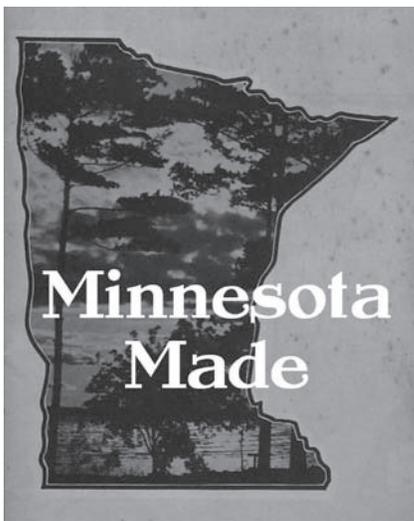


# Slayton Fiberglass Boats

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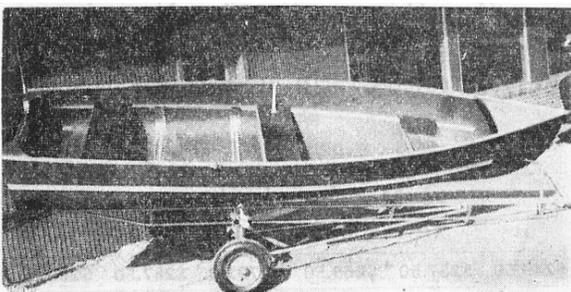


The “Slayton” brand of boat is virtually unknown. Its name was unfamiliar to this author until

recently. For a short time in the 1950s the small Minnesota prairie town of Slayton was home to a boat manufacturing concern.

Art Olson was affiliated with John Lysdale’s Pipestone Sales Company. Pipestone made metal television towers, called Strato towers, along with airplane crop sprayer tanks. The towers were from 40 to 70 feet in height. Olson and five workers were making the same products at Slayton under an agreement with Lysdale.

Olson began experimenting with fiberglass in early 1954. By May that year he had built four reinforced fiber plastic boats of fifteen-foot length. Two had been sold and another one was spoken for by a customer. Art designed and made the wood plugs used in the manufacturing process of the molded boats. Several of the boats were being used on nearby Lake Shetek in the summer of 1954.



1955 Pipestone, built in Slayton, sold by Pipestone

According the *Murray County Herald* newspaper of April 07, 1955, fiberglass boat hulls were being molded at Slayton by Olson’s firm. The hulls were then shipped to Pipestone where Pipestone Sales Company installed aluminum keels and ribs along with seats, trim, and hardware. The fourteen and sixteen foot boats were sold by Lysdale’s Pipestone Sales Company. Sixty

watercraft were built from February 15 to April seventh in that year. About five boat hulls were being produced by Olson’s five man crew at Slayton each day. Twelve hours curing time was required for each fiberglass hull. Olson was aided in his boat building by his son Ray Olson along with Don Conway, and Wayne Olson.

The local business leaders of Slayton pooled their efforts and on August 2, 1956 they established “Limit Products, Inc.” The corporation was a for-profit industrial development firm which planned to bring industry to the town. Boats were their first product. By this time, Pipestone was molding their own hulls and they no longer needed Art Olson’s talents. Olson became the technical head of Limit Products with Mel Risting as president and A.D. Weck as secretary-treasurer. George Marsh, Stan Nording, and Paul Mettling rounded out the initial board of directors. Fifty thousand shares of common stock at \$1.00 par value each were authorized. \$11,000 worth of stock had been sold by November 1956. Factory space was secured at the former Andy Herdman used parts company on south highway 59.

The first “Slayton” boat made by the new enterprise was tested in late August. The runabout was of complete fiberglass construction “with no wooden fixtures or accessories.” (*Murray County Herald*, August 30, 1956, page 1).

Slayton boats were displayed at Northwest Boat Show in Minneapolis in October 1956. Two fishing boats and two runabouts complete with windshield and steering were on exhibit.

With Pipestone Sales Company now completely on their own, Limit Products turned to a Detroit Lakes, Minnesota boat works to fit out their hulls (could it have been Ole Lind Boatworks?). The first load of eight fishing boats headed out of Slayton in November 1956 with four workers on the payroll.

