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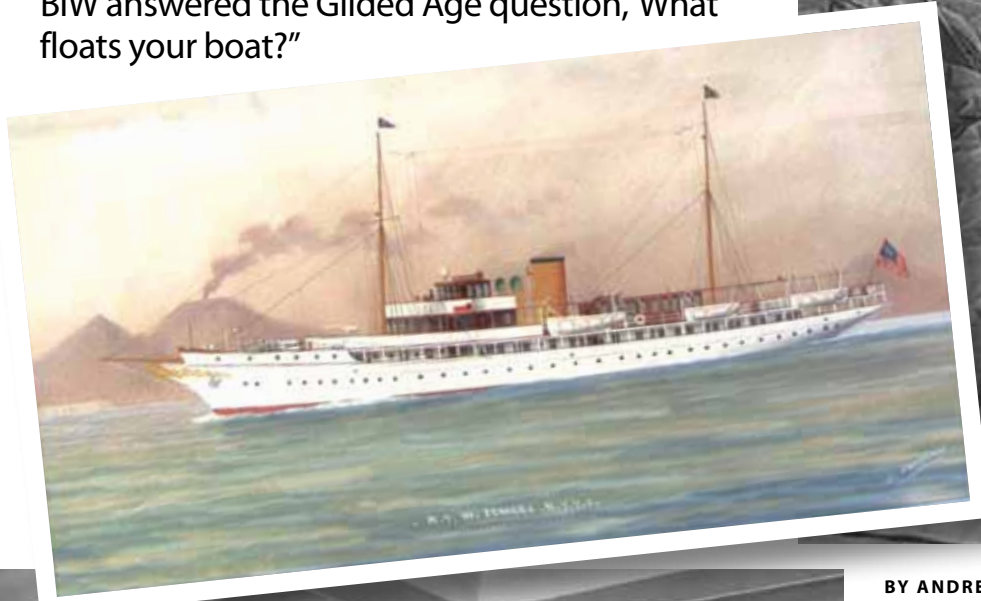
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BY ANDREW TOPPAN

In the early years of the 20th century, America's wealthiest industrialists and financiers commissioned Bath Iron Works to build opulent yachts, the ultimate status symbol of their day. BIW, on the banks of the Kennebec River in Bath since 1884, has long been known as a cutting-edge military shipbuilder. BIW's lesser-known yacht building business reached its peak in the Roaring 20s and into the 1930s, when the largest and most luxurious yachts in the world were launched in Bath. The yachts and their owners traveled in the highest social circles and voyaged around the world in splendor, but this golden era soon came to an end. With the coming of World War II, most of these yachts were taken into military

From top: Guests enjoy a *Gatsby* moment on the stern divan aboard J. P. Morgan's *Corsair IV*; Louis Papaluca (1890-1934) gouache painting depicts *Hi Esmaro* cruising a volcanic coastline; dining in spacious style aboard *Aras*.

FROM TOP: FILE; HI-ESMARO, (GOUACHE), LOUIS "LUCA" PAPALUCA (1890-1934)/EBAY; COURTESY ANDREW TOPPAN/BIW;

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service and dispersed to the far corners of the world. Remarkably, a few of these opulent vessels survive to this day.

Winchester

The 224-foot *Winchester* was launched in 1916 for Peter Winchester Rouse. The speedy turbine-powered vessel was designed by the firm of Cox & Stevens. Her owner, heir to the Winchester arms fortune, used her as a true commuter yacht,



traveling to New York City from his summer home in Newport, Rhode Island. Her yachting career was short as she was soon purchased by the U.S. Navy for World War I service, where her high speed—nearly equal to the fastest warships of her era—was put to good use. Following the war, she was eventually sold to Cornelius Vanderbilt, who traveled aboard between Newport and Florida. Later joining the Royal Canadian Navy as HMCS *Renaud* during World War II, the former *Winchester* sailed until 1957 before vanishing from the records.

Vanda

The 240-foot *Vanda* of 1929 was built for Ernest B. Dane at a cost of \$634,000. She was the first BIW-built vessel designed by Henry Gielow Company of New York, a relationship that would continue for many

subsequent yachts. Her owner, president of the Brookline Savings and Trust, enjoyed *Vanda* for several years, mostly cruising the East Coast and the Caribbean. She probably visited Maine often during these years, as the Danes maintained a summer home at Seal Harbor. During World War II, *Vanda* joined the Navy as USS *San Bernardino*, serving as a weather patrol ship in the Pacific.



Clockwise from top: Ernest Dane's graceful yacht *Vanda* under way; a paneled and furnished stateroom aboard *Vanda*; and *Haida's* formal dining room evoke bygone movie sets.

Paragon

Paragon followed *Vanda* in 1930. She was built at a modest cost—under \$200,000—for Charles Davol, whose family had earned its fortune in the rubber industry. Designed by Loring Swasey, she was a smaller yacht, equally suited to entertaining and cruising. Few details of her career are recorded, but she probably spent much of her time near the Davol family estate at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. After Charles Davol passed away in 1937 she was apparently sold, and in 1941 she was wrecked on the Pacific coast.

