

## Company Story

Henry B. Burger, "Sr." 1839-1907

To tell Burger's history and give it proper justice we must go back to 1846 when Simon and Margaretta Brauburger left their home in Bad-Homburg-Ober-Erlinbach, Deutschland and emigrated to the United States with their five children. A romantic could easily imagine that just perhaps the winds of that journey across the Atlantic Ocean had a most profound affect upon the youngest Brauburger... Henry, then 7 years old.

The Original Burger Shipyard, 1863

Upon arriving in the New World, the family shortened their name to Burger and established their home in Jeffersonville, Sullivan County, New York where they resided for about ten years. The upper Midwestern U.S., particularly Wisconsin, had become a desired destination for many Germanic Europeans as the region so closely approximated the climate and topography of the "Old World." In 1856, the Burger family relocated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin where a rather large contingency of German, Dutch, Norwegian, French, Polish and Scandinavian immigrants had settled. In 1857, at the age of 18, young Henry began honing his skills by apprenticing as a shipbuilder at Milwaukee's Wolf and Davidson Shipyard. In 1863, at the age of 24, he married Mary Esslinger, the daughter of a prominent German businessman from Manitowoc, Wisconsin, a small community on the shores of Lake Michigan some 80 miles north of Milwaukee. It was there and during that year in the midst of the Civil War that he began his own production of small, 20' - 30' Mackinaw fishing boats for the local commercial fishermen.

J.I. CASE - Schooner

His expertise and penchant for building extremely high quality vessels quickly became known on the Great Lakes. Between 1866 and 1869, Henry and his small group of merry boat builders built and launched the scow MENOMONEE, the schooner FLEET WING and the schooner S.A. WOOD. In 1870, during the heyday of wooden sailing ships, Henry B. and Mr. Greene-Rand consolidated their shipyards to form the Greene Rand, Burger Shipyard-building among many others, the schooners CITY OF MANITOWOC and J.I. CASE. This partnership continued until Mr. Rand's death in 1885.

LIZZIE METZNER &ndash; 80' Schooner, 1888

In 1886, Henry took his nephew, George B. Burger into partnership forming the Burger and Burger Shipyard and in 1887, envisioning the decline of new wooden sailing ships, they purchased the only dry dock in Manitowoc to begin a ship repair business. In 1888, the Burger yard launched the LIZZIE METZNER, an 80' three-masted schooner built of blue oak that had a cost of \$1200, a mere \$15 per foot. That same year, the 171' steamer PETOSKY, was launched defying all superstitions about Fridays being unlucky days for boats. The keel was laid on a Friday, she was launched on a Friday

and her maiden voyage was on a Friday. She was very successful, but met with ill fate in 1935 when she was destroyed by fire in Sturgeon Bay while being converted into a barge. In 1889 Burger launched CORA A, the last full-rigged schooner built on the Great Lakes and in 1890, built and launched the 201' ferry INDIANA for the Goodrich Transportation Company, the largest and by far the most successful passenger steamship company on the Great Lakes.

#### INDIANA &ndash; 201' Ferry, 1890

The combination of new construction and ship repair was the formula that made Burger prosper during the 1890's when many shipyards went out of business. There were no dry docks between Detroit and Manitowoc and none in Lake Superior,

#### Manitowoc Dry Dock &ndash; JOHN GREGORY

and at times there were eight to ten ships waiting to come in for repairs. The company also maintained a large wrecking tug, the JOHN GREGORY that often brought in profitable repair jobs. The yard boasted a 337' graving dock, which could handle vessels of 2000 tons. In addition, it had a set of boxes which would lift vessels of 350 tons and a large stock of spars and a spar derrick. Between 1870 and the turn of the century, the Burger brand name appeared on almost 100 vessels.... steamers, tugs, scows, schooners and barges. Without question, the name was synonymous with quality and craftsmanship.

#### Henry B. Burger, "Jr." 1863-1914

In 1902, Henry B. and George B. Burger, after almost 40 years in business, sold their shipyard to the Manitowoc Dry Dock Company, newly formed by John West, Elias Gunnell I and William Geer.

#### Ad for Manitowoc Dry Dock

This company has evolved into the current Manitowoc Company, world's largest builder of cranes and commercial ice makers. Henry B., then known as Henry Sr., retired but the Burger name continued in shipbuilding because ten years earlier, in 1892, nephew Henry Jr., also Henry B. Burger, formed a company in his own name, Henry B. Burger Shipyard, just across the river from his uncle. It is on this site and directly from this company that the current Burger Boat Company has evolved. Henry Jr. was very innovative and he was a true visionary. While he also began by building small sailing and fishing vessels, he quickly recognized the potential advantages of the newly developed gasoline engine. With engines being locally produced by Kahlenberg Brothers of Two Rivers, Henry Jr. began installing them in his launches. Their first motor launch was the 85' cruiser, VERNON JR. built for Vernon Siever of Chicago and launched in the spring of 1901. Within ten years, the company was building many 80,' 90' and 100' wooden cruisers and had established a reputation for building the finest custom motor yachts anywhere. When Henry died in 1914, his wife and four children, Henry C., George M., Walter and Caroline assumed ownership and management of the yards. In 1915, they incorporated as Burger Boat Company and it prospered.

