

CRL Report 9: Modeling *La Belle*

When one looks at the archaeological remains of a once-proud ship, it can be difficult to imagine how she looked in her prime. This is the case with *La Belle*, a 17th century French ship that sank off the coast of Texas on her maiden voyage while carrying colonists to the New World. Archaeologists from the Texas Historical Commission excavated *La Belle* in 1996 and 1997. The hull and the material contained in the hold are being conserved at the Conservation Research Laboratory of the Nautical Archaeology Program at Texas A&M University. A major part of the conservation effort involves the reconstruction and conservation of the remains of the hull.

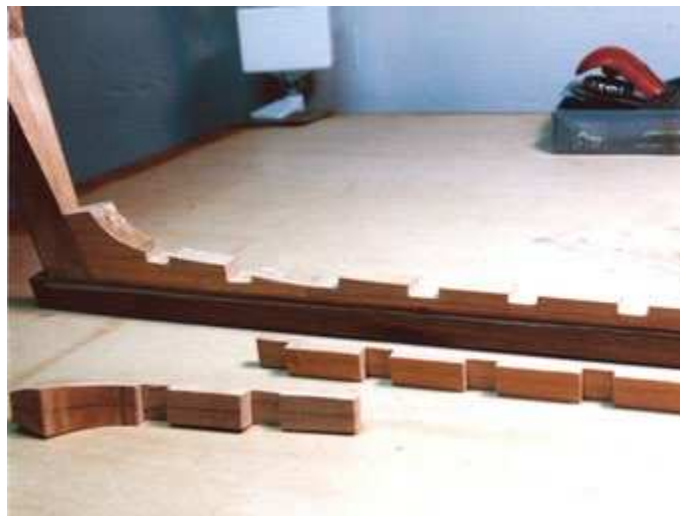
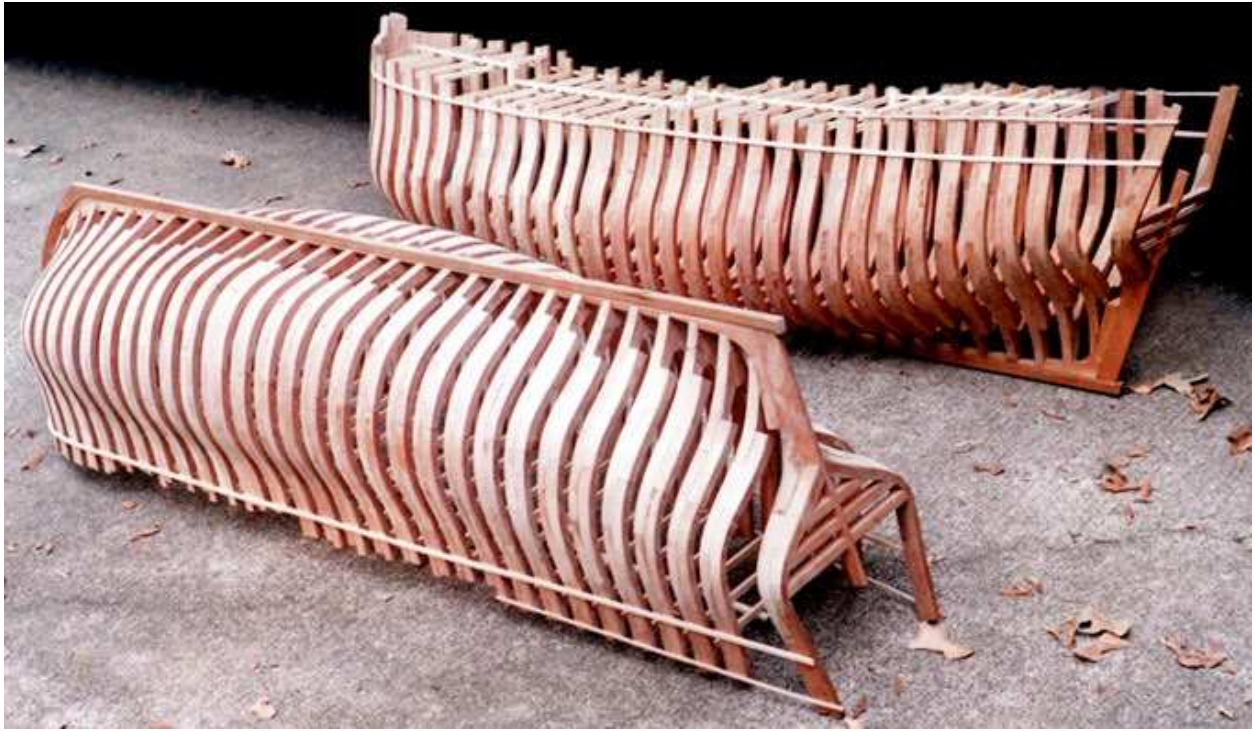
Glenn completed three models for the La Salle Shipwreck Project, including two 1:12 scale models of the complete ship and her rigging. One such model is on display in the Anthropology Building at Texas A&M University, and the second at the Texas Maritime Museum in Rockport on the Gulf Coast.

