

Shepherd Boats: A little bit of everything



Engine vent plate from 22-foot Shepherd Miss Geneva Manotick Classic Boat Club photo



22-foot 1948 Shepherd Miss Geneva Photo Randy McKendry

Shepherd boats always had a distinctive look. There were beamy, handsome craft with rounded garboards, and they were easy to recognize, particularly when one is bearing down on you while being driven by a ten-year-old boy who can barely see over the top of the windshield. This was the author's introduction to the sight of a Shepherd, just under the newly built Rideau Ferry Bridge in 1970.

Lloyd Shepherd was born in Beamsville, on the Niagara peninsula in 1889. His maternal grandfather had fought with Isaac Brock and had settled in the area after the 1812 war. As a Colonel, he had been given a grant of two thousand acres. Shepherd's father moved to Detroit to get into carriage making but had given up this highly competitive business and moved back home to set up a peach farm, so Shepherd grew up in a farming environment. However it turned out that unlike his father his future was not in farming but carriage making, or its modern equivalent, trucks, and cars. In 1910, he married Kathleen Marsh and had one son, Howard, and two daughters. He served in the Royal Flying Corps during the Great War and afterward took a number of jobs eventually setting up a business building truck bodies for the Dodge Brothers. At this point he was working out of whatever space he could rent, but was steadily building a reputation, if still not much of a business. In 1930 he was able to find an investor in Sydney Symondson, a recent arrival from Winnipeg, "a well-known and respected citizen" as the local paper put it (i.e. he had money). Symondson's reason for leaving the Peg was not mentioned, but it sure was a lot warmer in the Peninsula. The new partnership was Symondson and Shepherd Limited. They purchased a lot at 207 St Paul Street West and built a 66-foot wide, 100-foot-deep building of cinderblock, with table saws, metal bending equipment, lathes, and drill presses. Shepherd was already thinking ahead and had purchased all electric motor-powered shop equipment, unusual for a time when many small factories still used the awkward and dangerous overhead belt and pulley power system. The paper described it as a factory, but it was a modest shop only a little larger than a car garage and the work was on customer order only. Cars were still something of an indulgence at the time, but people needed trucks and vans. Still the economy was still hitting bottom, and most small businessmen who had a truck were most likely to keep it going rather than go into debt for a new one; the business also offered auto repairs. Symondson and Shepherd survived but was just barely alive; Shepherd began to consider other lines of business. Symondson had lost interest by 1934, and the business dissolved. Shepherd moved to a new location back across the CNR tracks at the corner of St. Paul Crescent and Pelham Road.

Shepherd was an outdoorsman and enjoyed fishing and hunting, particularly moose hunting, he was familiar with boats, but mostly rowing boats and small outboards, a market already utterly dominated by the Peterborough gang. What about inboards? This market was coming back to life, albeit slowly, Gidley in Penetang, Myles Jeffrey way out in Eastern Ontario, the reconstituted Greavette Boats in Gravenhurst. All were offering mid-size, mid-range planing-hull runabouts. Shepherd must have known his location was a natural disadvantage, Niagara had few inland waters, the big lakes were in the Muskoka's, Kawartha's and the Rideau and St. Lawrence systems, any boats he built would have the additional cost of shipping by rail. Shepherd had been mulling over the boat thing as early as 1931, and incorporated the company Shepherd Boats Limited, but given the times, this venture was put back into the icebox for a few years. By 1934, the worst seemed to be over, and he decided to segue into boat building.

At the time most truck bodies were galvanized sheet steel over wood frame, he had woodworking equipment and knowhow already on hand; how difficult could it be at least to build a boat? In 1935 Shepherd put out an ad in 1934 for "Shepherd Boats and Equipment" – "Offer Their New 1935 Craft". Those boats and equipment were as follows:

The Niagara 14 Foot Mahogany Utility Boats

15 ½- foot Runabouts

18 1/3-foot Speedsters

22-foot DeLux (sic) Runabouts

Agents and installers for Kermath engines 8 hp to 450 hp.

