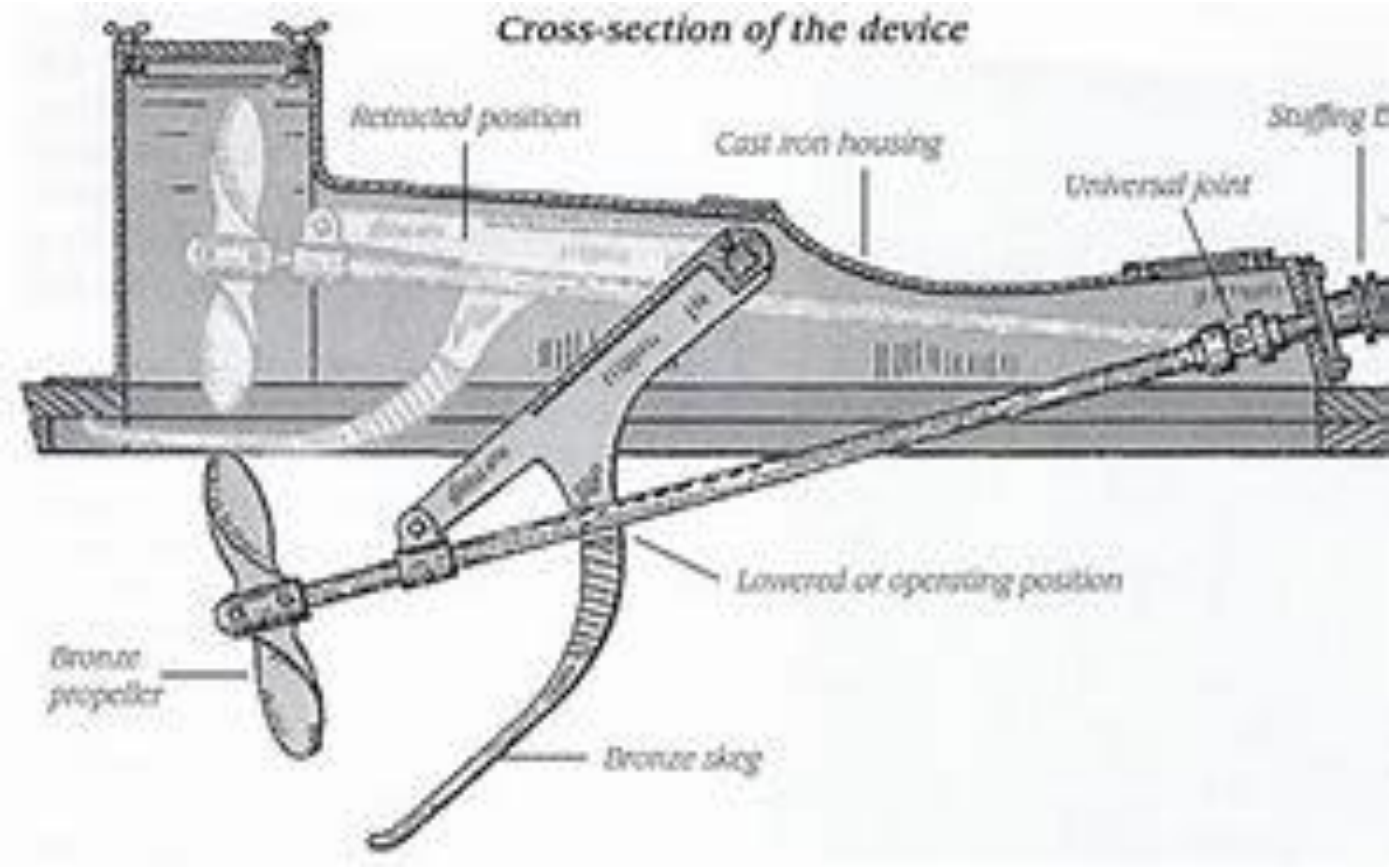
The Disappearing Propellor Boat Company: A Riddle, Wrapped in an Enigma, Planked with Cedar

Much of the information has been drawn and condensed from “The Greatest Little Motor Boat Afloat”, by Joe Fossey, Jim Smith, Paul Dodington et al; the book referred to here by the acronym GLMBA. The main purpose of this chapter is to try to clarify the business elements of the story.

Postcard shows fishermen posing in early teens Dispro. Pike should be filleted to avoid choking on the 1,000 bones.

