The City of Seattle
Landmarks Preservation Board
Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

LPB 282/21

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: **The Center for Wooden Boats**
1010 Valley Street (Waterway 4)

Legal Description: Portion of Waterway #4 & Boren Avenue which lies south of a line between the NE corner of Lot 7, Block 74, Lake Union Shore Lands & the NOW corner of Lot 4, Block 73, Lake Union Shore Lands; which lies N of a line beginning at a point on W boundary of Waterway #4 which is 110' N of NE Corner of Lot 1, Block 74. Parcel number 302504-HYDR.

At the public meeting held on June 2, 2021 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of The Center for Wooden Boats at 1010 Valley Street (Waterway 4) as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

B. It is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the City, state, or nation.

C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.

D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or a method of construction.

DESCRIPTION

Introduction

The Center for Wooden Boats is in Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood, northeast of downtown in the central part of the city. The Center is located within and adjacent to

Waterway 4 along the south shore of Lake Union. The floating campus includes a boat shop, boathouse, oar house, and two open-air classrooms, all connected by floating walkways. At the entrance to Waterway 4 is an open-air pavilion, a portable carving shed, and a totem pole. The adjacent parcel includes the Center's new Wagner Education Center.

The earliest structures – the boat shop, pavilion, oar house, and boathouse – were included in the Center's original permit requests and are the primary focus of this report. The overall design of the Center's campus at Waterway 4 is a result of the vision and planning of its co-founders Richard (Dick) and Colleen Wagner. The couple, the Center's Board of Trustees, and the most-active members had long discussed their vision for a permanent campus, even before they had settled on Waterway 4 as the site. Their idea for a multi-faceted living museum on the water would take years to be realized, but the organization remained focused on the Wagners' vision, which guided the physical development of the site well into the 21st century.

Setting

The subject property is northeast of Seattle's Central Business District, about four blocks west of Interstate 5, and situated along the south shore of Lake Union. Lake Union is the smallest and most heavily urbanized of King County's the three major lakes, which include Lake Sammamish and Lake Washington. Located entirely within the Seattle city limits, the freshwater Lake Union currently has a surface area of 580 acres, a mean depth of 34 feet, and a maximum depth of 50 feet. The lake's main inflow is the Lake Washington Ship Canal via the Montlake Cut and Portage Bay, and the main outlet is the Hiram Chittenden Locks via the Fremont Cut, Salmon Bay, and Shilshole Bay. There are three much smaller freshwater lakes within the city limits, located north of the ship canal – Green Lake, Bitter Lake, and Haller Lake.

Lake Union shores are completely lined by an eclectic mix of public and private entities including marinas, floating home moorages, commercial docks, dry docks, industries, restaurants, and historical and recreational parks. There are 23 state-owned water access points known as waterways on Lake Union. They are managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources whose aquatic lands managers work with lessees to use the lands with care.

The area around the Center has undergone considerable change since the 1980s, including the demolition of older properties, the construction of multi-story commercial and residential buildings, the reintroduction of a streetcar service, and the redevelopment of vacant parcels into public park space. As a result, the area has transitioned from a largely industrial setting to a modern, mixed-use business and technology hub with public parks and access to the water.

The change also has included the redevelopment of older properties. Anchoring the South Lake Union shoreline is the former Naval Reserve Armory (860 Terry Avenue N), a City of

Seattle Landmark that is next door to the Center and now serves as the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI). The adjacent pier is home to the fleet of historic ships, including the landmarked Virginia V, Tugboat Arthur Foss, Fireboat Duwamish, and Lightship Relief/Swiftsure, maintained by the Northwest Seaport Maritime Heritage Center. Landmarked vessels moored nearby at the southeast portion of Lake Union include the MV Malibu and MV Thea Foss. Other nearby Seattle Landmarks include: the Ford Assembly Plant Building (1155 Valley Street), the American Meter and Appliance Building **(**1001 Westlake Avenue N), the Boren Investment Company Warehouse Building (334 Boren Avenue N), the Troy Laundry Building (311-329 Fairview Avenue N), the Terry Avenue Building (320 Terry Avenue N), and the Lake Union Steam Plant (1179 Eastlake Avenue E).

Site and Landscape

The Center for Wooden Boats occupies Waterway 4 and the public shoreline access addressed as 1010 Valley Street (parcel 302504-HYDR). The museum's new Wagner Education Center, completed in 2018, occupies the adjacent 1.35-acre parcel (408880-3175). Together, the two parcels have a street frontage of approximately 350 feet. Running parallel to Valley Street and forming the south boundary of the property is the South Lake Union streetcar line, which began service in 2007. A public parking lot is situated between the streetcar line and the new education center.

The shoreline is approximately 200 feet north of the streetcar line and is accessed by a series of crisscrossing concrete sidewalks. A park-like setting with trees and gravel landscaping serves as a buffer between the busy street and rail corridor and the water. A small, portable, open-air carving shed (2008) sits at an angle approximately 50 feet from the shoreline. An open-air pavilion (1984) near the shoreline marks the original entrance to the Center's floating campus and serves as an observation space from which to view the lake.

Two gangways, installed in 2011, access the floating campus, one from the south shoreline and another from the west. A network of floating docks connects the components of the floating campus, which include a boat shop (1982-83), boathouse (1988-89), oar house (1984), and two portable, open-air classrooms (2008). The arrangement of the floating docks has changed over time as the site developed and as museum needs evolved. Most recently, in 2010-11, the approximately 21,765 square feet of existing timber and concrete floats were rearranged and about 5,000 square feet were replaced with new floats.

Structures

<u>Pavilion, 1984</u>

The open-air, post-and-beam pavilion was the Center's first shoreside structure. Dick Wagner conceived of and designed it to serve as both an observation point for viewing Lake Union and a gateway to the Center's boat shop and livery. The Center hired architect Steve Johnson of

Seattle's Environmental Works to produce the drawings and plans that were submitted to the City of Seattle as part of permit #611697. Students from the schools of carpentry and boatbuilding at Seattle Community College built the pavilion. Center member Dennis Broderson donated and installed the roof's cedar shingles.

The pavilion has an elongated octagonal plan, measures approximately 50' 7-1/2" by 23' 8-1/2", and is 15'6" in height, according to Johnson's original drawings. King posts with cross ties, cross bracing, and chamfered posts support the hipped roof that is clad in composition shingles that replaced the original cedar shakes. A metal bronze sailboat weathervane crowns the building Gables mark pavilion entries on the north and south sides. An original pendant light hangs above each gabled entry. What once was a continuous bench rings much of the perimeter, with two access points to the open interior on the north and south sides, but parts of the bench have been removed. The interior is open and the roof structure is visible, with fluorescent-tube light fixtures hanging from the cross ties. The pavilion has a concrete foundation and wood-plank flooring that is flush with the ground, providing visitors a smooth transition from outside to the interior.

