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[Back](#)

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PT 48 lives on in Ulster County

KINGSTON – It's a long way from Florida or war in the Pacific Theater, but PT 48 still survives.

PT 48, originally launched in 1941 and built by the Elco in Bayonne, NJ, now sits, wrapped and out of the water alongside the frozen Rondout Creek in Kingston.

The boat arrived a week ago from Florida and joins a historical collection of three other PT boats in Fleet Obsolete, which is based on the Rondout waterfront and owned by Robert Iannucci.

"It's a small fleet of PT boats, which he has collected over the last two years," said Tim Ivory, the project director of PT boat restoration for Fleet Obsolete.



Ivory, with drydocked PT48

And Ivory said its unknown how and when the boat will see more service. "How it ends up being used in the Rondout, I really don't have a clear vision of what we will do with the boat," he said. "The reality is that it is a historical piece. The main importance is the boat itself. How it develops after that remains to be seen, but I am sure it will find its place in life again."

PT 48 was launched in 1941 before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. After the United States declared war on Japan, the torpedo boat was assigned to the Pacific Theater, where it engaged an enemy destroyer on its first combat mission.

It fired at a Japanese transport, observed a pair of explosions and may have sunk the boat. It conducted maneuvers with PT 109 when John F. Kennedy was believed to be on the crew of that boat.

The 77-foot PT 48, constructed from wood, was later rescued by PT 109 and then decommissioned in 1944 and sent to a training school in Melville, RI.

After the war, PT 48 saw leisure duty in Florida in the tourism industry before being rescued by Fleet Obsolete. PT 728, which is part of Fleet Obsolete, is now a tourism boat on the Rondout.



PT728 patrols Rondout Creek
Right, Fleet Obsolete's home



Ivory said PT 48's future is unknown other than certain destruction. But restoring it, he said, will be very expensive and could cost as much as \$5 million.

"Nobody has that kind of money sitting around the pump into it willy-nilly," he said.

The boat is believed to have the most extensive service record of any surviving vessel of its kind. Drawings and plans are available through the National Archives, and Ivory it may take years of research and restoration to bring the boat back to its original condition.

"There are no molds left for the original fittings. Its original configuration during the war had been modified extensively," said Ivory.

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[Back](#)