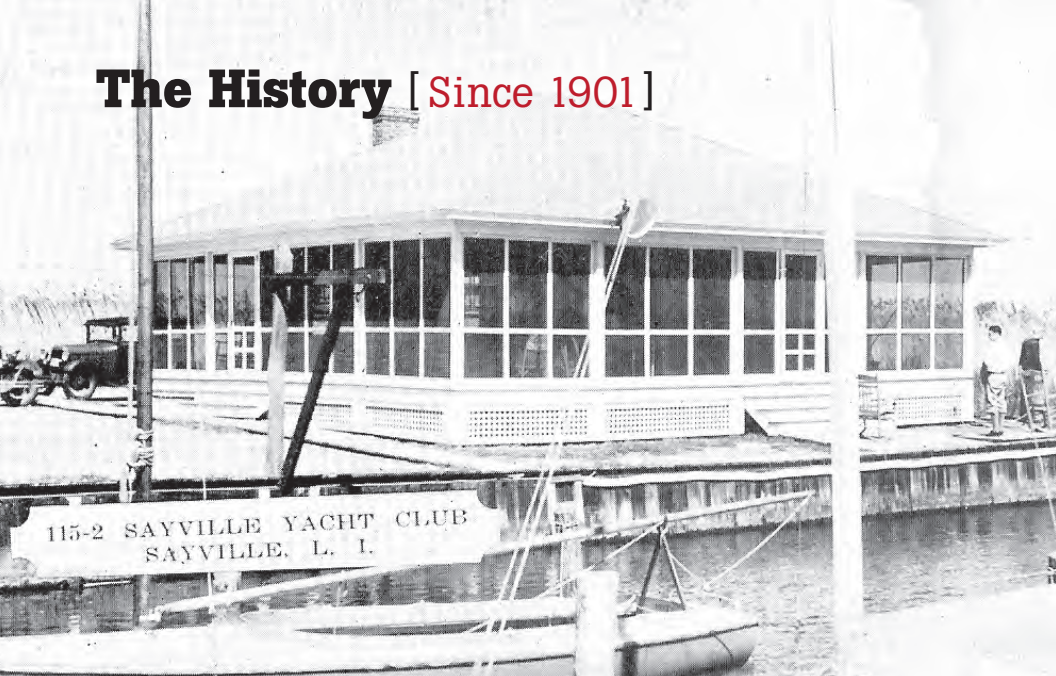


The History [Since 1901]



Some time during the latter part of the 19th century, a group of sailors broke away from the New York Yacht Club and formed the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club in Center Island on the North Shore of Long Island. Some years later some of the members moved to the South Shore of Long Island and formed the Southside Division of the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club. The Seawanhaka Club burgee is the same as ours but it has a blue field for its 12 white stars.

In July of 1901, Regis H. Post, Walter L. Suydam, John E. Roosevelt, John R. Suydam, Robert B. Roosevelt, Bryce Metcalf, Kenyon Fortesque, Robert B. Roosevelt, Jr., Walter L. Suydam, Jr. and George C. Kobbe decided to form the Southside Yacht Club. The first site of the club was in Bayport. The first Commodore was John E. Roosevelt who served from 1901-1907. The meetings were held at his home, Meadow Croft. He was evidently quite an active sailor and brought a rich sailing heritage to Sayville. According to a letter from Liz Roosevelt, relative, historian and Seawanhaka Corinthian YC member, "... Apparently John Ellis Roosevelt was a great sailor and was a member of Seawanhaka from its beginning. He crewed on the winning Seawanhaka schooner Idler in a race from Newport around Block Island (in) 1874

– which was an early Corinthian race. He subsequently crewed on Addis Voortis in the 1st Seawanhaka race in New York harbor in 1875 which she won. He was Vice Commodore of SCYC in 1884."

In 1904 the club burgee was described: "The club burgee shall be a pointed flag, the hoist to be two-thirds of the length. The device shall be a cross composed of 12 five-pointed stars in white on a red field: eight stars to be placed on the middle line lengthwise and four crosswise at the third star from the luff, the stars to be equidistant and size one-sixth of the hoist."

In 1904, the club had 27 sloops, yawls and 6 catboats in its racing fleet. The largest of these was F Class at over 46 feet in length with maximum crew of 18 persons.

Some time after 1910, the club became more closely associated with Sayville. Early in this century, President Theodore Roosevelt used to race in Southside Yacht Club regattas with his uncle Robert B. Roosevelt of Sayville and Regis Post of Bayport. Prior to World War I the Southside Yacht Club held its Invitational Regattas off The Tidewater Inn (later known as the Shoreham) at the foot of Poster Avenue. Large tents were

erected on The Tidewater property to serve lunch, provided by the wives of members to the visiting yachtsmen.

