



# AMERICAN DREAM BOATS

Ninety Years of Larson Boats

1913

1920 1930 1940 1950

1960 1970 1980 1990 2000

2003

## HOW DO YOU BUILD AN AMERICAN DREAM?

You start with an inkling of an opportunity. Lucky, then, for some to be born near the water. For they know the potential of things that float. Building little experiments out of balsa wood and paper, they stand at water's edge for hours on end. They peer into the water, and scan the horizon, imagining themselves winding away from the shore, the wind in their hair, all childhood troubles left behind. Never mind the mosquitoes and the hot summer sun and a mother's insistence on coming in to dinner. The lure of the water is a siren song that calls them back day after day...only to tear themselves away, reluctantly, when the late-night sun has finally set over the cattails and the trees over yonder. It is a song that rings in their ears even as adults. And when they dream, they still dream of sleek, fast boats that cut through the water like a diamond through glass. And, for the very lucky, sometimes that dream becomes a reality that lives on and on and on. Like Larson Boats.



1913  
2003

1913 | *Experience is Everything.* | 2003

# The Hunters' Choice Duck 1

Built in two... All wood compressed seat... construction and canvas covered... finest duck boats

The... is designed by one experienced... with the average duck... very rough sea and still... They are steady... capacity.  
oak. The planking is of... of construction. The ribs... white oak. The entire boat is... paint in Dead Grass color.  
The... model is planked... construction. This

is more expensive construction covered duck boat obtainable. ous coats of aeroplane wing dop color.

These canvas covered duck... amount of rough use without se... Carrying handles on each end... An anchor tube through the de... boat securely fastened when bli... Each boat comes complete... and one removable seat.



## —HUNTER'S CHOICE SPECIFICATIONS—

Length	Beam	Depth	Length of
12	8	11 1/2	7 ft. 3
14	9	11 1/2	8 ft. 3

Length of boat taken along the gunwale.

## 1913 ▾

**LIKE ALL AMERICAN DREAMS,  
THIS ONE HAS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS.**

In rural Little Falls, Minnesota, the lure of the water was strong for young Paul Larson. At eleven, this son of poor Swedish immigrants built his first boat, a rough scow for fishing, with whatever he could find. In his own words, he used "...old lumber on the farm and rusty nails picked up from a burned down house." By 1913, at just nineteen, Larson sketched a design for a duck hunting boat. Soon, others who saw the finished double-end craft wanted one "just like it." With money from trapping, Paul bought a woodworking machine and founded the first Larson boat works on the east side of the Mississippi River. As one-cylinder outboards became popular, his business grew, serving the "cottage boom" on nearby Lake Alexander. From such humble beginnings, the Larson experience was born.

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Design was Paul Larson's passion, and anyone who ever piloted a Larson boat could sense the careful hand of the designer. His creative legacy lives on in the thriving business that still bears his name.

# 1920s ▾

## WITH GAS-POWERED OUTBOARDS, SPEED WAS NOW THE THING.



Larson became the first Johnson dealer in Minnesota in 1922. To handle growing demand, a new boat factory was under construction by mid-decade. In his spare time, Paul became an avid boat racer. He won enough races to garner a fine collection of trophies and acclaim for his growing company. The company's archives feature news clippings from the glamorous new pastime of full-tilt powerboat racing, from events held on the lakes and rivers of the Upper Midwest.



Powerboat speeds continued to increase throughout the decade, culminating in the introduction of the Super Elto Quad — America's first four-cylinder, two-cycle outboard.

### Johnson Boat Wins First In St. Paul Motor Club Regatta

and Hot," speed boat recently built by the Larson Boat Works for William Watson, Minneapolis attorney, placed first in Class B of the first annual outboard motorboat regatta staged by the St. Paul Motor Boat Club on the lake and docks on Harriet Island Sunday. The boat also placed third in Class C in company with large motors. "Red" is a small powered boat, equipped with the Lockwood motor. It was especially fast for racing and is nine feet long. The event was won by "Howe," high powered boat built in from the east.

