

## About William James Roué

William James Roué (1879–1970) is one of Canada's most prominent naval architects. He is best known for designing the iconic schooner *Bluenose*, but his accomplishments cover a wide range of vessels. His career, which spanned more than 50 years, is intimately linked to the history of wooden ship and boat building in Canada during the 20th century.

### Early Career

Roué was largely self-taught. An early fascination with boats led to extensive reading, designing and experimenting with model boats. After quitting school at the age of 17, following a dispute with a teacher over nautical nomenclature, he worked as a grocery clerk before joining the family soft-drink firm. He took night classes in mechanical drafting at the Victoria School of Art and Design (now Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University) to acquire the drafting skills necessary to become a naval architect. Roué also spent considerable time at the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron, where he crewed on members' boats and studied in the clubhouse library. As soon as he was old enough to join, he spent \$10 of his \$100 annual salary on a membership.

In the following years, Roué divided his time between the soft-drink firm and his work as a naval architect. It was during this period that he was commissioned to design *Bluenose*, a ship that would become Canada's most beloved schooner and Roué's most famous accomplishment.

### *Bluenose*

The International Fishermen's Trophy was a competition between working fishing schooners from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia and Gloucester, Massachusetts. After the Americans won the initial race in 1920, Roué was commissioned by the Canadian committee to design a schooner for the following year's race. *Bluenose* won the trophy in 1921 and continued its racing success throughout the 1920s and 1930s, winning the International Fishermen's Trophy race a total of five times.

### After *Bluenose*

The success of *Bluenose* opened many doors for Roué. He sold the family soft-drink firm in 1929 and took public and private commissions from across Canada and the United States. He did not simply ride on the success of *Bluenose*, however. He constantly proved his capabilities as a naval architect, staying abreast of developments in the field and displaying talent for designing a diverse assortment of vessels. His designs ranged from small pleasure craft to larger racing sailboats to more utilitarian vessels, including ferries and fishing boats for the Nova Scotia government and, during the Second World War, sectional barges for the British Ministry of War Transport.

Roué died in 1970 at the age of 90. His career spanned more than 50 years and included over 200 designs. His contributions as a naval architect have been recognized in numerous ways, including through his induction into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame and the Nova Scotia Sports Hall of Fame, the long-time presence of *Bluenose* on the Canadian dime and being featured on a Canada Post commemorative stamp in 1998.