

SKETCHBOOK

BY SAM DEVLIN

An Old Photograph Inspired This Double-Ender Design

It's not uncommon for me to be asked, "Of all the designs you have done, which is your favorite?" It's an interesting and complicated question for a long-time boatbuilder and designer.

The best answer is that I live in a harem of boat shapes and forms, with a different choice virtually every night as I move from the conscious day to my dreams. There is always a time in every design or build project when I sell myself on the idea that I need the boat in my life. My needs and desires might change a day or two later, but for one delicious moment, each boat is as close to perfect as I can imagine. I really am in love with each design and vessel.

Enter the Rover 29. The seed for this boat was planted years ago with a book, *The Guide to Wooden Power Boats* by Maynard Bray, with photography by Benjamin Mendlowitz. A copy has graced my bookcase off and on (I will explain that in a moment) since 1998, and on Page 131 is a photo of an old workboat named *Rover*, built in Astoria, Oregon, in 1910. I have never seen *Rover* on the water, but the stern-quarter view of her in the book — anchored in nearly flat-calm, dark, reflective water — is one of my favorites.

Rover was on my mind as I pondered the reasons old commercial vessels hold such a rapt audience. I'm one of the fans: My restored fishing boat, *Josephine*, built in 1934, has detail and elegance that are truly captivating.

Why not create a new design that captures the essence of old working boats, but in a package with more stability (without the hold full of fish and ice), less length and more comfortable accommodations? To achieve this, I would have to throw away speed as a requirement. This design is meant to be efficient, economical, seaworthy and slow — a boat for a patient skipper with time to appreciate the voyage.

At the same time, I was thinking about

using this hull for several cabin configurations and arrangement options so it would have wide appeal. I remembered the old *Rover* design and checked my bookcase for *The Guide to Wooden Power Boats*. It was not there.

I walked up to the house and checked the living room. No book. Then upstairs to the small room we call the library. No success. It turned out that my youngest son Mackenzie had borrowed the book. I nervously leafed through the pages until I got to the photo of *Rover*, looking just as she had in my memory — a right proper workboat, majestic in purpose and grace.

Seeing her again helped me to finish my new design. I call her the Rover 29 in tribute

to her inspiration. She is a double-ender with three house configurations, all on the same hull: H for the aft house "halibut schooner" version, T for the "salmon troller" style and C for the "cruiser."

I am most struck by the H model, which has a walkaround bulwark for the mid- or waist deck and aft house. Sliding pilothouse doors on the port and starboard sides would provide good airflow on the warm days of summer, and there's enough space aft for a simple galley and some sort of stove to give off heat at anchor. Two quarter-type berths are in the aft cabin, with the foot areas extending forward and under the twin pilothouse seats.

