

HISTORY

Some years previous to 1854 a number of students at the University of Pennsylvania had been in the habit of taking their summer exercise in the form of rowing on the Schuylkill River. They would journey to Fairmount by omnibus, in the interests of safety, to avoid the infamous "Schuylkill Rangers." They would hire boats from an individual named "Charlie". When the Bachelors Barge Club offered for sale their four-oared barge, "Hesperus", which had been housed at "Charlie's" boathouse, the boat was purchased, and the *University Barge Club* began its career, and was instrumental in inaugurating the first organized rowing at the University of Pennsylvania. The College Boat Club was formed in 1872.

At first, all the members were undergraduates of the University of Pennsylvania, but several years after the founding of the Club, the requirements for admission were modified to permit the election of a certain proportion of non-collegians, as well as students at other colleges and universities. The membership continued to grow steadily so that in 1855 it was possible to erect a boathouse, and a small one-story brick building was built in conjunction with the members of the Naiad Club, who subsequently joined the University Barge. From 1854 until 1892 a unanimous vote of the Club was necessary for election, but with the increased membership the method proved too cumbersome, so that in the latter year the By-Laws were amended to provide for an Elective Committee.

Before the Club was founded, it has been the custom of the founder members to run with the Independence Fire Engine in the dress which was later adopted as the first Club uniform, consisting, in part, of a red shirt and varnished leather helmet. This was soon discarded, however, and the correct uniform of a "Bargee" became a white shirt with a wide turn down collar, pantaloons of white duck, tight in the seat and wide in the ankles, a broad leather belt having upon it in large metal letters UBC, and a stiff brimmed straw hat with a wide ribbon containing the word 'University', upon the ends of which again appeared the initials UBC. This uniform, together with the regulation pea jacket and brass buttons, *was* always worn when a member embarked in any of the Club's boats. The original outfits were purchased from Jacob Reed's, who then operated a sailors' clothing store on Second Street. After a few years this uniform was discarded in favor of one less elaborate, and the membership reverted to the original red fireman's shirt which is worn today on festive occasions. Although the red shirt is not in evidence on all occasions as in the past, it should be *worn at* all social functions at the Lilacs, and on Barge Parties. A variation in costume during the winter months, in the early days, consisting of black pants and a leather cap has been lost in the shades of antiquity together with the summer time straw hat.

Shortly after the occupation of the first clubhouse, an eight-oared barge called the "Ariel" was built to supplant the old "Hesperus" which had been swept over the Fairmount Dam while its crew were engaged in an attempt to assist a sailboat which was in grave danger. Tradition hath it that the Barge Club coxswain gave the order "Toss Oars!", as the Hesperus went over, and thus the plunge was made triumphantly. A six oared lap-streak boat with coxswain called the "Lucifer," and a four-oared Spanish cedar shell, the second "Hesperus", were among the early racing equipment. By the time they were built, outriggers and spoon oars had come into vogue.

Other rowing clubs were soon established, and in 1858 the Schuylkill Navy of Philadelphia was organized. Prior to this date it is probable that all races were of a very informal character. One of the earliest races of which we have record was rowed over a course from Turtle Rock to the Columbia Bridge and return, a distance of three miles. The contestants were Excelsior, Philadelphia, and the University Barge Clubs. The University Barge Club crew rowing *in* the "Lucile" crossed the finish line first. The second regatta of the Schuylkill Navy was held in 1860, and the "Lucifer" was again victorious in a three-mile race with the Barge "Atlanta" of the Keystone Barge Club. It was worthy of note, that of the original eight Clubs forming the Schuylkill Navy in 1858, the University Barge Club is the only one still in existence.

About the time the Civil War broke out, the Club moved its quarters to a boathouse under the new home of the Philadelphia Skating Club and Humane Society which it shared with the Undine Barge Club for ten years, the old quarters being rented to the Philadelphia Barge Club. The University Barge Club was incorporated on March 7, 1870, and a new double-story stone boathouse was completed in 1871. The Philadelphia Barge joined in its construction; and again in 1883, when the boathouse assumed its present form.

Arrangements were made with the Fairmount Park Commission in the year 1887 to lease "The Lilacs" which at the time was in very bad condition, with broken windows, a leaking roof, and was set in a dense thicket of poison ivy and lilac bushes. The house originally was the residence and part of a "plantation" owned by the Garrett Family. At the time of the Revolutionary War it was occupied by Major Morton Garrett, of the Seventh Battalion of Philadelphia Militia.

