



# Pocock Classic Cedar Singles

*Handcrafted in Port Townsend, Washington*

*In the Tradition of the George Pocock Racing Shell company*

*A collaborative entrepreneurial project  
Of the Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation,  
The Point Hudson Boat Shop, and Pocock Racing Shells, Inc.*

## The Rebirth of the Cedar Speeder

### The Point Hudson Boat Shop

The white paint is peeling on the door of the Point Hudson Boat Shop in Port Townsend, Washington. The door is not square, not plumb and most certainly not level. A fat chunk of marine braid knotted into a fist protrudes from a rough hole a third of the way up its right side. From a rusty pad eye above hangs an open padlock, the hasp flipped aside. More peeling paint reveals the face of the building was once blue; now it is mostly the gray of well-weathered plywood. A tug on the rope swings the narrow door open and you feel tension on the bungee cord that will close it behind you. Looking down, you notice the threshold is about a foot high, as if its carpenter was expecting an exceptionally high tide.

You step over the threshold into history.

But this is not the parched history of a rarely-checked-out library book. It is the pungent aroma of Western red cedar. It is a honey spiral of Alaska yellow cedar curling off a small draw knife. It is steam and sawdust, delicate sticks of sugar pine and brawny iron anvils. It is the whine of a 1940's Porter-Cable saw, the slow revolution of big clock hands. It is clamps and glue and wedges and shoelaces. It is the thin red line of... a laser beam.



Here, where a new cedar single—built in the tradition of George Pocock Racing Shells—is taking shape, history has joined hands with the 21st Century. Under the tutelage of retired master Bob Brunswick, 80, and with the assistance of full-time volunteer, Jim Kellogg, shipwright Steve Chapin is crafting a wooden racing single of uncommon beauty, employing equipment, materials and processes that—but for the generosity of a handful of people and the dedication and persistence of others—could easily have been lost forever.

### Pocock Racing Shells & the Pocock Legacy

With the growing use of composite materials as well as the increasing difficulty of acquiring clear, tight-grain cedar for hull planking, the Pocock Racing Shell Company began phasing out the construction of wooden shells in the 1970's. Pocock cedar singles—"cedar speeders" as they were affectionately known—had been used by virtually every champion sculler in the country for as long as anyone could remember. But the new composites were modern, popular, easier to build and maintain, and faster—or so most believed. George Pocock, his son Stanley and their employees had built hundreds of rowing shells of all configurations and had pretty much dominated the

industry for more than half a century. But there were no plans or drawings for their wooden shells. The Pococks had passed along their skill and knowledge one-on-one, from master to apprentice, as had been done throughout history. By the time Stanley Pocock retired in 1985 and sold the company to his longtime family friend, champion sculler and Lake Washington Rowing Club coach Bill Tytus, such knowledge—and along with it the desire to build wooden shells—was rapidly disappearing. The Pocock Company ceased the production of cedar singles in 2003 when their last remaining builder, Bob Brunswick, retired at age 77, after 54 years with the company.

*It's a great art, is rowing.  
It's the finest art there is.  
It's a symphony of motion.  
And when you're rowing well  
Why it's nearing perfection.  
And when you reach perfection  
You're touching the divine.  
It touches the you of you's  
Which is your soul.*

*George Pocock*

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## Steve Chapin & Bob Brunswick



Bob Brunswick, Steve Chapin and Jim Kellogg steam bending the first hull plank.

*“Bill Tytus was adamant that he did not want any one building ‘bad boats’ using the historic Pocock processes or the Pocock name”*



Steve Chapin carefully removes the first of two steam bent cedar planks from the original Pocock form.

The question arose of what to do with the remaining forms, jigs, tools and leftover materials for building wooden singles. The Pocock Company had gone through several moves over the years—from the old Conibear shell house on the shore of Lake Washington, to Lake Union to, finally, a new facility in Everett, Washington. The company was growing—it was now building world-class racing shells from high-tech composite materials—and the old equipment required a lot of space. Though he had had offers over the years from interested boat builders, Bill Tytus was adamant that he did not want anyone building “bad boats” using the historic Pocock processes or the Pocock name. In fact, he said he would “rather burn the stuff” than let that happen.

Steve Chapin had met Bob Brunswick at the Pocock factory some years earlier. He was restoring a beautiful Pocock single for a client and had

gone there in search of parts and materials. Looking around the factory, Steve remembers thinking, “It would be pretty cool to be building these singles.” He was already an accomplished shipwright and an expert sculler, and he had a 1978 Pocock single of his own which he raced often, sometimes even winning. Later, at his shop in Port Townsend, he worked on a number of old wooden shells—the *Quinault*, the *Husky Challenger* and others—that had, over the years, made their way to Port Townsend from a variety of places. He had participated in the restoration of a famous Pocock four, the *Hoh*,\* which a crew from Lake Washington Rowing Club, coached by Stan Pocock, had rowed to Olympic gold in 1960. He had great appreciation for the beauty of Pocock cedar singles, and great reverence for their place in the history of rowing. But he didn’t imagine that he would soon be building them.