Documented and observed changes to the pavilion include:

- Parts of the perimeter bench have been removed (date unknown).
- The original cedar shake roof has been replaced with composition shingles in 2018.

<u>Boat Shop, 1982-83</u>

The boat shop was the Center's first structure at Waterway 4. It was constructed from an early 20th-century boat livery-turned-houseboat that was taken down to the flotation deck and rebuilt according to a design by Dick Wagner. He envisioned it as "an attractive post-and-beam structure with a hip roof…around which to plan the waterborne portion of our site." He further described it as "a little like a Victorian rural railroad station on floats." This building set the architectural standard for the entire park. The contractor, Camelot Construction, prepared the boat shop construction plans, and the Center hired landscape architect Barbara Oakrock with TRA architects to assist with the other drawings and plans that were submitted to the City of Seattle as part of the initial permit process.

The rectangular building measures approximately 20' by 45' and rests on a floating log platform. It is held in place by two steel pipe pilings that were driven in 2011, replacing multi-pile timber dolphins. The pilings extend several feet out of the water and are secured to the building's west deck with steel hoops. The shallow hipped roof has broad, flared overhangs with exposed rafter tails and open soffits that are supported by simple square posts with flared knee braces. The wide overhangs form deep exterior "porch" spaces. The north end of the building features a gabled projection supported by square posts; this projection was added in 2013. A gabled cupola is centered on the hipped roof. It has a north-south ridgeline, vertical beadboard siding on the north and south gable ends, and bands of windows on the

east and west sides. A metal stovepipe chimney projects from the west slope of the hipped roof near the peak. Both the main hipped roof and the gabled cupola have cedar shingle roof cladding.

The building exterior is clad in vertical beadboard cedar siding with wide, flat baseboards. Window and door openings have minimal, narrow trim. The east elevation includes the building's primary entry in the south bay; it is a Dutch door with a stained-glass window in the upper half. Occupying the center bay is a single-leaf sliding door mounted on an exterior track. It is designed to blend with the other flanking bays, which consist of a continuous band of double-paned windows, some fixed-sash and others sliding-sash, with metal frames set into a beadboard-clad wall. A metal gutter is attached to the rafter tails of the overhanging porch near the entrance and spans the south one-third of the east roofline.

Centered on the north elevation is a double-leaf sliding door mounted on an interior track that also is designed to blend with the exterior. Each door is clad in beadboard, has wide baseboards, and a pair of fixed, double-paned windows in the upper half. A gabled projection, added in 2013, extends north over the sliding door entry, and this is where small craft can be hoisted out of the water and into the building using the gantry that is affixed to the structure.

The west elevation includes a band of sliding-sash, double-paned windows with metal frames in both the north and south bays. The remainder of the west wall is clad in beadboard cedar siding and has no openings. The expanse of wall is used to store sails, Spars, and other items of length on wall mounts. This carries through to the south elevation where there are no openings.

The boat shop interior was designed to be multi-functional. When built, it needed to serve as the Center's primary museum building for the first several years. Inside the entry at the southeast corner is a small gathering space that was originally intended for public viewing of boat shop activities. The walls in this corner of the building are clad in vertical beadboard topped by a wide, flat trim piece. An enclosed office, originally designated a plan room, occupies the southwest corner space. Adjacent to the office along the west interior wall is a small enclosed storage space that originally functioned as the restroom. A workbench and tool storage area spans much of the west wall. Occupying most of the interior is an open workshop space for boatbuilding and gatherings for hands-on demonstrations.

The exposed roof beams facilitate the storage of long pieces of lumber, construction materials, and oars. The hipped roof rafter system above also is exposed, allowing the cupola windows to filter natural light into the center interior. Between the roof rafters, cedar tongue-and-groove exposed sheathing has been covered with insulation panels.

Documented and observed changes to the boat shop include:

- The building was repositioned several feet farther into the waterway and attached to newly driven steel piles in 2011.
- A gantry was installed at the north end of the building, necessitating the modification of the north roofline to include the gabled overhang in 2013
- The small restroom was converted interior restroom to storage space in about 1989.
- The original drawings do not show workbenches along the west interior wall, but there probably have always been benches of some sort.

Boathouse (Education Center), 1988-89

The boathouse was the second major floating building constructed at Waterway 4 and was the final piece of the Center's initial long-term building plan. The Center's initial permitting paperwork of the early 1980s said the following about this building:

> …The larger two-story education center and museum building would carry out the Victorian design and provide additional space for fleet maintenance and storage area. The ground floor would include a boat rental office, museum store, dry storage of rental fleet and canoes, and boat exhibits and would also double as a teaching/seminar and lecture hall…The upper floor would be used for sailing instruction, sail-making and repair, small-group seminars, rotating exhibits, public reference material and a small area for accessory administrative office space. The education center building would also provide wind and wave protection for the public boat livery operation.

The Center hired architect Keith Vaughan to produce plans for the new building, according to designs by Dick Wagner, and to navigate the permit process. They again hired contractor Camelot Construction to build the boathouse on site in 1988.

The two-story, wood-frame building measures approximately 25‘ by 50‘, according to Vaughan's drawings, and rests on a foundation of 10“ styrene foam logs with pressure-treated stringers and floor joists. A wood deck encircles the building, measuring approximately 6-1/2‘ on the north, south, and east sides, and approximately 5-1/2‘ on the west. The buiding is held in place by four steel pilings that were driven in 2011, replacing multi-pile timber dolphins. The pilings extend several feet out of the water and are secured to the building's east and west decks with steel hoops.

The building exterior is clad in horizontal drop siding and cornerboards. The shallow hipped roof with cedar shingles has generous overhangs. There is a skylight on the west-facing roof slope and a weather station instrument at the roof peak. The second story has a slightly smaller footprint than the first and modestly pokes through the broad overhanging eaves of the first story. The eaves at both stories are open and the paired rafters are visible. Both stories feature large three-sided bay windows.

The primary entrance is at the east end of the south elevation. The single-leaf, wood door with clear-glass panels and the adjacent multi-light window are inset. A built-in wood storage box with hinged double doors sits below the window. A three-sided bay window, containing a large multi-light unit flanked by multi-light casements, is centered on the second story.

The long west elevation has one opening on the first story – a single-leaf entry leading that accesses a secondary hallway. Adjacent to the entry are full-height, wood storage bays with hinged doors that were added in the mid-1990s. There are two three-sided bay windows on the second story.

The north elevation, facing Lake Union, serves as a sort of gateway to the water. Two pairs of wood-and-glass doors open to join the first-floor interior classroom with the sprawling outdoor deck. The doors are set within a projecting bay that includes tall, narrow casement windows at either end. A wide three-sided bay with four large, multi-light windows flanked by casements occupies most of the second story.