BOATS—BOATS—BOATS

SHEPHERD BOATS AND EQUIPMENT

OFFER THEIR

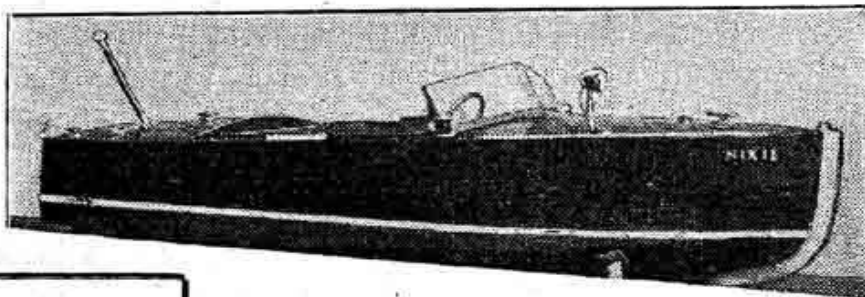
New Advance 1935 Craft

15½ ft. Runabouts

18'4" Speedsters.

22 ft. DeLux Runabouts

Speed, 20 to 40 m.p.h.



SEE THE NEW
**Niagara 14 ft.
Mahogany Utility
Boats**

NEW LOW PRICE.

*Let Us Quote You
On Our New Craft
or New Installation*

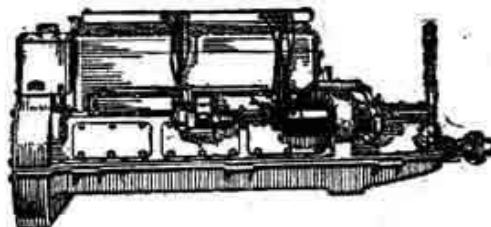
ESTIMATES FREE

NOTICE—We will be moving to our new plant this fall. Boats stored and taken care of at the water front for storage in our spacious new plant.

ANNOUNCEMENT: We have been appointed dealers for the famous Kermath Marine Engines in the Niagara District. Enquiries solicited.

KERMATH

8 H.P.
TO
450 H.P.



ST. PAUL CRESCENT AT PELHAM ROAD

“Let us quote you on your new boat or new [engine] installation – estimates fee” was noted on the ad, noting that this was still strictly a custom order operation; the customer came in and picked the boat or engine they wanted. The ad also noted that the firm was relocating to a new shop down by the St. Catharines waterfront. The boat pictured in the ad was basic and rather squarish, when Shepherd did find a customer, possibly his first, the this was an 18-foot twin cockpit runabout with lines very reminiscent of the swept curving stern style of Earl Barnes; Barnes did provide design services to Shepherd after the war and most likely at the beginning as well; Barnes closed his shop in 1937 and went to work for Moffat Industries UK for two years, returning in 1939, so I don’t know what design services, if any, he provided during this break. This boat’s lines are very reminiscent of Barnes’ style and the curves would eventually come to define the Shepherd design style, although a lot less radical than Barnes’ own creations. The Niagara Mahogany Utility boat is also a mystery- was it an outboard? Also what was the 18-foot Speedster? The first boat had slick lines, but it was a traditional family runabout. All this line may simply have been plans, ideas customers could study and then pick out one they liked.

Boats began to trickle out of the shop, but not enough to truly identify as a boat building business. Shepherd Boats were a no-show in the 1937 Federal Government study on the shipping and boat building industry, while other little-known builders such as Oliver Berry, James Dowkes and J. P. Tinkiss were listed. In 1938 he secured plans for a speedboat designed by Bruce Crandall, a 135 cu in class racing boat known as the Crandall Flyer. The Flyer design was popular, as much for its streamlined looks as speed. This boat was raced before the war, but its owner seemed to have ongoing problems with the Ford 60 engine power plant, which kept throwing piston rods. The owner is not known, the only photograph clearly shows the driver as Howard, so perhaps this was sort of a demo boat, there to stir interest in the brand. The Shepherd-Crandall, known as Miss Shepherd, participated in races in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s. It was last seen in a field north of Lindsay in 1959.

The 1934 ad noted a move to a waterfront location in St. Catharines; did it ever happen? As near as I can tell, this did not; the business was still way too small for such an expansion. At best 10-15 Shepherd boats were built between 1935 and 1939. The big contract for 1939 were two sedan cabin runabouts, 23 feet long twin 85 hp Kermath engines, one such “Sheppard” was sold to Frank Leslie, who had a cottage on Lake of Bays, and the same style of boat to John David Eaton of Lake Muskoka. A Shepherd, this particular model was actually advertised the Eaton’s Catalogue for 1939 and 1940, most likely the most expensive

item you could order from the company (Eaton's did offer small outboard boats and canoes as a matter of course, this was the norm). Apparently Eaton's would also finance your boat purchase, monthly payments, much like boats today. In 1939 there was a short article in the Niagara on the Lake paper that Shepherd had planned to move to town. The planned location was at the very mouth of the Niagara River, between Collingwood and the tail end of Nelson Street, just behind Ricardo. This property included an old pumphouse and a wood lighthouse building. This kept getting delayed; coming events would force the issue.