#### WWI Subchaser 330, 1917

During the war, there was tremendous destruction of allied shipping, together with a shortage of steel and the development of extremely sensitive magnetic mines; this led to a revival of and strong demand for wooden vessels. Between 1914 and 1920, the company's tremendous reputation for wooden shipbuilding was such that the U.S. Navy ordered nine vessels.... wooden minesweepers, subchasers, tugs and rescue craft. Burger also built thirteen 90' wooden tugs for the U.S. Army Emergency Corps. The years following WWI saw many large luxurious wooden cruisers and some sailboats built for the civilian pleasure market.

#### TAMARIS &ndash; 81' Ketch, 1938 First All-Welded Steel Auxilliary Ketch

However, technological developments spurred innovation. With the advent of electric arc welding, Burger developed techniques for the construction of an all welded steel hull for pleasure crafts. In 1938, Burger built the country's first all welded steel auxiliary ketch, the 81' TAMARIS. The competition hooted, calling them "tin cans." The laughter soon died; however, as yachtsmen began praising the massive strength of the "tin cans" versus wooden hulls and the market boomed. This new technology helped the company survive the depression years of the thirties by building steel gill net fishing vessels. It proved to be a far more practical item than luxury yachts. Burger started another trend that gained immediate popularity when, in 1940, it launched the first flush deck cruiser, the 65' PILGRIM. To this day, PILGRIM plies the waters of Lake Michigan and the Door County region of Wisconsin.

#### PILGRIM &ndash; 65' Cruiser, 1940

WWII began and the U.S. Army and Navy ordered 55 vessels over a five-year period. Utility craft, steel tugs, crash boats, rescue boats, minesweepers and sub-chasers slid down the ways in rapid succession. After the war, Burger devoted its efforts to producing pleasure boats. Luxury cruisers and auxiliaries were built and a line of custom and semi-custom yachts were introduced in 1949. In 1951, the Navy once again ordered seven craft, two 138' wooden minesweepers and five 170' wooden minesweepers. This brings the total number of military vessels produced by Burger Boat Company to eighty-four.

#### WWII Minesweeper

1952 brought another major innovation. Because of Burger's long reputation for building America's finest yachts, the company was approached by the Reynolds family of Reynolds Metals Company to work on an experimental hull utilizing the new alloy.... aluminum. With the development of MIG and TIG welding, the collaboration produced America's first all welded aluminum vessel, the 36' cruiser VIRGINIA, in 1955. In 1957, the first all welded aluminum, shoal draft, centerboard yawl, the 58' DYNA was built for Mr. Clayton Ewing. Designed by Sparkman and Stephens, DYNA was the first yacht built in the Great Lakes to win the 635-mile biennial Newport to Bermuda race finishing in 5 days, one hour 40 minutes and 34 seconds, a course record. She went on to win many races establishing numerous records due to weighing 8600 pounds less than a comparable wooden hull and 10,000 pounds lighter than a comparable steel hull.

#### ARARA III &ndash; 125' Motor Yacht, 1977

In 1959, the company was reorganized. The son of President Henry C. Burger, Henry E. Burger, became president and George M. Burger, who was Vice-President stepped aside for his son-in law, Elias Gunnell II. Eli's father was President

of Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company and the inventor of the rivet gun among many other inventions. Caroline continued as Secretary-Treasurer and oversaw accounting. The company became Burger Boat Company, Inc., and the first decision unanimously made by the new board of directors was to end sailboat construction. Steel yacht construction also ended in the early 1960's and the company focused on the design and construction of luxury aluminum motor yachts. The heyday of flush decks, cruisers, houseboats, raised and semi-raised pilothouse motor yachts continued through the sixties, seventies in into the eighties. The company worked with such notable naval architects as Sparkman and Stephens, J.B. Hargrave, C.Raymond Hunt, and Don O'Keeffe. 1977 saw the launching of the largest fully found aluminum yacht ever built in the U.S., the 125' ARARA III. She was built as a corporate yacht for Illinois Tool Works and has since been extended to 130'.

WINDRUSH &ndash; 91' Raised Pilothouse Motor Yacht