



Toms River Yacht Club, which hosts fourth Barnegat Bay Yacht Racing Regatta tomorrow. (Press Photo)

BARNEGAT BAY YACHT CLUBS

Toms River Oldest of Bay Clubs

TOMS RIVER — Tomorrow's fourth championship regatta of the Barnegat Bay Yacht Racing Association will be hosted by the Toms River Yacht Club, oldest of the member clubs.

The races will be sailed from the Island Heights Yacht Club because of the larger sailing area in that section of the river.

The traditional high light of the meet is the race of the venerable A Cats for the Toms River Challenge Cup placed in competition by the club in 1871. Other special trophy contests are the E Sloop race for the Horace Doan trophy and the B

Sneakboxes for the Franklin Doan trophy.

Organized yacht racing on Barnegat Bay had its beginnings with the formation of the Toms River club in 1870, predating other bay clubs by nearly three decades.

Town Was Port

By that time the little settlement of Toms River, established in 1624, had grown to a bustling river port. Situated on the stream of the same name with easy access to bay and ocean, it had become headquarters for party fishing yachts, excursion and pleasure craft, along with carriers for coal, wood, charcoal and other commodities.

It was the keen rivalry among the captains of the party boats, proud of their speedy catboats, and the resulting impromptu races which brought about the formation of the club. A group of retired sea captains from Toms River, Forked River, and Waretown headed the move.

Ran Races Semiannually

For a period of years the only function of the club was the organizing of the races, one or two a year, and officers met only when necessary. Before the second summer the club had purchased the Challenge Cup, now reputed to be the oldest perpetual trophy for small yacht racing still in competition.

The most common yacht of the time was the Barnegat Bay version of the Holland Catboat, a workhorse craft which was to be the forerunner of the racing Cats which were to make the bay famous. They averaged from 24 to 28 feet in length, were broad beamed and roomy, and designed for navigation of the shallow bay waters.

Ephraim Robinson of Toms River built some of these boats but the majority came from the boatyard of William D. Force in Keyport.

River - Little Egg Harbor Yacht Clubs' trophy and the International 14 regatta each fall for the Barnegat Bowl.

Racing for auxiliary sailboats is another important feature of the club program. Several races with auxiliaries from the Island Heights club are scheduled each year, among them the race for the Little Brown Jug trophy. This event is always followed by a rendezvous for all hands.

Other high lights of the summer season are a weekend cruise to Sedge Island, a cruise to Little Egg Harbor Yacht Club, and the entertainment of a cruise from that club.

Youngsters Stressed

For the younger members, starting with the 8-year-olds, it

offers a full summer of daily sailing instruction in Silver Beach waters. Under the direction of F. William Sutton, chairman, and John L. Clayton, co-chairman, a staff of able instructors teaches swimming, seamanship, and safety and provides the youngsters with lots of actual sailing and racing in the club's fleet of prams.

Heading up the organization's many activities and carrying on the traditions of the granddaddy of Barnegat Bay yacht racing are its officers elected annually. For 1961, they are Frederic Scammel, commodore; Frank B. Ewart, vice commodore; John B. Pierce, rear commodore; John M. Pettit Jr., fleet captain, and Carl F. Heagey, secretary - treasurer.

TOMS RIVER Y.C.

Sloop Built Locally

By the mid 80s, a diversification in yacht classes was begun with the introduction of the Delaware tuck-up sloop by John P. Kirk at his local boatyard. The Gracie, one of the most famous champions of the era, was Kirk-built.

For 33 years, the club had no clubhouse. Following a slump and revival of racing interest, the club reorganized in 1903 and its 200 members, eager for a social as well as a sailing headquarters, purchased the old Dover House (sometimes called the Barney Haines house) which faced the river on the west side of Robbins street.

The clubhouse opened formally on July 4, 1904 and was used until part of the present building was erected in 1914. It was enlarged to its present size in 1923-24.

The roomy clubhouse is a year - round gathering place for its members who hold semi-monthly dinner dances all year in addition to numerous other social functions. The docking area provides safe berths for large and small craft in all kinds of weather.

Sailing Big Part of Club

Sailing in all its facets remains an important part of club life. In addition to participation in BBYRA events, the club annually sponsors an invitation E Sloop regatta today and tomorrow for the Toms