

About Mentor Harbor Yachting Club

THE MISSION OF THE MENTOR HARBOR YACHTING CLUB IS

Tucked away in beautiful Mentor-On-The-Lake, the Mentor Harbor Yachting Club is known to be where your future is written on the water.

Mentor Harbor Yachting Club – as it stands today – is the result of extensive planning going back to far-seeing members who, in July 1928, organized the original club. Through a series of happenings, the club has survived the events of 1929, has weathered the lean war years, and has reinvested in its infrastructure to become what we know today.

The membership owes a deep debt of gratitude to a succession of dedicated officers and directors who, over the years, had the vision and follow-through to bring these dreams to fruition. Here's how it came about from the start way back when. Mentor Harbor Yachting Club, originally incorporated in 1928, barely survived its initial eight years during the depression. Once through this period, the club regrouped, and has continued to grow throughout the years.

Mentor Harbor History

On a bright August afternoon, when the rows of handsome cruisers lie easily at their docks and only the smallest boats in the lagoons try to point out each change in the wind, it is natural to find yourself believing that Mentor Harbor has always been as it is now; but this is a quiet trick which an agreeable scene plays on you.

Even in winter, your eye finds little that calls up the past. The ship's hulls, shrouded under winter covers, seem to belong to the present and to the future. Their underwater lines, exposed now, have a beauty which speaks of next summer.

What you cannot readily see, as you look at the pleasant harbor, at its well-kept fleet, and at the clubhouse which stands beside it, is that you are enjoying the fortunate result of a long and tangled chain of events. Some of these events were natural. Some were brought about only by painstaking work of many people. Some were carefully planned and forecast; some were simple chance.

For hundreds of years, the land was a marsh which formed a hazy break in the otherwise clearly etched shoreline of Lake Erie. When the American Indian civilization began to develop, the marsh became a favorite summer camping ground, teeming with game, fish, and wild fowl. The highlands east and west of the marsh were dotted with tents; not many years ago you could see the charred rocks in the fire holes of these Indians encampments.

In the 1800's the marsh was thought a likely spot for bog iron and a log road, made of closely laid heavy square timbers, which was built across it for prospecting. The road became the most traveled route from the Headlands westward to the Herrick farm, which was located on the west bank of the marsh near the present location of the uncompleted highway just east of the club.

By the late part of the last century, a channel had broken through and with relatively high lake levels, the marsh's potentialities as a harbor came to be realized to a small extent. A fleet of small lapstrake-hulled fishing sloops was built up, sailing out of the marsh to tend their nets. The fleet docked in an open arm of water to the east of the marsh and the fisherman dried their nets over the reeds and cattails in the center of the marsh. In the years after 900, however, the level of the lake dropped somewhat, and the channel became too shallow to be usable, so the operations were abandoned.

Although no longer a harbor, the marsh was still a hunting, trapping, and fishing paradise, with gun club, covered boathouses for skiffs, and a number of small private cabins. Waterfowl came in great flights, to the satisfaction of the hunters in both spring and fall seasons. Large bass and pickerel up to three feet in length were caught in the channel and ponds. The largest –carp in Lake Erie-some almost the size of a man-lolled in the warm sunny backwaters. Water snakes and black snakes up to eleven feet in length were reported on the marsh and the winter trapping of muskrats was a profitable occupation. In all, the marsh was the wildest area on the shore east of Cleveland.

Near the turn of the century, the marsh was recognized as a likely site for a large harbor. The men who envisioned it then were railroad men; they saw the lakes becoming more heavily used each year for the transportation of grain down from the Northwest. This would be of tremendous value-with a railroad-owned fleet of lake vessels to round out the entire shipping process.

The plan (and it was thought out in considerable detail) was developed by the B & O; clear out the marsh, made a harbor of it, and dredge a channel for five miles down the Grand River to Richmond, with the New York Central constructing the eastern end of the channel. Physically, the plan was feasible, for exploration revealed an average depth of 22 feet of soft muck beneath the marsh surface, which could be dredged out in short order with the use of heavy suction equipment.

So, the railroads began buying land. They were brought up short, however, by the results of a series of cases which reached the Supreme Court; the decisions in these Granger Rate Cases were, in effect, that the railroads could carry grain from Minnesota as cheaply as the new steamships. And with the ruling, the prospect of a great new harbor became much less attractive. Having bought a large area of marshland, the B & O railroad decided it had already gone too far and called the rest of the plan to a halt. The development of the harbor was to wait for a time.

In the 1920's, when boom times seemed destined to grow forever, when the sky was the limit, and immediate possibilities seemed limited only by a man's imagination, Mentor Marsh came once more under the scrutiny of men with vision.

