



MICHELLE JOHNSON PHOTO

Mantoloking resident Connie Pilling attends to preparing a duckboat last Friday before the start of the 34th Annual Duckboat Worlds at Mantoloking Yacht Club. The race included 50 boats, all deemed to be in Bristol condition before the race.

Duckboats take to the water at Mantoloking Yacht Club

By Keith Grace

Some of the oddest shaped crafts seen on Barnegat Bay found their way back on the water recently.

Nearly extinct, but still clinging to life since their inception on the local body of water in 1836, the duckboat was the boat to be in during the 34th Annual World Duckboat Championships last Friday morning at Mantoloking Yacht Club.

Today, with the annual duckboat race, the craft has returned. Interested competitors search out for duckboats and then begin the arduous tasks of restoring them. It is often a job that takes a half a year to complete.

Before the racing begins, all boats are judged and scrutinized to be deemed Bristol condition, which is the quality of a ship-shaped vessel in the British port of

Bristol.

If in that condition, they are allowed to enter the race. Private parties and longtime duckboat enthusiasts involved in the race annually pledge \$5,000 to all first time competitors who achieve Bristol condition for their crafts and plan to race in the event each year.

Locally, Rev Vienckowski was one of 59 competitors last Friday who as a first time competitor achieved Bristol condition. Racing in a boat for the Point Pleasant Lions Club, named Rube, Vienckowski finished eighth overall and was the first woman racer to finish.

According to Point Pleasant Lion Secretary Marge Morry, the Lions found their boat in January at Beaton Boat Works and finished restoration in July.

"We paid \$300 for the boat and went to work," she said of the restoration

tasks. "It was really in terrible condition when we started."

The duckboat was created for the purpose of hunting fowl on Barnegat Bay over a century ago by Hazleton Seamon, a boat builder and expert shooter of wildlife. They became a necessary vessel for fishermen and oystermen, as well.

The choice wood for the boats was white cedar because it was plentiful in forests and swamps along the shore. The wood, practically leakproof, is soft and fine grained, light, durable and capable of resisting the effects of the change from wet to dry conditions.

By the 1920s, adding a sail to prove the duckboat was quite a racing craft as well, and they were used as an introduc-

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Competitors prepare to sail before the start of the Duckboat Worlds last Friday at the Mantoloking Yacht Club. A total of 59 restored vessels in Bristol Condition took to the Barnegat Bay for the event.

LOCAL CLUB HOSTS ANNUAL DUCKBOAT WORLDS

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racing boat for children. The duckboat was always considered safer for younger sailors. In time, Barnegat Bay became a site for races.

Phil Clark is one of the original duckboat builders to be used primarily for racing. David Beaton & Sons were also known for building boats. Many of the duckboats that have been restored in years past for the current World Duckboat Championships have been located at Beaton Boatworks.

The craft is an odd looking boat because of its spoon-shaped bow and its broad beam that appears extremely girthy from a head on view. Because of these features, the duckboat moves over rather than through the water, at faster rate of speed than other shaped sail boats. The broad beam provides a stiffness so firm that two sailors may stand upright without possibility of capsizing the vessel.

The duckboat is regarded for its performance when headed

into wind and is less productive when facing a string head sea.

With the turn of the century came newer boat building materials such as fiberglass, which in time set back the duckboat. With

lighter materials in demand in the mid-1900s, the duckboat disappeared as yacht builders of the time often failed in building proper duckboats.