Bayfield Boatyards Schooner

In a barn just north of Bayfield sits a 38-foot sail-powered commercial fishing vessel – Helen MacLeod II. With a story dating back nearly two centuries, this two-masted wooden fishing boat is the last known “Huron Schooner” in this part of North America – and an irreplaceable piece of Great Lakes marine heritage.

The MacLeod story began in 1834 when Hugh MacLeod emigrated to Canada from Scotland with his parents. The family settled in the village of Bayfield at the mouth of the Bayfield River. As marine prosperity grew in the village, McLeod became one of its first boatbuilders and fisherman – launching Helen MacLeod I in honour of his late infant daughter.

Following Hugh’s death in 1910, his son Louie took over the family business and built a replica of his boat. Helen MacLeod II officially launched at the harbour of the Bayfield River in 1926. After Louie’s health failed, the boat ended up with various owners, including Detroit’s Dossin Great Lakes Museum.

Passed from owner to owner, the condition of the boat deteriorated. In 1996, the Prothero family of Niagara assisted the Bayfield Historical Society in purchasing the vessel and bringing her back home. Restoration began, and today Helen MacLeod II sits in a custom cradle in a barn at the Bayfield North Antiques and Flea Market. Though there is work still to be done, Helen MacLeod II carries 200 years of history with it while remaining the only fishing boat of its kind surrounding the Great Lakes.

Represented here is the Bayfield Boatyards Schooner, built by a Canadian boat builder Bayfield Boat Yard Limited originally based in Bayfield, Ontario, and later in nearby Clinton, Ontario. The company specialized in the design and manufacture of fibreglass sailboats. The company was founded by Ted Gozzard in 1970 and continued in business until a plant fire forced its closure in 1988.

About The Artist Robert Johnson

“After learning about this project, I knew I had to be a part of it. I love Bayfield, and being a fan of marine art, it seemed like a perfect fit. I’ve painted a number of schooners and fishing boats in the past – and taken great interest in researching the nautical history of Bayfield (and the Great Lakes surveying ship “Bayfield I”). I thought the landscape of Bayfield’s shoreline with the village in the background would make a great subject for my sail.”

BIO

Robert Johnson is a quintessential Ontario paint artist! He spends his time painting his favourite scenes throughout the province. From the city streets of Toronto to the tranquillity of Muskoka to the roar of Niagara Falls. Drawing inspiration from Mother Nature and classical architecture, Robert’s paintings pay tribute to his community at large. To date, his finely-crafted paintings have been exhibited at galleries and museums and are in worldwide collections. Robert has recently opened his own studio/gallery in a historic building located in the village of Hensall, where he teaches painting classes. Look for more paintings of Huron County and area coming soon.

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