

Heydays at Herreshoff's

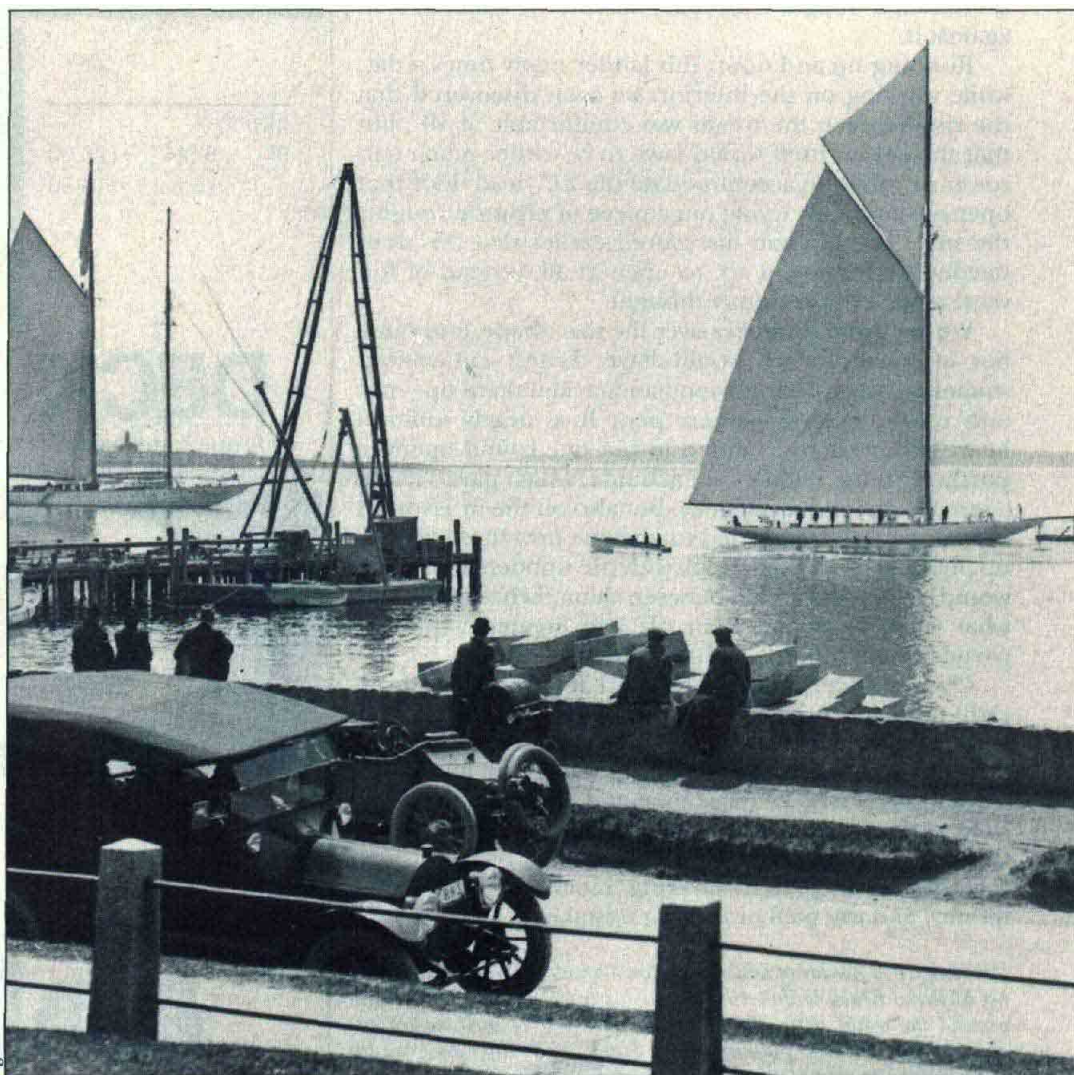
RESOLUTE

(HMCo #725, 1914)
LOA 106'3"
LWL 75'0"
Beam 21'2"
Draft 12'11"

KATOURA

(HMCo #722, 1914)
LOA 162'0"
LWL 115'0"
Beam 30'0"
Draft 18'0"

What a marvelous sight greets Bristol's early risers the morning of May 3, 1914, as the Cup candidate RESOLUTE (center) and the schooner KATOURA—both brand new—get underway! It has been more than a decade since an AMERICA's Cup Challenge and, as always, there is a good deal of curiosity surrounding any contender. As to KATOURA, she is the largest sailing yacht ever to be built by HMCo, exceeded in cost only by the 1903 Cup Defender RELIANCE. This will be RESOLUTE's second builder's trial and KATOURA's first, and NGH will command one great yacht after the other on this proud Sunday. Although yesterday's sail in RESOLUTE was cut short when a peak halyard block parted, today's trials for both boats went off without a hitch. (Tuning up turned out to be rather fruitless, however. AMERICA's Cup racing was postponed on account of the war, and it was 1920 before RESOLUTE could claim victory.)



Agnes Herreshoff

Left—John Brown Herreshoff
(1841-1915); photo
taken about 1881.

Far left—Nathanael Greene
Herreshoff (1848-1938);
photo taken about 1893.



