

Hamilton Harbour Building on the Bay

ROD AND GUN IN CANADA.

Robertson Bros.

SHIP YARD AND LAUNCH WORKS
FOOT OF BAY ST.

HAMILTON = CANADA



A variety of styles and sizes of Launches in stock } Up - to - date Models

Any Size Motor Boat Built to Order, from our design or from drawings furnished by purchaser.

SEND FOR ROBERTSON BROS. CATALOGUE.

When writing advertisers kindly mention ROD AND GUN IN CANADA.

Robertson Brothers, 1907 model.

Once upon a time, Burlington Bay was a pristine body of water at the very southwestern end of Lake Ontario. You could go swimming in it, go boating in it and eat the fish that lived in it. The

City of Hamilton was growing, along with its heavy industry base of steelmaking. A permanent haze seemed to settle over the downtown core. In 1868, a fishery inspector noted the high number of dead birds at the shoreline and personally caught and ate a fish in the harbour and noted the strange chemical taste and unmistakable smell of coal oil. It should be noted that coal oil is actually consumable, but would you really want it in your food? (it was used in horrible patent medicine concoctions of the time). It would get worse, very much worse over the years as industry continued to grow and waste products were flushed into the lake, on the assumption they would eventually be carried out to the open ocean. In the 1950's the beaches were closed due to the danger of the water on exposed skin. But if you lived in Hamilton and wanted to be out on the water, where would you go? The land is pancake flat, inside the Niagara peninsula there are almost no lakes, only a few glorified puddles and the so-called Grand River, admittedly wide in breadth, but not deep; just barely enough for a kayak to pass over. In order for the boatbuilding industry to grow in a place, at least in a time before flatbed transport trucks and the 401 and the QEW, there needed to be a local body of water for the boaters to go boating on and for better or worse, this was Burlington Bay. A long sandspit guards much of the entrance to Lake Ontario proper, it now serves as the base for the Skybridge. With this resource, boat builders began to appear and play their trade.

A single flicked match or someone accidentally kicking over a lantern could have destroyed much of Hamilton's boat building industry in about a half hour. It was concentrated along Bay Street, hugging the shoreline on the north end of the Bay. There were two main locations, the H. L. Bastien complex off Picton Street, stretched out on to a jetty over the water, and three blocks down another jetty off Wood Street, comprising a settlement of builders, Ben Kerr, Thompson, Massie, Robertson Brothers, Whitaker and Askew. Years of producing a consistent quality product and aggressive marketing led them, along with Gidley's of Penetang, to dominate the Southern and North Central Ontario market for boats; they were so dominant on the Muskoka lakes that the local builders Ditchburn and Minett made little initial headway into the market.

ROD AND GUN AND MOTOR SPORTS IN CANADA.

91

CRUISING AND RACING
GASOLINE LAUNCHES
FULLY EQUIPPED



A VARIETY OF STYLES IN STOCK
FROM 16 to 35 ft. IN LENGTH.

Special Light Motor Boats

FOR HUNTING AND FISHING

Hulls furnished, caulked, puttied and painted ready for interior fittings.
Knock Down Frames, Frame and Plank Patterns.
Second Hand Launches.

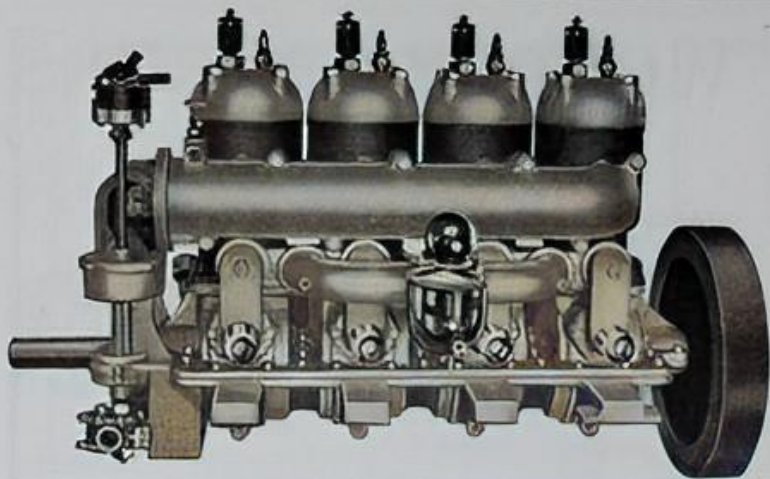
Send for Catalog

Robertson Bros.