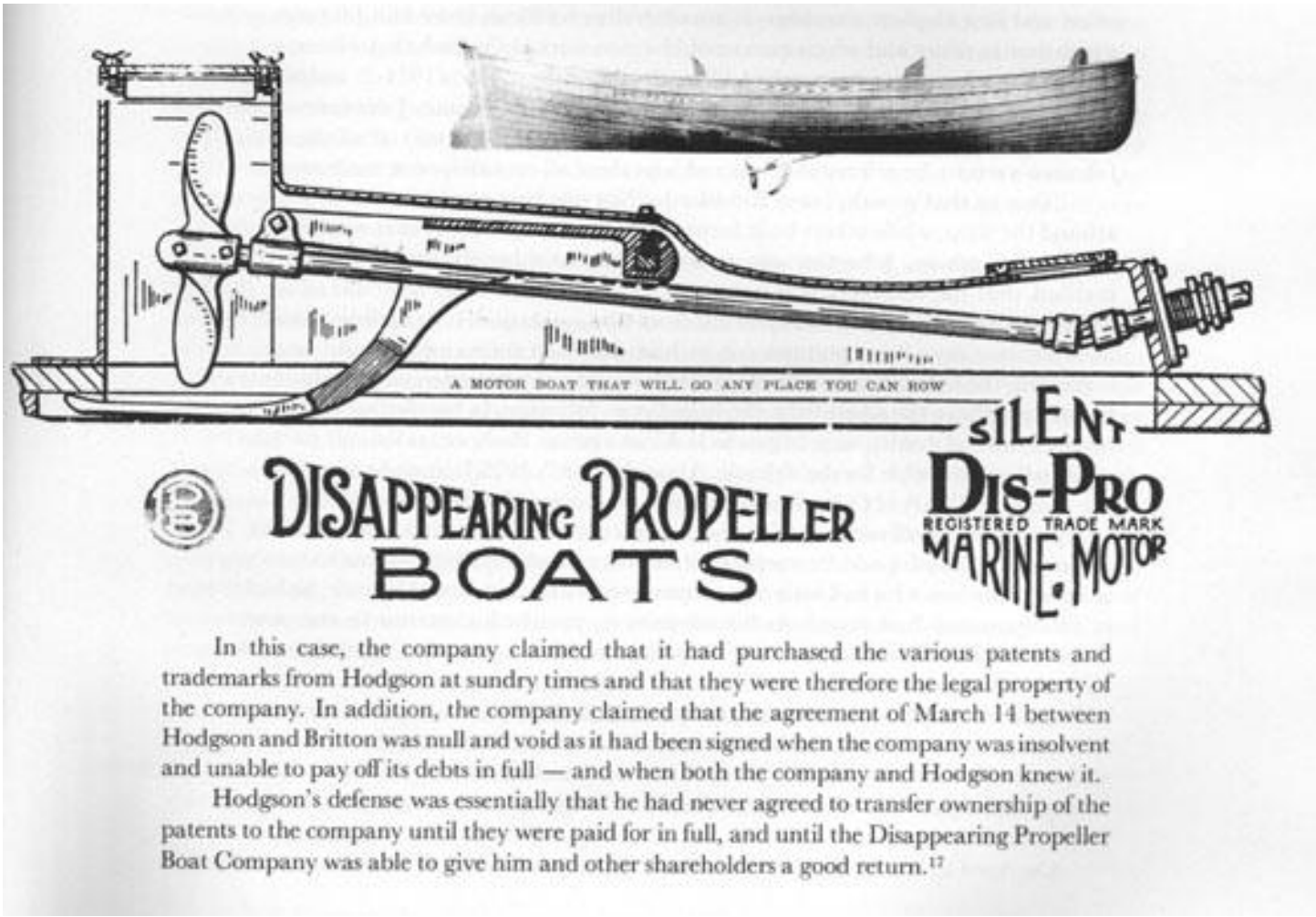
Minett and Ditchburn had one thing in common, they built big boats for rich people. If you were merely comfortable, you went to Johnston’s at Port Carling. Starting in the 1880’s Johnston’s father built rowing skiffs, over time the boats became heavier and wider, and then he began to install small 2-3 hp engines in the early 1900’s. Fisherman would take these boats to shallow and rocky areas where the fish were and there was a long casualty list of bent and broken propellors coming in for repair. Port Carling’s resident machinist and mechanic, Edwin Rogers, had cobbled together a retractable propellor system, but busied with service work, had left it propped up in the corner of his shop. Once when Johnston Jr. was visiting, he noticed the

machine and arranged to buy it and the rights from Rogers. He had an improved and final version made and had it patented. It was not initially promising, it appeared to resemble one of the devices that appeared in the popular comics of Reuben Goldberg, a great deal of mechanism to do something that wasn't really necessary. The driveshaft would be fitted to a universal joint, and which would allow the propellor shaft, which was attached to a lever, to be raised and lowered below the keel, as needed based on the depth of the water. The propellor could be brought up inside the hull, encased in a bell-shaped housing made of cast iron. Rogers had built his prototype housing out of aluminum, but aluminum at the time was challenging; it was tricky to cast and tended to be brittle and crack at stress points, it wasn't until after the war and the introduction of molybdenum that it became the go-to metal of the modern era, for any other heavy use, cast iron or forged steel was the choice. The complete device unit was heavy, given it's construction probably a hundred pounds. The propellor bracket included a long skeg that would push the propellor out of harm's way if it struck a hard object, rocks, or a submerged tree. Johnston was sure he had something big, but he was a boatbuilder and not so much a salesman and he needed help to build a production and marketing infrastructure; he would also need capital. Enter J. R. C. Hodgson, as his name was generally referred.



