

# THE HERRESHOFF BUZZARDS BAY 30s



BENJAMIN MENDLOWITZ

## *Four 1902 sloops simultaneously restored*

by Maynard Bray

**M**y first glimpse of a Buzzards Bay 30, or, for that matter, any Herreshoff-built boat except for the local 12½-footer fleets at Maine's Islesboro and North Haven Islands, was of CATSPAW as she occasionally came and went from Rockland, Maine's public landing in the late 1940s. My pal Don Merchant and I used to hang out there summers to watch such comings and goings. Yawl-rigged, beautifully kept, and owned by Perry Coke Smith of Islesboro, CATSPAW created an image that stuck. Years later, in 1972, after assisting in her sale, I helped deliver her to her new home in West Mystic, Connecticut.

A few years after that trip to Connecticut, another BB 30 made its appearance in my life. MASHNEE, re-rigged as a marconi sloop and re-cabined with a doghouse, came to be owned by my friend Ken Mahler of Mystic Seaport. He, too, kept his boat bandbox-perfect, maintaining her himself and living aboard year-round for the 10 years he owned her.

By the mid-1990s, however, both boats, under subsequent owners, were in trouble—deep trouble. CATSPAW had languished ashore in Norwalk, Connecticut, and then

in Brunswick, Maine, abandoned, and I knew only that Ken's sale of MASHNEE had taken her to near Charleston, South Carolina, where, ultimately, the word drifted back that she had survived Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

By 2004, CATSPAW, now a complete derelict, turned up at Newport's International Yacht Restoration School (IYRS) while Van Herridge (the fellow Ken Mahler sold to) told me that MASHNEE, also a derelict, had been on jackstands in a Myrtle Beach, North Carolina, boatyard for the past 10 years. Hearing this, I featured MASHNEE on this magazine's Save a Classic page (WB No. 179) and, as a result, Jan Rozendaal rescued her and trucked her home to Vermont for restoration. The tide had begun to turn; the Buzzards Bay 30 class was on its way back.

**E**xactly how the idea of building a batch of identical racer-cruisers came about may never have been recorded, but surely the Buzzards Bay 15s (BB 15) and the Newport 30s were catalysts. The Newport 30s were sporty fin-keelers whose fleet came out of the Herreshoff Mfg. Co., 12 boats strong, in 1896; the smaller BB 15s were keel-centerboarders from the same source

---

**Above**—Trucked to French & Webb's Belfast, Maine, shop from Florida, Rhode Island, and Maryland, YOUNG MISS, QUAKERESS II, and EVELYN (renamed LADY M) have been restored side-by-side, while MASHNEE, a fourth survivor of this 14-boat class, traveled from North Carolina to Vermont for the same treatment. After three years work, all will be sailing this summer.

**E.M. Farnsworth's ZINGARA flies her single-luff spinnaker, booming it to windward on a long (and very flexible) spruce pole. Aboard a boat at the finish line, photographer Nathaniel Stebbins also caught YOUNG MISS that same Saturday afternoon, but he missed the eight other BB 30s as they crossed on August 8, 1902, including the winner, QUAKERESS II. With an unwieldy 8 x 10 camera and glass plates to deal with and only 10 minutes between the leader and last boat, it's little wonder. ZINGARA finished eighth.**

sponsored by the Beverly Yacht Club (BYC) for racing on the shallow waters of Buzzards Bay. The new Buzzards Bay 30s would be combination craft set up for spartan onboard cooking and sleeping in addition to daysailing. In them, one could join up with yacht club cruises, race from port to port, and then sleep aboard; enjoy coastal cruising singly; or compete in club-sponsored round-the-buoy races as a one-design fleet.

Young Bostonians who loved to race small boats had established the Beverly Yacht Club as a complementary offshoot of Marblehead's Eastern Yacht Club back in 1872. Better summer breezes and convenient rail transportation caused the club's migration south to Buzzards Bay, and by 1901, when this new class of 30' waterline sloops was conceived, the club was ensconced in rented quarters on the shore of Monument Beach, about halfway down the Bay's eastern shore. The Cape Cod Canal was then but a dream (it wouldn't open until 1914); the upper bay was a shallow and pastoral cul-de-sac that offered ideal sailing with dependable afternoon breezes and relatively mild currents.

