

WILLIAM FIFE III / HENRY B. NEVINS 40 FT R-CLASS SLOOP 1925/2024



Specification

FIFI

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Designer	William Fife III	Length waterline	26 ft 5 in / 8.05 m	Engine	Bell Marine DriveMaster 10 kW Electric
Builder	Henry B. Nevins, City Island, New York	Beam	7 ft 3 in / 2.2 m	Location	Italy
Date	1925	Draft	5 ft 9 in / 1.75 m	Price	USD 190,000
Length overall	39 ft 8 in / 12.1 m	Displacement	5.9 Tonnes		
Length deck	39 ft 8 in / 12.1 m	Construction	Mahogany on oak		

These details are provisional and may be amended

Specification

BROKER'S COMMENTS

Designed by Fife of Fairlie, Scotland, and built by Nevins of City Island, New York – yacht design and build pedigree doesn't get much better. When Larchmont Yacht Club member Harry L. Maxwell decided to join the burgeoning mid-1920s Long Island Sound Universal Rule R-Class fleet, his Ulster-Scots ancestry took him to William Fife III for the design of FIFI and he had her built relatively locally by the perfectionist, Henry B. Nevins. During seven summers of hard class racing, and many more as a performance cruiser-racer that's a lot of fun to sail, FIFI's pedigree stood her in good stead. The inevitable later life deep restoration in current ownership means that FIFI enters her second century as strong if not stronger than her first, and as beautiful as ever.



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Specification
REFIT/ RESTORATION

2022-2024 SANREMO, ITALY

- All bottom planking removed and replaced traditionally
- Silicon bronze screw fastened
- All new wood floors
- Hull was reinforced, including repairs to several broken timbers

- Cockpit completely rebuilt to original drawings
 - Installation of the electric propulsion system
-

Specification
HISTORY

WILLIAM FIFE & SON YARD NO. 735

A family fortune accrued from two fundamentals in the development of the USA – railroads, and the Portland cement that built the Panama Canal and the Empire State Building among many other projects – funded Henry “Harry” L. Maxwell’s yachting life. Of Ulster-Scots origin and soon to be Commodore of Larchmont Yacht Club, in 1924 Maxwell turned to ‘the old country’ for the design of a racing sloop to join Long Island Sound’s burgeoning Universal Rule R-Class for the 1925 season.

FIFI was to be one of only two built designs to the American Rule by William Fife Jr, though one wonders how many he doodled, especially in later life when the J-Class size band became all the rage. And, if her designer’s name isn’t enough pedigree, the build by one of America’s finest, Henry B. Nevins of City Island, New York, is the icing on the cake. That FIFI is a rare survivor of the class says much about Fife’s excellent wood engineering, and the renowned build artistry of Nevins. Whether or not Nevins built her exactly to Fife’s scantlings may never have been established, but patently he built her well – now more than a century ago.

Despite the 1920s USA advance of the relatively heavier and more expensive European metric classes (Maxwell owned one of the Starling Burgess/ Abeking & Rasmussen 12-Metres, ISOLDE, from 1928) with their attraction for potential international competition in exotic places, racing in the R-Class on Long Island Sound remained strong through the mid to late 1920s, their sensible cost allowing experimentation particularly in rig aerodynamics.

Maxwell raced FIFI for a season, but he had a lot of boats to race, including the Herreshoff New York 40 BANSHEE, and his R-Class campaign may not have been fully focused; from 1926 he concentrated on BANSHEE. On reporting FIFI’s sale in February 1926 to Pawtucket, Rhode Island textile manufacturing executive Isaac B. Merriman, also owner of the New York 50 BARBARA, the New York Times hailed FIFI as a fast boat.

Somehow, Merriman’s plans changed (maybe he also owned too many boats), and it was New York stockbroker and New Rochelle Yacht Club member George P. Granbery who raced her from 1926 through 1928 - and perhaps got the best out of her. In 1929 FIFI was raced in the Long Island Sound R-Class fleet by L.B. (or L.E.) Marvin, and in the 1930 and 1931 seasons by William A. Kirk.

Although the R-Class continued thereafter to have a class start, at least in the major Long Island Sound regattas, into the very early 1930s, FIFI’s activity and ownership becomes a little harder to trace after 1931, but there is no doubt that this pedigree, sporty boat was used, loved and looked after, because she survived in commission to be recognised as something special when the ‘wooden boat revival’ came about late 1970s to early 1980s.

Roger Marshall owner her in Massachusetts c.1938-1952, at some point she was BOW-WOW, and from the late 1950s to 1985 Gerald Shaffer gave her much TLC at Groton, Connecticut as the lightly modified fast cruiser SCURRY.