Who was John Robinson Clair Hodgson? Hodgson was from a business family that lived in

Lindsay, his cousins founded Hodgson Bros. Chemical, a chemical manufacturing company specializing in methanol and other distillates. Cousin would infer a common grandfather, which would be Christopher Hodgson, who emigrated to Canada from England in the 1840's. J. R. C.'s background details are not known. He was not involved in the Lindsay business. J. R. C.'s branch of the family apparently moved to Syracuse, New York, where he grew up and then he returned to Canada. He set up in Toronto and began to build a career as a stockbroker. He was also an inventor and patented a sort of rubber bandage to protect against car tire blowouts in 1912. For a businessman that needed a public profile, he was hard to find, his name appeared in Might's Toronto in 1910-1912 (as Clair Hodgson). He lived in and ran his business affairs out of a small apartment in the King Edward Hotel in Toronto. He seems more to have been a knockabout entrepreneur, one of the thousands of hopefuls in the big town, all trying to break into any sort of business. His efforts as a stock broker and inventor never seemed to develop into any sort of business or earn any significant royalties. His purchase of the Humming Bird, a long open-deck motor launch from the Johnston works in 1909 seems more to be a tool to mingle with those of means than a means of recreation. Keeping tabs on the locals, he became convinced that the device could be a real business, a way of commandeering the small motor boat industry, then comprised mainly of numerous small local boat builders, with little capital and little funding outside of whatever profits were left over, and the good graces of the local bank.



In this case, the company claimed that it had purchased the various patents and trademarks from Hodgson at sundry times and that they were therefore the legal property of the company. In addition, the company claimed that the agreement of March 14 between Hodgson and Britton was null and void as it had been signed when the company was insolvent and unable to pay off its debts in full — and when both the company and Hodgson knew it.

Hodgson's defense was essentially that he had never agreed to transfer ownership of the patents to the company until they were paid for in full, and until the Disappearing Propeller Boat Company was able to give him and other shareholders a good return.[17]

If Hodgson were to be part of the DP project, he needed a share. Originally, the 1915 patent for the device #161292 was split evenly between Johnston Jr. and R. A. Shields, a Toronto businessman and cottager (and the uncle of then teenage Bryson) who provided the additional R&D funding to develop a workable mechanism and provide the expertise to obtain the patent. Shields did not like Hodgson (he seemed a bit too hyper and aggressive for the more reserved business types) and did not care to go into business with him, but Johnston was convinced this was the man for the job, in spite of Shields' personal warning. Shields sold his share in the first patent to Hodgson in the fall of 1915. A few months later the corporation known as The Disappearing Propellor Boat Co. Ltd, was formed with authorized share capital of $45,000, divided into 450 shares at $100 a share. In a deeply unwise move, Johnston agreed to let Hodgson have power of attorney over all matters pertaining to all intangible property matters of DP, including valuations, transaction regarding the patents, current or future, as well as trademarks. On April 17, 1916, Hodgson, using the said power of attorney, effected the sale of Johnston's interest in the foundational patent 161292 to himself for $2,500 in stock and $1,000 in cash. On May 2, 1916, Hodgson resold the patent to DP for $3,000 and 2,000 paid shares.

Hodgson had paid Johnston $3,500 for the patent, in the form on $1,000 in cash and resold it a few weeks later to DP for $3,000 in cash and 2,000 paid shares I'm assuming this is a misprint and that it was actually 200 paid shares, at $100 each it would be $20,000. Unless there is a two-tier share structure, with high value preferred and low paid-up common, I'm assuming, based on what is written in GLMBA is that there were only common shares authorized. Basically, aside from the lopsided cash consideration issues, if the shares at issue are $100 each this would mean Johnston received 25 shares for the patent when he sold it to Hodgson and a few days later Hodgson received 200 shares when he sold it to DP Ltd. There wasn't much Johnston could do, given the power of attorney which he signed off on, but it was not a great start. A second patent was awarded on June 27, 1916, #170381, which included the skeg and a ratchet for holding the shaft in place once it had been raised. Johnston was listed as the sole inventor, but he agreed once again to assign half the patent to Hodgson and later sold his remaining share to Hodgson, or more likely Hodgson worked that arrangement as well. Johnston was a small-town carpenter with a grade school education and did not understand complex concepts of intellectual property valuation (he admitted how lost he was about this, much later), at least he was able to roll in the physical plant assets of W. J. Johnston & Son into DP at a fair-ish value of $17,130; this included the Johnston boat shop, a two-story waterside structure, plant machinery and equipment, raw material inventory, boats in progress and finished boats. Basically, the shareholder roll in looked as follows

