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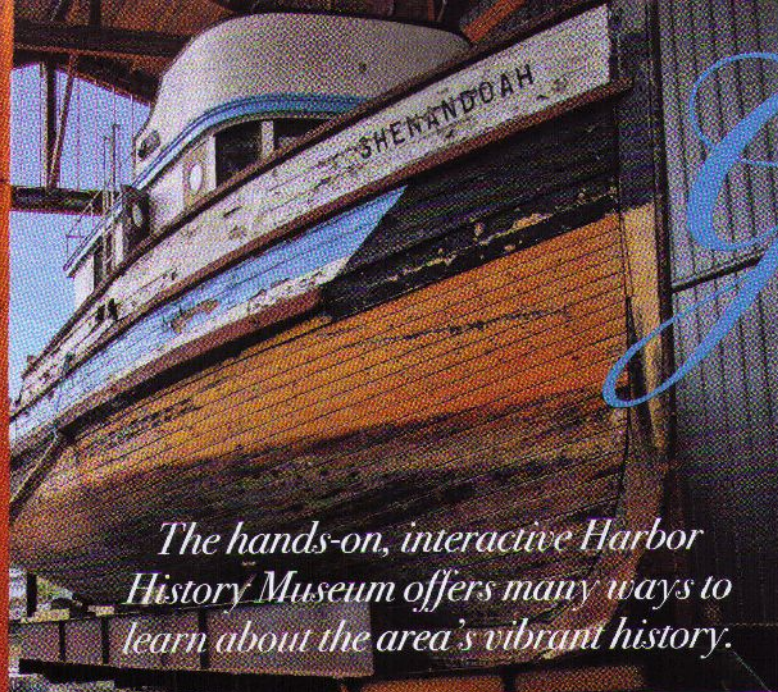
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Gig Harbor History Comes Alive

STORY BY ALLEN COX

The hands-on, interactive Harbor History Museum offers many ways to learn about the area's vibrant history.

IN SEPTEMBER, one of the Northwest's newest attractions will celebrate its first birthday in its state-of-the-art facility. The Harbor History Museum in Gig Harbor, on Washington's Kitsap Peninsula, presents local culture and history

through a wide variety of permanent and special exhibits.

The technicians that brought Seattle the acclaimed Museum of Flight brought their high-tech museum magic to Gig Harbor. This museum educates and entertains through artifacts as well as hands-on, interactive multimedia exhibits.

Jennifer Kilmer, the museum's executive director, has led the transformation and move of Gig Harbor's museum from its tiny, cramped location to a repurposed 1950s utilities warehouse on the waterfront, a facility 10 times the size of its predecessor.

Inside the museum, the Daylight Gallery exhibits highlight the area's Native American roots with artifacts, interactive language exhibits, and the chance to try your hand at the fine (and complicated) craft of basket weaving. The Showcase Gallery lets kids learn by playing at a curved magnetic story wall. The Annelise and Warder Stoaks Permanent Gallery highlights the region's history, from the pioneers to the peninsula's strong maritime heritage and early industries. The museum also possesses the world's largest collection of twisted wreckage from Galloping Gertie, the original ill-fated Narrows Bridge.

A main attraction is the *Shenandoah*, a 65-foot wooden commercial fishing vessel built in 1925. This ship has seen better days, which is the point of having it at the museum. It's an ongoing permanent exhibit with an on-site shipwright demonstrating ship restoration techniques.

Another outside exhibit teaches elementary school children what classroom life was like in the 1890s. The one-room schoolhouse, built on the peninsula in 1893, was moved to the museum site and has been restored to its original austerity—except for the TV that plays interviews with some of the original students recalling what their school days were like. The notion that the first kid to class has to light the stove always draws laughs.

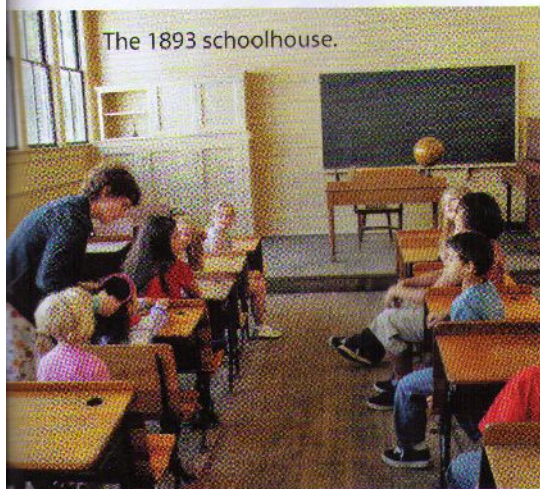
"We're thrilled to have this beautiful facility as a permanent place to preserve and share Gig Harbor's unique and diverse history," Kilmer says. ■

WHEN YOU GO

HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM
(253-858-6722; www.harborhistorymuseum.org)

Hours: Tuesday–Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Admission: Adults \$6; age 7–17, \$4; age 6 and under, free; military/seniors (65+) \$5.



The 1893 schoolhouse.



PHOTOS COURTESY HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM