

Rebirth of a Class

Herreshoff NY-30's prepare for their centennial season 1905-2005

Much has been written about the storied past of one of yachting's most successful and famous one-design class, the Herreshoff designed and built New York Thirties, but what's happening with them now?

As the legend goes, several members of the New York Yacht Club, during the 1904 season, got together and decided they wanted a class of modest yachts, "free of any freak proportions", to actively race on a regular basis, while still participating in the Annual Regatta and Annual Cruise. They changed the eligibility rules of the NYYC events just for them and they commissioned the Herreshoff Company to design and build the yachts. Then, over the winter of 1904, 18 identical yachts were created and the class was organized with, at the time, some of the most strict class rules ever put together to ensure close racing and to discourage alterations.

The original specifications were so detailed, the inventory included matching china and silverware and even "tufted, green corduroy cushions and dark green carpet of the finest materials" were specified and expected to be in place during racing.

Of the 18 original yachts, only five are known to be lost. Number 3, ATAIR, was lost in a 1952 storm, number 4, MAID OF MEUDON, was lost in a 1938 hurricane, number 5, PINTAIL was lost in a trans-Atlantic attempt in 1979, number 6, DAHINDA and number 19, Minx were cut up in Long Island in the 1980's.

Which leaves 13 of the original New York Thirties still viable to compete sometime in the future.

Over the past few years, there has been great interest in these yachts as Banzia (#15) in the early 80's and more recently, Amorita (# 9) in the 1990's, tore up racecourses in New England, showing off their speed and beauty in nearly every event they entered. Banzia is currently sailing in Martha's Vineyard while Amorita has become a fixture of the Newport waterfront for nearly 15 years, competing in (and twice winning overall) every Classic Yacht Regatta since 1983.

This excitement led to the restoration of Linnet (#10) by Patrizio Bertelli (of Prada America's Cup fame), which is successfully competing in the Mediterranean Classic Yacht Circuit, and the completion of two magnificently restored thirties, Cara-Mia (#14) and Nautilus (#15), both residing in Long Island Sound.

Projects on the horizon include a newly purchased Ibis (#2) awaiting the start of a restoration (RI), a work in progress Oriole (#11), expected to be sailing in 2004 (ME), and mid-completion projects waiting to be jump-started including Tobasco (#7 - RI), Carlita (#8 - CT), Neola II (#12 - NY), and Anemone II (#18 - RI).

To manage this growth and to ensure the uniform standards set by the founding fathers of the class, a non-profit corporation has been established in the name of the New York Thirty Class (NY-30)TM which will be governing *"The record keeping, restoration, and presentation of the original wooden boats, while establishing the current rules, regulations and specifications of the racing, restoration and manufacture of original and replica wooden boats to be recognized by the New York Thirty Class."*TM

The basic principles of this newly established organization is to foster the growth of the class while avoiding the dilution of the class standards that makes this one-design class truly in a league of its own. These principal regulations include keeping all the original or established names and sail numbers, ensuring that restorations are completed without construction, visual, or performance altering modifications, and that the total number of replicas and originals be limited to the eighteen specified in 1905.

With great pride, and many years of hard work, it is the hope that this newly revived class will celebrate their return as a viable one-design fleet by their centennial celebration, in 2005.

It must be noted, that these yachts owe a great deal to many of those that have loved, dedicated, and saved them from destruction over the past few decades including all the current owners. But much credit has to be given especially to David Kiremidjian who, as a one man operation, saved as many as five of these great yachts, and dedicated much of his time to preserving their legacy in the late 1970's when very few other people seemed to care. Without his efforts, none of this could have taken place.

Now, if you've been paying attention, you might have figured out, that only 16 of the 18 original yachts have been accounted for in this article. That's right, there are two lost treasures, #1, Alera and #17, Phryne somewhere out there just waiting to be discovered. Find them and join the class in 2005 for what is shaping up to be a magnificent celebration of sailing history.