Shareholder	Asset	Roll in Value	Value of shares	Number of Shares @ $100
J. R. C. Hodgson	Patent 161292	$23.000	$20,000	200
W. J. Johnston & Son	Plant Fixed Assets	17,130	17,100	171
Hodgson??	Working capital	7,900	7,900	79
Total			$45,000	450

The working capital would already be reduced by the $3,000 payout to Hodgson, I would assume the balance would be bank loans and bank credit line. I don't know who the other investors would be, if doesn't make sense that Hodgson would invest his own cash of $8k and then kick back $3,000 for the patent. It doesn't appear that he invested any money at all but relied on his apparent capacity for fast talking to make it all work. Later Hodgson would claim

that there was, in fact a conditional asset roll-in for the patents, in that DP would have to pay him in cash for the patents, even though the initial story was that his consideration was in shares. But Hodgson's stuck to his claim that the true plan (he was the one who engineered the entire corporate structure) that the actual consideration would have been cash, to be paid out of retained profits, which never materialized. Oh, what a tangled web…

First production run Dispro, showing engine placement Manotick Classic Boat Club photo

Regardless, I get that it was only appropriate that Hodgson was entitled to some equity, but he essentially convinced the Johnstons to hand over 60% of their business and patents for what appeared to be not much more than promises and hustle. He didn't have any experience in the boat business, other than owning one, and his prior business history was never disclosed, then or later. Still, it seemed to work, and boats began to roll off the assembly line and buyers began

to place orders. The headquarters of DP was Johnston's apartment at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto; Johnston was the plant manager at the Port Carling factory. Johnston remained in this capacity throughout, he was never a director or senior officer, he (and his father who owned a share in the predecessor enterprise) remained a large but minority shareholder in DP. The Toronto office made sense, as the King Edward would have first rate communications, telegraph as well as telephone, as well as walking distance to banks and advertising agencies. At the time telegraphic services followed the rail line, and Port Carling would only have had a post office at best, nothing more, anyone needing to send electronic communication had to go the railroad station at Bala.

Lily J, built in 1916, is the oldest surviving Dispro. Author photo

Lily J, view of the original device. Author photo

There was only one DP model to begin with, a beefed-up version of the Johnston rowing skiff, 16 ½ feet long with a beam of 3 feet 9 inches. The stem, sternpost and ribs were white cedar, the seats and planking were all cedar. The casing for the device was cast iron, as noted the aluminum used by Rogers was not sufficiently robust. The engine was a small, very light 2 hp single cylinder Waterman inboard. The Waterman was the creation of Cameron Waterman Jr., often mistakenly associated with Waterman pens, in fact his father was a successful real estate developer. While at Yale Law School, he came up with the idea that a motorcycle engine could be modified to propel a rowboat. With some support from his father and in partnership with an engineer friend named Oliver Barthel he founded the Waterman Marine Motor Co. Ltd. The first engine in 1907 was crude and awkward and did look more like a coffee grinder than an outboard motor, but he and Barthel brought out a new and more practical design in 1909 known as the Porto. It was finely made and very pretty, perhaps too much so. It was the creation of a gentleman for gentleman's fishing. A year later a new motor came along built by a farm boy turned machinist named Ole Evinrude. It was robust and tough and reliable, and it quickly

