

An Abridged History of the New Hamburg Yacht Club 1869 - 2020

The New Hamburg Yacht Club has a long history that is a source of great pride to its members and to the best of our knowledge is the sixth oldest Yacht Club in the US. The club was organized December 20, 1869 by the local millionaires, river captains and village residents as the New Hamburg Ice Yacht Club. The dues were \$3.00 for active members (those who owned yachts) and \$2.00 for non-active members (those that did not). It was said to be the pioneer ice yacht club in the area. Summer boating wasn't included in its activities until many years later. Today there is no ice yachting.

Irving Grinnell was the first commodore and the leading spirit of the original club. He was a local millionaire who owned a river-front estate with a boat house that was a short distance south of third point that is the third point of land jutting into the river north of New Hamburg. For some 30 years the Grinnell boathouse was used as the yacht club's headquarters. The Grinnell estate and the adjoining estate of Temple Bowdoin, another early member, is now known as Bowdoin Park of Dutchess County.

During the 1880's the club had many fast ice yachts (Mr Grinnell owned six) and several expert boatmen. Most of the boats of the period were built by Jacob Buckhout of Poughkeepsie, with most of the boat owners being either wealthy sportsman or owners of sailing vessels on which they earned their living when the river was open. During the winter, ice boating



and their eternal games of dominos were the chief interest of the river captains.

The club was reorganized three times, 1902, 1938 and in 1948, each time to fit the changing needs of the community. In the year 1911 the NHIYC was incorporated and became known as NHYC. The old lime rock dock was acquired from William Workmen and his wife Rowena. Between 1902 and 1920 the members became more and more interested in summer boating, first in small sail boats, then in Naphtha launches. During that period there were beach parties at Third Point, two or three times a month. The parties were for the wives and children of members, as well as the men. There were often 40 or 50 at these parties. Most of the group would go up the river in 10 or 12 launches but some of the younger members would take their girlfriends up by canoe.

In 1924 the members decided to raise the building. They did this by putting in a lower floor of concrete blocks. The second floor was reserved for meetings and pool. Claude Van Nostran was Commodore at the time and all work of remodeling was done by members working summer evenings and weekends.

The lower floor was used for dances, dinners and smokers. The woman's auxiliary was organized at the time of the remodeling to take care of refreshments. The club had been very exclusive before the remodeling and the club house had been reserved for members only.

The club house gradually became more and more the center of the village activity in the summer. Of course, the sandy beach and bath houses were an attraction to the younger generation. Boys and girls went down to the club house when they wanted to swim or boat, then sat on the "deck" or porch and looked out over the river. Older residents found the deck was a pleasant place to spend a summer afternoon or evening. It was especially pleasant after the club installed telescopes.

In 1948, the club had about 30 members who owned a couple of outboard motor boats. Under the new setup, the minimum age limit was dropped from 18 to 16, to take in the high school crowd. Young boys and girls were to be allowed to use the club so long as they respected it. In fact 12-13-14 year olds were a real help when the grounds were cleaned up, the beach re-sanded and the float built early that season.



Members were using the club once again. Some of them were out every night with outboards. Younger members would go down to swim then sit on the dock. Other would sit, look at the river and talk. The club house once again became the hub of the village social life.

In the 1950's there were outboard races on Memorial Day weekend and "Sunfish" sail boat races were held in the 1960's. In recent times, Family Day was held in June or July and finally moved to August with games, food, music and refreshments. During a hurricane in November of 1950 an empty fuel oil storage tank, to the south of the club, floated loose and brushed the club's sea wall on its journey up the river with the tide. The NHYC Centennial Celebration was held in 1969 at which time the club had 82 members. In 1978 the property and house adjacent to the club were purchased from Arnie and Joan Cohan. This property commonly referred to as the 'rental property allowed for increased parking and yard space. It also increased our frontage to the club greatly enhanced the lawn and waterfront and brought in additional revenue through the rental of the house. The mortgage was discharged in 1995. Another improvement to the club was the 1979 rebuilding of the interior stairwell leading to the second floor.

Today dockage facilities can accommodate approximately 87 boats. Many social activities take place on a continual basis throughout the year including, holiday parties, annual family day, dances, dinners, cook-outs and Sunday morning breakfasts.

The club has evolved into a recreational boaters club that has many ties to the community. A significant number of club members reside in the hamlet, and the club prides itself on its community activism. Local residents are routinely invited to social functions, and a Community Appreciation Day is held annually.