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_launching through the surf Traveling Exhibit Panel 07: Pacific City Dories_

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Launching Through the Surf: The Dory Fleet of Pacific City

From the earliest settlers to today’s fishers and women, adaptability and innovation have molded the lives of the Pacific City fishers and their boats. The dories of Pacific City have evolved from the double-ender boats rowed on the Nestucca River and later into the ocean to the motorized and technologically advanced square-stern dories of today. The images in these panels reflect some of the innovations in the evolution of the PC dory.

The advent of the square stern revolutionized the dories of Pacific City. If you ask people who built the first square stern, you are likely to receive ten different answers. Diana Sears states that Bill Sears and his brother “had a Calkins Craft square stern, with an 18hp motor” in 1950. Howard Kellogg mentions building a “single-ender” with a “lift-up well in the Motor” in 1955. So far, no additional information about these dories has been located. Fred Vojta and Stan Kephart built the Texan II in 1957/58 and the Texan IV in 1959. Some contend that these were the first “modern” square-stern dories. In the early 1960s, the square stern became the standard design for the PC dory. Although much is known, the history of the early square-stern dories is still unsworn.

What is a dory? The answer is not simple. Since dory builders and fishers adapt the boats for local conditions and their individual styles, many versions of the dory “co-exist.” The Pacific City Dory, also known as the PC or Kiwanda Dory, evolved from the New England Swampscott, Banks, Gloucester, and other North Atlantic dories.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, the standard dories of Pacific City were planked double-enders powered by oars with a compass for navigation. With the addition of gas motors to the fleet in the mid-1930s, small box wells were added to 12 to 24-foot planked double-ender boats to accommodate the engines. In 1947, the first tiller-type poles were added to commercial boats. In the mid-1960s, the first plywood dories appeared and till wells were added eliminating the process of stitching and detaching the motor inside the hull. Cotton hand lines with small lead weights replaced hand-held rods and reels, which had been banned for commercial fishing. By the late 1950s and early 1960s square sterns began to replace double-enders and rowing during launching and landing was replaced by engine power. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, fiberglass of wooden dories and molded fiberglass boats appeared. Consoles were added, providing a space for electronic gear and a helm for steering. Hand-crank gurdies with wire placed with hydraulic systems. From the CB radio to cell phones and from LORANs to GPS systems, PC dory fishers continue to incorporate new technologies and innovative designs in their dories.