

## St. Petersburg Yacht Club re-launches regatta to Cuba

The historic race and associated events runs Feb. 25-March 5, 2017

St. Petersburg, Fla. — The St. Petersburg Yacht Club is poised to make history again. Both celebrating its storied past and looking to its future, the 107-year-old organization announced that it is re-launching the St. Petersburg-Habana Race, which the club staged from 1930 to 1959.

The club issued an official Notice of Race to the yachting world at noon today.

The regatta will start in downtown St. Petersburg on Feb. 28, 2017 and, after 284 nautical miles of competitive sailing, finish at the Hemingway Marina in Havana. An ensuing three days of festivities in Cuba will include an array of social events as well as the approximate 12-mile Morro Castle of Havana Regatta on March 4.

“All of us at this Yacht Club are looking forward to not only re-establishing this historic race, but to creating an exchange of fellowship between the St. Petersburg Yacht Club, Pinellas County and the City of St. Petersburg along with the Cuban government and the yachting world,” said St. Petersburg Yacht Club Commodore Richard Winning.

While the race certainly has social and political importance, it was certified by the Cuban government as a sporting event. Club officials expect top yacht competitors from around the country to participate. The field is capped at 70 boats in four classes, and must be at least 30 feet in length.

The race was first conceived in the late 1920s by George S. “Gidge” Gandy as a promotional event sorely needed with St. Petersburg mired in a housing bust prompted by the Great Depression. Eleven boats competed in the inaugural regatta, which started on March 30, 1930 at the St. Petersburg Municipal Pier. The winner finished in 41 hours, 42 minutes.

The race, which became one of St. Petersburg’s signature events, was suspended in 1942 due to WWII, and resumed in 1946. Military and political unrest in Cuba threatened the event in the latter 1950s, and it was last run in 1959, as gun-wielding revolutionaries patrolled the streets of Havana. Recent breakthroughs in U.S.-Cuba relations prompted club officials to re-institute one of its most historically significant events.

The St. Petersburg-Habana Race will also include festivities in St. Petersburg, starting on Sat. Feb. 25 with a street party near the Yacht Club, and including Historical VIP party, a champagne bon voyage and other pageantry.

The regatta begins near the St. Petersburg Pier at 10a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 28.

Boaters interested in further detail about the competition can click <http://www.spyc.org/> for more information and access the Notice of Race.