

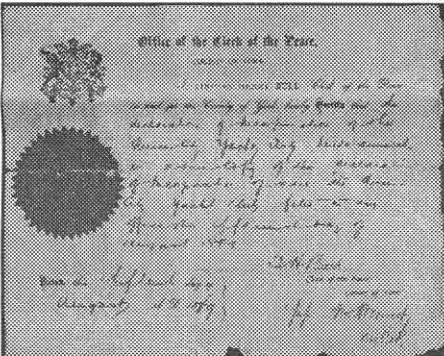
CLIPPER

QUEEN CITY YACHT CLUB ————— JUNE 1999

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It's official! Queen City is 110 years old on August 15

Documents dating back to 1889 are the oldest record in QCYC's history

As diligent as researchers were in gathering documents for QCYC's Centennial book, there were some distinct holes in the assembled history. Many early documents had simply been lost to time. Or so it seemed.

Happily, at least some of the missing information has turned up. Furthermore, it's in excellent condition given its age. Among the documents is the original Declaration of Incorporation of Queen City as a yacht club, dated August 15, 1889. The document, which includes the original signatures of each of the club's founding fathers, is the single oldest piece of QCYC history in existence.

Almost as significant, and in similarly good condition, a copy of the original Memorandum of Agreement as well as the original Letters Patent under the Ontario Companies Act that made Queen City an official corporation in 1921, are now in the club's possession.

Links to the past

Interestingly, one of the signatories to the Memorandum of Agreement, Richard Slee, is the great-grandfather of our current, junior club chairman.

Rounding out the treasure trove are various leases between the club and the City of Toronto after QCYC moved to Sunfish (later to become Algonquin) Island in 1920, (cost, incidentally, was \$100 a year), and some early club by-laws.

Also included in the material are some original surveys of Sunfish Island, delineating the exact area that the club initially leased.

The discovery of the documents was about as Queen Cityish as it's possible to get. When past Commodore Wayne Smith was preparing to move to St.

Catharines a few years ago, he held the obligatory locker sale to cut down on the things he had to move. Those present will recall the inventory as being somewhat greater than usual. Wayne had inherited the locker from his father Harry, who had had it for a number of years. An address on an envelope accompanying the documents indicate that they may at one time have been in the possession of Bob Hicks, a QCYC commodore in the 1950s


Saved by accident

In any event, not everything sold. Wayne's wife Nancy gathered the leftovers in boxes for shipping to St. Catharines. Nancy remembers one of the things thrown into a box was a yellowed chart holder with some papers in it that had been in the locker wall, behind the usual paraphernalia that we all know can collect. At the time she thought little of it, intending to sort it later.

With the preparation and renovation of a new home, it was only a few months ago that they got around to sorting through the boxes and made the exciting discovery. Realizing the significance of their find, Wayne and Nancy (now members of Dalhousie YC) have kindly donated the material to Queen City.

Seeking a means of preservation

Exactly how the documents can be used remains to be seen. Richard Slee, currently preparing an update to the constitution, is more than a little interested in the founding fathers' intent.

As well, some initial inquiries have been made to find an archivist capable of preserving the documents, preferably in a format that permits them to be framed and displayed in the club house as one more link in Queen City's illustrious 110-year history. 

"The Riparian Alliance is a well-organized lobby that cares little for interests beyond its own"

House Chairman resigns from board

Upset over board's handling of complimentary memberships cited


Bruce Beyer has resigned as house chairman. In his letter of resignation Bruce cited disgruntlement with the tendency of board thinking generally and disagreement with board policy regarding issuing of complimentary memberships in particular.

Bruce, a skilled guitarist and former entertainment chairman, was a driving force behind the formation of the Queen City Blues Band, bringing together a number of club musicians. He's also been one of the sustaining forces behind the band which has entertained at many club events over the last few years. Bruce says the band's performances have saved the club the cost of hiring an outside band.

Complimentary membership an issue

In an effort to improve the quality of the music, the band has recruited at least one participant who is not a club member. Bruce maintains that in return for playing in the band, the recruited band member should be given a complimentary membership.

Apparently Bruce and the board don't agree on the issue. Although the current roster indicates that the non-member was given a complimentary membership – and the free tender pass that goes with it – the printing was apparently done prior to official sanction by the board and is due to be rectified.

In discussing the complimentary list for this year, the board felt that notwithstanding the time spent practising and money saved through the band's performances, voluntary band participation is a club activity for the enjoyment of members rather than a task for which outside participants should be rewarded. 

Rochester group blamed for low water levels

Self-interested group claimed to have the ear of politicians

The following is a condensation of an article written by Bruce Henderson, Commander of the Britannia Power and Sail Squadron. Thanks to Brian Case for bringing it to the attention of the Clipper.

Low water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence river are partly due to the influence of a small but vocal group of Rochester, NY, area residents known as the Riparian Alliance.

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control, formed by the International Joint Commission, is charged with managing all US/Canada boundary waters. It controls water levels and river flow rates according to an approved regulation plan. The Board of Control consists of a panel of eight members representing the US Army Corps of Engineers, Transport Canada, Environment Canada and five state, provincial and local agencies and representatives.

Water-flow rates are set weekly by the board. A change in the rate must be unanimously agreed to by all panel members.

The current regulation plan, known as 1958-D, only recognizes three interests in determining water flows and levels: hydro-electric power generation, commercial shipping and protection for riparians (shoreside property owners) against flooding.

