

The Return of the Sound Interclub

A retired Lake George sailboat is making a comeback, and Mystic Seaport is following its progress

By Anthony F. Hall

Led by Lake George's John Kelly and Reuben Smith of Hall's Boat Corp., the Mystic Seaport maritime museum in Mystic, Connecticut, is documenting a once-famous class of sail boat that has slipped into obscurity.

The boats, Sound Interclubs, were sailed on Lake George from

the 1930s through the 1950s, when the Lake George Club replaced its racing fleet with Stars and Rainbows.

Two of the surviving sail boats have been acquired by John Kelly, the Assembly Point resident whose 1936 Lake George Gar Wood was restored by Reuben Smith and the crew at Hall's earlier this year. Hall's is now restoring Kelly's Sound Interclubs.

Of Kelly's two boats, one was in relatively good condition, but even that one had been disfigured by the force of the 42 foot mast and the weight of the lead keel, said Smith.

So before he could begin the work of restoring the boats, Smith needed an accurate set of plans.

Smith said he called Mystic Seaport in search of plans, photos and any additional information that might be in the museum's extensive archives, and while dozens of classic photos had been taken of the boats racing in Long Island Sound in the 1920s and 30s, no plans survived.

That inquiry led Mystic Seaport's staff to start researching the Sound Interclub, said Louisa Watrous, the museum's Intellectual Property Manager.

"Mystic Seaport is delighted that Reuben Smith and John Kelly are doing this work, because the museum maintains a representative collection of American sailboats, and there's too little information about the Sound Interclubs," said Watrous. "The Museum doesn't have a boat of this type in the collection, and the restoration at Hall's offers us an opportunity to clarify and update the photographic and vessel records."

In the absence of the designer's original plans (believed to have been lost in a fire), Smith is drafting a new set of plans as he restores Kelly's first Sound Interclub; his plans, notes and photos of the restoration will guide the restoration of the other four Sound Interclubs.

Mystic Seaport will be one of the beneficiaries of Smith's work, says Louisa Watrous.

Watrous, however, is not merely collecting the information gathered by Smith and Kelly; she's heavily involved in co-ordinating research



Above: Sound Interclubs on Long Island Sound by Morris Rosenfeld. Below: Sound Interclubs on Lake George. Mirror file photo.

on the boats, enlisting the aid of people like Rik Alexanderson, whose grandfather, E.F. Alexanderson, was among those who brought one-design racing to Lake George.

Alexanderson is conducting oral interviews about the boats' history on Lake George, said Watrous.

Others, like David Warren, have contributed photos of the boats being sailed on Lake George.

"I tend to feel that stories preserve themselves; they're waiting to be told and will be told when the time is right," said Watrous.

The oral histories and photos are not only valuable additions to Mystic Seaport's archives, but can assist Reuben Smith and John Kelly in their work, said Watrous.

For Watrous, researching the Sound Interclubs is not merely a professional obligation; it's a way for her to rediscover her links to the lake.

"I have personal ties to the lake through my family, and I even sailed on Sound Interclubs in the 1970s," said Watrous. "After the Lake George Club switched to racing Stars and Rainbows, two Sound Interclubs were sold to Canoe Island Lodge, where I worked as a college student in the 1970s."

John Kelly says he hopes to take his first sail in his Sound Interclub sometime this fall.

"I became interested in the boats when I was researching the history of my Gar Wood, which was owned

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History is in our nature

Lake George Association Meeting to be Held Friday, August 20

By Mirror Staff

Dr. Ken Wagner, commonly acknowledged as one of the nation's foremost experts on fresh water lakes, will be the keynote speaker at the Lake George Association's 125th annual meeting, to be held August 20 at the Lake George Club.

Wagner is best known on Lake George as a consultant to the Lake

George Park Commission who helped develop a pilot program to test the effectiveness of an herbicide in eradicating milfoil. After several public hearings in 2001, the Adirondack Park Agency denied the Commission a permit to test the herbicide. Wagner also advised the Commission during the drafting of the proposed stream corridor regulations.

"For decades, Ken has played a valuable role in environmental

research conducted on Lake George, working with the Lake George Association and other lake organizations," said Walt Lender, the executive director of the Lake George Association.

