

Doing the Trail the Deblois Street Dory Way

BY CLINT CHASE

It was deep February and the wind and snow were pelting my basement window in 2009 as I finally sat down to draw the perfect Trail boat. I had been poring over *The Dory Book* by John Gardner and Sam Manning for years trying to find the right dory to build, yet the book inspired me to draw my own dory.

A traditional dory is an excellent choice for the Trail: It is easy to row and can sail, has a flat bottom for beaching, and is able to take quite a load of people or gear. But I wanted a dory that was updated specifically for recreational use and that a family could safely take on Trail outings.

Moreover, I wanted a dory that was lightweight, low maintenance, and could be built from a precut kit. What resulted that winter in my old shop on Deblois Street is the one and only Deblois Street Dory (DSD).

Built for Beaching

The DSD is 18 1/2 x 5 feet and weighs about 175 pounds. A traditional dory this size would weigh 300 pounds or more and be made of solid wood that can split and crack over time—not to mention leak a bit after drying out on land. The DSD is made of plywood with a fiberglass-reinforced bottom with a graphite-epoxy coating to take the abuse of a lot of beaching. The topsides are four 3/8-inch-thick plywood “strakes,” which are overlapped by about 1-1/8 inches and glued with epoxy.

The garboard may be fiberglassed, but the rest of the strakes are just coated in epoxy. Epoxy is both the glue that holds the boat together and a coating that makes the wood very durable and the paint job last a long time (5-10 years).

The interior is made up of three frames, each containing a thwart for rowing. At the frames in the bow and stern, there is a

below-sheerline deck. Under these decks there is foam for positive flotation. The DSD is easily driven by a sprit rig of 76 to 90 square feet. There is an option to add a mizzen in the stern. A mizzen is common on lobster boats to hold the bow of the boat into the wind. With a mizzen in a small boat, you can maneuver more

easily, back off a beach or dock, and heave-to as you switch from sail to oars or start the engine. And, of course, it looks beautiful.

Beginner-Friendly Construction

The DSD comes in a kit suitable for beginner boatbuilders. The plywood and solid

wood pieces (e.g., seats, gunwales, etc.) are precut and come with a thorough building manual full of photos and procedures. The kit comes with the epoxy and fiberglass supplies to get the hull built.

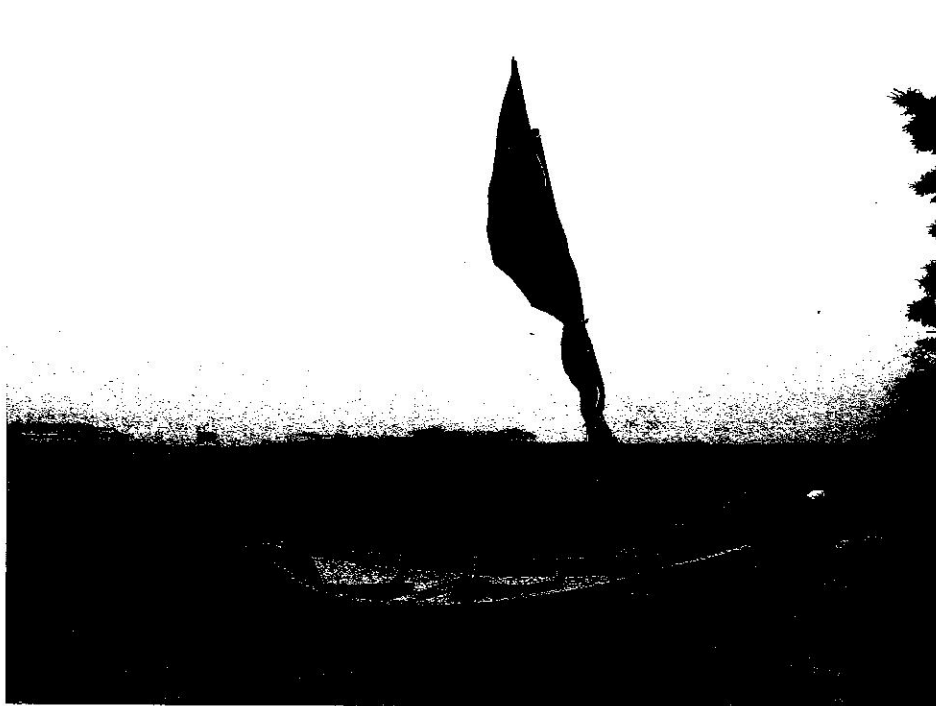
Part of the special design of this kit is that the hull is built just like a traditional dory is built. Dories are built

by setting up the premade frames, as well as the stem piece (bow), transom (the classic, “tombstone” shaped stern piece), and centerboard case, on the actual boat bottom in the upright position. This whole assembly is turned upside down and bent over a curved strongback included in the kit. Everything is braced, and the planking begins. Each plank is attached with screws and glue, planed by hand on one edge, and the next plank fits over it with a glued overlap.

After planking the boat, gather some friends, some cold adult beverages, and turn over the hull. A real dory is born! All that remains are the seats, decks, gunwales, and plenty of sanding and painting. A DSD kit can be built in 300-400 hours.

Rowing the DSD is a joy because she is light and tracks well due to a small skeg. Up to three people can row the boat using eight- and nine-foot oars that are carefully made to be light, balanced, and appropriate for this boat. A rower could maintain a three-knot speed for hours.

If I could only own one boat—and I hope that never happens—I would choose a dory for its simplicity and purity of form and function.



Lightweight and beachable, the Deblois Street Dory makes an attractive companion for the Trail. Photo credit: Shane Hall.

When you are ready to sail, sheet in the mizzen, raise the sail, and grab the sheets. She steers with lines or a tiller that connects to a yoke at the top of a rudder. A helmsman can sit on the aft seat with passengers on the forward seats; or, a seat can be removed to make room for people and gear. An easy-to-make, foil-shaped daggerboard gives her good ability sailing upwind. There is also a motor well option for mounting a two- or three-horsepower motor inside the boat.

So, the DSD rows, sails, and can motor for auxiliary power. Many miles can be made on the Trail in this boat!

Reports from the Field

Those who have built and used the DSD tell me she is a good choice for island hopping. They appreciate that she is easy to get on and off a trailer and can carry a sizeable load of people and camping gear.

But as with any boat, there are tradeoffs with the DSD. Especially if you are new to sailing, you may find this boat to be challenging to sail alone. Having a crewmate will also make the rowing go much easier.

If I could only own one boat—and I hope that never happens—I would choose a dory for its simplicity and purity of form and function. And when I am daysailing to MITA islands or cruising the Trail, the last thing I want is to dread having to row when the wind dies. I want a boat that is as pleasurable to move by oars as it is by sail or motor. And I want it to be a beautiful boat that can be built by a total amateur and used to explore the coast of Maine.

Based in Portland, Clint sells his own designs, as well as those of other prominent boat designers, as pre-cut do-it-yourself kits or complete boats. Two new Trail-friendly boats—Jewell and an outboard skiff—are in the works. Visit him online at www.clintchaseboatbuilder.com.



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