

# 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](http://spiritofcanada.net)