From 1985 at Gloucester, Massachusetts, wooden boat disciple Ernie Morin Jr gave SCURRY much hands-on, life lengthening love and cruised the New England coast extensively, including in 1989 attending the first and perhaps only East Coast USA William Fife rally at Mystic Seaport Museum along with the post-WW2 Fife designed, Fairlie Yacht Slip built NYATONGA and MADRIGAL II.

In 1994, ownership transferred to Jim Ross of Bar Harbor, Maine, who restored her R-Class features – the glazed house and deeper cockpit – and sailed her as FIFI again ‘Down East’ for 24 years.

FIFI’s present owner purchased her laid up at Bar Harbor in 2021 and she arrived in Italy in the spring of 2022. She has been impressively and thoroughly restored and upgraded as described elsewhere here, and achieved podium places at the Antibes and Cannes regattas in 2024 and 2025. Once a race boat, always a race boat!

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Specification
RACING RESULTS

Cannes Régates Royales 2024

- 3rd in Class

Specification
CONSTRUCTION

- Carvel planking
 - Oak timbers
 - Bronze screw fastened
 - Oak floors bronze bolt fastened
 - Bilge stringers bronze bolt fastened
- Beam shelf with full length clamp
 - Bronze plate hanging knees and deck strapping at mast and companionway

Specification
DECK LAYOUT, EQUIPMENT, AND GROUND TACKLE

- GENERAL

 - Sheathed and painted marine plywood deck
 - Varnished mahogany coveringboards, toerail and superstructures
 - Bronze hardware
- FROM AFT

 - Flush ensign staff socket
 - Bronze stern light
 - Bronze screw-in vent cowl with aperture cover
 - Raised, varnished mahogany lazarette hatch
 - Boom crutch
 - Mainsheet horse
 - Ash mainsheet blocks; padeyes
 - Tiller
 - Cleats port and starboard
- COCKPIT

 - Varnished mahogany coamings
 - Lower coaming aft
 - 4 x Seats; stowage space under
 - Access aft to lazarette
 - 4 x Bronze AIS 25 sheet winches on wood plinths (2024)
 - 4 x Associated cleats
- SIDE DECKS

 - 2 x Jib sheet tracks at covering boards
- VARNISHED MAHOGANY TRUNK CABIN

 - Bevelled glass glazed sides
 - Sliding companionway hatch
 - Washboards; top one with 'Fife dragon' vent
 - Bronze opening port to port
 - 2 x Bronze AIS 25 halyard winches (2024)
 - 4 x cleats
 - Varnished mahogany hatch forward
- MAST POSITION
- FOREDECK

 - Deck prism
 - Bronze screw-in vent cowl with aperture cover
 - 1 x Mooring cleat on centreline
 - 2 x Mooring fairleads
 - Spinnaker pole stowage teak chocks to starboard

Specification
ACCOMMODATION

- Sideboards port and starboard of companionway; fiddled tops
 - Bronze opening port to port
 - Gimballed oil lamps port and starboard
 - Deckhead lights port and starboard over sideboards
- Settee berths port and starboard with cushions
 - Shelves outboard
 - Bevelled glazed house sides
 - 2 x Bronze ports forward
 - 1 x Deckhead light forward of mast

Specification
RIG, SAILS, AND CANVASWORK

- RIG

 - New sitka spruce rig to original drawings
 - by WoodSpars, Locmariaquer, France (2024)
 - Hollow mast
 - 2 x Sets of spreaders; upper set as 'diamonds'
 - Spruce boom
 - Spruce spinnaker pole
 - Custom bronze and stainless steel fittings
- SAILS

By One Sails (2025)

 - Mainsail
 - Genoa
 - Jib
- 7 x 19 Stainless steel standing rigging (2024)

- All running rigging from 2024

- Spinnaker pole track and fittings

By Sailorware (2023)

- Mainsail
- 2 x Genoa's
- Reacher
- Spinnaker
- Gennaker

CANVASWORK

- Mainsail boom cover

Specification

PROPULSION AND ELECTRICAL

PROPULSION

- Bell Marine DriveMaster 10 kW electric motor (2023)
- Volvo type rubber shaft seal
- Shaft and propeller - specs to follow
- Minimum speed: 0.1 knots
- Maximum speed: 7 knots
- 40 hours use

Batteries:

- 2+2 x 48 V DC Li-Fe battery banks 100 Ah each; total 400 Ah
- battery management system
- stowed in stainless steel cases forward of mast

Charging

- 2 x NOCO 20 Ah units; total charging rate 40 Ah

ELECTRICAL

Specification

SAFETY

- 1 x Electric bilge pump

- 1 x Manual bilge pump

Specification

OTHER EQUIPMENT

- Custom galvanized steel cradle
- Cradle suitable for sea shipping

- Fenders
- Mooring lines

Disclaimer

These particulars have been prepared from information provided by the vendors and are intended as a general guide. The purchaser should confirm details of concern to them by survey or engineers inspection. The purchaser should also ensure that the purchase contract properly reflects their concerns and specifies details on which they wish to rely.

