

Jersey Sea Bright Skiff

As its name implies, the Jersey SeaBright Skiff originated in the nineteenth century as a fishing boat along the New Jersey shore. Small, relatively lightweight, and seaworthy, she made up a fleet of small boats that were launched from the beach and used for inshore fishing. Originally fifteen feet long and distinguished by their lapstrake hull, round bilge and short foredeck, they proved themselves capable of managing rough seas, repeated beach landings, and the rigours of the fishing industry. With their five foot beam, they could be either rowed, or sailed when outfitted with a spritsail and jib. Steering was often done with an oar, mounted through a notch in the transom in place of a rudder.

Eventually enlarged to seventeen feet long, the SeaBright also doubled as a lifeboat along the New Jersey shore, a heritage which continues today. With her narrow, flat bottom, round bilge, and high freeboard, the SeaBright was ideal for handling the rough seas, high winds, and necessary load-carrying capacity of a lifeboat, while being powered solely by oars. Other design features included an abundance of reserve buoyancy, reverse chine construction, and a sloping U-shaped transom, characteristics which contributed to her overall stability as both a fishing and lifeboat. The traditional SeaBright also featured a complete absence of keel, a necessary feature when it came to beach launchings and ease of rowing through ocean surf and rough seas.

Although a number of these wooden craft can still be spotted along the Jersey shore, they have largely been replaced by fiberglass versions which continue to be built and used as lifeboats today, a testimony to their excellent design. A handful of SeaBright Skiffs have also been owner converted to either motor craft, or sailboats using the traditional spritsail rig. This stable, durable craft, formed the foundation for the design of the innovative NorseBoat 17.5, combining the proven seaworthiness and spaciousness of the SeaBright Skiff with the modern concepts of light weight, an efficient rig, and modern construction techniques.