Lastly, the east elevation has four three-sided bay windows – two on each of the first and second stories. Additionally, there are two full-height, wood storage bays with hinged doors that were added in the mid-1990s between and adjacent to the first-story bay windows.

The primary entrance on the south elevation opens into a full-height, two-story entry hall with a reception desk. This area occupies the southeast corner of the first floor and accesses the restrooms, the open U-shaped staircase to the second floor, and a short hallway into the multi-purpose classroom and exhibit space in the north half of the building. There is an enclosed kitchen with a pass-through window opening along the south wall of the classroom. The secondary entrance on the building's west elevation opens into a short enclosed corridor that lines the west wall. It accesses the mechanical system spaces, the kitchen, and classroom. The first-floor interior spaces have painted, drywall-finished walls and wood floors, baseboards, and door and window trim. The classroom ceiling is unfinished, leaving the floor structure above visible. Fluorescent light fixtures, as well as small wooden boats, hang from the structure.

One staircase, in the building entry hall, accesses the second floor. The staircase terminates at a second-floor landing with a doorway that leads to a library and classroom space that occupies the north half of the second floor. An office, formerly that of the Dick Wagner, is situated in the northwest two-thirds of the second floor. These spaces have painted, drywall-finished walls and wood floors, baseboards, and door and window trim. The finished ceilings are pitched, conforming to the angles of the roof structure. Exposed roof beams pierce the finished ceiling.

Documented and observed changes to the boathouse include:

- The building was attached to four newly driven steel piles in 2011.

- The full-height wood storage bays with hinged doors on the east and west sides of the building were added in the mid-1990s.

Oar House, 1984

Jim Bucklin, a designer and builder of custom staircases, constructed the oar house in 1984 and donated it to the Center. The small floating building is located northwest of the boathouse, where it has been since about 2010 when it was moved from its original location next to the boat shop. Situated on concrete floats, the wood-framed structure has a pyramidal roof with flared ridges and cedar shingles. A metal oar blade weathervane crowns the small building. The exterior walls are clad in horizontal bands of cedar shingles, with both fishscale and square patterns. The building has just two openings – a wood-panel, Dutch door on the south-facing wall and a horizontal, rectangular window opening (now covered) on the north wall.

Originally, the oar house featured a square plan, but it now has small shed-roof additions on the east and west sides that more than double the size of the original structure. The additions are clad in various wood sidings including vertical boards and horizontal drop siding.

Documented and observed changes to the oar house include:

- The building was moved from its original location next to the boat shop to the current location northwest of the boathouse in about 2010.
- Two small shed-roof additions were added to the building after its relocation.

Other Campus Features

With the completion of the boathouse in 1989, the initial comprehensive plan for the Center for Wooden Boats had been realized. However, in order to function as a living museum, the campus needed to adapt to the Center's evolving programming needs. In 2007, a red cedar totem pole was installed at the site near the pavilion. The 24-foot pole came from the Tlingit tribe of Klawock, Alaska. It was a gift to the Center after Saaduuts, an artist-in-residence at the Center, carved a canoe as a gift to his wife's hometown. The Center's partnership with Saaduuts continued, and he used the small, open-air carving shed, erected in 2008, for another canoe carving project in 2012-13. This portable structure sits at an angle approximately 50 feet from the shoreline. Similarly, two floating, open-air classrooms designed by Dick Wagner were added to the water-side campus in 2008 and situated in their current location in 2011. These were part of a larger project that included the re-arrangement of the floating docks, the addition of 10 steel pilings to which the floating buildings and docks are secured, and shoreline restoration.

The Center's physical footprint expanded with the completion of the impressive Wagner Education Center in 2018. Designed by Tom Kundig of the Seattle-based firm Olson Kundig, it

occupies the location of the Belknap Glass Co. facility, demolished in 1990 as part of the redevelopment of this area into a park. The building was carefully sited to fit within the existing park landscape, to present a more visible face toward the street, and to serve as a gateway to the waterway.

SIGNIFICANCE

Lake Union & Neighborhood Context

Seattle's lakes and hilly topography are the result of glacial activity during the last ice age some ten to thirty thousand years ago. The retreating glaciers left behind what we know today as Lake Union and Queen Anne hill to the west. Prior to non-Native settlement in the mid-19th century, the central Puget Sound region and the Lake Union area were home to Native peoples, namely the Duwamish, which is an Anglicized name for du-AHBSH or People of the Inside Place. They established seasonal and permanent settlements along the area's bodies of water, including Lake Union, and a network of transportation routes connecting them. In their primary language Lushootseed, they called Lake Union Ha-AH-Chu, meaning littlest lake.

The rich natural resources of the lakes and forests attracted settlers and entrepreneurs to the Pacific Northwest in the mid-nineteenth century. Early European-American settlement concentrated near Elliott Bay, and abundant forests drew those with logging and mining interests inland, pushing out Native dwellers. David Denny and Thomas Mercer staked land claims in what is today's South Lake Union and lower Queen Anne neighborhoods. Small farms and mills developed along and around the freshwater Lake Washington and Lake Union as the foothills were cleared.

Historians credit Mercer with naming Lake Union at a celebratory gathering on July 4, 1854, at which he suggested the body of water would one day unite Lake Washington with Puget Sound. At the time, a natural dam near present-day Montlake separated Lake Union from the higher-elevation Lake Washington to the east. A small stream drained Lake Union into Salmon Bay on the west. Mercer's vision of uniting the lakes with Puget Sound would not be realized for more than 60 years.

Until then coal would be portaged to Lake Union, as did the Seattle Coal and Transportation Company, which brought the first industrial activity to the lake. In 1872 the company completed a narrow-gauge railroad that extended from the south end of Lake Union to the foot of Pike Street along Elliott Bay. The city's first lumber mill outside the Elliott Bay area developed along the south shore of Lake Union. It began in 1882 as the Lake Union Lumber and Manufacturing Company and became the Western Mill Company, owned by David Denny. A group of lakeside property owners – a who's who of early Seattle developers including Corliss P. Stone, Thomas Burke, Benjamin F. Day, and Guy C. Phinney, among others – formed the Lake Washington Improvement Company to promote development. Their improvement

company, using Chinese laborers, dug small canals with locks connecting Lake Union with Salmon Bay and Lake Washington through which logs and small boats could pass. The system could handle little more than floating logs, and Lake Union's full economic and industrial potential remained unrealized in the eyes of these businessmen.

