

Published Articles
Of
Shattemuc Yacht Club
1946-Present
at
Ossining, NY
~

03.22.1961

Shattemuc Yacht Club: Donna Destroyed Dock. In 1868 20 men gathered along the banks of the Hudson on many pleasant summer weekends for canoeing and sailing and the common bond that existed among them soon ripened into friendship. The friends established no formal relationship but they were known as a band of fun-loving weekend sailors and their friendship was the basis for a club formed and incorporated in 1884. It was on June 28, 1884 that 24 men banded together to form the Shattemuc Canoe Club².

The name "Shattemuc" was chosen from the Indian word for the Hudson River... "The river that flows both ways". Two years after the founding of the club, the members built a boat house which served as a congenial gathering place for the members until it burned³ down in 1914.

The first commodore of the Shattemuc Canoe Club was the Rev. Wilson S Phraner. The Rev. Mr. Phraner served as commodore until 1895 when the Shattemuc Canoe Club joined with the Sing Sing Yacht Club to form the Shattemuc Yacht and Canoe Club⁴.

The Sing Sing Yacht Club was founded by 60 members on Oct. 25 1887, and was incorporated on Oct 18, 1888. The two clubs joined informally in 1895 and on April 1, 1902, the two clubs were incorporated as one⁵.

Rebuilt in 1907. The combined membership under the hand of Commodore J Herbert Carpenter, Capt. William M Carpenter and Purser Thomas J Hand⁶, pitched in to rebuild the exiting clubhouse in 1907 and leased

Camellia Dock in Sing Sing for \$75 per year.

The craft that the early members commended were far from imposing. The canoes were made of canvas and paper stretched over rattan rigs. The first recorded race for Shattemuc was a three mile Class B sailing event that was won by a Mohican named Wackenhager in 40 minutes.

Soon after New Year's Day in 1914, the newly rebuilt clubhouse was totally destroyed by fire. The Shattemuc sailors were without a meeting place for a while but they soon purchased a two-story boathouse that would serve.

The boathouse, then located in Oscawana, was slipped from its mooring⁷, mounted on a barge and towed to its present site.

In 1937 another crisis faced the members of Shattemuc. The paid up membership had slipped from over 100 to 11. The club could not continue to exist with such a small membership and the small band of members started a drive for new blood.

Robert M Akin Jr. who spear-headed the drive for members, was successful in his quest and was held on as commodore of the club for the next nine years. Within those years the paid up membership reached 150 during the war.

Member servicemen, during both World War II and the Korean conflict, found Shattemuc ready to welcome them home with open arms. All servicemen on leave who were members of the club could eat and drink at the club, free.

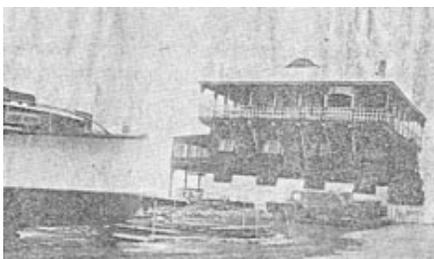
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The club has grown from 24 canoe owning members in 1884 to 150 members today, with 75 boats, sail and power. Last September, Hurricane Donna destroyed Shattemuc's dock, and sent many of the boats moored there down the Hudson. The boats were recovered, although some had capsized in the rough water, but the dock is not yet completely rebuilt.

As their ancestors did when a crisis arose, the present sailor of Shattemuc are taking action to repair their club and install a marina. The funds for such an operation are not readily available, but the clubhouse has no mortgage and the members expect to soon have enough money to begin work on another project that will keep Shattemuc going for the next 80 years.

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The Citizen Register

¹ The blue burgee belonged to the Canoe Club. The red burgee was kept.

² This text was apparently taken from the 1951 Golden Jubilee article published by the same paper.

³ The Sing Sing Yacht Club house burned down in 1914.

⁴ J Herbert Carpenter was first commodore. The club dissolved about 1889, but re-organized 1896

⁵ These events did not happen

⁶ The founding fathers of the Shattemuc Canoe Club, 1884

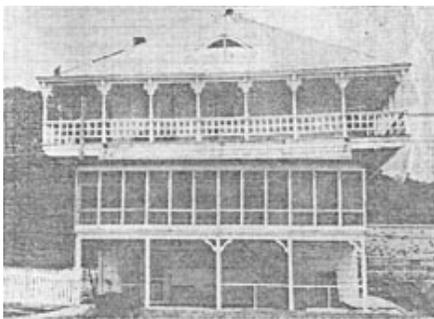
⁷If the clubhouse was afloat when purchased it would not need to be lifted on to barges. .

