

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RIVERSIDE BOAT CLUB

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INTRODUCTION

Riverside Boat Club was founded in 1869 by printers, many of them Irish, employed at The Riverside Press. During the following fifty years, as rowing emerged as one of America's leading sports, it and its fellow working class rowing clubs were social centers for Boston and Cambridge immigrants, through which they could take part in and ultimately transform popular culture. Riverside emerged from the era as the most successful rowing club in New England. Its history at the turn of the 19th Century is linked to the transformation of the Charles River into one of America's great recreational facilities. The last ninety years have been a period of adaptation to rowing's shifting place within the American and worldwide sporting scene. Through each era, however, Riverside Boat Club has retained its commitment to making rowing available to working people. Today, even as it maintains its tradition as a club run by its members for oarsmen and women of all economic backgrounds, it has once again emerged as an energetic rowing community and a competitive force in American rowing.

INITIAL YEARS

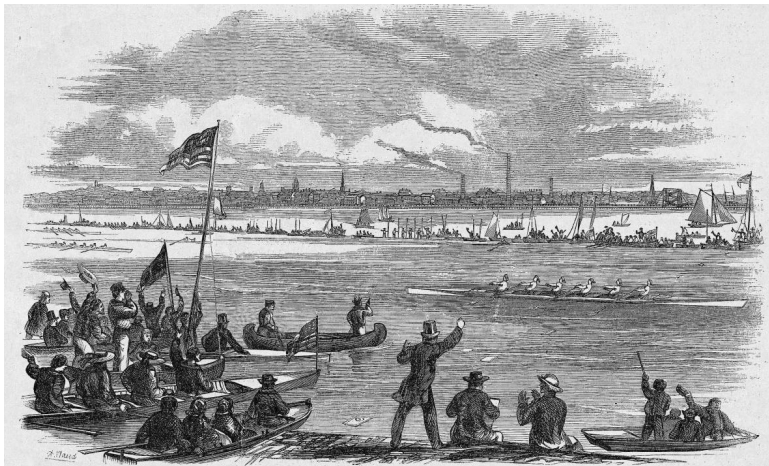
The earliest organization of American rowing clubs appeared in New York City in 1834. By the end of the decade there were additional clubs in Boston, Philadelphia, Providence and Detroit. Long-forgotten formal and informal rowing organizations appeared and vanished. Boston's lone surviving club from the period, the Union Boat Club, began life with one heavy gig in 1851, in the same time frame as the founding of Philadelphia's Bachelor's Barge Club (1853), University Barge Club (1854) and Undine Barge Club (1856).

The first club boats were lapstreaks of various dimensions, with oars set in thole pins mounted on the gunwales. For the most part the rowing was social and recreational, "companionable exercise". Clubs formed by Harvard students during the 1840s rowed down to Boston for dinner and entertainment. They had a disreputable reputation within the college, which was not enhanced in 1850 when one of them got into an argument with Boston police that ended with the fire department's being called out. More sedate Union members perennially rowed to their hut on Squam Island in the Annisquam River and favored moonlight rows in the harbor with lady friends.

According to one report, the first formal rowing races in the Boston area were an 1842 East Boston regatta on the Chelsea River. Clubs from New York City entered the regatta the next year. By the 1850s, racing was beginning to attract growing popular interest. The 1852 race between junior class club boats from Harvard and Yale, the country's first intercollegiate sporting event, was promoted by a Lake Winnepesaukee speculator hoping to attract attention to his real estate development. The City of Boston added the City Regatta to its July 4th celebrations in 1854. The Schuylkill River Navy was organized in 1858 to manage competitions in Philadelphia.

In Boston, clubs like the Fort Hill Boys—Fort Hill being the area now

occupied by International Place—were being formed wherever there were navigable stretches of water. Because memberships were small and among them they owned so few boats of one kind, races might be contested by pairs, fours, sixes, and even tens. Handicaps were given out based on the number of oars in a boat, generally fifteen seconds per oar for a three-mile race. Outrigger shells made their first appearance on the Charles in 1856.



Sixes racing on the Charles River in 1858, with Cambridge's factories in the background

By 1860 there were more than a dozen formal regattas a year throughout the country. The Civil War considerably dampened enthusiasm for racing and for rowing in general, but it redoubled after the war, and in 1867 there were some forty-eight match races and regattas. By 1869, the year Riverside Boat Club was formed, there were approximately ninety American rowing clubs, club memberships were booming, sixty-five regattas were held throughout the country, and racing for prizes was attracting widespread interest. Rowing was on its way to becoming America's most popular spectator sport.

Its celebrity was the result of a unique confluence of factors. The country was prosperous. Its cities were growing rapidly. Their residents enjoyed

increased leisure time, providing pools of potential participants and spectators. The national railroad system extended sporting rivalries to a regional and even country-wide scale, while the national telegraph network made results available to an emerging form of journalism, sporting weeklies, which promoted these rivalries and stimulated the fans. With the ground prepared for the American public's embrace of athletics as mass entertainment, the only established sports available to capture its imagination were competitive rowing, prize fighting and horse racing. Each involved competing for stakes and each appealed to wagering. The impact of the press was on display in the coverage of the first trans-Atlantic rowing event in 1869, in which an Oxford coxed-four defeated Harvard on a 4½ mile Thames River course. According to *The London Times*, the race attracted one million spectators. Blanket newspapers coverage throughout the United States gave an enormous boost to the sport's popularity. The number of organized American rowing clubs, which had stood at ninety in 1869, reached 289 in 1873, and the number of regattas expanded from sixty-five to 159.

The demographic and economic developments that were transforming rowing into a celebrity sport in 1869 were particularly influential in Boston. The country's second greatest port of arrival, the city was in transition from a Yankee mercantile town of 61,400 in 1830 to an immigrant industrial city of 250,500, thirty-five percent of whom were foreign born, in 1870. The newcomers were predominantly Irish, a population that began to arrive in Boston in overwhelming numbers in 1845 as the result of Ireland's devastating potato famine. As they settled along the waterfront, to which they were drawn by longshoremen's, railroad and industrial jobs, Boston's geography of bays and uplands produced a series of slenderly connected immigrant neighborhoods, such as Cambridgeport, the West End, East Cambridge, Charlestown, the North End, Chelsea, East Boston, and South Boston. By the 1860s these neighborhoods were, in varying degrees, "zones of emergence", communities in which the second and third generation immigrants were attaining a degree of employment security. Many were

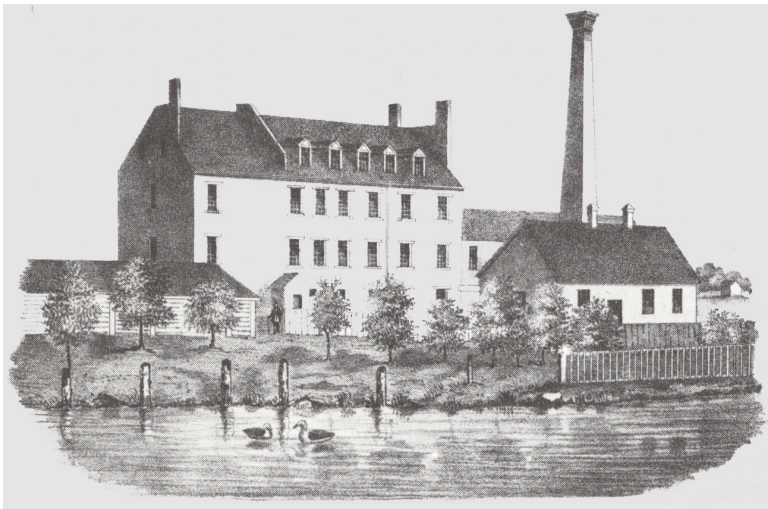
determined to combine ethnic solidarity, pride in their neighborhood, and recognition within mainstream society. They responded to rowing's celebrity by forming neighborhood-based clubs like the West End Boat Club (1867), from which residents could compete on a metropolitan stage for prizes and fame.

The sport's popularity in Boston was evident in the 1869 City Regatta. The event included races for the area's top professional scullers and crews. Committees of financial backers served as their managers. The regatta, announced for 7:30 AM to catch slack tides, attracted an estimated 40,000 spectators, who thronged along the made land at the foot of Mt. Vernon Street, the waterside of Beacon Street, and the Mill Dam connecting the partially filled Back Bay to today's Kenmore Square area. City officials and bands crowded spectator boats. The spirit along the course was like that of Churchill Downs.

