



SWEET PEA's builders can choose between an easily stowed sprit rig with 45 sq ft of sail and the 59-sq ft leg-o'-mutton that is used for several other Bolger/Payson designs. The mast and sprit are made from 8' closet poles, 1 1/8" and 1 1/4" in diameter.

only a couple of frames, an internal deck structure, and plywood planking with fiberglass-taped seams.

Have you ever rowed a peapod designed specifically for the task? If you haven't, imagine a wide, hefty canoe built ruggedly like a boat, and fitted with thwarts, foot stretchers, and oarlocks. Imagine a hull that slides wakeless through the water like a fine-lined ocean shell yet has enough freeboard to provide both psychological and actual seaworthiness in foul conditions. Imagine a rowboat with enough oomph to take you across the mouth of Penobscot Bay in a smoky sou'wester or through the Cape Cod Canal no matter how strong the tidal current might be. Imagine, then, how I felt when I asked Dynamite if I could borrow SWEET PEA after she was finished and take her on a coastal rowing tour, and he said sure, why not, somebody has to try her out.

So at the end of May last year, during one of those weeks in the spring that make you forget there had ever been a winter, my wife and I hauled SWEET PEA down to an ironbound point in Boothbay and launched her into the harbor. What a delightful little boat! Her flat bottom made her easy to launch and retrieve; her sharpness forward and aft allowed taking the waves breaking on the shore from either end; her removable and adjustable seats made loading the boat a snap.

Does she have capacity for a rowing tour? Consider what we had on board: A pair of 8' oars and bronze oarlocks, plus spares of each, box compass, bailer, sponge, charts of the area, anchor, anchor rode, seat pad, two life jackets, docking fenders, spare rope, grease for the oarlocks, binoculars, camera, foul-weather gear, two duffles with clean clothes, books and magazines, knitting supplies (Eileen's), ditty bag (mine), lunch box, water bottle, a few cans of beer, and a bottle of Ben's fly dope—all we needed for several days of coastal inn-hopping.

Since we wouldn't be sailing, we left behind the sailing rig, as well as the Bolgerian keel, the one mounted with tongues in the wells, forward and aft. The one thing we didn't bring, and should have, was a skeg for the stern to give the boat more directional stability. As it was, however, SWEET PEA tracked reasonably well and, on the positive side, turned on a dime. Plant the inside oar, take one pull on the outside one, and she spun right around. With a skeg or, better still, the sailing keel, she would be perfect for straight, long-distance runs down flatwater rivers. In my mind I can see her on the Kennebec, the Connecticut, the Mississippi, the Shannon in Ireland, the Loire in France.

Our route, though, was around Boothbay Harbor, Linekin Bay, and some of the offshore islands. SWEET PEA fit the bill for that admirably. She was easy to pull, simple to maneuver, and dry in what little rough water we encountered. What's more, her side decks were in just the right position for spreading out navigational charts. Great for beer cans, binoculars, and Ben's fly dope, too. She flew with a following wind and tidal current, made good progress into the teeth of it without pounding, and had enough bearing to keep from blowing sideways in a beam wind and sea.

I have never sailed SWEET PEA, so I can't comment on her sailing abilities. But as a rowboat, especially as a coastal and open-ocean rowboat, she makes great sense. If I were to build my own, the only change I would make is in the design of the seats; they work, but they're too nontraditional-looking for my taste. Rather, I'd install fixed thwarts. Then I'd paint her dark green on the outside and buff on the inside, run a manila rope guard around her rail, keep her permanently on a trailer, and explore the waterfront from here to Kingdom Come.

—PHS