

BULL & BEAR



LOA: 55' (28' LOD)

Class/Type: Sandbagger

Builder:

Independence Seaport Museum Workshop

Designer: Tom Brady

Launch Date: 1995 & 1996

Skipper:

Various Volunteer Skippers

Sandbagger sloops were popular work boats in the 19th century which were also sailed for pleasure. A descendant of shoal-draft sloops used in oyster fishing the shallow waters of New York Bay, they ranged anywhere from 20 to 30 feet in length, but had sail areas that were significantly disproportionate to their size. They were the extreme sailboats of their day, with a sailplan that was twice as long as their hull length. Because they were so shallow, all sandbaggers have very large centerboards which can be raised and lowered.



While working, crews of 10 or more men would use their catch as ballast, moving it from one

side to the other when tacking. It has been said that the first boat to get their catch to market got the best price, so a race ensued daily. People at the dock started placing bets on which boat would get home first. This evolved into sport, and instead of bags filled with oysters they used bags of sand, thus the name, sandbaggers. Actually it is said they used gravel so that the bags would not retain too much water.

From the 1860s to the 1890s sandbagger racing was a very popular sport from New York down the Atlantic coast and up to New Orleans, and also on the West coast in San Francisco. The exciting challenges would have watermen and amateur sailors racing for crowds of betting spectators. With few rules, sandbagger racing was always exciting. Stories have been told of sandbagger crews throwing extra sandbags into the water in light air to gain a bit more speed, along with the occasional extra crewmember!

BULL and *BEAR* are modern reproductions of sandbaggers based on [ANNIE](#), a sandbagger with a winning history launched in 1880 and raced in Georgia, Florida and Long Island Sound. Over 130 years later,

ANNIE

is still around, on display at

[Mystic Seaport Museum](#)

BULL and *BEAR* feature shorter spars with less sail area than the original in order to increase stability, so they can be comfortably used for a variety of community, group and educational sails by NSHOF. Watertight compartments and other features further increase their safety. While the hulls are wood fastened with bronze, the spars are made of carbon fiber wrapped in wood, which significantly reduces weight aloft while maintaining authenticity.

[Click here to watch a short documentary about *BULL* and *BEAR*.](#)