

A great shift in the manner in which yachtsmen sailed and raced was taking place in the early 1930s and the Fishers Island sloops got caught right in the middle of it. Like other similarly sized one-design classes, some going back even before the turn of the century, these boats were laid out for a paid hand who took care of the boat on more or less a full-time basis and who had his living quarters in the forward part of her. Herreshoff had a rather standard arrangement for boats of this size, and the Fishers Island sloops were outfitted with it—a main cabin for the owner with a couple of settee berths and a couple of convertible upper berths, a galley to starboard up near the mast, an enclosed toilet room opposite, and a fo'c's'le forward of the mast for the paid hand, access to which could be gained through a hatch in the fore-deck. In 1926, when these craft were designed, there was no reason to vary this arrangement from what had been successful in the past.

But then came the stock market crash of late 1929 and the hard times

A Look at the Class

which followed. No longer could boats carry paid professionals as a matter of course—that was to be the exception—and for day racing around the buoys and an occasional yacht club cruise, these boats became too expensive to keep up.

Thus CIRRUS (then KELPIE) wasn't the only boat of the class to change hands soon after she was built. After only about five years of one-design racing, the class broke up and the boats were sold. In 1932, there was a move to smaller boats without the expense of a paid hand. These were the Fishers Island 23-footers (34' overall), also a Herreshoff product. In time, under subsequent owners, many of the 31-footers were converted for family cruising, just as Alan Bemis did with CIRRUS.

It has been as cruisers and handicap racers that these wonderful boats have spent most of their lives. For this use they were ideal—seakindly, fast under a wide range of measurement

rules, sleeping six in reasonable comfort, affording standing headroom, and being strikingly handsome to look at in spite of changing styles. Of the 13 or so boats built to this model, nearly all are still in use. CIRRUS, trimmed and decked with teak and somewhat more refined because she was the 11th boat in the series, may be the most elegant, but there are others which also look nearly new after a half century. KESTREL, SPINDRIFT, and TORCH are three that I'm familiar with, and if these three boats journey to Brooklin this summer to celebrate CIRRUS' 50th anniversary as is now being planned, the harbor will really be something to see. Of the others, two are on the Great Lakes, one is on the West Coast, and at least one is on the Chesapeake. I believe PATAPSCO II, in which Dr. Robert Murray sailed around the world in 1960-62, is still around, and I know that WILD GOOSE is being restored in Essex, Connecticut, because I saw her a few weeks ago.

The Herreshoff Company went heavily into advertising in the 1930s,

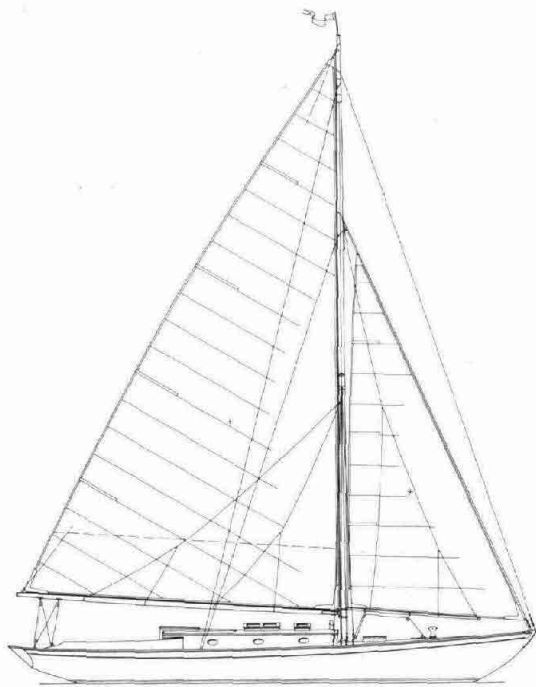
but with what appears to have been only marginal success. Among the several "stock" boats offered were the Fishers Island 31s, but the company's construction record indicates that only two new boats resulted from this promotional campaign—and both of them seem to have been built on speculation. The first of these was sold in 1936, but it was 10 years later before a buyer was found for the last one. Both boats sold for far less than the \$16,000 price prevailing before the depression.