Hi-Esmaro

Hi-Esmaro soon followed, placing BIW firmly in the top rank of yacht builders. The 266-foot, \$900,000 yacht was built for

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: FILE; COURTESY ANDREW TOPPAN/BIW;



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Hiram Manville, president of Johns Manville Corporation. Manville cruised to Europe aboard *Hi-Esmaro* twice and hosted the Swedish royal family on more than one occasion, including a state visit to New York. During World War II, *Hi-Esmaro* became USS *Niagara*, a patrol gunboat. She served as a tender to small motor torpedo boats similar to JFK's famed *PT-109*. She was sunk by Japanese aircraft in the Solomon Islands in 1943, miraculously without any fatalities among her crew.

Corsair IV
Financier J.P. Morgan's *Corsair IV* was BIW's largest yacht, and the largest yacht built in the U.S. in that era. The Gielow-designed, 343-foot masterpiece was launched in 1930. Although her \$1.45-million price tag may seem high for an era when the average salary was under \$1,400 annually, an equivalent yacht today would cost \$150 to \$200 million.



From top: William Henry Bishop's painting *John Pierpont Morgan's Yacht Corsair IV Observing the 1934 Cup Races off Newport, Rhode Island* depicts the dream boat in its heyday; Morgan, in banker's threads, boards his megayacht *Corsair IV*.

Corsair cruised with high society to Europe, the Caribbean, and even to the Galapagos Islands in the remote Pacific. With the coming of war, *Corsair* became a flagship in the Royal Navy, based in Bermuda for most of the war. Following the war she was sold and refitted as a cruise ship, with 42 luxurious staterooms for 82 pampered guests, a pioneer of today's worldwide cruise industry. Sadly, this career was cut short in 1949 when she ran aground off Acapulco, Mexico, and became a total loss.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: CHRISTIE'S; WILLIAM HENRY BISHOP, JOHN PIERPONT MORGAN'S YACHT CORSAIR IV OBSERVING THE 1934 CUP RACES OFF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND; FILE

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MADE IN MAINE

Black Douglas

To learn what the yacht formerly known as the steel-hulled staysail schooner *Black Douglas* (1930) is up to these days as the royal yacht of King Mohammed V of Morocco, please see our feature story on page 52.

To chart the course she sailed before she was transformed into *El Boughaz I*, read on.

Designed by Gielow & Orr, the thorough-ly modern, 175-foot *Black Douglas* was created with an all-steel hull at a cost of \$256,000 for Robert Roebing, grandson of the man who designed the Brooklyn Bridge.

She was christened *Black Douglas* in honor of Lord James Douglas, so fierce a Scottish revolutionary that according to legend, English mothers used to whisper to their babies, "You'd better be good, or when you're sleeping the Black Douglas will come and eat you."

Who could have resisted sailing her below Manhattan's skyscrapers for a photo-op under the Brooklyn Bridge! For decades, the Roebings kept her at their island near Savannah, Georgia, before selling her in September 1941 to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for duty from California to Alaska, per U.S. Navy records.

"In 1941, she was sold to the United

States Government to do seal research in the Aleutian Islands off Alaska," according to Wayne Foster, Sr., writing in *Dubh Ghlase* in 1996; the monograph appears in www.douglashistory.co.uk/history/ships/schoonerblackdouglas.htm. "She was in San Pedro, California when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. So she was immediately impressed into the Navy as a patrol craft. On her way to Seattle, a Japanese submarine lobbed a couple of shells across her bow off the Oregon coast, but she escaped. She even had a torpedo fired at her but came out unscathed!

"She was stripped of her sails, sailing tackle, masts, spar, and the *Black Douglas* figurehead. Guns and sonar (underwater detection gear) were mounted on her...From 1942 through part of 1944, she patrolled the water of Neah Bay, Washington" as the Navy's *USS Black Douglas*, commissioned on 19 April, 1943.

Homeported in Puget Sound, she was assigned to brilliant first skipper LCDR Robert Copeland, USN, who



I sailed her in 1962

My first trip on the *Black Douglas* in the summer of 1962 set my course going forward [as a future merchant marine captain], says Wally Slough.

I was just 16. My bunk was up in the forecandle, and I'll never forget the panic I felt when I was sound asleep and they dropped anchor near Los Angeles to rendezvous with another Fish and Wildlife Service vessel. It sounded like a bomb had gone off next to my bunk when they let go the anchor!

She was a workboat, plain and simple, and her accommodations reflected that and were Spartan to be sure. She was certainly seaworthy enough from my perspective as a 16-year-old kid, but I was in no position at the time to judge how she handled under power, although it seemed fine to me.

It's remarkable that after 83 years she's still in service. —Capt. S. W. Slough



had quite a brave heart himself. Though he faced little action aboard the *Black Douglas*, future Rear Admiral Copeland would become a legend of the Pacific Theater as captain of the *Samuel B. Roberts*, winning the Navy Cross for his leadership in a hair-raising torpedo attack against a vastly superior force of Japanese cruisers during Leyte Invasion.

Mastless and overshadowed, *Black Douglas* was struck from the Navy lists on



October 14, 1944.

