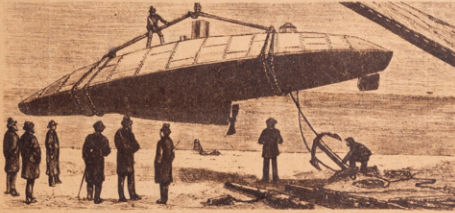


The PTs' Bristol-Built Ancestors



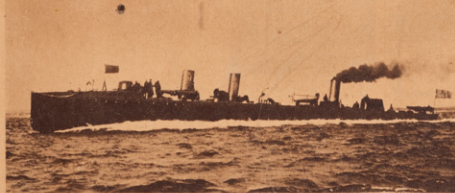
In 1879 and '80, Herreshoff designed and built four small torpedo boats, one for Britain, two for Chile, one for Russia. They were armed with ram-type torpedoes fore and aft, had a flush turtle deck with only the smoke stack protruding above it. This contemporary drawing is not accurate in all details.



USS Stiletto, built as a yacht at Bristol in 1885 and purchased two years later by the Navy for use as a torpedo boat, is believed to have been the first such craft owned by our government. She made 21 knots during trials, boat the famous Hudson River steamer Mary Powell, was decommissioned a few years after World War I.



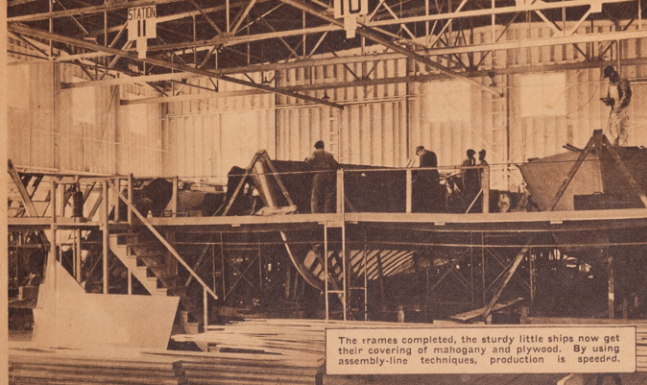
In 1890, the USS Cushing came off the ways at Bristol. She was armed with torpedo rams fore and aft, had a turtle deck with conning tower forward, was 138 feet long and had a draft of five feet four inches. She developed a speed of 22 knots.



Six years after the Cushing came the sister ships, USS Dupont and USS Porter, 175½ feet long, capable of 28 knots speed. Like today's PTs, the vessels had torpedo tubes on deck. The forward stacks came from a fire room forward of engines, aft stack from a second fire room astern of the machinery.

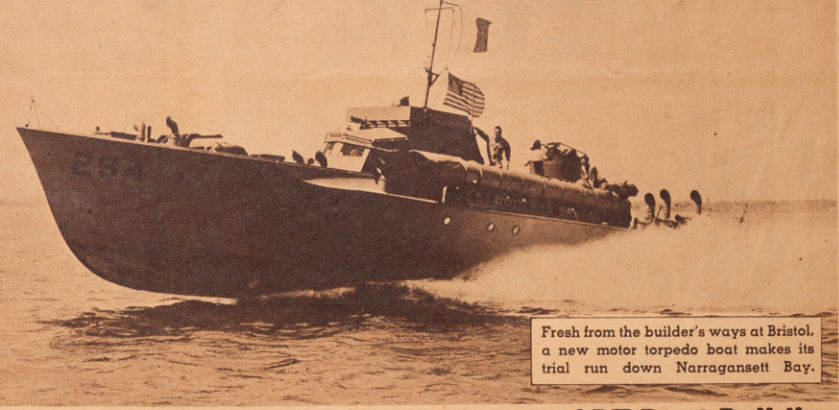


Closer in size to the present PTs were the USS Talbot and USS Gwin, built by Herreshoff in 1897. The boats were of steel construction, 100 feet overall and drew five feet, three inches. They were designed with a plumb stem and stern, had a flat raised deck forward of the conning tower. The vessels turned up a speed of 21 knots.



The frames completed, the sturdy little ships now get their covering of mahogany and plywood. By using assembly-line techniques, production is speeded.