During World War I, the club was disbanded. In 1920 the Southside Yacht Club was incorporated, and its name was changed to Sayville Yacht Club.

In 1920 racing was reestablished and in September the first Queen of the Bay Race was held off The Cedarshore Hotel in Sayville. In 1922 or '23 the original Queen of the Bay trophy was won and retired by the "Q" boat Dixie, owned by the Luderman brothers of Sayville and sailed by Captain Jim Zegel of West Sayville. The trophy was a large sterling silver loving cup which had to be won three times in order to be retired. There was some controversy about this race because of the fact that a professional helmsman had sailed the boat to its final victory.

In 1922, Sayville Yacht Club purchased the former Patchogue Yacht Club building. It was floated by barge from Patchogue to Sayville by James I. Davis, house-mover. The building is now known as Sunset Bay Apartments on River Road, Sayville.

After eight years Sayville Yacht Club was financially unable to support the clubhouse and it was closed by Captain Frank Rogers of Bayport. In spite of this, Captain Rogers permitted the club to use his oyster houses and grounds for parties and the annual clam bakes, beginning a long tradition of the club's midsummer party. In the early 30's, Mr. John P. Zerega of Bayport built a slip and clubhouse on Brown's River. The slip is presently part of Doug Westin's Boat Yard on River Road, Sayville. The Westin family made that their summer home in the early 1950's, and it became a place where Sayville Yacht Club members could gather for an occasional social event.

In 1935, Sayville Yacht Club organized an all day race for cruising sailboats and auxiliaries. The race ran from Sayville to Howell's Point (Bellport) to Babylon, then returning to Sayville for the finish line, or in reverse order depending on the wind. This race was an annual affair until World War II and the basis of the present South Bay Cruising Club.

Once again in the late 1930's Sayville Yacht Club came on hard times. Even so, the club remained active over the years. During these years sailors from Sayville, Bayport, and West Sayville raced boats from Stars, P boats and R boats down to Narrasketucks, CCs and Snipes in Great South Bay Yacht Racing Association regattas. Through the efforts of Doug Westin and other members, the club was kept alive and was always represented in the championship races of GSBYRA and many national regattas. During these trying years the annual dues were \$5.00. Meetings were usually held in the Commodore's home.

In the spring of 1957, the club started on its present course. The membership met at the Foster House in Sayville and decided to buy property from Lisenard Suydam of Blue Point, a long-time member. He offered the membership very attractive terms on a small piece of property where the clubhouse now stands. The Club purchased additional property and now we own almost 800 feet on the bay or a total of 12½ acres.

The ink was just about dry on the sale of the property when some members located a building at Smith's Point belonging to Walter Shirley, known as Shirley's Pavilion. In the spring of 1957 a group of members went to Shirley and rowed across the as-yet unbridged water to Smith's Point only to see an old vandalized building. Only people with great enthusiasm would jump for joy at having found a place in such a state. It was purchased. The building was moved in three sections by barge, again by Davis Brothers, to its present site and reassembled, painted and repaired. In the same manner as we do today, members did the work, and worked for a good six to eight months to put the building in order.

The club generated tremendous interest among its existing membership and attracted many new members. In 1956, the membership bought \$10,000 in bonds, almost 100% of which we might add, became a donation to the club.

In 1960, we built our first swimming pool, which finally broke up in 1975. In 1976 we built a new and larger pool of modern construction that should last at least 30 years.

The membership raised \$60,000 in bonds for this endeavor. In 1968, the clubhouse was enlarged to include a cocktail room and deck. In 1970/71 we borrowed \$100,000 from the Oysterman's Bank in Sayville for the construction of our basin, which presently can hold over 50 boats.

In 1977, the bay froze so hard that cars were being driven from the mainland to Fire Island. Don Beebe drove the Commodore from Blue Point Beach to the beach in front of the clubhouse, first time ever which hasn't happened again. 1978 was another severe winter. During the blizzard in early February the ice broke and moved up to the shrubs in front of the deck. The ice piled six feet high on the lawn. In 1984 the bay froze again but this time when the ice broke up the wind was just right to pile ice in front of the clubhouse almost 20 feet high. A few more feet and the clubhouse would have been matchsticks.