Nearby Newport, primarily a summertime bastion for New Yorkers, existed in mild rivalry to the Boston-based estates of Buzzards Bay, and Herreshoff could and did supply countless yachts for both resorts. As the leading club on Buzzards Bay, the Beverly Yacht Club already had four classes of smaller boats actively competing: the 25' and 21' restricted classes, the Buzzards Bay 15' one-designs



STEBBINS COLLECTION, HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

already mentioned, and a batch of catboats.

However, knowing what fun the Newporters were having with their class of daysailing 30-footers surely helped promote the idea of a new and more substantial class for BYC. The concept had such appeal that 14 of the new boats were ordered, to be built in rapid succession over the winter of 1901–02.

N.G. Herreshoff's hull shape, created via a precisely carved pine half model in his usual manner, departed but little from earlier handicap racers where waterline length was balanced against sail area ( $L + \sqrt{SA/2}$ ) under the so-called Seawanhaka Rule. If not carried to extreme, this formula produced some very nice boats. The BB 30 hulls pretty much echo the smaller club-sponsored BB 15s. Low freeboard, a long overhanging bow that's noticeably higher than the stern, a circle-arc sheer and deck outline, generous beam, and moderate draft are blended together harmoniously, and faired smoothly from sheerline to keel.

Hull construction was typical Herreshoff: lead ballast keel, diagonally bronze-strapped hull and deck, oak backbone and framing, single-planked bottom, double-planked topsides, single-thickness pine deck that was caulked and painted, varnished mahogany trunk cabin and trim, and bronze or copper fastenings pretty much throughout. The boats were strong, light, and durable, as time has proven. They sleep four (five counting the paid hand): two on wide quarter berths and two on pilot berths that lie above and outboard of main cabin settees.



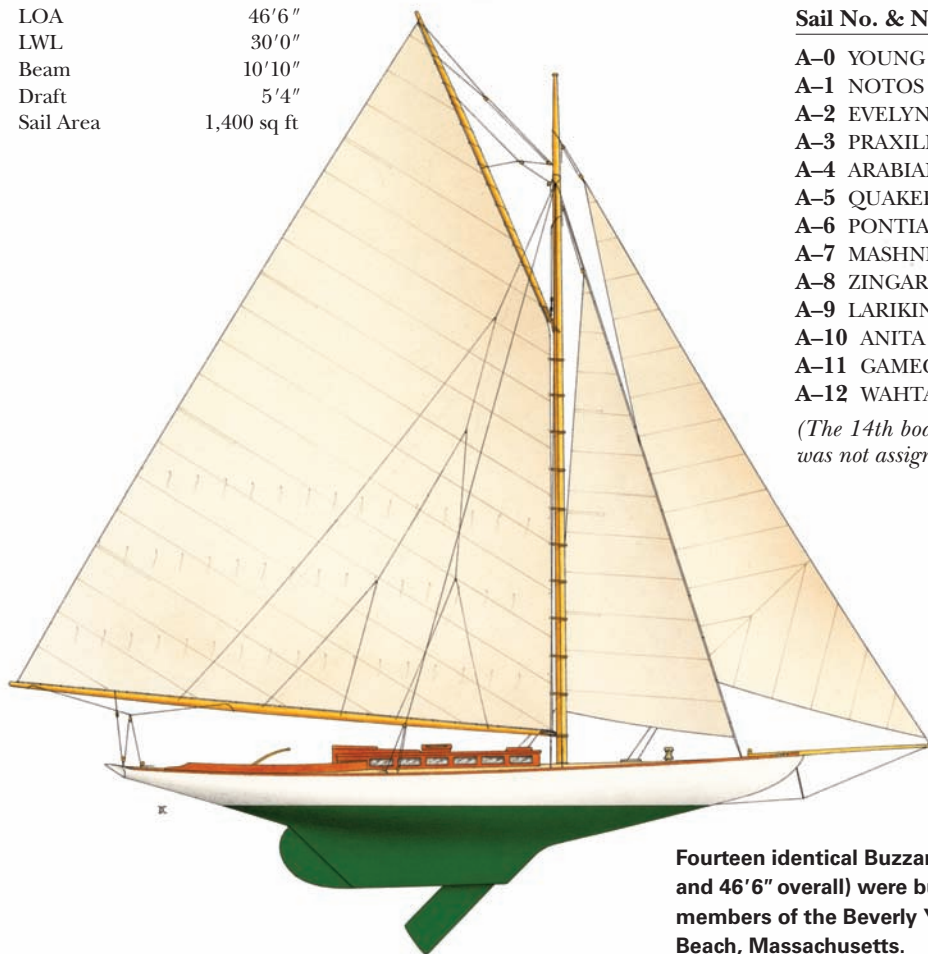
STEBBINS COLLECTION, HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

