

Weekly work updates from February 2004 through December 2004 on the restoration of the 1895 lumber schooner *C. A. Thayer*

April 26 – 30, 2004

Work continued on dry fitting the new futtocks of the starboard station frames. It looks like we have resolved the question of the treatment of the butts and surfaces of the new frames. We will coat them with wood care, a product that is borate dissolved in paraffin. It gives a bit of water repellent effect, while leaching more borates into the outer surfaces. This is probably the best we can do. We will also be sure that the frame sections being retained and butted to the new material are well soaked in liquid borate mixture.

The gang made their first experiments with fastening the new frame sections, with locust trunnels. Originally, these trunnels were driven from aft, as the frames lay flat on the framing table, before being stood upright in the hull. In a repair process, when there are frames remaining fore and aft of the one being replaced, we are not able to duplicate the original method. We are forced to drive the trunnels from the outside, at as flat an angle as can be managed. This should be a perfectly fine repair, with the angles of the trunnels opposing each other as they are driven from fore and aft. The fastening of the rest of the starboard station frames will be done only after the butts and the surfaces are treated with borates according to the agreed plan.

The lining off with battens continues on the port side. The gang will presumably move on to the port side station frames when the finish with those on the starboard side.

We will be working in the coming week to pin down the locations of the new butts in the forward and after frames; in those cases where we are able to cut back existing futtocks or floors which are soft in their upper portions but solid lower down. We need to get a handle on this so that the material for these pieces can be ordered. In some cases, this will be a bit of a guess, because we will not really know the condition of the old timbers until we cut into them. But we should get it pretty close, with any luck. In making these repairs, we will be compromising the original butt layout, but will be retaining a higher overall percentage of original material than if we replaced the whole of the old piece. The approach seems to make sense both from preservation and from a cost perspective. We just have to be sure that we cut back far enough to remove active rot, and that we soak enough borate into the original material to kill off remaining rot spores.

Any major ship repair project is faced, at some point, with the question of where you stop. On this job, we are able to be pretty rigorous. We are going for a sound hull that will last another hundred years. But even here, there are judgment calls. We hope that we are getting it right.