Yards and Launch Works

Foot of Bay St.,

HAMILTON, CANADA.



2 and 4 Cycle

Marine Engines
Stationary Engines

HAMILTON MOTOR WORKS
LIMITED

Hamilton, Canada



TOLEDO MARINE MOTORS

The kind that make boating a pleasure. When you start you know there'll be no engine troubles to mar the trip. A marvel of smooth working simplicity that the non-technical can easily understand and operate. Complete. Guaranteed. 2 cycle, 2 port, 3 1/2 x 3 1/2, 4 1/2 x 4 1/2. Write to-day for Catalogue B.

THE UNIVERSAL MACHINE CO., 413 Avon St. BOWLING GREEN, O.



GET NEXT TO OUR
"CUT RATE PRICES"
OF
Motor Boat
Fittings
CUT RATE CATALOGUE MAILED FREE
JAMES ELLIOTT COMPANY
ST. JOHN, N.W. BRUNSWICK, CANADA.



Powerful, reliable and economical Gasoline Engines, Marine and Stationary. **STRICTLY BEST CLASS.** "The choice of the men who know."

GILSON ENGINE
"GOES LIKE SIXTY"

Made in all sizes.
Every Engine Guaranteed
WRITE FOR CATALOG-FREE
GILSON MFG. CO. LIMITED
88 YORK ST. GUELPH, CANADA

MAKE MONEY!

MOUNT BIRDS ANIMALS, HEADS

Tan Rugs, etc. Our correspondence course will teach you.

Special offer to those students registering this month.

We guarantee to teach you in your spare time, right to your own home.

For terms and particulars Write— Canadian School, Taxidermy Regina

Headquarters for Supplies
A Canadian School for Canadians

1) Robertson Brothers: Great looking ad photo, beat up buildings and a grubby yard. The graphic artist needs a new profession. The ad has been clarified and colorized so the photo details are visible.

2) Hamilton Motor Works ad, the engine looks very much like the experimental St. Lawrence 4 cylinder, planned for it's 25-foot model launch.

The three Muskoka lakes, Muskoka, Rosseau and Joseph are all joined at Port Carling, where boats could pass through a lock system was also a sales hub, photos taken in the early 1900's show the Johnston boat shop and rental, the Ditchburn sales office, but also a sales office for H. L. Bastien, representing a company 260 Km distant. Bastien also advertised extensively in all the outdoor magazines, the most prominent at the time Rod and Gun and Motor Boating in Canada, later just Rod and Gun, the American periodical MotorBoating, and the short-lived local version Canadian MotorBoating, the Toronto Star, the Telegram, the Globe, The Mail and Empire, Maclean's, and The Canadian Engineer, among others. Bastien's main product was canoes and rowing skiffs, which it turned out at industrial rate, about 600 a year.



The Bastien complex. I'm not sure what this picture even is, I can only guess it is a painted over photograph.

Henri Louis (quickly anglicized to Henry L) Bastien arrived in Hamilton in 1856, after working as a ship's carpenter. He was originally born in Terrebonne, then a small village northeast of Isle Montreal. At the time Quebec was a type of British colony, the Anglo elite pushing for it to become completely English in language and culture, the Francophone mostly working population pushing back to retain their culture language and separate sense of self. For the average French worker, it was either a career as farmer, a factory worker or miner, or lower-level tradesman; there was little communication between English and French society, other than what was absolutely necessary, hence the term "two Solitudes". Bastien left the family farm, learned English and settled into the English-speaking business community in Ontario. At the time Hamilton was a clean, growing settlement with light industry and transport and shipping businesses, the heavy steel, coal, and coke plants had yet to develop. He started as a residential building contractor, and in 1865 opened his boat shop to cater to both pleasure and small commercial watercraft.