Mayall's Photographic Studio



Photographer unknown

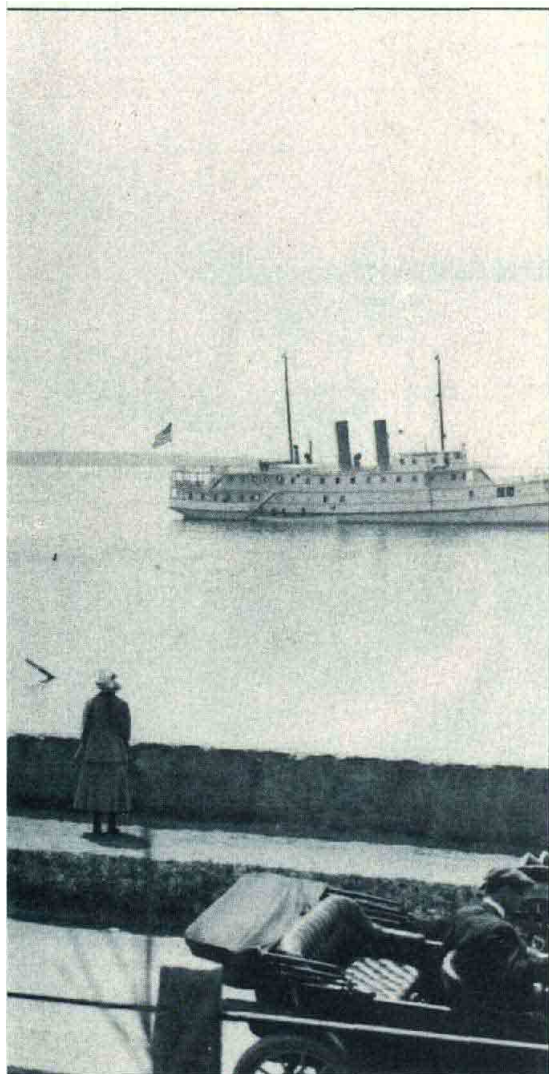
by Maynard Bray

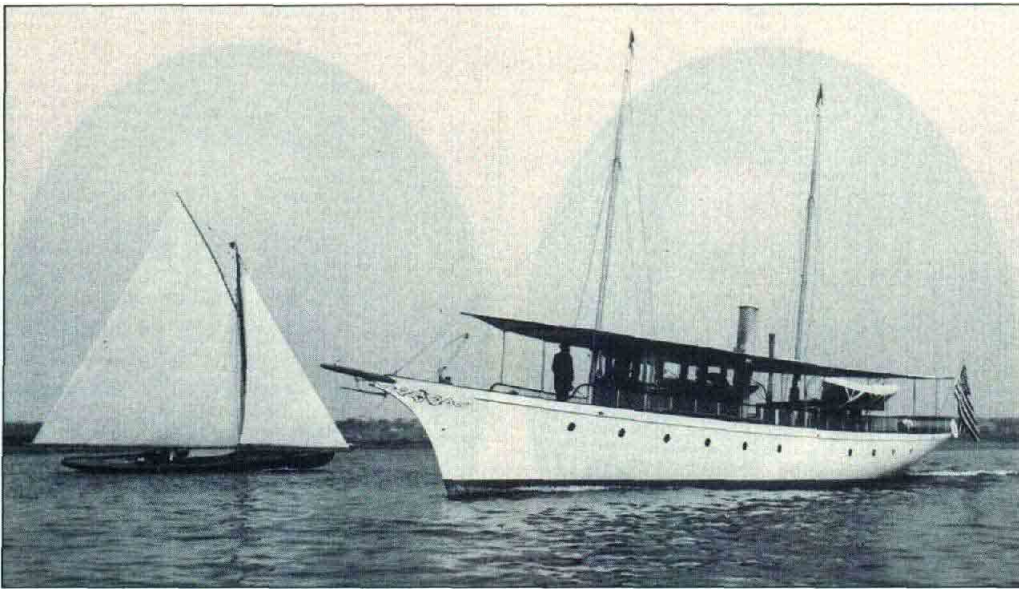
The name Herreshoff hardly needs an introduction, especially within the pages of this magazine. The story of the brothers, Nathanael Greene (NGH) and John Brown (JBH), and their Herreshoff Manufacturing Company (HMCo) has been told and retold so often as to be old hat, even though their achievements and their lasting influence are never likely to be equaled. What's new here are photographs taken by Herreshoff family members and company employees which make it possible to show, rather than tell, some of what went on between 1866 and 1944. The following pictures are from the collection of the Herreshoff Marine Museum and are but a small percentage of the holdings there, the vast majority of which have never been published or even widely viewed.

Some marvelous, recently discovered turn-of-the-century large-format glass plates taken by JBH's daughter Katherine were made into murals to become a special museum exhibit. And the exhibit, in turn, catalyzed a cooperative project between this magazine and the Herreshoff Marine Museum in the publication of a picture book. The photographs that follow are a few from that soon-to-be-published book.

Besides Katherine Herreshoff's images, the collection is largely made up of those (also in large format) of HMCo office manager Tom Brightman and Nathanael Herreshoff, Jr., and revealing snapshots taken by NGH's only daughter Agnes and her brother Clarence. Other photographers, known and unknown, professional and amateur, have contributed to this remarkable photographic history as well. It's exciting, especially for those of us who have been so long inspired by the Herreshoff tradition. We hope you enjoy this glimpse of yachting past.

Archival-quality photographic enlargements (restricted to personal use only) can be ordered from the Herreshoff Marine Museum, P.O. Box 450, Bristol, RI 02809. Ordering information about the book will appear in a later issue of *WoodenBoat*.