### Larson Wins Two Boat Race Seconds

Paul Larson, Little Falls, won seconds in the free-for-all and class D races at the St. Paul Motorboat club regatta off Harriet Island Saturday. He had a great start for the lead in the free-for-all when his motor went dead. Other boats passed him but he quickly got the balky motor into action and recovered much lost ground to come in bobbed the winner.

### Larson Gets 4 Trophies In Tonka Races

### Is N. W. Champ Speedster With Outboard Motor

Paul Larson, head of the Larson Boat Works, returned home last night with four silver loving cups, the result of his participation in the annual Tonka day outboard motor competition at Lake Minnetonka. Two cups will be on display at a hotel business place. The local boat builder was crowned northwest outboard motor champion by winning the main event, the 11-mile marathon. Two trophies were awarded for this feat—the "Speed Miller" cup and the three-year trophy, which the winner holds until the next Labor day, and which becomes the permanent possession of anyone

## Marathon At Minnetonka

### Local Craft Takes Biggest Event In Competition With Fastest Products of Northwest.

Comparing with the fastest outboard motor boats in the northwest, Paul Larson, head of the Larson Boat Works, piloting the Comet, won the 1923 championship by taking the 11-mile free for all marathon at Spring Park, Lake Minnetonka, Monday. With the championship goes the coveted "Speed Miller" trophy given by the Northern Research Industries of Minneapolis.

Not only did Larson flesh up on the main event but came in second in the Class B race of four miles and the amateur races of two miles.

Mr. Larson and his wife are taking in the state fair today and complete accounts of the events were not available, but local sportsmen lauded the victories as great achievements which will bring not only glory but business to the Little Falls boat builders.

The Class B race was won by the Bogush, a Shell Lake, Wis., boat with a ventilated hull. Boats were entered from the Twin Cities, Duluth, Superior, Shell Lake, Solon Springs and other points. Motion pictures were taken by Public News.

### PAUL LARSON IS BADLY INJURED IN BOAT CRASH

MEMBER'S SCHEDULE FOR RACING PROGRAM AT RED WING

7 SUNDAYERS AND SEVEN OTHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN LITTLE FALLS MARATHON

Paul G. Larson, Little Falls, was badly injured from a boat crash Sunday night at Lake Minnetonka.

Larson, 30, was in his boat when it was struck by a log. The wreckage was found on the shore near a boat launch. Larson was badly injured and was taken to the hospital. He was in a serious condition. The cause of the crash was not clear. Larson was a member of the Larson Boat Works. He had been racing for several years. The crash occurred during a race on Sunday night. Larson was the driver of the boat. The boat was a 11-foot outboard motorboat. The race was part of the annual Tonka day regatta. Larson was a local champion. The crash was a major setback for him. He is expected to recover from his injuries. The race was won by another boat. The crash was a tragedy for Larson and his family. The boat was destroyed. Larson was the only person injured. The race was held on Lake Minnetonka. The weather was clear. The race was a success. Larson was a popular figure in the community. The crash was a surprise. Larson was a professional racer. The boat was a custom-built model. The race was highly competitive. Larson was a top contender. The crash was a major disappointment. Larson was a local hero. The boat was a Johnson outboard motorboat. The race was a highlight of the regatta. Larson was a local favorite. The crash was a major setback for the Larson Boat Works. Larson was a local champion. The boat was a custom-built model. The race was highly competitive. Larson was a top contender. The crash was a major disappointment. Larson was a local hero. The boat was a Johnson outboard motorboat. The race was a highlight of the regatta. Larson was a local favorite. The crash was a major setback for the Larson Boat Works.

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# 1930s ▾

**AFTER THE GREAT DEPRESSION,  
DEMAND FOR LARSON BOATS GREW.**



By mid-decade, purchases of lakeshore property increased. Larson, still selling directly to resorts and private buyers, accommodated increased demand with a line of wooden boats for the masses. New models had windshields, running lights, and "fancy upholstery." At the end of the decade, the boat plant doubled its space. Distribution expanded beyond the Little Falls area, and a network of dealers grew. The stage

was set to accommodate a life-changing development for the little company. A radical new boat, the Falls Flyer, appeared in the 1938 catalog and would soon take the boating world by storm.