An etching of one of his products survives, a combination rowing and sailing skiff, with a single mast sporting a triangular yawl like mainsail, and a strange much smaller batwing attached to the stern rudder; what the batwing was supposed to accomplish is not clear, I think it would have caused more problems than it solved, pushing back against the sailor's effort to maneuver the craft. Bastien was producing about 60-75 of these small craft each year, not actually a huge amount, but augmented with a boat rental operation, it was steadily expanding, including a set up of the aforementioned sales office in Port Carling. Bastien even claimed to be supplying boats for the Klondike gold rush in 1898, although how the 200-300+ pound craft made up the Chilkoot Pass, to say nothing of surviving the Yukon River all the way to Dawson is anyone's guess.

With Bastien's success, more players arrived. James Massie and James Weir set up in 1882. Thomas Jutten had been working as a general carpenter, by 1891 he was also offering boatbuilding services, but also small commercial craft repair, and built a haul out ramp near his shop so he could work on hull refitting over the winter. George Askew was working at a variety of trades, including shoemaker, he did set up his boat shop until 1910. His son Henry joined his father in the business just as Thomas Jutten was pivoting out of the boat business and into politics, he had a run as an alderman and then as a city controller, a full-time job. Up until that time Jutten's specialized in small motor launches and had some success in selling it's product in the Muskoka lakes area, but again, as with Bastien, the boats being built in Hamilton had to be

loaded on a train and shipped to Gravenhurst, and it was simply cheaper to have the boats built locally. Bastien tried to expand services in Port Carling by selling gas, which did not have a good local reputation. The steel tanks on the wharf dripped continuously and there was often a gas slick on the water. Gasoline at the time was not often of the best quality, often contaminated with oily globs and bits of crud from the long refining and transport process, in many cases was drained through a rag before being put in a boat, no one appreciated have to take a carburetor or fuel line apart and poke through the passages with a wire to clean it out. It's surprising that the entire waterfront, composed on rather ramshackle wood frame structures, with Bastien cheek by jowl with Johnston's and the local Ditchburn sales office and showroom didn't burn completely down.

Jutten had come to Hamilton to apprentice in the machine and tool trade. He worked at the machine shop of a foundry, trimming, and finishing the cast products for final shipment, but foundries are always smoky and Jutten had asthma and was prone to bronchitis and decided to go into the boat rental business himself. He had little money, but some confidence and bought a slice of waterfront for \$250, \$10 down and a mortgage of \$240. He bought some very second-hand boats (basically scrappers) from Bastien's livery and set up his own boat livery, combining the rental with optional fishing rods and tackle. Most serious fisherman had their own, but at least Jutten was thinking, hoping to catch visitors and first timers.

