

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROCHESTER YACHT CLUB 7

Our Club had its beginning in 1877*. In that year, thirteen gentlemen organized themselves as Directors of a society, the object being "the encouragement and promotion of Yachting."

A Clubhouse was erected, the first of four, on the beach in Summerville and was formally opened on June 23, 1877. Newspaper accounts reported that a Regatta, open to all Monroe County boats was held in July.

Historical record has a way of leaving gaps in recording, and so it was with R.Y.C.

In 1886, Incorporation papers were filed. In that year George H. Newell was Commodore, Matthew Cartwright, Vice Commodore; Charles A. Worts, Secretary; Edmund Occumpaugh, Treasurer and Edward N. Walbridge, Captain.

In 1887, land was cleared on the east bank of the Genesee River. This gave the Club an anchorage and was the beginning of our current basin. That year the roster showed 117 members, fifteen (15) Sail Yachts and eight (8) Steam Yachts.

It is not quite clear as to what happened to the first Clubhouse. Records indicate that it might have been destroyed by fire. So in 1889, the second Clubhouse was constructed on the west bank of the river.

The Club had grown to 157 members, twenty-nine Sailing Yachts and seven Steam or naphtha launches. Such well known boats as "Madge", "Majel", "Velnelle", "Ripple" and "Nox" appeared on the roster.

In 1902, another move found the Clubhouse back in Summerville, just east of the east pier. It was a three story structure with a large veranda. This building later was to become known as, Popp's Inn and survived until the early 1950's.

In 1908 a plan was developed to improve the basin, the area was formerly a swamp. Some work was done in 1909, and lockers were added, however the dredging process is an on going thing.

In February 1912, the first issue of "The Compass" was printed with much fanfare and an Annual Budget of eight hundred dollars.

During 1917, a total of 77 new members were admitted to the Club against 7 resignations. About then, a Star Fleet was established with interclub racing with Cleveland Yacht Club.

In 1922 the fourth and current Clubhouse was built on the east bank, just north of the swing bridge. This Clubhouse was substantially remodeled in 1953, again in 1973. It has accommodated many a function in its sixty odd years.

At the annual meeting in 1923, the initiation fee was raised to \$30.00, the Dues \$24.00 per annum and the membership of the Club be limited to 500 people.

In 1925, the "R" Class came to the Club with a fleet of four boats, they were to become the backbone of the Clubs Racing activities, also in that year, the Club elected to membership, Sir Thomas Lipton, the famous Tea merchant and 5 time challenger for the America's Cup. He presented R.Y.C. with a Trophy that bears his name. We still race for the Cup under L.Y.R.A. and still in "R" boats as the original Deed of Gift called for.

1926 saw the start of the Rochester Junior Yacht Club.

For 1933, dues were dropped back from \$50.00 to \$25.00 per year and the initiation fee was waived. Low water through this period required continual dredging and in 1935 it was reported that during the year, 15,000 yards were dredged at a cost of \$.50 per yard.

In the early 30's it was decided by some of our astute members that we needed a new design for our Dinghy Fleet. At that time we were sailing Cat rigged boats, while the Canadians and British were Sloop rigged. A delegation went to England and commissioned UFF-Fox to design a 14 foot Dinghy. This little craft proved so successful that in 1939 the International 14 Association was formed at R.Y.C. and we became Fleet Number One. In interclub competition, they raced for the Emerson and Douglas Trophies and at R.Y.C. they raced for the Baker and Ford Cups. The 14's went on to become World famous and to this day are still actively being raced.

For over fifty years, R.Y.C. was the dominating factor in Canada Cup contests. The Cup was won first by R.Y.C.'s "Genesee" in 1899, sailing under Chicago Yacht Clubs Burgee. It came to Rochester in 1903 having been won by "Irondequoit". It was successfully defended in 1905 by "Iroquois", in 1907 by "Seneca" and in 1930 it was "Thisbee", first of the 8 metre Yachts. In 1932 and 1934 it was "Conewago", she has the distinction of being the only boat to have won the Cup twice. It came to an end in 1954 when "Iskareen" lost to R.C.Y.C.'s "Venture".

1936 was a big year at R.Y.C. In June we sent eight men and three of our new 14 foot Dinghies to Europe. They first raced in Denmark, then Oslo, Norway. Scotland was next, then on to Cowes, Isle of Wight, England. They returned home after two months with a basket of Trophies, including the Gold Cup, taken at Cowes. Another triumph that year was bring the Worlds Star Class Championship to R.Y.C., our first Worlds. In L.Y.R.A. competition, we took the Mabbett and Lipton Cups. To top it off, we went to Chicago and brought home the Richardson Cup. In 1936, R.Y.C. came of age.

