

# Talullah: McMillen Yachts' Next Generation Comes of Age

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The mid-August launch of the 1931 Wicks Brothers dayboat *Talullah* marked another successful restoration for McMillen Yachts, but it was also a milestone of another kind.



Elizabeth, Earl & Nelson McMillen (standing L-R) ready to christen *Talullah*. [McMillen Yachts](#) is a family business, run by Earl and Elizabeth McMillen (see [“Earl McMillen: Torchbearer for Classic Yachting”](#)). The two-plus year *Talullah* restoration was the first project in which their son, Nelson (21), a junior at Sewanee University, was intimately involved. Nelson had already worked several summers doing odd jobs at the family’s Portsmouth, RI boatyard, but *Talullah* was the first project on which Nelson took responsibility and began to develop his shipwright skills.



*Charlie* in 2019, before being restored and rechristened *Talullah* by the McMillens. Having been recently donated to [Block Island Maritime Funding](#), the boat, then named *Charlie*, fell into the McMillen's lap in mid-2020, and they were able to enter into a charter-to-purchase agreement and begin work. Over the years, she had been fully restored on more than one occasion, and rewired and updated within the past decade. Former owner Neal Harrel offers a detailed ownership history and record of past restorations and refits in [Charlie's Wooden Boat Registry entry](#). Nonetheless, by the time the little dayboat found her way to the McMillens, she was again overdue for a restoration.





### Tackling the *Talullah* refit head-on

That first summer was spent stripping varnish with a heat gun and scraper, and generally prepping her for repair. Nelson worked under the tutelage of master shipwright, Charlie Cabral. Charlie has been with McMillen Yachts for more than 17 years, having been an integral part of the [Enticer](#) and [Freedom](#) restorations among others. Earlier in his career he built boats at Dyer, TPI (Tillotson Pearson) and Alden Manufacturing, but loves the variety of work that comes with the McMillen projects; “There’s never any repetition.”



*Talullah's* restoration well underway at the McMillen Yachts yard in Portsmouth, RI. A team of four to five worked on *Talullah* on and off from June of 2020 to August of 2022. The summer of 2021 was devoted to getting rid of rot and rebuilding the cabin trunk, deck, and hull. "As is often the case with these older boats," Cabral explains, "the deckhouse was particularly rotten and had separated from the deck. We had to steam-bend boards and cold-mold a new cabin trunk."





Nelson McMillen and *Tallulah*, mid-restoration



...and ready to splash!

Work replacing rotten planks and decking continued while Nelson was back at school, but he jumped back in whenever home on vacations. By the time he returned late last spring, it was time to get the entire McMillen fleet relaunched for the summer season; then the team resumed work on *Talullah* and put the finishing touches on her for an August launch.



Nearing completion *Talullah's* lines begin to shine again  
As Cabral is fond of saying, “a wooden boat is never done” and certainly this is true for *Talullah*. Next winter, the team plans to repower her, replacing the existing Gray Marine engine with a Mercruiser 350 V8, and there remain further updates and improvements to be made to the interior as well.





### Talullah Ready for christening and launch

While Nelson credits Charlie Cabral for teaching him "everything he knows about carpentry and boatbuilding," his mentor is quick to acknowledge that "Nelson has come a long way and is now a real asset to the team." Like the river gorge in the North Georgia mountains she's named for, *Talullah* is beloved by Nelson and once complete is expected to remain part of the McMillen fleet far into the future. As for Nelson, he's not ready to commit to a career in the family business, but, having caught the classic yacht bug from his parents, certainly sees the attraction and looks forward to seeing where future projects will lead.



The McMillen Yachts team celebrate another resuscitation...or restoration  
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