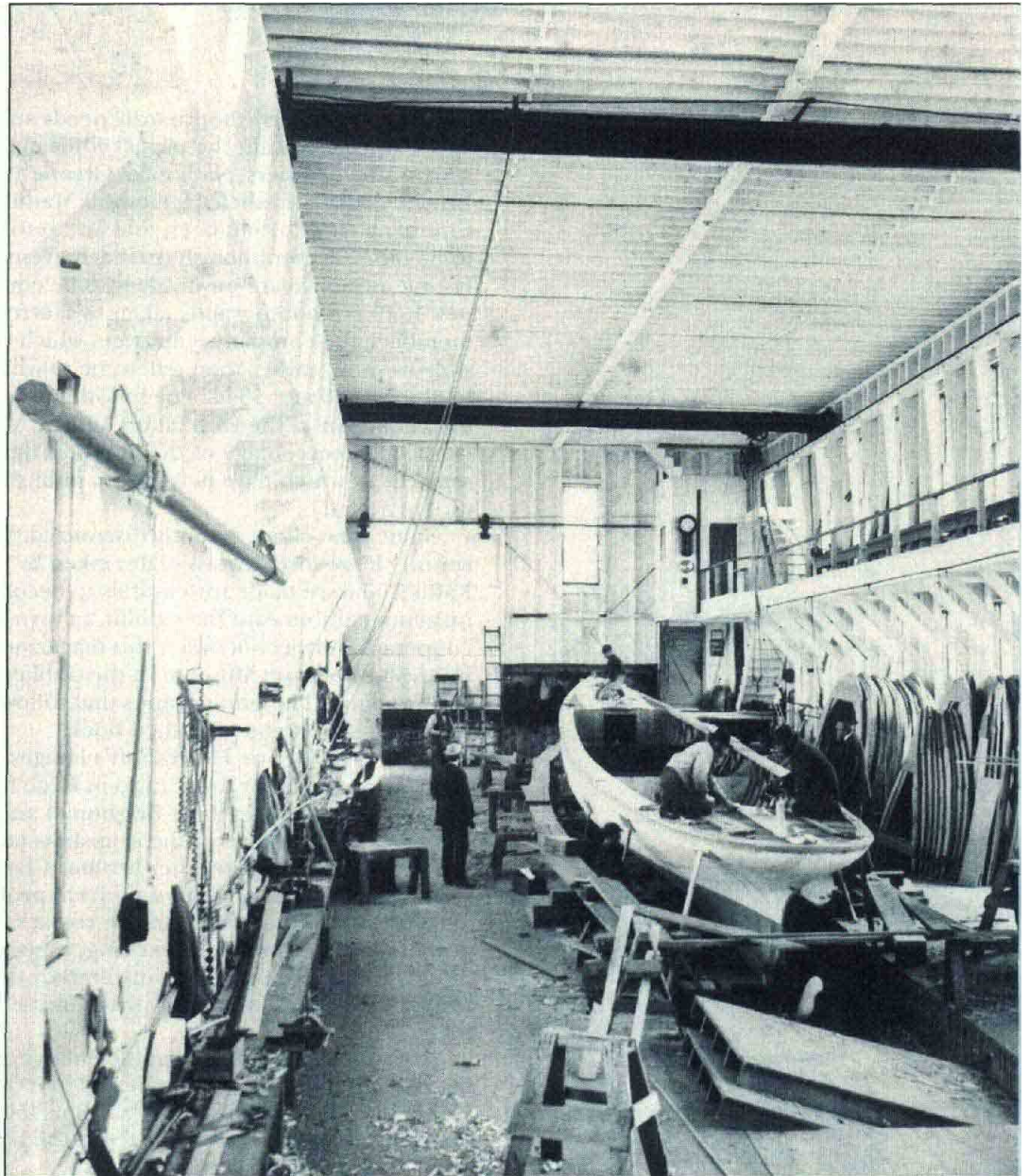




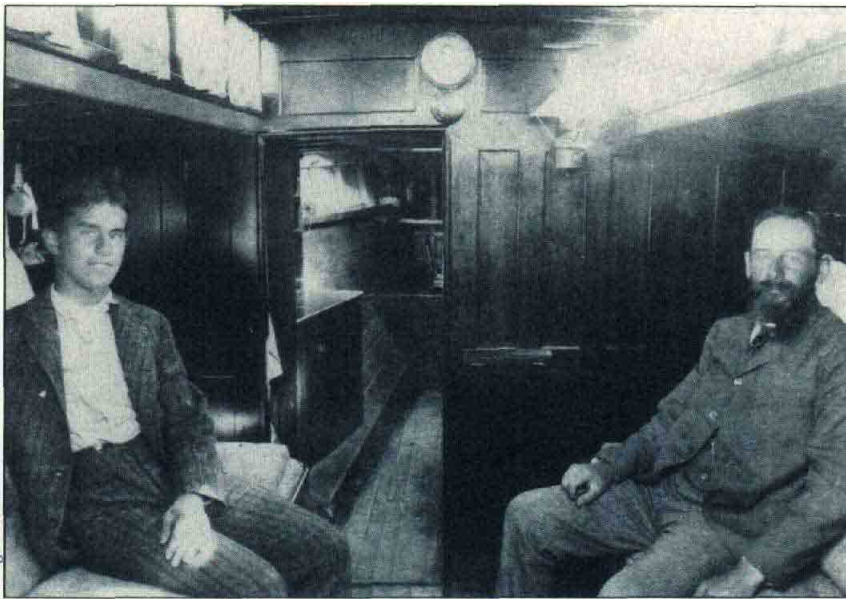
W.H. Childs

Quiet, sedate steam yachts and high-strung, fin-keeled daysailers were two important turn-of-the-century HMCo products. The sloop is one of the dozen identical Newport 30-footers (42' LOA) of 1898, and the steamer appears to be JBH's then-current EUGENIA (he owned three of that name), with JRH—his ever-present walking cane in hand (JBH was blind)—posed on the foredeck. While not as lean and graceful as, say, Watson's larger steam yachts, those built by HMCo were favored for their efficient power plants and marvelous craftsmanship.

Inside the South Construction Shop, about 1884. In this obviously posed and earliest of several shop-interior photos, the 45' steam launch XANTHO (HMCo #97) is being decked, while JBH stands by (at right) and NGH confers with a workman (at left). The timber molds from previous jobs lie stacked against the south wall, and along the north wall opposite is a full-length workbench. Second-level balconies run along each side above, and the two traveling cranes are evident overhead. The idea for overhead cranes (and, no doubt, for other features of the HMCo plant as well) may have come from the Providence, Rhode Island, shops of the Corliss Steam Engine Co., where NGH was employed for nearly a decade before joining up full-time with JBH. The cranes were initially installed to assist in the building of steam yachts; they were needed for hoisting boilers and engines aboard the hulls. However, they soon became a vital part of the Herreshoff wooden hull-building process wherein the hulls of all but the largest yachts were framed and planked upside down, and then, lifted by the cranes, turned over for completion.



unknown



George Owen, Sr.

CLARA

(HMCo #402, 1887)

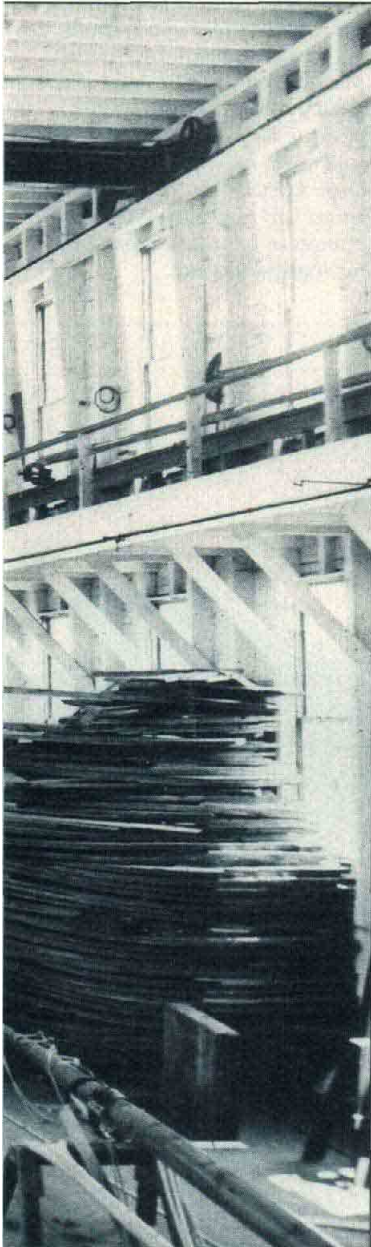
LOA 36'7"

LWL 29'3"

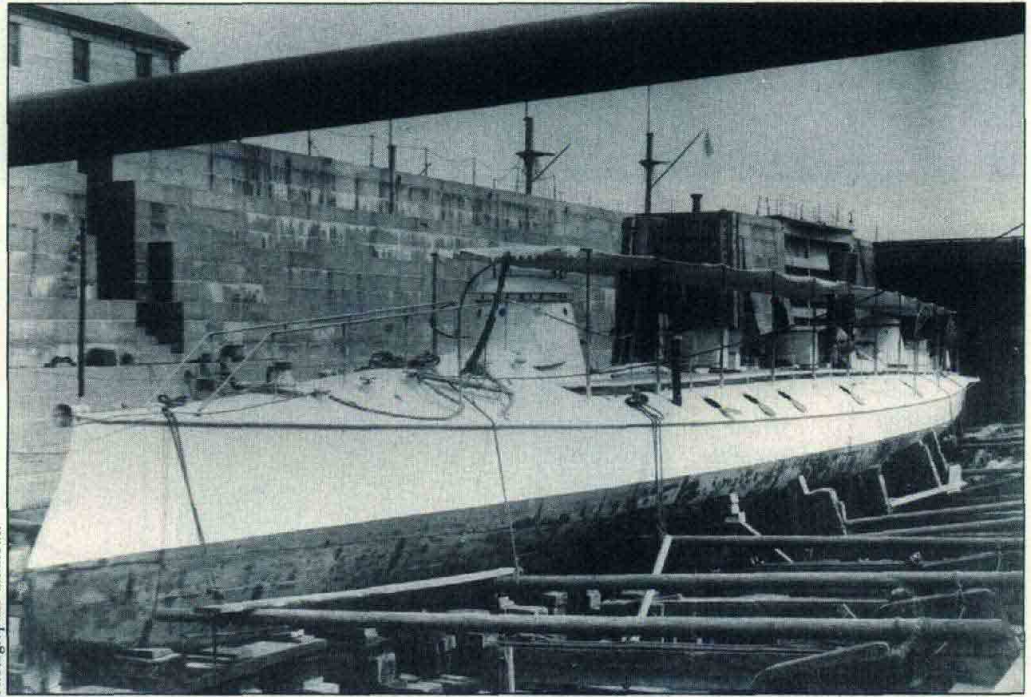
Beam 9'10"

Draft 5'5"

NGH (right) and friend Lucien Sharpe, Jr., aboard the cat-yawl CLARA, about 1889. Although NGH was a "workaholic," driven by HMCo's astonishing demands for new designs as well as superintending all the yard's work, he also loved to sail and always kept boats of his own, such as CLARA, for this purpose. Sundays between April and November would usually find him out on the water. Although over a century old, CLARA still survives in California—her rig altered, but otherwise surprisingly original.



