

History of Gale/Buccaneer Outboard Motors

By: Barry Shortill

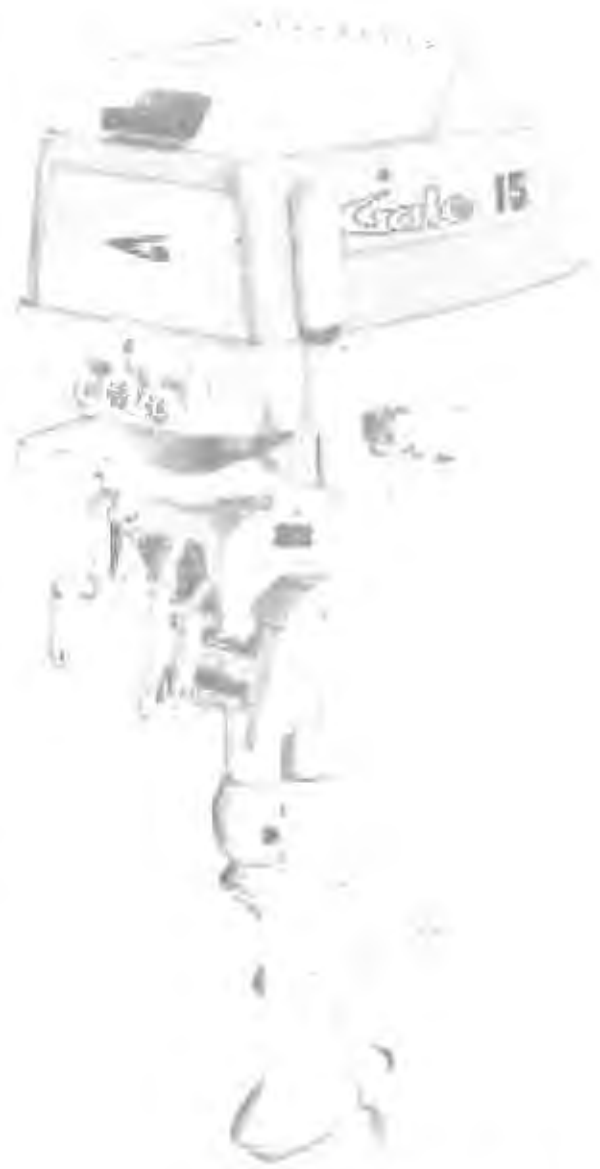
Gale Products Inc. was a subsidiary of OMC which made Johnson and Evinrude outboards and was considered to be their third division. Gale was so named as they were located in Galesburg, Illinois.

Prior to World War II, Gale manufactured refrigerators and air conditioning units. These products were never a real success and it was decided after the war to drop the refrigerators and the air conditioners and set up a wholesaling division where Gale went about manufacturing outboard motors for department store and tire store chains. These outboards would be labeled with the name of the selling store. Outside companies included Wards, Spiegel, Gamble and Goodyear. Gale products were so successful that in 1948 they sold over 100,000 outboard motors, which was more than all other manufacturers including Mercury, Johnson and Evinrude.

Starting about 1950, Gale began to offer outboards under their own brand name initially called Buccaneer and later just labeled Gale. The Buccaneers and Gales were offered through sporting goods and hardware stores and a few independent dealerships. All in all, outboard motors built by Gale were very well designed and often had features not found in the flagship models of Johnson and Evinrude. In fact Gale sold engines in what was called their economy and deluxe versions. Deluxe versions were ahead of their time and included fuel pumps, better soundproofing/vibration dampenings and rubber engine mounts.

Gale was different from Johnson and Evinrude in that models produced were always a few horsepower less. For example, when Johnson and Evinrude produced a 15hp, Gale produced a 12 hp. When Johnson and Evinrude went up to 18hp, Gale produced a 15 hp, and so on. Gale would range in size from 1 1/2 horsepower, which was produced in 1948, all the way up to a V4 60 hp in 1960, but never did produce anything larger.

Gale really came into its own during the mid-fifties where it produced engines for Atlas Royal in 1955-1956, Brooklure in 1955-1958, Hiawatha in 1955, Sea Bee from 1955-1959 and Sea King from 1955-1959. Most models for these



1961 Gale and a
Sea-Bee logo

companies were much the same, including horsepower (3, 5, 12 and 22 hp models respectfully). Other models were produced by Gale which included Sea Flyer, Fedway, Western Flyer, and Vikings. They were produced post war era and sold through the T. Eaton Company.

If you are considering buying a good used Gale motor, make sure you purchase one with a full forward-neutral-reverse gearshift. This is the closest thing to the flagship models. Many of the parts are interchangeable and still readily available. I would avoid any Gale without a gearshift or neutral clutch as these engines tended to have a lot of problems and were expensive to replace. I guess it depends how badly an avid collector wants this type of Gale engine, because parts are getting very scarce to locate. It is nice to know (and many are not aware) that many Johnson and Evinrude parts are interchangeable with the newer Gale models which would include water pumps, ignition components and rebuild carb kits.

Gale continued on its merry way producing some excellent engines until it was announced in very early 1964 that they would be ceasing operations. They did not produce any models that year, so the actual last year of production was in 1963. It was felt by OMC that Johnson and Evinrude had grown large enough that Gale was no longer needed. It was a poor decision on their part and one where OMC suffered financially. It took years to recover from this decision.

This was not totally the end of Gale. They would go on to form a new division of OMC in which they would go on to develop the new OMC sterndrive units. These are the last remaining records I could find on Gale outboards.

I own five Gale outboard motors ranging from 5hp to 60hp, and I love every one of them. It's a shame they could not have been around for a few more years. ~ ~

Barry Shortill (a.k.a Motornut)



Sea King 12 hp