

## The Barnegat Bay A CAT Fleet

Robert B. O'Brien, Jr.

"Some of the early boats were gaff rigged but soon the Marconi rig proved its superiority and by the mid-20's all boats adopted that style."

A Cat boat is a shallow draft, broad beamed sailing craft characterized by having the mast stepped very far forward in the boat with one large sail to power it. Developed close to 200 years ago, it was the accepted mode of transportation in shallow waters such as exist in Barnegat Bay.

In the early 20's, several Barnegat Bay sportsmen built 28' Cat boats with 10' beams.

Most of these boats were designed by Naval Architect Charles D. Mower and approximately seven of these boats called Class A Cat boats were built by Morton Johnson & Co. of Point Pleasant. One boat was built in Toms River by a builder named John Kirk. Some of the early boats were gaff rigged but soon the Marconi rig proved its superiority and by the mid 20's all boats adopted that style. The mast towered 46' above the deck, giving the boat tremendous sail power.

These boats have been racing continuously since 1923 and are, therefore, the oldest continuously raced, one design class in New Jersey.

By the early 1970's the four original boats, then more than 50 years old, were in pretty sad shape. Then came Nelson R. Hartramft of Pine Beach, NJ, who had been an observer of the A Cat fleet since he was a little boy. He decided to try to save "the fleet" and, over a period of years, he bought and restored all of the original boats. In 1979 he decided to build a new A Cat at the Mantoloking yard of David Beaton & Son. WASP was the first "modern" A Cat and her presence on the Bay generated a renewed

interest in the fleet by several other people, notably Peter R. Kellogg of Bay Head. He built a new TAMWOK in 1991 from the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild, now part of the Independence Seaport Museum's Workshop on the Water at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia. In 1994 William Fortenbaugh, also of Bay Head, built GHOST at David Beaton & Son. In 1996

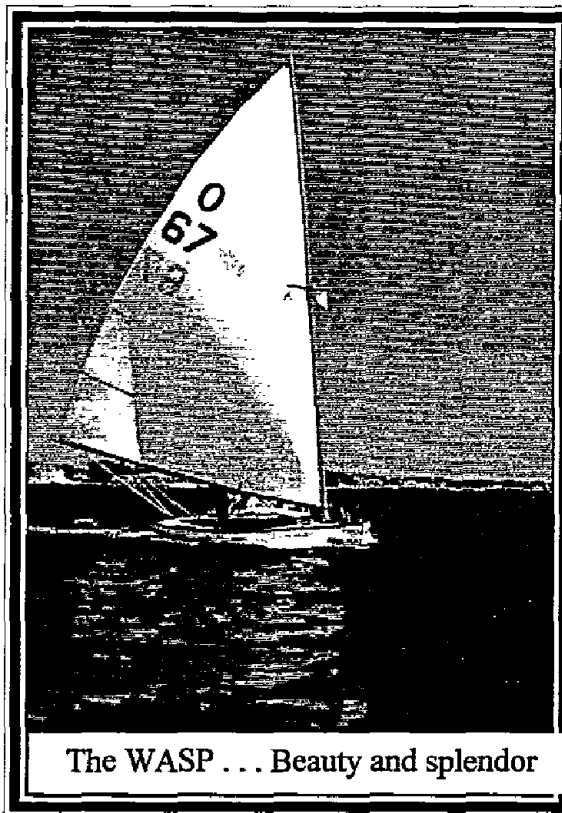
Peter Kellogg built VAPOR (again, from the Workshop on the Water in Penn's Landing) and in 2001 he built the SPY II at the Workshop on the Water.

A group of Metedeconk River sailors built RAVEN at David Beaton & Son and Kellogg built TORCH at the Independent Seaport Workshop on the Water in 2002.

Also in 2002, Austin and Gwen Fragomen of Bay Head decided to enter the A Cat fleet, but both the Workshop on the Water and Beaton's were busy with new boats, so they commissioned young

Bill deRouville of deRouville's Boat Shop in Lanoka Harbor to construct their new boat. Bill, a long time Cat boat sailor and A Cat crew member built WITCH, a lovely, innovative boat which captured the 2002 Bay Championship.

The New Jersey Museum of Boating became involved in the A Cat fleet by resurrecting WASP. Launched in 1982, she was in poor condition by the year 2000 as rainwater had collected in the forward part of the boat and



The WASP . . . Beauty and splendor

## An Ambitious Project

Joseph P. McGinty

NJMB President Bill Birdsall conceived of, and the NJMB Board of Directors endorsed, a unique display on the history of boating in New Jersey that would be the first exhibit seen by people entering the Museum. The display would "tell the story" of boating in our state—Camden to the Delaware Bay, to Cape May, the Mullica, Tuckerton, Toms River, Sea Bright, Bayonne— from the days of New Jersey's first boaters, the Leni Lenape, up to today.