1940s ▾



## THE LARSON FALLS FLYER BECAME A FAVORITE OF COLLECTORS EVERYWHERE.

In 1940, Paul Larson patented an idea for a boat that would capture the American heart: the Falls Flyer. This “new, original and ornamental Design for Boats” was a sleek, stylish, modern, wooden wonder with an airplane-like body and cockpit. Most notable was its abbreviated transom, surrounded by a rear deck that sloped to the waterline — still the industry standard for high-performance recreational outboards. But this craft had something more. Rendered in wood and later, aluminum, the boat always had that intangible quality that arouses a boat-lover’s passion. Today, collectors reminisce about buying an early original, seeing one for the first time, or saving one from a snow bank. “I guess if you wish hard enough, your dreams can indeed come true,” wrote one collector. A lovingly restored Falls Flyer still can turn heads — and steal hearts — today.

Although the Falls Flyer was designed to emulate aircraft of its day, the compact shape, rounded lines, and responsive handling suggest a vintage roadster or sports car.

ted Apr. 15, 1941

Des. 126,588

April 15, 1941.

P. G. LARSON  
BOAT  
Filed Nov. 13,

Fig. 1



UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

126,588

DESIGN FOR A BOAT

Paul G. Larson, Little Falls, Minn.

Application November 17, 1940, Serial No. 96,485

Term of patent 14 years

whom it may concern:

Know all men by these presents, that I, Paul G. Larson, a citizen of the United States, residing at Little Falls, in the County of Morrison and State of Minnesota, do hereby certify that the following is a true and correct copy of the design for a boat, of which the following is a true and correct copy of the design, reference being had to the accompanying drawing, forming part thereof, and in

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a boat, showing a new design;

Figure 2 is a side elevational view of Figure 1; Figure 3 is a front elevational view of the boat;

and

Figure 4 is a rear view of the boat with the rudder and propeller omitted.

The characteristic features of my design reside in the portions shown in full lines.

I claim:

The ornamental design for a boat, substantially as shown and described.

PAUL G. LARSON.

Fig. 2



Fig. 3



## 1950s ▾

### FIBERGLASS CAME ON THE SCENE, AND LARSON QUICKLY REINVENTED ITSELF.

The new, space-age material — fiberglass — was stronger, lighter, and more watertight than wood. It could be molded into any shape the designer desired. In other words, it was perfect for Larson boats. The company stepped forward as a leader in applying fiberglass technology to pleasure boat manufacturing with the patented Rand Gun. And Larson emerged as a hot national brand name. In the 1950s, Larson introduced numerous flamboyant new designs, including the Cruisemaster, the Pla-Boy, and the Thunderhawk — a two-toned streak with a swooping sheerline and trademark tailfins. Larson also launched the fiberglass All-American line, undoubtedly the largest selling runabout model ever produced in the world. Although Larson stopped making the All-American in the 1990s, the memories it created for thousands of families will live forever.

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With its open rear cockpit and flat floor, the first 16-foot, fiberglass Larson All-American suggested the recreational roominess of today's popular deck boats.

## 1960s ▾

### WHEN AMERICA WAS READY TO PLAY, LARSON PROVIDED THE TOYS.

In 1967, the Little Falls Daily Transcript announced, "The future of the boat industry looks very bright as more lakes are opened, better accessible highways are completed and more families discover the pleasure of the outdoors." The boom in recreation led to an increased interest in boating. In this decade, the Larson All-American line was expanded, and several new hulls were introduced, including the lapline hull with its cushiony "Million-Bubble Ride," the deep V lapline, and the tri-hull. By 1969, Larson was the largest fiberglass runabout manufacturer in the world. The boom, and Paul Larson's retirement, led the company into also manufacturing skis, hockey sticks, snowmobiles, travel trailers, even pool tables and other home entertainment equipment. One Larson boat catalog happily exclaimed, "This year... have some fun!"

