



Paying Attention to Detail Or Why Does My Boat Look So Goofy

By Sherwood Heggen

I realize that everyone has a style or method in doing their restoration or building. It follows their personality, but regardless of who you are, it is important to do things correctly to have a great looking finished product. With that, let's consider paying attention to some of the little things in boat restoration. Seeing issues regarding detail on boats that come through my shop causes me to wonder what the previous owner/restorer was thinking. If their mind had been on details, the boat would have had looked so much better.

With that in mind, the following is an assortment of flaws regarding detail on boats that frankly bug me, especially when it is so easy to do right. Just thought I would put it in print to get it off my chest.

Hardware screws

Hardware is held in place with screws of many different kinds and sizes. It is important to know that pre-war boats did not have Frearson head screws; they only had slotted-head screws as Frearson screws had not yet been invented. If it is to look correct, a Phillips or Frearson just doesn't make it. Post-war boats

used Frearson screws, not Phillips. There is a difference in appearance to the discerning eye, and also to the screwdriver used to install them. The Frearson has a crossed slot that has sharp corners at the intersection which doesn't fit a Phillips screwdriver. Although a little pricey, Frearson head screws are available from classic marine suppliers. Also, oval head screws are the correct type to fasten down hardware. Using a flat head slot where an oval Frearson

belongs looks rather out of place.

Screw diameter and length are also important. Holes are provided in the hardware for the screws to fasten it to the hull. The hole is sized to accommodate a certain size screw. The shoulder of the screw should be flush with the surface of the hardware when installed which gives the hardware a nice finished appearance. The length of the

screw is determined by where the screw is going and what it is holding down. If it is securing a vent on a deck plank, a short screw is sufficient. If it is securing a cleat, a longer screw is important to withstand the stress it could be exposed to by mooring lines or fenders. Using screws that are so long they come out the other side of the plank is not acceptable.

Installing screws for deck hardware should be handled meticulously. Don't crank down on the screws until the driver spins out of the slot and hacks up the screw slot. It creates a burr that catches on clothes and cleaning cloths. Use a little finesse when snug-



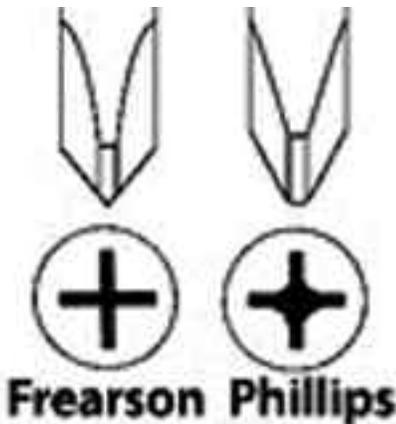
ging down the screw that last little bit. Don't forget to line up

the slots in the slotted screws. The slots should be parallel to the edge of such hardware items as rub rails, transom bands, cutwaters, etc. On deck hardware, the slot should be running fore and aft.

Oh, one more thing. Don't use steel screws anywhere in a boat! They rust and screw up the wood into which they are screwed. Stay with silicon bronze or stainless steel.

New deck planks

Installing new deck planks is a good idea to freshen the appearance of a boat. Trying to save old cracked and battered planks is often more work than it is worth. When new wood is chosen, it is important to get wood that matches the old wood around it. You all might have seen a plank replaced with light colored wood on the side of a boat that says the restorer didn't pay attention to detail. It appears as a big light colored stripe and that is all that attracts your attention. Another bad idea is replacing deck planks with wood that doesn't match in grain pattern and color. For example, the grain pattern and color on a run-about aft deck should be consistent from the front of the hatch to the transom.



Frearson Phillips



Any mismatch creates a patch work quilt appearance. If any wood is to be replaced on only one side of the deck, it is important the grain pattern and color match what remains on the other side. Doing so gives the deck an appearance of symmetry.

When installing new deck planks, obviously new holes must be drilled to accept the screws to hold the planks in place. It is very important to use a drill bit of the same diameter, or slightly larger, than the screw shank to drill those holes. Trying to drive a screw too big for the hole through the new wood will stress the wood around the hole. This is particularly a problem regarding holes in the ends of deck or topside planks. Stressing the wood will likely cause a split from the screw hole to the end of the plank. Also, turning the screw too tight can cause undue pressure on the hole and, again, split the plank.

Boat appearance

There are many things that make a boat look bad even though they may seem insignificant.

Here are some don'ts:

Don't use silicon bath tub caulk in the deck or bottom seams. There is great marine caulking available designed for the purpose of filling seams.

Don't bed your deck hardware in caulking. Use a little caulking in the screw hole for the screw holding the hardware is okay to seal the hole from water, but not necessary.

Don't use letters and numbers intended for mailboxes for the license numbers and name for your boat. Tacky – tacky. Sign shops can design anything you want for letters and numbers.

Don't let the width of the deck seams get out of control when repainting them. The original seams were less than 1/8" wide. If they are too wide, the attention is negatively drawn to the seams.

Don't use plexiglass to replace a broken windshield. It just plain looks cheap. Bring the broken one to a glass shop and have them cut a new one out of safety glass. When replacing the glass, use new windshield gasket in the brackets and trim off the excess with a sharp razor blade flush with the edges of the bracket.

Don't use flags and pennants too small or too large for the size of the boat. The same goes for bow and stern poles. Anything but the correct size will stand out as odd.

Don't put carpet on the floor boards of your boat instead of rubber flooring or linoleum. Oh, please!

Don't cut holes in the dash and ceiling boards to install a radio and speakers! There are better options available today if you need music while boating. And, why wouldn't you want to hear the music of a well tuned engine instead?

I think you get the idea of paying attention to detail. Be proud of your wooden boat. Make people envious of what you have rather than scoff at a beat up looking old boat. It isn't that hard to do it right. It reminds me of my industrial arts teacher years ago who would chastise his students by saying, "If you can't do it right, don't do it at all." More diplomatically put is to say "Anything worth doing, is worth doing well".

I hope you are involved in restoration or maintenance of your woody. If you want to run some problem past me for an answer, I am willing to help you with what I know or pass it along to a network of people I have.

**You can reach me at
715-294-2415 or Heggensj@Centurytel.net.
I would love to hear from you.**



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