And that raised the question, "Is this history written down anywhere?"

The answer is, yes...and no. Mary Ann Trail is currently the Administrator of Library Educational Programs and Assistant Professor in the Library of Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. In addition she is a principal of GT Information Consultants in Galloway, New Jersey who holds a Masters of Library Science from Rutgers University, and has worked as a professional librarian for over 25 years throughout southern New Jersey. Mary Ann agreed to consult with NJMB to do a review of the literature on the history of boating in New Jersey, and to prepare an initial timeline of that history, as a pre-requisite to completing the display for the Museum.

Her efforts resulted in a five-page bibliography listing 50 sources of information about New Jersey shipbuilding, shipwrecks and

types of craft. Her timeline begins in 1609 with Henry Hudson describing canoes of the Lenape as being "made of a single piece of wood," and concludes in the early 1900's with the Elco Naval Division of the Electric

Boat Company of Bayonne producing "hundreds of motor torpedo boats (PT boats)." [The bibliography and timeline are available from NJMB for \$.50 and \$.20 respectively]. This part of the project has been supported by a minigrant of \$750 from the New Jersey Historical Commission.

Mary Ann then selected an artistic media consultant to assist her in preparing an initial rendering to serve as the basis for an artistic media representation of the history. Alice McEnerney Cook of Tuckerton holds a BA from Chestnut Hill College, Philadelphia, PA; an M.Ed. in Art from the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, and an MFA from The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, also Philadelphia. Alice's exhibitions over the last twenty years have been mounted in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Washington, DC, Arkansas and New York. In 2000, she was honored by the Artist as Catalyst Program of the American Littoral Society, and her works may be viewed in the McGraw-Hill Company collection, among others.

While the project is still in progress and being further defined, NJMB anticipates the end result to be a privately funded, three-panel artwork presenting the State's boating history which will be prominently displayed in the Museum and which will be portable and available to schools, civic and other organizations throughout the region and the State.

NJMB continues to hope that the NJ Historical Commission will "come through" with the remaining \$2,250 needed to create the rendering. And we continue to look for private donors who would be willing to provide the funds to pay for the final artwork. If you know of a potential donor, please call Bob O'Brien at 732-295-2072. And many thanks to Mary Ann Trail and Alice McEnerney Cook for their participation in what is proving to be an exciting and ambitious project!

The display would  
"tell the story" of  
boating in our state—  
Camden to the  
Delaware Bay, to Cape  
May, the Mullica,  
Tuckerton, Toms River,  
Sea Bright, Bayonne



Founder & President Bill Birdsall surveys improvements being made to the museum

## A CAT Fleet

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"an interested group of 'Friends of the WASP' raised close to \$60,000 to finance a complete refit"

rotted out the mast step and other timbers. Mr. Hartrampf and NJMB struck an agreement wherein the Museum promised to repair the boat to competitive condition and campaign it in the Barnegat Bay Racing Association for five years.

Navy Lt. Chris Chadwick was named Skipper and an interested group of "**Friends of the WASP**" raised close to \$60,000 to finance a complete refit at deRouville's Boat Shop. A new sail was made by Beaton Sails and the vessel was tied for first place by mid 2001 season and ultimately finished third overall. The Museum is proud that it has saved the first modern A Cat and that she is doing well on Barnegat Bay racing events.

The Museum also wishes to thank the members of the "**Friends of the WASP**" Roll of Honor: Jack Chadwick, Albert

Thrower, Mitchell Shivers, Richard Swetits, Faye Gade, and the Thomas Hamilton Foundation. All of these gave \$5,000 or more towards the WASP's renovation. The Museum raised lesser amounts from important contributors such as Edward Mullen, The Kellogg Family Fund, Sidney Stires, Moe Shaw, deRouville's Boat Shop, Winter Yacht Basin, David Beaton & Son, the Dougherty Family, Marcy Brown, the Lucas Family, Frank Allocca, John Chickering, Doug Love, Peter Wright, Ed Dimon and Judy Prestia.

The above-mentioned people, along with the Museum's Officers, Directors and Trustees all pitched in to save an important boat and continue to promote the heritage of the longest, continuously raced, one design sailing fleet in New Jersey.

NJMB

2002 EVENTS

Sunday, December 8, 2002 1-4 PM  
Annual Holiday Party  
No admission charge  
Party Goodies/Photo Show

Starting December 7 through the month  
Maritime Photo Show

SHAPES & SHADOWS: Beaton's Boatyard

Presented by

Photo Friends of Princeton

No admission charge

A portion of the proceeds from all events benefits the  
New Jersey Museum of Boating, Inc.,  
a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization as determined by the IRS.

CORRECTION

In the last edition under EVENTS the wrong date was given for the Annual Holiday Party. The corrected date is Sunday, December 8, 2002. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend.