



Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club in Bay Shore during about 1906. (LIMM)

Great South Bay Yacht Racing Association

Racing on Great South Bay emerged in the late 1880s when wealthy Brooklyn and New York yachtsmen who summered in the area, and local, year-round resident, trade sailors, who often acted as paid skippers, raced against each other. Their shallow-draft boats, built either by professional or amateur builders, competed in separate classes rated by length. These early classes, the larger P, Q and R classes, and the smaller V, W, and X cat-boats suited the shoal water of Great South Bay.

The Great South Bay Yacht Racing Association was founded on September 27, 1906 at a meeting held at the former Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club in Bay Shore called by J. Adolf Mollenhauer, Commodore of Penataquit. Attendees William Candee of Penataquit, Alexander N. Cook of Bellport Bay Yacht Club, Francis Williams and Edward Bleecker of Unqua Corinthian Yacht Club, Charles Searle and Joseph W. Lawrence of Babylon Yacht Club, and Joseph Wood and Dr. George E. Rice of South Side Yacht Club in Sayville recognized the need to unite local yacht clubs and promote more organized racing. Mollenhauer was elected the first President and Lawrence was elected Secre-

tary and Treasurer. Soon these original member clubs were joined by South Shore Yacht Club in Patchogue. In the early days of the Association, decisions were made by representatives called Delegates from each Member Club and the Officers and Chairmen of Committees.

During the period of time in which the early Member Clubs formed the Great South Bay Yacht Racing Association, several common currents surfaced. Clubs originated with similar purposes that encouraged members to become proficient in handling their yachts, promoted sociability and recreation among members, and provided a base for sailing activity. Membership in these early clubs was originally limited to men, who raced similar yachts in separate classes. These early classes were either large and sloop-rigged, or small and cat-rigged at these clubs. At each club some strong personalities desiring the fastest boat for racing emerged and strong social ties were formed. These early racing sailors on Great South Bay understood the necessity to link individuals and their clubs together. A Constitution and By-Laws provided each Member Club and the Association with the authority and rules

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to operate and organize a multitude of racing opportunities which formed many traditions. Clubs and the Association provided elaborate, engraved, silver prizes. A Registry of yachts was published each year and handicaps were established and published. A 6 by 9 inch Race Week pamphlet, eventually to become a small book, was published yearly. The first annual cruise week began in 1907.

Many perpetual Association trophies were established during the 1920's. It had often been tradition to retire a trophy after the same person won it three times. As a result, many early perpetual trophies do not remain in the possession of the Association. In 1920 the Association established a Special Prize for Race Week, which was awarded to the yacht making the fastest time over the course at Sayville. It was won by *Constance* a P Class yacht. Subsequent winners were: 1921 *Eagle*, 1922 *Dixie*, 1923 *Bee*, 1924 *Invader*, 1925 *Avis*, 1926 *Eskawaja*, 1927 *Constance*, 1928 *Avis*, 1929 *Edna*, 1930 *Edna*, 1931 *Windward II*, 1932, 1933, 1934, and 1935 *Constance*, and Duncan Arnold. In 1922, the Yacht Squadron of Westhampton left the Yacht Racing Association of Southeastern Long Island to join GSBYRA.

In 1927, the first advertisement appeared on the back cover of the Association year book to help defray the publishing cost. That year, the Association awarded a gold perpetual cup, the Fire Island Cup, to a registered yacht receiving the greatest number of points in her class in Race Week, provided 4 boats started and finished in class in 5 scheduled races. Recorded winners were: 1927 *Montauk*, 1928 *Torrap II*, 1929 *Torrap II*, 1930 Buddy Smith in M class sloop, and 1931 Buddy Smith in M class sloop.

The Gil Smith Perpetual Trophy was given by owners of P Class boats for the P boat with largest number of points during invitations and cruise week. Recorded winners included 1929 *Edna*, 1930 *Edna*, and 1931 *Constance*. The Brown's River Trophy was given by Sayville to the yacht with the best performance during Race Week by selecting only the score from the yacht's single best race. The Commodore George A. Corry Trophy (father and organizer of Star Class) was established for the Star class in 1929. Recorded winners were: 1929 *Budsal II* Frank Robinson, 1930 *Wings C. & J. Pflug*, 1931 *Wings C. & J. Pflug*, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935 H. Meislan and L. R. Bowdan, Jr, 1936,

1937, 1938, 1939, 1940 *Draco II*, skipper Edward V. Ketcham, Jr.

