

Build a Boat in the Basement? Not a Bad Idea

by Dave Holbrook

When a ship runs aground, it's said to have foundered. But what's the term for a ship built underground?

Nautical references joined the standard architectural fare on architect Charlie Hildebrand's office shelves when clients of the Chatham, Mass., design-build firm Polhemus Savery DaSilva decided to have some fun finishing the basement of their oceanfront home. What began as a conceptual sketch evolved into formal blueprints and, ultimately, a stunner of a room.

Compound-curved framing converted foundation walls into a ship's hold, complete with bow-berth seating and eight brass portholes, each featuring a backlit oil painting with an ocean theme. Mahogany trim and beams outline beaded and painted pine hull planking on the room's ceiling and walls; a "deck" of clear-finished fir gleams underfoot.

The hold is accessed by a mahogany ship's ladder with polished brass handrails and stainless steel cable stays. Concealed behind built-in stowage, a 28-by-48-inch plasma screen provides an ideal port for viewing "Mutiny on the Bounty," "Master and Commander," or even "Gilligan's Island."