A centerline wheel that you can stand at,

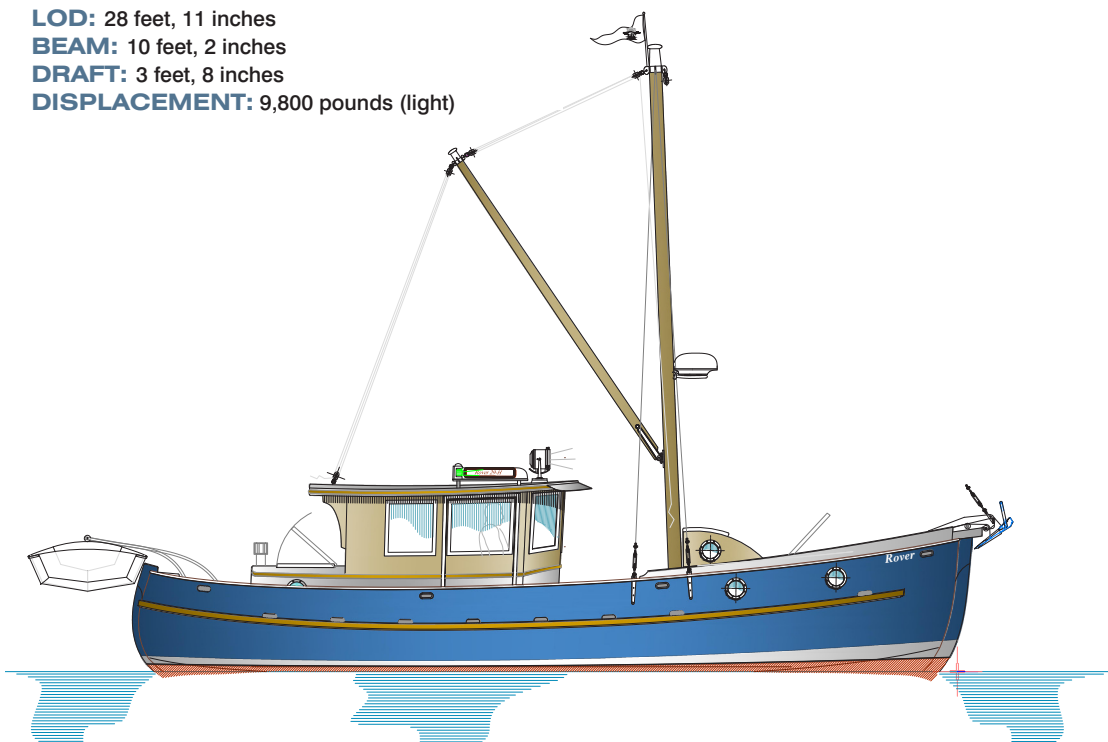
Rover 29-H

LOD: 28 feet, 11 inches

BEAM: 10 feet, 2 inches

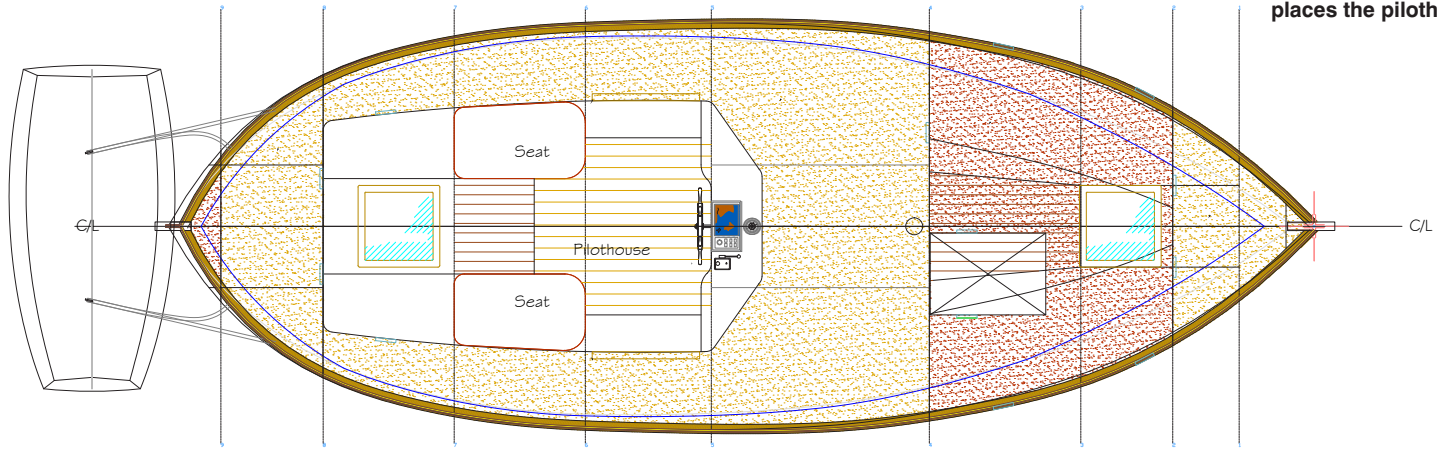
DRAFT: 3 feet, 8 inches

DISPLACEMENT: 9,800 pounds (light)



NEIL RABINOWITZ (TOP)

The Rover 29-H model places the pilothouse aft.



or that can have a pedestal seat, is in the pilothouse. Years ago, when I worked on tugs in Alaska, I learned that while it was strictly forbidden to sit on watch, I could back myself up to a chart table or stool and form a tripod with my two legs and my butt against the table or stool's edge. This position kept me stable and upright in rough seas. And it would work aboard my Rover.

The forward cabin — properly described as the fo'c'sle — has twin berths with foot room below the waist deck and a true water

closet forward under a hinged lid of counter stowage. I have an extreme dislike of toilets on vessels, based on years of fixing the darn things while cruising in all sorts of sea conditions. Staying simple is always the best choice, but this arrangement on the Rover gives the fo'c'sle cabin a full head with privacy.

The engine room is below the waist deck and under a watertight flush hatch, with oil checks done from a door in the fo'c'sle's aft bulkhead. More extensive engine work can be done under the sky (you could rig a

boom tent in inclement weather) and with full standing headroom alongside the engine.

The best power option is a 110-hp Yanmar diesel, but it would be fun to find an older, restored 1- or 2-cylinder banger. If I took that idea to an extreme, I would do a water-cooled exhaust system plus a smooth-running dry exhaust, with the stack extending over the top of the pilothouse. The look would be in keeping with the romance of boating, which in my experience comes from simplicity in the process of moving through water. ■