



## Mackinac Boating Heritage Foundation

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PRESS RELEASE

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### **First Bayview Mackinac Winner to Race Again!**

On a hot July day in 1925 the 32 foot R-Class sloop *Bernida* rounded the Mackinac Island lighthouse to sail into history by winning the first Bayview Pt. Huron to Mackinac race.

Skipped by owner Russell J. Pouliot (1896-1956), the boat and its crew of four sailed the was one of only four boats in the 12-boat fleet that finished the race.

Its man crew had battled storm after storm to cross the line in just over 50 hours. Shortly after, almost mysteriously, the *Bernida* disappeared. This historic boat was discovered 75 years later by Toby Murray, a Mackinac Island resident, stored away in an old Frankfort, Michigan warehouse.

Bart Huthwaite, Commodore of the Mackinac Island Yacht Club, purchased the *Bernida*, moved her to St. Ignace and hired Irish Boat Works in Harbor Springs to do a restoration feasibility study.

The question: Could the *Bernida* be brought back to racing trim to compete in another Bayview Mackinac race?

The answer: It can!

However, Huthwaite soon learned the price tag for restoring the *Bernida* to a condition safe enough to race is a challenging \$175,000.

The Mackinac Boating Heritage Foundations has launched a state-wide campaign to raise the funds to do just that.

Some two years will be needed to complete the project. Restoration will be done in St. Ignace, just across from Mackinac Island, providing work for local residents.

“The *Bernida* is a sailing icon that symbolizes Mackinac Island’s dedication to preserving history,” says Commodore Huthwaite, head of the Mackinac Boating Heritage Foundation.

The Foundation is a non-profit group supported by the Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau, local Mackinac Island businesses, the Mackinac Island Yacht Club as well as other Great Lakes Boating Clubs.

“The Mackinac Island community is deeply interested in strengthening interest in the annual Mackinac races and sailing history at large,” says Huthwaite.

Bacardi U.S.A, a long-time sponsor of the Bayview Mackinac Race, is supporting the *Bernida* project. Local bartenders are creating their own *Bacardi Bernida* rum drinks to be sold at Mackinac Island bars and restaurants. Owners will be contributing a percentage to the *Bernida* restoration.

Bacardi is also co-hosting a brunch with the Mackinac Boating History Foundation at the Mackinac Island Yacht Club on Tuesday morning, July 26, at 10:00 A.M. Invitees will be Island notables, officials of Great Lakes Yacht Clubs, potential contributors and the press. The purpose will be to explain the goals of MBH and the *Bernida* project.

The *Bernida* will be on display on the Island at the end of the Bayview and Chicago Yacht Club races. Raffle tickets will be on sale as part of an effort to raise funds for the restoration.



projects being considered include:

1. Compiling a maritime history of the Mackinac Straits, an area that played a pivotal role in Great Lakes history.
2. Organizing a sail training program for local residents and students.
3. Raising funds to refurbish the Mackinac Island Harbor light that stands at the entrance to the harbor and now badly in need of repair.



The *Bernida* under sail in 1925. The R-Class 32-foot boat won the first Bayview Pt Huron to Mackinac Race in 1925. Plans are now under to restore and race the boat again.

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