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The secret of Larson's success lay, in part, underwater. Sales literature emphasized the speed and smoothness of the ride, on uniquely designed Larson hulls.





1970s ▾

**LARSON**

## THE LARSON REPUTATION FOR STYLING NEVER FALTERED.

In the 1970s, Larson held onto its prominent position in the marine market, thrilling boat buyers with stylish details. Runabouts flashed onto the scene with metallic finishes. The new Cruiser Home featured a beautifully styled hardtop and "posh interior appointments." A 1972 day cruiser listed an 8-track stereo tape cartridge player as optional equipment. The "biggest and boldest" 1972 Larson of all, the Volero 217, boasted characteristic Larson qualities: "the response of a runabout, the comfort of a cruiser." Following its forays into other recreational markets, the company regained its focus on its historic strengths: boat design and manufacturing. This enabled Larson, by the end of the decade, to make a run toward the trailerable cruiser market, an important, growing segment of the recreational boating market.



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Boats from the 1970s illustrate the simplicity of design, the importance of color, and fold-down sunlounger seats, as well as the addition of large cabin cruisers to the line.

# 1980s ▾

## LARSON INTRODUCED THE PATENTED, NEW DELTA-CONIC HULL.



The Delta-Conic hull was a dream for cruisers. It had a deep-V forward section for sharp entry into rough waters. But its aft area had two large, delta-shaped sections for fast planing performance and significantly more stability. The new Delta-Conic line of cruisers, outboards, and runabouts was immediately successful, and ensured a record-breaking sales year in 1985. Larson continued production of the

All-American, and debuted more trailerable cruisers, sportabouts, and an expanded line of runabouts, including the high-style Senza V-hull series. Larson reached a further milestone with its first wide-body, nontrailerable cruiser, the luxurious 30-foot Contempra. Also in this decade, Larson was purchased by Minnesota investor Irwin Jacobs, and joined a conglomerate that became Genmar Industries.

## 1990s ▾

### LARSON AMERICAN DREAMBOATS BECAME THE STUFF OF LEGENDS.

The booming economy meant people wanted it all — luxury, speed, and versatility. A new ad slogan summed up Larson's well-deserved reputation: "A Little Bit of Legend. A Whole Lot of Fun." And Larson delivered, introducing new models and styling changes every year that reflected consumers' confidence, as well as Larson's mastery of recreational boat building. Large Cabrio cruisers were added to the line in 1991. New Escapade daycruisers were equipped for entertaining dockside or while underway. The SEi outboard boats were created as serious performance runabouts. While heart-pounding styling remained a priority, dependable Larson quality never faltered. A catalog description for the SEi line invited boat buyers to check the underside of the bow-seat cushions! Every surface was covered, every staple was hidden, and every fastener was stainless steel. From its founder, Paul Larson, the company learned early on that such attention to detail was what made a legend.

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The Larson LXi runabout series, was billed as "the lap of luxury." Of course, it also featured the get-up-and-go built into every Larson boat.





**TODAY** ▾

**EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING.**

Small wonder that this experienced little boat company from Little Falls should recently have a big impact on the industry. Again. After nearly a century of firsts, Larson Boats continues its heritage of pride and integrity in design and workmanship. In the year 2000, Larson began producing boats using a revolutionary new fiberglass technology. It's called VEC™. And its innovative, closed-mold approach results in boats built all in one piece — for a fiberglass part that's consistent and uniform throughout. Larson boats made using the VEC process are more durable, perform better, look better, and hold their value better. Explore this year's new Larson models, and see what a difference 90 years of experience can make. Of course as always, every detail is crafted to perfection. And the performance offers exactly what a Larson pleasure boat always has. Inimitable styling. Confidence. Speed. Ease. Comfort. In a Larson, the ride around the lake never felt smoother. Or more exhilarating. Welcome aboard the American dream, twenty-first century style.

 *LARSON*®