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The Ossining Register
08.28.68

Shattemuc Club Leans Towards Charm. Like the Tower of Pisa, Ossining's Shattemuc Yacht Club leans, but it will not fall. Neither can anything be done to level it, if anyone would want to. It has become part of the charm of the place. The only time it becomes inconvenient is when you have things on your dinner table that tend to slide down toward the bottom.

The Shattemuc Yacht club has gone under two other names before becoming what it is today. It was founded⁹ in December 1888 under the name of Sing

Sing Yacht Club with a charter membership of 35 and a fleet of three catboats. In 1889 the first clubhouse was erected on the present site, but during the Ossining fires¹⁰ of 1912, it burned to the ground. Largely through the efforts of Harry M Carpenter, the members bought the Oscawana clubhouse which had been condemned by the New York Central Railroad.

It was loaded on a barge to be towed downriver, but in the loading process, had been dropped eight feet. The fact that it survived the fall without damage is testimony to the strength of the building, says Albert Brieant, of 32 Ferris Place, Ossining, the oldest living member of the club.

When the clubhouse was relocated, once more it would be in a foreign element from the earth. First water, now air: the original building was raised one story to accommodate a storage place for the canoes. A few years later, the northeast piling¹¹ sank into the mud and gave the clubhouse its renowned tilt.

The second name came about when Sing Sing was renamed Ossining. According to Mr. Brieant, the people of the town of Sing Sing became tired of being associated with the nearby prison. (Sing Sing is a corruption of the Indian tribal name Sint Sinc). The year that Sing Sing officially became Ossining, the Sing Sing Yacht Club became the Shattemuc Yacht and Canoe Club of Ossining. Shattemuc is Indian, again, for "the river that rises in the mountains and flows to the sea".

By this time the fleet had grown to an astonishing 16 sailboats and 20 "steam and power boats of various designs" according to a news clipping of the time. The membership had also risen to a roster of 60. The club had adopted an insignia: two crossed flags, one red triangle with a red five-pointed star on a

white triangle background, for the yachting division; and a blue rectangle¹² with a white boarder for the canoe division. Today the Shattemuc insignia is just the red triangular flag.

Mr. Brieant joined the club somewhere around 1906. He said that he had bought a canoe and was keeping it where Westerly Marina is today. One day he was leaving when he happened upon an argument between two boys and this prompted Mr. Brieant to apply for membership in the Shattemuc Yacht and Canoe Club. He said, "the young men were using such foul language that I thought what would happen if I wanted to bring a girl down here to go canoeing. So the next day I applied for membership in Shattemuc". From 1909 to 1939, Albert Brieant served the yacht club in the capacity of treasurer. When he resigned from that post he was elected to be an honorary life member.

During the first¹³ year of World War I, 1914, resignations poured in until there were only eight paying members at \$25 per year. For four years this continued until the end of the war. In 1918, the victory dinner held was a huge success and once again membership mounted. Mr. Brieant made it very plain, however, that the only reason there is a Shattemuc today is because of the love and devotion of many of its early members; members who contributed land, money and time to keep the club going. The club was originally¹⁴ situated on only 75 feet of waterfront.

What about Shattemuc today? The name was officially change again about 1945 to the Shattemuc Yacht Club Inc. and today, the full membership roster includes some 75 names. The new facilities include a pool and an expanded marina with room for 20 dry sailing boats, 55 motor boats, and 35 sail boats. Barges which will be replaced in a few years have provided a quite shelter. Various rendezvous and

⁸ The blue burgee belonged to the Canoe Club. The red burgee was kept.

⁹ Incorporated. It was founded the year before as the Sing Sing Boat Club.

¹⁰ 1914. There were local arsons at that time, but the Shattemuc fire was reported to be accidental.

¹¹ The clubhouse was supported on cribs, with one line of piles to the south. It was the cribs that settled

¹² triangle

¹³ A substantial member roll existed even in 1915. Membership probably declined after America entered the war in 1917.

¹⁴ 50 feet originally, 75 feet later.

entertainments are spotlighted through the year. Every Sunday races are held for the cruising class in a Nyack-Shattemuc meet. The plans for the future are basic beautification of the grounds.

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The Citizen Register
11.30.1973
by Rob Kelley

Shattemuc Club Razed. Ossining's Shattemuc Yacht Club was destroyed early today in a spectacular fire that was visible for miles.