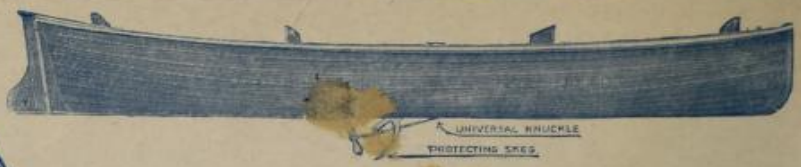
became the design standard- almost all competitors copied it. Evinrude sales took off and dominated the market from 1911 through 1913, and then began to fall off dramatically as the industry wildly overbuilt. Waterman branched out into inboard motors as well, producing 4-cylinder race engines, as well as 1- and 2-cylinder skiff engines. It was actually the little single cylinder 2 hp that was the most successful product, it weighed a mere 45 pounds and could be easily installed in any small boat. The combination with the Dispro was a success, but it was not enough to put Waterman back on top, Cameron Waterman was finally exhausted by the game of chicken the industry had gotten into and sold to Arrow Motor Co. in 1916. Ultimately Harry Knight of Knight Metal Products of Toronto obtained a license to manufacture the Waterman/Arrow engine. They made hundreds of this model each year, along with all the hardware specific to the Dispro. It took the owner a little practice to learn how to start and operate the little engine, but this was the norm for anyone who bought a motorized skiff. They quickly learned where to set the timing lever, put the choke on, and grip the flywheel and flip it just hard enough to catch. Small engines of the time were not automatic starters, although cars were considerably improved, some were now using an electric starter motor. The seal between the device and the hull was not always perfect, but most boats leaked after some seasons of usage, every boater with any common sense carried a bailing pail; today it's the law. The price was right, at $225, something even a workman could afford, with a little saving effort (the base model went up to $350 a few years later, not much changed from the original, possibly suggestive that the boat was costing a lot more to make than they realized). There were now two models, the original, soon to be named the Water-Ford (a nod to the car) and the John Bull, a slightly heavier and beamier model. Ultimately the lineup would be expanded to include the "Uncle Sam" model hopefully named to attract American customers, of which there were many already in Muskoka, but also across the border. There were minor differences between the boats, the Uncle Sam came with a little foredeck with wood strip design, John Bull came with seat cushions although the Sam was $50 more expensive.

Dispro "Waterbug" underway, ca 1920. Peck family archives

Just a year into business, the capital of DP was increased from $45,000 to $100,000, and additional $55,000 was brought in to build a proper factory and a warehouse, where the boats would accumulate as winter production progressed, readying for the spring sales rush. The warehouse could accommodate a maximum of 400 boats. From photographs the building appears to have three stories and about 60 feet wide and 100 feet long, assuming each boat takes up 140 or so square feet, it could be done, as long as they were stacked on top of the other. Where did the money come from? This is not known, I would assume it was a bank loan, Hodgson already managed to keep the Johnston's out of any executive decision making, he certainly didn't want other major shareholders poking around, getting pushy at board meetings, and asking difficult questions. A $55,000 loan from the Bank of Nova Scotia was noted as

having been taken out in 1923, perhaps this was mistaken for 1917-18? A BNS calendar is seen in the Port Carling office in a photo taken in 1921. Boat production was slow in the warm seasons, as there was more money to be made servicing tourists and cottagers, but overall the plant would produce about 350 boats a year. Assuming an average price of $400 per boat by the early 1920's there would be gross revenues of $140,000 and a reasonable operating profit of 7-10% per hull, this would suggest an overall corporate profit of $10-14,000 a year. Stock dividends were apparently paid, but there is no mention of any cash dividend. All finances were dedicated to growth.

Single cylinder Silent Dis-Pro. 3 h.p., 9 miles per hour, 20 to 24 miles per gallon gasoline.



Any obstruction, such as submerged logs, driftwood, rocks, reefs, sandbars, etc., that hits the skeg (see illustration above), automatically raises the Propeller and Shaft into the Propeller Housing, Skeg making continuation of keelson, at the same time throttling the engine from racing.

Disappearing Propeller Boat

"EVERYBODY NEEDS ONE"

FISHERMEN, Sportsmen, all lovers of the outdoor life, have found Disappearing Propeller Boats ideal motor boats. Hundreds in use in every part of Canada.

A HANDSOME beautifully designed boat with the famous Disappearing Propeller device giving automatic propeller protection has made motor boating a greater delight for man, woman and youth.

The Safest Boat Afloat

THE Disappearing Propeller device enables this boat to land anywhere a row boat can, to traverse waters deep and shallow, without danger of accident from logs, rocks or sandbars.

The Vibrationless Boat

A SILENT engine driving the boat without vibration makes it a boat adapted for all classes of fishing or trolling and a general utility boat for the summer home.

Canada's Largest Motor Boat Factory

THE Disappearing Propeller Boat is the product of the largest boat factory in Canada. Each boat being equipped with the special 3 or 6 H.P. Silent Dis-Pro motor, Maxim Silencer, built on splash boards.