Howard Shepherd at the helm of Crandall designed 135 Class racer Miss Shepherd Photo Dave Van de Laar archive

In the early evening of October 10, 1940, there was a fire at the St. Catherines plant in the frame works (main assembly) building. Someone called the fire department, but all their trucks had already responded to an alarm at the nearby General Motors plant. The firemen spent precious time pulling out hoses before they found out the GM plant alarm was false

and that there was a real fire elsewhere. By the time the trucks made it to the Shepherd works it was too late. The workers were able to pull away two finished hulls that were outside away from the building; that was all they could save. The building was leveled and two boats still inside, one under construction and the second ready for delivery and costing \$5000, as well as drill presses and all of the other machinery and equipment was ruined. Mr. Shepherd had been in Hamilton all evening and on the way back home the traffic was stopped by a truck burning on the highway. The fire chief at the scene happened to mention that it was a busy night for his crew as they had already been called both to the nonexistent fire at General Motors and then to a real fire at the Shepherd plant. Surveying the damage the next day Shepherd estimated his losses at 15-20 thousand dollars, not all of which was covered by insurance.



Side view of 22-footer, Lady of the Lake, owned by Chris Grant Manotick Classic Boat Club photo

There was a real question about what was going to happen with commercial pleasure boat building with the nation at war. Shepherd at least could sell to Americans, who were just a few hundred yards away by water. The government had been dithering about full mobilization but the collapse of France earlier in June meant that Canada would now have to requisition all ship and boatyards to build war materiel. The new shop was an L-shaped building with a barn styled roof and a small semi-circular office tucked in the crook of the wings.



The new plant at Niagara on the Lake, the production line wing at the left with the garage doors, the finishing wing on the right with the four windows, the administration office in the semi-circular structure.

The main wing was an assembly line, the smaller wing serving as the varnish and finishing room. As noted, the wartime production act could force you to divert production, but given the big projects for the navy, you would be foolish not to take advantage of the contracts, which was basically billed at cost plus 10% operating profit. From what I gather, boats in

progress could still be completed; the last prewar project was the most unusual boat Shepherd would ever build. It was a wood hulled 65-foot sailing ketch named the Niagara Southwind. Perhaps this project indicated that the future lay in the big sailboat and motor yacht business. The motor yacht business ultimately prevailed, sailboats were not the boat of the moment, they would be, but years later with a different company and with different materials (and a couple of former Shepherd employees!). The Niagara Southwind was last seen at a yard in New Orleans, unpainted and needing some love and deep pockets. It was later damaged during Hurricane Katrina, and like much of the Big Easy's wooden structures, likely gone to landfill.



The Niagara Southwind, at anchor, sometime in the 1940's.



The Niagara Southwind at full sail, sometime after 1965, given the flag.

Shepherd did not have the staff or the facilities for the big Fairmile contracts undertaken by J. J. Taylor or Minett Shields, but it did build motor torpedo boats for the RCN, a guaranteed run of revenues and profits, but this would eventually run out. On April 19, 1945, as the war was winding down Shepherd announced they intended to buy adjacent waterfront land and install a 100-ton crane. The crane would allow them to pick big yachts out of the water and haul them up on land for storage or repair. Apparently, Shepherd was still unsure about what the runabout market would be like after the war and were planning their focus on repair and storage of work boats and luxury yachts. They stated that they intended to eventually employ 60 people, although they didn't specify what all those employees would be doing. As it was, by 1949, the employees totaled about 25 and all of them were engaged in building runabouts. The 100-ton crane idea as well as the yacht service operation was shelved. Still, Niagara was not an optimal place to make boats. As noted, aside from nearby Hamilton Bay, there was almost nothing in the way of lakes or rivers (aside from the Great Lakes Ontario and Erie) so to be successful, the company had to market and ship anywhere, particularly Muskoka, Kawartha, Rideau, and the St. Lawrence. Boat trailers as we know them today did not exist, therefore the company made frequent use of rail shipping, sometimes finding customers across Canada, and in one case as far away as Manitoba. Lloyd sent his son Howard out to Lake Winnipeg to zip around on the water as a way to demonstrate the product to the local cottagers. They were able to find a U. S. distributor as well, at Jafco Marine Basin (Owned by John A. Frauenheim, hence the acronym) in Buffalo, New York.