Meanwhile, many of these same interests filed residential plats as capitalist Luther H. Griffith developed electric streetcar lines around Lake Union. He hoped to connect downtown to a townsite at the northwest edge of Lake Union that he had named after his hometown Fremont, Nebraska. Griffith's Seattle Electric Railway and Power Company completed the first extension to Lake Union in 1890, marking the beginnings of Westlake Avenue. He built a trestle along the west shore of Lake Union, eventually connecting to the north side, where the Seattle, Lake Shore & Eastern (SLS&E) Railway had a depot. The SLS&E connected Elliott Bay with timber outfits and coalfields north and east of the city, and it included a spur that also ran along the west side of Lake Union to the mill at the south shore. In 1892, the Northern Pacific Railroad acquired the SLS&E. Similarly, in 1893, David Denny's Rainier Power and Railway Company extended streetcar service north along the east side of Lake Union toward the new university campus. It crossed Portage Bay via a trestle that he built at Latona.

With improving transportation networks, residences began to fill the plats around the lake, although it took time for neighborhoods to develop. The industrial area at the south end of Lake Union was associated with the working-class Cascade neighborhood to the east and part of the Denny Triangle to the west that make up today's South Lake Union district. Industry attracted blue-collar newcomers and immigrants to the area, including Russians, Swedes, Norwegians, and Greeks, to work in the mills and lakeside shops. Over time, modest single- and multi-family residences dotted the landscape, many built between 1900 and 1930. Extant examples include the Jensen Block (601-611 Eastlake Avenue E, Seattle Landmark), the Grandview apartments (409 Eastlake Avenue E), the Brewster apartments (133 Pontius Avenue N). The Cascade School (333 Pontius Avenue N, demolished) served the neighborhood as did several houses of worship, including the St. Spiridon Orthodox Cathedral (400 Yale Avenue N, Seattle Landmark).

Activity on Lake Union and along the shorelines increased and diversified in anticipation of the 1917 opening of the Lake Washington Ship Canal. In 1913, the Ford Motor Company built a five-story assembly plant at south end of Lake Union (extant, 1155 Valley Street). The Lake Union Power Plant at the southeast corner of the lake was built in stages between 1912 and 1921 (extant, 1179 Eastlake Avenue E). William Boeing's original seaplane hangar was at the foot of Roanoke Street and was where he and Lt. Conrad Westervelt built their first airplane, the B&W in 1916. Transportation improvements included the completion of four double-bascule bridges spanning the ship canal – Ballard Bridge, Fremont Bridge, University Bridge, and Montlake Bridge – all of which remain in operation. It was not long before tall-masted ships, like the *Monongahela*, *Tonawonda*, and *Moshulu* that had been parked on Lake Union since World War I, were ushered out when the George Washington Memorial Bridge (Aurora Avenue) was completed in 1932.

With the new ship canal came changes to the lake itself including nearly two-dozen water access points that were cut into the shoreline to accommodate industrial use of the lake. More marine-related industry appeared on the lake, including the Lake Union Drydock Company (1919), which remains in business today, and an assortment of small boatyards. Over the next decade, several boat building outfits opened that would become known for their craftsmanship and production of exceptional vessels. These included Grandy Boatworks, the Blanchard Boat Company, Prothero Boat Company, and Jensen Motorboat, to name a few.

Lake Union remained decidedly industrial during World War II, with much war-related activity around the U.S. Navy's new armory and the nearby Lake Union Dry Dock. Following the war, seemingly everyone wanted a piece of the lake. By the late 1940s, Lake Union was "one of the busiest and most highly developed industrial areas of the city." Five flying services used the lake while the old boatyards jockeyed for shoreline space with fishing companies, gravel and asphalt plants, and more than 1,000 floating homes. The character of the South Lake Union area, in particular, included a commercial laundry, light manufacturing facilities, transportation services, and others, with pockets of aging working-class houses.

Significant post-war-era changes were on the horizon, as signaled in 1956 by the closing of the gas plant anchoring the north end of the lake. This was around the time that a young Richard (Dick) Wagner arrived in Seattle and lived in houseboat on Lake Union. He later recalled of this period: "one thing I noticed about Lake Union was that it wasn't used for recreation purposes, it was used to park boats, and Friday nights or Saturday mornings they would all leave and go through the Locks and come back on Sunday, so Lake Union was a parking spot and a highway for them. That kind of puzzled me." Wagner's observations illustrated a growing interest in the lake as a public recreational space. Indeed, various interest groups participated in the public discussion and planning for Lake Union and its shorelines in the late 1960s and 1970s as the City worked to implement the Seattle Shoreline Management Program. Adopted in 1977, this program ultimately defined how the lake developed and could be used (more on this topic is included in the next section).

Maritime heritage interests gained a foothold on Lake Union beginning in 1964 when a grassroots group led by philanthropist Kay Bullitt, Seattle City Councilperson Wing Luke, and restaurateur Ivar Haglund known as Save Our Ships formed to save the *Wawona*, the largest three-masted sailing schooner ever built in North America. The group later became Northwest Seaport, a *non-profit dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the maritime heritage of Puget Sound and the Northwest Coast, that today maintains a floating fleet moored at Lake Union Park*. Meanwhile, traditional wooden boat enthusiasts organized in the mid-1970s and formed the Center for Wooden Boats in 1978. The opening of their boat shop and livery at the south end of the lake in 1983 began a years-long transformation of that area, from a polluted industrial shoreline to a recreational and educational destination. The Northwest Seaport Maritime Heritage Center and the Museum of Heritage and Industry (MOHAI) completed the transformation of the lake's south shoreline in the early 2010s.

Maritime Heritage

The rich maritime history of the greater Puget Sound region has been shaped by generations of those who built, sailed, and repaired boats, from the canoe culture of the native Coast Salish peoples to the varied traditions of immigrant boatbuilders. In time, regional boat styles and methods of building emerged, especially with the availability of an abundance of raw materials and advancing technologies.

Boat shops were found along the shorelines throughout Puget Sound. It was only after the opening of the Lake Washington Ship Canal in 1917, which connected the freshwater Lake Union with the saltwater Puget Sound, that boat shops popped up on Lake Union. Prior to this, there was just one boat shop on the lake near the University of Washington campus – that of George Pocock, the famed British designer and builder of racing shells, including those that led the UW to its 1936 Olympic gold medal in rowing. Pocock worked out of the UW Canoe House for many years, eventually relocating to a bigger boat shop on the north side of Lake Union. The opening of the locks enabled Lake Union to develop as a boatbuilding center and was an ideal setting that protected boats from the harsh winter weather and saltwater environment of Puget Sound. The first to open was Lake Union Drydock Company (1919), which remains in business today, followed by shops opened by N. J. Blanchard, Vern Grandy, the Prothero brothers, Jim Chambers, Vic Franck, the Schertzer brothers, Antonius Jensen and his sons George and Anchor, and others. In addition to the builders, local boat designers included Leigh Coolidge, Bill Garden, Ted Geary, and Ed Monk, Sr.