BIRTH OF A PT



Fresh from the builder's ways at Bristol, a new motor torpedo boat makes its trial run down Narragansett Bay.

Blueprints to Launching — the Story of PT Boat Building by Mass Production Methods at the Shipyard in Bristol

BY CHARLES L. HUGHES

WHEN one of Uncle Sam's fastest naval vessels, a PT or motor torpedo boat, hits the water in Bristol harbor, it is an exciting occasion, not only because the launching means added sea might for the Allied nations, but because the building of the swift little torpedo carriers continues a line of craft begun at Bristol in the late seventies.

Once the boat is over and put through her trial runs, she is ready to join the Allied fleets in some part of the world—Russia, India, the Mediterranean, the Southwest Pacific, the Aleutians or in the invasion of Europe. To the people of Bristol and especially to the 400 shipyard workers, a launching means that a long local tradition for building high-speed craft for war, as well as pleasure, is being maintained at a greater rate of production than ever before.

Rainbow . . . Enterprise . . . Resolute . . . Reliance . . . These names will be remembered by the present generation as successful defenders of America's Cup in the international yacht races of postwar time. Before them were the other cup boats—Columbia, Defender and the Vigilant, which defeated the Valkyrie for the America's Cup in 1893.

Few, except close students of American naval history, will recall the names of the following vessels: "USS Stiletto," "USS Cushing," "USS Dupont," "USS Porter," "USS Talbot" and "USS Gwin" sister ships, and "USS Morris." These ships, built by the Herreshoffs for the U. S. Navy just prior to the turn of the present century, were the progenitors of the modern motor torpedo boat.

Available information indicates that the Bristol yard was a pioneer in the type of vessel then known as the torpedo launch. These boats were of unusually light weight, but thoroughly rugged construction. They were equipped with the then famous Herreshoff steam engines and boilers and gained international



Rocco Migliori, veteran Bristol boatwright, examines a PT model.

recognition because of their outstanding performance. Strangely significant is the record showing that Britain and Russia, purchasers of PT boats under the Lend-Lease Program, were among the first nations to realize the potential value of the new type of light, but fast, war vessel. In 1879 when the first Herreshoff torpedo launch was built, orders were received from Britain, Russia and Chile after the Herreshoffs had failed to interest the U. S. Navy in witnessing a demonstration of their craft.

The first torpedo launches carried ram-type torpedoes, made fast to the end of long poles, one protruding from the bow, another from the stern. To damage an adversary it was necessary to run in under full steam, ram the hull with the torpedo exploding on contact, then back away and take cover until a new charge could be secured to the ram. Little information has been uncovered as to the effectiveness of these early torpedo boats in actual combat.

In 1885, the "Stiletto" was designed and built as a fast flush-deck pleasure yacht. On a trip to New York, the "Stiletto" met and defeated the speedy Hudson River steamer "Mary Powell"—a feat never before accomplished. This and similar performances attracted naval authorities and in 1887 she was purchased by the Navy and converted at Bristol into the first torpedo boat to fire a "free" torpedo from a tube. The "Stiletto" remained in service for 35 years and was attached to the Torpedo Station at Newport until she was decommissioned a few years after World War I.

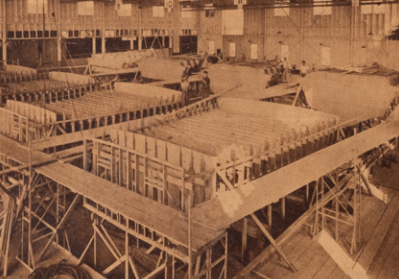
Construction of torpedo boats for the U. S. Navy continued at the Herreshoff boat yard until 1898. Some of the later type boats measured 175 feet overall and they could attain a speed of 28 knots, at that time a record for any vessel.