Photographer unknown



CUSHING

(HMCo #152, 1890)

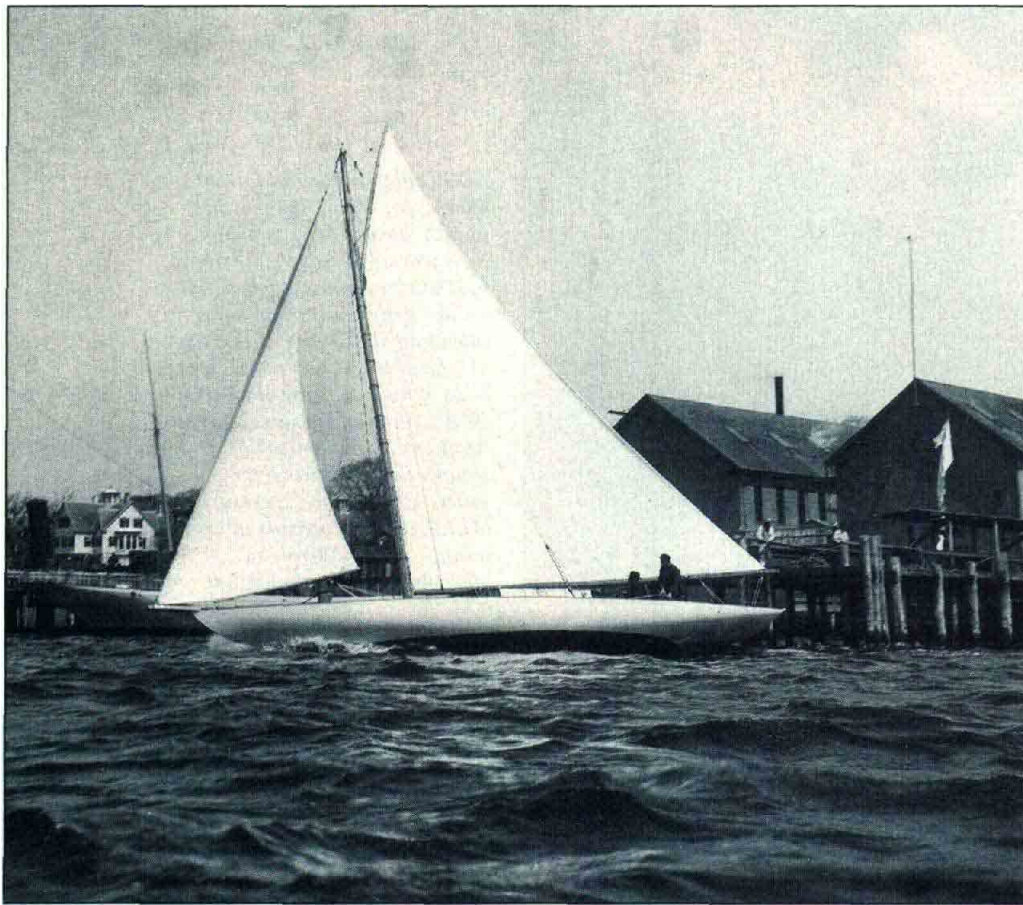
LOA 138'

Beam 15'

Draft 10'

GUSHING in drydock, probably in Providence, Rhode Island, March, 1890. The Navy, intrigued with the speed and efficiency of Herreshoff steam yachts and their powerplants, awarded HMCo the design and construction contract for GUSHING, its so-called "Torpedo Boat No. 1." The full-length awning seems a bit out of place on a fighting ship, but, as with yachts, it helped keep the soot off this new vessel of the Navy's "Great White Fleet." The standard Herreshoff stock anchor (in chocks on the foredeck) is unusual as well; one might expect a heavy Navy-type anchor housed in a hawsepipe on such a craft.

CUSHING was equipped with two of the largest and most powerful steam engines ever produced by HMCo, giving her a speed of about 26mph.



Katherine Herreshoff

ELECTRA

(HMCo #582, 1902)

LOA 42'5"

LWL 27'6"

Beam 12'3"

Draft 3'0"

ELECTRA skims past the Herreshoff waterfront, presumably on builder's trials in the spring of 1902. NGH appears to be at the helm, and the man with him, no doubt, is dealing off the windward runner after their just-completed tack. *ELECTRA*'s cabin has drop-curtain sides (note the rectangular patch of white) and a steam-bent, curved wooden front.

Two years previously, for the Massachusetts Bay 21'-class sloop *RADIANT* (HMCo #548), NGH made the half model that was used again here in building the larger *ELECTRA*. NGH frequently reused half models, even though changes in scale, deck layout, and rig disguised the fact.

Buzzards Bay 12½-Footer

(744 class, 1914)

LOA 15'10"

LWL 12'6"

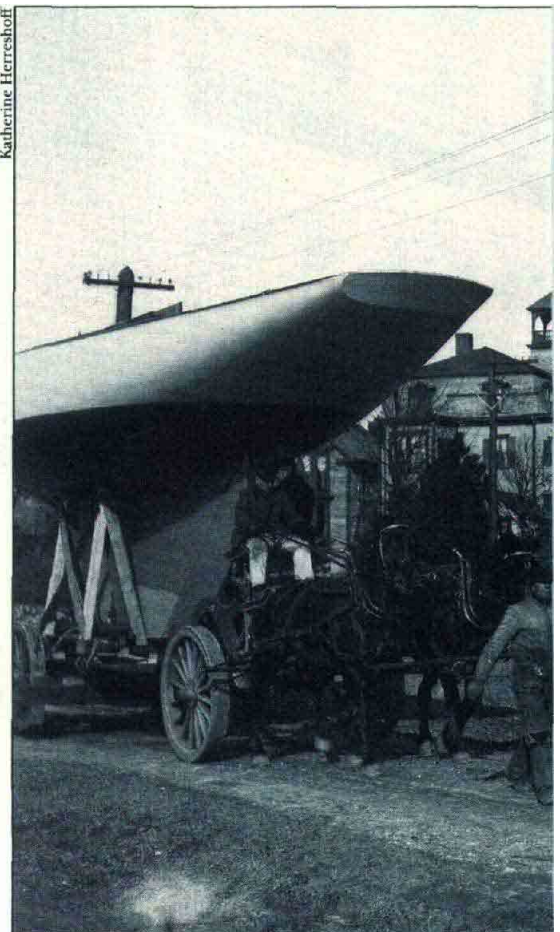
Beam 5'10"

Draft 2'6"

ROBIN, the first boat of the 12½' class, set up inside the North Construction Shop, December, 1914. Sitting in the cockpit is young Charlie Sylvester, who no doubt had a hand in the building of this boat and later would have charge of and personally build many of the 12½-footers and yacht tenders for the company. Like the other early 12½-footers, *ROBIN* was fitted with a rowing thwart. Notice also that she has a metal tiller socket and a longer-than-standard coaming ogee. A quarter-century and more than 400 boats later, 12½-footers would still be a-building, becoming HMCo's best-loved product.