Lake Union boat shops of this era were hives of activity, particularly when big jobs came in requiring the hiring of more shipwrights. The shop buildings were substantial wood structures built on pilings, with marine railways or drydocks, multiple bandsaws, and shop trucks. The proliferation of boat shops led to the need for training programs, one of which was Seattle's Edison Technical School. The Seattle School District began offering boatbuilding classes at Central II in 1917 and then at Broadway High School. In 1936, the district rented property along the north shore of Lake Union at 1115 N Northlake Way that included a building, dry dock, and machinery. Student-built craft were sold at open houses. The Edison Boat Shop transferred to Seattle Community College in 1966, which relocated its marine carpentry classes in 1975 to its Gompers Branch location in Rainier Beach.

Boathouses, or liveries, stood in stark contrast to boat shops on the waters of Puget Sound and the inland lakes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Several boathouses appeared on the shores of Lake Washington during this early period, often at the base of a streetcar line. Boathouses at Leschi Park and Madison Park were popular destinations of day-trip visitors in the early 1900s. These floating wood buildings ranged from modest to fanciful, with Victorian ornamentation such as turned porch posts, spindlework, and finials, where people could rent the finest rowboats and canoes available.

The emergence and proliferation of fiberglass as a building material in the 1960s marked the beginning of the end for most of Lake Union's boat shops and for traditional small craft shops everywhere. More broadly, the industry faced threats from new regulations about boat safety and design, prompting the formation of a wooden boat advocacy group on the East Coast that became the Traditional Small Craft Association. These pressures led to a renewed interest in wooden boats in the Pacific Northwest that included the formation of the advocacy group Save Our Ships (later Northwest Seaport), the launching of *Wooden Boat* Magazine, and the first wooden boat festivals in Seattle and Port Townsend. The festival on Lake Union led to the organization of the Center for Wooden Boats, which established a floating campus on the lake in 1983. They continue to host this annual wooden boat festival, and their presence in South Lake Union began a renewal of the south shoreline that is today steeped in maritime heritage. Similarly, the festival at Port Townsend in 1977 led to the formation of the Wooden Boat Foundation, which today manages the Northwest Maritime Center and also continues to host its popular annual boat festival.

Today, many maritime heritage organizations thrive throughout Puget Sound. They are connected to one another through the new Maritime Washington National Heritage Area, one of 55 regions designated by Congress with rich history and culture that tell stories important to our national history.

The Center for Wooden Boats

The story of Seattle's Center for Wooden Boats begins in 1968 when Dick and Colleen Wagner started a traditional boat rental business behind their floating home at the north end of Lake Union. Over the next decade, the Wagners' home at 2770 Westlake Avenue N, known as The Old Boathouse, became a gathering place for wooden boat enthusiasts and anyone interested in history, boats, and woodworking. In 1976 they started hosting monthly educational meetings, drawing as many as 40 people. It was during these meetings that "the group was told of the long-nurtured fantasy of a small craft museum where people can play with the boats and handle the tools." The idea was well-received, and over time, this group would turn fantasy into reality. In 1978, six individuals organized and incorporated the Center for Wooden Boats and began the long process of finding a permanent home for the organization.

The Wagners and The Old Boathouse

Dick and Colleen Wagner are considered the co-founders and visionaries of the Center for Wooden Boats. Fellow founding member and lifelong wooden boat enthusiast, Marty Loken, recently said that today's Center is "pretty much what Dick and Colleen imagined and doodled on the backs of envelopes in the 1970s. They had a surprisingly clear vision of what it could be." Loken also said that it was Colleen who encouraged her husband to start the wooden sailboat livery at their houseboat, and her inspiration and creativity resulted in the museum that we know today. Another early Center volunteer recently recalled to their sons Michael

and David that Dick was the battery and Colleen was the spark plug, which goes a long way in explaining their success together.

Dick Wagner (1933-2017) only came to appreciate traditional wooden boats after he moved to Seattle. A native of New Jersey and a graduate of Columbia and Yale universities, got his first glimpse of Lake Union in 1956 when he took a summer job at Tucker and Shields, a small Seattle architecture firm whose offices overlooked the lake. Architecture degree in hand, he returned to Seattle for good the following year and briefly worked for Boeing before working for architect Fred Bassetti. By 1958 he was living in a houseboat at the north end of the lake. Among Dick's neighbors in the small houseboat community was Colleen Luebke (1929-2020), a teacher and graduate of the University of Oregon, whom he married in 1964. When he met Colleen, she lived with housemates at 2770 Westlake Avenue N in the very houseboat where she and Dick would raise their two sons and live the rest of their lives.

Dick recalled that he had not been that interested in boats until he moved to Seattle. He recalled seeing many wooden boats on the water and that shops were still building and repairing them. His first boat purchase, in the early 1960s, was a 24-foot schooner designed by the skilled shipwright Bill Garden. Dick was hooked. By the mid-1960s, as boat repair shops closed and wooden marine vessels rotted around them, the Wagners began collecting small boats. They purchased two small 12-foot wooden sailboats called Beetle Cats from the Concordia Company, Inc. of South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Named for the Beetle family of New Bedford, Massachusetts, who originally designed and built them, the Beetle Cat design turns 100 years old in 2021. Their early collection of boats also included El Toros, small eight-foot prams that remain a mainstay of the Center's youth education programs.

In 1968, the Wagners started a traditional boat rental business at their houseboat, and within a decade they owned a few dozen small boats. It was called The Old Boathouse, and Dick called it "the kindergarten of hands-on maritime heritage museums…We not only taught our visitors how to row, paddle and sail traditional boats, but we also had Saturday regattas at our floating home".

For many, this was their first real exposure to small classic wooden boats. Through informal regattas and rowing races, they had an opportunity to row and sail so many different designs and types of small boats. The interactions drew many to the world of small craft restoration and collecting as well. Enthusiasts started meeting monthly at The Old Boathouse for discussion and lectures, and the group evolved into the Traditional Wooden Boat Society. With aspirations for a new site, Wagner purchased the old and dilapidated Leschi Boathouse in 1969 with the hopes of restoring it to serve as a boat livery, art gallery, and café. The sprawling gabled structure had floated at Leschi Park on Lake Washington from about 1905 to 1925, when it was moved to Lake Union. Wagner towed it to the site of the old Grandy Boatworks Co. at 2540 Westlake Avenue N in 1970. It was about half restored when it caught fire and was destroyed in January 1971.

