

SAILING

Regattas & The Spirit

Sailing has been an important factor in the development of Cobourg Harbour since the 1800s, when yachts from other ports on Lake Ontario visited, often on their way to the Thousand Islands. In 1857, the Commodore of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club described the protection offered by Cobourg Harbour but warned of a shifting sand bar and the danger of underwater crib remains. By that time competitive sailing had become popular, with many Cobourg-built yachts enjoying success in various Lake Ontario regattas.

In 1908 the Town of Cobourg contributed \$500 towards an August **event in which boats raced from Toronto, Kingston, and Charlotte (Rochester, N.Y.) to Cobourg**, followed by triangular races held here. For many years a multi-day regatta was held in Cobourg.

Typical of major events was a race for the "*Freeman Cup*" on long distance courses. The course varied from year to year, including one between Toronto, Rochester and Cobourg.

Many of these yachts had Cobourg owners, though they were often berthed in Toronto, usually at the R.C.Y.C. **The very first race for the "Prince of Wales Cup" was won in 1861 by the *Wide Awake***, a small boat owned by Mr. J. Elliott of Cobourg. **In 1862, '63 and '64 the winner was *Gorilla***, owned by Mr. R. Standley, also of Cobourg!



Moth Class sailboats racing on Lake Ontario.

Photo courtesy of the Pickering-Ajax Digital Archives

Spirit of Canada

This 'Open 60' class of racing yacht was built in Cobourg and launched in 2007. 60ft long with an 18ft beam, it was specifically designed to compete in the Vendee Globe Single Handed Around the World Race in 2008. **After 50 days alone at sea**, builder and skipper Derek Hatfield was in a good position in the fleet when an exceptionally powerful wave rolled the boat. The mast was too severely damaged to repair at sea. Since the race rules stipulate that it must be non-stop and unassisted, Hatfield was forced to retire and head for Hobart, Tasmania.

The *Spirit of Canada* was the first boat to fly the Canadian flag in a Vendee Globe competition, and did so proudly. Hatfield wasn't alone on that race. The names of over 6,000 people, including ones from Cobourg, were printed on the hull.

Under new ownership, **there is currently a campaign to return *Spirit of Canada* to competition** in the 2016 edition of the Vendee Globe race.

Spirit underway.

Photo courtesy of <http://fairportyc.blogspot.ca>



Spirit of Canada Launch.

Photo courtesy of spiritofcanada.net

SAILING

The Club & The Countess

In 1963 a group of sailing enthusiasts came together as the “*Great Pine Ridge Marine Association*” to promote and encourage the sport of sailing. The following year **the Cobourg Yacht Club was formed and received its official charter in 1965.**

Early club racing was among classes of open, *one-design* dinghies, often hand built by the owner for reasons of economy. As racing and day sailing became more popular, different classes were introduced and a general move to larger boats gradually occurred.

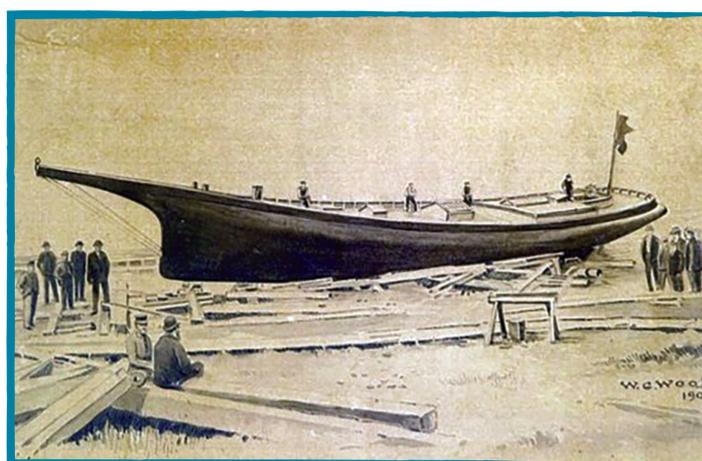
The year 1967 was a banner year for the CYC as **a new clubhouse was built** on the beach west of the centre pier. Also that year, the Port Hope Yacht Club was first **challenged to race for the now famous brass cuspidor** (spittoon). To the victor went the spoils, and the classic relic has changed hands many times over the years.

Today the Cobourg Yacht Club has boats ranging from 13ft dinghies to 40ft keel boats, cruising locally and racing on a club maintained course. Keel boats race on Tuesday evenings and dinghies on Thursday plus occasional longer races.



The old clubhouse with fleet on the sandy beach.

Photo courtesy of the Cobourg Yacht Club



The *Countess* under construction at Cobourg harbour.

Photo courtesy of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club

Countess of Dufferin

In 1876 the *Countess of Dufferin*, a 92' yacht, was built in Cobourg for a member of Toronto's Royal Canadian Yacht Club to challenge for the “*Queen's Cup*” (later to become the “*America's Cup*”).

Disappointingly, **it was defeated in an early race by the yacht *Madeleine*.** Unfortunately, that loss was a harbinger of poor performances in further meetings.

On April 3, 1876, the *Cleveland Herald* expressed regrets about the Canadian ship's name,

“for it necessitates the beating of a lady – a thing a Yankee seldom does”.

Three months later the same newspaper reported:

*“The yacht *Countess of Dufferin* was in Quebec on Monday receiving a new mast as the one she stepped in Kingston **has a bad habit of turning around to see what is going on”.***

The *Countess* was sold to John Prindiville of Chicago, who overhauled her and raced again in 1882. However, later that year **she sank in the waters off Chicago, where the wreck still remains.**