Complete Launches and Engines

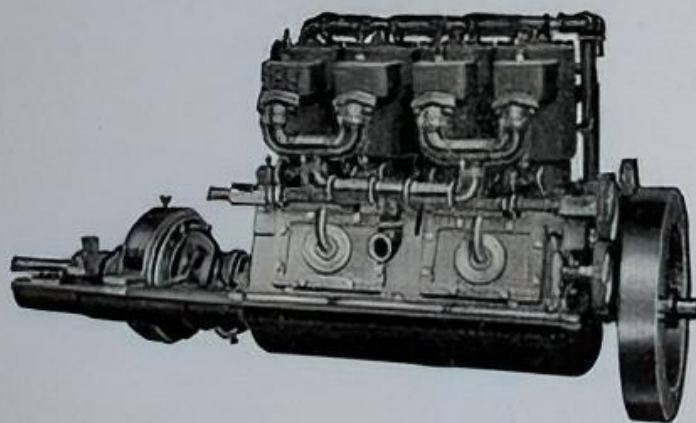


3 Port 2 Cycle Engines

4 Cycle Engines

Reversible Propellers

SEND FOR CATALOGUE AND PARTICULARS

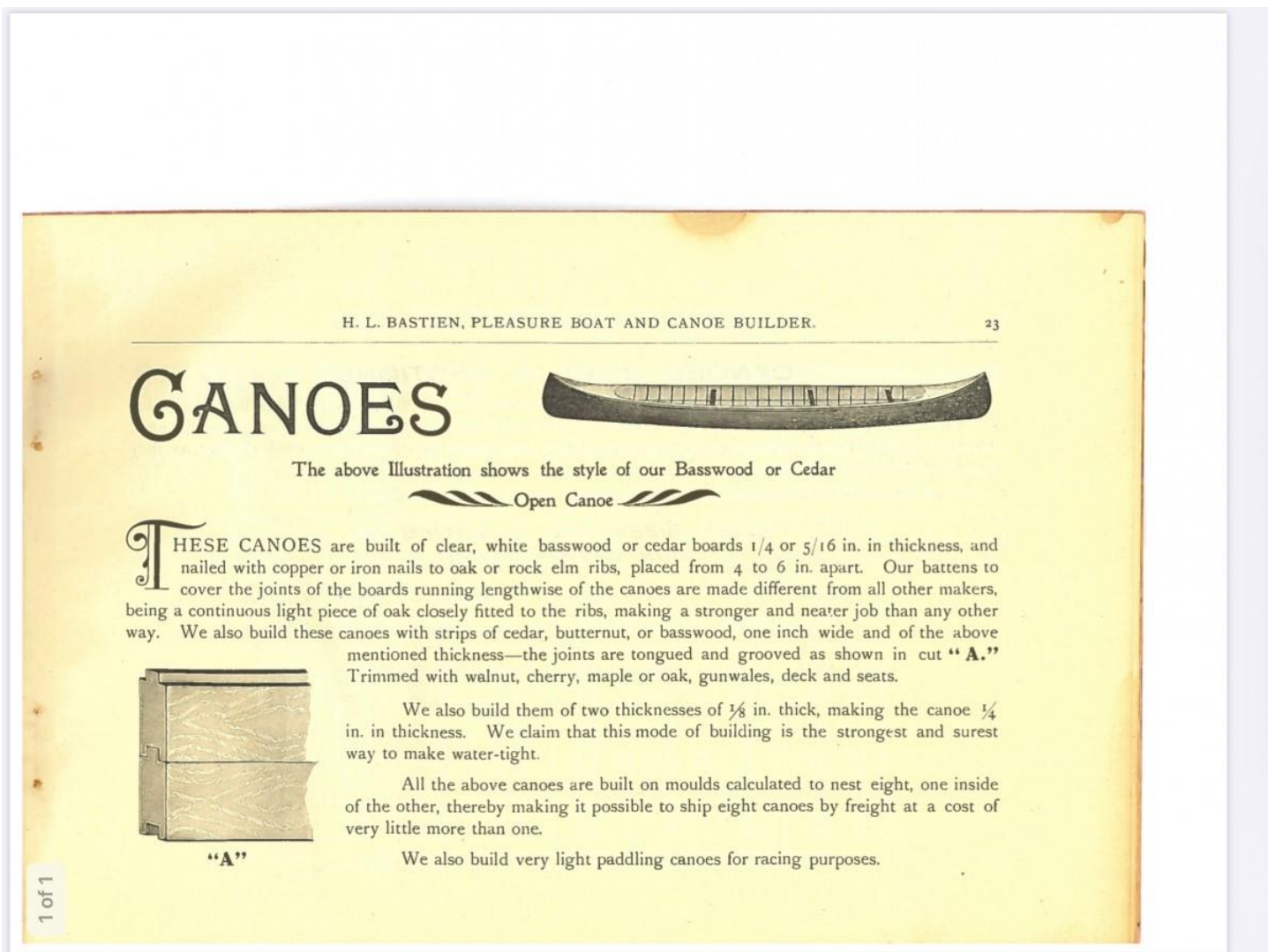


Hamilton Motor Works, Limited

191 Barton St. E.

HAMILTON, CANADA

It's worth noting that boat rentals were a big business in the marine services of the time. The era of cottage ownership only took off with mass car ownership in the 1920's, even boat ownership was something of a luxury. Today someone will buy a bass boat or a runabout and trailer it to the nearest launch ramp. In the 1900's if you bought a boat, you would rent a boathouse space for it, most towns on a river or lake would all have a long row of boathouses usually all wood frame with tens, sometimes a hundred or more spaces. If you couldn't or didn't really want the demands of boat ownership, you could rent a boat for the day, most cities had rental operations, or liveries. Bastien, Jutten, Kerr all had rental boat lines, Bastien was the largest.



Bastien canoe, showing tongue and groove planking construction