It is here she slips out of view for 16 years or so until 1960, when we see her working from Alaska to California as a research vessel with the Bureau of Fisheries.

"When I worked on her in 1962 and 1963, any sense of her opulent beginnings were long gone," says Capt. S. W. (Wally) Slough, who began his maritime career aboard her "as a 16-year-old kid." He's "amazed" to find she's still afloat in 2013 and hasn't "been transformed into razor blades or become a fishing reef somewhere!"

If there were a movie about this vessel, who'd play the part of Louis Black, the adventurer who snapped her up at auction and took her through the Panama Canal to the Bahamas, where he sailed her among the coral reefs of the Turks and Caicos for nearly a decade, looking for pirate treasure?

After her interlude in Margaritaville, she was sold to Captain George Stoll and served as a seagoing classroom off Saratoga, Florida, as part of the former Flint School.

The first of her series of serious make-overs to transform her to the superyacht she is today began in 1983. —*Colin W. Sargent*

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Caroline

The 279-foot, \$1.2-million *Caroline* followed in 1931 for Eldridge Johnson, founder of the Victor Talking Machine Company, best known for its Victrola phonographs. *Caroline* was a cruising yacht designed to carry an archeological expedition to explore Easter Island. Also designed by Gielow, she was the first BIW-built vessel with an electric elevator, a true novelty at the time. Like *Hi-Esmaro*, wartime saw her serving as a tender to PT boats, renamed *Hilo*. She survived the war operating from many island bases along the front lines in the Pacific, and was sold postwar.

Aras

Although smaller at 244 feet, *Aras* of 1931 was no less luxurious. This was the second *Aras* built by BIW for Hugh Chisholm, president of the Oxford Paper company. BIW designed the vessel in-house rather than turning to an outside design agency. Like many of her contemporaries, *Aras* was purchased by the US Navy and renamed *Williamsburg*, operating as a flagship and command ship in the Atlantic during the war. Postwar, the ship became the Presidential yacht for Harry Truman, then an oceanographic research ship, then a floating restaurant, and eventually made her way to Italy. Today *Williamsburg* is a rusted ruin in La Spezia, Italy, a mere shadow of her former self, and is advertised for sale at \$11.7 million for, seeking a wealthy and adventurous new owner to restore her. [See our feature story "Dream Boat," May 2012.]



From top: *Caroline's* accommodations have all the comforts of home; *Aras* (a.k.a. *USS Williamsburg*) alongside the larger *USS Delta* in Reykjavik, Iceland, 1942.

FROM TOP: FILE/JIM RODGERS; COURTESY SARGENT FAMILY

Seapine
Seapine, 154 feet in length and completed in 1931, holds the distinction of being the largest vessel built entirely indoors at BIW, and of having two owners before she left the shipyard. Frank Goodyear ordered the yacht but passed away before her completion. She was sold to a Mr. Hollander, and later to a Mr. Larsh, from whom she was purchased by the Navy in 1941. Renamed *Rhodolite*, she served as a patrol ship off Hawaii during the war. Little is known of her later career, but she was rebuilt in the 1980s and is still in service today, named *Yanbu* and registered in Southampton, England.

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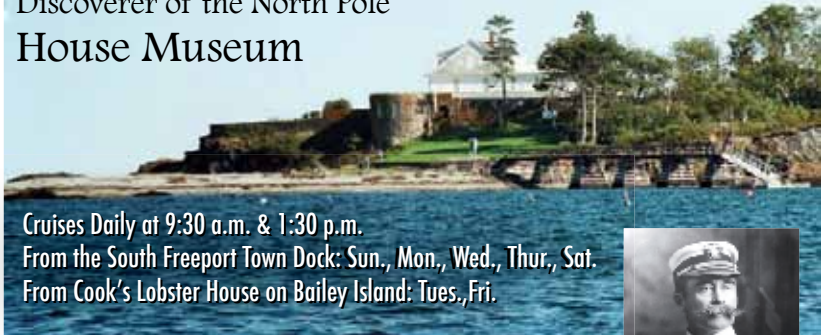
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Ranger

The magnificent J-class racing sloop *Ranger* closed out the era of great yachts in 1937. Designed by Starling Burgess and Olin Stephens [see our Stephens interview "The Magnificent J," July / August 1989], she was built for Harold Vanderbilt's defense of the famed America's Cup, the oldest active trophy in international sport (1851). The 135-foot sloop sported a 165-foot mast and was built with painstaking care and attention to detail. BIW's pride in *Ranger* became even more evident when she was dismantled and the shipyard constructed an entirely new mast in only three weeks, working around the clock. *Ranger* successfully defended the America's Cup in 1937, but her career ended the same year. There were no further races due to the coming war, and *Ranger* was soon broken up for scrap.

Ranger, built quickly but inexpensively, cost \$165,000. Vanderbilt's entire racing effort that year was estimated to cost \$500,000, while today an America's Cup yacht costs \$10 million, and a full racing season 10 times more. ■

▶ For more, visit portlandmonthly.com/port-mag/2013/07/biw-yachts-extras.

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