



Notes from the Bilge



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September 2022

Newsletter of the Lake Champlain Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, Inc.

Susan Haigh, President

President's Message



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Hide & Seek

By Bob Blanchard

When the 18th amendment to the Constitution was ratified on January 1, 1919, alcoholic beverages were famously banned in the United States. This set about a scramble by those determined to evade the law and profit by importing and selling alcohol, and another scramble by law enforcement groups who tried to stop them.

Bordering Canada, Vermont was naturally a place that smugglers gravitated to. Cars with liquor concealed within them came through Customs ports of entry, but most smuggling took place between the Customs ports, via back roads or paths through the woods. Cars were used on some of these roads, and horses and mules were even used in some of the more difficult locations.

Customs agents responded by increasing patrols between the ports and were able to at least put a dent in the smuggling trade by the seizures they made. No one knows how much got through of course, but officials agreed that far more got through than was caught during the 12 years of Prohibition.

But the impact of the Customs activities soon caused smugglers to take to the water to get their liquor into the U.S. You could pack a lot more liquor in a boat than in a car or on a horse, and there was no Customs presence on Lake Champlain initially. Customs quickly responded by establishing the Customs Boat Patrol, commanded by World War I veteran Jack Kendrick. Kendrick transformed his camp on the Georgia Shore into the headquarters for his boat patrol. Their initial fleet consisted of three vessels, the *Flopsy Jane*, a river vessel unsuitable for use when the lake was rough, and *Old Pop*, a 45 foot boat that was antiquated and not very fast.


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This summer has been a whirlwind of activity for our members, especially those of the show committee. A few of them have spent all of their spare time working on production of the show.

Special recognition is due to Holly Weber who took on the daunting task of meeting City requirements for the Waterfront Park set up. This included a mountain of paperwork, changes to the contract and plenty of insurance requirements that had to be passed between ACBS Headquarters and the City. Thanks to her efforts, and those who have helped her, we have managed to move forward. There will be many vendors, non-profits, land displays, demonstrations, and children's activities in the Waterfront Park. There will be also a tribute to Bill Truex under the tent. It will be a really great place to gather, get out of the sun, sit down and relax.

Thanks also go out to dedicated Northern and Southern cruise leaders and our pre-event leaders that have been working for the better part of year to arrange their events. These folks along with the show committee have been attending bi-weekly Zoom meetings with headquarters helping to solve problems as they arise. Steve Pond, our Dockmaster, developed a docking plan, leading to the realization that we had to cut off new entries at 124 boats, with a waiting list. Susie Becker has pulled together a team of volunteers who are ready to go to work. Emily Weber has designed gorgeous posters that are so lovely kids are snatching them! The street banner that she designed will be hung over Main street for 2 weeks starting Sept. 1st. She has also translated her designs into T shirts which will be one of the items the Chapter has for sale under the tent. Our ads for the show are being run on WCAX and an article

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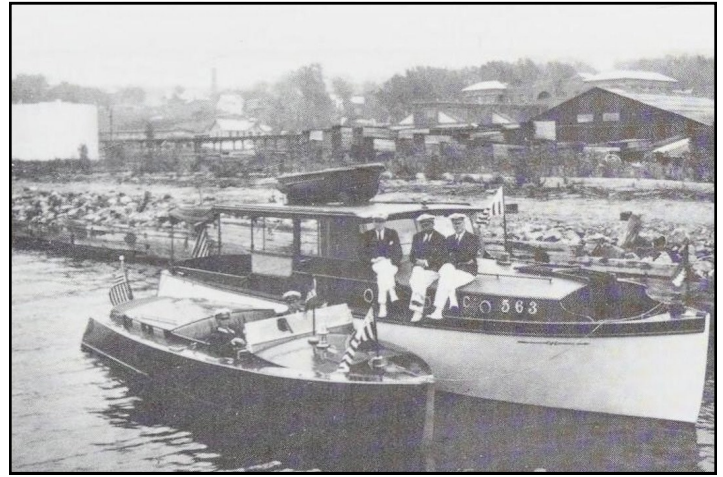
Just the names of these boats make it clear that smugglers had little to fear from them. The third boat was a modern mahogany speedboat, capable of catching anything on the lake.