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Specification
GALLERY





SANDEMAN
RESTORATION OF CLASSIC & VINTAGE YACHTS
YACHT COMPANY

Michael C. J. *Chris*
PHOTOGRAPHY

Jamal Robinson Taylor



 **SANDEMAN**
ESTABLISHED IN 1988
YACHT COMPANY

Jamie Robinson Taylor

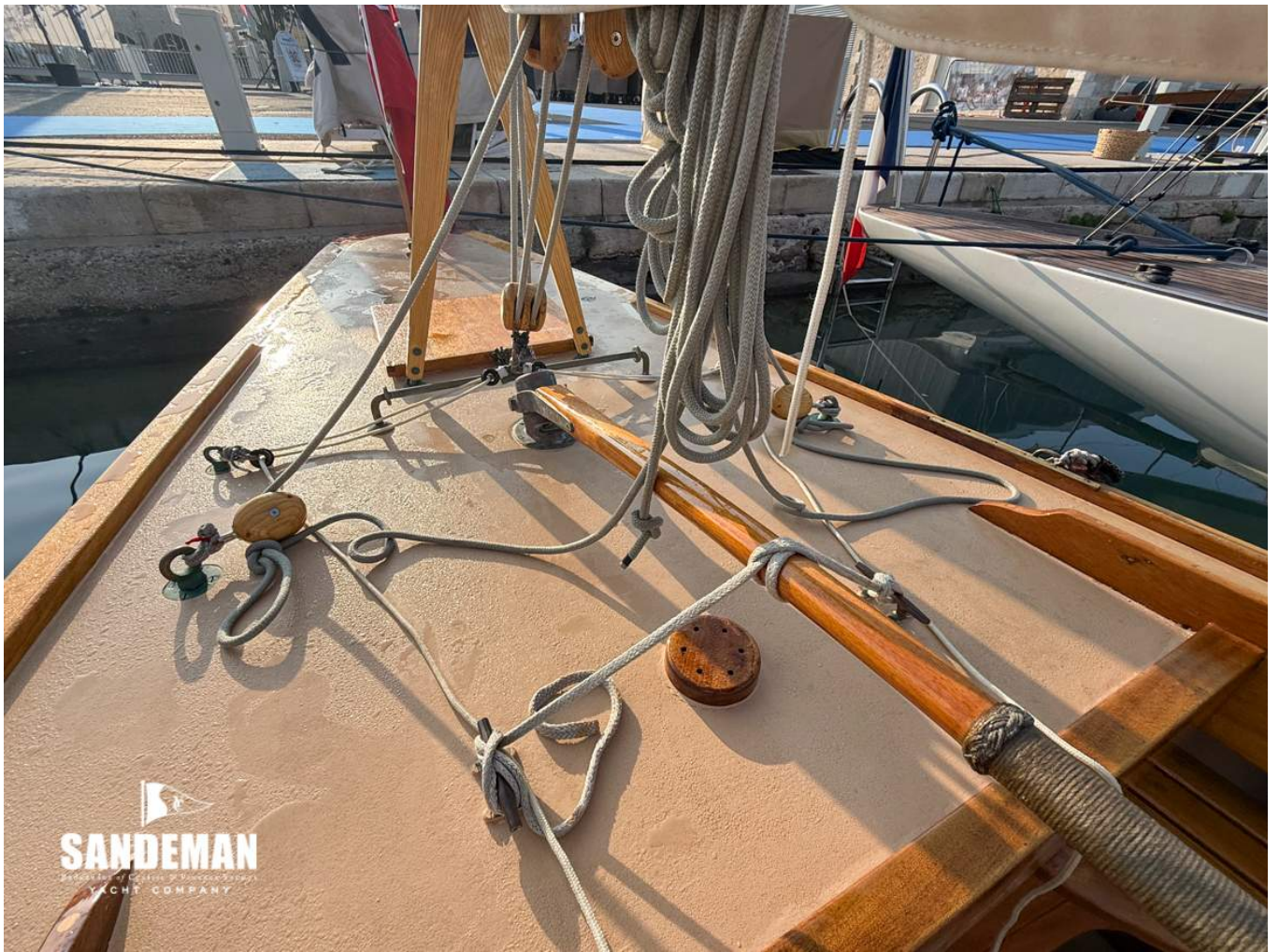


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BOATWORKS OF CLASSIC & TRADITIONAL YACHTS
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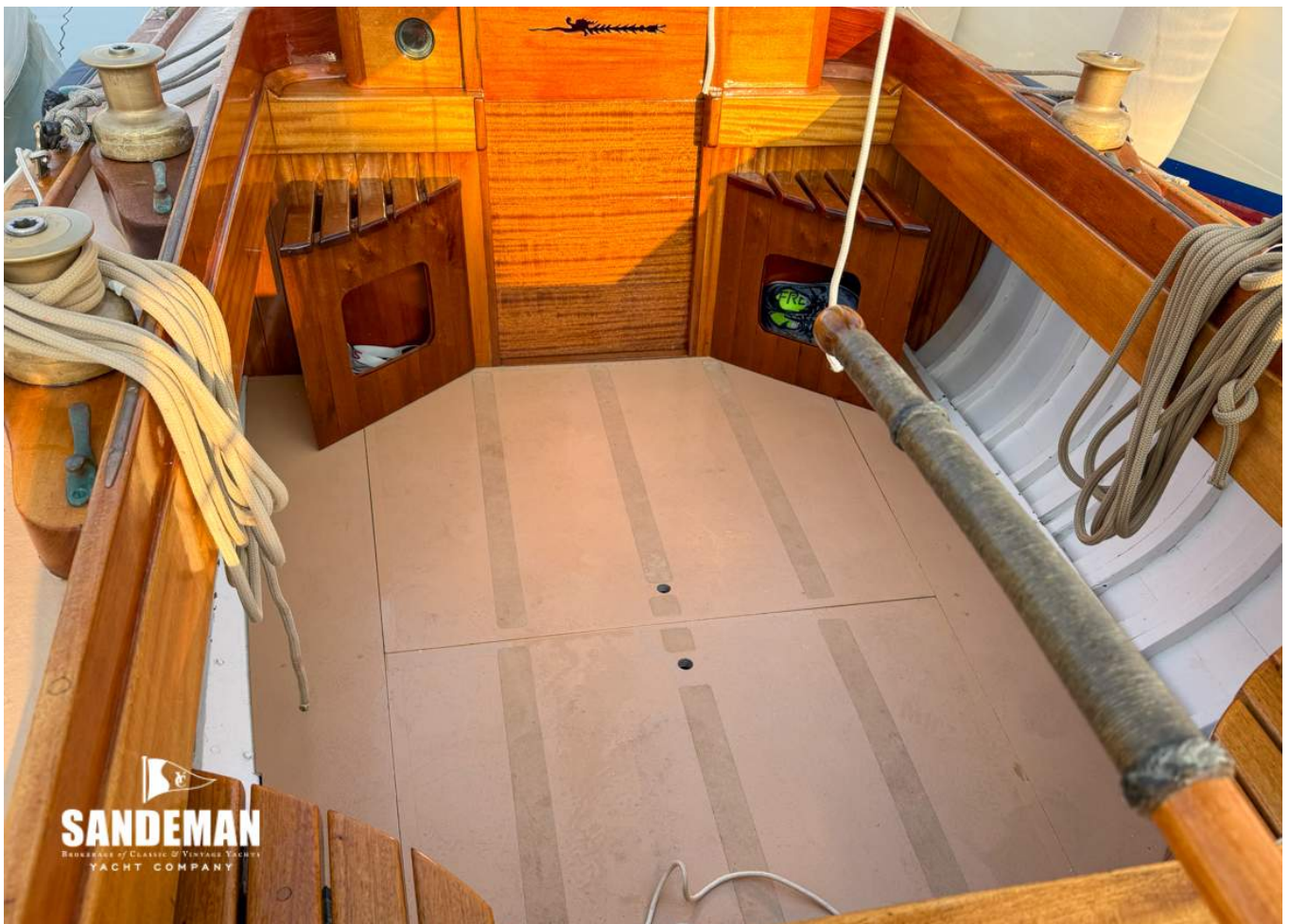





