

BLC readies for 44th annual Antique Classic Boat Show

'Thoroughbred Round Up' to feature Century Boats; club members set to visit BLC

BY TERRY DUFFY
Editor-in-Chief

Boating season is in full swing, particularly in the Great Lakes region, which, overall, offers the best on-water fun this time of year.

With that in mind, planning is moving ahead for what organizers expect to be a significant boating expo set to visit this fall at one of the nation's historical powerboat clubs. It's the 44th annual Niagara Frontier Antique and Classic Boat Show, slated for 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 9, at the Buffalo Launch Club on Grand Island.

Niagara Frontier Antique and Classic Boats presents the show each year, with a special co-sponsorship for 2023 by the Century Boat Club. This year's event, titled the "Thoroughbred Round Up," will feature the classics of the nearly 100-year-old Century Boat Company.

"We are expecting over 100 vintage mahogany runabouts, cruisers and early fiberglass 'glassics' from across the Northeast, Midwest, and Southern Ontario," said Sharon L. Dickinson, event chair. "This is one of the largest and finest antique boat shows in the country."

Long-recognized as one of the nation's premier boat manufacturers, Century Boats was founded in 1926 in Milwaukee. It soon relocated to Manistee, Michigan, where it became a nationwide supplier of watercraft for over 60 years. Century served the wooden race boat and runabout enthusiasts of the '20s and '30s; the U.S. government in the 1940s, with 3,600 military service-type boats manufactured during World War II; and the boating community of the '50s and '60s, with Century's growing line of wooden boats and yachts, its popular Coronado and Resorter, plus all-new jet-powered boats and fiberglass models.

It was during this era that Century's "Thoroughbred of Boats" promotional slogan became popular.

Century continued its presence from the 1970s onward, with a variety of makes and models available. These included wooden and fiberglass boats, cuddy cabin models, plus Century's Tournament water-skier and Miramar models of the 1980s.

The company continued to diversify into the 1990s, with new ownership by Yamaha Motor Corp. and Cobia Boats, and it became C&C Manufacturing. Century models were built and distributed from Panama City, Florida. Today, Century is owned by Allcraft Marine and has its headquarters and manufacturing base in Zephyrhills, Florida. It offers a full line of saltwater fishing boats, as well as walk-around, center- and dual-console models for boating enthusiasts, as well as the tournament fishing industry.

This company continues to be a well-regarded manufacturer among boating enthusiasts worldwide. In fact, there's even an established boating club among its owners.

Known as the Century Boat Club, the group is dedicated to the preservation and restoration



A display of Century vintage craft owned by members of the Century Boat Club will be among the attractions at this year's show. (Century Boat Club photo)

of these vintage boats. Founded in 1979 in the Chicago area, the Century Boat Club was established as a boat users' organization, primarily the owners of classic Century wooden boats who were interested in the hobby of antique boating.

Like Century Boats, this club continued to grow in popularity throughout the years. Today, it boasts a membership of close to 4,000 private boat owners, based throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. It even has an online presence.

"The criteria to belonging is really quite simple," a Facebook post noted. "An appreciation of or interest in the wooden boats built by the Century Boat Company over the years. We also in recent years have been reaching out to fiberglass Century owners."

Club members enjoy their vintage watercraft; they are typically online with member chats on Century models, trades or private sales; and the group is active with displays of these beauties at shows throughout the country. Recent events included the Finger Lakes ACBS Show in Skaneateles, plus an antique boat show on Keuka Lake in Hammondsport. They will be the featured guests of the 44th annual Antique Boat Show at the BLC, come September.

As part of the three-day visit to Buffalo-Niagara, Century Boat Club members will visit attractions, local restaurants, and partake in some neat tours. Included will be a Maid of the Mist boat ride at Niagara Falls, cruises on the Buffalo waterfront and harbor areas, and a "Grand Tour around Grand Island." There, members will enjoy a 27-mile, 90-minute ride and "experience the falls like never before."

The Antique Boat Show itself leads off with a ceremonial cannon salute at 9:45 a.m. at the

BLC. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., visitors will have the opportunity to check out the Century classics from throughout the years, both on the water and on the grounds. Also expected will be a display of remote-control boats, a nautical flea market, a showing of classic vehicles and a ships store.

"We should have 40-50 Centurys," said Rocky Nagel, local liaison for the Century Boat Club. "For the Coronados, our goal is to get one from each model year, from 1955 through the '80s."

Visitors of all ages can enjoy a 1 p.m. seminar on the history of Century Boats, while youngsters can take part in an all-day kids camp at the BLC. A variety of foods and a beer tent will be available.

"(There will be) boats on display, both on land and in water, (spanning) four decades from the '30s to the '60s. We'll even have a few from the '20s," Dickinson said.

"The show is one of the largest in the country; we'll have some extra-curricular events going on, too. A lot of out-of-town people are coming. It will be fun," Nagel said.

There is no admission charge for this event. A \$10 per car parking fee will be charged on the BLC grounds.

For more information on this event, visit the NFACBS online at <https://oldboatsbuffalo.org>, or contact Dickinson at 716-574-0435.

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