

For Immediate Release:

Celebrating 100 years of Chatham Yacht Club and John Beetle's Cat and 10 decades of Beetle Cats on Pleasant Bay.

Chatham Yacht Club will begin its week-long celebration of its centennial by hosting the New England Beetle Cat Association Annual Championship Regatta on Pleasant Bay on July 31-August 1, 2021. This event actually marks three centennials: the 100th anniversary of Chatham Yacht Club, the 100th anniversary of John Beetle's cat boat, and ten decades of sailing Beetle Cats on Pleasant Bay. The Leo J. Telesmanick Regatta is the annual championships for the Beetle Cat, the jaunty little catboats that have held a special spot in the hearts of Cape & Island boaters of all ages for a century.

The Beetle Cat, a 12-foot, gaff-rigged sailboat, was initially built by whaleboat builder John Beetle in 1921 so that his kids could learn to sail. Since that time, the little craft's popularity has sailed along for years with yachting clubs and summer camps, and passed down as well through generations of families. Notable Beetle Cat sailors throughout history include Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Steven Spielberg, Calvin Klein, and Senator John Kerry. The Beetle Cat is currently built in Wareham by Beetle, Inc., owned by Bill Womack.

In the spring of 1940, the New England Beetle Cat Association (NEBCBA) was formed in New Bedford for the purpose of providing an annual junior championship for Beetle Cat Boats. Over the years, NEBCBA initiated several other championships for both juniors and adults. Today, NEBCBA sponsors an annual championship under the umbrella of the "Leo J. Telesmanick Championship," in honor of Leo J. Telesmanick (1915-2001), who built the Beetle Cats for over fifty years. In addition to the overall champion, prizes will be awarded to the skipper and crew of the first three boats in the following divisions: Junior (under 18), Women/Men's/Old Salts (50-69), and Ancient Mariners (70+). This is the third time this century that CYC has hosted this event.

Chatham Yacht Club's celebration will continue in the following week when it hosts the Southern Massachusetts Sailing Junior Team Racing Championships on August 4th, a Baybird Open House (an opportunity for CYC sailors to sail the boats) on Friday, August 6th, and its annual regatta on August 7th and 8th. This is the oldest and largest free regatta on Cape Cod (if not in the whole country). There are usually over 120 boats competing in a variety of fleets. CYC started in 1921 when the Regatta Committee of the Chatham Country Club organized a group of 20 families to buy a fleet of 20 Baybirds. The Baybird is a round-bottom sailboat, 18-feet long, with a centerboard, a jib, and a gaff-rigged mainsail. The President of the Country Club (now Eastward Ho!) then donated a cup for the Baybird competitors. In the 2021 regatta, a fleet of Baybirds will once again compete for the President's Cup. We believe that this is the first and only time in history that the same class will compete for the same trophy 100 years after the first competition (and one of the boats is one of the original 1921 boats!).