Built in Three Elegant Models

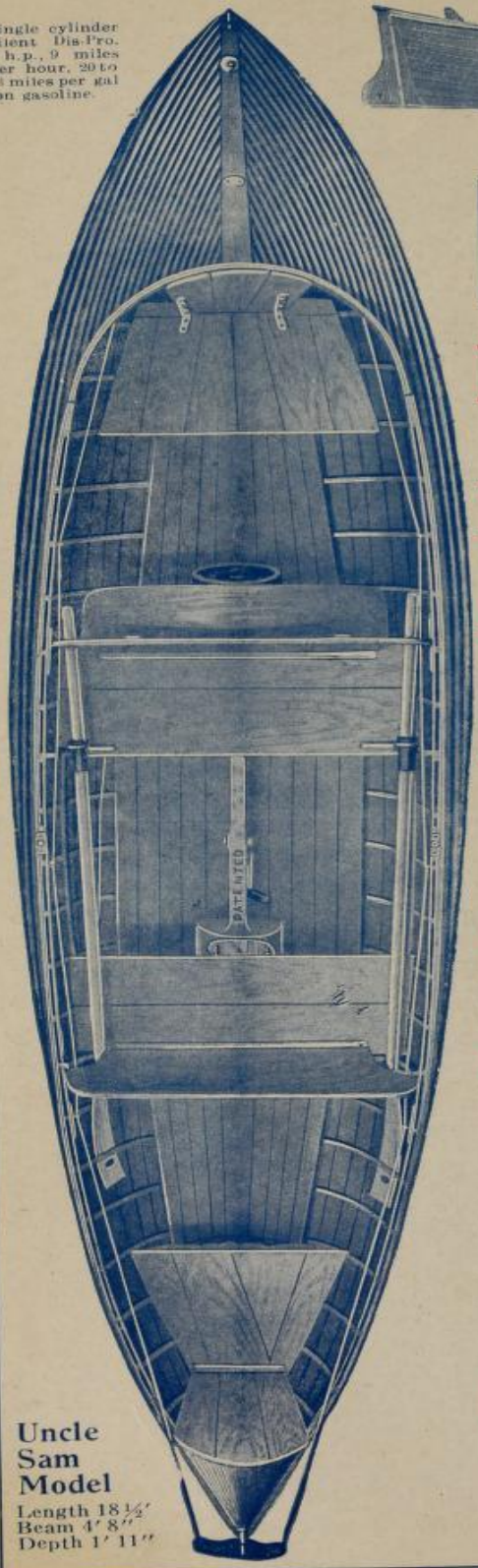
Water-Ford	John Bull	Uncle Sam
$300.00	$350.00	$400.00

On exhibition at all dealers and at our Head Office and Show Room.

Disappearing Propeller Boat Co. Limited

92 King St. West, Toronto, Ont

A fully descriptive catalogue showing boats and engine in actual colors will be gladly sent for the asking.



Uncle Sam Model
Length 18½'
Beam 4' 8"
Depth 1' 11"

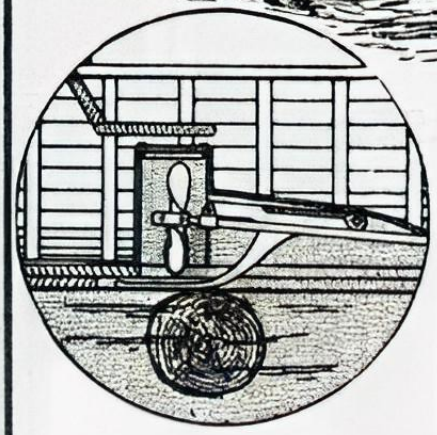
DP advertisement in Rod and Gun in Canada, 1919

The troubles started with the plan to build a plant in the United States. Several Canadian boatbuilders came to grief with multinational ambitions, DP was just the first, later Grampian Marine would be taken down by a poorly run money pit in North Carolina, C & C Yachts by a faltering subsidiary in Rhode Island. Hodgson's plan for the U. S. was different, rather than a branch plant, he set up a franchising system. The Disappearing Propellor Boat Co. of Delaware was set up in 1920, with Hodgson, Harry Knight and a third person only noted as Mr. Brouse as directors. DP Canada had already registered all the patents in trademarks of note in the United States and sold all the U.S. patents and trademarks (i.e. "Disappearing Propellor Boat") to DP Delaware Corp. for $50,000 in cash and 600 preferred and 8,000 common shares. I think that the transaction was paper only, the cash was a journal entry, so that once earned, the royalties would be used to pay down the payable to DP Canada. The business plan was that DP Canada would arrange for the engines and devices (all built by Knight) to be purchased by DP Delaware Corp, which would then resell the equipment to the franchisor manufacturers. The franchisors, which would be comprised of local investors and operate independent of DP Group, would then pay royalties, in this case an outrageously high fixed fee of $75,000 which if the plant were able to produce 500 craft a year, works out to a whopping $150 a boat which would retail for around $450, or a 33% rate! But I suspect that DP Delaware would also take a cut on the sale of the engines and devices as well, this is not an uncommon tactic in the franchising world, to try to leverage a profit on every aspect of the franchisor's operation; it is a common reason why these empires decline and often fail. Hodgson and Knight had planned a network of Dippy franchises across America, only one, in North Tonawanda, New York came into being, financed by local businessmen. DP sent one of the Port Carling managers, Doug Milner to help set up the plant and train the mostly non-English speaking immigrant workforce, who had no boat building background, to build Dispros. The workers apparently learned fast enough, and boats eventually began to move out the door. But the whole project collapsed in 1922, scarcely a year after it had begun. I suspect the investors realized that the cost per boat was simply too high and with the load-on of royalties payable to DP Delaware, the plant would never be profitable and decided to cut their losses and put the operation into bankruptcy. As would happen in 1977 with Grampian US, the American system is that the sheriff, acting as trustee, simply finds a buyer for the bankrupt assets, which in this case was Penn Yan Boat Co. Ltd. Hodgson made a deal with Penn Yan to buy the inventory of 350 completed boats, basically at f.o.b. retail and then send William Ogilvie to handle the sale of the said inventory to various dealerships. The deal was for $150,000, losses were guaranteed; it makes no sense unless there was, as I suspect, some sort of fail safe written into the royalty arrangement or perhaps he was afraid Penn Yan would sell them way below MSRP (i.e. dump them for a quick profit), essentially destroying any sort of