Jutten's initial rental fleet was leaking and ready for the fireplace by the end of the first season. He didn't have the money to buy new boats, and didn't want to buy other people's junk, why not build his own? Jutten was a metal guy and not a carpenter, so he decided to learn the wood boat trade. He obtained an internship, basically free labour for an education, with a Toronto small boat builder, (it is not known which, there were several in 1890's, Hick's Aykroyd, Dean, Frank Noverre was still at the York wharf) and after three months he concluded his boatbuilding course and returned to Hamilton.

lxxx

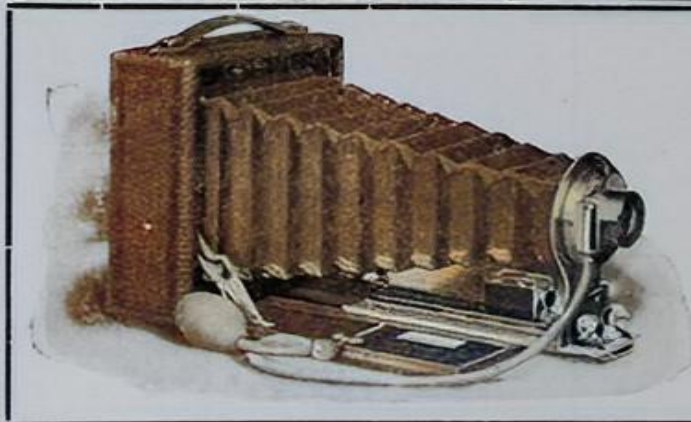
ROD AND GUN AND MOTOR SPORTS IN CANADA.



THOS. SONNE, SR.

TENTS: All sizes and styles for sale, rent to rent. **OILSKIN CLOTHING** of different qualities. **SALES:** All kinds made to order. **Yacht and boat sails a specialty.** **FLAGS** of all nations. **OARS** and all kinds of fittings for Yachts and boats. **AWNINGS** for summer residences and boats. **WRITE FOR MY PRICES BEFORE BUYING ELSEWHERE.** I have been in this business since 1866 and confidently feel that I can meet your requirements as to price and quality.

