

# Pearson 35

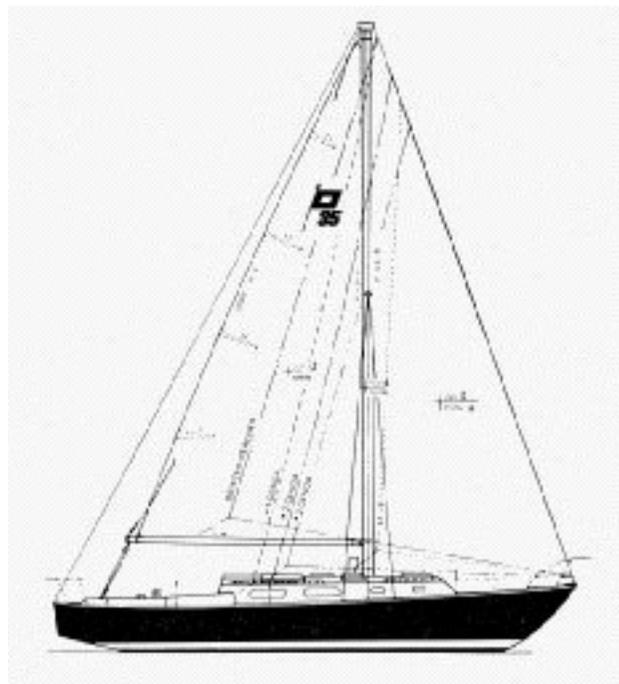
***Rugged, versatile and handsome, the Pearson 35 has held her value well over the years.***

Even to those of us who had begun serious sailing in that era, 25 years ago seems like history. *Finisterre*, a beamy centerboarder by the standards of the time, with a yawl rig, had won a remarkable three straight biennial Bermuda Races at the end of the 1950s. In 1964 another relatively beamy centerboard yawl, a Pearson Invicta, won again. It was the beginnings of an era of shallow wide boats that not only sailed through a gaping loophole in the popular rating rule of their day but also offered interior space unavailable in the typically narrower, deeper boats that preceeded them.

Thus, in the mid-1960s when Pearson Yachts sought to replace in its line the venerable but “old fashioned” Alberg 35, it chose to do so with a centerboard 35-footer. Retaining the traditional long overhangs, modest freeboard, curved sheer and moderate displacement, Pearson’s in-house designer Bill Shaw put together the Pearson 35.

The 35 was introduced in 1968 and remained in production for the next 14 years. In all, 514 P35s were built, almost all for East Coast and Great Lakes owners attracted by the 35’s shoal draft (3’ 9” with centerboard up) and “classic” proportions. Even the popular Pearson 30, usually heralded as the enduring boat from a builder otherwise noted for its frequent introductions of new boats and short production runs, remained in production only 10 years, albeit with almost 1,200 boats built.

Equally remarkable during an era when builders were quick to make regular changes to existing boats in concert with their marketing departments (and affix a “Mk” whatever to designate changes), the 35 remained essentially unchanged. A yawl rig continued to be an option and the original dinette layout was replaced by a traditional settee layout, but otherwise the most significant changes were the variety



## Specifications

LOA .....	35' 0"
LWL .....	25' 0"
Beam .....	10' 0"
Draft .....	3' 9"/7' 6" (board up/down)
Displacement .....	13,000 lbs.
Ballast .....	5,400 lbs.
Sail area .....	550 sq. ft.

of auxiliary engines used over the years. Thus in talking about the Pearson 35 we can talk about 14 years of production all at once.

## A Close Look At The Boat

The success of the Pearson 35 was no accident. Like the Tartan 27, the Alberg 30, and its Pearson predecessors the Alberg 35, Vanguard and Triton, the P35 gave a broad spectrum of sailors the type of boat they were looking for: traditional design, contemporary styling, solid construction, and eminently livable space both in the cockpit and belowdecks. And those same qualities continue to make the Pearson 35 a highly sought after boat on the used boat market almost 25 years later.

Introduced in the midst of the how-many-does-

she-sleep era and, with that, the convertible dinette fad, the 35 boasted six berths, only three or four of which promised comfort. It took a number of years but the discomfort of the dinette/double berth combination became evident and the small upper berth became shelf space. Remaining have been the good sized forward V-berths and a reasonable transom (pull-out) berth in the main cabin. In the mid-1970s a pull-out double berth replaced the dinette although it remained better as a single berth with the boat capable of sleeping a total of four without crowding.

Excessive berths notwithstanding, the 35 has a livable interior. However, note that it does not have a navigation table, the galley tends to interfere with the companionway, and the head is small by modern standards. We do not consider any of these shortcomings serious.

Although the interior is more spacious than the average boat of her era (but less so than 35-footers nowadays), perhaps the strongest appeal of the 35 is her cockpit. By any standard old or new it is big (over 9' long), comfortable, and efficient, equally suitable for sailing or dockside entertaining, especially with wheel steering and a sloop rig to leave it uncluttered by tiller or mizzenmast. The lack of a quarterberth results in sail lockers port and starboard as well as a usable lazarette.