Great activity in the social life of the Club was noted at once following the acquisition and development of the "Lilacs" which, due to its attractive surroundings and secluded location, was in great demand for dinners, and other

social affairs. The "Lilacs" was the scene on June 4, 1904, of a celebration in honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of our foundation, the program including a procession of barges up the river from the boathouse, naval evolutions before landing, a garden party at the Lilacs and a Club dinner in the evening.

The morality meetings of the Club, which had been held for many years at the Colonnade Hotel, at the Southwest corner of Fifteenth and Chestnut Streets, were transferred in 1897 to the Lilacs. Before the hostelry was utilized for the meetings, the Club convened at various places. Some of the early meetings were held at the house of Mr. Henry B. Coxe, one of the early Presidents. For several years a room over Schumacher's Saloon, on Locust Street, opposite the Academy of Music, was the stated meeting place.

In 1899 a junior four-oared gig was formed and entered the Schuylkill Navy and People's Regattas. They were beaten in both races, but undaunted, the following year entries were made in Junior and -Intermediate Events in the Passaic Regatta at Newark and the Schuylkill Navy Regatta. They were coached by Dan Galanaugh, famous professional oarsman and Schuylkill River character, and emerged victorious in both races. In 1900 the Philadelphia and University Barge Clubs **conceived the idea of an annual** Inter-Club Regatta. Races were held for a period of thirteen years until the outbreak of the World War I, during which period the University Barge Club was victorious eight times.

At this time the Club came rapidly to the front as a racing organization. Numerous championships have been won by our members, and in some seasons the UBC has been the "head of the river". In 1905 the Club scored its first victory in a National Regatta, when Walter Stokes won the Intermediate singles race from a large field of entries. In the same Regatta the Club was represented by three of its scullers on an All-Philadelphia Octopede Crew. The Single Sculling Championship of the Navy has been won five times by UBC members. Edward F. Hoffman, Jr. having recorded the last two victories in 1910 and 1911. The first eight-oared shell ever organized in the Club entered the second eights of the American Rowing Association in 1912, and won from the Ariel Boat Club of Baltimore. In the same year Princeton defeated this same crew by a length, in almost record time over the one and a half mile course on Lake Carnegie. The Club four won the Senior four-oared shell race in the Nationals held at Philadelphia in 1914, while in 1915 the same crew finished a good second to Duluth in the National Regatta held at Springfield Other races have been rowed in New York, Saratoga, Washington, Annapolis, Baltimore and St. Louis.

During the period of World War I about seventy-five percent of the active members entered the service, racing stopped entirely, and Club activities came to a standstill. When the Armistice was signed, the Club found its membership greatly diminished, but steps were soon taken to revive our activity on the river. In 1919 Russell H. Johnson, Jr., won the Association singles race in the Schuylkill Navy Regatta.

In 1920 the services of Ralph R. Zane were secured as coach, a coaching launch was purchased and the boathouse hummed with activity. Winthrop Rutherford and Clement B. Newbold entered at St. Catherine's and succeeded in winning the Hop Bitters Cup.

The Club celebrated its Seventieth Anniversary in the spring of 1924 by having a dinner dance at the Lilacs which was attended by about two hundred people. A similar celebration was held in June of 1929 to commemorate the Seventy-fifth Anniversary and although it rained hard all day the ardor of three hundred or more guests and members was not in the least bit dampened.

The Philadelphia Barge Club, founded in 1862, decided to disband in 1932, and passed a resolution donating its boathouse and equipment to the University Barge Club. During the year 1933 many of their members joined the Club. The result was, in effect, a union of the two clubs.

In the spring of 1933 Mr. George W. Allison volunteered to act as coach. This move greatly stimulated the interest in rowing and resulted in the generous gift by one of our loyal and ardent members of a new coaching launch. Subsequently a squad was organized which entered a number of regattas, and it made a very creditable showing. For several seasons one of our veteran rowing members had been teaching his sons how to schull. Their success soon inspired the parents of other potential scullers, and the result was, that in the fall of 1933, there was held for the first time a Boys' Regatta, in which all the participants were sons of Bargees. The regatta was very successful,, both oarsmen and spectators expressing the hope that the event be made an annual affair.

Lake Carnegie was the scene on October 27, 1933, of what was probably the first sculling race between colleges. Entries were made by Princeton and Pennsylvania. It is quite proper the University Barge Club should take pride in this event, since it was primarily promoted by two Bargees.