It was within this context that Riverside Boat Club was organized in 1869 as a trade-based sports club by John P. Facey, its first president, John J. Thorogood, John Curley, P. H. Hickey, Edward McDermott, Alexander McKenzie, Charles Chase, and Henry G. Davis. They and the rest of the thirteen original members were employees of The Riverside Press. The printing company was owned by Henry O. Houghton, who purchased it from Little, Brown in 1867 at the conclusion of a fifteen year lease, and who would go on to form the prestigious Boston publishing company Houghton, Mifflin & Co. The press employed about 300 workers at the time. As was characteristic of the period, work at the plant was physically demanding and the hours long—ten hour days, six days a week, with the only holidays being Christmas, New Year's and the Fourth of July.

The presses' grounds were located between River Street and Western Avenue in Cambridge, on one of the few areas of solid riverfront land within the marshes that at that time stretched along the Cambridge shore from East Cambridge to Watertown. After taking over the company in 1867,

Houghton constructed a handsome four-story main building, more than doubling the presses' capacity. The boat club's quarters, unlike those of many clubs of the era which floated on the estuary's tides, were located in a dingy mill on the press grounds, perhaps made surplus by the presses' new building. The tides were accommodated by a floating dock. Despite the strenuous workday, by 1873 the club was reported to have thirty members, all employees of The Riverside Press, and to own thirteen boats. As rowing interest accelerated, however, it soon opened itself to members from outside the print works. Nevertheless, Riverside's membership continued to consist largely of middle and working class men, and its leadership was consistently Irish-American. Its regattas were major attractions. An 1877 newspaper article refers to one that drew a large crowd for a 1.5 mile race between Brighton and the Brookline (BU) Bridge and which included events for doubles with a prize of \$50 and sweep crews in lapstreak boats racing for \$20 for first and \$15 for second.



The 1852 print works acquired by Henry Houghton in 1867

Despite a depression that stretched from 1873 to the end of the decade,

Boston's immigrant neighborhoods organized a profusion of working class rowing clubs over the next ten years. Sandwiched among waterfront uses, they included South Boston's Shawmut (1869 or '70), City Point (1872) and the Central (1878) boat clubs; East Boston's Columbian (1879), Jeffries Point, Atlantic, and Everett (1878) boat clubs as well as the East Boston Athletic and Rowing Club; the West End's Lakeman (1871) and Leverett (1873) clubs; and Cambridge's Bradford Boat Club (1875). Additional clubs were formed in Chelsea and Lynn. Like Riverside, each had a strong Irish identity and was a touchstone of neighborhood pride.

Relations among them were both competitive and fraternal. They conducted races in singles, six-oared racing boats, and whitehalls, derived from the water taxis then rowed from Whitehall Street in lower Manhattan. Eight-oared shells were introduced from England by three Philadelphia clubs in 1872 and replaced six-oared boats in the Harvard-Yale race in 1876, but eights do not appear to have become an important part of club racing on the Charles until the 1880s. Instead, four-oared workboats, a uniquely Boston institution perhaps reflecting the social origins of most rowing clubs, attracted the highest level of interest among oared events. The 1876 July 4 City Regatta, which featured a six-mile race for workboats, was reported to have attracted another crowd of 40,000 spectators. Riverside raced successfully in local regattas, particularly in the workboat events.

Boston rowing clubs' memberships included both professionals and amateurs, although the distinction was sketchy since prizes were awarded to both. In contrast to England, where an amateur came to mean a gentleman with the leisure to row, in this country the differentiation was between professionals who made their living on the water or who had no other livelihood than rowing, and workingmen whose jobs prevented them from training as regularly as the professionals. For instance, George Faulkner, who was to be a talismanic Boston and Riverside rowing figure over the next three decades, was considered a professional because he began his career on the water supervising the unloading of coal barges on the Charles.

Competitive challenges for cash stakes were regularly issued in the newspapers, such as the following in an 1878 edition of the *Boston Globe*.

“The Lakeman Crew No. 1 do hereby challenge any crew that took part in the four-oared working boats in the Silver Lake regatta, May 30, to row them a three-mile race...for from \$250 to \$500 a side, the Chelsea, West End, or Riverside crews preferred...”

Other newspaper notices reveal rowings’ working class roots and its contribution to the solidarity of Boston’s trades, such as one in 1878 for a four-oared workboat race for \$250 among four express mail companies and another for a pairs race among leading professionals backed by marble workers.

While the racing was competitive, Boston area workingmen’s rowing clubs shared a sense of solidarity. They held joint outings, such as the Walden Pond picnic hosted by Riverside, Farragut (Lynn), and Moulton in 1882, which reportedly attracted about 1,500 attendees. In addition to a variety of athletic events, including a two-mile walk, a 100-yard dash, a three-legged race, a ladies’ rifle match, a tug-of-war, tub races, and a four-oared workboat race won by the West End club, there was music and dancing. An 1887 joint Riverside-West End Boat Club festivity featuring trick rowing, such as standing on one’s head in a single, brought together over 300 oarsmen and was followed the next year by a West End water carnival, in conjunction with Riverside and Bradford. One of the features of these affairs was Riverside’s famous “trick boat” Downie, which its members defied guests to row without taking a spill.

As sporting exemplars of their respective neighborhoods, these clubs were centers of community social life. They sponsored dinners, dances and other festivities. An 1886 newspaper story describes a Riverside “entertainment” and dance at the Prospect Street skating rink at which over 500 people enjoyed vocal quartets, whistling solos, and clog and reel dancers.

THE RISE OF AMATEUR ROWING

Rowing's celebrity continued to grow through the 1870s. It was one of only three sports, in addition to riflery and yachting, included in the 1876 Centennial celebration in Philadelphia. Boston professionals Patsey Regan and George Faulkner won what was considered the world's championship in the double at the event.

Even as rowing was reaching its popular ascendancy, however, controversies over the roles of gamblers in fixed races and the unclear relationship between amateurs and professionals were damaging its standing with the public. As concern about the professionals' credibility grew, disputes over the amateur status of competitors in an 1872 Schuylkill Navy regatta led to a convention in August of that year at which some thirty clubs from around the country, including Union Boat Club, formed The National Association of Amateur Oarsmen, the first national sports governing body in America. The NAAO's first amateur national championship was held in Philadelphia in 1873.

Union Boat Club, which had been an enthusiastic racing organization in its formative years but had become a largely recreational rowing club, played an important role in the NAAO's early struggles for legitimacy. Amateur rowing in Boston gained additional converts in 1882 when half the members of the Shawmut club broke away to form the Crescent Boat Club, which restricted itself to amateur oarsmen. Crescent's Daniel J. Murphy was the first New Englander to win the national amateur singles championship in 1885. On the whole, however, New England remained the region of the country most devoted to professional rowing. It was the professionals and the betting associated with them that dominated popular attention. A match race between George Faulkner and Portland's Michael Davis in 1877 attracted 30,000 spectators to the Charles. In 1878 six thousand people took off work to attend the funeral of Patsy Regan, who died in a train wreck returning from a \$2,000 match race with Davis at Silver Lake. Thousands of dollars were wagered on a match race in the mid-80s

between Shawmut's John J. Murphy and the West End's Andrew O'Brien. Reflecting New England's enthusiasm for the professionals, Boston's annual City Regatta was devoted primarily to their races.

Riverside does not appear to have been the home of illustrious professionals. In fact, interest in racing waned at the club, allegedly because of the professionals' dominance of local events. The Charles River, the Muddy River—accessible through the milldam tide locks up to Brookline Avenue, the Mystic River and the harbor islands all offered attractive destinations to rowers interested in picnics, swimming and camping. Riverside members' interest shifted to pleasure boating, including canoeing. While the club owned a six-oared shell, three four-oared workboats, a double and some singles, and a number of members had their own singles, the club's fleet was increasingly devoted to boats for recreational rowing such as canoes and whitehalls.