THOS. SONNE, SR. 109 Cordilliers St. and 105 St. Louis St. **MONTREAL**

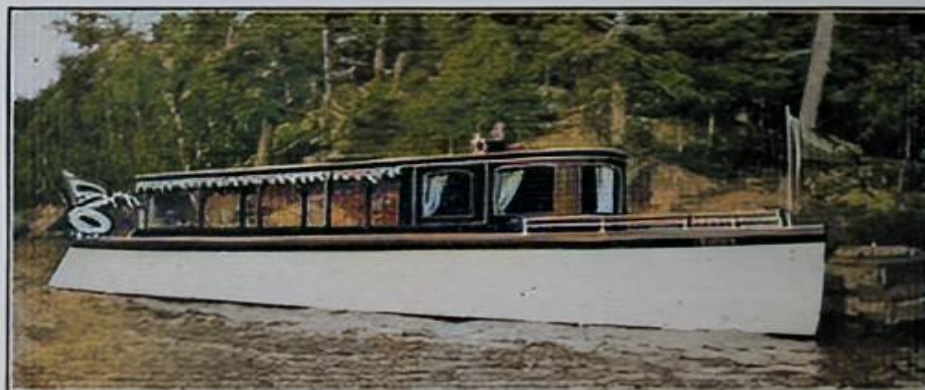


ESIV Pocket CAMERA

Adapted for plates or films. takes pictures 3 1/4 x 4 1/4 **\$10.50**

SEND FOR OUR NEW CATALOG

Vise Photo Supply Co.,
501 QUEEN ST. W. TORONTO.



The Jutten Boat & Launch Works

ESTABLISHED OVER 25 YEARS AGO

Builds Gasoline Launches, either cabin or open boats, but makes

Speed and Cruising Launches a Specialty

Can give you an engine that is as sure to run as the tide.

Write us and mention Rod and Gun, and we will give a special bargain for the first order taken through this ad.

J. W. JUTTEN, Boat and Launch Works

Foot of Wellington Street,

HAMILTON, ONT.

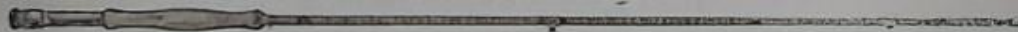
Jutten ad, 1907

The first large build in 1898 was not to any professional boatbuilders, but to the Johnston Brothers, Abraham, and William. Abraham was a general carpenter who had his shop at 94 Leeming and William a homebuilder, whose shop was at 46 Ferrie. Neither had any significant marine construction experience, they had never advertised boat or shipbuilding services, but somehow, they landed a contract to build the Lizzie, a steam excursion launch that was to carry 150-200 passengers. It would be 74 feet long and 12 feet wide, the high number of passengers was really pushing it, even by the risk-friendly standards of the time. It was a commercial contract, and I suspect they were the low bidder; did they know what they were getting themselves into? The oak frames, pine hull lumber and interior cherry and walnut finishing wood alone was \$2,000. They rented workspace on Emerald Street North and soon found themselves in way over their heads, work was literally day and night and Sunday afternoons; there was no time off. The project took two years, but the boat was launched and floated and steamed away; it was a success. The brothers returned to land-based carpentry work after that; at best the Lizzie was an adventure they could look back on and not ever do again.



Manufacturers to
HIS MAJESTY
KING GEORGE V.

Hardy's, the World's Angling Specialists In "Palakona" Regd. Split Bamboo Fishing Rods



THE "DE LUXE" ROD, made of Steel-hard "PALAKONA" is Hardy's latest design in single-handed rods for wet or dry fly fishing.

IT is the product of the largest, and best equipped factory, supervised by the champion Professional Fly Casters and Anglers in Europe, "Hardy's." Don't forget that as wages in Great Britain are 75% less than in America we can give greater value in high class hand work. All our rods are hand made by experts whose lives have been spent at this work, for which 50 GOLD MEDALS have been awarded. Length 9-ft. weight 5 1/4 ozs.; 9-ft. 6-in., weight 5 3/4 ozs.; 10-ft., weight 6 ozs. All fitted with Hardy's patent screw grip reel fittings.



DRY FLIES—As made by us for the late F. M. Halford Esq., for whom we also made rods, etc.

GUT CASTS—The Anglo-American tapered mist color No. 1 medium, No. 2 fine, as made for Mr. Halford.

Stout to 4X Ditto, Ditto to 3X, Stout Lake to fine, Ditto to medium, Ex-stout to MEDIUM, Ex-stout to stout, 6 ft.