In the summer of 1934 the club celebrated its Eightieth Anniversary in traditional style. The old barges were rowed from the boathouse to the Lilacs, which again became the scene of another gay party.

The University Barge Club and the Philadelphia Barge Club have supplied the Schuylkill Navy with eleven of its Commodores.

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Henry B. Coxe.....	1871- 1873
Alexander Krumbhaar.....	1877-1879
Charles V. Grant.....	1870-1881
Louis C. Madeira, Jr.....	1890-1892
Wm. Innes Forbes.....	1900-1905
Clement B. Wood.....	1906-1907
Jesse Williamson, II.....	1908-1910
J. Elliot Newlin.....	1917-1920
Charles R. Nalle.....	1941-1944
Edward C. P. Thomas.....	1979-1980

Men from the University Barge Club and Philadelphia Barge Club together with members of the Union Boat Club of Boston were instrumental in organizing the American Rowing Association. Col. Wm. Innes Forbes was one of the first stewards. Thomas Reath, Sr., Russell H. Johnson, Jr. and Clement B. Wood were also active stewards. After the last World War this association was revived by J. Elliot Newlin while the majority of Philadelphia stewards are members of the University Barge Club.

The Philadelphia (Gold) Challenge Cup, emblematic of the Amateur Single Sculls Championship of the World, first awarded to John B. Kelly, Sr. after his victory in the Olympics of 1920, was the idea of J. Elliot Newlin who was chairman of the committee in charge of this trophy since its organization.

In 1945, Lindley Johnson, Jr. and J. Elliot Newlin went to Boston to row in a Club REGATTA run by the Union Boat Club of that city. Such friendly relations developed that in the following year an annual Inter-Club Regatta was inaugurated to alternate between Boston and Philadelphia. A silver plate was donated as a perpetual trophy for this event by J. Elliot Newlin. Each team is made up of two Juniors, two Intermediates, two Seniors, and any number of Veterans. The regattas are followed by convivial dinner parties for the contestants, club members, and their friends.

On April 7, 1954, the 100th birthday anniversary informal races were held between Girard Avenue and the Lighthouse, followed by a barge party and dinner at the "Lilacs". Close to a hundred members attended the festive occasion at which the George P. Page Memorial Tablet was presented by Mrs. Page and accepted for the Club by Col. Wm. Innes Forbes.

On September 18 the regatta with the Union Boat Club of Boston resulted in a victory for the University Barge Club. This event was preceded by a luncheon at the Sedgley Club and a final Centennial party at the "Lilacs". Officers of the Navy were present and presented the Club with a magnificent illuminated scroll commemorating the Club's Centennial. Our friends from Boston presented us with a beautiful memorial plate.

With the opening of the Schuylkill Expressway, and on-going tenant problems at the "Lilacs", our up river Clubhouse since 1887, was reluctantly given up in 1956. The old Philadelphia Barge Club locker and shower room in the boathouse was converted to our present "Lilacs Room", along with a mini kitchen. During this period, under the leadership of then President William M. Hollenback, many new members were brought on board. Robert C. Lea, Jr. rejoined after an absence of 16 years, along with his son Robert C. Lea 3rd, George M. Harding and Frederick W. Morris to mention a few.

Some of these men, as well as others joining in 1960 and 1961 went to work and competed in many regattas, not always winning, but proving to Boathouse Row that UBC had strong competitors, not just recreational rowers. Fred Morris and Chuck Hill would travel to just about any regatta they could find, carrying a double on top of Fred's Volkswagen Beetle. Robbie Lea was the most prolific winner, rowing up and down the East Coast. He teamed up with the Richard M. Burnes while at Harvard and they rowed in the doubles at the Royal Henley Regatta on July 7, 1961. Although defeated, it was a memorable occasion for them and the Club. October 15, 1961, inaugurated our first inter-club regatta with Malta Boat Club, and a victory for UBC. It has continued, although occasionally, ever since. 1962 was a banner year for our Club, with entries in 29 events and 10 wins, but also brought bad news, due to severe sinking of the upstream bay wall. This necessitated trenching, laying a concrete foundation, and shoring up the rafters inside of the bay wall. The Independence Day Regatta on July 4, 1963 finally brought victory to Bo Lea in the Veteran Quarter mile dash. He had battled Harold Finnigin for some years to no avail. At the start, Mr. Bracken announced: "Gentlemen, I have two shells in my shotgun, one is to start the race, and Harold, the other is for you if you jump the gun". Near the finish line, Bo received his prize — a bottle of beer from Harold. The first annual Head of the Charles Regatta took place on September 16, 1965 with Bo Lea and Fred Morris representing our Club. Both made excellent showings in their respective races.

