



HISTORY OF PETTIPAUG YACHT CLUB

1934

A group of local sailors led by Meade Minnigerode, Dr. Charles Winne, Jess Halliday, Bill Sangster, Wright McCallip and Frederick Koehler gathered where Pettipaug is now located to form what was then known as the Hi and Dry Yacht Club. These men were principally interested in racing off the Great Meadows in Essex. The Hi and Dry Yacht Club later merged with the Essex Open Class.

1950s

In 1950 the Essex Open Yacht Racing Association became Pettipaug Yacht Club. In 1956, a formal sailing instruction program for juniors was developed. Commodore Walter Rowe was a guiding father to this program that taught hundreds of local children to sail. Peter Gref was instrumental in the development of

the Blue Jay fleet. A fleet was constructed using his mold and club talent.

1957 brought new docks and a larger racing fleet. The Club (along with the Essex Yacht Club) became the sponsors of the Connecticut River Squadron of the Frostbite Yacht Club. Club members were saddened by the death of John Newman, 1957 Junior Program Chairman, who was instrumental in setting up the program. The following year, Pettipaug hosted the ECYRA Midget Championships to celebrate the addition of a sail locker and bathroom facilities to PYC's pavilion. The Newman Trophy was established by friends and awarded to the Essex area's junior sailing champ.

During 1959, the Blue Jay fleet leveled off, and the open class found itself becoming a Lightning fleet.

1960s

1960 brought an improved road and new styrofoam floats. Pettipaug again hosted the ECYRA Midget Championships.

Two important events took place in 1961. First, the non-profit Pettipaug Junior Sailing Academy was established. Second, the mortgage note was burned. 1963 found Pettipaug with its first ECYRA champion, Carleen Reynolds, winning the PYC-sponsored Midgets. In 1964 members mourned the passing of former commodore Skipper Hawkins who had given so unselfishly of himself to the furtherment and well-being of Pettipaug. In his memory, the Board of Governors established the Elbert A. Hawkins Trophy to be awarded to that junior member who best exemplifies the unselfish contribution of Skipper Hawkins. Carleen Reynolds won it the first year.

Recognizing a community need, early in 1965 the Club sponsored a meeting open to the public concerning boating safety with the State Boating Commissioner and representatives of the Coast Guard and State Police as speakers. Later in the year Ann Shepard became the Club's second ECYRA champion when she won the ladies division, a title which she successfully defended in 1966 and 1967. 1966 brought the club another winner when Tim Doan became midget champion in races held at Pettipaug.

Series racing reached an all-time low in 1966 but 1967 showed some improvement. Blue Jays were in slightly better force, and a small Open Class appeared to replace the Lightnings. For the first time in the club's history a yearbook was published in 1967. Commodore Donald Doyle began 1968 with the

construction of the new Commodore's Room and lockers. He also facilitated the creation of a fleet of nine 505s to increase high performance racing and provide an advanced trainer for the Junior Sailing program.

Both 1969 and 1970 found increased activity in the three series of racing, all of which had now moved back to Pettipaug.

1970s

1970 saw the club co-sponsor, with the Essex Yacht Club, the ECYRA Annual Regatta. Also in 1970 the club purchased the tract of land running back from the old property to the creek.

In 1971 in honor of Charles Birch, one of the early High and Dry sailors, the Charles Birch Memorial Trophy Race for small cruising sailboats was created and continues to be a competitive well-attended river race.

In 1972 two new classes were added – Thistles and International 14s. A new dock was built to facilitate launching and a third ECYRA Midget Championship was brought to the club when Jim Scheide won at Sachem's Head.

The 1973 season under Commodore John Field saw electricity and telephone facilities installed and our first Blue Jay National Champion. PYC member and Junior Sailing Academy instructor Doug Daly won the event held at East Greenwich R.I.

In 1974, the Blue Jay Nationals were held at Pettipaug and won by Steve O'Connor, a graduate of PSA and a junior member of the club. In addition, Pettipaug Yacht Club acquired four acres of land adjoining our present property, immediately to the south, running from the river to North Cove. Also, in 1974 a Laser fleet began with the purchase of more than 20 boats facilitated by Don Doyle.

