do not pay, a devastating fire).

A favorite scene is the description of the shop with all of its old tools and ancient equipment which are used in wooden boat building. There are only one or two newish tools used... and the floor is covered with a sketch of the dimensions of the final ship... referred to constantly. There are detailed plans, but there is an element of sorcery or "feel" that is involved in boat building... smoother here, thinner there, is that a bulge forming? The knack of planking the deck is part magic.

Loved the book.

Chris says

This is two books in one. The personal stories of sailing and wooden boats are brilliantly written. However, the sections about boatbuilding are poorly described and difficult to read through. This is disappointing considering the author did not have a boatbuilding background before the book. I wished he made it more approachable for non builders, but he didn't. It would have benefited from diagrams and pictures to better illustrate what was happening.

Aimee says

This is an intriguing look into the hard realities of making a living as an american craftsman. I only wish the "voice" of the narrator was a bit less intrusive. The real-life dramas and personalities are more than able to speak for themselves.

Perry Vayo says

I loved this book.

The author takes you on an effortless journey inside of a community and lifestyle that most people think is long gone. But, it lives on in fine fashion in small patches here and there around the country and the world. This story is about one of those places and the people who populate it. It's a trip into the past and a look at the present. If you love old boats (like I do) or even if you have never set foot on one, this is a great read. Read this book and you will begin to understand the connection of sailors to their boats and to the sea.

Scott says

Enjoyed this book, made me wish I knew how to sail. Gave me a new respect for wooden boats. It demonstrates the beauty of the process, craft and materials of the boats. Stories of the boatbuilders are interesting. Illustrates that what you make is who you are and vice versa. What is quality and genuineness in society today?

Jeremiahtatter says

Really great book. The detail pulls you in but it's pretty repetitive.

Ray Savarda says

Well written, interesting book. Develops a real appreciation for the many many hours required to really build a quality wooden boat, and the differences between something done by craftsment and the equivalent produced in a fiberglass, mass produced mold-driven process.