By the late-80s, however, the popularity of professional racing was declining even in New England, undermined by stories of sabotaged boats and poisoned food. Other sports competed successfully for the public's attention. In particular, track and field and bicycling attracted growing numbers of amateur athletes, and baseball was well on its way to being America's ascendant spectator sport. There was increasing concern in New England rowing circles about the sport's future. In the winter of 1887 a number of leading local amateurs proposed to promote their sport by forming the New England Amateur Rowing Association. Riverside Boat Club was among the Boston clubs invited to join. Invitations were also extended to clubs in Arlington, Chelsea, Lowell, Gloucester, Portland, Fall River, Providence, and Manchester. The Association was formed in April 1887, and Riverside's president, J. Frank Facey, son of founding president John Facey, was selected as its secretary. Facey would go on to become a major figure in the administration of regional amateur athletics of all kinds. The Charles River races organized by the NEARA were generally 3 miles long, 1.5 miles upstream from in front of Union's dock to a turn and back,

giving spectators a chance to see both the starts and finishes of races.

Under the guidance of older members from the club's active racing days, a Riverside four-oared workboat manned by Eugene Sullivan, T. F. Riley, William Balmer, and William Kivien won the senior race in the first New England amateur championship on June 17, 1887. The regatta was a great success and Riverside's victory was celebrated by a banquet at which Cambridge Mayor and former Harvard oar William E. Russell and Riverside Press President Henry Houghton led city aldermen, the president of the city council and some 125 other guests into Cambridgeport's Austin Hall to orchestra strains. Speeches extolling the credit Riverside had brought to Cambridge and to the printing company were followed by jig dancing and songs by an Irish quartet. The four blue stripes on the oar in Riverside's emblem are said to be in tribute to this four's famous victory. Riverside's membership nearly doubled the following year, as did those of several other clubs.

Responding to the formation of the NEARA, organizers of the 1887 Boston City regatta increased the number of amateur races from one to three. Races for juniors and intermediates were introduced at subsequent events, substantially increasing racing interest among the clubs. In 1891 the NEARA voted to expel any club that participated in professional races or held professional races as part of their annual regattas, up to then a common practice of the West End, Everett, and Columbian clubs. By 1896 professional racing had been eliminated from the Boston City regatta altogether, although professional sculling match races continued to draw huge Boston crowds well into the 19-teens.

By the mid-80s The Riverside Press needed to expand onto the club's boathouse site. Although the club carried a large debt, under the leadership of treasurer and future president James T. McNamee in 1886 it purchased the site for a new boathouse, wedged between the Riverside Press property and the Cambridge Electric Company's coal yard at the foot of Albro

Street. It applied for a charter as an incorporated organization in March 1887. With interest in amateur racing rising, Riverside's membership surpassed 85, requiring the new boathouse to be a larger facility. Under construction at a cost of \$3,000 in 1891, the completed two-story shingle structure was 65 feet in length and 40 feet wide. Its first floor provided boat storage, dressing rooms and a shower. In keeping with the club's role as a center of Cambridge community life, the second floor, like those of other neighborhood rowing clubs, was devoted entirely to social gatherings. It contained a hall and "gentlemen's and ladies' parlors and ladies' toilets". By 1895 membership stood at 150.

Social activities were central to the life of the club. Some involved rowing, like the annual picnic and rowing competitions on Walden Pond with the neighboring Bradford club. Others involved the other popular sports of the day. Like many of the rowing clubs of the era, it sponsored boxing matches in local neighborhood halls. In keeping with its role as a center of neighborhood life, however, many events were entirely social. Over a hundred of its members and as many guests regularly assembled on Sunday afternoons in the club's second floor hall.

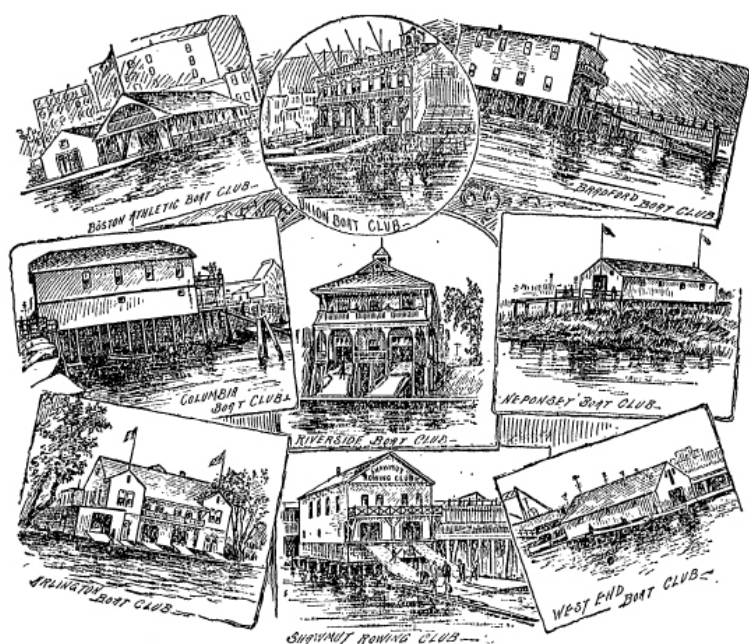


Riverside's second boathouse, approximately 1892

Riverside was integrated not only into Cambridge's social life but into its political structure as well. During the mid-1880s members included an aldermen, the assistant city clerk, the clerk of the Common Council, and James McNamee's brother and club treasurer Councilman John H. H. McNamee, who would become Cambridge's first Irish mayor in 1902. The club would maintain strong ties to city government throughout its first sixty years. In fact, there are indications that Riverside was something of a political club. President Frank Facey, who began his working life at The Riverside Press and in 1888 formed his own printing company, rose from membership in the Cambridge common council to Ward 4 Democratic chairman and then to chairman of the city Democratic party. In recognition of his organizational ability and in particular his program to naturalize and register immigrants, which was given credit for McNamee's election, the new mayor appointed him registrar of voters.

THE GOLDEN ERA FROM 1890 TO WORLD WAR I

With competitive rowing on a new organizational basis, the last decade of the 19th Century and the first two decades of the 20th were a golden age for Boston and particularly for Riverside Boat Club. The number of clubs and active oarsmen was at its height. In addition to the clubs dedicated to the established racing boats of the time, there were barge clubs such as the North Ends, the Puritania club, the Ramblers, the Coreys, the Lafayette



Boston area boathouses in 1895, with Riverside at the center

club and the Coopers, who did their own racing. There were more opportunities to compete than ever before. In addition to Boston's annual July 4th City Regatta, which continued to serve as the New England

championship, in 1895 the newly formed Metropolitan Amateur Rowing Association introduced an annual spring regatta. The recent institution of Labor Day provided the occasion for an annual NEARA fall regatta, which kept rowers in training to the end of the season.

As rowing reached a peak in celebrity and Boston area sweep oarsmen transitioned from workboats to the four and eight oared shells that were most popular elsewhere in the country, they began to achieve national success and Riverside emerged as one of the region's dominant clubs. William Caffrey of Lawrence won the national amateur senior sculling championships in 1890, with Frank Smith of Riverside second. Caffrey, who repeated in 1891, joined Riverside in 1893 and stroked many of its eights. Riverside carried on a particularly intense rivalry for racing reputation with fellow Cambridge boat club Bradford. Newspapers regularly cite Bradford's 1890 "big eight" as the standard of excellence in this period. Through the early 1890s the two clubs challenged each other to fours races for prizes that threatened the amateur code and attracted considerable public interest. The tide turned in 1894 when Riverside's intermediate eight won the National Championship in Saratoga, New York, the first national banner ever won by a New England eight. News clippings tell of throngs of triumphant Riverside club mates and friends meeting the train from Saratoga in Fitchburg and celebrating the entire journey back to Cambridge. East Boston's Joe Whitehead, previously of Columbians but now rowing for Riverside, won the national singles title in 1895. "The Riverside cheer was given with a will" at the various train stations along the route home, a big crowd met the victor at Union (North) Station, and the silk championship banner was on exhibit for a week at 6 State Street. Although Bradford's Joe McGuire won the national sculling title in 1897 and Worcester's Edward TenEyck in 1898, long-time *Boston Globe* rowing reporter and NEARA figure Eugene Buckley stated that Riverside was now "the first racing club in America". Its membership in 1895 stood at 150.



