

One-Design Sailing

The earliest reported example of one-design sailing was in 1878 when Water-Wags began racing on Dublin Bay, Ireland. Other one-design boats followed, but these were typically restricted to the clubs who raced them, as each club developed its own design. Clubs typically opted for a distinctive one-design fleet suited to their particular weather conditions that differed from other one-designs. Many such designs were initiated, though not many lasted beyond a few seasons. It was not until after WWI that inter-club, class racing became common as we know it.

Shattemuc participated in some of these early initiatives for class sailing. The following reviews our club's one-design sailing history.

---Bill Sparacin

The early Shattemuc sailboats of the 1880's and 1890's were sandbaggers. They were high performance, one-off, over-canvassed racing dinghies that ruled the river. Shattemuc's *Columbia*, *Irex* and *Orient* were "peers of anything of their inches afloat". They raced often and could not find rivals in other organizations¹. After a short, few seasons they had to be content with fighting it out among themselves. This was a common theme at various boat clubs and discouraged the growth of competitive sailing.

By 1900 the internal combustion engine appeared in boats and sparked a sustained euphoria of powerboats and

¹ In those days handicapping was based on length only and could not adjust for differences in design or sail area. At Shattemuc it was "one minute to the foot"

powerboat racing. As a consequence of this, and the absence of a more comprehensive system of handicap racing as we know it today, sailboat racing waned. By the turn of the century motorboats had completely replaced sailboats at the club.

Class Z. The absence of sailboats persisted until about 1910 when Harry M Carpenter, was elected president of the Hudson River Yacht Racing Association (HRYRA). Harry had been a member of the early Shattemuc Canoe Club and would later be Commodore of Shattemuc. He and other Shattemuc members of HRYRA arranged for that organization to promote the formation of a one-design fleet of sailboats among the 15 clubs along the river. The idea was for each club to build a sailboat of pre-determined length and sail area and compete in HRYRA's annual Regatta, which took place every Labor Day. It was intended to revive interest in sailboat racing by making competitive boats more accessible.

The one-design concept was not new to this area. A 21-foot one-design sloop had already been drawn by Charles D. Mower and built in 1907 by Thomas Fearon of Yonkers for the Tower Ridge Yacht Club of Hastings². Probably based on the success of that design, the (Tower Ridge?) Mower was selected by HRYRA. A total of 16 such boats were built. The Shattemuc Yacht and Canoe Club was enthusiastic about the project. Several club members contributed funds for the boat, and the rest of the money came from the treasury. They would christen her *Shattemuc*.

Shattemuc was constructed at Tarrytown in 1910 and delivered to the club in mid August. She had an overall length of 21 feet and a water line length of 15 feet. Her crew needed to be trained, as it was "practically impossible to get an experienced crew from the young members of the club as none of them have

² It was Mower's design #79. A set of his plans is on file at the Mystic Seaport Museum

any knowledge of the handling of sailing craft, the catboat and sloop having given away to the motor boat during the past twenty years". Within a month, however, she was ready to race in HRYRA's annual September regatta, which was hosted that year by the Shattemuc Yacht and Canoe Club.

The 1910 HRYRA Regatta was a major event for the town. Boats begin arriving in ones and twos and soon a large fleet was anchored off the village. The clubhouse was packed with spectators and "a gravel barge having chairs placed upon its deck was anchored between the club house and the power house dock for the accommodation of the club's guests, who numbered over three hundred". "Launches bearing the word 'Police' in big black letters scurried about driving the scores of heavily laden yachts from the race course." The motor boat races were started first, followed by a double paddle canoe race and then the sailboat races.

When the one-design's turn came, the *Shattemuc* started in a fleet of twelve Mowers. Surprisingly, the three 1910 Mowers finished behind those built in 1908. It had been expect that all would be exactly alike, but the results showed "a finer line and less beam was used in the latter [1908 Mowers] division". This was an unfortunate situation and lead HRYRA to re-organize the Mowers into separate classes: Class Z (1908) and Class Z (1910).

In the following years the *Shattemuc* competed against the 1910 Mowers. These were the *Rival*, owned by M. Collyer of Newberg, and the *Tappan* owned by a syndicate at Tarrytown. The *Shattemuc* proved to be the fastest among them. Her crew competed with a passion. In 1912 they raced at the Shattemuc regatta in the teeth a howling gale. A newspaper article of the event noted:

"The boats were bunched at the start and as they worked away toward the first buoy, a thunder storm swept down the river and the boats were met with a

succession of squalls. After rounding the first buoy the boats scudded before the wind down the river, with the wind developing to the proportion of a howling gale. When about opposite the High Stack, the *Shattemuc* heeled over, plunging her main boom into the waves, and she was unable to right herself." The crew clung to the capsized craft until they were rescued. A few minutes after, the *Tappan* capsized and her crew was likewise rescued."