The most notable sailing achievement in 1975 occurred when Cindy Batchelor won the Adams Trophy, the women's national small boat racing championship, at Newport Beach, California.

The women were outstanding again in 1976 with Jane Scheide going to the finals for the Adams Trophy and Robin Doyle winning the quarter finals in the Sears. Lou Annino served as anchor man for the juniors by winning the first position in the ECYRA regatta.

1977 was the year of the Academy instructors. Jane Scheide won the ECYRA Adams Trophy. Lou Annino won the ECYRA Sears quarter finals. Dave Nickerson went to the O'Day single-handed men's finals in Kansas City, having already won quarter and semifinal eliminations. Paul Welling won the ECYRA Blue Jay championship.

In 1978 Paul Hughes won the ECYRA Midget Championships and the PYC juniors went undefeated in seven team races against other ECYRA yacht clubs.

1979 marked the second year that Pettipaug juniors returned undefeated in seven team races against other ECYRA yacht clubs.

1980s

In 1980, John Lombard, Jr. took the Pettipaug burgee to Cleveland and represented the area in the finals of the Bemis Junior National Championship.

In 1981 the Club celebrated 25 years in its home on the river. Improvements in the facilities were begun, leading to the installation of an electric hoist and a refurbished bulkhead in 1982.

In 1982 Cindy Batchelor went to the Adams Cup national finals. Capital improvements continued in 1983 with the addition of dolphins secure

the docks, and filtering systems for our water supplies.

In 1985 a fund-raising campaign undertaken by Simeon Braguin enabled us to build new floats and make repairs to the clubhouse.

Walter Rowe, who had founded the Pettipaug Junior Sailing Academy some thirty years before, died in 1986 at the age of 84. Walter will be remembered for the love of sailing which, through the Academy, he passed on to the young people of our area.

1986 saw the establishment of our first Advanced Racing Clinic. Vice Commodore Jeffrey C. Lovelace developed the clinic, which invites advanced sailors from all area yacht clubs to Pettipaug Yacht Club for one week of advanced racing and sailing techniques.

In 1987 naval architect and club member Britton Chance, Jr., played an important role as a part of the team, which designed Stars and Stripes, the 12 Metre yacht which brought the America's Cup back from Australia. Students of Pettipaug Junior Sailing Academy marched in the Essex parade honoring local members of the winning team.

In 1988 under the direction of Paul Risseeuw, a program to construct nine Optimist dinghies was undertaken. These boats allowed the Pettipaug Junior Sailing Academy to admit nine-year-old students for the first time.

In the autumn of 1988 the Wesleyan University sailing club, Wesail, used the club premises as a base for its fleet of four collegiate 420s. In the spring of 1989, the fleet grew to six. Wesail sponsored its first intercollegiate regatta in April 1989.

1990s

In 1990 the Academy's junior racing team won the ECYRA Team Racing Championship Regatta for the first

time in Pettipaug's history. The United States Yacht Racing Association awarded William H. Grover, recipient of the Club's USYRU Sportsmanship Perpetual Trophy, honorable mention in its national competition for the W. Van Alan Clark Jr. Sportsmanship Award.

In 1991 the PYC Blue Jay fleet grew substantially and 22 boats raced in the Sunday afternoon series. In 1992 the Club Blue Jay fleet totaled 47 boats and the club purchased additional land to the south of the existing property.

from the DEP to cover all previous and future waterfront improvements such as docks, bulkheads, pilings and crane. At this time the estate of Simeon Braguin gave PSA a sizable bequest to fund scholarships for club and academy improvements. Also in 1998, the junior team of Randy Batchelor and Rebecca Doane went to the Bemis finals in Hawaii. In 1999 Pettipaug joined with Essex YC and Essex Corinthian YC in establishing a Tri-Club series of river races. Each club sponsored a memorial club race and a combined overall trophy was awarded.

In Memory of Paul W Risseeuw, 1943 - 2015



In 1993 PSA's racing team went undefeated, winning the ECSA Team Racing Championships and ECSA All Star Regatta.