Riverside's 1894 National Championship Intermediate Eight

Boston hosted the NAAO national championships in 1899. The regatta committee set up a quarter mile long grandstand holding 2,000 spectators on the Back Bay seawall to accommodate the crowds. Despite the popular interest created by the NEARA and Boston area oarsmen's successes, however, by 1900 social changes within Boston's neighborhoods, new sporting interests, and generational changes within many neighborhood clubs were creating stresses from which some would not survive. Several, including clubs in East Boston and South Boston, suffered from diminishing local rowing participation and sustained themselves through their social activities. East Boston clubs, while producing many of Boston's best oarsmen, debated whether they should continue to limit their membership to neighborhood residents or recruit rowers from elsewhere. They jockeyed to capture East Boston's best oarsmen, competed to offer social facilities, and by 1900 had

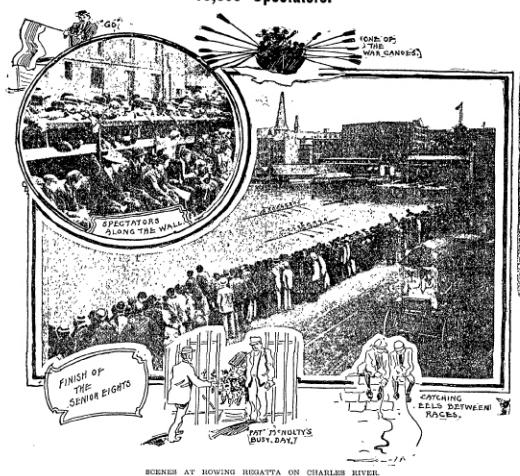
begun to explore consolidation. There are reports that Bradford was in financial trouble and that younger members committed to restoring the club's ascendancy had formed a club within the club, electing their own officers and holding their own meetings. Even Riverside was not immune. Unspecified discord among its members in 1897 was said to threaten the club's future.

By 1903 the NEARA was concerned enough about the health of some of its member clubs that it formed a committee to investigate. Despite reservations, it found that the West End and Crescent clubs remained viable, but the BAA resigned in good standing and South Boston's Central and City Point clubs were expelled. On the other hand, three new rowing clubs joined the Boston fleet. Two of them were outgrowths of the efforts of Catholic parishes in this period to recruit young men by offering athletic and social facilities. The Mission Church in Roxbury formed the St. Alphonsus Athletic Association in 1900, opened a large gym and social hall on Mission Hill, and began a rowing program. After failed merger negotiations with Bradford, it built its own boathouse on the Boston side of the river just below the Brookline (BU) Bridge in 1909. A second parish athletic association, the West End's St. Joseph's, built a boathouse near Craigie Bridge and began a rowing program of its own. The Cambridge Boat Club was formed in 1909.

Despite shifting fortunes, Boston area clubs were increasingly successful on the water. In 1899 Worcester's TenEyck won the national elite singles title, an event introduced that year. In 1900 Frank B. Greer, switching allegiance from the Jeffrie's Point Boat Club to the East Boston Athletic and Rowing Club, won the national senior singles championship. Except for TenEyck, Greer and Bradford's Joe McGuire were locally considered to be the fastest single scullers in the world. They were so prominent that 1901 match races between Boston and Canadian rowing hotbed Halifax, in which Greer and McGuire were the Boston scullers, were second in public interest only to the national championships. The celebrity of Boston's oarsmen invigorated

popular interest in rowing, and the sea wall along the Boston shore was “packed as of yore” for the 1902 New England championships. Greer won the national elite singles title in 1903, ‘04 and ‘05 and a fourth time in 1908. He was also singles champion at the 1904 Olympics. Altogether, Boston area scullers won the national senior and elite single sculling title in eight of the sixteen years between 1890 and 1905.

**Annual Fall Championships of N. E. A. R. A. on the Charles Interests
15,000 Spectators.**



SCENES AT ROWING REGATTA ON CHARLES RIVER.

Spectators at the finish line in front of Union on September 3, 1901

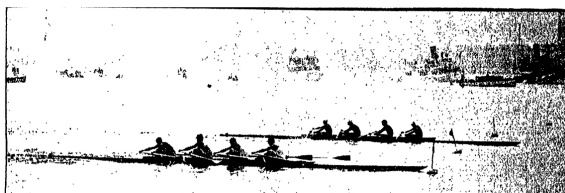
Its internal problems apparently resolved, by 1900 Riverside was firmly established as the region’s leading club. It was reported in 1902 that, “Never in the history of rowing was there greater activity shown in turning out racing crews than is the case at present (at Riverside).” Seat selection for its intermediate and senior sweep boats was more competitive than ever. Riverside’s 1903 senior eight, New England champion, was considered the best the club had put on the water to-date. In the 1906 National Championships the club’s senior eight was awarded a controversial first place dead heat with the New York Athletic Club. St. Joseph’s crack

senior four made news that year by going over to Riverside as a group. Riverside's young scullers were also coming on strong. The club selected its intermediate entry for the 1908 nationals, to be held in Springfield, by holding a much publicized race among four of its members—reported to be the first time in Boston rowing history that there were four men in one club that were so competitive in their class. Up-and-coming Carey Faulkner, George Faulkner's son, defeated another second generation oarsman, Joe Ryan, prominent boat builder William Davey's son Frank, and J. Brassil to represent the club. Faulkner won his event and was the New England senior champion the following year.

By the century's second decade Riverside's scullers were ascendant. Frank Davey won the New England singles championship in 1912. Together with Cary Faulkner, his brother William, and Yale oarsman Henry Livingston, they formed a quad that won the U.S. National Championship in 1913. Again held in Boston, the event was the largest rowing competition in the country to that date, with over 91 competitors from this country and Canada competing in 13 races. Cary and William Faulkner, Davey and Livingston repeated as national champions the next year in Philadelphia.

RIVERSIDE-UNION RACE THRILLS GREAT CROWD ALONG THE CHARLES

**Former Winner by 18 Inches--Duluth Carries Off Two Events
--Canadians Hold Their Own in Day's Racing.**



The Boston Globe page one, August 9, 1913, Riverside's quad defeating Union in the National Championships

To a greater extent than other boat clubs during this period, Riverside operated as a general athletic association, engaging in a wide number of sports in addition to rowing. A spring 1892 newspaper report announced that two well-known race walkers and long-distance runners would compete under its colors. The athletic committee was said to be putting together a track team for the Gloucester Games, including sprinters, jumpers, and competitors for the mile run, the mile walk, and the shot put. The club held annual track meets at Spy Pond Grove in Arlington. The first meet in 1901 included 125 participants in the 100-yard dash, the 440, 880 and one-mile runs, and the broad jump. Riverside supported other sports as well. The club was reported in 1892 to be purchasing gymnasium equipment, including a punching board and wrestling mat. Tug-of-war was hugely popular and Riverside had a team in training. It organized the Bridge Athletic Club for young members, many of whom participated in track and gymnastics. An 1896 article describes the boathouse as swarming with crack boxers and states that Riverside's Ben McArthur is the area's best boxer ever. "The club can outclass any amateur organization in America as far as boxers go." A 1906 newspaper reports on Riverside's bowling and pool champions and its New England amateur middleweight boxing champion. Interest in the club was so high that it capped its membership 125, and at times the waiting list was twice that number.

While the competition among each neighborhood's boat clubs was never stronger, they continued to share a sense of camaraderie. During the winter months Riverside held "smoke talks", in which "all the best local stars in athletics and in the theatrical profession" were entertained by speakers and boxing. During the summer it participated in the Boston tradition of Sunday open houses, when oarsmen rowed to each other's boathouses for social get-togethers. Riverside's reception for its junior single and junior eight, winners of the 1900 Labor Day regatta, was said to attract over 1,000 guests, including a leonine appearance from Frank Greer and delegations from St. Josephs, St. Alphonsus, Columbians, Jeffries Point, Bradford, Millstreams from Chelsea, and West Lynn.

Its role in Cambridge's social scene remained central as well. Newspapers in 1892 refer to a series of ladies nights. Seasonal events, such as the Thanksgiving Ball Riverside held in the Cambridgeport Union Hall on November 29, 1893, were prominent, just as they were among all the athletic clubs of the day. The club's 25th annual ball was held in Malta Hall in April 1904. *The Boston Globe* of that year describes Friday evening dances at the boathouse. "Boating parties from down the river make landing at their float and take part in the merrymaking". A 1908 minstrel show, with "many girls taking part", followed by flying rings and hand-balancing demonstrations and then a dance, was said to be a great success.

