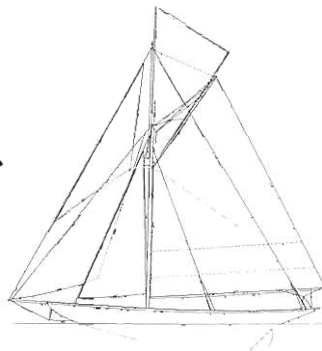




VAYU A 1905 Herreshoff



Particulars

LOA	77' 6"
LWT.	56' 7"
Beam	15' 2"
Draft	9' 2"
Sail area	3,780 sq ft
Displacement	97,650 lbs
Designed by	N.G. Herreshoff
Built by	Herreshoff Mfg. Co., Bristol, Rhode Island
HMCo Hull	No. 625
Doc. No.	201963

by Maynard Bray

This 78-footer began her career as the gaff-cutter DORIS, and is one of the largest all-wood sailing yachts the Herreshoffs ever built; she's the largest wooden one from that famous yard that survives. Bostonian S. Reed Anthony had her built strictly for cruising, and for her hull shape N.G. Herreshoff utilized one of his existing half models—specifically, the six-year-old one from which sprang PETREL. He gave the new yacht a little more beam (by increasing all of Petrel's width measurements to a 17/16 ratio) and shed PETREL's gaff-yawl rig in favor of a single sticker.

She was laid out simply and elegantly. Her accommodations were all on the same level; she was essentially symmetrical side-to-side; and her bulkheads and partitions were of pre-plywood, raised panel construction.

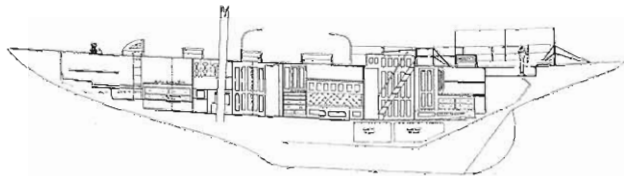
When new this yacht kept pace with Herreshoff's legendary GLORIANA, despite her being a cruiser with lavish accommodations that included a separate owner stateroom and built-in bathtub.

Twenty years later, when the boat was owned by Miss Louise Grace, who sailed her from Islesboro, Maine, Herreshoff drew up the taller sailplan shown here; he shortened the bowsprit and boom and called for a jackyard topsail. To look her best, she really needs that sail, and with it set, Miss Grace and her yacht indeed graced their home waters.

In 1934, DORIS returned to the Boston area and became a marconi ketch named ASTARTE. In 1937, as HUNTRESS, she was given her first engine, and in 1940 she became VAYU when Richard Harte bought her to replace his slightly older and nearly identical Herreshoff ketch VAYU, ex-PETREL. Harte kept this, his second VAYU, until 1951.

My first encounter with VAYU, ex-DORIS, was in 1957 when her new owner and fellow Electric Boat engineer Jim Mercanti brought her to New London as his floating home, sailing her seldom. The lovely paneling and the custom carved cabinet doors (with a different AMERICA's Cup defender on each) were still intact back then. I envied Jim when below deck, but sympathized with him when on deck. He stayed with VAYU for nearly two decades and kept up with her maintenance as best he could.

The dreams of VAYU's subsequent owners never saw fruition, although one managed to get her listed on the National Historic Register. Today, with her interior stripped clean and her deck collapsed, she needs a total, and I mean total (including ballast keel), restoration if that jackyard topsail is ever again to point skyward. But on the plus side, besides the impeccable pedigree, there are the original drawings—including offsets—available at the MIT Museum in



MAYNARD BRAY

VAYU, a 77'6" Herreshoff built for cruising, would make a fine yacht for a new owner with the means to put her back in service.

Cambridge, Massachusetts; lots of old photographs; and there's the planking, which could be largely reused. I believe it's mostly longleaf yellow pine—extremely durable wood, but now mighty scarce.

VAYU lies in Crocker's Boat Yard in New London, occupying valuable storage space. Miraculously, David Crocker has managed to avoid breaking her up. She looms large there, nearing a hundred years of age and waiting for better days...or worse ones, unless a committed buyer with means comes along.

For more information, contact owner David Crocker, Crocker's Boat Yard, 56 Howard St, New London, CT 06320; 860-443-6304.

Send candidates for "Save a Classic" to Maynard Bray, WoodenBoat, P.O. Box 78, Brooklin, ME 04616.

DRAWINGS ABOVE: HART NAUTICAL COLLECTION/MIT