Tom Brightman/NGH, Jr.



Katherine Herreshoff



Tom Brightman/NGH, Jr.

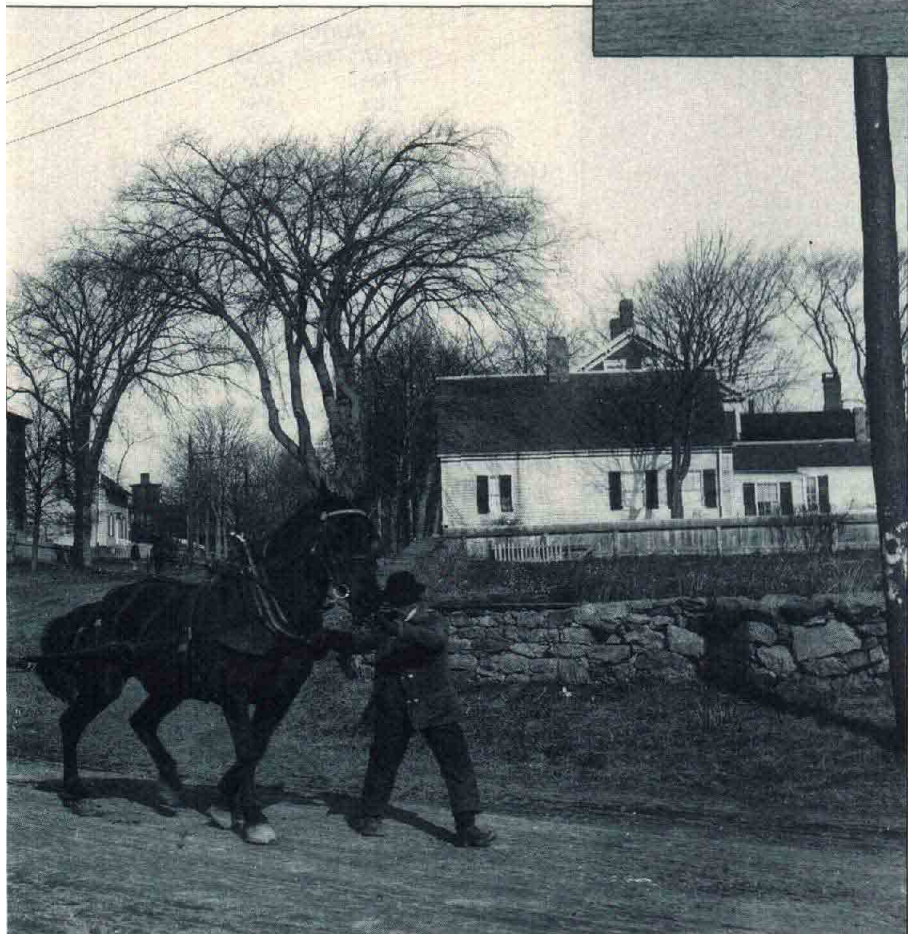
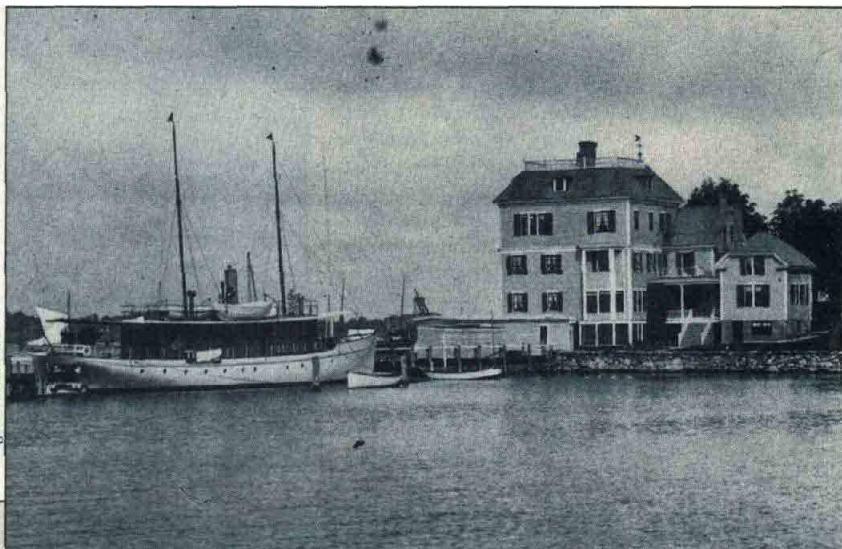
SACHEM
 (HMCo #292, 1913)
 LOA 40'0"
 Beam 6'11"
 Draft 2'3"

The high-speed pleasure launch SACHEM (ex-FAD), 1928. In SACHEM, NGH's oft-criticized aesthetic sense can hardly be faulted, for Ms boat is striking in her beauty. Her sheer is set off by a varnished sheerstrake whose molded shape became the standard at Herreshoffs. Her lowforward cabin comes to a point, which makes it sleek and easy to build. Both windshield and day-cabin roof can be removed, if desired; or, the canopy can be rolled up and the windshield folded for real wind-in-the-face running.

ROAMER
 (HMCo #215, 1902)
 LWL 93'8"
 Beam 17'6"
 Draft 4'10"

ROAMER in front of NGH's Love Rocks home in Bristol, where he kept her (and his other personal boats) ready for immediate use. In contrast with JBH's larger, clipper-bowed EUGENIA, built about the same time as somewhat of a company yacht, ROAMER was for NGH's family, to be used while the children were still at an age where cruising together was fun. According to L. Francis, one of the five sons, the summertime cruising was extensive, and during the eight or nine years she was owned by NGH, ROAMER was apt to be anywhere between New York and Bar Harbor, Maine.

Agnes Herreshoff



Bar Harbor 31-Footers

(592 class, HMCo #592-604, 1903)
 LOA 49'0"
 LWL 30'9"
 Beam 10'5"
 Draft 7'3"

A just-completed Bar Harbor 31-class sloop, probably in early spring, 1903. Thirteen of these sloops were built during the winter of 1902-03, most of them for Boston yachtsmen with summertime connections in Bar Harbor, Maine. The horse-drawn low gear carried each finished boat from the construction shop (where all were built one after the other, in production-line fashion), down rough, unpaved Hope Street, and deposited it in an open storage yard where, under fitted canvas covers, the new class awaited the sailing season.