RIVERSIDE AND THE CREATION OF THE CHARLES RIVER BASIN

Through the early 1890s the Charles River estuary between Watertown and the Brookline Bridge, a wooden trestle structure built approximately in 1894, consisted of tidal marshes and mud flats, punctuated by industrial sites like The Riverside Press; Harvard's coal yards, the only university riverfront property at the time; the Watertown Arsenal; and the Brighton slaughter house, located between the Arsenal and North Beacon Street bridges. It was a challenging rowing environment. The tide dropped at least five feet, sweeping through closely spaced bridge pilings like a mill race until at low tide the river was so narrow that two crews could not race abreast. Riverside Boat Club, situated between the Western Avenue and River Street Bridges, was reported to have grown weary of rescuing Harvard boats that hung up on the bridges' piers, for which Harvard no longer thanked them with a sweater or two. In the fall the river was, as a mid-1880s oarsman described it, a "dank, dark ditch". Downstream from the Brookline Bridge on the river's Cambridge side, portions of a seawall for a failed speculative landmaking venture, now the riverfront of MIT's campus, had been constructed in 1883. Further east, Cambridge's river bank was, in the words of an 1892 report of the Cambridge Park Commission, "most unsightly, the most offensive, and the most menacing and is susceptible of the greatest improvement by being made attractive, valuable and healthful..." On the Boston side of the river, the West End shore was an industrial waterfront except for its Massachusetts General Hospital and Charles Street Jail frontage. The water's edge of Back Bay was formed by the seawall to the rear of the houses on the river side of Beacon Street, which offered a popular vantage point for viewing races. The granite blocks where the crowds stood can still be glimpsed as one drives east on Storrow Drive. The Harvard (Massachusetts Avenue) Bridge was constructed between 1887 and 1891. The replacement of the low-slung West Boston draw bridge with arching Cambridge (Longfellow) Bridge was authorized in 1900.



An 1870s view of the Western Avenue Bridge from the Riverside Press

As set forth in Karl Haglund's *Inventing the Charles River*, a movement was underway to create parks for the recreation of Boston's growing urban population that was to transform the river and dramatically affect Riverside and other Charles River boat clubs. Charlesbank Park, an enormously popular recreation facility with a running track and gymnastic equipment, located at the foot of the West End where the tennis courts and baseball fields are today, opened in 1889. In January 1893 the newly formed Metropolitan Park Commission issued a report proposing a regional park system that would include public reservations along the length of the Charles and Muddy Rivers. The City of Cambridge stood somewhat aloof from the Commission. It put forward its own plan for Cambridge's riverfront, which called for a dam just upstream from Craigie's Bridge, an esplanade between the West Boston bridge and the Brookline Bridge, a park and swimming beach above the bridge known as Captain's Island (now Magazine Beach),

and a tree-lined Charles River Road extending upriver past Harvard.

In January 1894 the City acquired most of its riverfront by eminent domain. The seawall for the esplanade below the Brookline Bridge was completed by 1899, although the made land would lay fallow for several years. The assembly of the right-of-way for the Charles River Road, which would be renamed Memorial Drive in honor of those killed in World War I in 1923 following its transfer to the Metropolitan District Commission, was impeded by the presence of The Riverside Press, but in 1901 the City acquired this portion of the roadway alignment, including Riverside's boathouse. The stage was set for the transformation of the Charles River estuary into a fresh water lake and recreation ground. In 1906 the Union Boat Club and the Boston Athletic Association were required to relocate from their boathouses behind Brimmer Street to the BAA's floating boathouse on the Cambridge embankment below the Harvard Bridge to make way for park construction on the river side of the Beacon Street seawall. The new embankment, which began at Charlesgate West, widened to 300 feet along the foot of Beacon Hill, and terminated at the Cambridge Bridge, was completed in 1909. Union's present boathouse opened that year, freeing its former site to be developed for squash and social functions.

The river's transformation to a recreational basin was completed with the construction of the Charles River dam. Despite the advocacy of Beacon Street resident and 1885 Harvard crew captain James Storrow for a dam that would eliminate tidal flow in Back Bay, in 1899 the legislature, responding to widespread opposition from other Beacon Street property owners, authorized a dam just downstream from the Brookline Bridge. By cutting upstream clubs off from the Back Bay, the project would no doubt have meant the end of Riverside Boat Club. The legislation was strongly opposed by Harvard and Boston's rowing clubs. In a glimpse of the continued strength of Yankee institutions in Massachusetts politics, representatives from Harvard, Union Boat Club, the Boston Athletic Association, and Weld Boat Club, together with an officer of the New England Amateur

Rowing Association representing the other clubs on the river, formed a committee to draft a substitute authorization that would place the dam at the Park Commission's recommended location above Craigie Bridge. The legislature authorized it in 1903, a temporary dam was in place in 1908, and the permanent dam was operational in 1910.

Ironically, although the waterfront recreational movement made the Charles an outstanding rowing venue, it hastened the end of some of Boston's rowing clubs. The metropolitan park commissioners required South Boston's City Point Club to make way for the Strand in the 1890s. The Crescent was required to relocate. Construction of the Charles River dam displaced St. Joseph's floating boathouse from its West End site to a pier near the Cambridge Bridge in 1905. In 1906 Bradford's boathouse was moved out of the way of the river improvements and the impending construction of a new Cottage Farm (the present BU) Bridge. The park commission served notice in the spring of 1909 that the club must either renovate its boathouse or remove it from the park reservation. Bradford attempted to raise the money necessary to tear down its boathouse and build a new one within the new parkland, but it was soon reported that, "It now looks as though they have to vacate the location granted for the boathouse on the east bank of the Charles River just above the Cottage Farm Bridge owing to the lack of funds to meet the requirements of the park commissioners." On the other hand, the BAA took advantage of the improvements. In 1911 it gave up its floating boathouse on the Cambridge shore in favor of a new boathouse within the park just below the Grand Junction Railroad's bridge on the site of the present Boston University boat house.

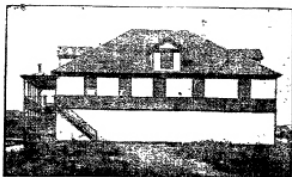
Riverside Boat Club was required to make way for the Charles River Road. It had not yet relocated when a fire erupted at about 1:00 A.M. May 2, 1911, burning the boathouse to the ground and engulfing the adjacent Cambridge Electric Co. coal bins. Riverside lost its boats, which included four eights, two doubles, two four-oared workboats, two fours, at least thirty singles, as well as a number of whitehalls. The fire also consumed seventy-five banners

and trophies, which may explain why only three NEARA banners hanging in the club date before 1912. The loss was valued at \$3,000, about half of which fell on the City of Cambridge, which was in possession of the building.

On May 5, a membership meeting instructed a committee to locate temporary quarters until a new boathouse could be constructed. The St. Alphonsus club invited the club to share quarters in its new boathouse for the time being. Thought was given to purchasing Bradford's old boathouse, but by the spring of 1912 a new facility, the present boathouse, was in construction at a cost of \$7,600 on a small spit of land at the foot of Pleasant Street leased to it by the City of Cambridge. Completed in the fall, it was surrounded by mud flats that were to form the western end of Captain's Island. The two-story, hip-roofed structure was designed in part by club member John McAuliffe. Its first floor housed the club's boats and contained showers, lockers and a dressing room. The second floor was devoted to a large assembly room and dance hall and contained a women's room and a checkroom. Their original contours can be deciphered today by tracing the wainscoting along the walls. The section of the Charles River Road and its supporting seawall between Western Avenue and River Street, the last to be constructed, were completed in 1914. Cambridge's 1916 Atlas shows Riverside's boathouse within the newly constructed riverfront parkland, adjacent to the men's, women's and boy's bathhouses serving Captain's Island.

RIVERSIDE BOAT CLUB'S NEW HOME

Handsome Boathouse on the Parkway Along the Charles Nearly Ready For the Formal Opening.



NEW RIVERSIDE BOAT CLUB HOUSE AT CAMBRIDGE.