Firemen expected to be at the site until mid-day, hosing down the smoldering remains. A two-story skeleton frame, all that remained after the intense blaze, was razed this morning by a bulldozer.

The building was engulfed in flames when firemen arrived, at about 4 am, according to Fire Chief Lloyd Davis. He estimated the flames were shooting some 50 feet above the roof and said the inferno was so hot his men couldn't get very close with their hoses. The intense heat melted one fire trucks taillight lenses.



Only beams remained before the bulldozer came Nov 30 '73

The frame was still smoking this morning as Penn Central commuters passed on their way to work. Firemen were directing streams of water at a flaring jet of flame on a small propane tank, midway between the Yacht Club and the railroad tracks.

The propane flame burned itself out shortly after 10:30 a.m. the chief said. Luckily, a safety valve on the tank reacted to the heat and allowed the gas to burn off slowly, instead of exploding all at once, he said.

Commuter trains were reported a half an hour late because power was temporarily cut off when the fire ignited a power line and parts of a utility pole and a power tower. Only the railroad was affected by the power cutoff. Davis said.



The Croton Fire Department alarm was sounded at about 4:15 am, when an observer's perspective made him believe the fuel storage area at Harmon Yards was ablaze. The error was discovered, however, before the Croton trucks rolled, according to Croton Police.

Cause of the fire has not been determined by the Fire Department. Chief Davis said he believed no one was inside the club during the blaze.

He also said no injuries were reported among the 175 to 200 firemen who responded, representing the department's nine companies. Two fire trucks stood at the ready at the fire scene in case another fire broke out at the same time.

Ironically, the club had no fire alarm system this week, according to Alan Hockman, a member. He reported the alarm system never had worked satisfactorily and was out for repairs. It was due to be reinstalled next week. He said.

The club's original house was destroyed by fire in January, 1914, 30 years after the club was founded.

This early structure was replaced soon after by a two-story boat house brought down the river by barge. The structure which was destroyed was three stories

tall. The charred frame which the bulldozer razed this morning extended only two floors.

The third and second floors collapse during the blaze, leaving a pile of smoldering rubble which Chief Davis said would burn for days unless it were turned over and doused with water repeatedly, which is why he called the bulldozer.

Ossining village police first learned of the fire at about 3:45 a.m. from a telephone call.

The blaze was so well along when firemen arrived that they knew the structure could not be saved.

They strung 3000 to 4000 feet of hose, the fire chief said, a figure which he stressed was a "guess". The hoses ran from a fire hydrant near the bridge over the railroad.



Spotlights powered by generators plus the fire itself provided the light for the operation.

Coffee was provided during the cold early hours by the Red Cross

A corner of a nearby barge was sparked by the intense heat, but firemen hacked the burnt parts with a fire axe and knocked the sparks down into the Hudson River.

Much of the blaze was under control by about 5:30 a.m. with only a corner of the building still flaming, although much of the remains were smoldering thickly. Firemen focused hoses onto areas where the flames tried to start up again, with the pressure of the water ripping off sections of wood which dropped into the rubble.

At its height, the fire was visible from much of the village, according to First Assistant Chief Gunnar Neilson.

Neilson and Second Assistant Chief George Losee stayed through to at least midmorning with the chief continuing to assist in the final aspects of the operation.

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The Citizen Register
11.30.1973
by Beth Smith

Buildings may topple but memories live on. The Shattemuc Yacht Club building is gone, but the memories of its people, its atmosphere and its history live on in the minds and hearts of its members.

“Shattemuc used to be the social center of Ossining” today recalled Mrs. Charles Briant, whose father was a member before the turn of the century.

“It was a little snobbish, perhaps. They use to call it ‘Westchester’s Little White House’ and people would break their necks to try and become members.”

The club was probably a union of two clubs, the Shattemuc Canoe Club, founded in 1884, and the Sing Sing Yacht Club. In 1902 the club was officially named the Shattemuc Yacht and Canoe club.

Franklin Brandreth was the first commodore according to the club’s oldest living male member, Robert Akin, and Gilbert M Todd was vice commodore.

The original building, built in 1890¹⁵ was destroyed by fire in 1914.

A two-story boathouse was brought downriver shortly after by barge and tugboat; members are not sure exactly where the structure was originally located. Oscawana, the Vanderbilt mansion, Cold Spring and Beacon are a few suggestions. Present Commodore Stephen Mishkin said he was pretty sure it was Newburgh¹⁶.

