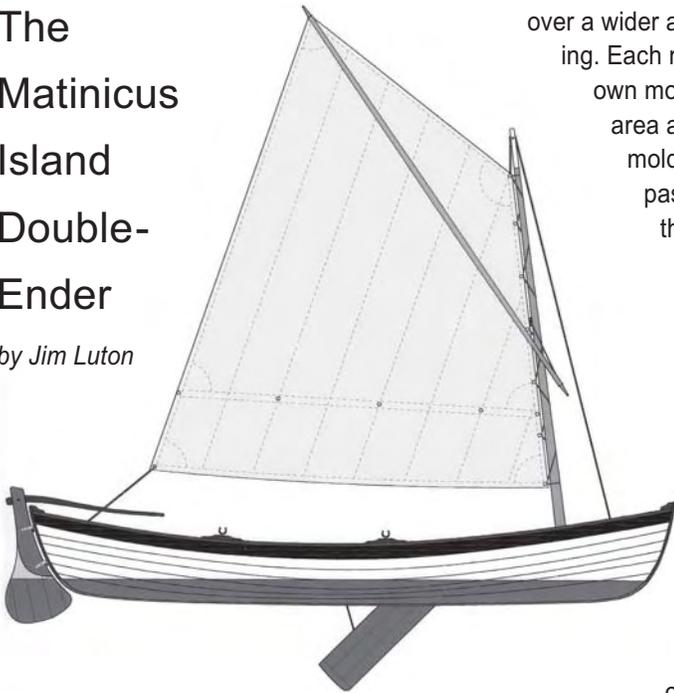


The Matinicus Island Double- Ender

by Jim Luton



I've been thinking for some time now about building a boat for myself that is light and easy to handle solo or with crew, both on shore and in the water; a boat that rows beautifully as well as sails, that is seaworthy, and of course beautiful. My crab skiff, **Cricket**, is a great sailboat, but she's a bit heavy to launch and retrieve by myself, and rowing is not her strong suit. While we were up in Maine last summer at *WoodenBoat's* Small Reach Regatta, I had the chance to look over a wide variety of traditional small craft, and formed some definite opinions about what were good "sail-and-oar" boats.

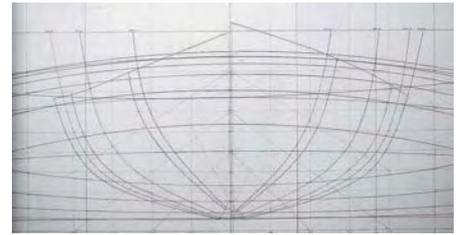
Arguably the quintessential Maine traditional small-craft, the double-ender, or "peapod," as the type is commonly known was once found all over the rocky islands and ledges of that state's rugged sea coast. Dating back to the late nineteenth century, the peapod was used in the lobster fishery, primarily to haul traps but some also served as lighthouse keeper's boats, and of course were used for other tasks around the waterfront as well. John Gardner wrote that the double-enders really came into their own as the lobsters were fished out, and it became necessary to spread their pots

over a wider area, usually by rowing. Each region produced its own model, peculiar to the area and the builder, and molds would often be passed down through the generations.

The double-ender in general, and the Matinicus Island model in particular, were extremely seaworthy, and rowed or sailed beautifully. The boat shown at left is a historically significant one, having been built

by a prominent family, the Youngs, on Matinicus Island for many generations. This model dates back at least to 1900 or so. Walter Simmons, a Lincolnville, ME boatbuilder, acquired the molds from Merrill Young in the early 70's, and set down lines to paper so they could be preserved. Walter has built many boats from these molds, and offers the design for sale to other builders (he also offers a wonderful Matinicus Double-Ender CD, which is both historical record and building guide). So I bought a set of plans for myself, and have started building her.

Above left, the Matinicus Island Double-Ender. Sail plan drawn by Jim, after Walter Simmons. At right, lobsterman Jud Young, Matinicus Island, circa 1904. Photo from the Penobscot Marine Museum collection, donated by, and used with permission of, Walter Simmons.



