

RYC



ROOTS

A Historical Perspective of the Racine Yacht Club Through Time.

Chapter 7 • October 2015

Racine Yacht Club: The First Half Century, Part 3

Part 2 of this insert appeared with the September 2015 Reef Point. Much of this material is excerpted from a Racine Yacht Club 50th Anniversary booklet.

Lakeshore Clubs to Compete In RYC's First Thistle Race

Preparations for the Racine Yacht Club's dual racing classic this weekend have been completed with the acceptance of five lakeshore clubs to compete in the first annual thistle races here. The R.Y.C. will be host to the Jackson Park, Sheridan Shore, Corinthian, and Columbus Yacht Clubs from the Chicago area and the South Shore Club from Milwaukee.

"Frostbite Dinghy Races" for the Horlick Trophy, cancelled in 1942 will be resumed Sunday in the seventh season. Tuneup races for the competing thistle crews are slated for Saturday afternoon with the championship races in both classes scheduled for Sunday at 10 a. m.

Top-Flighters Compete.

Eddie Schnabel, Sr., winner of the Barthel Trophy in 1944 and the leading R class sailor on Lake Michigan for the past 25 years will be among the top flight yachting men taking part in the classic.

Schnabel's son, Ed, Jr. will also be in the races as a member of the Chicago Yacht Club's competing crew.

Other notaries in the sailing world to enter the weekend racing events include Woody Pirie, 1939 Interlake Champion, and winner of the '36 and '37 Sheridan Shore Race Week for star class boats.

Smieding Sails "Mystic."

Henry Smieding will sail Mystic and Tom Owen will sail Carmen to represent the Racine club. Harry Nye, Chicago Yacht Club has won four of the annual dinghy events while Leeds Mitchell from the same club has won the trophy twice. At the completion of 10 meetings the entrant winning the Horlick Trophy the greatest number of times in that period will gain permanent possession.

Tony Hermann has been appointed as chairman of the committee in charge of the thistle events while Art Meyer and Harold Sustachek will judge the Horlick Trophy dinghy races.

The races will be run over a course to be laid out either off the pier heads or within the harbor breakwater, depending upon the weather conditions at the time of the races.

Guest Fractures Wrist, Asks \$5,000 From Yacht Club

A Milwaukee guest, who suffered a fracture of the right wrist while operating a coin amusement machine at the Racine Yacht Club Aug. 12, 1944, today started suit in Circuit Court against the club owners for \$5,000.

Oscar Kratochvil, Milwaukee, alleges in his summons and complaint that he was in the basement of the club house at 2 p. m. on that date playing a coin machine when one of the coins fell to the floor. As he bent over to pick it up, a 200-pound steel plate, suspended from the wall to barricade the room when it was not in use, fell, striking his right wrist which was shattered in several places.

Kratochvil contends the Yacht Club operators were negligent and careless in not seeing that the plate was properly secured. Papers in the case have been served on Commodore H. F. Griswold.

"Coin machines" were a common feature in clubs in the 40's and 50's. This patron had bad luck at the 'casino' that evening. The steel plate in question was used to block the door. RJT, Sept. 11, 1946 *Racine Journal Times*, September 11, 1946



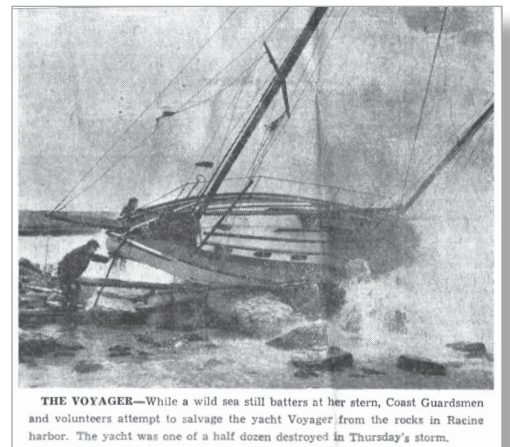
Storm Damage – Bad weather, particularly blows from the southeast, damaged many boats over the years. The Yacht Club would eventually build a pier system to prevent problems like this. RYC Photo, 1948

Thistle and "Frostbite Dinghy" races, sponsored by the Racine yacht Club, to be held. *Racine Journal Times*, October 25, 1946

August 2, 1948

Racine Journal Times – Sailing and motor boating should be among Racine's most popular forms of recreation. We don't have the best harbor or the best yacht basin on the Great Lakes, but ours is good enough, and many citizens have put in a lot of time, throughout the years, in erecting and maintaining a yacht club. Thousands of cities throughout this country could well envy the facilities which nature, and these people, have given to us. Because of all this, it is too bad that the waters of our harbor and river are covered with "a film of sticky, creosote-like substance," as the Racine Yacht Club describes it, which leaves a

tarry coating on everything with which it comes in contact. We recall what happened last year when the Lake Michigan Yachting Association Regatta was held here. We saw the smeared hulls of some of the visiting craft, and have since learned how the owners had to scrape down to the bare wood to remove the dark brown stain. It isn't hard to understand why the Club felt forced to call off its Regatta this year. "We are glad that this has since been taken care of, and our hope is that History doesn't get a chance to repeat itself in the future."