Below, the decor is strictly functional with a fiberglass head and hull liner and lots of Formica, a plastic enactment of the typical decor of the 1970s.

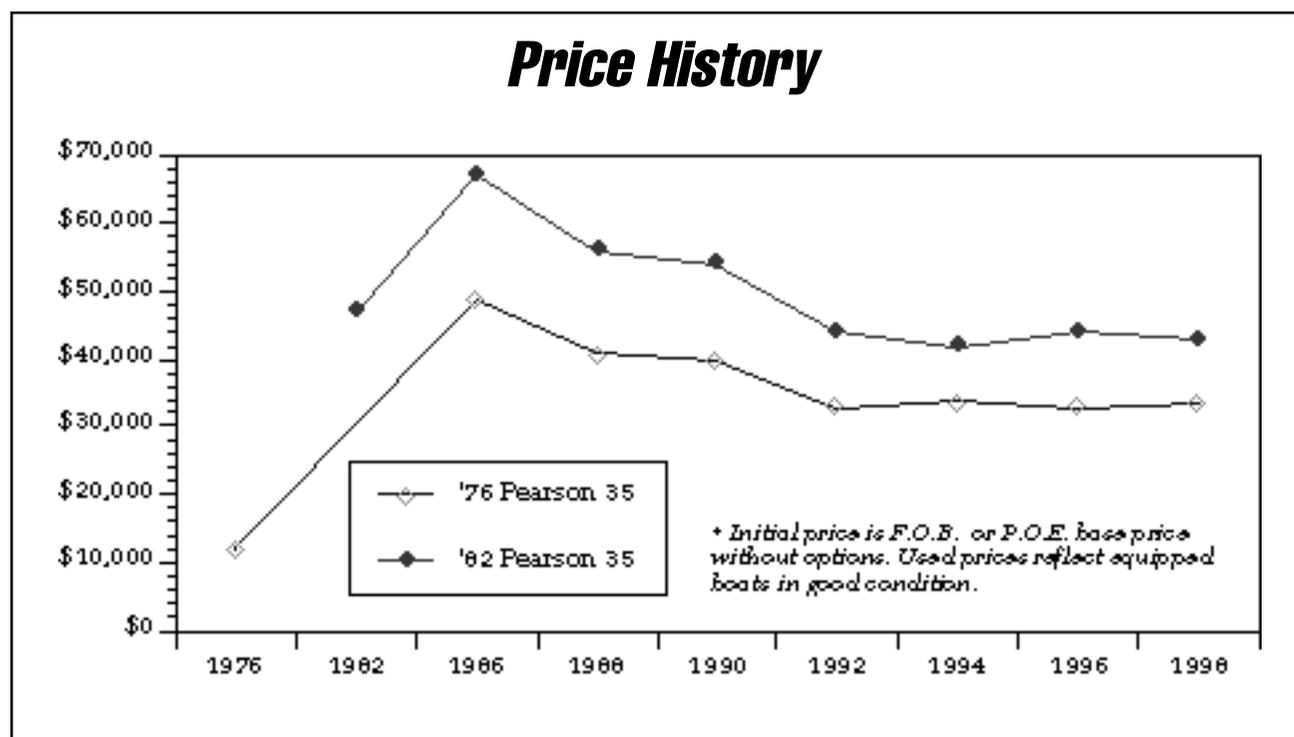
The performance of the Pearson 35 is moderately

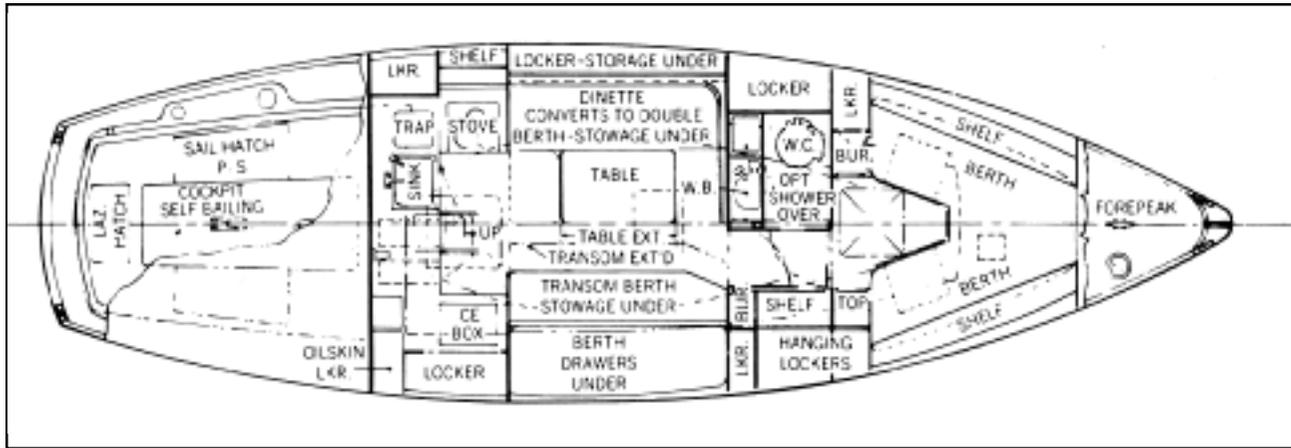
good (average PHRF base rating, about 180). Like many moderately beamy boats with full keel and low aspect sailplan, she quickly picks up a weather helm as she heels. However, the combination of adjustable centerboard and judiciously shortened sail makes that helm only inconvenient, not annoying, especially if the 35 is equipped with wheel steering. She tends to be at her worst in lighter winds, particularly when seas are sloppy, at her best on a close reach in at least moderate winds, then she feels fast, solid and seaworthy.