We will be pleased to quote prices on receipt of inquiry.

Hardy Bros., Manufactory Alnwick, England

THE GREAT ENGLISH FIELD says, "We must never forget that it is to HARDY Rods of Alnwick we owe the supremacy we have achieved as Rod makers."

We furnish Knock-Down and in various stages of completion

Launches
Cruisers
Auxiliary
Yachts

Work - Boats
and Hulls for
Outboard Motors



Have ready for shipment finished hulls from 16 ft. to 28 ft., also some launches complete with engine installed ready to run.



Robertson Bros. Foot of Bay St. Hamilton

Robertson Brothers, at least this ad is a little more to the point.

In the early 1900's Thomas Jutten installed a 4 hp gasoline engine in a rowing skiff and had entered the motorboat business. He purchased engines from Gray Marine of Grand Rapids, Michigan and began to put out a line of motorboats. By the early 1910's the Jutten shop was producing a boat every two days, most were sold, as with Bastien to customers across the country, and were loaded onto a train for shipment. He was ahead of the pack in being one of the first yards to be hooked up to electricity to run the equipment and provide lighting. At the time most plant lighting was sunlight, the workday lasted as long as the sun was up; oil lamps were obviously not recommended and didn't produce much light anyway.



Inside the Bastien works, a long deck launch in progress at right, or at least the mould for one. The building is clearly at the Bastien works; it was also used for Robertson Bros. ads.

Bastien was also catching up with Jutten's motorboat lines, and one of the few photos we have of the workshop shows a long launch, upside down for planking. One of the interesting features is a block extension off the keel for the propellor shaft, the stuffing box would actually be underwater, a leftover from early motorboat design; later builders discarded this feature as irrelevant, and the stuffing box and plate was installed inside the hull. The hull is very narrow and long, possibly 4-4 ½ feet beam, I would estimate it to be from 1906-10, needed to coax as much speed as possible from the weak engines of the time, often 8-12 hp twin cylinder models. As engines became more powerful the launches widened out to beams of 6 feet. Like Polson's with the Roller Boat, Jutten picked up a contract to build an experimental craft, an early jet boat. Unlike Knapp's idea, this had some basis in engineering reality, having a long 6-inch tube in the hull, taking in water from the bow and using a propellor to blast it out the stern. The boat was 44 feet long and was fitted with a 40 hp engine. The backers were sure it would be a success and advertised widely for people to come to the Jutten wharf to watch it go. Of course it didn't work and at a mere 3 mph was the same speed as the Roller Boat, but unlike that project, this had a future, but the existing set up caused too much drag at the intake, the engine simply wasn't strong enough and a displacement hull was not appropriate; proper jet boats needed a different propulsion set up and a planing hull and powerful engines over 200 hp to work, or as in the cases of jet skis, they needed to be extremely light.