If their dreams failed to work out in every detail, it should not be charged that their plan was a poor one, for it was not. The "hazy break in an otherwise clearly-etched shoreline" was as full of genuine promise in 1926 as it had ever been. Just as with the railroad plan, uncontrollable events took charge of the plans and looking back, it is not that their aims were not fully accomplished, but that they came so near realization and ultimately could not overcome the unforeseeable events of that time.

In the middle of that eventful ten-year period, a small group of men were turning casual conversation into a definite plan. The conversation had been about the Venice-like real estate developments which were being successfully promoted in Florida and Mentor Marsh. They talked of how the good harbor would make great for yachts and how it might be a wonderful place for a community of fine homes for people who liked yachting. The plans were on a large scale; they involved nothing less than a dredge out of the marsh, to build a completely concrete-walled harbor lined with small boat marines; construct a breakwater and a channel; build a clubhouse in the Spanish architecture so popular in Florida; start with one fine home; and then advertise the development widely to attract new people and new homes. In 1926 a syndicate was formed to purchase the marsh and the high land to the north. Only three years later, by the end of 1929, over a million dollars had been spent. And every item in the original plan had become a reality. Only in its hoped-for effect fell short. Advertising for the development was ran in many places, but it did not attract new people and new homes, which in 1930, was not surprising.

The original syndicate, which did so much in such a short space of time, included S. Livingston Mather, a driving force in the group; James Murphy, Donald McBride, E. Nash Matthews and Roy S. Dunham. A few months later the syndicate became the Mentor Harbor Company, and new principals were added; Chester A Bolton, Edward B. Greene, Louise S. Ingalls; H.H. Timken E.J. Johnson, Samuel Mather, and F.A. Pease

"The scale of the project' said a club booklet published in 1940 referring to the Company's overall plans, did not fit in with events followed the year 1928." An incomplete bridge to the island in the lagoons stands, in testimony, but it and the unused boat wells are virtually the only visible evidences of the plans gone astray.

The Mentor Harbor Yacht Club was originally incorporated on July 9, 1928; and although the harbor has not yet become "an American Venice," as advertising and promotional literature for the development thought it might, the club itself had grown almost continuously since that time. The old Mentor Harbor Company became insolvent by May of 1934, and liens were attached on all its property by the principal contractor. Through the following years, however, S.L. Mather allowed the club members to use the clubhouse without charge.

It was against this background that the club grew; by 1935 there were 200 members and a fleet of 90 boats. In 1936, the organization was reincorporated as the Mentor Harbor Yachting Club then boasting 140 boats, power and sail.

As it grew, the club began to find its financial sea-legs; the clubhouse was purchased from the contractor under a mortgage, and the club obtained a ten-year lease and an option to buy the land on which it operated. By 1939, there were 216 members and 175 boats. Also, in this year a junior membership plan was inaugurated with a sliding scale of dues including gradual payments toward a full membership initiation fee.

1940 was a good year for the club, because it marked the beginning of a steady swing into the black ink. Regular payments of substantial size were made in that year and in each succeeding year, toward retiring the mortgage on the clubhouse. The final payment was made in 1942, and then the same financial determination was applied to making good the back taxes on the land.

Careful plans were made in the early '40's for further development of the club after World War II, and in 1944 a permanent improvement fund of some \$30,000 was subscribed by the members to help put these plans onto action. In that same year the club exercised its option to buy Hanks and Hitchcock property, which included land along the main bank and the harbor entrance itself. The first was an outright purchase, and the second was paid for over a period of seven years. The total cost of these properties was about \$60,000; their purchase gave the club substantial control over its facilities.

In 1944, the harbor was improved by the placement of a barge breakwater at one side of the channel in order to break waves entering the channel and reduce the surge of water inside the harbor. In the following year, the "A" frame crane, which serves the harbor, was erected. This crane has a capacity of 35 tons and is capable of handling the largest yachts on the lakes.

The severe winter of 1951-52 required harbor improvements for a section of the channel wall which was undermined and broken through by the lake. In 1952 the Board of Directors set up a program of permanent improvements and authorized the issuance of \$100,000 of bonds. With these proceeds it was possible to rebuild the east break wall, install new steel docks, make improvements to the clubhouse, provide a new water supply, develop a picnic area, add to the skeet facilities and create a children's play yard.

The Club's facilities expanded rapidly in the years of 1960 through 1980. Some of these facilities included the swimming pool and locker building (1961); enlargement of the clubhouse porch which is now "trophy row", building of the cantilevered bar overlooking the lake, channel and beaches, a snack bar at water level, the harbor masters building and the new "T" docks for the East Beach (1968); a new gate and fence at the front entrance (1971); the assumption of the operation of the boatyard, purchase of the 20-ton travel lift and tennis courts (1972); a new large mast shed (1973); the purchase of the floating center-head dredge with proceeds from loans by members (1975); shelter and showers on the East Beach (1976); and the completion of

16 new docks on the east Beach and dry pipe lines for firefighting system on the main and east "T" docks (1980).