Fishers Island Sound 31-Footer

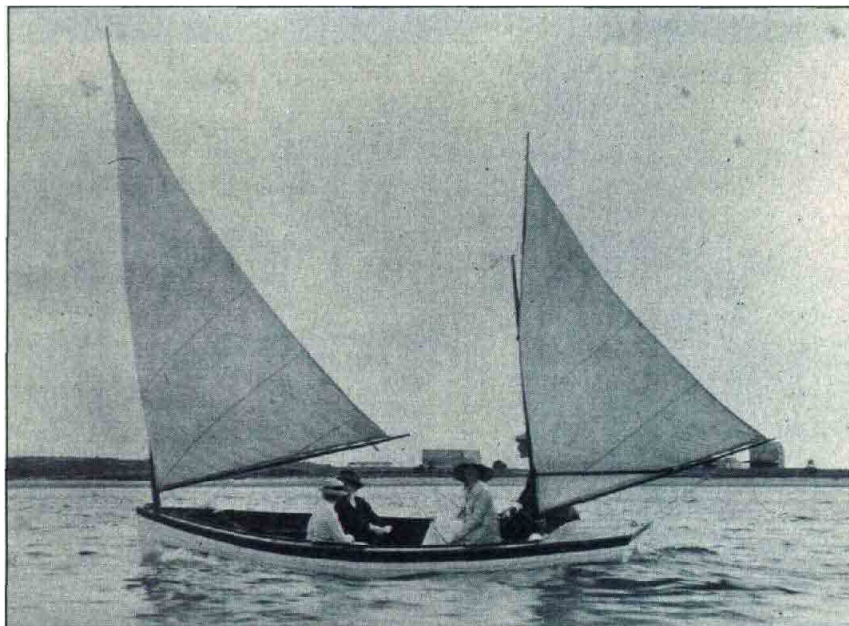
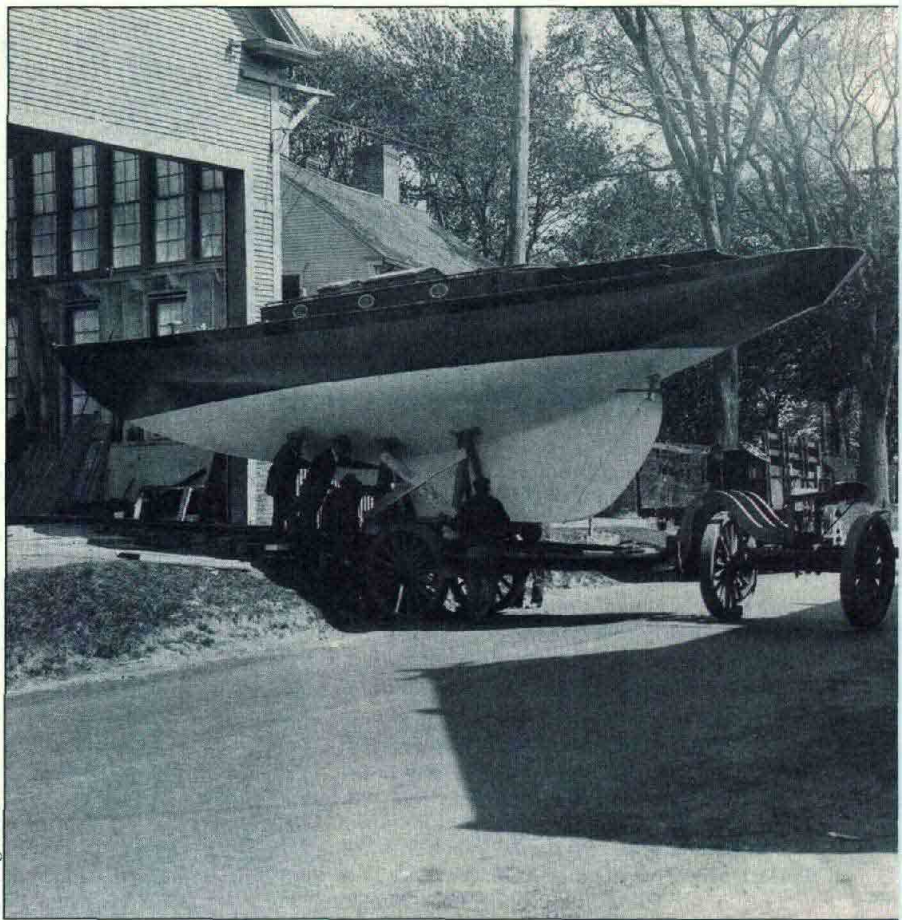
(HMCo #1054 class, 1927-1931)

LOA 44'0"
LWL 31'0"
Beam 10'7"
Draft 6'1"

A newly built Fishers Island 31-footer leaving the East Construction Shop, about 1930. The boat is probably *KELPIE* (HMCo #1157), ordered by Henry Maxwell and later owned for many years by Alan Bemis as *CIRRUS*. She was trimmed in teak and has, since new, been painted red. The design started out in 1912 as the model for the 26' centerboard daysailer *ALERION III*, which NGH had built for his own use.

That model, with its offsets suitably expanded through a change in scale, a full keel added, and its ends extended on the mold loft floor, is what Sidney Herreshoff used in creating the wonderful Fishers Island 31s. It was the work of great ingenuity, and there have been few better all-around designs ever produced. The boats are beautiful to look at, contain reasonable accommodations, and are outstanding sailers.

Tom Brightman



Agnes Herreshoff

COQUINA
(HMCo #404, 1887)
LOA 16'8"
LWL 15'9"
Beam 5'0"

COQUINA sailing off Prudence Island, June 15, 1919. Built for NGH in 1887 as an easy-to-get-underway daysailer (as opposed to her contemporary, *CLARA*, which was for cruising), *COQUINA* stayed with the Herreshoffs for nearly a half-century—until the 1938 hurricane destroyed her. Weekend picnicking was a favorite Herreshoff family pastime, so it's very probable that's where NGH and his lady passengers are headed on this Sunday sail. *COQUINA* steers with a rope instead of a tiller, that rope being connected to the rudder blade by means of small tackles from the corners of the transom. A strut keeps the mizzen boom from lifting, as it would tend to do because of the inward lead of the sheet.

Charles Davis, an unusually skilled HMCo boatbuilder, did a beautiful job on *COQUINA*, holding faithful to her delicate scantlings: 5/16" lapstrake cedar planking 1 1/16"-square steam-bent frames, a 5/16" brass centerboard, and a molded mahogany sheerstrake finished bright. Stripped, the hull weighed only 275 lbs.

COQUINA had lifting eyes forward and aft and was kept hoisted on davits in NGH's Love Rocks boathouse, ready for immediate use. NGH claims she was so easily rigged that he could push off from a lee shore and have her sailing before she drifted back in and touched bottom again. There were several rig options: two sizes of rigs (one totaling 183 sq ft, the other 131 sq ft) and three possible mast locations. Under the stern deck is a dry compartment where clothing, food for the day, and gear could be safely stowed.

This is the first boat L. Francis remembered sailing in at age five. Until about 1901, when NGH designed the so-called *COLUMBIA*-model tender, all HMCo yacht tenders were shaped pretty much like *COQUINA*, with plumb stems and raking transoms.