## The Northwest Maritime Center & Wooden Boat Foundation

Presently, Steve Chapin’s work and enthusiasm came to the attention of Stan Pocock through his old friend, Jim Buckley, a lifelong rower and one of Port Townsend’s wooden boat aficionados. Stan duly recognized Steve’s skill and appreciated his respect for the Pocock legacy. Eventually, Stan suggested to Bill Tytus that it would be okay to give the old Pocock equipment to “those guys in Port Townsend.” Bill listened to his old mentor, and agreed.

Rather than receive the gift themselves, however, Steve and Jim requested that it be donated to Port Townsend’s Wooden Boat Foundation (now part of the Northwest Maritime Center). The idea was for Steve to learn directly from Bob Brunswick, and ultimately market new singles under an entrepreneurial small business model, with profits going to support the Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation’s educational programs. An agreement was reached and dozens of volunteers collected, transported and discharged trailer loads of gear to Port Townsend.

Through the Northwest Maritime Center, a business plan was developed which called for securing eight lead donors, to be called the

“Pocock Eight”, whose contributions would fund Bob Brunswick to come to Port Townsend and work with Steve to build the first single, plus pay for the documentation of the entire process through video, still photographs, text and construction drawings. These initial investments would finance the business to profitability, and thereafter, singles would be marketed in the rowing world as a handcrafted alternative to mass-produced shells. Each of these eight donors would receive one of the first eight singles, as well as permanent recognition in the new Northwest Maritime Center, to be built in Port Townsend.

The first donors, Dick and Anne Schneider of Port Townsend, came forward in the summer of 2005, followed soon thereafter by Viktor and Diane Grabner of Yarrow Point and Marrowstone Island. They were joined by Fred and Johnna Kleisner of Bainbridge Island. Each of these donors saw this project as a rare opportunity to capture a significant moment in Northwest maritime history—a moment that could soon be gone forever. Through their generosity, Steve Chapin was able to begin construction of the first single.

### \*The Hoh

The bulk of the restoration of the *Hoh* was carried out by a cadre of volunteer rowers under the leadership of Ted Shoulberg, who spent countless hours stripping, repairing, sanding and varnishing the shell. Stan Pocock was so impressed with the exquisite work that he requested the return of the *Hoh* to the George Pocock Rowing Center in Seattle where it would be placed on permanent display. Ted, and the many volunteers who had worked on it agreed, if sadly. The beloved shell had become the centerpiece of Port Townsend’s fledgling rowing scene. So it was with both tears and pride that it was presented to Stan and the Pocock Center in September, 2005, where it now hangs in a place of honor.

## Stan Pocock & Bill Tytus

With plans becoming reality, Bill Tytus—recognizing Steve’s meticulous craftsmanship and the dedication of others involved in the project—agreed to allow the name *Pocock* to be used in conjunction with marketing the new singles. Given the stellar reputation of his company in the rowing world, this represents an enormous stamp of approval.

Over the past months, Bob Brunswick has made a number of trips to Port Townsend, guiding Steve through the process of constructing the frame, then steaming and attaching planks. Videographer, Jane Champion has been documenting it all, as has photographer, Dianne Roberts. Along the way, Steve has been writing up each step of the process in detail, and Jim Kellogg has been logging all of it into a computer, with accompanying photographs.

In a remarkable act of generosity, Stan Pocock recently gave a large quantity of lumber to the project—lumber he had stored in a warehouse in Seattle for decades. Incredibly, Stan’s gift will

supply planks to build perhaps two hundred singles—precisely cut, 3/32-inch-thick, book-matched planks that are steam-shaped over a form, glued to a minimalist framework of thin sticks of sugar pine, coated with mirror-like varnish and thence reborn as exquisite cedar singles—26 ½ feet long, 12 ½ inches wide and weighing a mere 35-or-so pounds. Planks of this quality—full length, of tight, clear, vertical-grain western red cedar—would be very difficult, if not impossible, to acquire at any price on the open market today. These days, no one would want to fell the sort of living trees, hundreds of years old, from which they were originally milled. But having been cut long ago when old-growth was logged without thought of scarcity, they will now come to life again—this time on the water—as glimmering, sleek hulls, their warm red-brown reflecting not only the ancient trees of their heritage but the spirit of generations of Pocock boat builders and rowers alike.



The delicate framework inside the first Pocock Classic Cedar single.

