



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

Restoration Or Reproduction?

At this stage in its life, nearly every boat built by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company has had some significant work, in many cases benefitting from a complete restoration. The restored vessel typically has had a great deal of its wood replaced, sometimes to the point of nearly no original material being left on the boat. This brings up the question of whether the vessel is actually a restored original or an authentic reproduction.

It appears that the question has been answered to the satisfaction of Lloyd's Of London. Each vessel listed in the Lloyd's Register is assigned a unique identification number. That number stays with the vessel even if she is 100% rebuilt. This has been their practice for some time. In *Sailing Alone Around The World*, Joshua Slocum wrote in 1899: "Now, it is a law in Lloyd's that the *Jane* repaired all out of the old until she is entirely new is still the *Jane*."

The US Navy also seems to have an answer to the question. The USS CONSTITUTION ("Old Ironsides") is considered to be the oldest commissioned vessel afloat, having been launched in 1797. Yet, there is nearly no original wood left. Significant work was done on her in 1925 and 1995. This needs to be verified, but it has been said that only 2 pieces of original material still remain: a breast hook and part of the forefoot assembly.

Clearly, all rebuilds cannot be considered to be restored originals. Very few would argue that a boat lofted from original plans, constructed alongside the original derelict hull for reference using the new molds, and then finished off with the original hull plate qualify as a restored original. Consequently, it is useful to have guidelines to use for deciding whether we are dealing with a restoration or a reproduction. The case of the CONSTITUTION shows that percentage of original material is not a useful measure. However, we can make the observation that the CONSTITUTION was restored over a number of years, and this suggests another way of judging.

In the November / December 2002 issue of *Wooden Boat* magazine, issue number 169, Nicholas Brown quotes Maynard Bray:

"Recently, the informal standard has been that to qualify as a restoration, the hull has to remain recognizable as a boat throughout the project. The Europeans came up with this concept," Bray continued, "and it seems to me to be a pretty good one. William Collier may have conceived this idea. He has been heavily involved in restoring Fife yachts and yachts of Camper and Nicholson. Despite there being precious little original fabric remaining in some of those projects, there is photo documentation that at no time would the hull not have been recognized as a boat."

This standard works well. In the case of a new boat being constructed next to the original hull, the new vessel is not recognizable as a boat for a good portion of the project. But in the case of the CONSTITUTION, at no time while the work was being done was the vessel unrecognizable.

Figure 1 below shows a beyond-repair Herreshoff 12 ½ being used for measurements while an essentially new boat is built alongside. The new boat will use the lead from the original, and the remnants of the old boat will be destroyed upon completion of the project. As the new boat was not recognizable for a good portion of the project, it is a replica by this standard. *Figure 2* shows a Herreshoff Buzzards Bay 15 being restored. The frames were steamed in place against the original planking, and then new planks were installed over the new framing, section at a time. In this way, the subtleties of the original lines are retained, and the boat is recognizable during the entire process. By this definition, it is a restoration.

Using this standard as a guideline, we can comfortably determine whether we have a beautifully restored original or an authentic replica.



Figure 1 – Reproduction

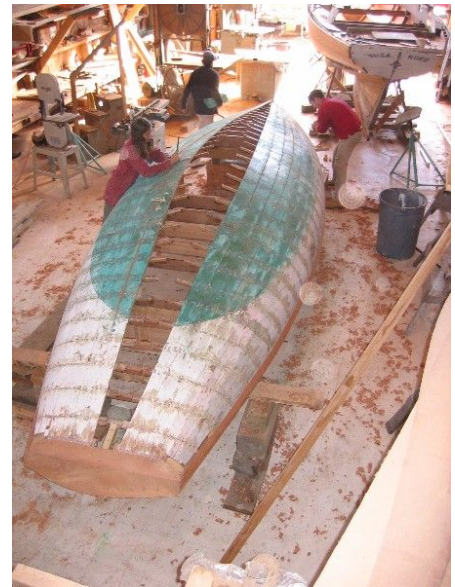


Figure 2 - Restoration