

NEWS

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The last wooden sailing vessel in Seattle is becoming the city's first maritime museum. At the helm of the restoration crew is Mary Stiles of Pasco, a petite blonde second-year student intern at The Evergreen State College.

Acting as curator of Northwest Seaport---a non-profit organization which is establishing the lumber schooner Wawona, as an historical museum---Ms. Stiles is working under the direction of the organization's president, Robert D. Ashley, and an Evergreen Faculty Member, Mary Ellen Hillaire.

Ms. Stiles, whose internship was arranged through Evergreen's Office of Cooperative Education, spends about 30 hours each week handling a wide variety of duties in connection with her unique academic program.

"We're hoping to have the ship open on the Seattle waterfront by May," she said. "We are currently restoring the old ship, recruiting volunteer work parties, designing displays, researching specimens and organizing fund drives, as well as keeping up with all the duties associated with operating an office.

The Pasco student said her research duties have taken her into the history of the ship, which was built in 1897 and which sailed under eight different captains.

"We found that her name, Wawona, came from a Yosemite Indian legend," she said. "The Yosemiteites believe the owl has special, magical qualities. Wawona mimicks the hoot of an owl."

As the last wooden sailing ship in Seattle, the Wawona escaped the fate of more than 30 of her sister ships which formerly sailed on Lake Union. "All the rest have since been junked, destroyed or sold to other states as maritime museums," Ms. Stiles said.

(more)
Dick Nichols, Director
Information Services

The demand for maritime museums---and experienced curators---is increasing, Ms. Stiles said. "Since I hope to be a curator myself, I have found my internship to be a most educationally valuable experience. I feel fortunate to have found this internship because undergraduate studies in the fields of museology are limited. Yet, there is a growing need for professionals to run these museums because many are organized by retired seamen who are inexperienced in that field."

Ms. Stiles got her first taste of museology during Fall Quarter when she interned at the Thomas Burke Memorial Museum at the University of Washington. There she learned the procedures of identification, research, restoration and cataloging of specimens and "became very intrigued with the field."

As her first major task for Northwest Seaport, she organized a booth for the Seattle Boat Show. "This gave me a chance to talk to the public and explain our project," she said. "I found that many people are interested in the Wawona."

That interest is sufficient to encourage further development of a maritime park in Seattle, according to Ms. Stiles. "The Wawona is just the first step," she said. "Once she's complete we will begin restoring the Arthur Foss Tugboat and an old Coast Guard lightship, "Relief,". All of these ships then will become part of an entire maritime park in the near future."

The Evergreen intern has other projects to tackle while the ship restoration work is under way. Her plans include development of educational programs which emphasize slide shows and nautical seminars. She also will conduct tours of the Wawona and will teach sailing courses through Northwest Seaport.

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