In 1994 Commodore Diana Coan oversaw the realignment of the Pettipaug Junior Sailing Academy by lowering the entrance age from 9 to 8 and by creating two three-week sessions. Additional land to the south of the existing property was purchased from Russell Vile.

In 1995-1996 under Commodore Chip Rutan, the Xavier High School sailing team begin sailing at Pettipaug as well as Trinity College, who supplied six new 420s.

In 1998 PYC, under Commodore Tim Robin, with help from Tom Klin, applied for and obtained permits

2000s

In 2000 Christopher Doyle, Jon Eaton and Randy Batchelor took the Pettipaug burgee to the Sears Area B semi-finals at Rochester Yacht Club. Also, in 2000 the rowing program was established under Commodore John Kennedy, Barbara and David Edwards and John Flory. New storage racks were constructed for their rowing shells. Thanks to the efforts of Sandy Sanstrom, Ed Birch, Breck Lardner and others the clubhouse ceiling was finished to prevent the return of the perennial swallows.

In 2001, new docks were built with low freeboard to accommodate the growing number of rowing shells. A series of learn-to-row days and

advanced clinics gradually added new members. The Pettipaug Yacht Club Rowing Group included a strong core of competitive scullers representing PYC annually at the Head of the Charles, National and World Masters Championships, other US regattas and internationally as well.

In 2002 racing for the Hawkins Team Trophy began again between PYC and Essex YC after a ten-year hiatus. 420's were used this year and Ideal 18's in alternate years.

In 2005 the PYC rowers held their first regatta, the 11 km Laundon Loop, from PYC through Selden Creek and back via the river.

2006 was the 50th anniversary of our Sailing Academy. A gala party was held at Pettipaug to celebrate the occasion. Under the direction of John Kennedy and the Connecticut Audubon Society we were one of the host sites for Eagle Fest.

In 2007 Paul Risseeuw and Sandy Sanstrom taught 100 students in their twelve behind-the-wheel Basic Powerboat Handling courses. These courses started in 2003.

In 2008 Myles Gibbs placed 2nd in the Blue Jay Nationals at Niantic Bay YC. New north docks and a handicap ramp were completed by Rear Commodore Chris Manero and Past Commodore Sandy Sanstrom.

In the 2009 season under Commodore Bob Scholes and Race Chairman Rob Jones a new monthly fleet racing format significantly improved participation in racing at PYC. A burgee swap program began with other yacht clubs resulting in 12+ colorful burgees on display in the Commodore's Room, which has grown significantly since.

2010s

In 2010, the PYC website was redesigned by Commodore Cameron Taylor and an online calendar with the latest scheduling of events and private parties was added. Vice Commodore Chris Manero and Sailing Director Paul Risseeuw introduced windsurfing to PSA's curriculum. PYC joined other local yacht clubs to race 12 Metre yachts in Newport, R.I.

In 2011, the Pettipaug Jr. Regatta was renamed the Paul Risseeuw Jr. Sailing Regatta honoring Paul's tireless efforts to build and direct a superior sailing program. "E-blasting" announcements and alerts to members' email addresses became the most effective (and free) way to communicate to the membership. Eighteen boats participated in the Mid-Summer Handicap Regatta, thought to be a record for the event. Through a grant from US Sailing, PYC was able to improve its fleet of powerboats to allow 40 additional

Thank You Marian!

Marian Carson (left) was honored at the Spring Commissioning on May 14, 2022, for her 30+ years of service as PYC's treasurer and Jr. Sailing registrar. A Proclamation from the Town of Essex (read by P/Cdre Kathryn Ryan) designated May 14th, "Marian Carson Day". Marian was then given a U.S. flag that had flown over the nation's capital. Marian and her husband Larry now live in North Carolina, close to their son, Scott, and his family.



students to take the Powerboat course.

In the fall of 2011, Priscilla Robinson visualized a women's sailing program at PYC. With fellow founding members Kathryn Ryan and Stephanie Taylor, the Women's Sailing Group (WSG) was launched in the summer of 2012.