Coming or Going
THE OUTSTANDING VALUE FOR 1950 IS THE
SHEPHERD

Acclaimed by boat enthusiasts everywhere as America's outstanding runabout for 1950—the **SHEPHERD** is available in 17' and 22' models—with Chrysler or Gray power! At better dealers everywhere!

Exclusive U. S. Distributors

JAFCO MARINE BASIN, Inc., BUFFALO 7, N. Y.



The Shepherd Boat Line for 1950

<u>Model</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Engine</u>	<u>H.P.</u>
Utility	17 Foot	Gray Phantom 6	125
		Chrysler Ace	112
Utility	22 Foot	Chrysler Crown	140
		Gray Phantom 6	125
		Gray Fireball 6	140

*22-foot Shepherd*

This was Shepherd's classic period. Initially the company produced two runabouts, the convertible which was 17 feet long and cost \$3,000 and the Sportsman model which was 22 feet long and cost \$5,000. Ish might be the best word, there were a range of engines, for the 18, from the Gray Phantom 4 75hp to the Phantom 6 cylinder at 125 hp, for the utility, ranging, at least for Jafco's American customers, from a low of \$3195 to \$3650. The utility had the engine under a box behind the front seat and a straight propellor shaft drive. The 18-foot deluxe came with a V-Drive, the engine was right at the stern and reverse tilted to a gearbox which powered an output shaft. This avoided the awkward presence of the engine (and noise amidships) and gave the passenger cockpit the appearance of more space. In fact it didn't change much of anything except cost \$750 more. The 22-foot utility power ranged from Chrysler Crown at 125 hp to a Chrysler Royal Special at 165 hp. Oddly the 22-foot V-drive went back to using the Crown, was the torque from the 125 hp engine all that gearbox could handle, that would appear to be the case. The supreme being was the 27-foot Express Cruiser (which as noted, could come in both sedan and open top format, with twin Crowns for power. The price was supreme as well, at \$11,950, at a time when the 24-foot Greavette Streamliner was about \$8 grand. Mileage, as explained to the author by an Express Cruiser owner, was roughly 5,000 feet to the gallon.

The Sportsman was the boat that observers usually identify as a Shepherd. What was interesting about these boats is that there was a real willingness to take on difficult carpentry. The boats were designed with curved and rounded hull features and the stern pieces, where the deck, sides and stern met were complex pieces of woodworking. Most runabouts of the 20-30's, speaking strictly from a construction standpoint, were a bunch of boards; all same-sized planks either twisted or steam-shaped and then fastened onto the framing. A few deep pocketed enthusiasts who were willing to give builders like John Hacker, or Earl Barnes the green light to design and build some very adventurous shapes, but most boats of the time were flat decked, and slab sided, practical and lower in cost.



18-foot Shepherd Owned by John Loucks

Unlike the pre-war runabouts with their airplane cockpit style passenger arrangements, the Sportsman and Convertible were both utilities, you could move around, change seats, and sit where you liked. The engine was covered by an engine box which could be lifted up for easy repair and maintenance access. When set down the engine box served as an uncomfortable seat. On the Rideau and St. Lawrence, it was the Sportsman that became the signature “Shepherd”. If you could afford a Shepherd, you could afford the big one. Still, in the earlier years 1948 to 1955 the balance of 18 and 22 footers sold seemed about even.

The new engines that came out in the 1930’s and 1940s’ had thermostats, oil cooling devices, better carburetors, and ignition systems. You turned the key, and they always went. They didn’t have bad days and good days the way earlier engines did and the power to weight ratio was considerably increased. When they didn’t work it was due to serious engine wear and a sign of major repairs being needed. The Shepherd plant had yet another fire in 1948. This time the firemen caught it before any serious damage could be done, but the

interior of one of the buildings was scorched and the stern of a finished boat was charred. It was, as the source noted “written off”, but was it? It wouldn’t be that hard to scarph on planks to a boat to make it viable again, the rest of the hull was undamaged; if someone has a boat from 1948 and there is some odd woodwork near this stern, this may be your boat.