THE VOYAGER—While a wild sea still batters at her stern, Coast Guardsmen and volunteers attempt to salvage the yacht Voyager from the rocks in Racine harbor. The yacht was one of a half dozen destroyed in Thursday's storm.

Another view of some of the damage from the October storm. *Racine Journal Times*, October 8, 1948





January 29, 1949

Racine Journal Times – Fleetwood, a 40-foot Class D Cruiser, owned by Nick Gieb left aboard a special built trailer for St. Petersburg, Florida. The *Fleetwood* was built in South Milwaukee in 1948 and won the 1948 Mackinac Race.

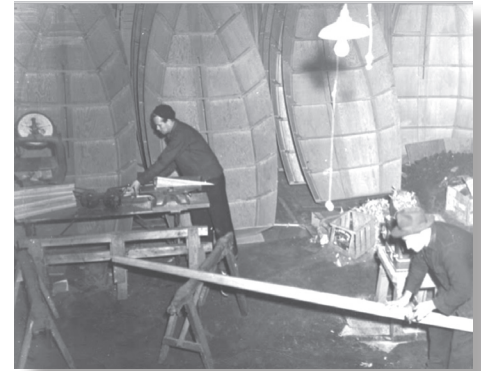
May 19, 1949

Racine Journal Times Editorial – Lake Michigan is a strong contender for the honor of being Racine's biggest asset and best attraction, and yet it is probably the most taken for granted and hence unappreciated. Oh, it's important to coal dealers as a mode of transportation. It provides a livelihood for some commercial fishermen, and sport for a few amateurs who go for perch. It is enjoyed by members of the Yacht Club. On especially hot nights, many citizens may seek relief alongside it — and help litter its shore with broken bottles or paper containers. But month in and month out, to most of us it is just a body of water that happens to be there. We are not suggesting an "Appreciate-Lake-Michigan-Week," nor do we propose that all citizens be required to bow or tip their hats when they look at it. But now and then it does us good to stop and "count our blessings," and the lake is certainly not the least of these. What does a seaport have that we don't have, from the standpoint of view? Look east to the horizon, and the scene is the same as that from the shore of the Atlantic or the Pacific. The waves may not roll so high for us, but in rough weather they are even choppier and just as spectacular. What seaport city has a better natural cooling system than that provided by our lake? Many times in the next 10 weeks we are going to be deeply indebted to it for a nice breeze and temperatures 5, 10 or 15 degrees

lower than areas a few miles to the west. Conversely, many times in the fall and early winter, this same lake moderates the cold; keeps the temperature from extreme low levels. How often we have seen frost strike early in the western part of our country, while the lake belt escaped. How did the lake happen to be there? Presumably as the result of glacial action uncounted thousands of years ago. We confess to a lack of expert knowledge on this point. Also, we know too little of the flora and fauna that exists in the depths. (*Ed. – This summer we may find out more with the aid of the University of Michigan doing some exploring.*) We have heard and read parts of the story of the men and the ships who have sailed the lake. Certainly they built a tradition, based on seamanship and courage that is an important chapter of the whole marine history of the nation. Yes, it's quite a body of water that borders Racine on the east. Perhaps we ought to pay more attention to it.