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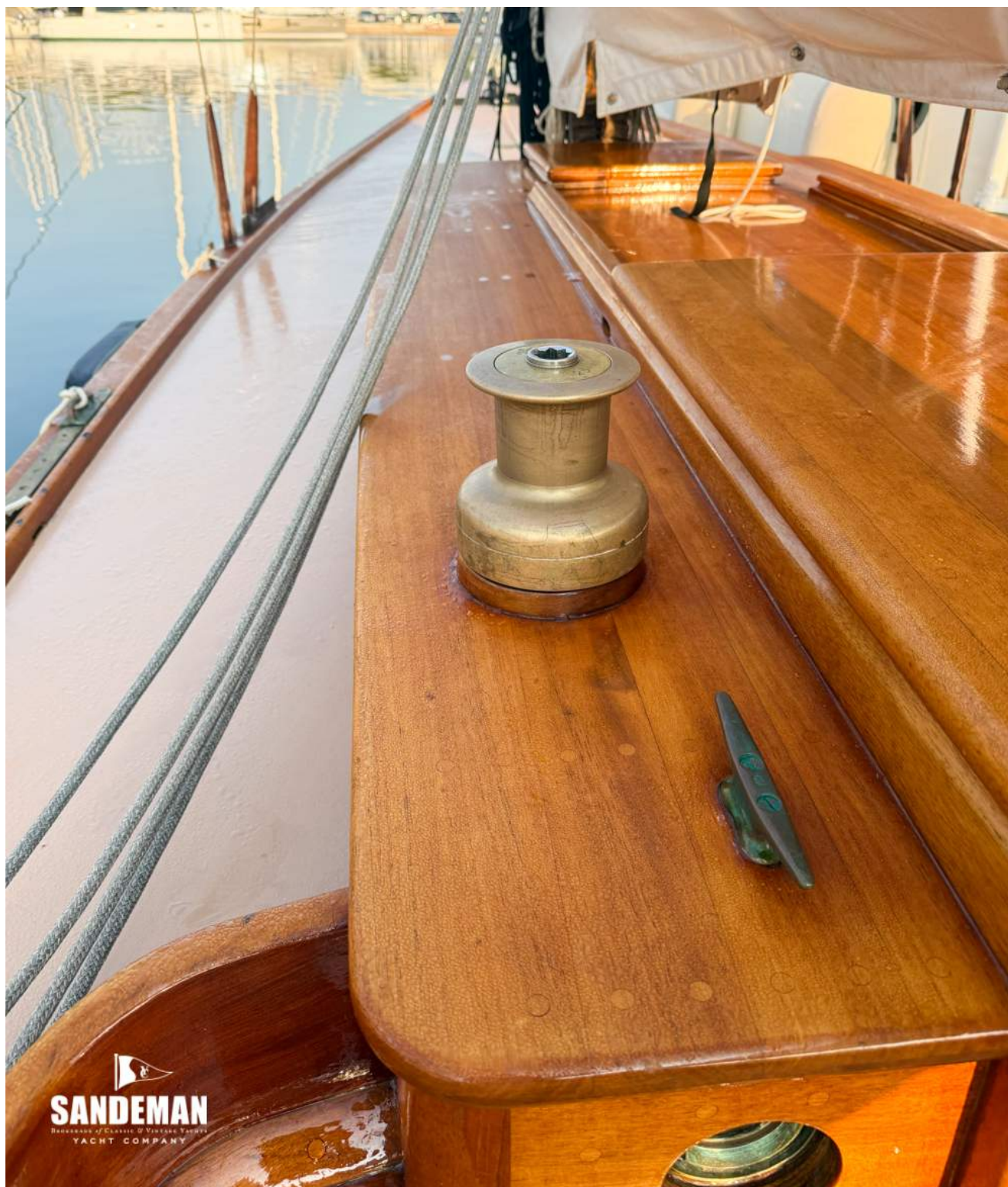







