



Business History

Bunker and Ellis Boat Company

Boat Builders

Address - 265 Seawall Road

City – Southwest Harbor, Manset

State - Maine

Map and Lot: Map 17 – Lot 44

Original Owner:

Bunker - Raymond Adelbert Bunker (1906-1994)

Ellis – Ralph Fulton Ellis Jr. (1910-1994)

Later Ellis Boat Company

Raymond fished, captained boats and was a foreman / designer for Southwest Boat Corporation in Southwest Harbor before becoming famous in his partnership with Ralph Fulton Ellis Jr. as Bunker & Ellis Boat Builders. Raymond Adelbert Bunker died on January 13, 1994 in Southwest Harbor, Maine.

Southwest Boat Corporation

Before building custom boats Ralph Ellis made a living, as many did during the early 1900s on the coast of Maine, fishing and captaining boats for summer residents. But his life would change one night during a fateful game of pool at Jim's Place, in Southwest Harbor. Ralph Ellis and Raymond Bunker were at the pool table, passing time and conversing about small town issues. It is said that Raymond made the statement, "If I had a place to build a boat, I would do so instead of wasting my time playing pool." Ralph replied, "I have a shop, but I know very little about building a boat. If you wish, I will put my shop up against your know-how." That is all it took. As of that day in 1945, they were in a partnership that lasted for over 30 years.

Jim's Place

ME - SWH – Clark Point Road - 030

It is said that they were the first to use the term "Lobster Yacht" as a description of their boats.

Bunker & Ellis

"The bright (varnished) mahogany cabin sides that mark many of [the Bunker & Ellis] boats are perhaps their best-known feature. Several of them have gracefully curved windshield sides with the canvas top of an open "picnic boat." They all have an elegance of line and pass through the water with ease. "Their design was very functional," says modern-day builder Mac Pettegrow. "They were shaped to get the engines down low in the boat, not to break any speed records. Raymond's boats go real clean, but they're not fast – just comfortable and seaworthy." - "Maine Lobsterboats:

Builders and Lobstermen Speak of Their Craft” by Virginia L. Thorndike, published by Down East Books, Camden, Maine, 1998, p. 55

“Another character that I remember was Clare Klinkard. He was quite an old man, probably in his seventies, and he looked to me just like Foxy Granpa in the funny papers. Clare had the job to make stems for mine yawls. He had a little room all by himself where he worked away with his adze shaping stems. They were setting boats up pretty fast and the crew was calling for another stem. Raymond Bunker went to see if Clare had a stem ready. Clare thought he had one but couldn't find it as the crew had taken it already. Clare said, “I will have this one done shortly.” Raymond went down in the shop, got a piece of oak, marked out a stem from the pattern and sawed it out on the ship saw, sawing the shape to the sides, smoothing it with a plane and cutting the rabbet with his chisel. While Clare was at lunch he took it to Clare's little room and put it behind the door. After lunch Raymond went to see Clare and asked, “Have got that stem done yet?” Clare said, “Just a few more minutes.” Raymond turned around and said, “What's this here?” Clare looked up and said, “There I knew I had one all done somewhere.”

On one of the 60 foot draggers built at Southwest Boat, Sargent brought the plans to Raymond Bunker saying, “Here are the plans for the dragger we have to build.” About a week later Sargent brought the patterns for the parts, stem, deadwood, horn timber, etc. Raymond pointed to a pile of oak on the floor and said, “There are the keel parts all made.” He had put his crew to work, made patterns and got out the parts while Sargent was making the patterns.” - "Boatbuilding During World War II: MDI, Ellsworth, Stonington and Bluehill" - manuscript by Ralph W. Stanley - 1997, p. 9-10.

“Raymond Bunker built one of the first boats that Bunker & Ellis put out, working nights...”
It was a 32 footer, built as a fishing boat and sold to Lawrence Beal
- Ralph Stanley 05/11

“Although Raymond Bunker and Ralph Ellis built a score of working lobsterboats, the Southwest Harbor pair are better known for the forty or so pleasure boats they built on the same model. The boats are not only comfortable, well built, and seaworthy, they are elegant of line and pass through the water with ease. Traditionally, the pleasure versions were finished with gracefully curved windshield sides and a canvas top, and the houses were finished with bright-finished mahogany.” -

“Islanders: Real Life on the Maine Islands” by Virginia L. Thorndike, published by Downeast Books, 2005, p. 130.

According to the Ellis Boat Company web site, Before building custom boats Ralph Ellis made a living, as many did during the early 1900s on the coast of Maine, fishing and captaining boats for summer residents. But his life would change one night during a fateful game of pool at Jim's Place, in Southwest Harbor. Ralph Ellis and Raymond Bunker were at the pool table, passing time and conversing about small town issues. It is said that Raymond made the statement, "If I had a place to build a boat, I would do so instead of wasting my time playing pool." Ralph replied, "I have a shop, but I know very little about building a boat. If you wish, I will put my shop up against your know-how." That is all it took. As of that day in 1945, they were in a partnership that lasted for over 30 years.

Of the boats that were produced by Bunker and Ellis, most are still turning heads throughout the eastern seaboard. The beautiful lines and custom finish work in teak and mahogany are respected

and copied by many custom boat builders. Building only a few boats a year, their work was immaculate. It is said that they were the first to use the term "Lobster Yacht" as a description of their boats. (read less)

Kittiwake II – 1964

Shangri-La

Newman and Gray Boatyard – Great Cranberry

We recently completed a restoration on Shangri-La, a classic Bunker and Ellis 26' runabout.

Built in 1958 by Raymond Bunker, who was from Great Cranberry Island, the boat had been stored at Newman and Gray for 15 years.

She is historically significant because she is not only a Bunker and Ellis but the smallest boat that they ever produced.

Fancy Stuff was built in the mid-70's by Bunker and Ellis.
This was one of the seven boats known as the wide-bodies.
All seven were built as lobster boats.

The renowned Raymond Bunker and Ralph Ellis built 58 boats from the 50's through the late 70's. They built boats in many configurations, but mostly they first defined the name "picnic boat" with their beautiful soft-top cruisers. BELLATRIX, built in 1956, is one of their handsome creations.