**PRAXILLA, owned by Jack Parkinson, cruised to Maine in 1903 and demonstrated that the BB 30s were more than just racers. In the years that followed, many more BB 30s would become cruisers. Racing as a Beverly Yacht Club one-design, the fleet soon dropped off, and the boats scattered. But by 1909 YOUNG MISS, along with MASHNEE, NOTOS, and GAMECOCK, showed up on Long Island Sound where they still competed (along with the similar DUCHESS, ex-KOTIC; HMCo No. 646 of 1905) as a one-design class—albeit a much diminished one. Handicap racing as well as cruising followed, as gradually all the BB 30s shed their gaff sloop rigs for marconi ones.**



### BB-30 Particulars

LOA	46'6"
LWL	30'0"
Beam	10'10"
Draft	5'4"
Sail Area	1,400 sq ft



### THE BUZZARDS BAY 30 FLEET

Sail No. & Name	Owner
A-0 YOUNG MISS	D.L. Whittemore
A-1 NOTOS	C.H. Taylor
A-2 EVELYN	John Hitchcock
A-3 PRAXILLA	John Parkinson, Jr.
A-4 ARABIAN	Robert Winsor
A-5 QUAKERESS II	W.F. Harrison
A-6 PONTIAC	J. Arthur Beebe
A-7 MASHNEE	R.W. Emmons
A-8 ZINGARA	E.M. Farnsworth
A-9 LARIKIN	Robert Bacon
A-10 ANITA	R.T. Crane III
A-11 GAMECOCK	Louis Bacon
A-12 WAHTAWAH	A. Rogers

(The 14th boat, *ARRIA*, owned by Walter Cotton, was not assigned a sail number and never raced.)

Fourteen identical Buzzards Bay 30s (30' on the waterline and 46'6" overall) were built over the winter of 1901-02 for members of the Beverly Yacht Club, then of Monument Beach, Massachusetts.