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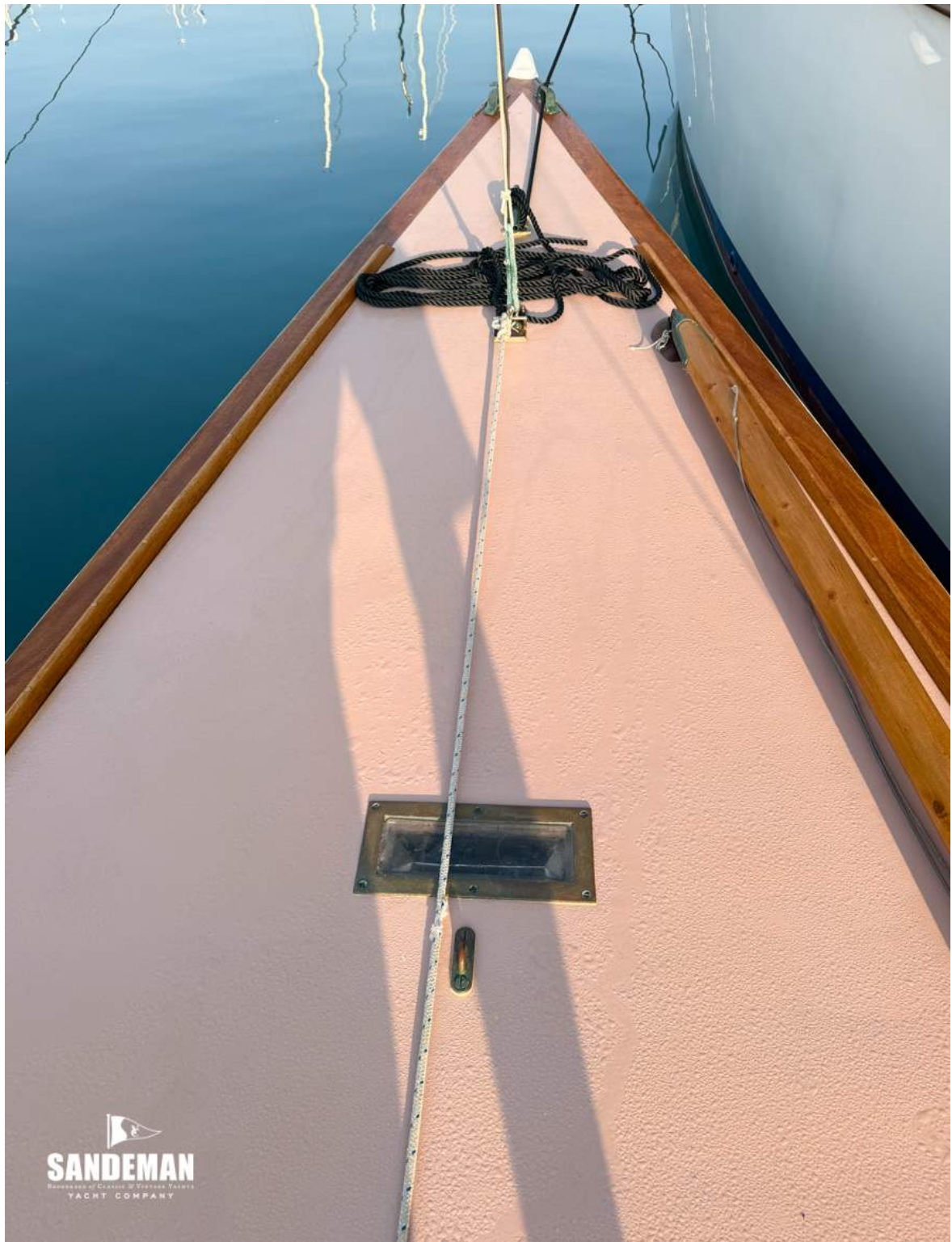


