

History of Hamburg Cove Yacht Club



The first meeting of HCYC, of which there is any record, was called an organizational meeting and was held at the Lake Breeze Tavern in Old Lyme on October 19, 1946. The Lake Breeze Tavern was located in Haines Park on Rogers Lake and in 1956 burned to the ground.

Apparently, a lot of effort went into planning for the meeting, as a Constitution was presented and approved on that date. Officers and Trustees were elected in accordance with the provisions of that Constitution. The First Commodore was Donald G. Reynolds.

Thirty-three of the people present at that meeting paid their \$10.00 dues and became members. It was decided that anyone who joined prior to April 1, 1947 would be considered a Charter Member. By that date, the club had seventy-seven Charter Members. Until his death in 2005, P/C Leland Reynolds was the only charter Member who was still a member of the Club.

Since there were no Club facilities, meetings were held in local restaurants, the Lyme Public Hall, or the Lyme Grange Hall. When held at the latter two locations, dinner was often prepared by the ladies of the Grange, or the Ladies of the Church. The dinners were very popular with the members as there was a lot of homemade food at a reasonable price.

Members came from many towns - Lyme, Old Saybrook, New London, Wethersfield, Hartford, Springfield, and even Pittsfield. During the winter months it was not uncommon to hold meetings "Up-State" in such places as the Gelston House in East Haddam and various locations in Middletown, Manchester, Marlborough, and Danielson.

There was a spasmodic search for Club Property. Not all Members were in favor, as many liked the \$10.00 annual dues. The property at 13 Cove Road was finally purchased in 1963 for \$15,000.00, half in cash, half with a 6% ten year mortgage. Improvement of the property was delayed by a nine year argument with the Town of Lyme over boundaries. The old records were not very specific, and there had been a semi-public access to the Cove for years. Neither side could prove exactly what they owned, so that the solution had to be a compromise. Since the Club was anxious to get the matter settled, and the Town could afford to wait, the compromise was not favorable to the Club.

In 1973, the mortgage paid off and the property lines settled, the Club embarked upon improving the property. The property was substantially improved over the years in several steps, prior to the 2020 complete renovation.

One of the first activities of the Club was to arrange for the marking of the channel in the Cove. The Club persuaded the Coast Guard to place four additional buoys at the Cove entrance. In the late 1940's the Club funded the cost of stakes and markers; these were installed by volunteers.

Membership has varied through the years. At one time, there were 114 male dues-paying members. There has never been anything in the by-laws excluding women from becoming members - there just were not any such members. At one time, guests (mostly wives and children) were excused when the Business Meetings started. It is understandable that the practice was soon discontinued. The Club now has female members and a lot of family memberships.

In 70 years, the Club has had 41 Commodores 19 Secretaries, and at least 17 Treasurers. The Yacht Club Burgee, adopted in about 1949, is a black "lazy eight" on an orange background. The first burgee design by Bill Lagel was white on blue, and hangs in the Club today. It is not

known how the colors changed to orange and black, but there is a rumor that this change was encouraged by a couple of members who were Princeton Alumni. The figure eight on the burgee represents the geographical configuration of the Cove. The fact that the Cove is fed by the Eight Mile River appears to be coincidental, and probably did not enter into considerations for the original design of the burgee.

After several years of discussion of how the clubhouse could be improved, in 2013 the club formed a building committee to explore how the clubhouse footprint could be used to improve its usability, and cost estimated plans were drawn up. However, plans had to be put on hold due to lack of funds, associated with the continuing drop in membership during the last few years. Starting in 2015 there was a concerted program to attract new members, which was so successful that in 2018 the club met its bylaw maximum of 125 regular members, and a wait list had to be created. With a commensurate improvement in the clubs financial situation, and the growth of its Capital Improvements Fund, after many years of deferring expansion and improvements to the clubhouse, that year the membership unanimously voted that a plan of renovation of the clubhouse should be commenced and a Building Committee was formed overseen by PC Peter Friel. A Capital Campaign was commenced to raise funds to reduce the level of debt, with voluntary contributions from members that successfully met its fundraising goals. Following the 2019 decommissioning and an extended design and bid process, the clubhouse renovation commenced in February 2020 and closely managed by Peter Friel the beautiful new clubhouse was ready in May 2020. Unfortunately 2020 will be remembered as the year of Covid-19, and club activities and use of the new clubhouse was severely impacted.