Although the Fishers Island Yacht Club was involved with the Fishers Island 31-footers by virtue of a few of its members owning them, that class does not appear to have been Club-sponsored. One should think of the letters "FIS" on the sails of these boats as standing for Fishers Island Sound, the body of water in which the boats usually sailed. W. Barklie Henry, of the nearby Watch Hill Yacht Club, originated the idea for such a boat (see p. 42 for details) and ordered the first one, CYRILLA IV, late in 1926. Three of his friends, thinking that his idea was sound, also ordered boats for 1927

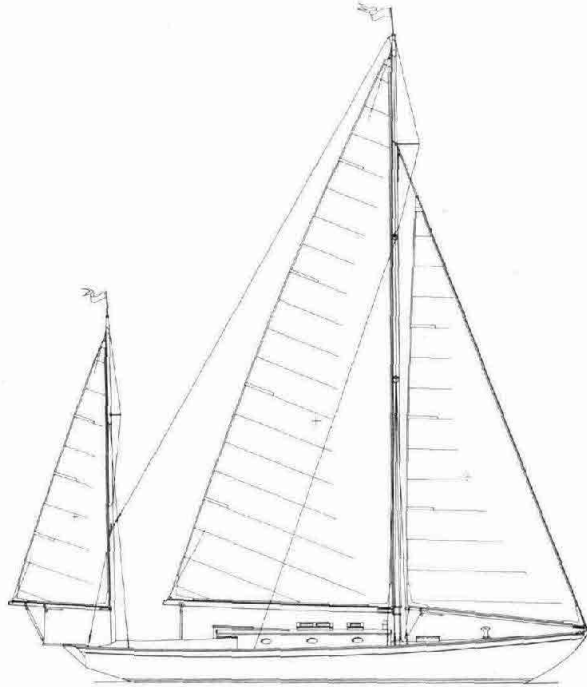
delivery. Except for two others which were built in 1929 and sold elsewhere, the four original boats had things pretty much to themselves for the first three seasons. Then, in 1930, five more boats, some owned in Fishers Island and some in Watch Hill, joined the racing. CIRRUS, then KELPIE, was the last boat of this second batch and wasn't delivered until late August. Ed Maxwell, son of Henry L. Maxwell, the man KELPIE was built for, remembers her first race and remembers going aboard her when she had just been delivered to the Maxwell mooring in West Harbor on Fishers Island, fresh and fully outfitted from the Herreshoff yard. For the short time they had her, the Maxwells did well with KELPIE. In 1931, her first full season, she won the class championship in spite of being one of the heavier boats (a penalty paid for a fancy teak deck instead of a lighter-weight canvas-covered pine one). KELPIE didn't go overboard in 1932, but she won Larchmont Race Week the following year and got a second in the American Yacht Club cruise as well. That year was to be her

last under H.L. Maxwell's ownership, and with only a single season intervening, she was destined in 1935 to begin her still-flourishing affair with Alan Bemis.

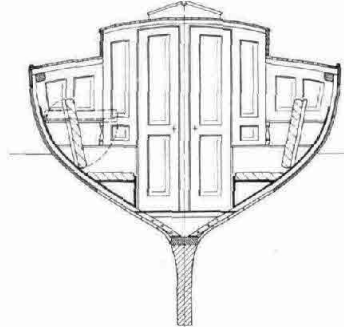
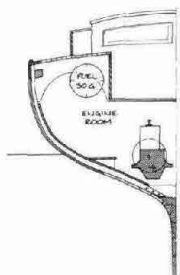
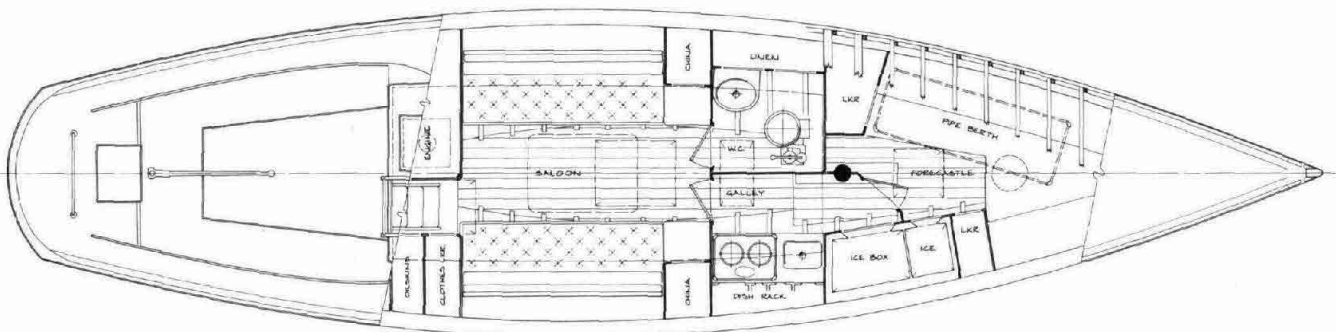
The Fishers Island 31-footers, although based on the Newport 29-footers and presumed to have been basically laid down from their offsets, (a blow-up, incidently, of those for ALERION), had some rather significant changes made from the original model. It is likely that the new profile (longer ends, deeper keel, more raking sternpost, straighter sheer) and deck line to match were established by means of a scale drawing. However, the fairing of the lines to these new end points, according to Sidney Herreshoff, was done right on the mold loft floor—full size. Sidney was a most modest man, reluctant to take complete credit for much of what he did, but he did admit (on a taped interview) that his father was in Florida for the winter while this work was going on and that he, Sidney, was in charge of executing the needed changes. I'd say he did well! —Maynard Bray