Glenn also built a 1:6 scale model of a gun and carriage based on those found aboard *La Belle*.

The construction of two 1:12 scale models of *La Belle's* hull and rigging formed the basis of Glenn's master's thesis.

Building models of archaeological ships is one of the most interesting aspects of nautical archaeology and is equally informative to the ship specialist. Approximately one-third of the hull of *La Belle* exists. Using data from excavations of similar ships, archives, paintings, and other sources, a ship modeler is able to make a 'best guess' approximation of the appearance of the superstructure of the hull and the rigging.

Texas A&M *Belle* model during construction:







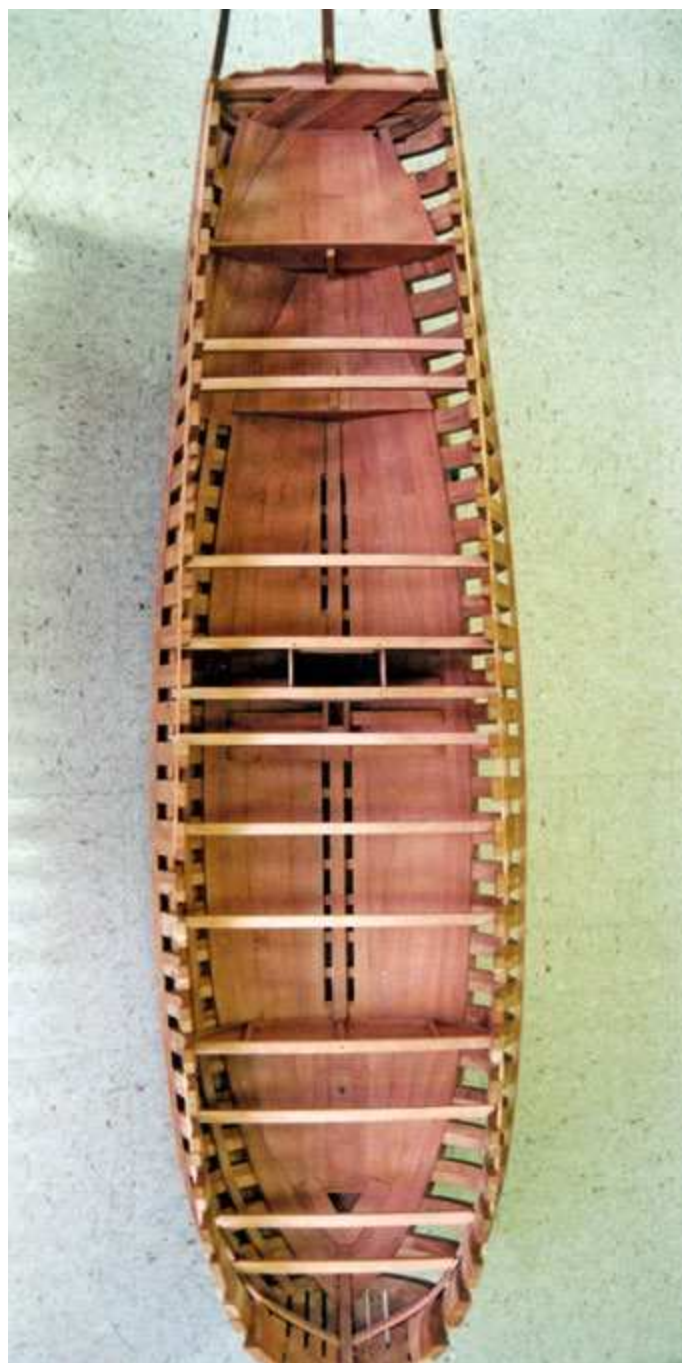