Owners report no lack of confidence in the 35, either in her strength or performance, in storm conditions. However, the size of the cockpit is a serious drawback in heavy seas offshore.

The original engine in the 35 was the Universal Atomic 4, about the largest (and heaviest) boat for which that engine is suitable, with the prop in an aperture. By 1975 the Farymann diesel became an option, followed by a variety of Westerbeke and Universal diesel engines. Accessibility to the Atomic 4 was marginal; for the diesels it became next to impossible, prompting the most common owner complaint about the boat: retrofitting a diesel to replace the Atomic 4 is difficult.

The 35 would never be mistaken for a motorsailer, given her succession of modestly powered engines. It would be a shame to further saddle her mediocre light air performance with the drag of a three bladed prop to improve performance under power; backing down will always be "an adventure," as one owner deems it, regardless of engine or prop.





The spars and rig of the 35 are workmanlike. Owners of yawls extol the opportunity to “get anywhere in anything” with jib and jigger. However, with slab reefing we’d opt for the sloop rig. Sail area is not so large that it cannot be worked even with a shorthanded crew, and “modern” conveniences such as roller jib furling and roller travelers make the task even more feasible.

As a further aid, several owners report having fitted their 35s with an inboard staysail, in effect a double head rig, but the short foretriangle base (“J”) of the 35 would seem to militate against much effectiveness from that rig except in extreme conditions.

## What To Look For

With the few changes in the Pearson 35 during her long production run, any basic faults with the boat were soon cured in the earliest models. There seems to have been few even of these. Indeed, the 35 is structurally a rugged vessel. As a result, buyers in the market for a 35 should concentrate on the effects of age on particular boats. Following is a sampling of the problems owners report:

- The aluminum ports, fiberglass hatches, and through deck fittings such as stanchions and chainplates are prone to leaking. So too on occasion does the hull-to-deck joint. These are largely annoying rather than serious and no more so than any boat of the vintage of the 35.
- The centerboard boat definitely has appeal, but with that appeal goes difficulties of maintenance including that of the pennant and pivot. Any survey of a prospective purchase should include a thorough inspection of the board, trunk, pivot and pennant. Incidentally, some owners report having permanently pinned the board up (and wedging them to prevent thunking), but we’d think twice before both compromising windward performance and control of balancing the helm by such a move.
- Gelcoat crazing is a common complaint, although most owners have learned to endure the disfigure-

*Originally, the Pearson 35 had six berths. Eventually someone must have listened to reason and altered the layout, adding some welcome storage space instead.*

ment while enjoying the rest of the 35’s aesthetic qualities. Bottom blistering seems about average for 10+ year old production boats.

- The rig is the typically rugged one that Pearson is noted for, and its problems are apt to be largely corrosion and age.
- Check the condition of the auxiliary engine with the help of a professional. The same goes for the fuel tank. Major repairs or replacement are not easy.

## Conclusions

If we were looking for a Pearson 35 we would spend our time checking out those built from the mid-1970s and later but not, if price were an object, one of the last ones built. We would want one with the “standard” (not dinette) accommodation plan, a sloop rig, and a diesel engine, preferably a Westerbeke. Cosmetic abuse would not bother us particularly; the basic quality of the boat lends itself to refinishing with polyurethane outside and even extensive refurbishing inside. A number of owners report upgrading of the interior with woods, fabrics and fittings, reducing or eliminating the formidably antiseptic fiberglass liner and “teak” faced laminate on the bulkheads.

The degree that the Pearson 35s have retained their value—and seem destined to continue to do so—has to impress any potential buyer faced with the prospect of paying a high price for an older boat. And on this score, make no mistake; a vintage Pearson 35 in good condition has become one of the more expensive used boats of her type and original price on the market. For the kinds of use she is best suited for—coastal cruising for up to four—she is a rugged, versatile, and handsome craft for which there should continue to be a healthy market for many years to come.

• **PS**