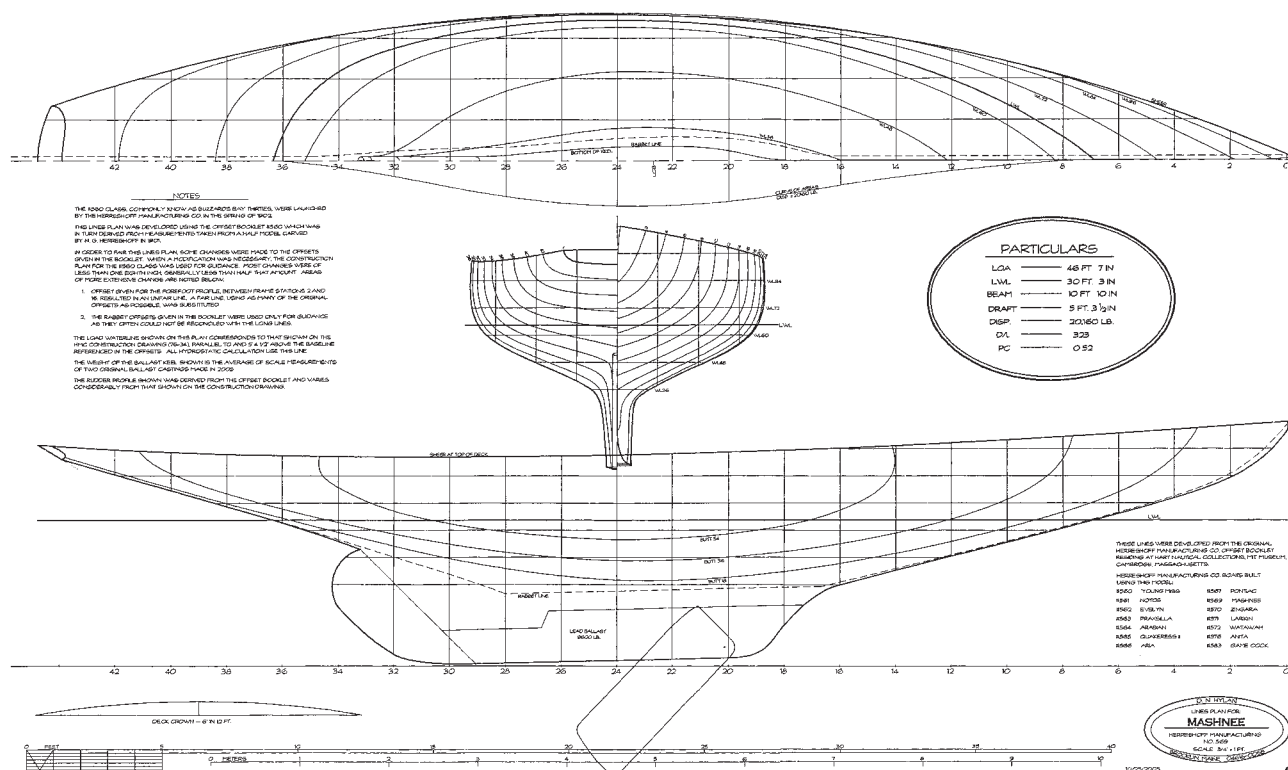


**Above**—Among N.G. Herreshoff's evolutionary designs leading up to the Buzzards Bay 30s and, subsequently, beyond them are (left to right and to the same relative scale) the fin-keel, spade rudder Newport 30s of 1896; the ubiquitous Buzzards Bay 15s which debuted in 1898; *MAY QUEEN*, a 25'-waterline sloop of 1899; and the 21'-waterline sloop *RADIANT* of 1901. Twelve Bar Harbor 31s followed a year after the BB 30s but had full keels and no centerboards. The famous New York 30s (far right, 18 built in 1905) were smaller and proportionally narrower than either the Buzzards Bay 30s or the Bar Harbor 31s.

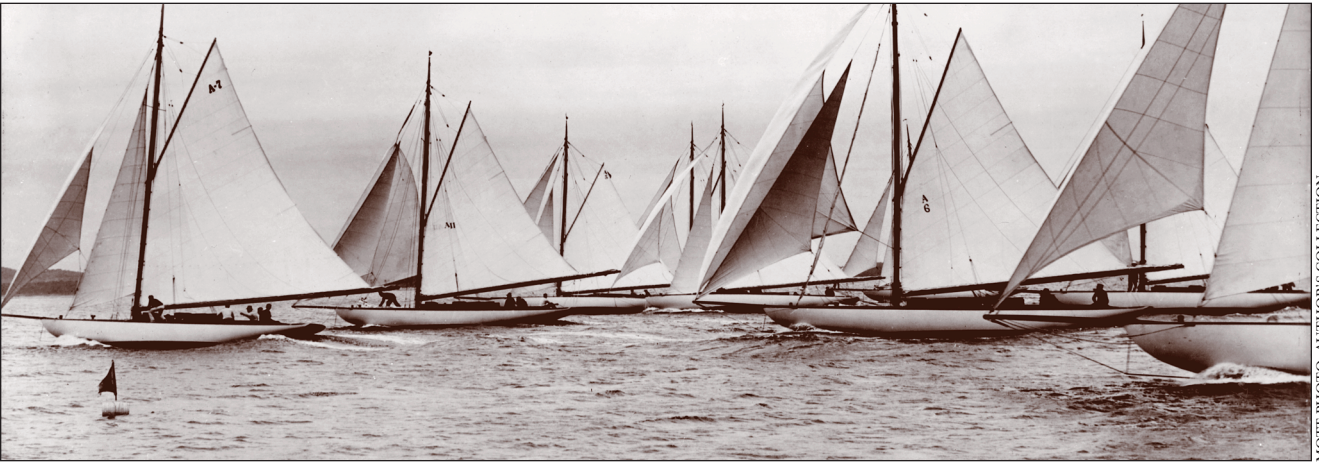
The minimal galley, at the time used only by the paid hand, lies to starboard near the mast, with the enclosed head opposite to port. The paid hand's pipe berth is in the fo'c's'le, which he shared with a built-in icebox, light-weather sails, anchor rode, and spare line.

With headroom that measures about 5'9" between the trunk cabin beams, these are adequate, not lavish, short-term accommodations for the owner and his guests (although the fo'c's'le-bound paid hand may have thought otherwise about his abode). It's a simple-yet-versatile

arrangement. Rigs were the size and shape of those of the era, although, being Herreshoff, they were lighter than the rigs of contemporary builders. The foretriangle was divided into two headsails, each loose-footed. Two-part sheets running through deck-mounted fairleads made winches and lead blocks unnecessary. The mainsails, at 900 sq ft, were generous to say the least, requiring four-part throat and peak halyards and a six-part sheet, also winchless. Quarter lifts and lazyjacks kept that big sail contained while hoisting and lowering.







