



## Stories from the Seaside Park Yacht Club

### Seaside Park Yacht Club

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Located on Barnegat Bay on the barrier island town of Seaside Park, New Jersey, SPYC was founded in 1899, beginning with a series of Sneak Box races for large cash prizes that evolved into first a Sneak Box owners club and soon afterward the Seaside Park Yacht Club.

**SEASIDE PARK YACHT CLUB □ BECOMES NSHOF FOUNDING MEMBER**  
**From the Commodore:**

“The Seaside Park Yacht Club is pleased to continue its commitment to our sailing tradition by becoming a Founding Member of the National Sailing Hall of Fame. The promotion of the spirit of sailing as a sport dates back to the Seaside Park Yacht Club's founding in 1899, which was home to some of the earliest formal yacht racing contests in the United States. Our members have continued to honor and expand the tradition of the earliest races, and are delighted to join the NSHOF in the furtherance of sailing through recognition of its history and its future.”

Marilyn Lennon, Commodore

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## History



The Seaside Park Yacht Club (SPYC) owes its birth to Henry J. West of Gloucester, N.J., who inaugurated a series of sneak box races on Barnegat Bay for large cash prizes. The principal contenders in these races were the Life Guards who manned the then "Life Saving Stations," which eventually became the United States Coast Guard stations.

The starting line was at the present Public Dock in Seaside Park and the course was the same as the present SPYC Course, except perhaps that it was longer, from the Public Dock to Westray's Point to the Drawbridge to the Public Dock, four times around.

As a result of these races it was often suggested by the Captains that an Association of Sneak Box Owners be formed and that a club house be erected at the foot of the Public Dock. These discussions took place in the basement of the Cottage owned by Henry J. West and later by SPYC Commodore Robert Wolstenholme at the corner of 5th Avenue and the Bay. Later that

year (1899) a meeting of all the cottage owners and yachtsmen in Seaside Park was held at the home of John Weaver and the Seaside Park Yacht Club was formed.

John Weaver was elected the first commodore and the Board of Directors was composed of the leading yachting enthusiasts such as Henry J. West; Harry B. Wyeth; John E. Creth; Dr. George H. Thacher; George S. Gandy and Harvey T. Weber.

The club house was built and soon expanded and boating boomed to an unprecedented degree in Seaside Park. As the area developed, the spirit of yacht racing grew and a series of contests between other early clubs: Island Heights, Bay Head, Mantoloking and Lavallette soon began. The older Toms River Yacht Club resurrected the Toms River Challenge Cup, which had been inaugurated in 1871. Barnegat Bay took on a racing fever unsurpassed in the annals of yacht racing.

SPYC, with its fleet of famous racing yachts, such as "Tsar"; "Mermaid"; "Lazy Jack"; "Another Old Maid"; "Fran Roy"; "Dorothy," and others, swept everything before it. All along the Atlantic Seaboard, Barnegat Bay became known as the home of the world's fastest catboats.

SPYC and other clubs on the Bay have played and continue to play an important role in the development of yacht racing in the United States. Barnegat Bay and SPYC are home to some of the earliest formal yacht racing contests in the nation and all the BBYRA clubs continue to honor that tradition in the annual contests that incorporate the old and the new. The Sewell Cup was presented as a perpetual trophy in 1900 by the then United States Senator from New Jersey, William J. Sewell and is still raced for every year. In later years the Rodman Wanamaker Trophies, the Middleton Cup (1921), the Morgan Cup, Stanger Cup, Wolstenholme Trophy, Doan Cup, Chance Cup, Thatcher Cup (1927) and others were offered.

The social features of the club are many. Over the years entertainments provided by the club members were many and varied. Cabarets, dances, card parties, and musical entertainments were staged every Friday and Saturday evening. The social program at Seaside Park and its delightful Club house were so popular in the '30's and '40's that the Seaside Park Yacht Club marina was filled with visiting boats from other Clubs who came for the swing bands and dancing on the deck on Saturday nights.

SPYC continues to hold a special place in the hearts of all BBYR sailors who traditionally wrap up the "official" sailing season on the Seaside Park Course on Labor Day weekend. Upholding tradition and creating new traditions on "Race Day" is a glorious finale to a summer well spent racing on the Bay.

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