

NOTES ON EARLY OUTBOARDS

Most treatises on early outboards indicate that one built by the American Motor Co. of Long Island City, N.Y., in the late '90's was the earliest. This may well have been the first one powered by a gas engine, but genuine outboards had actually been built previous to this.

Possibly the first was the Trouve', a chain drive electric job displayed in Paris in 1881. An illustration of this motor can be seen in "Electrical Boats and Navigation", N.Y., 1894. Also in "S.L.O.W. Bell" for October 1959. This rig was copied by U.S. manufacturers in the '90's. The French are also credited with a set-up using an outboard mounted steam cylinder with chain driven prop. and an inboard boiler. No date available on this last unit.

On this side of the ocean, Emerson Harthan of Worcester, Mass., was granted a patent on July 19, 1887, for a design of "Machinery for Propelling and Steering Boats". This ingenious device was a completely self-contained steam powered detachable boat motor. The condenser took shape as a rudder, while the 4-blade screw was driven by a crank by the engine connecting rod. Liquid fuel was stored in the framework. The steam generator wasn't detailed but could very well have been a flash job in the form of coils of tubing. (This mode of steam generation had been employed for some ten years in the famous Herreshoff built craft.) No model was submitted and evidence of production has yet to be found by this writer.

It may be well at this point to mention the gasoline outboard designed and built by Edw. S. Savage (who later achieved fame as a toy designer) of Rochester, N.Y., in 1898. This was complete with reversible screw, eccentric driven water pump, and a rudder which could be raised above the boat's keel.

In France, the L'autonavigable Propulseur Universel (better known as the "Propulseur Amovible") was available in five sizes in 1902. The smallest, 1-3/4 h.p. with complete apparatus weighed 132 lbs., while the largest, with an 8-1/2 h.p. rating, topped the scales at 308 lbs. The construction of this device gives an appearance not unlike a present day inboard-outboard drive. The 4-cycle oil engine drove the screw by means of two bevel gears, said screw mounted in a housing that could be turned around so as to drive in any direction.

The machines built by Cameron Waterman and Ole Evinrude are so well known that they need hardly be mentioned. One that came out in 1908 is worth mentioning however. This is the 2 h.p. outfit built by the Walnut Machine & Brass Foundry Co. of Toledo, Ohio. Weighing 40 lbs., this machine had an air-cooled cylinder with a bore and stroke of 2-1/2", and swung a 12" prop. No rudder was used as the prop turned with the tiller - like present day models. An adjusting clamp to fit the shaft housing to the transom angle was also included.

By 1915 there were some 45 builders of outboards throughout the world, including seven in Germany, three in France, two in England, and one in Sweden. These figures, of course, don't include a number that had discontinued manufacture.

=====

This valuable and most interesting information submitted by member
Many thanks Don.

Donald J. Heermans
13925 S.W. River Lane
Tigard 23, Oregon