

Building a Clubhouse, 1948

Written by
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AT M.D.C. HEARING ON WATERTOWN YACHT CLUB BOATHOUSE - Mrs. Carolyn L. Collins, a resident of Watertown for 38 years, speaks in opposition to project for house and parking lot on the Charles, near the Arsenal.

From Boston Globe Issue of Friday, March 12, 1948

- A site across the river (at what is now Newton Yacht Club) had been proposed and considered but discarded because the channel leading to it was too shallow and narrow.
- The Metropolitan District Commission felt that it was bound by law to foster and promote recreational activity on the Charles River.

The building phase seemed to go smoothly enough (the notes say it was "almost finished" in 1948, "operational" in early 1949, and was formally dedicated in May of 1949). They are full of accounts of the efforts of the Members to do the greatest part of the building themselves. For every account of someone doing a job that they were particularly good at there is another story of men completely mismatched to their experience but working along just the same.

We have little information on how the dredging of the "Fairway" (the channel between the embankment and the shore) and the "Turning Basin" occurred. We do know that our 1948 Permit Plans show two islands and a proposed channel between them, and the Meeting Minutes say that the dredging took place during 1948. (The dredging spoils were deposited between the two small islands leaving us with the one larger one today.) It is said but not recorded that the Corps of Engineers was instrumental in this work. No matter that, the underwater topography has remained unaltered by man since that year. At least a dozen references to annual filings of dredging bills before the State Legislature are in the notes but no reference yet to a vote or even a reading of those Bills.

By this time a tradition had already developed which we still adhere to today: each successive administration attempts at least one task that will improve the physical facility, and we hire outside help only if we are absolutely unable to do the work with our own "volunteers".

After the new Club House had become operational, the next several years' projects were related to moving the boats and cars around on land. At that time, the area was now used as a parking lot was wooded, the boat storage area was hilly, and the area just the mill was muddy or under water. The notes



Early stage of construction of The Club House.