Tom Brightman



Development Boat
(HMCo #1148 or 1149, 1929)
LOA 20'0"
Beam 5'3"

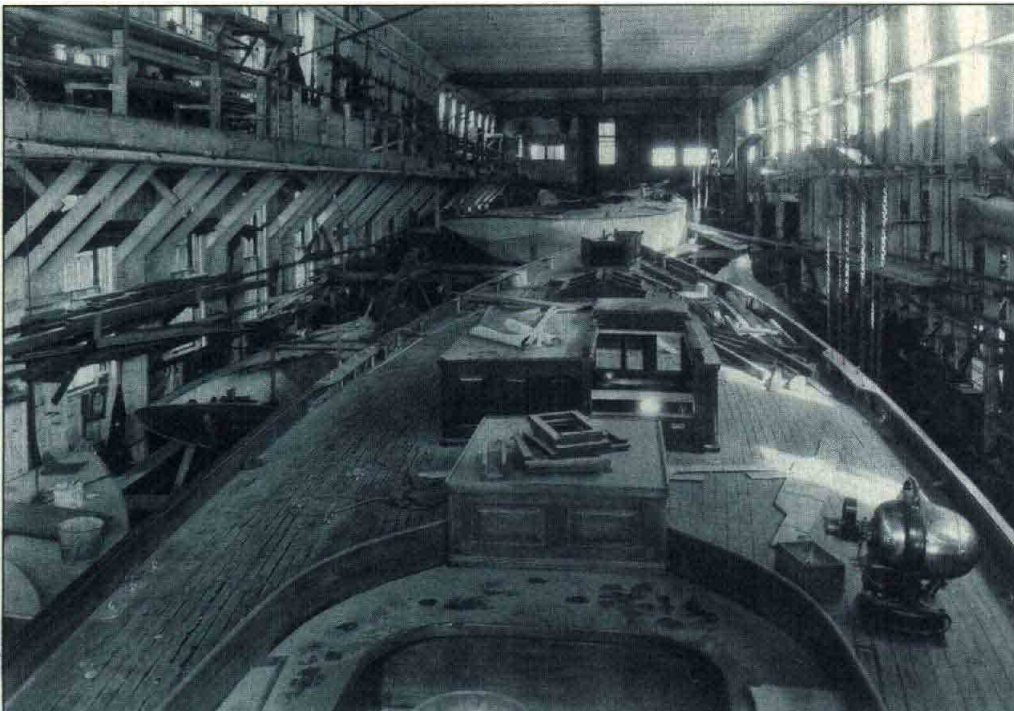
A Development-class boat on trial, winter of 1929-30. While their J-class AMERICA's Cup contender WEETAMOE was under construction, brothers-in-law Junius Morgan and George Nichols had a matched pair of NGH-designed, so-called Development-class boats built. NGH had been much taken with the new Development-class rule and carried on a lengthy correspondence with his son, L. Francis, about its potential in creating practical boats which could compete against one another and demonstrate the speed-giving qualities of various rigs. The boat shown and her sister could be rigged with one, two, or three masts, and, although larger than the usual rowing craft, they were fitted with oarlocks for rowing when there was no wind.

AMARYLLIS II
(HMCo #1232, 1933)
LOA 33'0"
Beam 18'4"

The catamaran AMARYLLIS II was sponsored by a Lake Michigan syndicate headed by K. T. Keller to be a near-replica of the first boat of that name (designed and built by NGH back in 1876 when, briefly and before joining his brother, he headed his own catamaran-building business). It was hoped that this new boat would be the first of many, twin-hulled catamarans, priced within the reach of the average yachtsman. Whether a profit on building additional boats was out of the question at the \$4,000 price, or whether there turned out to be no market at any price, is unclear—but no more were ever built. Like her predecessor, AMARYLLIS II proved her speed by setting what was then (in 1933) a new record of 19.8 mph. She is now part of the Herreshoff Marine Museum.



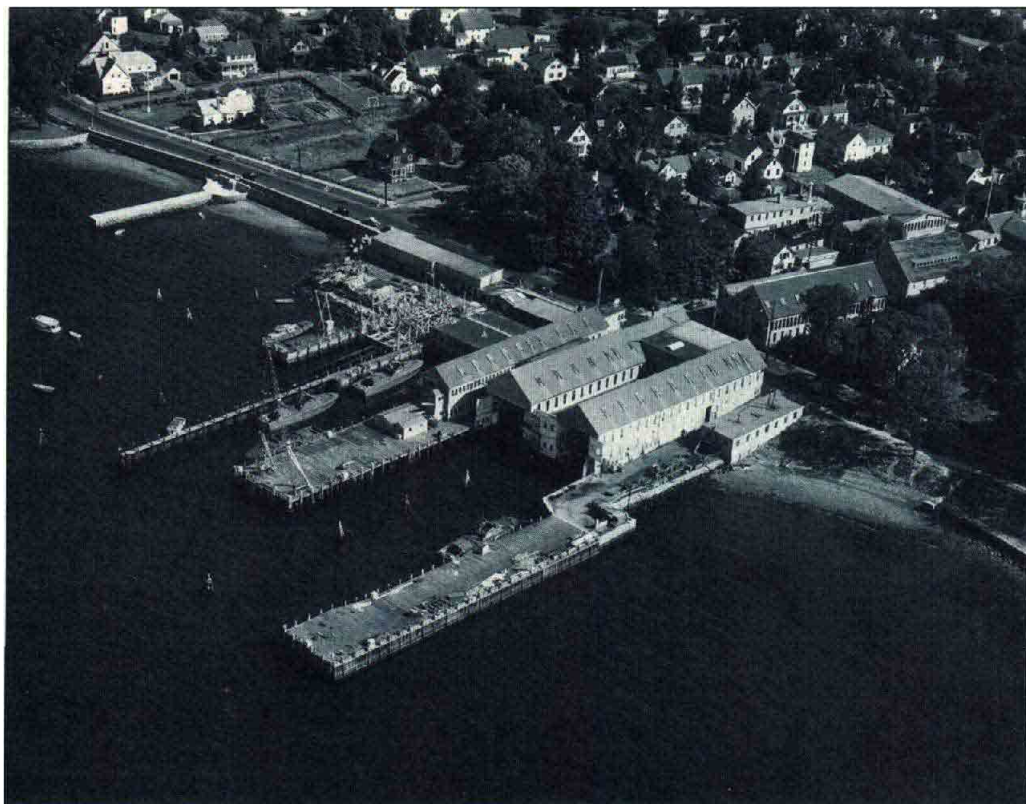
Tom Brightman



Tom Brightman

MARY ROSE
(HMCo #954, 1926)
LOA 64'10"
LWL 47'8"
Beam 14'3"
Draft 8'8"

HMCo enjoyed the late-1920 boom years, and endured the subsequent economic depression and World War, under Haffenreffer ownership, which began in 1924. This 1926 view inside the North Construction Shop shows it filled with work. In the foreground is the 65' schooner-yacht MARY ROSE, whose deck seams have just been payed with hot pitch; there are two New York 40-type yawls (59' LOA), RUGOSA I and MARILEE, ahead of her (one hidden); at the far left, two of the ever-popular 21' Fish-class sloops are being brought to completion; and the still-upside-down hull of a 28' S-boat can be seen under MARY ROSE's starboard bow.



Carl Haffenreffer

HMCo in November, 1944, before the waterfront shops were razed. (One hundred military vessels consisting of PT boats, APc coastal transports, AMc and YMS minesweepers, and Army Air Force air/sea rescue boats had been built here during World War II, earning the company awards for outstanding productivity and worker safety.) Rather than face an uncertain future in which material shortage and high overhead would loom large, the Haffenreffers, who had owned HMCo for the past 20 years, decided to call it quits, selling off the remaining facility and donating the drawings and records to M.I.T. Today, much of the property has been acquired by Halsey Herreshoff (NGH's grandson) and the Herreshoff Marine Museum.