In the early 1960s Chestnut Hill Academy had been rowing informally out of UBC, coached by Senior Life member Frank Steel. In one of the Manny Flick Regattas in 1967 their crew was way ahead of the pack when their old patched up four sprung a monumental leak and almost sank at the finish line. As a result of this debacle, an interested CHA parent, Bo Lea, another "Bargee" and most importantly Mrs. Jane (Jordan) Lea O'Neill, widow of

Bo's late brother Sydney L. W. Lea set up fund raising and ingenious financing which resulted in a boat bay, locker and shower room, two new Pocock coxed fours and a ten year paid for lease for CHA. Our downstream wall was shored up in the same manner as the upstream wall, and three overhead boat bay doors were installed, all at no cost to us. CHA is still a tenant coached and supervised by our Bruce LaLonde. The first Philadelphia Graduate Sculls Regatta sponsored by UBC took place on September 28, 1968. With modest beginnings this regatta grew to what is now the Thomas Eakins Head of the Schuylkill Regatta.

1970 and again in 1971 disaster hit us when two bay walls flanking the East River Drive entrances to the boathouse collapsed. Fortunately rebuilding was started promptly, and they were restored to their former condition. It was noted that one of our members never rowed again after these incidents. One hundred mile dinners were established usually in the midst of winter which has been a good way to bring members together. Lindley Johnson, sidelined for a year by an earlier mild heart attack rowed for the last time on November 7th, 1970, and recorded in the Log a lifetime total of 36,016 miles. We think this is on the low side. Newsletters were inaugurated in 1971 by Lyman S. A. Perry, and have continued to the present under the superb direction of George Harding and Jeff Walker.

In June of 1972, Bo and Nancy Lea invited all Club members, their wives and children to their beautiful estate on Skipton Creek near Queen Anne, Maryland to enjoy a weekend of rowing, picnicking, swimming and camping. Shells were transported, and it was a huge success with 46 adults and 15 children attending. This wonderful event still continues, as the "Head of the Wye".

Bruce LaLonde opened his shop in the boathouse in 1972 which has had a tremendous impact on the availability of Club and private shells. Downtime is at a minimum. Our Club was host to the Honorable J. William Middendorf, Secretary of the Navy, who arrived in town to row for Potomac Boat Club in the Independence Day Regatta in 1976. The U.S. Navy Band came with him and entertained at the finish line. After the races he led the Band playing "The Schuylkill Navy March", which he had composed.

Stuyvesant B. Pell joined UBC in 1979 ushering in a spectacular number of victories too numerous to record here. Bill Hollenback was elected President of U.S. Rowing that year, along with Executive Director Chris Blackwall, both serving until 1985 when the organization moved to Indianapolis.

Starting in the 1980's, membership expanded rapidly as did serious competition, with members rowing in far away places, which still continues. Individual mileages exploded, culminating in a new Club record in 1987, with 34 men rowing over 300 miles, 8 rowing over 1000 miles and James R. Wells putting in 2877 miles, not quite up to his 2909 logged the year before. Television's "Good Morning America" arrived at our float July 1, 1987 to interview senior oarsmen to find out what makes them tick. The camera rolled, the microphones recorded many voices, but in one viewer's opinion their efforts were wasted when considering the anemic results shown on TV. With the mandatory bond issue of 1988 in place, the first phase of long awaited boathouse renovations got underway. Two features are a new roof and the winterizing of our locker room. Phase two started in 1992 after loans and donations were made by the membership. The boathouse is now in excellent shape and except for a balcony, looks as it did a hundred years ago. We all owe a great deal of thanks to Chris Blackwall and Al Doering for their leadership, and untiring efforts to bring about the many necessary improvements. Women are now being *elected* to the Club and next on the agenda is a locker room for them, and a new balcony.

From September 30 to October 11, 1992, Jim Wills, Prescott Huidekoper and Brian McLelland were part of a contingent of US rowers who were invited to Russia. They won the Masters four with cox in a "head" race, and were part of a winning mixed eight in another "head" race. The Russians had nothing but shared everything, and it is hoped our rowers can return or bring the Russians here. To quote Jim, "It was the trip of a lifetime!"

New records were established in 1992 with 48 men and 2 women vying for the President's Cup. Jim Wells won it easily with 2945 miles on the Schuylkill, and a grand total of 3000 miles, capping off an outstanding year.