In January 1957 Art Olson departed the boat firm and Marlow Samp was named production manager. He had been working closely with Olson for more than a year, he was a good choice to replace him. Seven workers were building boats and



a goal of 500 boats was projected for the 1957 season.

Fifty boats had been sold by March 1957 and another 50 were completed and in storage at that time. Demand exceeded production capacity and expansion became necessary. Additional capital was required and another stock sales campaign commenced.

Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman came to Slayton on July 23, 1957. One of his stops was to view products of the boat works. The governor sat in one of the runabouts and commented "nice boat."

**The Boat of Tomorrow - Today!**

THE  
*Chieftain*

The Chieftain is designed for maximum interior room, high stability and ease of handling in all conditions. The full length inside aluminum keel with the three quarter length fiberglass hulls moulded as one piece of the boat make the Chieftain the finest handling boat on any lake — trolling or high speed.

Seating arrangement can be varied in the Chieftain. Inside illustration shows the special model. In the standard model the seats cross the boat in the same manner as those shown in the Warrior. The Chieftain is very stable and well constructed and is a wonderful family unit. It is truly designed for a lifetime of boating pleasure.

SPECIFICATIONS:		Deck Length	62"
Length	15'	Weight	484 lbs.
Depth of Deck	21"	Factory Recommended Load Capacity	950 lbs.
Depth Amidships	24"	Maximum Factory Recommended Motor	40 H. P.
Depth of Cockpit	21"		
Width of Deck	30"		
Width of Transom	56"		

Equipped with All Aluminum or Fiberglass Decking

1956 Pipestone, built in Slayton

- Orville Bremer's first job at the age seventeen was with Slayton Boats. He was one of five to seven workers making boats under the direction of Marlow Samp. "It was a small crew and we all did everything to make the boats. I did plenty of rolling of the fiberglass." He was at the boat works for a little over one year. "Most of what we made were sport and ski boats. We built a few fishing boats, but not many." said Bremer. He continued, "I bought one of the boats and used it for about ten years. It had a nice ride and was very maneuverable because of the keel."
- Art Olson returned to Slayton later in 1957. On September 24, 1957 the boat operation was recapitalized and the name became "Slayton Boat Industries." This entity was incorporated on January 2, 1958 with officers: O.E. Klasse, president; V.K. Buckles, vice president; R.F. Pierson, vice president; and A.D. Weck, secretary-treasurer. Marlow Samp was a director. Olson along with Stan Nordin, Marlow Samp and Alden Ford took two Slayton

boats to the Missouri River near Yankton, South Dakota in December for testing.

- The Slayton boat enterprise came to a crashing end on Wednesday March 18, 1959. A fire started just before noon and an hour later the entire factory was destroyed. Marlow Samp noticed the fire in the paint room, telephoned the fire department, and the fire burst up so quickly that he was unable to grab his jacket before running out of the inferno. Dr. R.F. Pierson, one the officers, owned the building. Initial estimates put the loss at nearly \$100,000. Five workers were employed and molds for new models had just been completed. Fire departments from Slayton, Currie, and Fulda fought the blaze. All buildings, tooling, molds and patterns, equipment, and inventory were lost. A number of violent explosions occurred during the conflagration as barrels of flammable materials ignited.
- Orville Bremer had left the company prior to the fire; therefore he was not witness to the event.
- The boat firm had been struggling; however prospects looked better for 1959. An order for thirty fishing boats had been received the morning of the blaze. With boat sales at an all time high in the United States, Slayton Boat Industries had hoped to get a portion of those sales and become stable.
- Intense debate took place in the ensuing days after the disaster. Should they rebuild, find temporary quarters, or abandon the enterprise? In the end, the numerous stockholders were unwilling to invest more funds. The Slayton Boat Industries met an untimely death.
- There are no known pieces of literature, brochures, or advertisements that exist today. The only photos known are those that were published in articles in the *Murray County Herald* newspaper of Slayton in 1956 and 1957. The original photos and negatives were destroyed many, many years ago.

