

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: *Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau*

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ART: Find images of Niagara and Put-in-Bay at visitputinbay.com

PUT-IN-BAY (OH) – With the success of 2013's Battle of Lake Erie Bicentennial Celebration, and the island's seventh annual Pyrate Fest, it just seems natural that Put-in-Bay host a Maritime Celebration each year.

Through the generosity of the Put-in-Bay Jet Express and the Put-in-Bay Winery at the Doller Estate, Put-in-Bay will host its first of many Maritime Celebrations June 19-22.

The Jet Express and Put-in-Bay Winery have partnered to sponsor the US Brig Niagara for the third weekend in June this year and in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Niagara will be dry docked for maintenance in 2017.

"Without the support and financial commitment of the Jet Express and Put-in-Bay Winery we would not have a Maritime Celebration," said Maggie Beckford, Executive Director of the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau.

That commitment by both island businesses, and the Flagship Niagara League, allows for long term planning and promotion so the event will continue to grow, Beckford added.

Representatives from the chamber of commerce, the Perry Group (the Friends Group at Perry's Victory & International Peace Memorial), the Lake Erie Islands Historical Society and the National Park Service met after the 2013 Bicentennial to discuss forming an organization to plan and support an annual maritime festival at Put-in-Bay.

Beckford said the chamber agreed to be responsible for signing the Niagara contract and being Port Manager for Niagara's five visits, and for selling tickets for a dockside reception and a five-hour Day Sail aboard the brig.

"We made a commitment with Niagara while still looking for sponsors," Beckford said. "And then the Jet Express and Put-in-Bay Winery came to us and said they wanted to co-sponsor Niagara not just for 2015, but for the entire contract period. That's a large financial contribution to ensure this new island event will be successful."

Put-in-Bay has had a long-term relationship with the Niagara, hosting the vessel on her inaugural sail in 1991. This historic replica, and US Coast Guard training vessel, is a copy of the Brigantine captained by Jesse Elliott during the Battle of Lake Erie on September 10, 1813.

Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's flagship, The Lawrence, was dead in the water when he decided to strike his Dont (sic) Give Up The Ship motto flag and took a 20-minute ride in a longboat to the Niagara.

Perry took command of Niagara and engaged and defeated the British fleet in the following 15 minutes. Perry's victory gave American forces the momentum needed to win the country's second fight for independence in the War of 1812.

In 2009, the Niagara made an impromptu visit to the island and asked the chamber for assistance in selling Day Sails aboard the ship. For several years Niagara visited Put-in-Bay and the chamber helped fill the ship with all proceeds going to the Niagara.

"Niagara has made many impromptu and scheduled visits over the years," said Beckford. "The Jet Express has provided pump out services, assisted with repairs to some of the vessels here in 2013, and has always been a friend to Niagara's captain and crew.

"Put-in-Bay Winery released a Commodore Perry Chardonnay featuring the Niagara for the 2013 season and it's still a best seller," she added. "It seems Niagara, the Jet Express and Put-in-Bay Winery is meant to be."

The US Brig Niagara is scheduled to arrive at South Bass Island on Thursday, June 18. She will be docked on the pier adjacent to the Jet Dock in Put-in-Bay's downtown harbor. Tours of the ship will be given on Friday, June 19, from 11 am to 5 pm, and on Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 7 pm.

A dockside reception to greet Niagara's captain and crew, and take an informal tour of the ship, will be held on Friday at 7 pm. Tickets are \$50 per person and the event is open to the general public. The cost includes appetizers and beverages, and access to the Niagara.

On Monday, the Niagara will take 55 passengers on a sail around the islands. Tickets for the 5-hour Day Sail are \$100, however; Beckford says she is sure the sail will be sold out by June 1. Niagara keeps all the proceeds from ticket sales for ship tours, she added, and the sale of Day Sail tickets is split between the Flagship Niagara League and the host organization. Reception ticket money will offset the cost of the reception, including a fee charged by Niagara for the use of the ship.

Tickets can still be purchased at the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce's website, visitputinbay.com. There is a link for Advanced Ticket Sales on the navigation bar. Tickets can be picked up at the dock the day of each event.

The Put-in-Bay Chamber also moved its popular Pyrate Fest to the third week in June to help build the new Maritime Celebration. The seventh annual family friendly event continues to grow each year with more than 75 pyrate re-enactors in period costume participating this year, June 19-24. Find more information on Put-in-Bay, and Put-in-Bay events at visitputinbay.com.