March 8, 1949

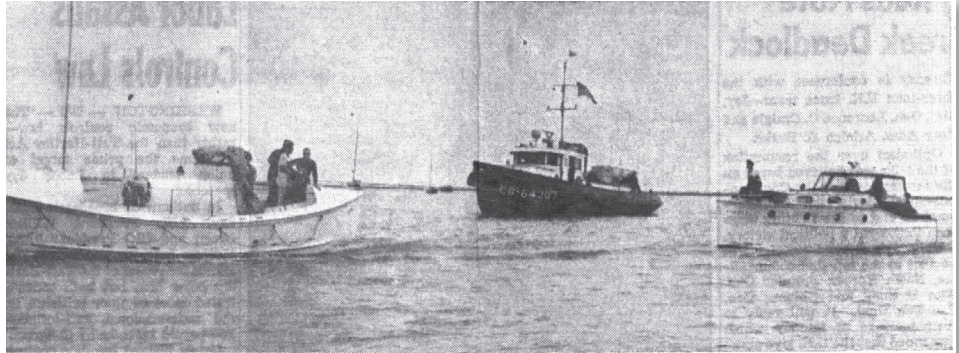
Racine Journal Times – RACINE YACHTSMEN BUILD FLEET OF 25 RACINE DINGHIES A brand new fleet of 25 Racine dinghies will be launched in Racine waters this spring by members of the Racine Yacht Club. The fleet is being built by 25 members of the club in one of the largest co-operative plans known to any Yacht club in the nation. The hulls of all 25 craft have been completed and the members are now working on the masts and finishing. The boats are of special design known as the Penguin dinghy. They are 11-feet, six-inches long and have a four-foot, 10-inch beam. Construction is of formed plywood, with oak centerboard and mahogany trim. The 19 foot mast will carry 72 square feet of sail. Ordinarily,



Construction of 25 Penguins in 1949
RYC Photo

the trim little boats retail for approximately \$400.00, but under the co-operative plan developed by the Racine yachtsmen, each member will have only about \$125.00 invested in addition to his time. The boats are being constructed on a mass production basis in a building in the 400 block on English St. One group works on the boats on Tuesday and Thursday nights and the second group works on Monday and Wednesday nights. Members do not work only on one craft. Ownership of each boat will not be decided until they are completed. Then the boats will be numbered from 1 through 25 and an equal number of slips will be placed in a hat for each man to draw his boat. Ray Nerad is commodore of the new fleet and Fred Guenther is secretary-treasurer. Plans now are to have the Racine fleet participate in races here virtually every Sunday through the sailing season. However, the boats have been designed to facilitate easy transportation and groups of the boats will be moved to nearby lakes to challenge other Penguin fleets in races. Normally in racing the boats carry a two-man crew, but they are capable of accommodating up to six persons for leisurely sailing. If desired, an outboard motor can be attached to the stern of the

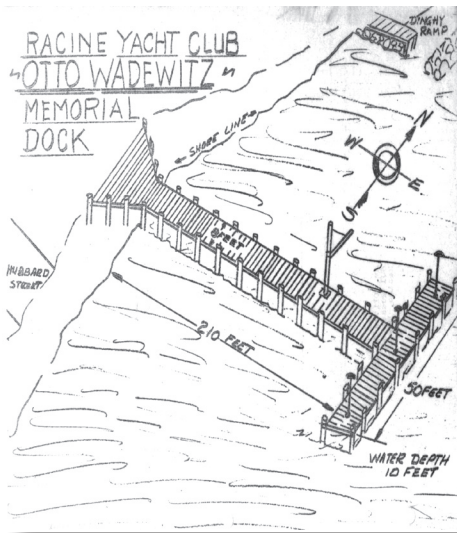
boat. Building the boats has not been a matter of merely fitting together pre-cut sections. Approximately \$1,900.00 worth of lumber was purchased by the yachtsmen and every piece was precision cut and fitted by them in the workshop. The individual pieces were then glued together, dried and fastened securely with screws.



END LAKE RESCUE—Bucking heavy seas Friday night, the Margaret, 30-foot cabin cruiser (right) ran out of fuel and was adrift from Saturday to Sunday morning on Lake Michigan before a Chicago Coast Guard tug towed the boat to Racine harbor Sunday morning. A Racine Coast Guard life boat took over the tow in the Racine harbor (above). The Margaret, with four men aboard, set out for Saugatuck, Michigan, Friday afternoon

in the face of a northeast storm and ran out of fuel Saturday morning. When the boat was not reported at Saugatuck Saturday afternoon, a Navy plane out of Glenview and Coast Guard boats from Chicago and Kenosha joined in the search. The plane located the Margaret 29 miles off Kenosha Saturday night, but surface craft were unable to find it. When the search was resumed at 6 a. m. Sunday, the boat was 12 miles off Racine.

Coast Guard Rescue of the *Margaret* *Racine Journal Times*, September 4, 1951



Drawing of the Wadewitz Memorial Dock, circa 1953 from the RYC archives. This would be the first phase of what would become the Yacht Club's present pier system.

Would You Believe...

(excerpted from the Racine yacht Club's 51st annual booklet, 1967, Ed. Cliff Hass).

