

RYC



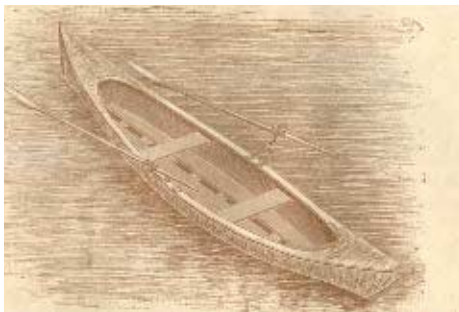
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A Historical Perspective of the Racine Yacht Club Through Time.

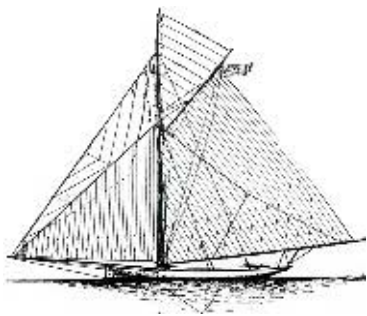
Volume 1 • April 2015

The Ancestor of Yachting in Racine: Our Boat-Building Heritage

Racine's maritime history stretches back to the 1840s when the city was the fifth largest shipping port on the Great Lakes, through the 1880s when shipyards here built cargo schooners for the lake trade, to a recreational boat-building industry that spanned fifty years at the start of the Twentieth Century. Following are just some of the boats made in Racine between 1879 and 1928.



In 1878 the Racine Hardware Manufacturing Company bought another Racine firm which made curved wooden goods from pressed and glued veneer. It made this **14' molded veneer row boat** in 1879 and launched an industry.



American Girl, a **25' Sandbagger** with 850 square feet of sail, was built for Chicagoan C. E. Berriman. She was designed by naval architect Fred W. Martin, who joined the company in

1891. Martin became the glue that held Racine's boat-building industry together.



Scientific American

The firm's boat shop built many of the **35' electric launches** for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The parent company, though, was caught up in the financial "Panic of '93", went bankrupt, and was reorganized. Martin left to form his own yard.

Martin incorporated the Racine Boat



Steve Wheeler model

Manufacturing Company late in 1893 and designed *Valiant*, a **42' racing cutter** with some 1,600 square feet of sail. *Valiant* put Racine boatyards on the map but, in a dispute with his partners, Martin left in 1894 to form yet another yard.



Library of Congress

The **146' Pathfinder** (1896) was the first non-commercial steel vessel built on the Great Lakes west of Cleveland. She ushered in an era of large yachts and new materials for the Racine Boat Manufacturing Company. Another large yacht built that year was *Vencedor*, a 65' fin-keel sailboat.



Racine Historical Museum

In May of 1903 the yard burned to the ground. The company then moved to Muskegon, Michigan; it retained its original name after the move.



Among the boats coming out of the new yard was this **canoe-sterned cruiser** in 1909.





RBYC logo

The company used the logo for many years. It is so complex, difficult to read but the letters "RBYC" are placed on white twine rope.



U.S. Coast Guard

The company also chased commercial and government business. **This steel lightship**, from 1911, was one. This kind of work wasn't enough to sustain the company, though, and it closed in 1916.



Steve Wheeler model

Fred Martin opened the Racine Yacht & Boat Works, in 1895. One of its offerings was this **22' canoe yawl**, a single-hander he had designed earlier, in 1891.



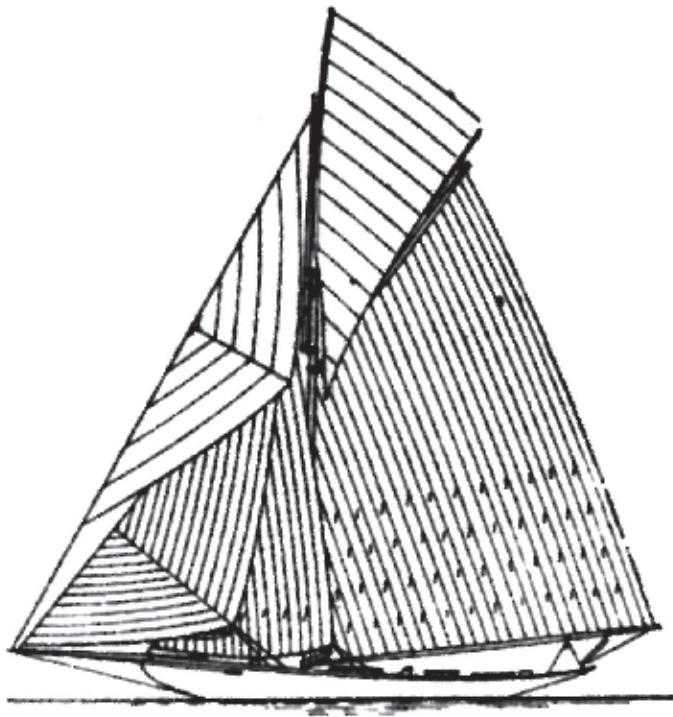
Steve Wheeler model

This **20' Sandbagger**, which carried 575 square feet of sail, is from 1897. The boat was named *Euliana* and was built for D.B. Jones, commodore of the Delavan Lake Yacht Club.