The Jutten works, more Bastien shops, and Ben Kerr's covered boat houses

Other unusual boatbuilders showed up, such as James Bensley “Ben” Kerr. The wild man son of an otherwise respectable Hamilton family, his shop, known as Kerr’s Marine Garage, which provided primarily marina slip rental and boat repairs and also built basic small cargo haulers, which became particularly useful in the 1920’s hauling booze to the American side. Ontario had already experimented with dry laws, through the ineffectual and incoherent Ontario Temperance Act of 1916, which prohibited the sale of alcohol, but not its manufacture, so you could continue to make the stuff, as long as it was shipped out of province. You could still drink it for medicinal purposes, along with that most powerful vice cure, the doctor’s note, which everyone who wanted a drink was able to get ahold of. Kerr had been importing U.S. booze into Ontario during this period, then the Ontario Temperance Act was repealed in 1919 just as the U. S. enacted the 18th Amendment, otherwise known as the National Prohibition Act, or more colloquially after Rep. Andrew Volstead of the House Judiciary Committee on Alcohol; now the booze was going the other way. Kerr did very well in his transport business, becoming one of the few boatbuilders (really more of a boat repair service) in this book to have substantial investments and own a mansion, although his wealth was not connected to boatbuilding itself, at least not officially. His principal freight hauler was his own cruiser Pollywog, built at the nearby Morris works. The other operation in town was run by Rocco and Bessie Perri, but they had an informal agreement to each mind their own business. However a third and more aggressive player was coming into the game by the name of Antonio Papalia who had immigrated to Canada from Sicily in 1912 and settled in Hamilton. After leaving on a run during rough weather in the fall of 1929, Kerr was overdue. A few days later pieces of the Pollywog, along with a headless body, came ashore at Port Colborne. The official version was that Kerr and Pollywog had foundered during the storm but given the condition of the body and the fragments of wood, the more likely candidate was a bomb. Bessie Perri was gunned down the following year; neither death could be traced to Papalia, ultimately he took over as the boss of Hamilton and South Ontario region. Kerr’s Marine garage continued in its more legitimate fashion after the death of its founder, it was still in business in 1962 as Kerr’s Marine Works.

Pleasure boat building declined dramatically after 1915 as a result of the war. This was offset by the success of one builder and that was the Morris works. The Morris Boat Works was listed as a boat builder in *Might’s* in 1924, but the Morris’ were very much under the radar, if there had been such a thing in 1924. John Morris Sr. and John Jr. set up their shop in the early 1910’s on 600 Wentworth and by the 1920’s began building primarily commercial craft, that commerce being bootlegging. Much like J. J. Taylor, these were beamy craft with plenty of cargo space and big engines, possibly surplus 400 hp Liberty aircraft engines, perhaps two or even three in

the same boat. Liberty engines were impressive to look at and put out mind boggling amounts of power, but they were prone to frequent breakdowns, so having more than one on a boat was a good plan. The Morris works also catered to the pleasure boat market and put out a number of impressive long deck launches, many of which were put on train flatbed cars and shipped to the Muskoka and Kawartha lakes. They also built cruising boats for locals, including the aforementioned Ben Kerr's ill-fated Pollywog. The prospered mightily in the 1920's and then as Prohibition was repealed and the illicit booze trade died and the depression killed the launch market, they continued on, and on and on, the business survived long into the fibreglass era in the 1970's although what they were building in the latter years is not clear. The Morris boats that appear on yacht and boat sites are only from the 1920's, there is nothing earlier and nothing later. I ran out of Hamilton city directories in 1969, but John Jr. was still the listed owner, (John Sr. had died during the war). I suspect the main post-Depression business was service and repair, the fallback of many wood boat shops.

Hamilton Bay was no longer a boatbuilding centre by 1920, it was not possible to compete any more with the local builders who no longer had to rely on expensive rail transport to sell their product. Hamilton and Niagara had no lake or river system, the Burlington Bay boat owners had their boats and wouldn't be needing a new one for some years to come. In 1913 Jutten had closed his shop and took a buyout from the city which wanted to make changes to the shoreline where his shop was. He was already an alderman as of 1906 and decided to pivot full time into politics eventually rising into the position of city controller and finally mayor from 1922 to 1925. In 1926 he was elected as Conservative MPP for Hamilton Centre only losing in 1934 as a result of the Liberal wave under Mitch Hepburn. Bastien was still active in his eighties, still running the boat works until his death at the age of 91 in 1923. His second wife Cora Bastien survived him and continued to manage the boat works, converting it basically into a marina for docking and boat and engine repair, the jetty and its collection of buildings was finally torn down in 1936. Bastien's only daughter Oveline lived in the family house until 1947. Robertson Bros. closed in 1930, by the middle of the decade, of the original gang only Askew and Morris were still building boats, and over time all either closed or pivoted to marina and servicing and in one case, in the early 1960's selling both boats and television sets.