



The History of the Mathews Boat Company by Scott Reynolds

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In 1890, an era of experiments on the "new" gasoline-powered engine and on sail and naphtha-powered boats, the Mathews Boat Company was founded by Scott J. Mathews in the basement of his home in Bascom, Ohio. His venture quickly expanded to boat building at his father's sawmill, where, in 1898, he

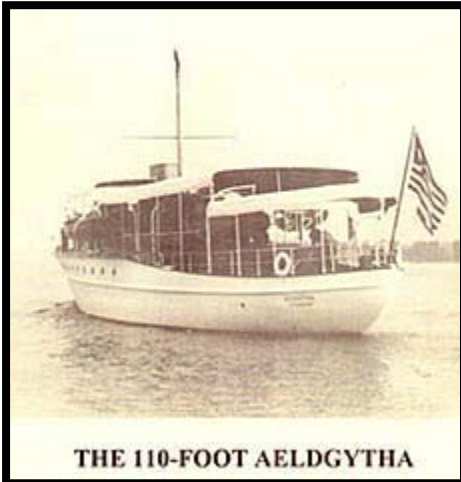
entered into an agreement with The Lozier Company in which Mathews built boats ranging from 16' launches to 45' cabin cruisers, all marketed under the Lozier name and shipped or run on their own bottoms to Plattsburgh, New York, where Lozier installed their engines. Lozier never built a boat—they were all Mathews built. By 1904, this arrangement ceased when Lozier turned to automobile engines. Bascom-built Mathews boats included the first Gold Cup Race winner, "Standard", an auto-boat marketed under the Lozier name; and "Onward", a 74' double ender that carried the Mathews family over 9,000 miles from Peoria, Illinois, down the Mississippi River, into the Gulf, around Florida, up the East Coast, and through the Erie Canal back to Ohio.



Mathews' endeavors were so successful that by 1906 he moved his company, at the invitation and with the financial support of the local businessmen, to Port Clinton, Ohio, where there was deep-water and East Coast access necessary to

the building and marketing of larger boats. The company, now called The Mathews Company, continued to prosper, building nothing but quality boats that became world-renowned. In 1909, Mathews received a government contract to build utility boats for the U.S. Army; "Mahapa", an 85' cruiser, was built in 1910 for H. A. Parsons of Cleveland. In 1912, W. E. Scripps, Commodore of the Detroit Motor boat Club and President of Scripps Motor

Company, contracted with Matthews for a 35' LOA, 10' beam vessel capable of crossing the Atlantic under gasoline power. The boat was an over-sized lifeboat, called a "trans-Atlantic liner" by Rudder, 1912. Captained by Thomas Fleming Day, editor of Rudder, the "Detroit" ran to New Rochelle, New York, where she began the cruise that would carry her over 4,000 miles in 21 days to Ireland, thence to St. Petersburg, Russia. Powered with a 16 horse Scripps engine and carrying a crew of three, she was the smallest gasoline powered vessel to cross the Atlantic.



THE 110-FOOT AELDGYTHA

The Ringling brothers of circus fame were frequent clients of Matthews, purchasing 6 different boats. Charles E. Ringling contracted for a special shallow draft 50' day cruiser to be used in Sarasota, Florida, in 1912. In 1913, Matthews built the 110' "Aeldgytha", the first all-American diesel-powered yacht. She was designed by John Wells and was the largest pleasure boat ever to be built by Matthews. "Marold", a 100' cruiser, America's highest powered yacht, was built in 1914 with 900 horse power engines

that gave a cruising speed of 30 knots. In 1915, Matthews diversified. Unable to locate electric specialties for boats, Scott J. Matthews developed his own electric power capstan, automatic lighting and power plant, electric pump, and hoists.



THE DETROIT CROSSED THE ATLANTIC

By 1916, Matthews changed its name from The Matthews Boat Company to The Matthews Company, expanded, and was a successful bidder for government contracts for World War I. The company built 110' sub chasers in 1917 and built a new shop to house 5 of these vessels at one time. Matthews also built airplane hulls during World War I, delivering them without wings to the East

Coast. Following World War I, an economic depression forced Matthews to again diversify. The company manufactured towel racks, meat cutters, and talking machine cabinets in order to retain the men on the payroll. Although the 60' "Whitecap" was built in 1919, the plant had so little work it closed its manufacturing operations in August of that year. Scott Matthews invented the

Ker-O-El, a lighting plant used primarily on farms, and a rope "chain" for car tires to prevent skidding during winter. These innovations provided work for the Matthews employees until 1922 when boat manufacturing once again was undertaken.

The company was successful with individual, business, and government contracts, building 50' passenger boats for an amusement park, rum chasers (speedboats) for the U.S. Government, and the 95' cruiser "Oswichee" for Mr. Joseph Williams of Cleveland. In spite of active business, Scott J. Matthews was concerned that economic slumps would again affect steady employment for his men. In 1924 he introduced a 38' "special", the first stock built boat in the industry. Past work had been



entirely by individual contract and design; the new Matthews "38" would be standardized, allowing him to keep his employees busy during slack periods and preventing layoffs. The last custom boat ever built was the 99' "Irwin", completed in 1925, and delivered by water to its New York City owner. The stock built line included a 46 foot introduced in 1926, a 32' speed cruiser in 1928, and a 25' sailboat in 1934. By 1942, Matthews had again turned to war production, primarily building 36' and 38' landing crafts. Matthews 38's were built for patrol boats, many under the Lend-Lease Plan.



Matthews celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1950 and introduced the first modern-day double cabin in 1951, a 42' flying bridge model. Scott J. Matthews, now in advanced years, turned much of the plant operation over to his oldest son, Carl, who became President when the elder Matthews passed away in 1956. Carl introduced the first flush-deck double cabin in 1962. However by 1962, the two

sons and two daughters of Scott J. Matthews were approaching retirement age; the sale of the company to Charles Hutchinson in October, 1964, was a family decision. Hutchinson celebrated Matthews' Golden Jubilee in 1965. By 1969, he had contracted with Halmatic of England to build 46' fiberglass hulls that were nearly identical in weight, appearance, dimensions, and performance to the Matthews 45' wooden hull. Halmatic hulls were shipped to Port Clinton where cabins, bridges, and interiors were built. The only fiberglass Matthews

hull was the 56, first produced in 1971 in what was then the world's largest rotating mold. The 56 was available in several designs, including motor yacht, trawler, yacht fish, flush-deck double cabin, and sport fish. Production and sales decreased steadily in the early 1970's.

With such a famous boat known for its quality and sea-keeping abilities, what caused Matthews to shut down in December, 1974, and declare bankruptcy in May, 1975? Was it changing to fiberglass too late? The fuel crises of the early 1970's? Under capitalization and over extension? Inability to convert an old plant constructed for one-off assembly-line production?



Inability to compete without reducing quality? Labor demands? Poor management? The answer can only be conjectured. The facts are that the plant, purchased at auction in 1976, was not to reopen and the mighty Matthews was never again produced. Be it known that she is truly "an endangered species". Take good care of her for there will never be another.