

Inventory for the

John G. Alden Collection

1909 – 2008

Overview: Plans, archival material, and photographs the yacht designer John G. Alden.

Creator: John G. Alden Company

Extent: 78 boxes and 7 drawers plans, 1.5 linear feet archives, and 1 box photos

Language: English

Identifier: 2009.011

Repository: MIT Museum, 314 Main St., Cambridge MA 02142

Conditions Governing Access: Open for research by appointment. Index available. Access may be restricted for unprocessed materials.

Copyright: Any copyright held by the John G. Alden Company is transferred to the MIT Museum.

Credit: John G. Alden Collection, Hart Nautical Collections, MIT Museum

Provenance:

This collection was donated by Tillotsen Holdings shortly after the John G. Alden design office closed in 2008.

Historical Note

John G. Alden (1884-1962) was a Boston-based naval architect known for designing sailing yachts that were comfortable, seakindly, and quick. Alden started his career as an apprentice to yacht designer B.B. Crowninshield, who designed some of Gloucester's racing fishing schooners, and supplemented with work with a few courses in Naval Architecture at MIT. He started his own yacht design business in 1909, which became famous in the 1920s after a few

of Alden's vessels won races to Bermuda. Sailing yachts made up most of the firm's business, though Alden also drew plans for commercial and military vessels in the 1940s and 1950s. Alden sold the business to some of his employees after World War II. The firm was later sold again to Tillotsen Holdings, but maintained the same address and design philosophy until it closed for good in 2008.

Scope & Content

The Alden collection contains nearly complete design records and some business papers from the John G. Alden Design Co. from its incorporation in 1909 to dissolution in 2008. Design records include a near-complete sets of plans, offsets, specifications, contracts, and lists of builder-supplied equipment for each yacht design produced. Similar material exists for merchant and military vessels designed by the Alden firm; these also often include calculations and other preliminary design work. Photographs of many completed vessels are included in the collection, also organized by design number. Company records are limited, but include records of expenses and profits, employees, general specifications, and lists of plans published during the Alden firm's lifetime.

The collection has been divided into five series, based primarily on document type and the Alden Company's filing system.

Series I. Plans

Series II. Indexes

Series III. Design data

Series IV. Archives

Series V. Photographs

A more extensive description of material in individual series is below.

Series List

Series I. Plans

Series I includes plans for both yachts and commercial vessels, organized by design number. In keeping with Alden's organizational scheme, plans are grouped according to the rig of the vessel depicted (sloop, schooner, powerboat, etc.). Lists of plans for specific designs are available on request.

Series II. Indexes

Series II consists of indexes kept by the John G. Alden Co. for its own boat designs.

Card Index A. Owners of Alden-designed vessels by design number

Card Index B. 1. Alden designs by owner's name

2. Alden designs by vessel name

3. Alden designs by rig

Box 1. Folder 1. All Alden designs by design number

2. Alden designs by vessel type

3. Alden designs by waterline length

4. Detail plans drawn by Alden

5. Preliminary Alden designs

6. Plans by other designers in Alden company archive

7. Inventory of plans by other designers

8. Photo negatives of Alden designs maintained by the company

Series III. Design data

Series III consists of data on physical and hydrodynamic properties of Alden boat designs, compiled by the Alden design office.

Box 1. Design data for Alden designs #75 to 1035

Series IV. Archives

The Alden archives include 37 boxes of design material and related office material. Among these boxes, 28 boxes are primarily yacht designs, 7 boxes are primarily military and commercial designs, and 2 boxes contain miscellaneous material.

Among the yacht designs, the material begins with design #14 and goes up to design #1248, with many omissions. Designs range from launches and daysailers to three-master schooners; a small number of designs did not originate with Alden. Some folders include material on multiple vessels built to the same design, often with modifications. The folders almost always include building specifications and often include design calculations. Folders sometimes include a small number of plans (often of details modified from the original plans); small prints of plans; sketches; photos; hull offsets; product information on components such as engines; correspondence with clients, builders, component manufacturers and others; design resources; results of trials; results of test tank research (after 1947); and stories in marine publications.

The military and commercial designs begin with design #313 and go up to design #994, with many omissions. Designs include fireboats, research vessels, cargo vessels, fishing boats, salvage vessels, harbor tugboats, rescue tugboats, tugboats designed for the Soviet Union during World War Two, ferries, Army barges and Coast Guard cutters. Most folders include material on multiple vessels built to the same design. Folders almost always include building specifications and calculations. Folders often contain plans, photos, trial data, hull offsets, correspondence and newspaper clippings.

Miscellaneous material includes account books from the early years of the company and brochures and correspondence with builders beginning in the 1980s. Historical material includes an obituary for Alden, a talk Alden gave at the Boston Yacht Club in 1954, vessel brochures, Cruising Club of America rule information, references to museum projects at Peabody-Essex Museum and Mystic Seaport, and a privately published book on the schooner *Wendameen*

Box 1. Historical material and yacht designs 14 to 160

2. Yacht designs, 161 to 262
3. Yacht designs, 273b to 318
4. Yacht designs, 319 to 367
5. Yacht designs, 367b to 419
6. Yacht designs, 421 to 482
7. Yacht designs, 483 to 567
8. Yacht designs, 568 to 644
9. Yacht designs, 645 to 695
10. Yacht designs, 696 to 759
11. Yacht designs, 761 to 828
12. Yacht designs, 828b to 863
13. Yacht designs, 863b to 895
14. Yacht designs, 896 to 916
15. Yacht designs, 917 to 932c
16. Yacht designs, 932d to 949
17. Yacht designs, 949 to 963
18. Yacht designs, 965 to 979
19. Yacht designs, 980 to 990
20. Yacht designs, 992 to 999, misc., B830, B837, P933 to P1113
21. Yacht designs, 1000 to 1014
22. Yacht designs, 1015 to 1033
23. Yacht designs, 1035 to 1042
24. Yacht designs, 1043 to 1180
25. Yacht designs, 1181 to 1215
26. Yacht designs, 1219 to 1248
27. Preliminary yacht designs, P1116 to P1138
28. Preliminary yacht designs, P1148 to P1240; tank test results

29. Commercial and military designs, 313 to 731
30. Commercial and military designs, 726 to 735
31. Commercial and military designs, 740 and 884
32. Commercial and military designs, 741 to 883
33. Commercial and military designs, 884 to 892
34. Commercial and military designs, 893 to 918
35. Commercial and military designs, 918 to 994
36. Correspondence with shipyards and builders
37. Historical materials

Series V. Photographs

Series V. consists of photographs and negatives of Alden vessels maintained by the Alden company. Photographs are grouped by media and size, but organized by design number.