In 1939 the first of the Six Meter's arrived on the scene. Over the years they would develop into the greatest inter-club racing yet seen on the Lake.

Names such as Stork, Jill, Mist, Starwagon, Circe, Fun, Meteor and Goose became prominent in the basin. Fleets grew at Youngstown, Hamilton and Toronto. They raced in L.Y.R.A. for the Alarm, Castle and George Cups. At home they fought for the Todd, Colonel Pond, Hornbeck and Mcowen Trophies.

A 1941 news report stated "Now many of the best sixes are on Lake Ontario and it is well on the way to becoming the worlds Center of the Class".

In the mid fifties, we had the North Americans on the Lake with boats from as far away as California. The winner went to Norway at the invitation of the King and Queen. For those who experienced them, there will never be anything to replace the "Sixes" Golden Years.

1940 saw the membership at 260, the fleet numbered 115 boats, both Sail and Power. At this time, there were twenty-four employed on boats in the basin, with one having five.

1941 — Due to the War, Yachting at R.Y.C. leveled off and L.Y.R.A. cancelled all activities on the Lake.

In 1945 the Fleet included 106 boats:

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| 2 - Comets | 5 - Lightnings |
| 4 - Six Meters | 11 - Star Class |
| 3 - Snipes | 11 - Miscellaneous Sail |
| 6 - Dinghies | 24 - Power Boats |
| 4 - "R" Boats | 36 - Auxiliary Sail |

It was in 1948 that R.Y.C. came into prominence. This was the Rochester Race, the longest fresh water race in the world. In the years of its running, it rated with the Port Hudson and Chicago Mackinac races and with these races formed a Summer Yacht Racing circuit.

In the early 50's we had high water as we did again in the early 70's.

It was about 1953 that the Dragon Fleet arrived, at its peak we had eleven boats. The inter-Club Trophy was the John Foster Dulles Cup. The Mayors, Klaus Baess, Darnell and Past Commodore's Trophies, were fought for at home. Yes, and after all these years, the Class is still very much alive.

Through the history of the Club, we have raced custom built boats, rule, built "P"s & "R"s, then the Meter boats "8"s and "6"s. The next classes to come were the One Design, Star, Dragon, International 14's, Jolly Boats, Rhodes Bantams, Knarrs, 420's, Tempest, Solings, Ensigns, 505's, Lasers and now Windsurfers.

During the late 60's and early 70's R.Y.C. carried out a most extensive physical expansion program. It involved all new lockers, sheet piling the entire basin, a new steel shed for winter storage, tennis courts, a swimming pool and a complete restoration of the Clubhouse. In 1982 we purchased the Yacht Center property adjoining the Club.

1977 was our Centennial year and we went all out. The Commodore assigned a task to each flag officer. The Vice Commodore was given the responsibility of putting the hundred years in print. It was a monumental task, however; the result would do any Club proud. We had a special Centennial Burgee R.C.Y.C. gave us a beautiful silver cup. That year we hosted L.Y.R.A. Also we had a formal ball that was well attended by the membership.

1979 - R.Y.C. has been a moving factor in many sailing events. We have hosted L.Y.R.A., Districts and National Regattas. Also, we have had World Championships, 1936 the Star Class, 1948 International 14's, 1956 Rhodes Bantams, 1973 Flying Dutchmans, 1975 Worlds Dragons. The year 1979, however, was to be outstanding. We hosted the "Women's Worlds". They raced in 420's and Lasers. This was the first Women's Worlds ever held in the United States.

In 1982 we were again to send an R.Y.C. boat to Europe, as we did in 1936. However, this time it was an 8 Meter. "Iroquois" went to Norway and came home a world champion and if that wasn't enough to prove a point, they repeated it in 1983.

Through the years R.Y.C.'s boats have raced off the lake to Chicago in 1899. Then through the years, S.O.R.C. saw the R.Y.C. Burgee in the 60's and 70's, six times in the Bermuda Race, five times in the Chicago Mackinac, and eight times in the Port Huron Mackinac. As for our cruising boats, we currently have two in the Mediterranean.

We can thank our founding fathers for the great history that R.Y.C. has had over the past 100 odd years and our object is still the same as theirs; "The encouragement and promotion of yachting."

*Reference - William F. Peck's History of Rochester, N.Y. 1884 Frank C. Diem Club Historian