Matinicus Island peapod body plan.

Before the first piece of wood can be cut, the boat must be lofted full size in three views, and faired. There is a lot of drawing and re-drawing to get all the views to agree. Move a waterline here, it affects a diagonal there, or changes the body curve somewhere else. In addition to the lines, many construction details such as stem profiles, keel widths, and bevels are generated. Walter will provide a full-size lofting for this boat at a very reasonable price, but I find the process enjoyable, and instructive. Once the lines are fair, and all views are correlated, the building molds can be lifted from the full size body plan, and the backbone can be built. The lines for this boat show a hull with fairly slack bilges and a moderate rise of floor, which coupled with her hollow lower waterlines, will produce a form that is very easy to push through the water. She will be tender, though, particularly when lightly loaded, and will not have a high top end speed. But she should row effortlessly, and her flare will





Cast bronze stand-up oarlocks from Duck Trap Woodworking.

provide a healthy range of secondary stability.

One interesting note about peapods is that they were often rowed facing forward and standing up! It is much easier to navigate rocky ledges while looking where you are going rather than where you've been. And when it comes time to haul a trap, you're already on your feet. This requires a long and very strong oarlock, quite different from the normal variety. Walter Simmons made new patterns for these locks, and is having them cast in limited quantities at a foundry in Maine. He sold me a pair, and I'll be very interested to try them out when the boat is done. I can see myself on some misty, winter morning, pushing through the marsh along with the buffleheads and mergansers.

These boats were traditionally built of cedar on steam-bent oak frames. The keel and stems were also oak. While



Hauling traps from a carvel planked double-ender. Used by permission of Walter Simmons.

many of the double-enders were built carvel, some were also built lapstrake. The lapstrake boats were quite a bit lighter, though they were all rather heavily-built for long service. I am building mine lapstrake, but with glued, nine-millimeter occume ply instead of riveted cedar. I may still use the steamed frames, but I might choose to use more widely spaced sawn frames, joggled to fit over the laps.

There are two keel types to choose from for this boat. In one type, the keel is set vertically, with the rabbet for the garboard plank land chiseled out by hand. This is sometimes called a "scantling" keel. The other type is the flat plank keel. This type of construction is typical for wherries, but was sometimes used for the double-enders as well. The flat plank keel is much easier to fit a centerboard to, being quite wide on its inboard surface amidship. I am using the latter, built up from two 12-millimeter layers of occume ply laminated together. There is additionally, another 12mm external shoe, which sets proud of the



A beautiful example of a Jonesport (Washington County) peapod. I photographed this boat at the 2008 Small Reach Regatta. The owner, Charles Chamberlain, told me that this boat was built by the late Alan Vaitses, to lines found in Chapelle's *American Small Sailing Craft*, page 219 (fig. 83). She is gaff rigged with no centerboard.

garboard plank, and brings the backbone structure to a little less than 1-1/2" thick. This applied shoe creates the rabbet that would be chiseled in on the vertical keel. Once the keel has been laminated, its shape must be laid

out on both inboard (top) and outboard surfaces. There is quite a rolling bevel to be cut down the length of the keel, with a lot of wood to be removed. I used several different hand tools in the process, but the bulk of the wood was removed with a power plane.

The stems and their knees are quite hefty. I got mine out of some old construction grade fir that I salvaged from a dumpster. I first made thin plywood patterns from the lofting, and arranged them on the stock to best advantage, working around knots and other defects. The knee notches into the stem, and I glued this joint with epoxy. The two pieces were also bolted together with bronze carriage bolts, and the whole assembly was glued and bolted to the keel as well. This is where I stand now at this writing. I'll be cutting molds soon, and setting up for planking. Stay tuned for future installments!



Contact Info:

Walter Simmons, www.duck-trap.com,
Jim Luton, jim@canopystudios.com
<http://sailingskiffs.blogspot.com/>