

Plans for a Clubhouse, 1943-1944

Written by
Friday, 26 November 2010 10:21 -



evaluate a building to be used as a Clubhouse reported negatively on it but as an interesting aside they reported that they had a verbal commitment from the MDC for the lot of land we sit on today. The same report recommended waiting until the War was over, when a building could be erected for much less expense. It is easy to forget that in the wartime years, building materials were so scarce that often serious consideration was given to dismantling and reassembling a structure.

A project that was built that year was an "improved hauling ramp". This was basically a wooden sawhorse-type ramp over which the boats (on cradles) were dragged out of the water. The project cost \$72.17 for lumber, spikes, nails, and grease. Labor was donated by Club members. At this time it was learned that the Governor had a large fund for improvements throughout the State and a request was promptly submitted for dredging the river as a post-war project. This would become a major improvement later.

The year 1944 started with the stated prime objective of establishing a club house. The previous year a member had offered to build a Clubhouse on site for \$ 5,000. The Building Fund already had the princely sum of \$ 155 in it from member's donations. A Building Fund Committee was selected and given full power to proceed in negotiations with the MDC. They presented a blue-print of our part of the Charles River showing an area that most interested the club. The presentation included a sketch of a building that would be suitable as a clubhouse for a yacht club. As another aside they asked at that time for interpretation of the apparently strict MDC rules regarding use of liquor on MDC property.

After establishing a budget goal of \$10,000 for the Clubhouse, \$200 was authorized for architect's plans. A plan was put forward to sell shares of stock to the membership to raise approximately \$15,000. Shortly thereafter, the Building Committee was able to report that an architect had been retained and that a 22' x 35' Cape Cod style building would cost approximately \$10,000 finished or \$6,000 un-finished.

In further reading of the old minutes for that year we find the first reference to a problem that is still not quite solved. The Boat Yard Committee reported that four boats had been broken into and asked for more men to stand watch. They suggested a sign be posted offering a reward of "\$25 for arrest and conviction of trespassers".

Another interesting bit of reading is the account of the talk Judge Cuniff of the Waltham District Court gave to the membership in 1943 when he spoke of the history of the area. The Judge begins with congratulations to the membership on forming this type of Club, and recounted that for some forty years a Barber in Watertown Square was very anxious to start a yacht club in this vicinity but could not get the cooperation needed at the time. He recalled that when he was a boy (at the turn of the Century, we presume) the Charles River was tidal, which made the river very nice when the tide was in but that it was rather polluted at low tide and that coal and lumber barges regularly came upriver as far as Watertown Square. He reached even further back in history with information that in the year 1590, Norsemen came up the River and settled in this locality. He closed by saying that he firmly believed that a Clubhouse, as then being proposed, would be a distinct addition to the community.

As time went on the Building Committee and the architect completed their plans for the proposed Clubhouse. The first plans for the Clubhouse were to erect it on the other side of our present driveway. The entrance was off of Charles River Road and the structure was located much nearer the street. Community opposition (which we will talk about later) caused the move to the present location which at that time was heavily wooded and not visible from any of the local homes.

The architect made a presentation to the membership and explained all the details involved and answered questions. The Chairman of the Building Committee then recommended that the Club apply to the MDC for a lease on land adjacent to and including present space used for winter storage of boats.