

# The Natoma Skiff—She's Just Plain Friendly

By John DeLapp

*When I asked John to allow me to publish these lines in The Ash Breeze, I didn't know how much work I was making for him. I found out when I met him at the Mystic Small Craft Workshop. John is deeply interested in small craft, especially designs that can get a person out on the water at low cost. Of course, the boat must also look good and perform well, and this design certainly does. The Natoma skiff he shipped to Mystic for the workshop was in use all weekend. I tried it out on Saturday, and it is very fast, seaworthy, and maneuverable. John also had a unique pair of oars in the boat with a new shaped grip that seemed easy on the hands. Maybe he will consent to writing something about it for a future issue....*

**T**hese drawings are for the Natoma skiff originally designed for Jim Lawson. She is a light, vee-bottom, double-ended pleasure rowing boat meant to carry a single explorer, a couple with camping gear, or a small family of picnickers. The boat is 15'6" long, 38" wide, and 12" deep. The outriggers bring her rowing beam to 48", and her carrying weight is 65 pounds.

While her light weight and narrow beam make her an excellent size for car-topping, her 8-degree deadrise hull makes a steady boat. The flared overhanging ends make her quite dry in most circumstances. She rows very easily and is, all things considered, a fast boat.

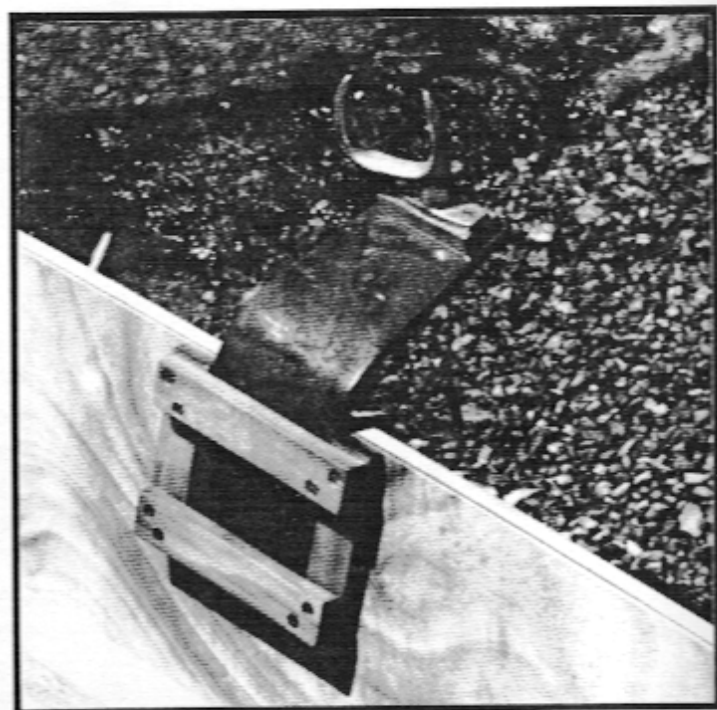
Her design is an outgrowth of work I had been doing in an attempt to determine exactly what is necessary in a really good rowing boat and what is superfluous. The variables are seemingly endless, but looking at the problem solely from the standpoint of getting the most desirable boat for the least investment of time and money, this is certainly my best effort to date.

The lines drawings were arrived at in a roundabout manner. The boat started as one of my endless procession of smudgy little worked-over sketches. This particular sketch showed a lot of potential for a high-quality, simply-made boat with a certain amount of charm and style. When you're dealing with minimum-investment boat design, the charm and style bit becomes crucially important.

Anyway, I thought Jim Lawson might like this boat as a replacement for his Bolger yellow-leaf pirogue, *Warthog*. So I put it to one side, and the next time Jim stopped by, I showed him the sketch. Jim was so enthusiastic about the boat that I carved out a 3/4" = 1' half model to start tuning in the hull.

After Jim had talked to William Enoch about building the boat, I took the dimensions off the model and did a full-size lofting which William took to his shop in Colfax.

William had two difficulties in construction: 1) The lie of the chine and 2) considerably more fullness in the garboard ends than I predicted. Jim and I drove to Colfax, and together we were able to work everything out. William did an excellent job on the boat. When he was done, he delivered it to my shop where Jim and I fitted foot braces and outriggers and painted her up.



*The removable, laminated outrigger on the Natoma skiff is unique, simple, and efficient. Photo: Ken Steinmetz.*

The reception of Jim's Natoma skiff has been heart-warming. Even discounting Jim's enthusiasm, the fact remains that she really does everything Jim claims. Perhaps most importantly, she's just plain friendly. It seems that at our local meets people are always lined up to take her out.

When Ken Steinmetz called to ask for lines and offsets to print with Jim's article, I was stymied. There was not only no plan, but I realized that before I could draw one, the lofting would have to be changed to reflect what the materials actually wanted to do.