Steve Wheeler model

From Martin's 1895 catalog we have this **38' Judges Launch**.



Smaller yachts and launches made up much of Martin's output but he did big ones, like this **70' cutter**, too. He found he couldn't compete with his earlier yard and the Racine Yacht & Boat Works failed in 1899. Fred Martin moved to Waukegan and died there in 1903 at age 43.



Steve Wheeler model

Andrew Jackson Pierce incorporated Racine's Pierce Engine Company in 1892 and designed and built marine, stationary, and automotive engines. This **1HP, 200 pound marine engine** is from 1897.



Steve Wheeler model

Pierce both ventured into the automobile business and built boats for his marine engines. Here is a **16' launch** that Fred Martin designed for him in 1897. Pierce's boats ranged up to some 50 feet in length.



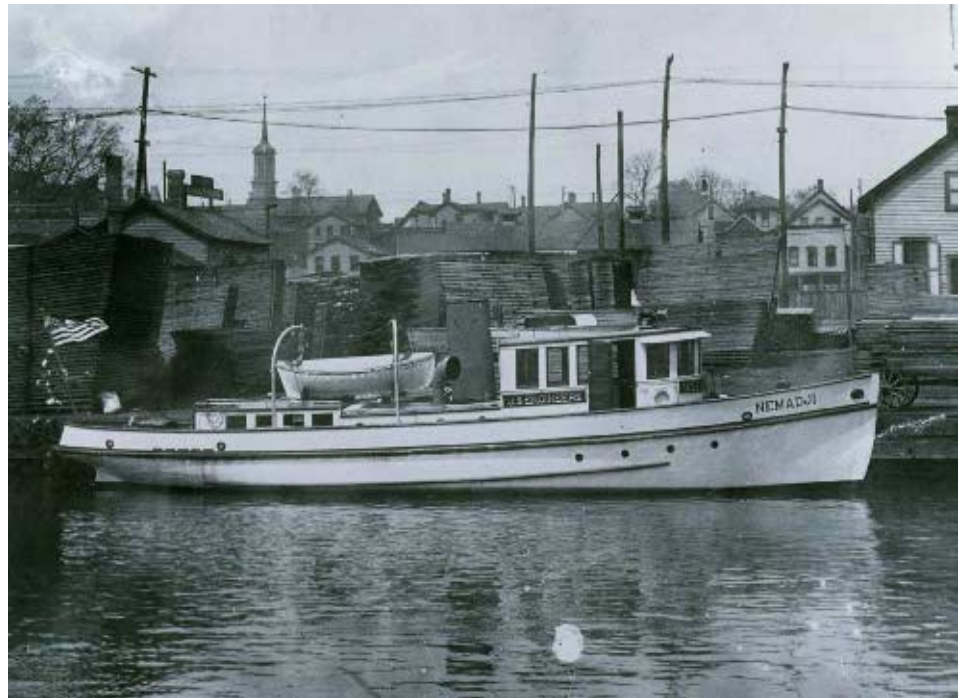
Steve Wheeler model

Pierce's engines evolved over time. This **4HP marine model** is from 1910; there were a number of other sizes. He was bought out by the Case Company in 1910.



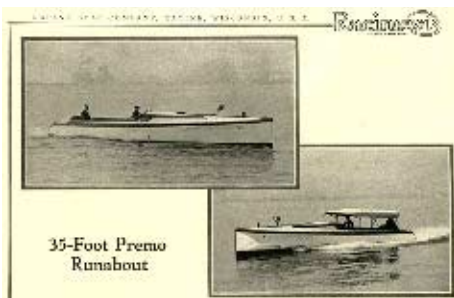


The Racine Boat Company was incorporated by workers who had moved across the lake after the great 1903 fire. They became homesick and returned in 1906 to build a wide variety of boats, mostly **power cruisers** like this one from about 1912.



Racine Historical Museum

The company also built work boats. 1911 saw *Nemadji*, a 60' tug built for the U. S. Engineers.



The business changed as time passed and output had compressed by the 1920s. Part of that output was a **line of runabouts**, at least one of which was designed by John Hacker.



RacineWis Canoes formed another staple of the company in its later years. The Racine Boat Company closed in 1928 possibly because the automobile, now cheap and reliable, changed the recreational habits of the country.



A publication of the RYC Historical Committee, a volunteer group dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of RYC's rich history. This issue was written by RYC member Steve Wheeler.

With the closing of the Racine Boat Company an industry that had flourished for a half-century disappeared. It is now almost completely forgotten. Boat-building here almost certainly fostered the rise of yachting in Racine and the early Racine Yacht Club. Many who worked in the different yards were certainly involved in recreational boating; some eventually became members, and even officers, of our Racine Yacht Club. Past Commodores Wm. H. Rohan Sr. and Fred Hermans were among them.