Our dining room (sail measuring room) was found by Davis Brothers in Patchogue. It was a nun's dining hall and in 1981 was floated from Patchogue across the bay and attached, as you see it today. We lost our bathhouses in 1985 to Hurricane Gloria and rebuilt them the following spring. A few years later in 1989/90 we installed a hot water heating system so that neither feet nor bottoms would freeze when members sat on our metal chairs at the winter socials. We also finished the second floor of the clubhouse, which provided a small meeting room and space for the race committee equipment. An elaborate barbeque facility was built by our members. Other members renovated the sailing shed and made it usable for the Jr. Yacht Club.

In 1991, a Halloween storm brought with it very high tides that many thought were the highest in memory. The water was well over the docks and the entire club property was under considerable water. Many of the unsecured boats on the beach floated away.

A study by the Long Range Planning Committee in the early 1990's, determined that our clubhouse required major renovation. A committee was formed, an architect was hired and plans drawn up. The cost of the

project was to be one half million dollars. In September of 1994 the plans were presented to the membership who gave approval for the work to be done. The money would be raised by the sale of bonds to the membership. On December 12th the work began with the demolition of the kitchen and bar room. The remaining building was temporarily moved back in order that pilings could be driven for a substantial footing and foundation. The building was then moved back onto the new foundation. Construction of the new kitchen, storerooms and bar area took place during the winter months. The club was ready for Commissioning Day, May 27, 1995.

From the time the club was reorganized in the '50s we have provided a good sailing program. We frequently have the highest enrollment of any of the junior sailing programs on the Bay, and provide adult sailing lessons. We also provide swimming lessons with instruction ranging from beginners on up to senior lifesaving.

Racing is the mainstay of the club and we've held regattas every year since we became reestablished in Blue Point. Since 1957 we have hosted six Thistle Nationals, six Raven Nationals, three Sunfish North Americans, three Penguin Internationals and two Finn Nationals. In 1999 the club hosted the Sunfish World Championship with sailors from 13 countries sailing in the 100-boat fleet. However, numerous other classes sought the Great South Bay breezes as events were held for Jet 14s, the Star Class, the Commodore Corey Cup, Blue Jays, the Fireball Class, the Catboat Association and Hobie 16s. The US SAILING Area B Championship for the O'Day Single-Handed Trophy has been hosted by Sayville Yacht Club four times. Numerous Laser regattas have been run by our members, including the Laser US Championship in 2003. The Sayville Yacht Club has hosted the U.S. Sailing Junior Olympics every year since 2004.

Sayville Yacht Club has come a long way since 1901. Its name is known for the sailing events that have drawn sailors to its waters from the United States, South America and Europe. Some Sayville Yacht Club sailors have become well known for their sailing accomplishments both on the bay, nationally

and abroad. Besides traveling to national and international championships, some sailors have endured stringent Olympic trials as well as competition in the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and 2012 in London.

In 2002 a match-racing event against the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club was introduced. The very intense races, which were sailed close to shore, could easily be viewed by the members from the deck. The Meadow Croft Bowl has become an annual event.

However, racing is not the only thing for which Sayville Yacht Club is well known. A hard working committee of about 60 members feeds approximately 300 people at our annual clambake. Potluck suppers and many other parties during the year entertain the members and their guests.

It is only through sheer determination, hard labor and the willingness of members who work that we have grown to be one of the most respected yacht clubs on Great South Bay.

In October 2012, Super Storm Sandy crashed into the club. The junior yacht club building was severely damaged, the sail lockers and the BBQ area were destroyed. The facilities in the boat basin were devastated. The low level decking around the Clubhouse floated up and very little was left in a close to level position. Through the herculean efforts of our members, much wood was salvaged, decks and walkways were rebuilt or releveled, the boat basin restored and the junior yacht club was repaired in time for Commissioning Day. As the only club on the bay anywhere close to full operation, SYC hosted the 2013 GSBYRA race week which had been scheduled for another club.

In 2014 we continued our recovery from Super Storm Sandy, and with the completion of the new Swim Lockers, we could say that the club was returned to full function and many of the facilities were in much better condition than before the storm.

In February 2015 the Bay once again froze from edge to edge. This created a great weekend of Ice Boating on Feb 28 – 29. By word of mouth (And social media) the word was spread far and wide, that the Ice was

perfect at SYC. This attracted more than 20 vessels some from Mystic Connecticut for a thrilling couple of days of Ice Boating.

This year also saw the first ice rink which was created by Commodore Kelley. It was erected in the north parking lot, and was used by many members of all ages.

NOTE: This edition of the Sayville Yacht Club History, provided by Bill Ludlum (2004), has been altered slightly from Raf del Castillo's earlier version. As Raf stated, some of the history has been from word of mouth but its content has also been obtained from written accounts. 2014 and 2015 additions by Paul Mac Menamin.