BOSTON ROWING FOLLOWING WORLD WAR I

With the country's entry into World War I, the 1917 national championships, which were to have been held in Lynn, were cancelled, as were those of 1918. In 1919 Riverside Boat Club celebrated its Silver Jubilee with a banquet attended by over 200. Cambridge Mayor Quinn made a presentation to George Faulkner, a symbol of the club's proud history. His sons Cary and William won the national double sculls championship that year.

Transit motorman Jerry Shea, widely known as "King of the Charles", maintained Riverside's racing reputation, winning numerous New England sculling events during the 20s. The war and the social changes that followed heavily affected rowing throughout the country, however.* Although Boston regattas continued to draw large crowds, many neighborhood rowing clubs fell into decline. East Boston's clubs began to merge or disappear, as did the West End's. Union Boat Club's Russell Codman enjoyed considerable prominence as a single sculler, but the balance of national competitive success shifted from Boston to Philadelphia and New York, although Duluth rowers trained by TenEyck were dominant between 1920 and 1924. Under the impact of the Great Depression and the public's declining interest in rowing, by the early 1930s the Boston area membership of the New England Amateur Rowing Association was reduced to Riverside Boat Club, Cambridge Boat Club, Shawmut Rowing Association, St. Alphonsus Boat Club, and Union Boat Club, as well as the club manifestations of M.I.T. and Harvard, Tech Boat Club and Weld Boat Club. Members from outside Boston included clubs from Lynn, Waltham, Worcester and Springfield. The NEARA's championship races often had few entrants and were sometimes abandoned for lack of competition. With the disappearance of local clubs, the regattas available to competitors became scarcer. Riverside itself did

**Boston's 1924 Labor Day regatta included the first women's singles event in the country, a half mile race between Helen Court of Wachusett Boat Club of Worcester and A. S. Mollard of the Pennsylvania Barge Club of Philadelphia.*

not hold a regatta after about 1920. Nevertheless, the club continued to compete. Its senior eight won the New England championship in a special match race with St. Alphonsus in 1923. In 1931, forty-six year old Jerry Shea, rowing with his brother Jack, won the national intermediate doubles championship. He also stroked the Riverside senior eight that won 50th annual New England Amateur Rowing Association championship on the Charles in 1935.



Jerry Shea, the "King of the Charles", in the stroke seat

Despite these successes, Riverside Boat Club declined through the 1930s. In 1937 it had dwindled to 75 active members. In an attempt to revive itself, as well as to celebrate Boston's past competitive glory, the club inaugurated an event that included "Old Timers" singles and eights races in 1935. The regatta drew 1000 spectators and quickly became the most popular rowing event on the Charles. Nineteenth Century rivals, some of their clubs now disbanded, were seated in Riverside's eight. In the regatta's second year

Riverside was stroked by Bradford's Joe Maguire, the 1897 national singles champion and now a 65 year old retired Boston police captain, and included 1888 New England champion Dick Fleming, 73; Bradford's 1894 New England champion Pat Berkeley; and Riverside's Jerry Shea, the youngest man in the boat at fifty. It finished the course from Weld to Riverside in what the newspapers called, apparently without intending double meaning, a dead heat with St. Alphonsus.

In 1936 a Riverside four-with stroked by Robert B. Cutler and made up of current and former Harvard oars, including Cutler's brother Roger, defeated boats from the University of Washington, University Club, California and Cornell in the Philadelphia national championships, winning the right to represent the United States in the Berlin Olympics. After a poor start in their second heat, they finished in a disappointing tie for fourth and were eliminated. By and large, however, Riverside continued to cater to working class rowers. According to newspaper accounts, club dues in 1937 were less than \$1 per month. Its machinists, carpenters and truck drivers launched at 7:00 in the evening, after completing long workdays. Only two of Riverside's senior and junior oarsmen in 1931 were said to have attended college, neither of whom rowed there, and only one of its 1937 senior crew had a college background. Among the club's more colorful oarsmen was Steve "Crusher" Casey. An immigrant from Skibbereen, County Kerry, a professional wrestler and boxer, and a Boston icon, Steve and two of his seven brothers raced victoriously for Riverside throughout the 1930's and 40's. In testimony to his popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, his statue stands today in his hometown, while in this country his bars, Casey's on Huntington Avenue near Boston Symphony Hall and Casey's Too in Hull, were favorite watering holes for locals, Irish immigrants and rowers alike.



The features that completed the present contours of the Charles River basin were added during this period. The present Cottage Farm or B.U. Bridge replaced the Brookline Bridge in 1927, the same year as the construction of the Weeks Footbridge. A mishap in the construction of the bridge resulted in the destruction of St. Alphonsus' boathouse. A controversial design process for doubling the width of the embankment along its Back Bay edge and creating a lagoon began unfolding in 1928. The completed Esplanade was dedicated to the basin's early advocate and major banking and civic figure, James Storrow, in 1936. The limited access roadway cutting the Esplanade off from residential Back Bay, named Storrow Drive in an act of disrespect to the park advocate's memory, was authorized in 1949 and widened in 1954-55.

COPING WITH DECLINING INTEREST

Competitive rowing was generally suspended during World War II. Club rowing in Boston languished throughout the 1950s and 60s. Local clubs participating in the 1962 New England championships were reduced to Riverside, Cambridge Boat Club, MIT Boat Club, Union Boat Club, and Weld Boat Club. Activity at Riverside dwindled. Its approximately 75 members, many of them recreational scullers, tended to look at the club as an inexpensive facility for their occasional outings. Annual dues were kept low. Riverside's boat inventory was limited to perhaps three club singles, two doubles, a four-with, a couple of gigs, as well as its members' private singles.

The club continued to support a few elite oarsmen. Two of them were among the most accomplished rowers in Riverside's history. Sy Cromwell, who was national elite single sculling champion in 1961 and 1962, enjoyed an international career spanning from 1957 to 1966, winning Olympic silver medals in both the single and double and competing several times at the World Championships. Don Spero, rowing for Riverside before decamping to New York, upset Cromwell for the 1963 singles national championship, Cromwell finishing second. Spero and Cromwell then won the elite double. A Riverside four-with stroked by Ted Kakas won its event, giving Riverside the most winners from any club in the competition and making 1963 perhaps the club's most successful year at the national level to that date. Spero and Cromwell are the two Riverside oarsmen enshrined in the United States Rowing Hall of Fame. Robert Lea also enjoyed considerable success on the national level and served as an alternate in the 1964 Olympics. Ted Kakas went on to secure a spot in the 1966 National Team eight that competed in Bled, Yugoslavia. Ted Van Dusen represented the U.S. in the 1977 World Championships.



With membership falling well below the capacity of the boathouse and with dues kept low, the club's finances became perilous. To rescue them, in 1963 Riverside entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with Northeastern University. It leased space to the fledgling college program for \$3,000 per year, plus responsibility for club maintenance and a share of the club's insurance. Although Riverside obtained much needed revenue and Northeastern established one of the country's leading college rowing programs, the club's access to its building was curtailed. The university locked off areas for its exclusive use, including two of the bays and the present men's locker room and shower area, which it constructed. The club allowed Northeastern to add the downstream bay to the boathouse in 1967.

The relationship between Riverside and Northeastern during the 1970s became strained over issues of rent and deferred maintenance. They were gradually addressed, however, to the point that Northeastern's rent reached \$45,000, almost 50 percent of the club's budget, and Riverside regained access to all its bays after the college season, which allowed it to begin to rent boats from Boston University and other colleges for summer use. With

the club and the university on better terms, they collaborated on a plan in which Northeastern would increase its space by adding another bay on the boathouse's upstream side, and it and the club would condominiumize the building's ownership. The Metropolitan District Commission rejected the expansion plan, however, and to the university's surprise suggested that it develop its own boathouse instead. The first site Northeastern selected was Magazine Beach, but it was opposed by Cambridgeport representatives.

In the meantime, The Riverside Press, the print works that had been Riverside Boat Club's origin in 1869, was closed by Houghton Mifflin and in 1972 its buildings were razed. Most of its site is now occupied by Riverside Press Park.

REVIVAL

While local club rowing was in decline, national and international developments were unfolding within the sport that were to provide the foundation for Riverside's revival. One of the most significant was the elevation of women's rowing. The first FISA regatta for women was held in France in 1951 and the first European rowing championships for women were held in 1954. In 1972 the U.S. Congress passed Title IX, which mandated that colleges provide equal athletic programs for men and women and resulted in a boom in women's collegiate rowing. The first U.S. national women's squad was sent to the European championships in 1973.

