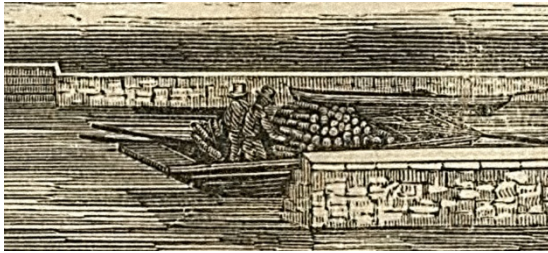




Flatboat, 16th - 20th Centuries

A flatboat, sometimes called a scow or often simply a "flat", is exactly what it sounds like: a flat-bottomed, barge-like hull built for maximum carrying capacity, stability and shallow draft. Flats were the workhorses of the colonial and territorial periods and would have been regular sights along the St. Augustine waterfront and the surrounding network of rivers, marshes and tidal creeks. Typically, a flatboat would be poled along the shallows or maneuvered by sweeps (oars) while drifting with tidal currents. While their shape made them unsuitable for offshore navigation, flats could be rigged with sails, such as a schooner rig, and sometimes were decked, this would increase their seaworthiness. Flats were commonly used on plantations as working vessels and to carry supplies and agricultural products to and from town or waiting ships in the harbor. The Spanish were the first to introduce this simple boat design to the area, as



confirmed by a 1602 document referring to a government-owned barca chata (literally, "flat boat") in the town. In 2008, LAMP volunteer boatbuilders constructed a replica barca chata, pictured above during its initial sea trial. This vessel is relatively narrow and thus quite maneuverable and two more were built in 2009-2010. This simple flatboat design would have been used here for centuries as

evidenced by an 1855 engraving which shows a very similar vessel with a load of logs at the town's waterfront near the present location of the Bridge of Lions. Flats were often built significantly wider in relation to their length, which would have increased both stability and cargo capacity