Doug and Nancy Porter do a final cleanup of their 22-foot Shepherd at a show in the 1990's

The factory began expanding in the 1950's. A second production line was added, with the same configuration as the original, a line leading down to a water slip. The varnish and finishing wing was extended, and a showroom was added on the north side. Even with the additions it was still a cramped workspace, the production areas were windowless, the only illumination was from overhead light bulbs, although the plant electrician replaced these with fluorescent light later on when this became widely available.



The final version of the works, Circa 1955, with a second production line, expanded finishing room (under sign) and showroom at top left of photo.

By 1953 the 22-footer was the most popular. From time-to-time Shepherd would build the Express runabout, 25-27 feet long with twin 135 hp 6-cylinder engines Chrysler Crowns. Like all Shepherds the engines were in the stern and used a V-Drive gearbox to power the prop shaft. This is a really big boat, weighing about three or four tons; one owner described its gas mileage as 5,000 feet to the gallon. Like the two smaller models it is also a utility and there's plenty of space not just to walk, but literally to wander around. A more modest sized hardtop boat was available. For years there was a very handsome 24-foot hardtop utility at the southwest side of Rideau Ferry. The design was that of a utility, but it was a smaller and sportier hull. I don't know which model category this fits into; it never had the look of any of the other Shepherds and might have been a custom (Shepherd also did custom builds).

1958 SHEPHERD RUNABOUTS

MODEL	LENGTH	ENGINE	H.P.	SPEED
75	16'	Chrysler V-drive	110	40 m.p.h.
80	16'	Gray direct drive	109	40 m.p.h.
100	18'	Up to 275 h.p., direct drive		48 m.p.h.
105	18'	Up to 275 h.p., V-drive		48 m.p.h.
110	22'	Up to 275 h.p., V-drive or D.D.		44 m.p.h.
130 Express	27'	Twin engines to 450 h.p.		39 m.p.h.
150 Hardtop	27'	Twin engines to 450 h.p.		39 m.p.h.
155A Hardtop	30'	Twin engines up to 550 h.p.		39 m.p.h.
160 Express	30'	Twin engines up to 550 h.p.		39 m.p.h.
160 Cruiser	30'	Twin engines up to 550 h.p.		39 m.p.h.

The Shepherd line had expanded considerably from 1950



Biggest of the line, the 27-foot Shepherd, with twin Chryslers Manotick Classic Boat Club photo



Detail of 27-foot Shepherd 1957 Manotick Classic Boat Club photo



1956 Shepherd 19 footer

The sides were painted white, which was probably original, and the deck was varnished. In 1956 Shepherd changed to a more colourful configuration of yellow bleached mahogany and dark brown. This was spurred on by the two-tone designs of Century and later Chris-Crafts, such as the Holiday and Continental models. Shepherds now had a large blond leaf/slash like imprint on the hull side and dark decks and light wood interior boards. They would maintain this style up until the mid 1960's.

Another new boat for 1956 was the 16-foot Ski-Bee. Waterskiing was a growing sport in the 1950's. Being pulled behind a boat on a rope had been around since the 1920's, but even then, the runabouts were so slow and the engines still too weak to move most of the boats much past 30 mph on a consistent basis. At the time ski boards (known as an aquaplane) were more like a sled and the rider stood on it and steered it with a sort of rope bridle. In the 1930's two former outboard racing brothers named Dick and Malcolm Pope opened up a water themed amusement park named Cypress Gardens. Each day they had a waterskiing show where the skiers would pull off a series of stunts, including jumping off ramps. The skis used were wide versions of snow skis (itself a relatively new sport). There really wasn't much you could do with the two skis - you could move carefully from side to side. The sensation was that the skis were constantly pulling your legs apart, so it didn't make for much flexibility in movement. So the stunts tended to be limited to the aforementioned ramps jumping, multiple skiers, or human pyramids. It wasn't until the single ski came into use that there was some freedom of movement and some interesting moves, such as slalom and wave jumping became possible and sport-specialized boats began to appear. In the US the big name in Ski boats was Correct Craft, which supplied Cypress Gardens and many similar venues. Like the Correct Craft the Ski Bee design was very simple. It was a 16-foot boat with a big engine and robust construction. There were usually two cockpits, the front one for the driver and the spotter and the rear one for the skiers. There was a step attached to the stern so the skier could climb back on board. The preferred launch method for newbies was to sit on a dock while the boat got up to speed and then they would be yanked out onto the water surface although most of the time this meant a quick wipeout. The second and more common method, which required more practice was to sit in the water with the skis in front with the tips just breaking the surface. Both methods require not just engine power but good acceleration, something the 1950's engines had plenty of. The huge carburetors were capable of feeding a lot of mixture into the engines in a short time. This was hard on gas, but gas was cheap and for the rush you got from flying around the lake, you could afford to

indulge yourself and not worry about the cost. The Ski-Bee was still a family boat, and you could still go for a cruise, assuming all your kids could be crammed into the rear seat.