By the 25th anniversary of the Association, twelve member clubs on the bay extended from Freeport to Quogue. Under the leadership of President Edward V. Ketcham, the 1931 member clubs included Babylon Yacht Club (1906), Bay Shore Yacht Club (1906), Bellport Bay Yacht Club (1906), Cedarhurst Yacht Club, Fire Island Yacht Club (1927), Point O' Woods Yacht Club, Sayville Yacht Club, Shinnecock Yacht Club (1930), South Shore Yacht Club (1907), Timber Point Yacht Club (1926), Unqua Corinthian Yacht Club (1906), and Yacht Squadron of Westhampton.

The Association as a member of the North American Yacht Racing Union published the rules of racing in the yearbook. When NAYRU established junior triple-handed and women's championship competitions, the Association formed the Gulden and Morgan competitions. The Gulden Trophy, donated by Commodore Frank Gulden for the junior championship and the Morgan Bowl, donated by Henry Morgan for the women's championship, were engraved and medals were given to the winners to keep. Commodore William H. Picken donated a perpetual midget championship trophy for children younger than juniors. The Association took initiative to form the Picken Championship, and then established an eight Association Middle Atlantic Championship for the Great South Bay Bowl.

A 1936 Association year book listed class captain orders for race week etiquette; and advertising paragraphs of tips "From the Crows Nest" by Skippers Mate. In the Star Class, if 20 or more Stars raced, 2 sections were made. Skippers needed to check the yacht club bulletin boards daily for section assignments to a division. The first division boats were required to carry a white pennant 4 by 12 inch streamer on their boom.

Another perpetual trophy, the Harry Growtage Memorial Cup, for the fastest corrected time over a designated course to be sailed in a Labor Day Regatta was established in 1939. Requirements included that the race be held under the auspices of a GSBYRA Member Club, confined to restricted classes, and only boats having entered and completed a race in at least 4 Invitation regattas during the season were eligible. It replaced the retired Queen of the Bay Cup. In 1940 it was

awarded to *Querida*, an R Class boat from Babylon.

By the 50th anniversary of the Association, fourteen member clubs comprised the roster under President E. Carleton Arink. In 1956 the member clubs included Babylon Yacht Club, Bayberry Yacht Club, Bay Shore Yacht Club, Bellport Bay Yacht Club, Cedarhurst Yacht Club, Domino Yacht Club, Moriches Yacht Club, Narrasketuck Yacht Club, Point O' Woods Yacht Squadron, Quantuck Yacht Club, Sayville Yacht Club, Shinnecock Yacht Club, South Bay Cruising Club, and Westhampton Yacht Squadron. The Association followed the lead of NAYRU and established a men's competition for the Fenner Championship.

In an innovative move in 1964, the Association purchased 8 Mobjacks for championship competition for the triple-handed events. It was one of the few Associations to own boats. Competition in the Association often had to be divided into an east and west sub division with the high number of competitors. The Mobjack fleet was originally kept in the marshy area now the Maritime Museum, moved to the Snapper Inn, moved again to Moriches Yacht Club, and eventually moved to Long Island Yacht Club in 1973.

The Association responded to NAYRU establishing single-handed competitions for juniors and for adults and established the local Shinnecock and Westin Championships. In 1975 NAYRU changed its name to the United States Yacht Racing Union and the Association became a member of USYRU. In 1978, the Association embarked on a three year fund raising initiative to purchase 6 new Mobjacks to replace the aging original fleet. Magoun Landing, a local property owners group, joined the Association as a member in 1980.

By the 75th anniversary of the Association, seventeen member clubs comprised the roster under President William B. Ludlum. In 1981 the member clubs included Babylon Yacht Club, Bayberry Yacht Club, Bay Shore Yacht Club, Bellport Bay Yacht Club, Cedarhurst Yacht Club, Hempstead Bay Yacht Club, Long Island Yacht Club, Magoun Landing Yacht Club, Moriches Yacht Club, Narrasketuck Yacht Club, Point O' Woods Yacht Squadron, Saltaire Yacht Club, Sayville Yacht Club, South Bay Cruising Club, Unqua Corinthian Yacht Club, Westhampton Yacht Squadron, and Wet Pants Sailing Association.

Finally in 1981, the Association purchased new Mobjacks with donations received from ten clubs. Babylon, Bayberry, Bay Shore, Bellport Bay, Hempstead Bay, Moriches, Narrasketuck, Sayville, Wet Pants and Westhampton, plus about three dozen individuals made donations.

