

## *Sneak Peeks at the Past ... Our Clubhouse ...*

Early records of the club are sparse, and neither the actual dates of construction nor the cost and plans for the original SPYC building have been discovered. Certain things can be surmised, however, from photographic observation and from written records and other references.

Although mysteries remain, the following information has been uncovered. There are some who believe the clubhouse was built somewhere across Barnegat Bay, floated by barge and placed on pilings off the shore of Seaside Park. While there is little other than legend to substantiate that claim, there is even less evidence to disprove it.

The events that can be substantiated begin with the official incorporation of the club on August 29, 1899. Eight months later, the Sea Side Park Company promised to convey the upland and riparian lands to the Seaside Park Yacht Club "as soon as the riparian grant for the same can be procured by the Sea Side Park Company." Less than five months later, without any riparian grant, title, lease or deed of any kind, at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 21, 1900, the clubhouse was formally opened. H. B. Wyeth, Chairman of the Building Committee, turned the house over to Commodore John Weaver in formal ceremonies that were recorded in the records of the club and in newspaper accounts. In September, 1900, the Company conveyed the upland properties to

the club and in June, 1901, the Company conveyed the riparian lands, upon which the club building was actually constructed.

There is room to speculate that, with only a promise and without legal title to any property, yet anxious to proceed with their endeavor, the Trustees may have arranged to have the building constructed elsewhere, floated to the sight and secured by pilings until such time as the property rights were secure. The legend is further enhanced by the substantiated fact that the Hiawatha Hotel (originally constructed as an exhibition hall for the centennial celebration in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia in 1876) was floated across the Bay in two sections and reassembled in Seaside Park about 1878.

The site of the present club was selected as the most centrally convenient and the best location because of the depth of the water. The clubhouse soon took form, and boating boomed to an unprecedented degree. Soon, owing to its immense popularity, a larger and more commodious house was needed and, with very little difficulty, funds were raised and a large addition made to the clubhouse.

Newspaper accounts indicate the Seaside Park Yacht Club house was constructed in 1899 facing the Bay. The clubhouse contained a large assembly room with a stage, a ladies' parlor, a gentlemen's smoking lounge where cigars

were sold and a billiard room, which housed at least two pool tables. There were shuffleboard courts, lockers and a large floor on which boats could be stored in winter. The club was originally situated over the water on pilings and was connected to the shore by a 250-foot boardwalk.

The identity of the architect is unknown. However, there are reports that J. Elvin Jackson was the architect for the club. The American Institute of Architects reports that J. Elvin Jackson appears in the Philadelphia city directory as an architect from 1879 to 1917. From 1919 to 1920, his occupation is given as an artist. Aside from a short partnership with J. Harris Reed from 1886 to 1887, operating as Jackson & Reed, Jackson appears to have worked independently, primarily on Philadelphia projects designing residences. Although SPYC is not listed among his projects, the Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects credits the firm of Jackson & Reed with the design of a cottage for A. R. Allen in Bay Head in 1887. Thus, there is circumstantial evidence supporting the reports.

*Special thanks to  
Joan Horvath-Leach  
for her input*