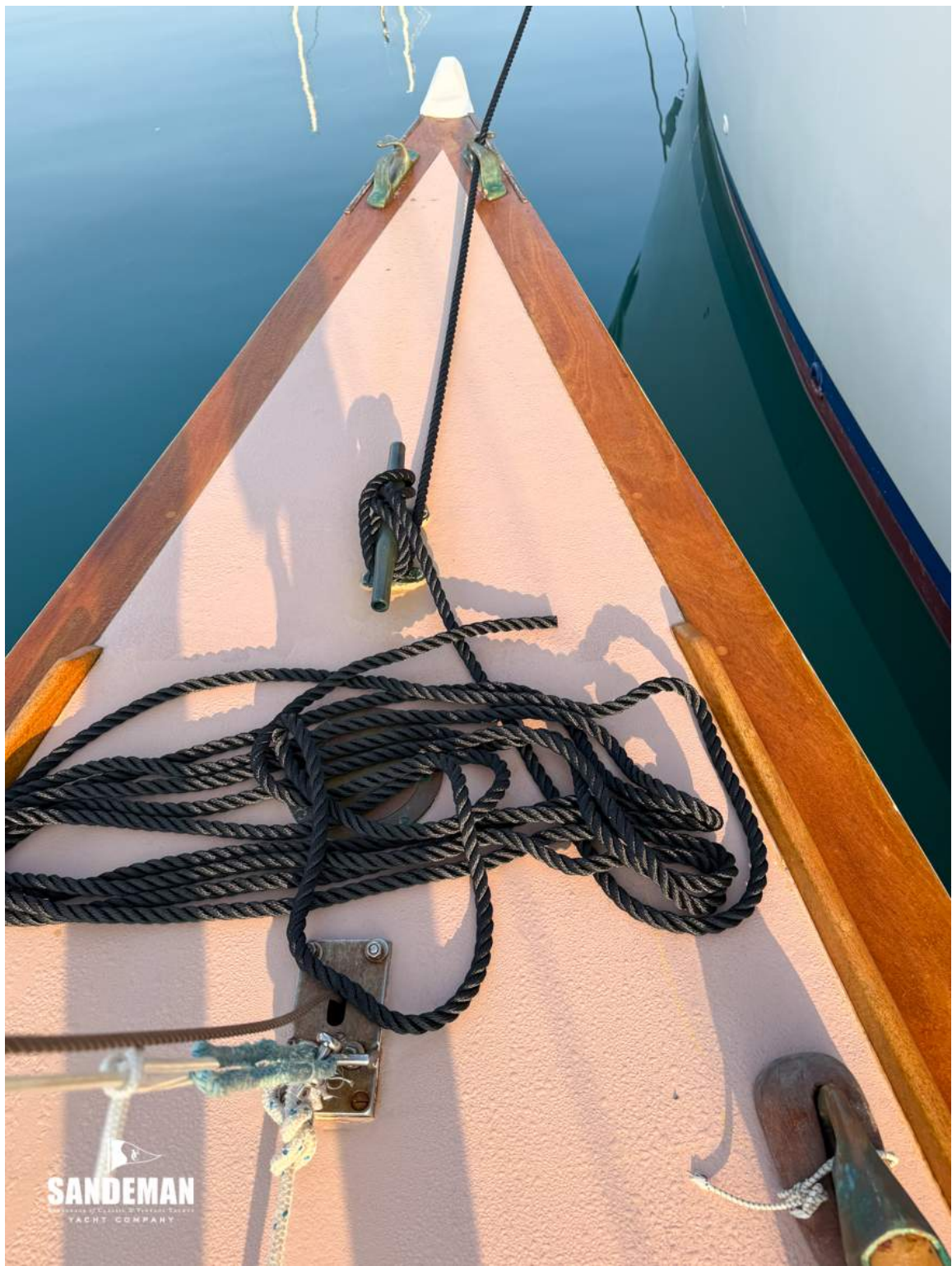

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BROKERAGE OF CLASSIC & VINTAGE YACHTS
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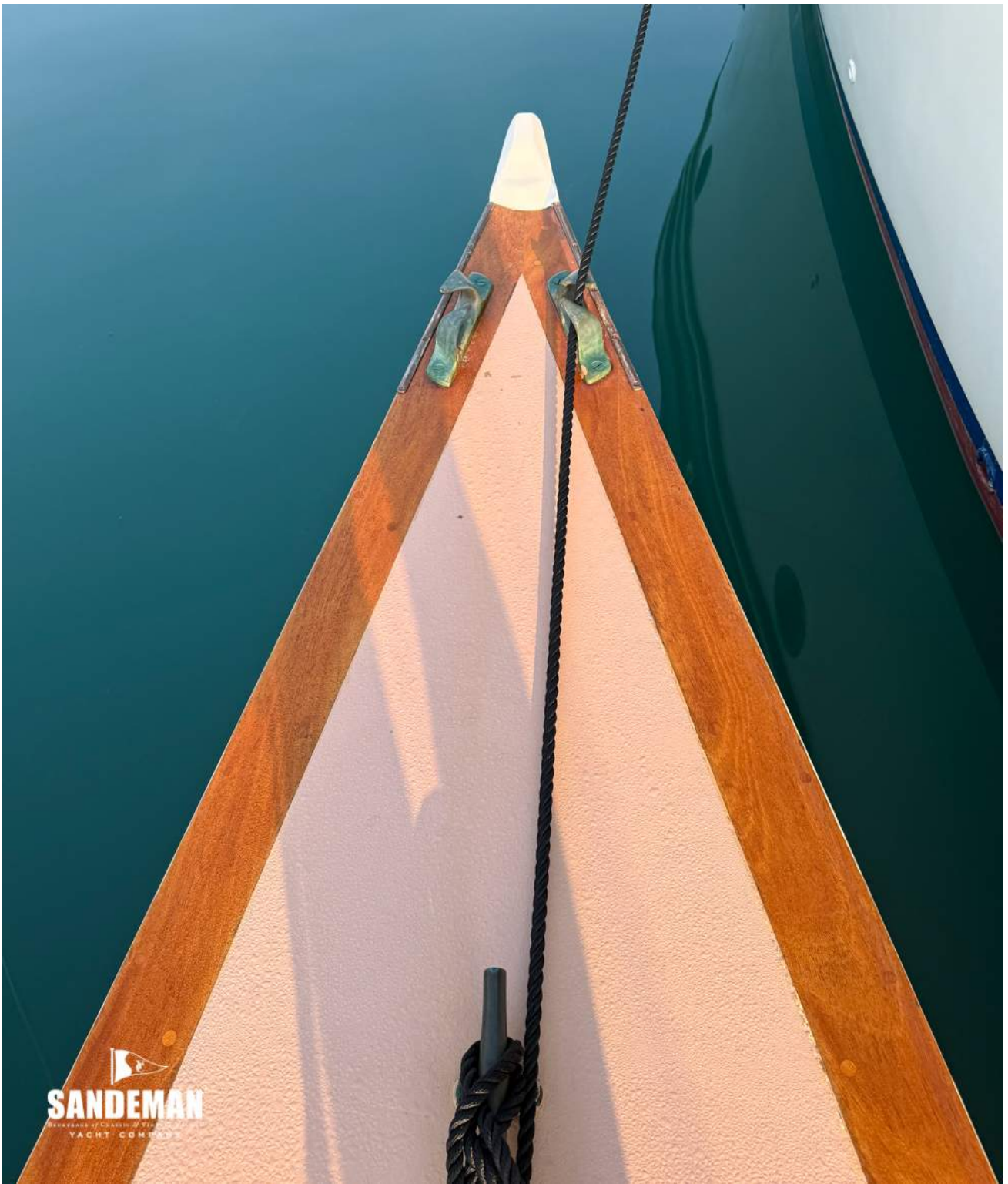




