



The Herreshoff Registry
A resource for owners, prospective owners, builders, and aficionados

The Herreshoff 12 ½ Footer

LOA: 15 feet, 10 inches
LWL: 12 feet, 6 inches
Beam: 5 feet, 9 inches
Draft: 2 feet, 6 inches
Displacement: 1500 pounds



Nat Herreshoff designed the 12 ½ footer in 1914. It has been in continuous production since then, and is nearly universally acclaimed as one of the finest small boats of all time. He was 66 years old by then, and had all the experience from a full and legendary career of designing and building yachts. He had already accumulated 5 of the never-matched record of 6 consecutive America's Cup defenses, and 6 consecutive victories.

The Herreshoff Manufacturing Company took the first orders for the 12 ½ footer in 1914 and built 364 wooden hulls through 1943. Following the closing of HMC production, the Quincy Adams Yacht Yard was licensed by HMC to build the design. Quincy Adams used the Herreshoff builder's plate, and built 51 hulls from 1943 through 1948. The Quincy Adams boats had hull numbers in the 2000's, and were planked with mahogany rather than the white cedar used by HMC. They also have something of a reverse sheer forward.

In 1947, Cape Cod Shipbuilding acquired the rights to the design. They built about 35 wooden hulls between 1948 and 1950, when they switched to fiberglass. You can still get a new fiberglass 12 ½ from Cape Cod Shipbuilding today. Cape Cod Shipbuilding also brought out a modification of the original, designed by Nat's oldest son, Sidney. Called the Cape Cod Bullseye, it is a fiberglass version of the 12 ½ hull with a small cuddy cabin.

Another company, Doughdish, Inc., is building a fiberglass version of the 12 ½. Since Cape Cod's rights prohibit anyone else from using the trademarked name "Herreshoff 12 ½", the boat is called Doughdish. The molds were created by taking the lines from three original wooden hulls. Bill Harding, the creator of the Doughdish, took great pains to ensure his boat was an exact replica of the original, even eschewing the weight reductions afforded by fiberglass construction to ensure the Doughdish is authentic in every way (other than building material). In fact, the Doughdish is allowed to compete against the original wooden boats in association regattas, while the Cape Cod Shipbuilding 12 ½ is not. Finally, since 2006 the Herreshoff 12 ½ is once again available in wood from Artisan Boatworks of Rockport, ME.

If you look at a 12 ½ out of the water, you can't help but notice the seductive shape and subtle reverse curves of her underbody. It is thanks to this shape that the boat can ghost along so well in only the lightest breath of air while all the other boats in the water stand still. The helm balance is perfect. They may be slow by today's standards and handle somewhat poorly in confined spaces, but they are well-mannered, roomy, dry, and seaworthy.