In 1980 major capital improvements were started. These included sea wall repairs to the harbor walls, the upgrading of Crow's Nest and Wet Hens sailing fleets and renovation of the Boat Room to the Spinnaker Room, being used for club and private parties and also meetings.

Finally, in 1982, to combat the surge problem, the Board of Directors approved spending \$200,000 to install weir walls (groins) in the channel. A total of 14 weirs were installed. In addition to the weirs, the gas dock walls and walks were also reconstructed.

Major improvements for 1983 included complete remodeling of the reception area, dining and living rooms. The club offices were completely reconstructed and remodeled.

At age 22 our swimming pool needed a major face lift and as a result, in 1984, it was completely renovated with two new filtering systems.

During 1985 and 1986 shoreline erosion protection was installed at the East Beach and boat docks were elevated to high water. House improvements included new air conditioning and heating for the bar and a new club sound system donated from the proceeds of "THE DRY ROT REVUE"

By 1989, the main dock bulkhead, now over 60 years old, had deteriorated to the point where it had to be replaced. Construction of a new steel and cement wall was started at the end of 1989 and completed in May of 1990 at a cost \$345,000 – the largest single project ever undertaken at Mentor Harbor Yachting Club. The planting of new trees and upgrading of dock lighting along the wall greatly enhanced the appearance of the club.

In 1997, the East Beach area was improved with the addition of a picnic pavilion, accommodating 100 people, along with the replacement of the East Beach toilet facilities. The East Beach soon became the choice location for the club's summer parties.

In 1998, the East Beach was enhanced by a system of up-lighting into the cottonwood trees. This lighting presents a wonderful view from the club along with providing the perfect atmosphere for picnics and parties. In this same year, an irrigation system was installed encompassing the front lawns of the clubhouse.

In 1999, the underground fuel facilities were replaced, and the gas dock building was demolished and rebuilt, mostly by members' donated labor.

In the year 2000, the harbor depth was accurately sounded, and a major dredging effort was undertaken, including the channel north of the clubhouse as well as specific areas of the main harbor and East Beach docks. The restaurant was remodeled and major redecorating of the

clubhouse, including paint, new lighting fixtures, and replacement carpeting for the dining room and bar.

In 2003, the consensus of member focus groups was to limit a proposed expansion of the clubhouse and instead direct capital improvement dollars to the harbor. In 2003, a re-energized Board of Directors undertook a comprehensive \$2 million capital improvement project, similar to previous major projects (such as the permanent docks in 1952 and 1968, the swimming pool in 1961, the expansion of the clubhouse in 1967, and harbor walls in 1990).

After exhaustive studies by the harbor and house committees and numerous presentations to the membership, a major commitment was made by the Board to address the failing concrete harbor walls north of the clubhouse, to reconfigure the dry sail area, and replace the 1952-era docks with floating docks. This resulted in a monthly capital-improvement fee which was added to the monthly dues.

The demolition of the concrete channel walls and its replacement sheet steel was driven over the winter of 2004.

In the early spring of 2005, the removal of the West Harbor steel docks and installation of floating docks, with upgraded utilities and Wi-Fi service, occurred.

The remainder of the project, encompassing the replacement of the East Beach and the utilities and the East Beach bulkhead wall, occurred the next year, in the spring of 2006.

In 2007, equipment was purchased for the East Beach including a grille and refrigeration. Playground equipment for the children is now set up near the pavilion making the East Beach the prime location for families and picnicking. The "old tennis courts" were refurbished into a teen playground equipped with lighting, stage, basketball courts and half pipes for skateboarding. "The Gifting Stone" was erected in the front turn-a-round thanking all the members who have donated to the vast Harbor Project.

In 2009, the installation of a new "Baby" Pool was donated by PC Mark and Monica Small. Along with the new pool the sundeck being enlarged including an upgrade to the landscaping and fencing and the deteriorating roof over the dining room was replaced in early spring.

2010 brought a renovation of the Board Room. The original floor was sanded down and re-stained, the electrical wiring updated, the walls painted and the large window, donated by Mr. Gunton, brightened and completed the new look. The snack bar also was updated with fresh paint and snack bar equipment. New wiring was run underground from the clubhouse to the gate and the Wi-Fi was updated.

After taking 2011 off for capital improvements, the spring of 2012 started off with a substantial project. The East Beach retaining modules needed to be reset to prevent further erosion to the beach. The modules were repositioned then cabled together to ensure that the wall created

would help keep the sand in place. Sand was then transferred from the west beach to the east beach to help build back the beachfront. The MHYC Skeet field also took on a new face that spring as well. The old walkway and stations were torn out and replaced with new concrete, generously donated by Doug and Jane Price. Not only did it help aesthetically with the front of the clubhouse, but it also provided a much sturdier and safer platform for shooting during the cold winter months.