The boathouse was jacked up and another floor was built underneath it; half was on dry land and the other half

of the building was supported on pilings.¹⁷

Club members use to joke affectionately about the “list” of the old building’s floors. Moving around the clubhouse interior gave people a nautical feel, and newcomers to the bar worried they had already had too much.

The bar was a point of pride with members; they had built it about 80 years ago. It was a handsome structure, made of mahogany and polished like a mirror. Trophies ranging from the traditional loving cup to a brightly polished cuspidor engraved with winners’ names, formed part of the interior decoration.

Alan Hockman, a member, said the building destroyed by fire early today contained sails and other boat equipment, “a tremendous amount of liquor” a TV, memorabilia and photographs that went back 75-80 years. The clubhouse -- which has been estimated at 75-100 years old -- had a history of fires. According to Akin, who has been a member since the early 1920’s and was commodore from 1938 to 1948, the dock used to catch fire once in a while from smoker’s carelessness.

In the late 1930’s lightning struck the building and burned a hole in the attic, Akin recalls.

“Sometime in the early 1950’s, he went on “the club got a new oil burner but didn’t insulate it enough from the pine beams on the ceiling of the floor underneath” Akin remembered someone coming over to him and his friends while he was eating lunch and asking for a nickel for a phone call to the fire department.

“I don’t have a nickel “ said Akin. “Well, make it a quarter” said the other man. “Take a look outside”. Akin did

¹⁷ Most was supported on stone filled timber cribs placed on the burned remains of the 1889 clubhouse. The remainder was supported on a line of piles along its south side.

so, and saw smoke pouring out of the building

“Those were all little fires” said Akin. “They were always put out right away”. “That club has a great history,” he continued. “Everyone got along with everyone else. No one ever got mad . If anyone got mad, we threw him out.”

“I’m sort of heartbroken it’s gone,” said Mrs. Briant. Her husband and son were both past commodores. “I think it’s just deplorable”.

“It had so much tradition and charm,” said Commodore Mishkin, who watched the building burn this morning.

Will another building be built? “I have no idea”, said Mrs. Briant, “I should hope so.”

Commodore Mishkin said an emergency club board meeting has been scheduled for Saturday, to decide about future plans. There had been talk of renovation or replacement before the building burned, he said, but “most members had a sentimental attachment to the club building “

Alan Hockman, when asked if the club would get a new structure up, said “Oh, yes.” He agreed there had been discussion at a membership meeting earlier this year about renovation of the old building or the construction of a new one.

“It’s always a tossup, though,” he mused. “What do you do with a landmark?”

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The Citizen Register
12.01.1973
by G S Thompson

What next for razed boat club? What’s next for Shattemuc? The historic yacht club in Ossining burned to the ground Friday when flames engulfed its good wooden walls and frame.

Now the club must decide what to do. Alan Hockman of the club said today that it might be quite a while before a new clubhouse is built.

¹⁵ 1889

¹⁶ It came from Oscawana

He said the Shattemuc Yacht Club board of directors was to meet today to discuss the situation, but it was extremely doubtful any decision toward building a new clubhouse would be made.

Hockman said that ironically the club had been considering whether or not to spend a substantial amount of money to renovate the old building or to build a new clubhouse. A decision was to be reached by June.

Now the question is whether or not the club can finance a new building, and if so, how soon.

Hockman declined to state how much insurance was covering the building, but he did say it seemed doubtful it would cover the cost of the building which was totally destroyed.

Besides, remarked Hockman, a building of historic value really cannot have a dollar value placed on it.

A great deal of sentimentality was felt toward the old building, he continued, and while some members had favored building a new clubhouse, many others had wanted the old clubhouse renovated. The building was between 75 and 100 years old.

Hockman noted that the alarm system in the building was not a fire alarm warning system, but a burglar alarm. He said it might have been triggered when the fire burned through its electrical system. But that the burglar alarm was being repaired at the time of the fire and was not operable.

Ossining firemen spent about nine hours losing down the rubble Friday. A bulldozer was called in by the department to turn the rubble over while firemen hosed it down. "If we hadn't done that we would have been there two days,:" commented chief Lloyd Davis. The chief said the cause of the fire would probably never be known because of the extent of the damage.

Hockman noted that the decision to install the burglar alarm was made after the club had been broken into some

months ago and an indication was found that a small fire had been started.

The last person in the building before the fire left at about 10:30 p.m. Thursday, more than five hours before the blaze was discovered, according to club members.

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The above clippings were transcribed from the original newspapers, which reside at the Ossining Historical Society in Ossining, New York