The photo shows members of the boat patrol with two of their boats tied up on the Burlington waterfront. The flags on the boats are the Customs ensign. The officers look like they're dressed more for a yachting jaunt than for tangling with smugglers.

The patrol boats would usually go out at night, when smugglers were most active. They patrolled the northern reaches of the lake, and officers and boats were positioned at Rouses Point in addition to the Georgia Shore headquarters.

The patrolling and chasing was dangerous, and one member of the patrol lost his life when he was swept off a boat and drowned.

Fines and seizures did little to stem the flow. Smuggling was so lucrative that these were seen as the cost of doing business, and most smugglers got right back at it after being caught.



Many times during chases the smugglers would toss their contraband overboard. There are no doubt many thousand of bottles of spirits on the lake bottom as a result.

Several interesting stories can be found in old news accounts of boat patrol activities. One incident involved the patrol's antiquated vessel "Old Pop". It was replaced and sold at auction at Burlington. But the patrol had not seen the last of their old boat as its new owner pressed it into service as a smuggling vessel. In 1932 the patrol ran down *Old Pop* and a 35 foot cruiser that were smuggling liquor. The result was one of the largest seizures ever on the lake as the boats held a total of 24,000 bottles.

In another incident, a tip came in that five late model cars laden with liquor were crossing the lake from Plattsburgh on the steamer *Vermont III*. Officials were waiting at the Burlington dock, and only one of the five vehicle owners came forward to claim his car. Having seen the officers by their cars, the other four left their vehicles and walked off the boat. All five cars were seized and the man who came forward was arrested. The retail value of the liquor was placed at \$50,000, and the cars \$15,000. The tip indicated that cars would take a steamer to Burlington, and then recross on another steamer to *Ticonderoga*. This was to avoid numerous check points on the New York side of the lake.

The final incident involved a smuggling boat that was seized by the patrol. they brought it to Burlington where it was tied up at the dock for the night pending disposition. When officials went to the dock the next morning, the boat was gone. it had been stolen, and was likely put back into use by smugglers.

After 12 years the futility of Prohibition was generally recognized, and it was repealed in 1933.



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President's Message continued

about the show will be appearing in *Seven Days* due to the efforts of Catherine Hughes who volunteered her time as media consultant for show publicity. Sadly we lost Catherine due to heart failure at the end of July. She will be missed by many.

We have also made time to gather and unwind at a series of wonderful rendezvous around the area; Mooney Bay, Saranac Lake, the new Bravo Zulu Bar on the Inland Sea, Indian Bay Marina on Willsboro Bay, the Old Dockhouse in Essex, and at the Red Mill at the Basin Harbor Resort. At each event participation seemed to increase, and (knock on wood,) the weather was great.

Our Annual Meeting and luncheon is coming up on October 2nd at the Basin Harbor Resort's Ranger Room. Invitations will be sent out shortly.

Lastly I want to mention that I am undergoing some medical problems that require chemo therapy and may be stepping back just a bit as things progress. I plan on being at the show when I can. One thing for sure though, we have a great team of folks who continue to help in every way with this show, it is sure to be one of the best. The wonders of Lake Champlain's waters and history will be experienced by our ACBS members, and hopefully the lure of these wonderful old boats will bring more folks into the hobby. 🍷

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Thank You Volunteers

As you read this, the 2022 ACBS Annual Meeting and Boat Show is about to begin. After, literally, years of preparation, the boats and members of ACBS will gather in Burlington to experience all the Champlain Valley has to offer as well as renew old friendships.

There are many high-profile people responsible for the event (see *President's Message*). However, there are others who will devote their time and energy and go unheralded.

In spite of all the planning and in spite of the generous support from the communities involved, the event is highly dependent on volunteers from both sides of the lake. Almost all of the volunteers are not members of LCACBS and there are many who are not members of ACBS. They have selflessly offered their time and their talents. Many thanks to the volunteers for stepping up.



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Bon Voyage!



Michael Sinclair

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- 9/5 ACBS Welcome Reception, Spot On The Dock
..... Burlington, VT
- 9/6 Lunch and tour of Essex, NY
- 9/7 Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Basin .. Harbor, VT
- 9/8 Cruise aboard The Spirit if Ethan Allen . Burlington, VT
- 9/9—9/10 ACBS Meeting & Boat Show Burlington, VT
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