MOTT PHOTO, AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

**A screeching southeaster for the first season's final race on September 9 required a lot less than full sail, and there was a fair difference of opinion on just how to achieve this. MASHNEE's owner Bob Emmons has decided on only two reefs and is out ahead, while the others have tucked in all three reefs and carry a variety of headsails. MASHNEE continued to lead and won handily over the nine other BB 30s that showed up that day. Identical boats, painted just alike, are recognizable only by their sail numbers.**


raced in its own fleet). Elapsed times over the three-day event indicated no great difference in speed. In August, five BB 30s sailed to New London to start on the New York Yacht Club's annual cruise, the first leg of which took them to Newport. They were small fry in those days, the smallest yachts able to enter this prestigious event in which schooners above 65' waterline length numbered 17 and sloops of 60' waterline and over numbered 14. Nevertheless, the BB 30 WAHTAWAH, the tiniest of the lot, made the news as being first over the starting line the next day when the fleet headed for Vineyard Haven.

Cruises as well as races were occasionally reported. Departures of YOUNG MISS and QUAKERESS were mentioned, as was PRAXILLA's cruise to Maine in 1903. While in the Mount Desert area, owner Jack Parkinson tried out PRAXILLA against Edgar Scott's brand-new Bar Harbor 31 BAT in a match race on July 17—and lost. With understandable allegiance, the *The Boston Globe* allowed how PRAXILLA was equipped for cruising, that Parkinson had made no changes for the race, and that, under the circumstances, the Harvard man had put up a game fight.

As sometimes happens with club-sponsored one-designs, initial enthusiasm for the BB 30s soon waned and the fleet began to scatter as owners moved on to other yachts. As early as 1905 there were races where only a single BB 30 showed up at the starting line, and by 1909, only seven years after their debut, there was no racing at all. The BB 30s may have been too large for the club's traditional afternoon round-the-buoy use, which favored decked daysailers instead of racer/cruisers. But in the Buzzards Bay 30s, the Beverly Yacht Club went a long way toward initiating a type of craft that did eventually prove popular, in later years after yachting became more of a family sport.

**I**n 2004, around the time MASHNEE went to Vermont for restoration, YOUNG MISS showed up for sale in this magazine's classified advertisements. She had been fiberglass sheathed, but was still afloat in Florida and, upon inquiry, seemed perfectly usable. My wife Anne

and I even considered buying her, but a phone call from an American living in Finland changed all that. The caller, who wishes to remain anonymous, not only bought YOUNG MISS and CATSPAW, which I suggested as a two-boat alternative for the L.F. Herreshoff-designed M-boat ISTALENA he hoped I could lead him to, but zealously dug up two more BB 30s: EVELYN in Oxford, Maryland, and ANITA on Long Island—both of which were for sale. He and his partner had committed to restore only the two boats they'd already purchased for themselves, but on speculation they bought EVELYN—which subsequently ran in Save a Classic and soon attracted a buyer who was as committed as they were to a first-class restoration. By the time you read this, MASHNEE will have been completed by Darling's Boatworks of Charlotte, Vermont, and YOUNG MISS, QUAKERESS II (CATSPAW back to her original name), and EVELYN (renamed LADY M) will have been finished by French & Webb of Belfast, Maine. ANITA is still available. (A sixth BB 30, the old LARIKIN, now yawl-rigged as RESOLUTE, is still in use on the Chesapeake.)

Before heading off toward the end of summer to Buzzards Bay with a hoped-for BYC rendezvous and to enter the Opera House and Classic Yacht Races, all four of these newly restored boats are scheduled to cruise and race along the Maine coast, and to gather in Rockland on August 6 at the Maine Boats, Homes, and Harbors Show. I'll be as gratified as anyone there to see a Buzzards Bay 30 once again gracing my hometown's waterfront. It'll be like old times when CATSPAW used to show up, only now she'll be sailing under her original name and have three sisters along. 

*Maynard Bray is WoodenBoat's technical editor. He is also co-author, with Carlton Pinheiro, of the book Herreshoff of Bristol.*

*The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Alden Reed, Ron Chevrier, and Claas van der Linde in researching the BB 30 history.*

*The next issue's In Focus pages will feature the four newly restored Buzzards Bay 30s under sail.*