More changes took place. As a member of USYRU, the Association established a match race competition as the Furman Championship and a double-handed junior competition as the Patin Championship. Membership in the Association rose to eighteen clubs in 1982 when Hobie Fleet 124 joined as a member. The Association added a \$10 sustaining membership category. In an innovative move in 1987, President Glenn Schmidt established a GSBYRA Scholarship Fund. From contributions to the fund, the first sailing grants were awarded to three recipients in 1988. When USYRU evolved into US SAILING in 1991, Association membership transferred to the newly named national organization. Bay Shore Yacht Club provided the home base for the Association owned Mobjacks in 1992. The Association established the Orr Championship in 1993 as a member of the eight-member Midget Association that created a single-handed competition. Eight clubs sponsored Friday junior regattas in 1993. In 1997 the Optimist replaced the Sunfish for the Orr midget championship. Then both Hobie Fleet 124 and Magoun Landing disbanded and left the Association in 2002, twenty years after joining. The Association developed a website in 2004 to aid communication. And finally the Club 420 replaced the Mobjack for the Picken midget championship in 2005.

For the 100th Anniversary sixteen clubs remained members of the Association headed by President John Everitt. Their dedication supported more improvements for sailors on Great South Bay. After consideration to replace the aging Mobjack championship fleet with another boat, the Association narrowed the selection to a class that could also encourage more family participation in sailing. Once again the Association undertook fundraising to purchase 2 Flying Scots and 10 identical suits of sails and encouraged Member Clubs to purchase a Flying Scot for their club that could be used in the triple-handed championships and for adult sailing lessons. Improving communication to sailors included revamping the Association website as the

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official voice. Lastly Delegates approved amendments to the By-Laws to create new membership categories to include more types of sailing organizations.

When spring 2007 began, Glenn Schmidt accomplished the tasks to find buyers for the Mobjacks and acquire the suits of sails and two Flying Scots with trailers for the Association. President Gerard Holwell and Glenn drove south to Maryland and trailed the boats to Bay Shore Yacht Club. Russell Pearson undertook issuing and inspecting the inventory of boats and sails. Now the Gulden, Fenner, Furman, and Morgan Championships were sailed in Flying Scots with Association owned sails used only for those events. That summer all the bay championships used sailing instructions generated according to GSBYRA outlines. Delegates voted in August to purchase an enclosed trailer for the storage of the inventory of sails. Jerry Holwell outfitted the trailer with shelves and arranged for the trailer to reside at Bay Shore Yacht Club.

The ebb and flow of similarities and constant change created one hundred years of historic and exalted competition on Great South Bay. Competition flooded the bay with enough boats to promote the development of one design rules for building yachts. Management of class competition surged within and among member clubs. Races run at various clubs led to an organized schedule to be agreed upon. Dominant personalities emerged and camaraderie swelled as members traveled and bonded at single day to week long, week end and multiple day events. Uniforms distinguished Committees and Officers from competitors. Innovative design and different boat building materials spawned the change from gaff rig to Marconi

rig, from cotton sail to Dacron sail, from wood hull to fiberglass hull, from wood spar, rudder, centerboard, and tiller to aluminum spar, rudder, centerboard and tiller, from displacement hull to planning hull, from single-hull to multiple-hull, and eventually to include carbon fiber everywhere. A few changes overwhelmed and submerged some clubs and classes into extinction. And finally, a lofty change emerged from the coalition of clubs and strong personalities to recognize female participation and leadership within the clubs that spilled over into the Association. Changes are inevitable, yet the love of sailing and competition never cease.

Standish Medina, author of *A History of Westhampton Yacht Squadron 1890-1965*, quotes Mrs. McClintock. "Just as sailing was the basis of that life, so racing was the thrill of it: All talk was of sail area, overall length, time allowance, every phase of racing receiving the keenest attention. For that was no idle, lightminded sport, and each youthful captain was out to win - in fact, was sure he would win". "The boat built, next in importance was the selection of crew, and no skipper worthy of the name chose his crew for friendship's sake alone but scoured about for bluff and heavy tars who were light on their feet, strong in their arms and (with 3-reef gales in mind) a bit on the plump side. The crew secured, there began practice; in fair weather and in foul, in blistering calm and in drenching gale, all to get them attuned to the idiosyncrasies of the boat, to know when, in a calm, to lie flat and light in the cockpit, scarcely breathing, and when, in a gale, to throw themselves, heavy and tense on their luckless stomachs, far over the side and let the waves wash where they would."

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