

Published August 01 2010

## Pride of Baltimore II is a peek into War of 1812

Amid the buccaneers and swashbucklers who descended on Harbor Drive in Duluth this week were War of 1812 re-enactors, and some of the redcoats exchanged barbs with people as they walked by.

“They were saying they were the Brits,” said Elizabeth Nordell of Duluth. “And

I said, ‘Sorry you lost the war.’ And they said, ‘It’s still 1812.’”

The war didn’t end until three years later, and few fighting machines of the day had more to do with the swift ending than the famed Baltimore clippers.

Duluth has its own Baltimore clipper in port this week as part of the Tall Ships festival: the Pride of Baltimore II, a 157-foot schooner out of Baltimore and owned by the state of Maryland (ownership is being transferred to a nonprofit). Built in 1988, the ship is a favorite to win the Great Lakes Challenge Race being held in conjunction with tall ships festivals going on this summer throughout the Great Lakes.

There’s no prize money for winning the four-race Challenge, only trophies and plaques, but ask any of the competitors what it means to win, and you always get the same response.

“Bragging rights,” said Pride of Baltimore II first mate Alan Morse.

The Baltimore, which can reach speeds of up to

18 mph, isn’t used to losing. About the only thing that holds it back is when there’s no wind. That, and the handicap system the Challenge uses to keep the clippers in line with the lunkers.

The ship’s captain, Jamie Trost, was sightseeing with his wife on Saturday and wasn’t available for comment, but Morse was like a living encyclopedia as he gave fans a history lesson that afternoon.

The Pride of Baltimore II is closely modeled after the renowned Chasseur, a 16-gun, 150-man Baltimore clipper captained by Thomas Boyle, who became more brazen with each ship he captured. The ship was the U-boat of its day.

“Boyle sailed across to England, captured a vessel and released the crew under the condition they post a note on the door of the Lloyd’s of London saying that England was under a strict and rigorous U.S. blockade,” Morse said. “Then he proceeded to stay off the coast and capture like 17 more ships. And when he sailed back to Baltimore, the newspaper article said, ‘The Chasseur: the Pride of Baltimore,’ and that’s where the name came from.”

The Chasseur captured 36 British vessels during the War of 1812, second only to the Surprise’s 43. Privateers based in Baltimore captured more than 500 British ships during the war, enraging the British Empire to the point they made it a priority to try to eliminate the production factory. The defense of Fort McHenry inspired Francis Scott Key to compose the “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

The ship’s predecessor, the Pride of Baltimore, tragically sank in a white squall off Puerto Rico in 1986, taking her captain and three crew members with her. The Baltimore II and its 12-man crew will leave Duluth on Monday but will be back in the area later in the week giving private cruises.

“You’ve got to be careful,” Morse said. “With the original, everybody talks about how she was maybe too much of a replica, an old boat, stuff like that, but earlier this year, the Concordia, a steel hulled vessel, a huge, modern boat, was in a microburst, flooded and sank. That tells me: I don’t care what boat you’re on. When things go wrong, you’re gong to go down.”

## **THE NIAGARA: NAVY AMBASSADOR**

The Pride of Baltimore II isn’t the only ship back from 2008, or patterned after a ship from the War of 1812.

The US Brig Niagara is back with a mission: to prove its worth as an ambassador for the Navy after the state of Pennsylvania cut off its funding. There is a lot of camaraderie between the crews of the Baltimore and Niagara, with some members even switching boats.

The Niagara is a reconstruction of the brig Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry led to victory during the

Battle of Lake Erie on Sept. 10, 1813.

Dr. Tim McLeod, an orthopedic surgeon at Cloquet Community Hospital, is in his second summer serving as a doctor on the Niagara. For McLeod, it’s personal. The 64-year-old served as a Navy doctor for 33 years, retiring as captain. People can go to [usbrigniagara.com](http://usbrigniagara.com) to learn how they can help.

“This boat is living history,” McLeod said. “It’s got actual wood from Commodore Perry’s boat. There’s no replacement for that. The War of 1812 is kind of a forgotten war, but people have to realize how it helped define the border between the U.S. and Canada. If things didn’t work out the way they did, we might all be Canadian.”