



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

Identifying Your Herreshoff 12 ½

This document was prepared to help owners of a Herreshoff 12 ½ with a missing builder's plate determine the vintage of their boat. One must be very careful in assessing one of these boats as over the years, many of the identifying characteristics have been changed during repairs or restorations. Many of the indicators are details that could have been changed and may throw off your identification.

Step 1: Is it a Herreshoff Manufacturing Company boat?

- If the boat is fiberglass, it is NOT an HMC boat. It would be manufactured either by Cape Cod Shipbuilding or Doughdish, Inc. after HMC went out of business.
- If it is wood but has a centerboard, it is NOT an HMC boat. Most likely, it is a Haven 12-1/2, which is a modification of the original drawn by Joel White.
- If your boat is wood and does not have a builder's plate, it could possibly be built by a private builder. More likely, however, it was built either by Cape Cod Shipbuilding, Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, or Quincy Adams Shipyard.
- If the boat is planked in mahogany, it is a QA boat. 51 QA boats were built between 1943 and 1948. They were built in the "Fishers Island" style, but without the copper flotation tanks (see Step 3). They used HMC builder's plates with numbers 2000 – 2050. QA also used laminated stems. Over the years, these stems tend to weaken and give the boat a slight reverse-sheer forward of the mast.
- If the boat is planked in cedar and employs butt-blocks, it is an HMC boat. HMC boats were built between 1914 and 1943. In most, but not all cases, HMC did not use full-length planks and joined them with butt blocks. CCSB built about 35 wooden boats between 1948 and the early 1950's. CCSB used full-length planks and did not use butt blocks.

Step 2: Is it an HMC standard configuration or "Improved Model"?

- HMC built a total of 364 12 ½ footers. Of these, 5 – 7 of them were "Improved Models", also known as "Fisher's Island Models". The improved version had mahogany trim, a Marconi rig, wider side decks, copper flotation tanks under the seats, a flush after deck, and an over-the-transom tiller. Unless your boat is one of the few unidentified vessels that have

these characteristics, you have a standard configuration. These boats were built between 1939 and 1941. Hull numbers are 1500, 1501, 1502, 1503, 1504, and possibly 1509 and 1510.

Step 3: Is it one of the first 20?

The first 20 are different than the others, and can be readily identified. These 20 were ordered in late 1914 and delivered for the 1915 sailing season in Marion, MA. The following characteristics are specific to the first 20 boats, numbers 744 – 765. Only 744, 750, 754, 755, and 765 remain unaccounted for.

- The coaming ogee is stretched longer than on the other boats
- The interior is configured with rowing thwarts
- The tiller socket is metal rather than wood
- The mast is 2-7/8” in diameter at the mast partner rather than 3-3/8”

Step 4: Was it built before or after 1936?

- At the beginning of 1936, HMC switched from using white oak to mahogany for the coaming, transom, and trim work.

Step 5: What are the details?

Getting closer is still possible, but it requires an examination of some of the finer details. At this point, it is probable that changes may have been made over the years that will contaminate your evidence, so very careful examination is required.

- The deck and bulkheads were planked cedar prior to about 1931 and plywood thereafter.
- The sternpost terminated below the after deck on boats built prior to the early 1920's, and protruded above the deck thereafter.
- Until the early 1920's, the transom was made of 5/8” oak. At that time, a switch was made to 3/4” oak. In 1936, the transom became 7/8” mahogany.
- The Traveler was changed after hull 1293. The older one was a straight rod that terminated at each end in a ball shaped socket attached to a mounting flange. The later one was a rod that had a 90-degree bend at each end attached to a mounting flange.
- A bronze boom crutch socket was let into the after deck on boats built after 1939.
- The mast partner was hinged up until hull 1293, when they switched to a one-piece casting.
- The bowchocks were also changed after hull 1293. Refer to the H12 Registry for photos of the 2 styles.