Tom Brightman

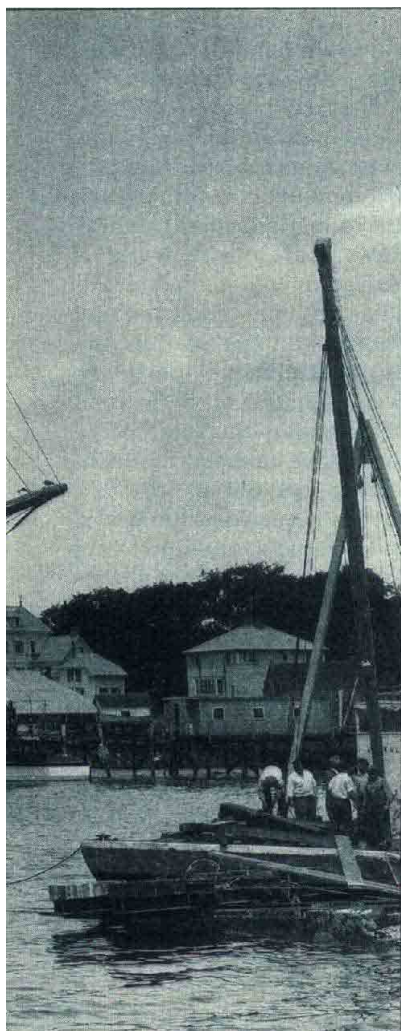


THISTLE
 (HMCo #1078, 1928)
 LOA 103'0"
 LWL 75'7"
 Beam 21' 6"
 Draft 13'6"

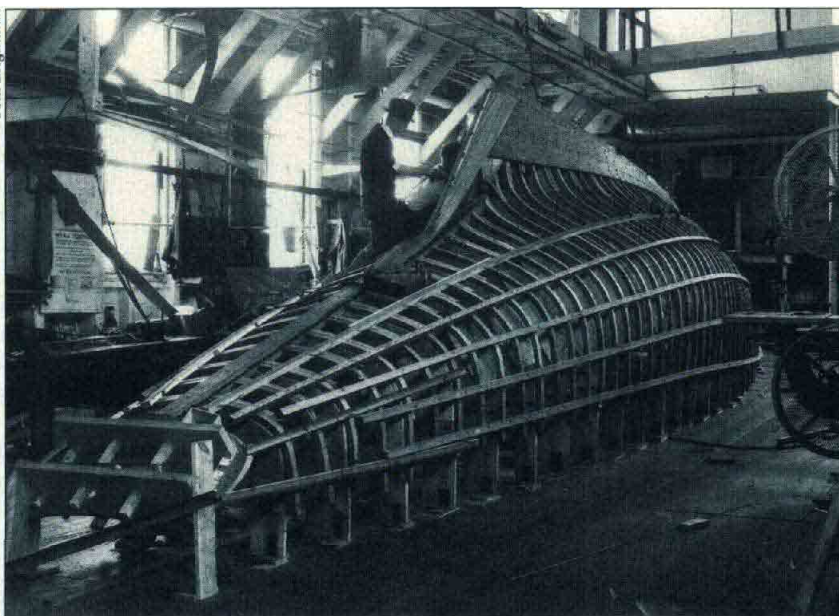
The Herreshoff yawl THISTLE stuck on the railway, July 16, 1936. When a rigged vessel as big as the 102' THISTLE jumps the tracks and rears up like this, there is legitimate cause for concern. A preventer has been run out from the mizzen, and another has been similarly made up to lead from the mainmast; both will act to keep THISTLE from getting blown over from this unstable perch. Accidents like this occasionally happen, even in yards like Herreshoffs, where the equipment was first class and well maintained. THISTLE survived this and went on for many more years, sailing summers from East Blue Hill, Maine, and ending her days in Turkish waters where, only recently, she was broken up. Her hull plating was bronze over steel frames.

HMCo—Chronological Highlights

- 1863: At age 22, JBH sets up in Bristol, Rhode Island, to build boats for a living, helped by various family members, and briefly by a partner, Dexter Stone.
- 1864: NGH, at 16, models his first boats—HENRIETTA, HAIDEE, VIOLET, and ARIEL. Father Charles, a meticulous tinkerer, develops a sliding ballast box and continues to train his boys in the proper care of a boat.
- 1866: NGH enters M.I.T.
- 1868: NGH designs his first steamer.
- 1869: NGH begins work as a designer for the Corliss Steam Engine Company in nearby Providence, Rhode Island.
- 1870: NGH designs his first famous racing sailboat, SHADOW, to be built by JBH.
- 1876: NGH designs his first catamaran, AMARYLLIS; in the summer, he sails her to New York and defeats all comers.
NGH designs the first U.S. Navy torpedo boat, the 57' LIGHTNING.
- 1877: NGH designs his first major vessel, the 120' ESTELLE, along with all the propelling machinery.
- 1878: JBH and NGH form HMCo, whose early specialty was steam yachts.
- 1891: The racing sloop GLORIANA is designed and built, and at the end of her first season is hailed as a "break-through" boat.
- 1891: NGH designs the first fin-keeled sailboat, DILEMMA, and has it built for his personal use.
- 1893: The first three metal-hulled sailing yachts—NAVAHOE, COLONIA, and VIGILANT—all about 85' LWL—are designed and built, the last two as AMERICA'S Cup defense contenders.
Captain Nat steers VIGILANT to victory in the AMERICA'S Cup series against VALKYRIE II.
- 1895: DEFENDER is designed and launched, to win another AMERICA'S Cup contest.
HMCo builds what are to be its largest power vessels (175'6" LOA), the U.S. Navy torpedo boats DUPONT and PORTER, to NGH designs.
- 1903: The largest Cup defender of all, RELIANCE, is overwhelmingly successful against Lipton's third SHAMROCK.
- 1904: NGH's new rating rule for racing yachts is adopted, encouraging more practical hull shapes.
- 1915: JBH dies. Ownership of HMCo passes to New York investors when JBH's heirs sell their stock in the company and, shortly after, NGH sells his.
- 1924: Principal assets of the HMCo are bought at auction by R.F. Haffenreffer. NGH, already in semiretirement, is retained as a consultant; son Sidney is named chief designer and engineer.
- 1938: NGH dies. —MB



Tom Brighman



BRENDA

(HMCo #1315, 1936)

LOA	44'6"
LWL	30'0"
Beam	8'0"
Draft	6'0"

Planking the Alden-designed yawl BRENDA, November 5, 1935. Upside-down hull construction continued to be HMCo's method, even in later years when the company started building one-of-a-kind boats designed by others whose construction drawings did not especially lend themselves to it. There were still economies to be realized through long-established habits and convenient down-hand positions, albeit the structure of boats such as BRENDA was more complex than what had been devised and perfected by NGH. (Most NGH-designed boats of BRENDA's size would have had a shallower hull and a steam-bent, plank-type keel timber, and there'd be a solid fairing of deadwood between hull and ballast keel. The overall shape might have been nearly the same, but NGH's structural design would have been especially tailored to HMCo's unique building method.)

Maynard Bray is contributing editor to this magazine.