He holds a B.A. in environmental biology from Dartmouth College and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in natural resource management from Cornell University. He was formerly employed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental

Protection.

At the meeting, which will begin at 10 am, Lake George Association staff will discuss emerging lake-wide issues and provide status reports on current initiatives.

Executive Director Walt Lender will discuss the West Brook Conservation Initiative, which will protect Lake George's south basin from sediments and pollutants.

Randy Rath, LGA project manager, will provide summaries on the

LGA's other lake saving projects, such as those at English Brook, Hague and Finkle Brook deltas, Indian Brook, and the town of Putnam.

Emily DeBolt will speak on the LGA's educational and outreach initiatives, as well as New York State's new phosphorus law, and the status of wall lettuce, a new invasive species growing in the watershed.

Members will be asked to vote on nominees for seats on the organization's board of directors. Nominees are Tom Jarrett, Salim Amersi, Holly de Buys, Bill Dutcher and John Schaninger.

For information about the meeting, call the LGA at 668-3558.

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by a Lake George summer resident, Dan Winchester. A member of his family showed me an album that included some photos of a sailboat I'd never seen before. I showed them to Reuben, who immediately identified them as Sound Interclubs," said Kelly.

Designed by Charles Mower in 1926, the boats were famous in the 1930s as the fastest boats in the Westchester and Connecticut waters of Long Island Sound.

"The whole idea behind one-design racing is that it's a test of skills; it has nothing to do with who has the most money or the best technology," said Reuben Smith.

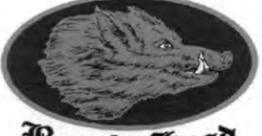
By 1935, however, the boats began to feel dated to the Long Island skippers, many of whom were America's Cup yachtsmen, and they replaced the boats with International One Designs, said Michael Kelly, brother of John Kelly.

Once the boats were no longer used for racing in Long Island Sound, they were brought to Lake George.

Reuben Smith says he knows of at least three other Sound Interclubs: one on Lake George, another in Texas and one on City Island in New York. He hopes they'll be brought to Hall's or to another Lake George boat shop and restored.

As does John Kelly. At the very least, he'll get some competition. What's the fun of owning a fast sail boat if there's no one to compete with?

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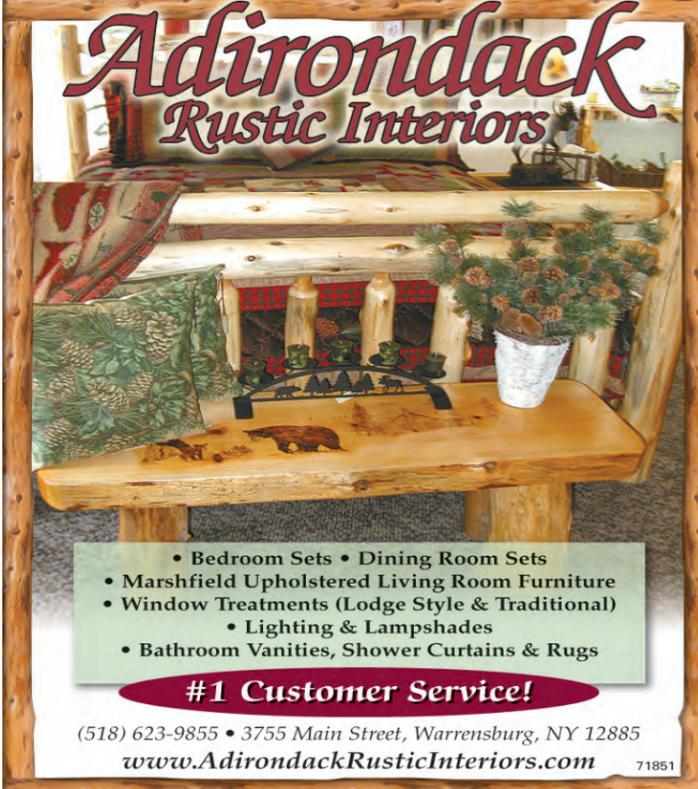


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