The 22-foot Shepherd had a commanding presence on the water. Kon-Tiki-Too, owned by Frank and Heather Phelan Manotick Classic Boat Club photo

Shepherd's success factor was that it stuck to a simple model formula, little Shepherd, big Shepherd, even bigger Shepherd; 18, 22 and 27 feet. In the late 1950's they added a 15-foot outboard boat to the model mix. These were production boats, but they would still build a custom job, such as Branch Office, a 31-foot commuter runabout completed in 1961.



Brenda Fisher, a long-distance swimmer from the U.K. and her coach stop by the Shepherd works for a photo op. Fisher beat Marilyn Bell's time on Lake Ontario in 1956 but dropped out the following year.

In 1958, Lloyd and Howard sold the Shepherd plant to James Hahn, a local businessman. Perhaps they saw that the wood boat business was coming to an end with the increasing

presence of fiberglass. Lloyd Shepherd was 68 now and decided to retire. He was able to enjoy 10 more years of this retirement, passing away in 1968. Howard invested some of the sale proceeds in an electrical equipment manufacturing business. This was a failure and subsequently he went to work for C & C Yachts, the sailboat startup begun under Ian Morch, Erich Bruckmann, George Hinterhoeller and George Cuthbertson. Hinterhoeller had immigrated to Canada from his native Austria in 1952 and even though he spoke little English, another friend and fellow Austrian working at the plant was able to translate and convince Shepherd to hire him and put him on the line. In 1958 Hinterhoeller and a Shepherd foreman named Gordon Brinsmead left the company to form their own business manufacturing sailboats. By 1967, Hinterhoeller Boats was booming, and Howard was able to find a position working for his former employee, until health problems forced his retirement. He died ten years after his father, in 1978 at the age of 65.

Rather than preside over a declining runabout business Mr. Hahn made a shrewd course change for the company, focusing on cruisers. Previously Shepherd did build day cruisers (limited, if any onboard facilities such as a head, bunks, or a galley), but they were more exception than the rule. These were sedan style hulls, where the driver was tucked under the wood cabin, with a limited sightline. The new cruisers were overnight-vacation oriented, with cabins, heads, galleys and a flybridge, a relatively new idea. Now he could see all around and still get the breeze and a good tan. There was a full cover for the flybridge in the event of inclement weather. Most of the boat exterior was painted white now. Brightwork was limited to trimming pieces and the deck. Models ranged from 25 to 45 feet. This was a good business. Big boats meant big margins and the cruisers were selling well. The cruiser boom was underway.



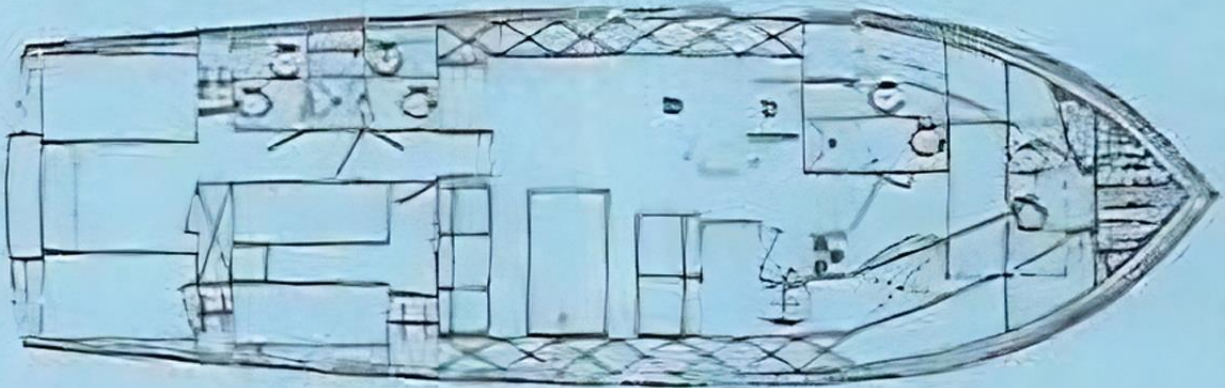
The last model styling of the runabout line Manotick Classic Boat Club photo