Parties here and there. For starters, let's go back to an article written for the newspaper and published on May 13, 1942, for a few choice bits. "It has just been announced that the Racine Yacht Club will open a new Rug Cutters' Cabaret on May 30. This event will be the launching party. Bob Henningfield and his boys will liven things up for the members and their guests that have twitchy toes. While individual acts have not as yet been announced, the number of acts that have been refused, as inferior for the occasion, insures a top-notch floor

show. How about our own members today, especially those dancing twins on the benches. This is alright if a person likes ballerinas, I imagine. There are even times when you can come down and see the Flying Aces of days gone by. The trophies that are presented these days are also pretty hard to beat, as the club feels that all Winners and Losers should have their own parties. This makes for two gala events of the year. Even the girls have a sail boat race where they have themselves a picnic giving orders to the crew, and trying to beat the "you know what" off the other skippers. This gives us an insight as to what the trophies are that they receive at the party. No need to say more about that. Coming events in this year of 1967 will show that the Power Boaters, under the able hands of Andrew (Andy) Vassh, are out for trophies also. If the activity of said party, (Andy) in corralling the speed boat gang into signing the roster for the races, is any indication of what is to come, then batten down the hatches boys as the Tuesday evening Power Races will be another big go-around at the club. This, coupled with the

Wednesday night sailing races, which will be well up in the neighborhood of 30 to 40 boats this summer, should make so much going on, it will be hard for a person to take a vacation away from the shores of Lake Michigan. Articles of this type are rather difficult to write, and so many people are involved in so many things at the club this year, a person finds it very hard to write anything without giving credit to some people, or offending others. Our Friday night Fish Fry's go over with a bang. Improvements are happening faster than the club newspaper can print the news. This gang is doing a fine job and hopes to do better. Naturally it costs money, but there is no reason to be misinformed any more about what the coming events are going to be. If you don't receive a copy it will still only cost 5 cents to write in and notify the club, but better yet, stop in and complain along with others. You may find that you have been missing a whole lot more than just the paper. It's been nice putting this together with only a few minor discussions, and I certainly hope that someone has a lot of information saved up by the time



the next book like this comes out. Many, many, thanks go out to those who years ago decided to start a scrap book, mainly to a member who has sailed away over the horizon, (Hank) Henry Smieding. Without his scrap book which has been donated (I think) to the Club, this would not have been what I hope, is a book worth saving. Lloyd Gorsiski, Dick Hennig and Roger Jordan also have scrap books. Just because some things weren't used doesn't mean they were not of value in their own right. In closing, let me say, I DON'T WISH TO DO THIS AGAIN.

January 30, 1950

Racine Journal Times – (Quoted in the RYC 51st Anniversary booklet)
 More than 20 lives were saved by members of the Racine Coast Guard unit during the past year, an official government report revealed today. Warrant Officer John Needham, officer in charge of the Racine station, said the report indicated Racine had more major rescue operations than any other station on the Great Lakes including Chicago, Milwaukee and Cleveland. Needham explained that the Racine station was credited with 20 major rescues and that as many as four persons were saved in some of these missions. Chicago had 16 major missions, Milwaukee 3, and Kenosha 1. Racine's station also ranked high on the number of minor missions where runs were made merely to assist after engine breakdowns and similar minor mishaps on the lake. Racine had 70

such runs, Chicago had 44, Milwaukee had 42 and Kenosha had 33. Needham said he believed the primary reason for the greater number of major rescue operations out of Racine was due to the large number of sailing craft out of Racine. Milwaukee, Chicago and other Great Lakes cities have more power craft owned by private individuals and these make many of the major rescues, he said. A recent Coast Guard survey, according to Needham, revealed that

Racine had more sailing vessels per capita than any other city on the Great Lakes. Needham also announced today that plans have been completed for installation of radar at the Racine station. (Ed. And now in the year 1967 we receive word that the Coast Guard station at Racine will no longer be maintained and we will have the services of the Helicopter stationed in Chicago. This will permit a rescue service of 30 minutes to an hour, for a boat in trouble off of Racine.)



In 1966-67 Yahnke Construction from Washburn, Wisconsin did work to extend the Water Company intake pipe. "Captain Ed" from Yahnke was the primary diver and the company was in Racine for the whole length of the project. He became something of a fixture at the Club. The intake pipe ran under the parking lot and at one time the work broke through the surface; the hole in the photo is the beginning of that breakthrough. The pipe went out about 1500 feet into the lake. That winter, Club members created a pond in the same area that was about 50' x 50' using snow as a berm. Flooded and frozen, it became "Lake Yahnke." Jim Rooney remembers ice skating on it along with Carol Schneider and other Club members during halftime of Super Bowl I.



A publication of the RYC Historical Committee, a volunteer group dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of RYC's rich history. Written by Charlie Manning using historical information, excerpts, and illustrations from RYC's archives.

