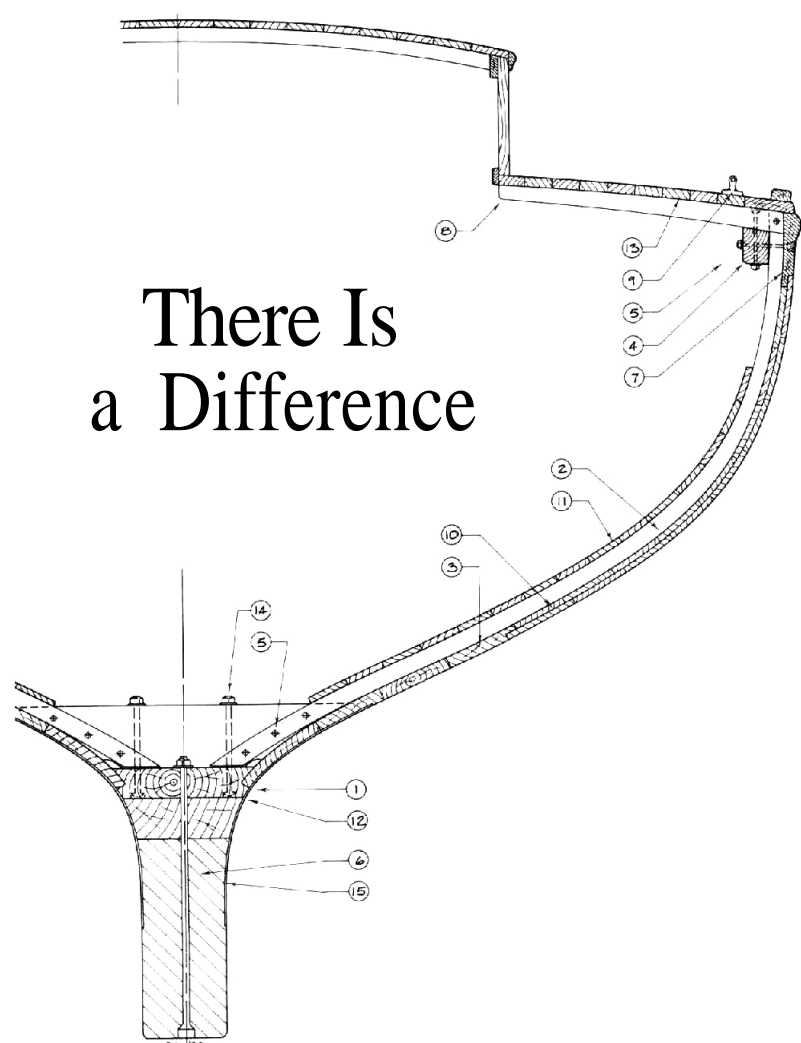


# There Is a Difference



Many boats properly carry the name Herreshoff. Not only did Capt. Nat (as NGH was called) design boats, but so did two of his sons, Sidney and L. Francis, as well as others of the family on occasion. A grandson, Halsey, is still very much in the yacht design business today. So when you're speaking of a Herreshoff-designed boat, you have to be careful to identify which of the Herreshoffs you're talking about; there is quite a difference in the nature of their work.

Compounding this problem of identity is the fact that boats are still being produced in all manner of materials which use the name Herreshoff in their advertising copy—sometimes with legitimate reason and sometimes simply to add some rather groundless prestige. And adding still more to the confusion are misled owners who claim, generally in classified ads, that their boats are Herreshoffs, when in reality these craft have no connection with that lineage whatsoever.

While Nat Herreshoff was an incessant experimenter—and was continually trying out new ideas on his customers' boats—he had, by 1900, adopted certain characteristic features which appear again and again in his small sailing craft. There were exceptions, to be sure, but I'm talking here about the distinguishing features which made the boats easy to build, gave them good performance and a long life, and nowadays can be used to identify a genuine Herreshoff-built boat from one that isn't. If you're ever asked for an opinion on whether a boat was designed by Nathanael and built by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, these are some of the things to look for:

1—A so-called plank type of keel which has been steamed and sprung into place. It is of uniform thickness but tapers in width, being narrow at the bow and stern and widest in the center over the ballast keel. A little of its lower edge will be visible below the rabbet line for most of its length on the outside of the boat.

2—Tapered (small at the head, big at the heel)

steam-bent frames which are more or less square in cross section. In the small craft such as dinghies, 12 1/2 -footers, Fish class boats, and S-boats, the frames are not tapered.

3—Planking which is fastened to the frames by flat-head wood screws whose heads have been puttied over in small craft and covered by bungs in larger ones.

4—Sheer clamps of nearly square cross section whose outboard edges have been continuously beveled along their length to fit against the changing flare of the frame heads. The upper surfaces of the clamps were kept about level to make good landing for the deck beams. Through-bolts showing square nuts were used for fastening both the frames and beams to the clamp. There is normally a good-sized chamfer on the lower inboard corner of Herreshoff sheer clamps.

5—Deck beams and plank-type floor timbers are fastened to every frame. Bolts or rivets are used at the floors, flat-head wood screws at the deck beam ends.

6—A lead rather than iron ballast keel held on with bronze bolts.

7—Oak, teak, or hard mahogany sheer strakes and covering boards. Sometimes the sheer strakes were specially molded to incorporate an integral guard rail, a feature rarely used by other builders.

8—Absence of fore and aft carlins under the sides of cabins or coamings so that the ends of the deck beams are clearly visible.

9—Custom-cast bronze hardware which usually includes the familiar Herreshoff bow chocks and hollow wide-base cleats.

10—A band of double planking in medium and larger size wooden yachts which extends from the rabbeted lower edge of the sheer strake to well below the turn of the bilge amidships, where it joins the single thickness bottom planking by means of a rabbet as well. Bottom planking in these boats is generally longleaf yellow pine; the double planking is usually of a soft wood such as cedar or cypress on its inside (thinner) layer, and of yellow pine, western fir, or mahogany on the outside.

11—Ceiling, if used, will run in a continuous band uninterrupted by bulkheads and other joinerwork from a few frames aft of the stem to a few forward of the transom. The upper edge of this band is spaced down from the sheer clamp about one frame space. The bilge stringer is often omitted in ceiled-up boats.

12—Only very rarely is there a knuckle outside at the lower edge of the garboard—a common feature in many boats of other builders. Most Herreshoff-built boats are shaped to give a continuous and fair curve from the bottom corner of the ballast keel all the way up to the deck edge. This usually involves contoured ballast keels and deadwood.

13—Decking is usually of pine or cedar and you may find it either in narrow strips sprung in parallel to the covering board or in wider ones which run fore and aft parallel to the centerline. A rabbeted covering board would be used in the latter case to give support to the ends of the deck planking. Deck seams were sometimes caulked and sometimes made up with tongue-and-grooved or ship-lapped edges. Unless the yacht is a big one with laid decks of scrubbed white pine or teak, you'll probably find her deck covered with canvas laid in white lead paste and sandwicked under the cabin, coamings, and toerails.

14—The boat will be virtually free of iron or steel fastenings, with the exception of the nails holding the decking to the beams (quite common) and the bolts connecting the floor timbers to the frames (rare, usually found only in the later boats.) Galvanized steel carriage bolts were also used on occasion in boats after 1925 or so, as fastenings for the deck beam ends to the sheer clamps.

15—Several external bronze straps which help hold the ballast keel onto the hull will be found in all but the smallest of keel-type sailing craft. These straps are let in flush and are located on frame lines.

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