The *Shattemuc* competed in subsequent races and regattas through 1916, but no records of her ultimate fate are available.

Indian Class. In 1912 HRYRA adopted a program for one-design racing within clubs along the Hudson River. The following year they selected the new Indian Class, a 20' dingy drawn in William Gardner's office³ and similar to his earlier 17', fixed keel Manhasset Bay Bug designed and built in 1906. A picture of a Bug is shown below. A contemporary account⁴ noted the Indian looked similar to the Bug, but was more akin to an early Star, which was designed a little later by Gardner's office in 1910.



A Manhasset Bay Bug similar to the Indian sailed at Shattemuc

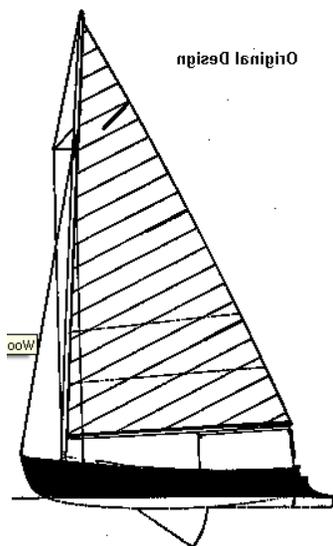
Thorpe Brothers at Nyack built a small fleet of Indians for Shattemuc members in 1913. They were

³ Not to be confused with John Alden's 1924 design of a 21'2" Indian Class boat, which had a centerboard.

⁴ "Forty Years Among the Stars" by Commodore George W. Elder, Chapter III - Geneology of the Star

inexpensive, chine-built, arc-bottomed sailboats with a fixed keel. Sporting names like *Red Feather*, *Yuma*, *Onhakey* and *Yixa*, their sail emblem was an Indian Chief's profile with a feathered headdress. The sails were not numbered, but each hull was painted a distinctive color to distinguish them. The boats were sailed in weekly races and in regattas by the younger members of the club. Prizes were established and much enthusiasm was generated. In 1913 they raced eight of their Indians at Larchmont Yacht Club in their Annual Race Week Regatta. This new activity gave fresh impetus to sailing at the club.

Wood Pussy. In the late 1940's and early 1950's Shattemuc sailed a fleet of six or seven one-design Wood Pussy's. These were a 13½ foot long centerboard catboats with a 6 foot beam designed by Philip Rhodes in 1943. They sported names like: Blue Dot and Blue Star (belonging to Dr. Charles L. Briant and his son, respectively), Pee Wee and Stinky. Dr. Briant won a trophy at the 1948 Labor Day event at Nyack Boat (?) Club.



An original Wood Pussy

Lightings, Penguins and more. In the early 1950's and 1960's Shattemuc hosted various one-design fleets. These included a small number of Thistles and Penguins in the early 1960s, Turnabouts and Lightings. There were actually two Lightning fleets at Ossining in 1951, Fleet #172 at Shattemuc and the Black Hawk fleet at the Ossining Boat and Canoe Club. The owners of the Turnabouts let

the club use their boats as part of a Junior Sailing program.

420s A small number of club members purchased International 420 sailboats in the mid 1960s. The boat was designed only a few years before that by Andre Cornu in France, where it first developed a following. The design soon spread to Britain and to the US. Shattemuc members were among the first to buy the boat in America. The 420 is sloop rigged, with a planing hull, tapered metal mast, centerboard, spinnaker and trapeze. It is 420 centimeters long, giving it its name. Alt: Eponymously, it is 420 centimeters long.



Our Junior sailing program began using members' 420's in the late 1960's. The program offered two, 4-week summer sessions. It also offered Saturday races for adults and alternate Saturday races for juniors. Gradually the club purchased 420's for the Sailing Academy's use. A dozen boats were in use by 1971. Over the years the 420 has been our most enduring one-design sailboat, providing continuous class sailing for juniors for the past 40 years. During this time, the Academy has turned out more than a thousand well-trained sailors. The Academy currently offers a balance of one-design boats for its students including a more robust Club 420, an Optimist Pram and O'pen Bics.

In recent years we have hosted other one-design racing fleets. In the mid 1990's we had a fleet of JY15's sailed by young adults. A little later we hosted the Columbia Sailing Team, whose members practiced with our Sailing Academy juniors in the evenings, after classes, using our 420's.

In return they maintained the boats and helped with club needs. For a few years some of our younger members raced International 14's and Lasers.