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# Leaving the land to set sail

Cleopatra sailing down the Nile, Greek and Roman ships exploring the ancient Mediterranean, Viking explorers menacing the seas of northern Europe, Christopher Columbus' attempt to sail around the world, Britain's epoch of naval superiority - from truths to legends, from courageous captains to one-eyed pirates singing "yo ho ho and a bottle of rum," stories of the sailing and the seas permeate the history and cultures of the world.

Millions of boats crafted thousands of ways have carried people afloat the earth's waters. Starting from the simplest of floating logs, boat design has evolved over the centuries to complexly rigged, multiple-mast sailing ships.



*The annual Eggehmoggin Ranch Race in Maine every August attracts classic boats, some 100 years old.*

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# The evolution of sailing

Until the onslaught of steam boats and railroads in the 19th century, getting people and goods from one place to another usually involved sailing, rather than horses or any other mode of transportation. But sailing for pleasure enjoyed far less favor than sailing for commerce. It was the wealthier companies that could afford the cost of purchasing a sailboat and hiring qualified people to safely take the boat from port to port.

Sailing for pleasure was an expensive hobby that only the rich could afford to participate in. Those that had enough money to sail for recreation didn't always make ideal sailors. Many accounts have been documented of well-to-do families perishing at sea when the weather unexpectedly turned bad.

*With a spear at one end and a broad blade at the other, a paddle could be used for propulsion and hunting.*



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# Sailing the wind today

Sailboat design has changed only slightly from ancient times to the 1800s. If a sailor from the 19th century could travel back in time to an ancient Roman ship, for example, he would recognize enough of the rigging and gear to pitch in and pass as part of the crew.

With the number of people sailing for pleasure burgeoning, boat designers changed their focus from building on tradition to developing better designs, methods, and materials. Even so, the early pleasure boats remained heavy because the primary construction material still was teak and other wood. Only within the last 50 years have modern materials produced lighter boats that require less maintenance.



*Racing and sailing magazines and other sponsors organize hundreds of sailboat races throughout the world.*