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Harkers Island Boats [1]

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by Lawrence E. Babits, 2006

Boat in the early stages of construction at the Lewis Brothers boat works on Harkers Island, 1992. Copyright Edwin Martin, 1992. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

See also: North Carolina Shipbuilding Company (from Tar Heel Junior Historian)[2]; Shipbuilding [3]

Boatyard of Brady Lewis, creator of the Carolina 'flared' bow. Image courtesy of the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center. [4]

Harkers Island boats, with their distinctive high, wide, flared bows, are the most easily recognizable traditional watercraft in coastal North Carolina. A shipyard existed on Harkers Island [5] as early as 1752. In the late nineteenth century many flat-bottomed sharpies were produced in the Core Sound [6] area. After conversion to engine power between 1912 and 1920, the sharpies snaked and vibrated, and the machinery obstructed the cockpit. Compensating for these problems, local boatbuilders combined sharpie attributes with power, and the Harkers Island design was born. This unique boat type was well adapted to the local maritime environment of the Carolina sounds, with an engine allowing much higher speeds in open waters and a flared bow, known as the "Harkers Island flare" or "Carolina flare," that threw water away from the hull at high speeds in the choppy local waters. Credit for the first flared bow went to Brady Lewis [7], who worked with his father on Bogue Sound overhauling and repairing sailing vessels. After moving to Harkers Island in 1926, they began building boats in their yard.

Handcrafted, "backyard" boat-building remains the typical production method employed by Harkers Island designers and builders. Harkers Island boats are used for trawling, shrimping, dredging, and recreational fishing [8].

References:

Michael B. Alford, *Traditional Work Boats of North Carolina* (1990).

Sonny Williamson, *Sailing with Grandpa* (1987).

Additional Resources:

Harker's Island Boatbuilding, NC Folklife Institute: http://www.ncfolk.org/NCTravel/CoreSoundItinerary_Stop5.aspx [9]

Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center: http://coresound.com/ [6]

Rubin, Small Craft Advisory: A Book About the Building of a Boat. [7]

The Boat Makers of Harkers Island: Proud Builders Eschew Blueprints and Elaborate Plans, by Charles Hillinger, LA Times http://articles.latimes.com/1985-07-28/news/vw-5705_1_harkers-island-boat [10]

Image Credit:

Boatyard of Brady Lewis, creator of the Carolina 'flared' bow. Image courtesy of the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center. Available from http://www.downeasttour.com/harkers_is/Tia02_vt003_03b.htm [4] (accessed August 8, 2012).

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Subjects:
Industry [11]
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Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. [15]

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