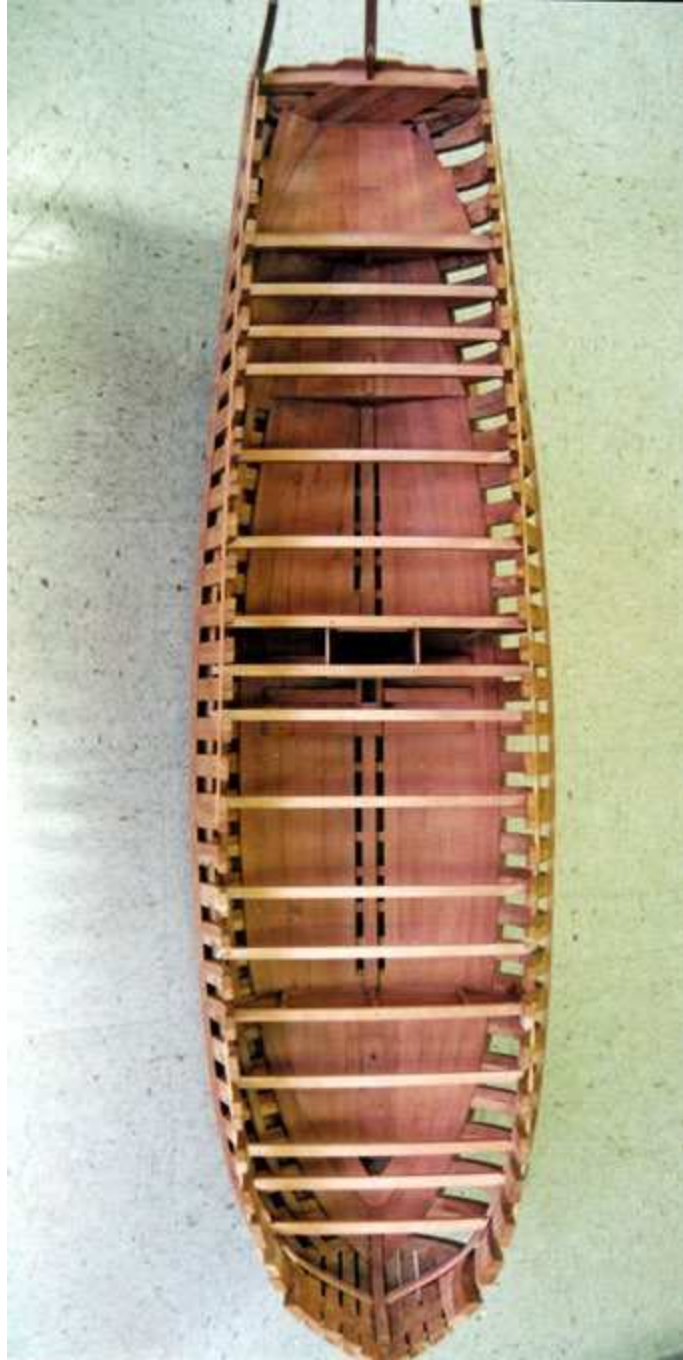














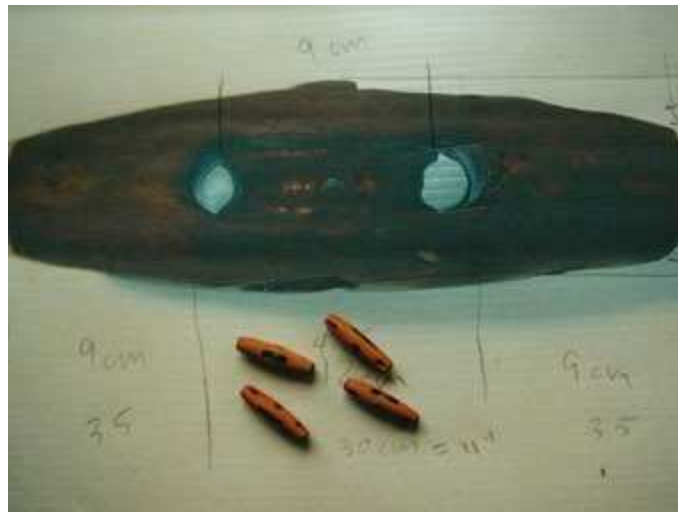












Texas A&M *Belle* model:









Belle Model: Texas Maritime Museum, Rockport, Texas





Modeling *La Belle*

a 17th Century Gun and Carriage

Glenn Grieco

Frank Darden Ship Model Research Assistant



The completed gun and carriage.

Glenn recently completed a 1:6 model gun similar to those carried on the 17th century French ship *La Belle*. The reconstruction of the gun carriages is based on a gun carriage found on *La Belle*, while the gun itself is based on archaeological information from Curtis Tunnell's report on a group of cannon buried at La Salle's colony of Fort St. Louis.



Close-up of the carriage

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