During the same period international competition, driven by East European training methods and the success of Karl Adam's Ratzeburg crews, became increasingly intense. Standards of performance reached levels that were difficult for American rowers to meet through the traditional college and club pipelines. The first American adaptations to the new competitive environment were made in 1958 by Vesper Boat Club in the East and by the formation of the Lake Washington Boat Club in the West. Under the guidance of Jack Kelly, Vesper's Tokyo Olympic eight consisted of experienced oarsmen from diverse clubs and colleges, anticipating the national camp system. In 1968 the U.S. did not win a single Olympic event, however, and in 1972 Harry Parker conducted a camp for the selection of the U.S. eight and coxed four, setting the stage for an evolving series of national training and selection systems that motivated rowers to remain in the sport after college. Those who gravitated to Boston became potential Riverside members. Rowing at the club was given additional focus by the Head of the Charles Regatta, which was first held in 1965 and was to become the largest regatta in the United States.

The club responded to these developments as well as Northeastern's impending departure with decisions that laid the foundation for its success today. Not without contention, women were admitted as non-voting

members in the late 70's and won Senior Member status in 1980. Under the leadership of President Jim Hanley and Captain Will Melcher, in 1981 the club's management was up-graded. The constitution was revised to replace its town meeting form of decision-making with a Board of Directors and monthly—now quarterly—voting by senior members. Program committees were established, enabling the club to address more challenging matters than had been possible in the past.

After a difficult search for a boathouse site, in 1981 Northeastern announced its plans to build at its present upstream location. Riverside faced a decision whether to look for a new tenant. Tufts University's new rowing program was interested in taking Northeastern's space. Instead, Riverside decided to build a membership that was large enough to go it alone by offering an attractive club environment to the growing ranks of active, competitive oarsmen and women. After acrimonious debate, annual dues were raised from \$75 to \$150 to cover not only operating expenses but the costs of a club coach. Doug Clark, a former Canadian National Team sculler, was hired for the position. Doug proved to be an energetic organizer and recruiter. A summer sweep program was installed, focused on competing in Canadian Henley. Millage requirements for rack use were established to insure that club facilities served its active rowers. Within a year there was a waiting list for rack space. It was at this point that Riverside adopted its distinctive uniform, its blue and white stripes. Keen to re-establish the club's identity, Will Melcher organized a contest in which members submitted mock-ups of proposals for new shirts. Having seen an antique picture of Riverside in stripes, he made up a replica and it won by a large margin. The club purchased rowing machines and weights. As late as the early 1980s Riverside owned no in-door equipment and the boathouse was vacant throughout the winter. It found that in-door training not only improved performances but increased members' camaraderie. Seeking to increase the sense of Riverside as a social unit and to keep it attractive to members after they no longer sought high level competition, the club expanded the range of its social events. Slowly but surely Riverside was building a cohesive

community dedicated to its active rowers, both men and women, regardless of their means.

Riverside's renewed spirit began to produce successes on the water. Ted Van Dusen again represented the U.S. in the 1981 World Championships, while Riverside women made their mark when Patty Pinkerton and Katherine Reith rowed a double at the 1982 Royal Henley Regatta. Riverside's Dan Charnoff and Jess Parks won at Henley in 1985 and were the U.S. Lightweight double in 1985 and 1986, the first time since the club's 1936 Olympic four-with that a boat made up entirely of Riverside oarsmen represented the United States at the world championship level. Bill Randall was a member of the national championship quad in 1986. C. B. Sands won gold in the women's lightweight double at the World Games in 1987 and silver in 1989. Molly Hoyle competed in the women's open double at the Lucerne World Championships in 1989. John Marden, who started his sculling and coaching careers at Riverside, coached the 1989 U.S. gold medal lightweight women's single and double.

As Riverside re-established itself, popular interest in the sport was reviving in the Boston area. When Riverside approached area high schools to offer space and boats for a scholastic program, Brookline High School, which had rowed in the Boston scholastic league early in the century, accepted and a small program was established. Community Rowing Inc., dedicated to bringing a new generation of rowers onto the Charles, was founded in 1985. At Riverside, the depth and quality of rowing among the general membership, both sweepers and scullers, improved to the point that the club finished second in the 1985 National Championships team points trophy and captured the Head of the Charles Points Trophy in 1987, 1988, and 1989. Its blue and white striped rowers were becoming conspicuous.

In 1988 the club introduced summer Lightweight Development Camps. At the time the Boston Rowing Center, a training and selection program operated out of Harvard's Newell and Weld boathouses with heavy financial

support from United States Rowing and the United States Olympic Committee, drew rowers from around the country. Under Steve Sawyer's charismatic leadership, Riverside's summer camp began to turn local rowers into oarsmen who caught Boston Rowing Center's attention. As it progressed, Riverside's program itself became a magnet, functioning as a feeder for rowers from around the country seeking to break into the national program. The club's other programs took it as a model for recruiting and training their participants.

By 1990, when Northeastern left for their new quarters upstream, Riverside felt confident it could do it alone for the first time in 27 years. It hired a full-time rigger, Linda Muri. The coaching staff was expanded to three: in addition to Steve Sawyer, who continued to coach the lightweight men's sweep team, it retained 1984 Olympic gold medalist Jeanne Flanagan to coach the scullers and master's sweeps, and Cecily Keifer to coach the lightweight women's sweeps. Together they guided Riverside athletes to victories at the New England Regionals, the Senior Nationals, and the Canadian Henley, as well as many other regattas. Riverside's programs began to produce competitive results on the international level as well. The club was prominently represented in the 1991 Pan Am Games in Havana. Molly Hoyle and Linda Muri teamed up to win the silver medal in the women's double and a kiss from Fidel Castro; Cindy Ryder won silver in the women's open single; and Karen Carpenter won the gold in the women's quad. The Lightweight Development Camp reached its goal of producing national team oarsmen as well. Steve Gantz and Marvin Giles joined Riverside's Pan American Games medalists with a silver in the men's lightweight pair. Eight of the nine members of the Lightweight Development Camp eight represented the US in various boats at the World Championships. Riverside took the gold at the 1991 Canadian Henley in the men's senior lightweight eight and four and in the senior women's quad and elite women's four.

1992 was a banner year. After a hard summer of trial racing, Cindy Ryder

and her doubles partner Mary Mazzio returned Riverside to the Olympic stage in the open women's double at Barcelona. She gained an 11th place world ranking, and a position in the Riverside Hall of Fame. Linda Muri won the women's open single at the Nationals and was a spare at the World Championships in Montreal. With one of the strongest lightweight men's squads in Coach Steve Sawyer's tenure, Riverside dominated the circuit. RBC's Matt Collins stroked a lightweight straight four that made the finals at the World Championships. Riverside's elite eight won the silver at the Nationals in Indianapolis and the senior lightweight four-with, straight four, and pair won at the Canadian Henley. The 1992 women's sweep program was also winning. Cecily Kiefer coached the women to top results in the Northeast Regionals, winning all events entered. At Senior Nationals, her crews placed in all events and won the senior pair, and her senior women's coxed four and senior pair won at Canadian Henley.

Riverside continued to produce impressive results through the balance of the 1990's. Cindy Ryder was the United States women's singles champion in 1993. Several Riverside athletes were members of the gold medal lightweight eight at the 1993 World Championships. Riverside rowers achieved five senior victories at Canadian Henley in 1993 and two in 1994. Jeff Mork and Josh Crosby won a national pair's championship in 1996. Racing in Riverside stripes, Jamie Koven won English Henley's Diamond Sculls in 1998.



Jamie Koven winning the Diamond Sculls in 1998

After a brief downturn, the 1996 Lightweight Development Camp was reinvigorated under the guidance of Rich Branch and Mike Willey, producing eight oarsmen and a coxswain who dominated the intermediate lightweight men's eight, four and pair at the club nationals and the Canadian Henley. Women were added to the program, and won the Canadian Henley senior lightweight eight competition. Following the program's transfer to Joe Wilhelm in 1997 and a second win in the women's senior lightweight eights race at Canadian Henley as well as the women's lightweight four-with, a 1999 Riverside boat composed of Erick Kenney, Tom Kiester, Jason Banks and Sean Wolf won the national elite lightweight four without coxswain title and the club's intermediate lightweight eight won its event at the Canadian Henley. In 2000 Keister and Wolf won the National Team Trials in the lightweight pair. Erik Limpitlaw and Eric Koep repeated Wolf and Keister's victory in 2001.