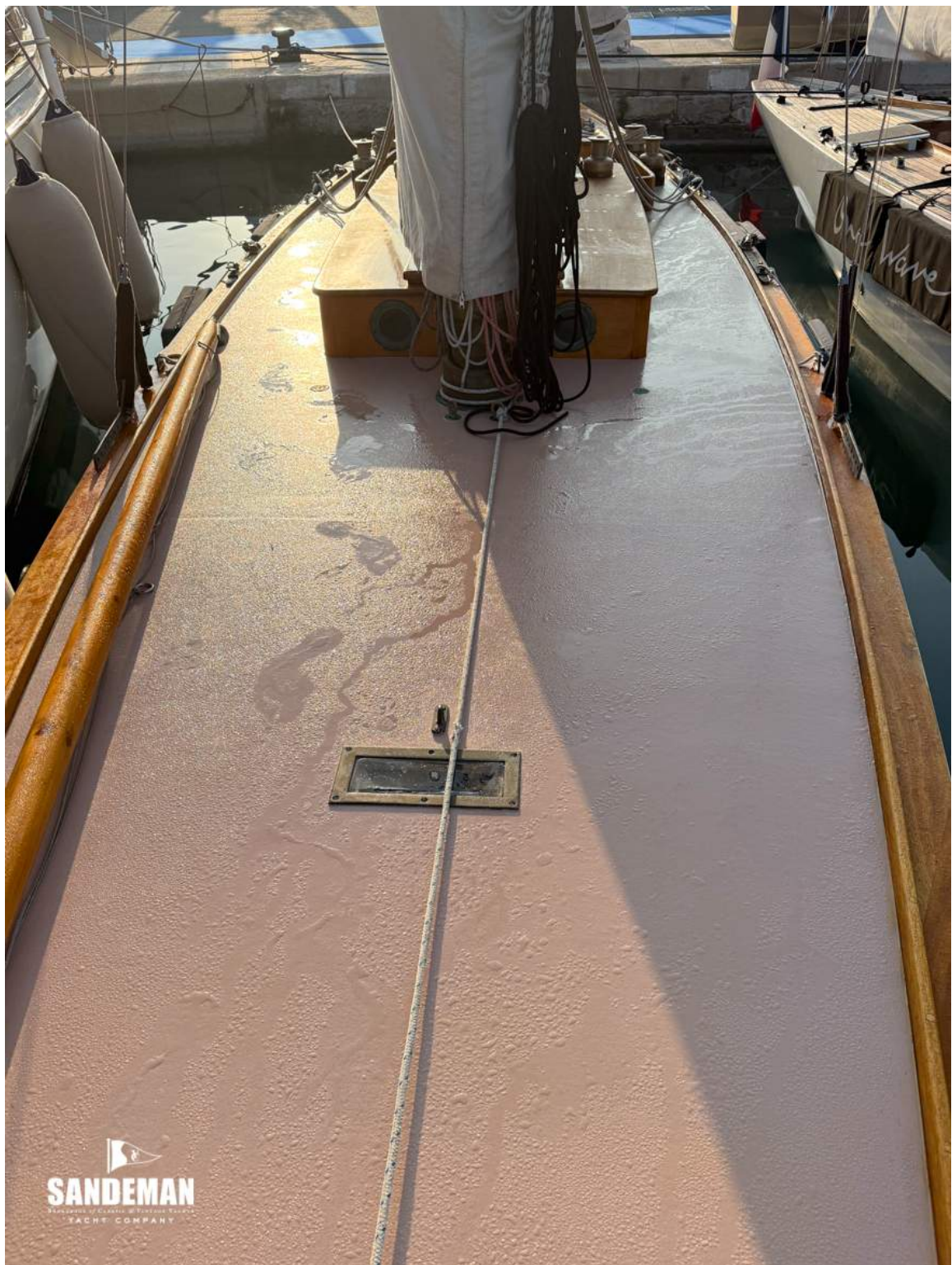









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