

Replicas of Cornish Pilot Gigs Coming to Bolton Boating Festival

By Mirror Staff

Among the boats coming to next weekend's Bolton Landing Boats and Boating Festival in Rogers Park are two 32-foot, six-oared rowing vessels from Lake Champlain.

"They're replicas of 19th century Cornish pilot gigs," explained Nick Patch, the director of the program at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum that builds and utilizes the vessels in educational and recreational programs.

According to Reuben Smith, the organizer of the festival, the originals were built to take local pilots out to the sail boats entering the coastal harbors and ports. They were also used to smuggle contraband, a function for which their speed and seaworthiness were well-suited.

More than twenty of these boats have been built by the Champlain Longboat Program, which enrolls middle and high school students in a construction project extending across several months.

According to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, the manual skills that students develop through participating in the Champlain Longboats Program are the least of them.

"We partner with regional schools and community organizations to help students develop positive, healthy behavior by exposing them to the innate team and self-esteem building nature of boat building and rowing," the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum states.

An intellectually-rich curriculum has been built around the boat building process, the museum states.

Lake Champlain is one of several places with programs featuring replicas of pilot gigs, said Reuben Smith.

"In 1977, a rowing club in California built one of these boats using a design published by John Gardner, the godfather of the wood boat revival, in the National Fisherman magazine. In the 1980s, the folks at the Hull Lifesaving Museum on the south shore of Massachusetts were looking for a fast and fun boat to row year-round in Boston Harbor and chose the pilot gig. It became the primary type of boat used by the museum in its open water rowing program, which puts thousands of kids and adults on the water every year," said Smith.

Smith continued, "Other programs followed the lead of Hull and today there are open water programs from the lower Hudson to Lake Champlain to Deer Isle, Maine."

At the Bolton Landing Boats and Boating Festival, spectators will be invited to join the crews and pull an oar for a row across Bolton Bay.

The festival, a day-long event, will feature dozens of small boats powered by oar, paddle, and sail. There will be in-water and on-land exhibits and demonstrations, and live music from 9 am to 5 pm.

The event is sponsored by the Bolton Historical Museum, which is currently exhibiting "Along the Shore: Boats and Boating on Lake George from 1890-1920."

Reuben Smith said the event will be reminiscent of the photos and boats depicted in the museum's exhibit, which will be open to visitors.

The event is hosted by the Bolton Historical Museum, and sponsored by the Lake George Mirror, Tumblehome Boatshop, and the Adirondack Chapter of the Antique & Classic Boat Society (ACBS).

This full day of activity for the entire family is free and open to the public. Rogers Memorial Park is located at 4922 Lake Shore Drive, Bolton Landing, NY.



Photos of Champlain Longboats by Buzz Kuhns.

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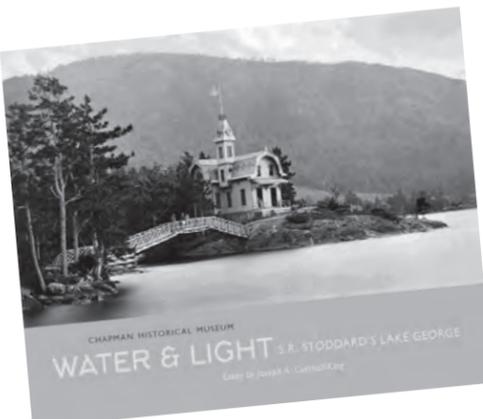
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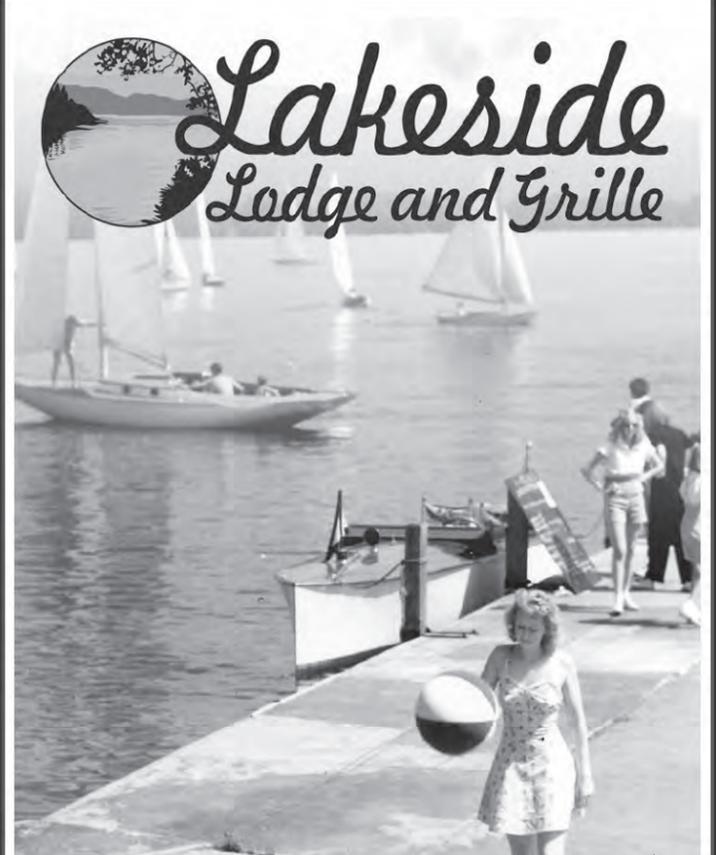


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