Note that it does not acknowledge recreational boating, aboriginal people, agriculture, tourism, wetland and shore habitat, or water quality of fisheries.

Riparians in control

This is where the Riparian Alliance comes in. It is a small group of home-owners who have built homes on the historic flood plain near Rochester. The group is a well organized lobby that cares little for interests beyond its own. And its own interest is the lowest possible water level that still allows commercial navigation and hydro production.

Water levels were higher than normal for several seasons, so last summer, the board set control dams on the St. Lawrence to maximize outflow down the river. But when water levels began dropping quickly last summer, the board was powerless to change the flow rate. Why? Because one member upheld the concerns of the Riparian Alliance and voted against changing the flow rate. (Remember, the board requires unanimous approval to change flow rates.) The result was the lowest water levels in the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario since the board was established.


Calling for a solution

The Ontario Marina Operators Association (OMOA) has asked the board to change the procedure from one demanding unanimous approval to one requiring a simple majority. The OMOA intends to make available a petition in its members' offices on the river and lakes. Concerned citizens are encouraged to sign it.

Additionally, you can send a letter of concern to the following:

Your Member of Parliament,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, ON,
K1A 0A6 (postage free)

The International Joint Commission,
Canadian section,
100 Metcalfe St., 18th floor,
Ottawa, ON,
K1P 5M1

Secretary, Canadian section,
International St. Lawrence River Board of Control,
c/o Canadian Coast Guard,
200 Kent St., Ottawa, ON,
K1A 0A6 

“The board serves the whole membership, not just a few well connected individuals “

Being a member of the QCYC board not always what it seems

Treasurer Tony Araujo speaks out

Soon after joining Queen City, I realized that membership required more of me than the simple act of paying for my dues. Sending in my cheque was the easy part. It was a “no brainer” to understand that without the willing participation of individual members working together on an assortment of tasks, Queen City wouldn’t be what it is today. I’ve found the cost of membership a bargain compared to the companionship and range of sporting and social activities that I’ve since participated in. I pay for my membership enthusiastically and like most members respond positively when asked to help the Club in other ways.

My enthusiasm must have been noticed. Not long after becoming a senior member I was approached by a good friend who asked me to consider running for the board, first as secretary while I learned the ropes and then as treasurer. In the latter case, the job description seemed simple enough: issue invoices, pay the bills and try to keep the financial ship on a reasonably even keel.

Being on the board not always as it appears

My friend, though, neglected to tell me that there was a hidden cost associated with being on the board. I’ve found that price much higher than expected.

When you’re involved, as board members are, in balancing conflicting interests to make decisions on behalf of a diverse group of individuals, criticism is to be expected. Board members aren’t perfect. They’ll inevitably err on occasion. But if you believe, as I do, that fairness and equity for all members should govern your actions, then most of the time the board will make decisions most members will understand and agree with.

Receiving criticism for your actions isn’t always a pleasant experience. At the same time, though, dealing with it is part of the job. A reasonable board member uses constructive criticism to adjust existing decisions because of unforeseen circumstances or as a guide to making better decisions in the future. I welcome constructive criticism. It shows me that members care enough about their club that they’ll make suggestions they hope will make it even better.

Constructive or destructive?

There is however a line between criticism and abuse that some members seem all too willing to cross when they feel wronged by the board or by an individual director. The price of that kind of abuse is something board members are finding increasingly difficult to pay. I worry that it might prove so costly, in fact, that good candidates will increasingly opt not to run for the board, a decision that would have serious ramifications for Queen City Yacht Club in the future.

tions for Queen City Yacht Club in the future.

Doing your duty for your club shouldn’t mean that your spouse must watch while a member virtually spits epithets at you while you ride back to the city on the Queen. It shouldn’t mean that dinner with friends in the dining room is interrupted for half an hour while a member harangues and threatens you for not providing a special deal for an acquaintance. Nor should it mean being publicly humiliated by the delayed departure of a Queen full of members while a member berates you over a safety rule over which you have no control.

And it should never *ever* mean that your friends can expect monetary or other favours from the club in order to retain their friendship.

Directors paying too high a price

Sadly, these are costs that board members are paying, even as they put in sometimes hundreds of volunteer hours every year on behalf of the club. I’ve been told by members more senior than I that this is the way it’s always been at Queen City, that abuse from certain members is also part of your portfolio as a board member.

But if that’s been true in the past, it doesn’t have to continue to be so. Indeed, if it did, it might well threaten the club’s viability over the longer term.

The Board is here to serve members - the whole membership, not just a few well connected individuals. Admittedly, things don’t happen quickly at Queen City. It’s one of those places that still adheres to the “spoken history” model of decision making. Very little of how we run things here is written down.

Civility called for

But if you have a problem that needs a board decision, there is a proper procedure. Discuss it calmly with a board member. Better still, write a letter and send it to the board. In my experience, it will be dealt with fairly and equitably at the next board meeting and you’ll receive a response noting the action taken.

Meantime, it would be best if individuals who insist on making life miserable for board members understand that threats, coercion, and questioning the intelligence or motives of the decision-makers won’t result in better or quicker decisions. And anyway, that just shouldn’t be the way to get things done at the “friendliest club on the lake”.

Care to comment?

As always, the Clipper invites members to submit their views on this and any other topic. See the masthead for e-mail and postal addresses.

