

## Attachment B

### Capt. Nat Herreshoff's Biography Prepared for *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*

Written in response to his 1904 *Cyclopaedia* biography that he received for comment in 1926.

Draft material is undated but is believed to have been written in the early 1930s.

Compiled from Nat Herreshoff draft handwritten writings in Mystic Seaport L. Francis Herreshoff Collection 138 Box 16 Folder 13; items 11, 12 & 13.

Note: Editorial Comments and Corrections in brackets [].

Nathanael Greene Herreshoff. Marine Engineer and Yacht designer was born in Bristol, RI March 18, 1848, and is the seventh child and fifth son of the late Charles Frederick and Julia Ann (Lewis) Herreshoff. His great grandfather on his father's side was John Brown of Providence, RI and a very prominent merchant and ship owner, and his mother's father was a noted sea captain in Boston, so it is quite natural he had a love for the sea and vessels. His early education was at the public school at Bristol, and then at the Mass. Institute of Technology, being a member of the class of 1870. Within a year after his older brother John B. lost his sight he became his guide, constant companion for nearly all the time out of school hours. This gave him an unusual knowledge of many tools as well as boat sailing in his very young days, but he was in a manner deprived from the plays and games of child of his years. At age of 12 he sailed his first race and won. This in the cat-rigged boat *Sprite* at Providence and against the best boats and helmsmen of the day. From that time on he sailed boats belonging to his brother John in about all available races between Boston and Newport, and very seldom lost first place. After studying mechanical engineering at M.I.T., he in 1869 entered the employ of the Corliss Steam Engine Co. as a draftsman and soon took up experimental work and that of what was known as "the engine doctor", and so became very familiar with practical steam engineering. He was selected by Mr. Corliss to start up the large Corliss Engine at the ["Philadelphia" crossed out] Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, and later to experimental research with it. In 1878 he left Mr. Corliss to join his brother John B. Herreshoff in his work of building steam vessels of small size at Bristol, RI. He took up the part of designing and superintending the construction of both hulls and machinery while his brother attended to office and outside part of the business, and together they made a successful and well known business of it. In the 1880s and 1890s nearly all the work was in constructing of steam driven vessels, including many notable yachts such as *Now Then*, *Ballymena*, *Truant*, and some of others and Torpedo boats, some for foreign countries beside those for the United States. The most notable ones were *Lightning* in 1875, *Stiletto* 1885, *Cushing* 1890 and others that took part in the Spanish War. It may be remembered that in no case did either the yachts or torpedo boats fall short of contract requirements as to speed or general conditions.

About 1900 [Note should be 1890], Commodore Edwin D. Morgan being well impressed with the good qualities of a sailing craft of N. G. Herreshoff, gave orders for two small yachts and these being successful, ordered a 46' wl yacht named *Gloriana*. This yacht by her unbeaten string of victories earned a world wide reputation and was the beginning of a new branch to the business that was followed by many very notable sailing yachts, including a line of defenders for the America's Cup in which Herreshoff yachts held the supremacy from 1893 to 1929, when Mr.

Herreshoff had retired from designing. The winning yachts in the America's Cup contests were, – 1893 *Vigilant*, 1895 *Defender*, 1899 *Columbia*, 1901 *Columbia*, 1903 *Reliance*, 1920 *Resolute*. *Columbia* was chosen twice, from the group of contestants in 1901. Having won over *Constitution* due to the perfection of management and of crew. *Constitution* however should be mentioned as being constructed in the longitudinal method of framing which Mr. Herreshoff derived several years before the patents of Isherwood were issued and also that she was a faster yacht than *Columbia* and was proven so in 1903. (Mr. Herreshoff retired from active work in 1925.)

Being annoyed by the difficulty of having good setting sails, he in 1893 began the study of sailmaking, resulting in the Herreshoff Mfg. Co. starting making their own sails in 1894, first in a small room, and very soon fitting into a larger one. This branch of the business grew rapidly and in 1898, the company was compelled to put up a special building for sail making. The loft thus obtained was at the time the largest and best in the country and employed the greatest number of sailmakers. He had several patents for his inventions which were assigned [two cross out words] to his employers. First to Corliss Steam Engine Co. and then to the Herreshoff Mfg. Co., beside he designed or improved a great many details both in steam engineering and yacht details. A few of which were means to compensate engine regulators to [direct?] uniform speed. The “vacuum dashpot” for Corliss engines. Jointed connections and general details to make double hull sailing craft practical. Machinery for the manufacture of coil boilers. This last was soon” given up as the coil boiler was faulty. New type of balanced valve for steam engines. Introduced [abbreviated] design of compound engines. Improved & simplified design of Du Temple boiler. New running gear for multi-cylinder engines. Improvement in the detail of fin bulb keel for yachts to make it practical. \* Improvement in form of anchors. Form of hollow metal belaying cleat. \* Tracks & slides for holding sail to spars. Making practical sails with the cloth seams perpendicular to the back or unsupported side. Spring buffer for chain cables. Those with stars (\*) are in quite universal use in many countrys.

Mr. H was twice married, first to Clara A. DeWolf in 1883, who died in 1905 leaving 6 children. 2<sup>nd</sup> to Ann Roebuck in 1915-