In 2013 the Board of Governors passed a motion that Past Commodores are to be honored with Life Membership.

In 2014 members agreed to an assessment to purchase a shed and finance the remodeling of the clubhouse. Stephen Dix and Bob Wynkoop introduced the MC Scows to Pettipaug racing enthusiasts. This revitalized the racing program and rapidly gained the support of "seasoned" sailors. Bob registered the fleet and was assigned Fleet 99 by the national MC Scow Association.

In 2015 Sandy Sanstrom, Paul Mikulak, and Pat Carufe with the help of others remodeled the clubhouse including the PSA director's office, named in honor of Paul Risseeuw, who passed away on November 27th. The MC Scow fleet organized a work party and repurposed the old, unused race committee platform into a Tiki Bar. Volunteers replaced our roof in November.

In 2016 the Board of Governors established a Capital Reserve Fund to systematically accumulate monies to be used solely for capital

improvements, major repairs or replacements and emergencies.

In 2017 Sailors for the Seas awarded the Paul Risseeuw Memorial Jr. Regatta Silver Level status in their Clean Regatta program for implementing over 13 best practices to help preserve our beautiful river. The Women's Sailing Group divided into two groups Summer Salts (Tuesday nights) for advanced sailors and the Nauti-Novices on Wednesday night. 2018, they reunited as one Tuesday night sailing group.

In 2018 PYC was a co-sponsor with ECYC of the first CT River Leukemia Cup Challenge Regatta, raising over \$30,000. Blue Jay racing returned to PYC under the guidance of Bill and Julie Dunbar (former president and secretary of Blue Jay International) and Priscilla Robinson. The 2018 Blue Jay Series (BJS) was won by Toby Doyle, who had won this same trophy in 1964. In the fall of 2018, eight distraught Blue Jays were given to the series and restored by its members.

In 2019 with refurbished Blue Jays and support by PYC, the Dunbars and the Women's Sailing Group, the 25 BJS members provided great racing and apres race partying. The MC Scow members awarded the first inaugural perpetual trophy to Victor Hoehnebart (see page 47). Many club members donated Prop Guards for club powerboats. Volunteers John Becker, Vic Hoehnebart, Matt Montana and Amy Gordon Pullin revitalized the PSA fleet: two Opti racks were built; five newer Optis and new Pram sails were purchased; and the 420 rigging was standardized. The year marked the end of Kathryn Ryan's two-year term as Commodore. Kathryn set the standard for leadership, commitment and participation.



Past Commodore Sandy Sanstrom with starting gun for the Charles Birch Memorial Race.

2020s

2020 was a year like no other. Volunteers prepared for a great season, only to be blindsided in March by a virus called Covid-19. Little was known about the virus and how it was spread. There was a lot of uncertainty and concern. After reviewing constantly changing requirements, reluctantly the Board determined our small volunteer club could not meet, implement nor maintain the mandated protocols. Pettipaug Yacht Club officially did not open for the season and PSA was canceled. The decision was not arrived at lightly or with enthusiasm by any of the Board members. Members, keeping their distance from one another, did use the club grounds for respite, access to the CT River and walking dogs.

2021 was a bit more normal. PYC was open, with members respecting Covid protocols and club events modified for safety. Volunteers used newfound time to complete club projects. A new south dock was built, the club foundation reinforced, while some

painting, planting and tree work completed. Each club event had a record number of participants, likely due to the safe venue and need for camaraderie. PSA was full to capacity. The year ended safely and successfully with an outdoor Annual Meeting at the club and hope the new normal was here to stay.

2022 PYC operating in our new post-Covid “normal” said good bye and thank you to Marian Carson, both PYC and PSA’s treasurer for over 30 years (see page 46 for details.) Racing was a priority in 2022. The One-Design Series – sailboat racing for at least four fleets of boats – was formed and held monthly. An enthusiastic Race Committee, strong in numbers and eager to learn, did an outstanding job. PSA and PYC both shared a good season. PSA sessions were filled and many members and guests shared summer afternoons and evenings enjoying the beautiful PYC venue.