A turning point for the group came in the spring of 1977 when John Gardner (1905-1995), a boatbuilder, maritime historian, and the father of the wooden boat revival on the east coast, discovered the Northwest. Gardner was the associate curator of small craft at the Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut, the largest maritime museum in the United States. He also founded the Traditional Small Craft Association and was a founding member of the Museum Small Craft Association. Gardner was invited to speak on the history of American boatbuilding at Evergreen College in Olympia, and Wagner asked him to talk with his group in Seattle. Wagner recalled, "He gave us a pep talk about putting our ideas into action. Gardner said that the world was ready for our museum concept. With those words ringing in our ears, we planned our first public event, the Wooden Boat Show at the Lake Union Naval Reserve Base, in July 1977." Years later, Wagner called Gardner the patron saint of the Center for Wooden Boats, that it was "through his writings and leadership, he gave our small craft heritage a legitimate presence in maritime museums. He gave hands-on programs credibility in a museum environment."

With the success of the festival, the group decided to incorporate as the Center for Wooden Boats. Those signing on behalf of the organization were the Wagners, Marty Loken, Pat Ford, Robert Chapel, and Land Washburn. They described the organization's purpose as follows:

> To obtain, preserve and disseminate knowledge of traditional small watercraft; to offer educational displays and services related to traditional wooden boats; to build, restore and preserve traditional small craft, particularly wooden boats unique to the Northwest region of the United States; to share information, traditional small-boat plans, small-craft history and woodcraft skills with others.

The organization's inaugural newsletter, called *Shavings*, included their aspirations for a museum site and a report from Dick on the search for a permanent home. He had been working and reworking plans for years, and he now concluded that "the Center should continue looking into availability of the so-called 'asphalt plant,' a prime piece of waterfront adjoining the U.S. Naval Reserve facility on Lake Union." He was referring to Waterway 4, a site that would take years for the organization to secure.

A Vision for a Museum and Securing Waterway 4

Lake Union groups had been eyeing Waterway 4 for years. It was the site of a former asphalt plant that the City of Seattle now owned. Before that it was home to a transportation office and hub for the Red Arrow Coal and Red Devil Coal companies. In 1968, the Lake Union Association, a newly formed group of residents and property owners interested the development and beautification of the area, urged the City to convert the site into a public park. Proponents of the idea, including the Floating Homes Association (FHA), thought a park at the south end of Lake Union "would compliment [sic] the much larger park planned for the Gas Company property at the north end of the Lake".

This discussion was happening concurrently to the Wagners starting their traditional wood boat rental business, and Dick Wagner made his way into this broader conversation. As a member of the FHA's Development & Design Committee in 1969, he presented to the City on behalf of the Association a proposal for a marine-themed park at the former gas plant property. He pitched the park as:

> *a lively waterfront area with such people-serving attractions as: a boat launching ramp; 'The Old Boathouse' for rental of small sail and row boats; headquarters for the Harbor Police and (maybe) the long needed Lake Union Fireboat; a snack bar and restaurant…; a pier for lake tour boats and two of three public moorage for access to the park from the lake for those coming by boat.*

He also supported landscape architect Richard Haag's idea that the park be designed to forge a link with the past by preserving one of the old gas plant structures. Haag ultimately carried out this idea as the park's designer, but it did not include any of the marine-themed amenities Wagner had pitched. Wagner presented this park proposal 14 years before the Center for Wooden Boats opened its museum at Waterway 4, and, importantly, it represents some of his earliest ideas for the organization's future campus.

Throughout the 1970s, Wagner and the Center's Board of Trustees studied and drafted plans for four different unused, publicly-owned sites on Lake Union. By late 1979, the organization was running several programs out of the Wagners' houseboat, and it needed a bigger space to accommodate its mission. The Center settled on Waterway 4 and presented its plan to the City in April 1980. Within weeks, The Old Boathouse was forced to close shop at 2770 Westlake Avenue N "due to a lease problem." In June, an emotional and upset Wagner delivered in his sailboat *Sindbad* the Center's 20 wooden boats to the waterfront homes of friends who promised to take care of them while work to secure Waterway 4 continued.

Founding member Marty Loken recently recalled that it was through "pure persistence" that the Center ended up at Waterway 4. In addition to a site permit, the Center needed a Shoreline Management permit, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit, hydraulic permit from the State Department of Fisheries and Game, sewer permit, electrical permit, more insurance to relieve the City of liability, and a bond to safeguard the City from having to remove sunken or abandoned structures. Wagner's frustration with the bureaucracy filtered through to nearly every issue of the Center's newsletter in the early 1980s. In one example he said the process involved so many memos, studies, and reports that it was "like a visit to a distant planet, where the breath of life is paper." He said, "all the people were friendly and sympathetic," but they were "charged with following rules and regulations, no matter how baffling."

One of those friendly and sympathetic people was Elsie Hulsizer, then a Senior Land Use Specialist at the City's Department of Construction and Land Use whose position gave her "a ring-side seat for observing the controversies around development taking place in South Lake Union." She met Wagner the day he brought to the City his plans for Waterway 4. She recalled

his enthusiasm as he unrolled a set of plans with “picturesque wooden buildings with beautiful wooden boats alongside, all looking as if they were from another era…Dick explained the docks and the buildings, as if he expected to move in tomorrow.” This application was an early test of the Seattle Shoreline Management Program (SSMP), adopted in 1977, that included goals and use regulations for Lake Union. The program, Hulsizer said, was ground zero for issues of water-dependent uses vs. nonwater-dependent uses, shipyards vs. marinas, and recreation vs. industry.

Hulsizer recalled that, “Petitions, appeals, and court cases accompanied each permit application,” and that “South Lake Union, where Waterway 4 is located, became the center of the battles.” The most fought-over permit was a proposed marina, restaurant, and retail complex immediately east of Waterway 4 which would replace the industrial H. C. Henry Pier. Hulsizer advised Wagner that, in her experience, neither the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which owned the waterway, nor the Harbor Patrol, which administered Seattle’s waterway regulations, were likely to authorize any structure more extensive than a temporary moorage float. DNR’s concern about the Center’s permit was that it would occupy a public waterway that might be needed for industrial water-dependent uses. Getting approval, she cautioned, “would be a long process and might require changes to either city regulations or DNR regulations or both

To address the challenges that permit requests were raising, the City’s Department of Construction and Land Use (DCLU) did a major study and revision of the SSMP. The 1977 version of the SSMP sought to encourage a diversity of uses on Lake Union shorelines by allowing a full range of uses around the lake. But new permit requests were consistently for commercial and nonwater-dependent uses resulting in the loss of industrial water-dependent uses. DCLU’s study included planning for all Seattle shorelines, inventorying the shorelines to determine uses, identifying land suitable for water-dependent uses, and planning for how to expand public access to the water. Meanwhile, as the reality of the process became apparent to Wagner, he began lobbying the mayor and city council members, the harbor patrol, and legislators, while gathering support from wealthy and well-connected individuals.

