

VINTAGE BOATS GALORE - AND MORE

It's that time again in America's Oldest Summer Resort Community when boats and boating and all things lake life visibly exemplify the history and stories of life on New Hampshire freshwater lakes.

And nothing celebrates the lore of summer lake fun better than the New England Vintage Boat and Car Auction hosted annually in July by the Wolfeboro-based New Hampshire Boat Museum. It's a not-to-be-missed annual event; a time to "ooh and aah", experience the romance of a by-gone era and, perhaps, even take home a trophy from the collection of beautiful boats, cars, themed rustic furnishings and nautical memorabilia up for sale.

However, what has for the past 18 years in July been an exciting outdoor, under-tent event will be hosted differently this year with organizers hopeful that a global pandemic will not dampen enthusiasm among bidders forced to compete virtually in an Internet-based format.

VIRTUAL IS THE NEW NORMAL

This year, no bidding cards; no familiar auction tent. Instead, NHBM's auction, set to begin at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, July 18, will be strictly virtual, meaning auction registration, pre-bidding and bidding will take place online only at <https://www.proxibid.com/New-Hampshire-Boat-Museum/2020-New-Hampshire-Boat-Museum-Auction/event-catalog/180675>

Despite this year's absence of in-person bidding, auction items can be viewed at the museum's website www.NHBM.org, or, for those who want to "kick the tires", live previews are set for tomorrow and Friday, 12-5 p.m. and again Saturday, 8-10 a.m., at the Museum's headquarters, 399 Center Street, Wolfeboro, NH. Face masks are required and attendees are expected to observe social distancing guidelines.

The grounds will be cleared just prior to the start of the virtual auction Saturday and bidders will be required to bid using cell phones in their parked vehicles or at home on computers.

This year, 52 items have been consigned or donated to the auction with more lots being added last minute. Among the lots on the block this weekend are the usual fabulous selections of classic, vintage and contemporary lake boats, including a '55 Chris Craft Continental; '47 Chris Craft Sportsman; a sweet '38 Century Utility; a Penn Yan and a '92 fiberglass Sunbird; plus a bevy of sailing and paddle craft.

Among the auto's offered are two especially cute and classy convertibles: a '02 Ford T-Bird and '73 Mercedes. Rounding out the cornucopia of vintage fair are numerous small items such as lake prints, watercolors, campy furnishings and lake/nautical memorabilia.

It's a roll of the dice, for sure, but organizers, fingers crossed, are cautiously optimistic. Turnout, they believe, will be strong and the event characterized by active bidding among buyers who, by now, have become reasonably comfortable functioning in virtual settings and socializing behind masks at greater distances from others than in months past.

The good news? While while organizers may have scrambled a bit this year to salvage the auction as an online only event, online bidding, now that it's been mastered, will be a staple of future live auctions, which event organizers say will enable NHBM to reach a far greater audience than it has in the past.

SO, WHAT'S DOIN' THESE DAYS

According to museum officials, NHBM remains open to the public, albeit on a slightly altered summer schedule. Although closed on Monday, the museum is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday - Saturday and 12:00-4:00 p.m., Sunday.

Today, visitors see a variety of boats on display within the Museum. As usual, the primary exhibit changes annually. Regrettably, the museum has put on hold its exciting Lake Winnepesaukee rides aboard the Mille B., a replica 1928 triple-cockpit Hacker Craft. The museum is, however, taking reservations for the 2021 boating season.

According to NHBM's website, the museum program highlights include boat building classes for adults, families, and youth; community sailing for youth and adults; a week-long summer camp program for elementary-age children; a lecture series; boat restoration; model yachting and model yacht (remote-controlled sailboats) kit building. Contact the museum directly by phone at 603-569-4554 or visit its website at www.nhbm.org for up-to-the-minute information on the status of current programs.

Each program and event offers an enjoyable opportunity to understand more and garner an appreciation for the region's boating heritage and the unique role New Hampshire's lakes play in people's lives down through the ages, according to the website.

A PARTING MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

"There is no doubt that we, like so many other public facing venues, are challenged by these difficult times and circumstances, says Martha Cummings, NHBM Executive Director. "But I want people to know that we have a wonderful museum here in Wolfeboro that is dedicated to sharing the history and experiences associated with New Hampshire's freshwater boating heritage.

"In a normal year, we offer many programs and events of interest and value to people of all ages who love boating, boat maintenance, boat restoration and construction and cherish the rugged beauty of the Lakes Region. We'll be back at it, soon".

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