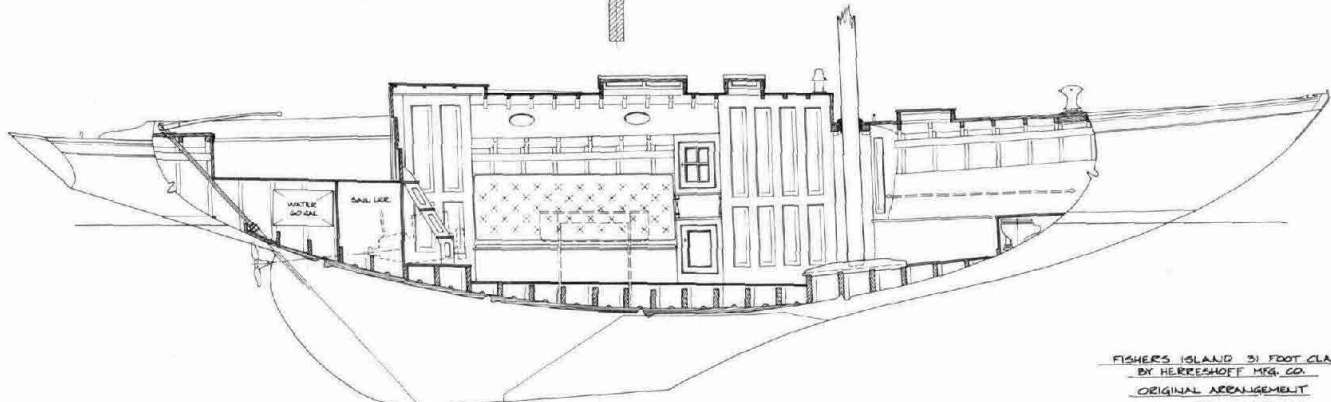
SLOOP RIG, KELPIE, 1150



YAWL RIG, CIRIUS, 1480



- SCANTLING(S):
- KEEL — 2 1/2" T. W. OAK
 - STEM — 3 3/4" O. W. OAK NAT. CROOK
 - STEM BOARD — 3/4" T. W. OAK
 - STEM KNUCK — 2" S. HICKENSTACK
 - FRAMES — 1 1/2" SQ. (HEAD) AL. OAK
TAPERED BOTH WAYS - 1 1/2" O.G.
 - FLOORS — 1 1/2" W. OAK
 - CLAMP — 3/4" x 2 1/2" YELLOW PINE
 - SHEERSTAKE — 1 1/2" T. W. OAK / TEAK
 - PLANKING — CHANGLED - 1 1/2" YELLOW PINE
DOUBLE - 3/4" CEDAR / CYPRESS
4 1/2" DOUG. PIE
 - DECK BEAMS — 2 1/2" x 1 1/2" W. OAK
 - DECK — 1 1/2" CEDAR / CANVAS OR TEAK
 - CABIN TIDELUK — 1 1/2" HAWOG / TEAK
 - CABIN TOP — 1/2" CEDAR / CANVAS
 - COAMINGS — 1/2" HAWOG / TEAK
 - CEILING — 1/2" CYPRESS



FISHERS ISLAND 31 FOOT CLASS
BY HERRESHOFF MFG. CO.
ORIGINAL ARRANGEMENT
DRAWN BY S.H. LINCOLN

FISHERS ISLAND 31 -FOOTERS

(1927-1930, last two or three boats sold later)

Sail No.	HMCo Hull No.	Original Name	Original Owner	Recent Name
1	1054	CYRILLA VI	W.B. Henry	WESTERN CLOUD
2	1055	JUDY	M.M. Buckner	FORTUNA
3	1059	CHANCE	A.E. Whitney	SPINDRIFT
4	1060	ALDEBARON	P.S. duPont	PRAXILLA
5	1061	KESTREL	D.F. Wolfe	KESTREL
6	1132	AZURA	G.H. Fields	ANNA MARIA
7	1153	SAVAGE	T.W. Russell	TORCH
8	1154	QU TEE	J.H. Holmes	BAGATELLE
9	1155	WILD GOOSE	C.B. Rockwell	WILD GOOSE
10	1156	SURPRISE	E.H. Cooper	PATAPSCO II
11	1157	KELPIE	H.L. Maxwell	CIRRUS
—	1165	SKIDOO	Herreshoff Mfg. Co.	PINAFORE
—	1166	LAST STRAW	E.E. Mallinckrodt	(Unknown)
—	1521	MEMORY	R.N. Bavier	WHISPERING WIND