The PTs now being mass-produced at Bristol bear little resemblance to

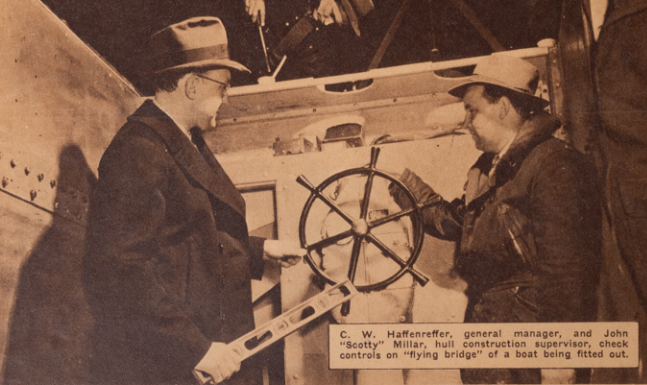
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Inspecting a blueprint of a PT, George Hibbert, leading cabinet maker, checks every detail. Hibbert's son, an officer in the Seabees, is in Alaska.

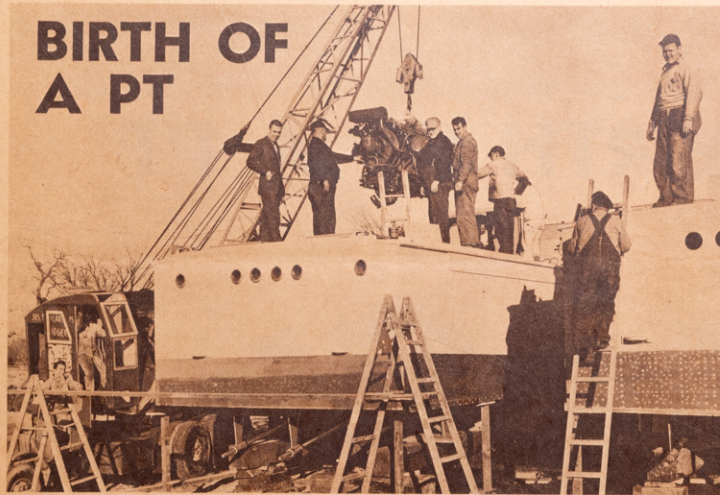


In the big shed of the Herreshoff south yard, carpenters begin framing up a group of PTs. The boats are being turned out by mass production methods.



C. W. Haffenreffer, general manager, and John "Scotty" Millar, hull construction supervisor, check controls on "flying bridge" of a boat being fitted out.

BIRTH OF A PT



Continued from Preceding Page

They are smaller—only 70 feet in length. They cost about the same as a four-motored bomber and their engines are just as powerful. Three 1350-horsepower Packards drive through clutches and transmissions to three shafts and propellers. They can attain a speed of 50 knots (nearly 60 miles an hour) and are so maneuverable that it is possible for the pilot to change course and "sidestep" an onrushing torpedo.

Mounted on each side of the decks are the tubes which house the deadly torpedoes for the "hit and run" missions of the PTs. Also carried on deck in quick-release racks are depth charges. Attached to the stern are chemical pots which blow a black smoke in laying down a screen for larger vessels.

With launchings averaging approximately two each week, a test crew of nine men is kept busy daily, including Sunday, on trial runs over a measured course. A builder's trial run is followed by another under the watchful eye of a naval officer before a boat is accepted.

Camouflage makes it almost impossible to distinguish a PT from the waters of the bay when it is travelling at top speed on one of the tests. But when the tiny boat nears the dock on its homeward trip, the pennant flying in the breeze seems to say:

"Everything is shipshape and Bristol fashion."

Story and pictures approved for publication by Office of Public Relations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

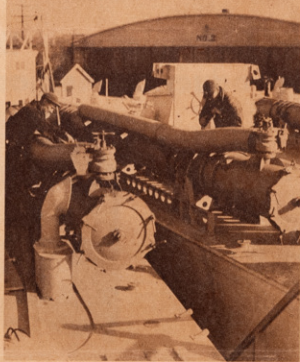


Each vessel in this quartet of PTs needs only one more torpedo tube. Then they will be ready to go over for the trial runs.



On launching day, the shipyard band, made up of workers, supplies music for the celebration. Photos by Ralph K. Lawrence, Charles L. Hughes and Herreshoff Mfg. Co.

A derrick and half a dozen men are needed to lower the three 1350-horsepower motors into engine room.



Putting the final touches on the torpedo tube installations, the most potent armament carried by the PTs.



Mrs. A. F. Haffenreffer, Jr., whose husband is in the southwest Pacific, raises the traditional bottle.

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And another small—but mighty—PT is on its way to join United Nations naval forces.

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