

Floats, 1950's & 60's

Written by
Friday, 26 November 2010 10:25 -



First Finger Slip at WYC

An interesting and never since repeated situation arose with the very first docks. Three finger slips (from shore) were built in the early 50's. Utilized, only two members wanted to use them. The Club was forced to float them off on brand-new members. After the first season with everyone having seen the amenities available with docking instead of mooring, many more members were interested in slips and so began a dock building program.

The first dock was approximately where the "Causeway" is now, with the "floating" Clubhouse eventually tied to it, and a steel ramp leading to it from shore. A "gas dock" was built in 1951 in approximately the same location as it is now. The "Causeway" was built in 1953 and the "Main Float" (a large rectangular dock about the same size as our present gas dock) was attached to the end of it.

The "Causeway" was actually an unplanned by-product of the "Main Float" construction that year. A large dragline rig (basically a blackhoe bucket hanging by two lines from a crane) had been hired to clear the area for the "Main Float". (The docks used to be made of heavy timber with no added flotation...when they got old, they wanted to sink...and when they got low in the water, another layer of decking was added to raise the walking surface!) The rig took the rotted docks and



Original gas dock.

a few scoops of fill from the area where the basketball court is today and made a flat platform out into the water so it could sit on it and reach further into the river. When the rig had completed its work, it came time to dig up the temporary platform as it backed toward shore. At that time it became apparent to many that the earthwork would have to be replaced with wooden walkways (at considerable expense) and that everything worked better with the new grating. They didn't really have any place to dispose of the massive old docks anyway (you can still see the ends of some of the timbers sticking out of the embankment.) Before the dragline moved, they quickly called the Station Captain at the MDC and got approval and an inspection to leave the causeway. It was ripped and paved several years later.

The dozen or so years that followed produced many different float schemes and many arguments over how they could be utilized. At one time or another the following situations existed at the Club.

- At first all floats were hauled out for the Winter.
- The Main Float and the Gas Float (both steel floats) were hauled out for Winter until the early 70's.
- There was once a float that was tied off to a mooring for use as a Work Float. (Try working on your float without 110 power)
- Early on, some members had built their own floats for their own private use.
- Members could sublet their floats. This became difficult because members who no longer had boats would keep their slips and sublet them to other members.
- Slips have always been assigned by seniority. However in the late 50's and early 60's there were two seniority lists, one for established members that were already seasonal slip holders, and another for all of the rest of the members. A member on a mooring or without a boat was not able to accrue seniority on the float system until he actually began using it. The two lists were eventually merged (after due consideration) to the single list we use today.
- For several years in the mid-50's some of the slips were attached to the Island. (Yes, that's right...now your dingy to the island, get on your boat tied to a floating slip, use it as if it were on a mooring). An interesting point to interject is that the Club once seriously considered leasing the Island too from the MDC and improving and developing it. An arched bridge was proposed for foot traffic across the waterway. The proposal was serious enough that the MDC had been contacted and fairly detailed plans had been prepared.
- The mooring field (later shared by Newton Yacht Club boats) stretched from bank to bank, and from the island to above where Newton is now. The MDC was constantly pressuring the Clubs to remove moorings. The first order came in 1966, to remove the "Balance of the