



Chapter Ten

REFLECTIONS



Ditchburn's products are still recognized as some of the best and most beautiful boats ever built in Canada. His important innovations in construction, mechanical systems, and design produced higher standards of customer satisfaction, safety, and utility. His vessels possessed a singular beauty—a sculptural quality that set them apart.

Herbert Ditchburn was born in Muskoka in 1880. He died in Trenton in 1950 and is buried in St. John's Anglican Cemetery there. It is a reflection of the quality of his life and his contribution to pleasure boating in Canada that this volume has been undertaken.

Apprenticed to his uncle Henry about the turn of the century, he learned boat building, soon bought out his uncle and grew with the company, acquiring skills in construction, design, and marketing. Over his career he built in excess of 1,000 vessels, ranging from rowboats to government patrol boats. His racing craft captured world titles for speed and endurance. He trained hundreds of employees in the skills required by the



company. He set the highest standards for his products, and he treated his customers with the utmost in fairness and respect. His integrity, skill, and artistry were represented in every vessel of his production.

Today his products are still recognized as some of the best and most beautiful boats ever built in Canada. His important innovations in construction, mechanical systems, and design produced higher standards of customer satisfaction, safety, and utility. His vessels possessed a singular beauty—a sculptural quality that set them apart.

Now his memory lives on, as collectors intend to preserve these Ditchburn treasures forever. Many Muskoka families have had a Ditchburn in the boathouse for three or four generations. It has become the ultimate cachet to own a Ditchburn, a masterwork from a master craftsman.

Left and opposite: Crumbling ruins of the Ditchburn factory mark the sad demise of a proud Canadian company.



RESTORATION

Like most manmade articles, wooden boats have a limited lifespan, a time that can be extended by careful use, dedicated maintenance, proper housing and professional assistance. Eventually, to some degree, replacement becomes necessary. The challenge becomes to undertake the necessary steps in a thoughtful manner, respecting the materials and construction methods used by the builder so that change is minimal and the integrity of the vessel is maintained.

Supporting Ditchburn owners are a group of restoration shops whose knowledge and skills are dedicated to maintaining the Ditchburn fleet as close as humanly possible to original appearance, construction, design and materials. We are indebted to these skillful builders—the success of their thoughtful efforts is reflected in many of the pages of this volume.

Dwight Boyd, Clarion Boats, Campbellford, Ontario

Peter Breen, Antique & Classic Boat Co. Ltd., Rockwood, Ontario

Tony Brown, Western Runabouts, Lake Tahoe, California

Tim Butson, Butson Boats Ltd., Port Carling, Ontario

Gary Clark, Clark Wooden Boats, Severn Bridge, Ontario

Ken Heshka, Canadian Heritage Boats, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Stan Hunter, Stan Hunter Boatbuilders, Port Carling, Ontario

Ken Lavalette, Woodwind Yachts, Nestleton, Ontario

Ed Skinner, Duke Marine Services, Port Carling, Ontario

Lance Wilson, Runabout Restorations, Umatilla, Florida

Mike Windsor, Windsor Boat Works Ltd., Gravenhurst, Ontario



A boatbuilder can learn much about the intricacies of wooden boat construction and sensitive restoration at Clark Wooden Boats near Severn Bridge, Ontario.