

SYC Sailing in the 1930s

(Sent to Holly Houston from Denis McWhan, September 2011)

Intrigued by the trophy for SYC Class racing in 1938 that was shown at the closing Commodore's Reception, I put together the following summary based on conversations/e-mails with Janet Azzoni, Frank Clifford, Bob Eaton, and Evelyn Sherman who were sailing with the SYC at the time.

Competitive class racing was initiated at the Southport Yacht Club in the late 1930s with as many as 15 to 20 boats on the water on some Saturday afternoons. There were three different class races just as we had in the 1970s with the Turnabouts, O'Day Daysailers, Rhodes/Mariners, and Christmas Coves. In those early days, however two of the three classes were home grown.

Ob Brewer built a number of skiffs in the 1930s – many of which are still in use in Cozy Harbor. He modified two skiffs by mounting a mast in a hole in the forward seat and adding a centerboard trunk and rudder. The intrepid sailors of these “Skiff Class” sailboats were Norma (Clifford) Smith and Bob and Priscilla Eaton. Bob still has his silver cup for winning the “Skiff Class” in 1938 and Priscilla has a small clock and a plate won the following year. Norma won the overall regatta in 1938.

The Southport Yacht Club developed the SYC Class that is a 13' catboat. The last remaining boat in the class is on display in the Hendricks Hill Museum. It was built by Sid Grey on the east side of Southport and was donated to the museum by Jeanette (McIntosh) Ingersoll for whom it was built. The original fleet of four boats was built by Herb Decker at his boat shop next to Robinsons in the 1930s. Three of the owners were Noel and Emil Colletti, Janet (Elderkin) Azzoni, and Evelyn (Pratt) Sherman. Evelyn has a beautiful sailboat trophy on her shelf for winning the SYC Class in 1938.

The largest class was the so-called “Townies”. These boats were built starting in 1932 by The Pert Lowell Company, and they became the Town Class in 1936. They are still a popular class of sailboats – <http://townclass.net>. Other companies built similar boats that were called Winabouts. Both are a 16.5' lapstrake sloops, and there was a fleet of boats split between Five Islands (Mauldin Island) and Cozy Harbor. Bob Eaton recalls that there were often between 9 and 13 Townies on the starting line and that there was a heated competition between Marr in Boat #150 from Cozy and Walker in boat #151 from Five Islands. Some of the SYC sailors were: Mason and Wright Britton, Frank Clifford, Bob Colby, Stan Freeman, Lee and Bud Lanning, and Bob Marr. By elimination the trophy shown at the closing Commodore's Reception must have been for the Town Class but the winner has not been identified.

The opening of the sailing season was a big event. The Coastguard brought their boat called the “Chilan” over to Cozy Harbor. Charlie Pinkham dressed up as King Neptune and went out to meet them. He had a big key with which to open the Sheepscoot for sailing, and the original key is in the Museum. At the end of the season the award's dinner was held at the Shore Manor (before it burned down) that was across the Townsend Gut from Robinsons.

The competitive racing was very active between 1936 and 1941 but the racing essentially came to an end with the start of the Second World War.