1964 SHEPHERD INBOARDS

MODEL	LENGTH	ENGINE & H.P.	COLOR SCHEME
Combo	16'	Up to 160 h.p., direct drive or V-drive	Varnished hull, decks, copper bottom, white water-line, gold and white upholstery
Runabout or utility	19'	Up to 325 h.p., direct drive or V-drive	Varnished hull, decks, copper bottom, white water-line, gold and white upholstery, green trim on top edge of hull sides, aft
Runabout or utility	22'	Options to 325 h.p., direct drive or V-drive	Varnished hull, decks, copper bottom, white water-line, gold and white upholstery, silver trim on top edge of hull sides, aft

The runabout model line by 1964, showing the substantial scale-down of the line. The 16-foot model was dropped in 1965, leaving only the 19- and 22-foot models to production end in 1968.

The runabouts were still selling well enough through the early 1960's. Shepherd stuck to the standard two-toned style they had switched to in the mid 1950's. The 1960 22-foot Shepherd changed to some degree, there was a dark sided hull and a white chisel like flash at the waterline. The stern sloped down even more, and the foredeck had been shortened. The power was now from the 318 cu in Chrysler. Hahn had been aggressive in pushing Shepherd cruisers and had established a national dealer network. By the early 1960's Shepherd was Canada's largest boat manufacturer and was beginning to ship boats overseas as well. This did not go unnoticed by the US Cruiser builders. The major US builders, were now Chris Craft, Owens, Trojan and the aptly named Cruisers, Inc. They were all trying to gain a foothold in Canada and Trojan won the race when it purchased Shepherd in 1966.



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Trojan Shepherd cruiser for 1969

For its part, Shepherd now had access to aggressive marketing and deep pockets of a major US concern. Trojan Canada slimmed the Shepherd line down, phasing out the runabout line by 1968. In spite of the line rationalization dollar sales increased the following year, so plans were made for new plant space. Trojan Canada purchased a 47,000 square foot plant in Smithville (the "Chicken Capital of Canada") for \$750,000 and applied to expand the original Shepherd plant at Niagara on the Lake. The city denied the permit. By the mid 1970's the long postwar boat boom was over. Sales were falling. The gas crisis had hurt

every vehicle or craft with a big thirsty engine, and no engine is as thirsty as a cruiser engine. The business had shifted heavily to fiberglass cruising sailboats, now being built in high production numbers at the C & C Yachts plant down the road. Sea Doo's made their debut in 1978. Trojan Canada was never able to affect its big expansion, and the Smithville project went nowhere. In 1978 Trojan decided to close the Canada works in February 1978.

The last project was the grandest, a 54-foot cruiser known as the Ozark Star bought by a wealthy family with a cottage on Lake of the Ozarks. This boat would sell for \$275,000. The family had engaged the plant to customize it, so in the final days before the February 28th shutdown the staff worked diligently to install the requested luxury items. Per the newspaper report:

“These included a washer and dryer, a dishwasher, stereo, television, bar, icemaker, king-sized baths, one on the main deck and one in the guest room, and a 4-piece bath in the master bedroom. It will comfortably sleep six. Inside the yacht is finished with teak wood. It has a fiberglass hull and is powered by two 415 cubic-inch diesel engines.”

This was the last of the five cruisers of the Star series built that year. Ironically, Trojan Canada had developed the tooling to build their boats out of fiberglass, so they were poised to take on the future technically, but not economically. It simply wasn't practical to have two boat plant locations, so all building was concentrated in Trojan's main plant in California. The Ozark Star was shipped on May 20 that year and the paperwork was boxed up and moved out. Facing the end, the employees made an offer to buy the works, this was turned down.



One of the Ozark Star series

The Shepherd factory was demolished in the 1980's and two very large retirement condo complexes were built on the property, which gives you a good idea of what really matters in our modern society. The former pump house building is now an art gallery to pull in the monied tourists in town for the Shaw festival. The name has been sold and the Bergersen Boat Co. of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin is currently offering new Shepherd boats.