future for DP in the U.S.; not that it mattered as it was clear that DP America was not happening one way or the other. It is not clear how much of a hit DP took on this; it would certainly be in the tens of thousands. DP Delaware also had considerable marketing and advertising expenses as well as many thousands of pamphlets, all this had to be written off.

Uncle Sam model, circa 1919 Owned and restored by Mike Krzyzanowski Manotick Classic Boat Club photo

Hunting Fishing Boating without Oarwork



Anywhere in Safety

The Propeller Disappears

THE instant the heavy bronze protecting skeg—the exclusive feature of Disappearing Propeller Boats—touches sand bars, snags, rocks or other submerged obstacles, the propeller and shaft are raised into their housing; the engine is throttled—the boat glides over as easily as the lightest skiff.

The weight of skeg and propeller keeps the boat on constant even keel—absolute safety when standing erect to fish or when diving. You can drive these boats anywhere—up the narrowest and most shallow reaches of lake, bay, river or creek. You can dock them on any beach or landing.

DISAPPEARING PROPELLER BOATS

are driven by a powerful 3 H. P. engine—Maxim Silencer—giving 20-25 miles per gallon of gasoline. Simple one lever speed control—a child can handle it. Engine is fitted with highly finished copper water jacket and Maxim Silencer. Equipped for foot-starter. All boats made of finest seasoned Natural Wood with many coats of high lustre marine varnish. Hardware very substantial and highly finished. Brass screws and copper nails used throughout.

Specifications

16½ to 18½ ft. (4½ ft. beam)

John Bull .....$425 Waterford $375

Uncle Sam $475

Read "Vacation Days," an interesting, beautifully illustrated story of the out-of-doors. Sent free on request together with views of Disappearing Propeller Boats in natural color and list of owners.

Disappearing Propeller Boat Companies

97 King St., W., Toronto, Can. **731 Main St., Buffalo, N. Y.**

1922 ad, reference both Canada and U.S. plant in New York. The plant was in North Tonawanda, the sales office in Buffalo.

DP Canada itself began to slide in 1923, sales were falling dramatically. Hodgson admitted that the company had lost $75,000 in recent years, and somehow managed to convince a number of senior employees to purchase stock up to $2,000 each (a life savings for a small-town tradesman) to keep the company going. Hodgson later claimed to have put up his cottage as collateral for a loan to the company. This pledge apparently did not extend to his new Packard, or the two houses he had in Toronto. In Might's Directory for 1922, J.R.C. Hodgson is listed as having owned a big newly built house at 17 Pine Crescent in the Beaches, and there is also a "John M. Hodgson, controller of W. R. Johnston & Co Ltd." living at a more modest residence at 447 Pacific Ave. Hodgson tried to make a grab for the patents and trademarks as well, this was overruled in court. Hodgson was ultimately criminally charged and convicted for pocketing the employee buy-in funds he had arranged earlier for about $13,000. Supposedly he made restitution, although this is part of the sentencing process in any criminal fraud trial. By 1925 the houses were gone, and he was listed as living in an apartment at 5 Earl Street. He does not appear in the 1926 or 1927 directories; he had either left town or was in a really big house this time.

After the 1924 bankruptcy there were several attempts to restart the business, Johnston tried to buy it back but could only raise half the fair value. Probably 2600-3000 dippies had been built between 1916 and 1924, at $400 a boat about $750-1,000,000 in sales, yet all that time Johnston never apparently received a monetary dividend, he had very little personal cash savings, all his wealth, such as it was, was in shares of DP, which were now worthless. DP assets were eventually sold for $40k to Thomas Hodgson, President of Hodgson Bros. Chemical Co. Ltd, in Lindsay. Why Thomas Hodgson became interested in his cousin's failed enterprise is a mystery, particularly given the stain on the family name with the fraud verdict. He was unable to do much with it and sold it to a Charles Barr who subcontracted the building work to a Lindsay boatbuilder named Sam Botting. Botting was part of the Peterborough gang, primarily a canoe, skiff, and later outboard boat builder. The Dispro was altered into 5 different price-point models, all sported a striped fore and aft deck and a more powerful 6 hp Caron engine, made in Quebec. I don't know how good this engine was, I have seen only one actually working in a Lindsay Dispro. Botting replaced the Caron with a 3 hp St. Lawrence single, keeping this product alive for several more years. About 30 were made each year from 1926 through 1930, when Barr lost his shirt in the stock market crash and Botting was able to buy the IP from Barr to cover unpaid trade payables. It wasn't worth much and Botting only ever made about 10 a year, 40 in total from 1932-36, although this production wasn't bad, given the circumstances of

