

# History of Fraser Shipyards

Compiling the history of Fraser Shipyards was a compelling project for author Patrick Lapinski.

“It is a story that explores all elements of the shipyard’s dramatic history—human endeavor, survival, strife, growth, independence, innovation, and tenacity of spirit,” said Lapinski. “It also was a story that had never been told in its entirety.”

*In The Yard: The History of Fraser Shipyards 1890-2017* was designed from the beginning to tell the story of the modern-day Fraser Shipyards. Part of the author’s intent was to change the Superior shipbuilding and repair narrative away from the focus on whale-backs or world war shipyards. “I wanted to bring it up to date and to honor the many workers who passed through those shipyard gates to go to work.”

His starting point was 1945, with the shipyard on the brink of extinction, and its salvation by the Knudsen brothers. The bulk of the research took about five years but, according to Lapinski, the story would not have come to life without the input of the people who were critical to the daily operations of the yard. Fortuitously, many of them were still alive: foremen, naval architects, superintendents, executives and laborers.

“It was a daunting task to interview them because many were reluctant to speak publicly,” said the author, “but the inclusion of their memories, the

unique perspectives of these workers, adds the vitality of human endeavor to the book.”

While *In The Yard* narrates the story of Fraser Shipyards, it also chronicles the evolution of the Great Lakes maritime industry, providing in essence a mirror in which to see the shipping industry over the last half of the 20th century. Fraser’s role in this history is one of innovation and leadership, placing the yard at the forefront of power conversions, vessel lengthening, the introduction of bow-thrusters and the conversion of bulk carriers to self-unloaders.

Visually, the book has over 300 photographs, images, maps and a unique roster of all vessels that have wintered in the shipyard since 1945. Many images have never been published, culled from private collections and the shipyard archives.

Photographer and historian Patrick Lapinski has been photographing and writing about the Great Lakes



Pat Lapinski

maritime industry for over 30 years. He is a regular contributor to publications such as *Seaway Review/Great Laker*; *The Inland Seas*, *The Nor’Easter*, *Lake Superior Magazine* and *North Star Port*. The author is currently writing the biography of a prominent naval architect.

*In The Yard* can be purchased online at [www.inlandmariners.com](http://www.inlandmariners.com).



Book cover photo of Fraser Shipyards (circa 1948)