## Special Unveiling Event

*You are invited to a special event at the Seattle Yacht Club*

*on May 3, 2007 at 2:00 p.m.*

As part of Seattle Yacht Club’s Opening Day celebrations, the first new Pocock Classic Cedar Single built in Port Townsend will be shown to the public for the first time.

Stan Pocock, Bob Brunswick, Bill Tytus, Steve Chapin and many of the northwest’s rowing community will join members of the Seattle Yacht Club on the lawn in front of the clubhouse for a gala celebration honoring the Pocock legacy and

the passing of the torch to a new generation of master boatbuilders.

The Seattle Yacht Club is located on Portage Bay, at 1807 East Hamlin Street, Seattle 98112.

Please be aware that parking is extremely limited at the yacht club during the week of Opening Day festivities. Please arrange to carpool if at all possible, and expect to walk a block or two from on-street neighborhood parking.

For additional information about the event, please contact the Northwest Maritime Center at: 360-385-3628 or [info@nwmaritime.org](mailto:info@nwmaritime.org).

*“Eventually, Stan suggested to Bill Tytus that it would be okay to give the old Pocock equipment to ‘those guys in Port Townsend.’”*

## The Pocock Eight

The Northwest Maritime Center is seeking eight individuals or organizations, to be known as *The Pocock Eight*, who share a passion for the Pocock legacy and who each will make a minimum donation of \$20,000 toward this unique project. These seed funds will fuel the initial efforts to preserve the Pocock legacy, through mentoring by Bob Brunswick, documentary filming, creation of construction drawings, a thorough written and photographic record of the construction process, and the construction of the first nine boats. These critical jumpstart funds will elevate the project to a self-sustaining level, ensuring future support for Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation programs through the building, marketing and sales of Pocock Classic Cedar Singles and oars.

The first cedar single built by Bob Brunswick and Steve Chapin will be permanently displayed in the soon-to-be-built Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend, along with a plaque recognizing *The Pocock Eight*. The next eight Pocock Classic Cedar Singles produced will be presented to each of these eight initial donors, as a thank you for their dedication and leadership of the project.

*The Pocock Classic Cedar Singles business plan, and complete budget figures are available on request.*

For further information, please contact the Northwest Maritime Center at: 360-385-3628 or email: [info@nwmaritime.org](mailto:info@nwmaritime.org).

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The Point Hudson Boat Shop, and Pocock Racing Shells, Inc*



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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.POCOCCCLASSIC.ORG](http://WWW.POCOCCCLASSIC.ORG)

*To the rowing community, the name Pocock signifies the best racing shells in the world. To the Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation it represents an extraordinary opportunity.*

*Stan Pocock and the Pocock Racing Shell Company have generously donated the equipment, tools and materials used for building their classic wooden singles to Port Townsend's Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation. In exchange for keeping the Pocock wooden boatbuilding tradition alive, the Northwest Maritime Center is authorized to build, market and sell handcrafted cedar singles in the Pocock tradition, with profits going to support maritime and environmental education programs.*

## The Boats

Pocock's classic cedar single is one type of rowing *shell*, in which a single rower uses two oars to row, or *scull*, the boat. (Different types of shells are designed to be rowed by as many as eight rowers, and sometimes with sweep oars—where each rower handles only one oar.) The single is built for competition and is light and stiff. With a length of 26 feet, six inches and a beam of 12 inches, it weighs only 34 pounds, yet it is designed for a rower weighing up to 200 pounds.

The hull of the Pocock single is unique in that the skin is made from a bookmatched pair of steam-bent Western red cedar planks only 3/32 of an inch thick. Yellow cedar is used for bedes, cheeks and washboards, sugar pine for the keel, gunwhales and frame, ash for the shoulders.

No drawn plans exist for the Pocock cedar single; only the forms, jigs and molds that perpetuate their traditional shape and construction remain. In the heyday of Pocock's wooden shell building, all piece parts were made in multiples and stockpiled. Then construction of the hulls

occurred separately, one or two at a time. Using this construction process, Bob Brunswick estimates he was able to assemble a boat by himself in about 80 hours

The Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation believes there is a market for traditional Pocock singles, particularly among masters rowers with prior experience rowing wooden Pocock shells in college or at a club. As composite boats serve a larger share of the elite racing market, a growing number of rowers are finding new appreciation for the charm, aesthetic appeal and longevity of these increasingly rare and beautiful wooden shells.

Once the new facility opens, it is anticipated that as many as 250,000 visitors annually will view the Pocock exhibit, and learn about the Pocock legacy and its role in the maritime history of the Pacific Northwest.



Steve Chapin in his Pocock single, with two other antique Pocock shells—the *Hoh* and the *Husky Challenger*.