The first permit approvals came in December 1982, followed by a shoreline permit on January 8, 1983, and a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit on January 17. The last city requirements were satisfied in May, just in time for the summer boating season. Wagner recalled of the process, “Our slow steps (34 months) through the halls of bureaucracy broke a trail. Other organizations can follow our path to their neglected waterways and revitalize them for the greater public benefit…Words, drawings, patience and a sense of humor were the equipment we used to scale Mount Permit.”

Years later Hulsizer, herself a wooden boat enthusiast and author of two books on sailing adventures, joined the Center’s Board of Trustees at Wagner’s request. While they never spoke with one another about the Waterway 4 permit process, the story told through their

individual recollections reveals that this location was a key battleground in the debate for how South Lake Union and public waterways were to be used.

While Wagner was working through the permit process, in 1981, Lon and Mary Israel heard through the grapevine that a group in Seattle was planning a hands-on small craft museum. Wagner shared with the Israels over dinner the mission and vision for the Center. Two weeks later, the Israels and their Oakmead Foundation of Sausalito, California, donated $40,000 to turn the vision into reality. Their gift gave the Center its boat shop and one-third of what was needed for the boathouse.

The Vision for a Living Museum Becomes Reality

The Center hired landscape architect Barbara Oakrock in 1981 to help navigate the tedious permitting process. She worked closely with Dick Wagner to prepare and submit plans for the site and its first building – the boat shop. For the shoreside portion of Waterway 4, they envisioned a park that opened the south end of the lake to the general public for the first time since the Second World War. Trees would be planted to define the street-side boundary and would funnel visitors to a "gateway pavilion" near the water's edge and to a ramp and floating dock. The vision for the floating structures was "to reflect a scale and character of a turn-of-the-century Seattle waterfront boat livery and small boat building facility." To achieve this, the plan called for a boat shop, an oar house, and a larger two-story education and museum building, each connected to a floating dock system.

This vision would take years to develop since it was largely dependent on raising funds, gathering in-kind donations, and volunteer labor. The first priority was to complete the boat shop, which was a recycled houseboat originally built as a boat livery in the early 1900s. Wagner envisioned it as "an attractive post-and-beam structure with a hip roof…around which to plan the waterborne portion of our site." He further described it as "a little like a Victorian rural railroad station on floats." Indeed, "the architectural standard for the entire park will be the boat-building shop."

A contract to build the boat shop was let to Camelot Construction of Redmond, a project that cost $29,000. The existing structure was stripped down to the log flotation and rebuilt according to Wagner's plans, the work taking place at a rented moorage in Ballard. It was completed by late 1982, but the permit process pushed the opening date into 1983. The shoreline management permit, approved in late 1982, had required certain site conditions before a master-use permit was issued. These conditions included a code-compliant public pathway to the shoreline, signage identifying the site as "Waterway No. 4 Public Access Improvements," and restricted access to the floating buildings when the Center is closed. Shoreline amenities such as bike racks, picnic tables, and trash receptacles would be the Center's responsibility to maintain. These last requirements were satisfied in May, and the Argonaut II, a classic wooden yacht built in 1922, towed the boat shop from its temporary moorage on the Lake Washington Ship Canal to Waterway 4 on May 25.

The Center next turned attention to improving the shoreline, which had functioned as an industrial asphalt plant for years. When the Center took responsibility for the site, Wagner described it as “a pothole wasteland,” and “a blighted field of gravel over a fill of miscellaneous rubble,” where no plant could live. Following the City’s initial clean-up of the site, the Center installed basic amenities including a picnic table, trash receptacle, and bike rack by early 1984 and, with the assistance of architect Steve Johnson of Environmental Works, submitted plans for the pavilion. With a $5,000 grant from the Seattle Foundation and other donations, Wagner enlisted the skills of Seattle Central College’s schools of carpentry and boatbuilding to build the structure. Donated roof shingles were installed by CWB member Dennis Broderson. Sitework and landscaping rounded out the pavilion project, with donated materials and time by the local service club CIVITAN. The pavilion and immediate landscaping were completed in 1985.

Meanwhile, the small floating oar house (also known as the boat rental shop) was taking shape in the spring and summer of 1984. Jim Bucklin, a designer and builder of custom staircases, was building the oar house as a donation to the Center. The ancillary building facilitated boat rental services and served as storage for oars and life preservers. It was anchored in place next to the boat shop in 1984 but was later moved to its current location.

In 1986, the massive, three-masted schooner *Wawona* arrived at Waterway 4, where Northwest Seaport volunteers worked to restore the vessel while offering public tours. It remained moored alongside the Center until 2009 when it was tugged away for dismantling, unable to be saved.

The Center’s long-term plan called for the completion of a two-story education center (boathouse) – the final piece of the original vision – by decade’s end. The donation of a floating foundation from Hurlen Marine Construction and the pledge of a matching grant of $32,000 from the Oakmead Foundation jumpstarted planning for the building in late 1986. Further encouragement came in the form of a grant from Burlington Northern Foundation, which not only supported the Center ($75,000) and Northwest Seaport ($75,000), whose *Wawona* schooner moored and being restored at Waterway 4, but also challenged the City to begin work on a South Lake Union park as a maritime heritage destination.

The so-called “Operation Facelift” began in February 1988 with a convoy of dump trucks delivering 300 cubic yards of topsoil, a donation of Leary Construction. This was followed by 591 volunteer hours in March and another 498 hours in April to prepare the site for the planting of a trees, flowers, shrubs, and rolls of grass. The Center hired architect Keith Vaughan to produce plans for the boathouse/education center and to navigate the permit process. They again contracted with Camelot Construction, but this time the construction was done in situ during the last half of 1988. The Center christened it the *Boathouse* and proudly announced its completion in their January/February 1989 newsletter *Shavings*. It was dedicated on April 6.

With the opening of the boathouse, the last piece of its planned development for Waterway 4 was complete. The steady growth of the organization and its programming was equally impressive, and 1989 had been a banner year. The Center reported that about 50,000 people visited the site that year, about half repeat visitors. Their collection grew that year from 80 to 100 historically significant small craft, which at the time represented more than 50 percent of all small craft in West Coast museum collections and more than 10 percent of those in U.S. museums. In 1989, the Center hosted hands-on workshops on plane making, model making, lapstrake boatbuilding, strip plank boatbuilding, brightwork, casting, laminating, sculling, sailing, Salish Indian maritime skills, and boat handling for school grades five through eight from Alternative School 1. Special events included their 13th annual Wooden Boat Festival, spring and fall regattas, a Kid's Day, a marine gear sale, launchings of three student-built boats, and much more. The Center provided 16 lectures and demonstrations that year, including one by Norman Blanchard, who built many vessels at the Blanchard Boat Yard on Lake Union. Today, the Center has seven Blanchard Junior Knockabouts, a 20-foot open sloop built at the Blanchard Boat Yard from 1933 to 1947. These boats make up the bulk of the Center's adult sailing rental fleet.