the time.

The decline of the Dispro was blamed in part on the appearance of the outboard motor, but that is debatable. Outboard motors were a rare sight on Ontario lakes at the time. Dealerships did exist, but the old-line cottagers on the Rideau system told me they didn't start seeing them in any quantity until the later 1920's. Peterborough did not advertise it's first purpose built outboard boat until 1916, and production only truly ramped up with the opening of the Johnson Peterborough plant in 1928. There were so many lakes and rivers and so many fish, a rowboat would do the job easily. Americans had less water per person and had to go farther, plus being Americans, leisure was a hard driving challenge like work, they always had to get the most fish and travel the longest distance and have more fun then anyone else, or else. A Dispro meant you were committed to one lake; motorboats could not be moved around easily. An outboard could be loaded into the trunk of your car or taken as luggage on a train. The Dispro never really gained much purchase outside of the Muskoka and Kawartha lakes, there were rarely seen in Eastern Ontario Rideau or Ottawa systems; most were satisfied with a skiff with a St. Lawrence and a fixed prop shaft. Johnston bitterly recounted, long after the fact. "That business was a gold mine. I was done out of it by a sharp promoter." But was he? One issue may have been that there were never much in the way of profits to begin with; all startup manufacturers take a few years to show a positive bottom line. One telling statistic is the dramatic factory-price increase over just a 12-year period

Boatflation: the price changes of the Dispro over the years:

	Basic (Water-Ford)	John Bull (Mid level)	Uncle Sam (Deluxe)
1916	$225		
1920	$300	$350	$400
1922	$375	$425	$475
1927	n/a	n/a	$525
1928	$475	$575	$650

As noted, the almost 30% jump in price from 1916 to 1920 indicates a need to match increasing costs. In the late teens over 1920-22 plant worker pay was by piecework and bonuses, by later 1922 and 1923 DP had changed to a pure wage system, the inference being an attempt to control labour costs that were too high. They had to switch from clear local yellow cedar, which was becoming too expensive to British Columbia cypress, so basic lumber prices were going up as well. The original 1916 model had a factory order price of $225.00; by 1920 the price of the base Water-Ford was $300.00, the John Bull at $350.00, the longer Uncle Sam at $400.00, by 1928, prices had risen, for the Waterford, John Bull and Uncle Sam to $475, $575 and $650 respectively, an price rise of 100+% over just 10 years, way outstripping the national rate; it was clear the company was struggling to get a handle on a price that would generate a satisfactory operating profit. Overall, based on my bean counter background, this infers a stream of continuous operating losses, grossly underestimating the actual cost of building the craft while trying to cope with steady increases to labour and products costs. Irrespective of the efficiencies of the Port Carling plant, if you can't get your pricing in order, there's not much hope. It's worth noting that a decade earlier, you could get a 1.5 hp basic motor skiff for as low as $100 from Capital Boat and Canoe Works, assuming they were on the level about the price (and not excluding fittings and other vital components as "extras").

At the risk of earning the eternal fiery wrath of the Dispro community, I would have to conclude the boat was at best a fad, not unlike those TV gizmos that looks great cutting vegetables, slicing meat or chewing up garden weeds; it seemed like a great idea in theory, not so much in practice. How useful was the device, really? If the prop shaft was stuck up, you couldn't move, if it was stuck down, you had to wait until you returned to the dock to service it. Most of the time when you reached the shallow, stumpy, cattail marsh areas where the bass and pike were, you would cut the motor and used the oars to move around. If you were going after trout, they were in deep waters and the device wasn't necessary. If you had a cottage on the lake, you usually knew the waters well enough where to go and what areas to avoid. If Hodgson hadn't been so greedy with the Tonawanda franchise and perhaps given them a break to scale up it might have helped but would it have solved the long-term problems? So many Dispros had been made everyone who wanted one had one, this was a common issue with boatbuilding; the boat companies built and built and built until the market could absorb no more, then the industry completely collapsed. It had already happened in Toronto with the 1900-1907 motorboat craze, it would happen yet again in sixty years with the great fibreglass sailboat boom.