



PHOTOS BY JOHN CARL D'ANNIBALE/TIMES UNION

PETE BOMBARD, a 45-year veteran at Hall's Boats Corp., works on restoration of an 1899 ELCO electric boat at the boatworks on Lake George. Owner Steve Lamando plans to turn the site into a destination for wooden-boat enthusiasts.

Career change born in childhood

Memories of wooden boats on Lake George brought Steve Lamando back to take over Hall's Boat Works

By LARRY RUUSON Business writer

LAKE GEORGE - The property here on the southern basin of Lake George that now is home to Hall's Boat Corp. might have been used for condos if not for Steve Lamando.

Lamando, a Connecticut financier who owns a home on the lake, bought Hall's about a year and a half ago.

He has big plans to transform the marina -long known for its expertise in classic wooden boats - into a premier destination for wooden boat enthusiasts across the country.

And while the venture has cost a lot - Lamando has poured more than \$1 million into the business since buying the property in November 2006 for \$2.7 million - he said the investment is really rooted in his love of Lake George and



HALL'S BOAT WORKS' featured commodity, wooden boats, will be produced under Reuben Smith, left, working with general manager Nick Lamando.

wooden boats.

After all, he bought his first wooden boat, a 1947 Chris-Craft, from Hall's.

"It was probably more of a passion than a

business opportunity," Lamando said. "I love the history. I love the wooden boats. I love the water. It would probably be condos

Please see BOATS C2 ~

↓ CONTINUED FROM C1
right now if I didn't buy it."

When Lamando, 44, acquired the business from Hib Nash, grandson of Hibbard Hall, who founded the company in 1928, it was called Hall's Marina.

Lamando has restored the name, Hall's Boat Corp., and he is making other changes to enhance the business.

That includes refurbishing all of the buildings in the compound, including the clubhouse - which includes bedroom suites for overnight stays - and the Crawford House, a three-bedroom home also for lodging.

Lamando's older brother, Nick, 49, has been named general manager. A 26-year veteran of IBM Corp. in Dutchess County, he is moving his family to Lake George. Like Steve, Nick also spent his summers growing up on the lake.

The brothers' newest hire, however, might have been their most important move.

Hall's Boat Corp.

- Founded: 1928
- Owner: Steve Lamando
- Employees: 12 in summer
- Location: 9 Front St., Lake George
- Phone: 668-5437
- Web site: <http://www.hallsboat.com>

Reuben Smith, a well-known boat-building craftsman, historian and teacher, is manager of wooden boat operations. Smith, who ran his own boat shop on Cape Cod Bay, comes from a family of North Country boat-builders.

With Smith, Hall's will be able to offer custom boat-building in addition to its high-end restoration services and docking, storage and maintenance offerings. It also does boat sales.

"That brings us to a new level with him," Nick Lamando said of Smith's hiring.

Smith, 42, who grew up in the Potsdam area and has been a

boat-builder since 1981, said his father, who lives in Long Lake, told him about the job. So he made a visit and was won over by the property and the vision that the Lamandos have.

"Right away, the place really impressed me," Smith said. "We're creating heirlooms here."

Smith said he plans to offer restoration workshops to boating club members and the public.

"We want to introduce some of that here," Smith said. "We want people to know that owning a wooden boat isn't frightening. It's really family-oriented."

Smith also is working with other employees at Hall's to restore Steve Lamando's 1899 EI-CO, a historic electric-powered wooden boat that had a long history on the lake and on Lake Champlain. The restoration should take six months to a year to complete.

~ Larry Rulison can be reached at 454-5504 or by e-mail at lrulison@timesunion.com.