During all this growth, the CWB maintained its original vision preserving and sharing knowledge of traditional small watercraft. The mid-1990s programming truly emphasized education and hands-on experiences, doing so through an impressive variety of activities that reached all kinds of people. Programs in 1995 included year-round sailing instruction for homeless teenagers, weekly boat rides for people with AIDS, sailing instruction programs with local schools, and "All Aboard" during which 10 or 15 "at risk" teenagers participate in summer-long instruction in sailing, rowing, seamanship, and woodworking. It is important to emphasize that Colleen Wagner's influence on the organization can be seen in these educational programs, and, still today in the popular toy boat building program and signal flag making activities.

Dick Wagner continued to run the all-volunteer organization, but by the mid-1990s the governing board recognized the need for an executive director to guide operations. In early 1996, the Center announced the appointment of Bob Perkins, who had been managing the boat shop, to fill the role. He worked alongside Wagner, who continued as founding director to do what he did best – planning and fundraising. Grant funding enabled the Center to hire part-time staff. The following year, Perkins reported that the Center was operating with its largest paid staff that included a paid livery person, Meg Trzaskoma; a youth program coordinator, John Brennan; a public service manager, Margaret Huchting; and a boat shop manager, Dierk Yochim. Various volunteer committees on collections, programming, and marketing took their cues from the board and staff. These structural and hiring moves laid the foundation for the Center to develop over the next two decades into the multi-faceted and professionally run living history museum that it is today.

In 1999, the Center acquired its best-known and most well-documented boat, the R-class racing yacht *Pirate*. Designed by L. E. "Ted" Geary and built at Lake Union Dry Dock in 1926, the sloop won the national championship in its class in 1929 and has the reputation of being one of the fastest R-boats ever built. The Center fully restored the yacht between 1999 and 2005 and documented it as part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) in 2009. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2000.

Further evidence of the Center's successes came in the continued expansion of their physical footprint. The organization expanded beyond its South Lake Union campus to include two more locations, first a boat livery at Cama Beach on Camano Island, in 2000, and then a workshop and warehouse on the north side of Lake Union, at 1475 N. Northlake Place, in 2014. After many years of planning, the Center completed construction of the Wagner Education Center at its home campus in 2018. It overlooks Waterway 4 and occupies the location of the former Belknap Glass Co. facility, demolished in 1990 as part of the redevelopment of this area into a park.

At the heart of everything the Center has done and continues to do is their fleet of traditional small craft. The Center maintains one of the most diverse and active collections of working and static boats in the country, which began in the late 1960s at the Wagners' Old Boathouse. The influence Dick and Colleen Wagner had on the success of the organization cannot be overstated, and it is truly fitting that the new education center bears the Wagner name. They used their professional talents in art, design, and teaching to share their passions for maritime heritage and lifelong learning with the public. Although both Dick and Colleen are now gone, their impact on the organization is evident in all facets of today's Center for Wooden Boats. A fitting end to this chapter in the Center's rich story came recently when it hosted a Sail Past the Old Boathouse to honor Colleen's life and legacy. She died January 2, 2020.

Architect: Richard E. Wagner (1933-2017)

A native of East Rutherford, New Jersey, Dick Wagner graduated from Columbia University in 1954 and Yale University School of Architecture in 1957. Following a brief summer job in 1956 at Tucker and Shields, a small Seattle architecture firm, Wagner returned to the Pacific Northwest for good in 1957. He was employed briefly at Boeing before working for architect Fred Bassetti. Following his marriage to Colleen Luebke and their year-long honeymoon, he returned to work for Bassetti for a few more years, but the work never fulfilled him. In 1968, he pivoted away from architecture to manage a boat livery business out of his floating home, while supplementing his income doing houseboat appraisals and other small, independent projects.

Wagner channeled his artistic creativity and design skills toward his deepening love of traditional boats and maritime history. His earliest sketches of his vision for a maritime heritage center on Lake Union date to the late 1960s. He drafted many versions of what such a place would look like at various locations around the lake. When it came time to settle on a

permanent location for the new Center for Wooden Boats in the late 1970s, Wagner and others had been refining their ideas for years.

The Center's permit application that was submitted to the City of Seattle in the early 1980s said the site's design was "intended to reflect a scale and character of a turn-of-the-century Seattle waterfront boat livery and small boatbuilding facility." Wagner was quite intentional that the buildings and the setting complement the traditional wooden boats to be moored there. Years later Wagner elaborated on this:

> I just designed what I thought would look good in the scale of the boats that we had, where people would not feel overwhelmed by big piles of stone. I wanted them to be small and intimate and easy to feel at home in. I wanted this to be a place where people felt like they were coming back to a little sanctuary that they would feel comfortable in. I wanted them built out of wood, for obvious reasons, and of good craftsmanship. We did well. And they were all fun to design.

Integral to the design was Wagner's view of this site as a *living museum*. He used that phrase often when describing the Center, particularly as he sought funding and spoke with media. He described it as a place where "instead of looking at a model of a boat, they [visitors] will be able to get in one, to row or sail it around, to understand by experience what the differences between them are." He continued, "when the boatbuilding shop opens, they'll be able to watch a hull come together, smell sawdust and wood and varnish and good marine paint." The Center differed from a traditional museum in that it "will show something that is still very much alive…We're not the last gasp of a waning tradition, we're the forerunners of an exciting future."

The campus developed over several years following a clear plan and vision, which was vital to securing funding, in-kind donations, and volunteer assistance. Importantly, Wagner saw the floating boat shop as setting "the architectural standard" for the entire site. To this end, he carefully prioritized the completion of the other campus features, with the shoreside pavilion and floating oar house coming next, followed by the boathouse (education center). The last floating features were added to the site in 2008 – the portable classrooms also designed by Wagner. They were situated in their current location in 2011. While the site has evolved with new features, docks, and gangways, it very much retains the character of Wagner's early designs.

Rarely does an architect have the opportunity to refine the design of a property over many years while influencing its construction, growth, and evolution over a lifetime. Wagner had this opportunity with the Center for Wooden Boats, and it is truly his lifetime achievement.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include*: the entire Pavilion structure, both exterior and interior; the exterior of the Boat Shop, and the pilings and platform that support it; the exterior of the Oar House, and the platform that supports it; and the exterior of the Boat House (Education Center), and the pilings and platform that support it.*

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Sarah Sodt
City Historic Preservation Officer

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