In the spring of 2013, we were able to resurface and enlarge our patio in part with the generous donation from Mr. and Mrs. Doug Price, who also donated the outdoor furniture to make the perfect place to enjoy dinner and watch the sunset. For the cooler late nights, we added a fire pit. In late July, the club sustained major flooding to the lower level. The drying out process was completed with renovation to start in 2014.

In the spring of 2014, the lower level renovation was completed with proceeds from the insurance claim from the July 2013 flooding. Upon opening of the pool for the season, we found the need to replace the pump and filter. All was up and running for the opening on Memorial Day weekend. In August, another storm came ashore, and the winds damaged the canopy of the pool deck and several trees on the East Beach. Replacing of the canopy was put on hold and a tent was rented for the rest of the season. With the several storms being experienced the East Beach was taking a beating with erosion. In the fall of 2013, 100 Armor stones were placed in hopes to save the channel wall and some of the beach. It was evident that more will need to be done in the near future and a committee was formed to explore the options. As the year came to a close, Treasurer PC Barton announced that the long-range committee had secured refinancing for the debt. Details were to be worked out with a closing shortly after the first of the year.

In April of 2015, the long-term debt refinancing was finalized with Lake National Bank into a 10-year loan, thanks to the efforts of Treasurer PC Tom Barton. With the recommendation of the Harbor committee, the board approved another 100 of Armor stone revetment wall to be placed along the East Beach to protect the Pavilion and the Bath House. In the fall, an additional load of Armor stone was added to partially fill the gap between the two revetment walls. Three pilings were replaced on the F&G Docks. The pool heater was replaced, and the pool backwash system was upgraded to EPA code. The steps and wall from the lounge leading down the snack bar received a makeover of new stucco. Lastly, the roof repair project began in 2015 with the repair of the office, dining room and gas dock roofs. More roof repair is scheduled and budgeted for 2016.

In 2016, the final phase of the East Beach revetment project was finished which will save our beach for years to come. The back steps off the lounge were refinished and retiled. The lounge bar was refinished, and a new ice machine was installed for the house. The final phase of the roof repair was completed. Also, installed were 3 new HVAC units. With the help of member donations, the pool deck was refurbished complete with tile floor, full-service bar, new canopy and furniture. For the summer of 2016, it was the place to be.

2017 was a significant year for capital upgrades to the Club. Due to the generosity of an anonymous member, a Challenge Grant campaign was launched, and the membership response exceeded the targeted numbers. The major projects that were completed with these funds were instrumental in refurbishing the clubhouse and more.

Major projects completed included a complete resurface of the stucco on the exterior of the clubhouse, remodeling of the pool restrooms including the HVAC system. On the interior of the clubhouse, new carpet was installed throughout the main floor, new carpet in the lounge and banquet room, as well as, a new drop-ceiling in the banquet room. The dance floor was stripped and sanded and returned to its original color. The Club was able to enter what turned out to be a very successful boating season with a fresh, vibrant appearance and feel.

2018 was a year of significance for the Club as we celebrated the milestone of our 90th anniversary. To commemorate this, we hosted a four-day long recognition of 90 years of history, friendship and boating. Members from years past came back to join in the fun and reminisce about their time spent at Mentor Harbor and, in many cases, rekindle old friendships. Our Junior Activities Sailing program continued to thrive and the year was capped off when we hosted the 2018 US Sailing Women's Double Handed Championship, better known as the Ida Lewis Trophy. This prestigious competition was conducted in top notch fashion and was capped off in the fall when Mentor Harbor was awarded the St. Petersburg Trophy which recognizes US Sailing's Regatta of the year.

In 2019 Mentor Harbor joined clubs and marinas from around the Great Lakes in battling record high lake levels and unprecedented flooding. From May through most of the summer, the grounds to the west of the clubhouse were under varying amounts of water. Unfortunately, this flooding also invaded the lower level of the Clubhouse and did significant damage to the Snack Bar and Teen, Spinnaker and Board rooms. An insurance claim was filed, and plans on how to use the funds to repair and renovate the basement were initiated.

On a happier note, the Club was honored to host the 2019 Tartan-10 National Championships for an entire week in August. This regatta went off without a hitch to rave reviews from participants and volunteers from across the country.

Operating seasonally, the Mentor Harbor Yachting Club offers a variety of activities for our members, spouses and children as well as full-service facilities including:

- Swimming Pools
- Bar
- Picnic Areas
- Dining Room
- Banquet and Meeting Rooms
- Wet Slips
- Sail Drying Areas

- Small Boat Area
- Hoists with capacity from 1,500 to 6,000 pounds