The club's other divisions surged as well. In 1997, twenty-three competitive sweep women moved from Community Rowing, Inc. to Riverside, augmenting the existing masters women's team. Their arrival provided the foundation for Riverside's dominance of both club and masters women's sweep rowing. Nikolay Kurmakov, a former Soviet National Team rower from Ukraine and past coach of the lightweight women's camp, took the reins of the programs and built a dynasty. Nikolay produced multiple Head of the Charles wins and Intermediate and Senior victories at the National Championships. The men's open sweep team, which had had difficulty luring scullers out of their singles for any length of time, also began to attract post-collegiate rowers, who began to produce results as well. Stripes were so prominent that in 2000 the Head of the Charles Regatta discontinued its points trophy for club sculling after back-to-back wins by Riverside. Kent Smack and David Gabel were the 2001 United States open double.



Kent Smack and Dave Gabel, 2001 U.S. Double

In the late 90's, Boston University, which occupied what had been the Boston Athletic Association's and then MIT's boathouse, decided to rebuild, displacing their tenant, Simmons College. Nikolay Kurmakov, now Simmons' head rowing coach, asked whether his program could set up a trailer and row from Riverside's docks. The club accepted and the college became part of the Riverside family. Nikolay continued to coach the Riverside women's sweep team and also coached scullers for a time, always producing results. Meanwhile, Brookline High School's team enjoyed increasing success. Its program grew so large, eventually attracting 150 kids for try-outs, that Riverside had to ask Brookline to limit its numbers to eighty. Brookline's girls and boys crews continue to post impressive results at the state and national level.

RIVERSIDE IN ROWING'S CURRENT ERA

By 2001, it was time to evaluate the programs that had restored Riverside's stature. Each operated somewhat independently from the others, and as they succeeded their demands on the club's equipment and the relationship between summer campers and resident members posed increasingly challenging issues. In 2002 Riverside decided to discontinue its summer programs. It did not want to abandon its commitment to athletes aspiring to rowing's highest levels, however. Kevin McDonnell proposed to replace the summer camps with a new program, the High Performance Group, designed to provide Riverside's most competitive men and women with year-round coaching and intense training focused on the development of small boat skills and an emphasis on single sculling. By the end of the 2002 season it was clear that the approach was paying off. Under Kevin's guidance, the program averted conflicts and produced results. Riverside's high performance women were particularly successful. Marny Jaastad made the national squad in a lightweight quad that won a silver medal at the World Championships. Riverside women won the senior women's pair, fours, eights, lightweight single and lightweight quad at the Canadian Henley. Liane Malcos and Bryna McConnerty, who competed in the pair, fours and eights, were selected as the *Independent Rowing News'* 2002 Club Crew of the Year. Wendy Campanella joined Abigail Cromwell, soon to become a Riverside member, and two rowers from other clubs to win a bronze medal in the lightweight women's quad at the 2002 World Championships in Seville, Spain. That fall the High Performance Group women formed a lightweight eight that won the Head of the Charles. On the men's side, Tom Keister and Sean Wolf won the national championship in the elite lightweight men's pair and a silver medal in the open men's pair. Jon Douglas was a member of the men's lightweight eight that placed second in the World Championships and Nick Tripician rowed in the men's open four-with, which finished sixth.

Although Kevin McDonnell departed the program in 2003, the athletes and

the board of directors have striven to maintain the standards of the High Performance Group while ensuring that it meshes with Riverside's other programs. At the national level, Liane Malcos won a World Championship gold medal as member of the 2003 United States women's four-without cox. Wendy Campanella won a bronze in the lightweight quad at the 2003 Pan Am Games, and Cindy Bishop, who had learned to row at Riverside just three years prior, earned a bronze in her single. The club's other programs continued to succeed as well. Riverside's women returned from the National Championships with eight titles, including the four-with. Out of 28 entries at that event, the club brought home twenty medals. The Lightweight women's senior quad won at Canadian Henley and Riverside's women's club eight won at the Head of the Charles, while John Tracey won the senior masters single and the lightweight women repeated in the eight.

In 2004 Adrian Smith took control of the High Performance Group. Cindy Bishop placed second in the single at the Olympic Trials and beat the reigning Olympic and World Champions to win the Head of the Charles Regatta. Kent Smack represented the United States in the quad at the Athens Olympics. He was joined by Liane Malcos, now a resident of the National Team Training Center, as the women's team spare. At the club national championship level, the women's four-with won again, as did its women's eight. Senior women won the eight, lightweight single and quad at Canadian Henley. In the Head of the Charles, the lightweight women's eight achieved a three-peat. Heather Moon won the lightweight single, and Marika Page and Layne Salter won the championship double. On the men's side, Tim Vogel brought home Head of the Charles gold in the club single.

2005 was even more dramatic. Seven of Riverside's athletes competed at the World Championships in Gifu, Japan. Coached by Tom Keister, an all-Riverside boat of Rob Zechman, Greg Ruckman, Matt Muffleman and Sean Wolf rowed the men's lightweight quad; Marika Page, coached by Adrian Smith, represented the US as the women's lightweight single sculler; Heather Moon rowed in the women's lightweight quad; and Liane Malcos

was selected to be a member of the women's eight. Riverside won the men's senior lightweight eight, senior women's eight, and senior women's double at Canadian Henley. The club's Head of the Charles results were not disappointing either. Jen Warwzonik and Charlie Burckmeyer won their respective club singles events. The men's lightweight eight also won at the Head of the Charles. 2006 brought continued success, including another all-Riverside World Championship entry. Coach Bruce Smith, who had coached the men's sweep program the previous year, combined some High Performance Group lightweight men with rowers from the light sweep program to form a formidable eight. Winning trials handily, they traveled to Eaton, England to race with great distinction, finishing fifth, within three seconds of the winning time. Three rowers with Riverside backgrounds were selected to be members of the United States team at the Princeton Training Center: Liane Malcos in the women's quad, Matt Muffelman in the lightweight four-with, and Esther Lofgren in the women's four-with. The club's continued success in sending rowers overseas, many of whom postpone their careers for the opportunity to train at high levels, led to its recognition of the financial burden they face in events not fully supported under the current U. S. Rowing system. In response, Riverside established an endowment intended to generate the income needed to support its rowers in such cases.



(from left) Sean Wolf, Matt Muffelman, Greg Ruckman, and Rob Zechman 2005 U.S. Quad

In 2007 Riverside's lightweight eight again represented the United States at the world championships, while Esther Lofgren rowed in the U. S. under 23 quad. The club's men's lightweight eight and women's senior quad won their events at Canadian Henley, as did Jen Warzonek in the 500m dash. At the Head of the Charles, four Riverside single scullers won their events: Heather Moon in the lightweight women's single, Dave Gabel in the masters' men's single, Igor Belakovskiy in the men's club single, and Alex Kazanovicz in the women's club single. Nine Riverside sweep boats were under the time standard for entry the following year.



CONCLUSION

By adapting to the evolving history of rowing in this country, Riverside Boat Club has maintained a distinctive place among the private rowing clubs on the Charles River. Of Boston's many neighborhood-based workingmen's boat clubs formed in the 1860s and 70s, it alone survives. After several challenging decades, it has restored the mission established by immigrant printers at the club's founding to offer a congenial setting and competitive opportunities to rowers of all economic backgrounds. In that spirit, Riverside offers senior memberships to oarsmen and women who are willing to actively participate in maintaining the club. Club management continues to be conducted by member volunteers. Paid staff is limited to coaches and a rigger. The club mounts three regattas each year to provide its members the opportunity to compete with rowers from throughout the region. By retaining its traditions of low fees, an orientation to competition, member involvement, and democratic decision-making, Riverside Boat Club has rebuilt its active membership to two hundred, and has re-established its place as one of the country's strongest rowing clubs.

SOURCES

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Riverside's second boathouse, approximately 1892, source unknown, Cambridge Historical Society

View of Western Avenue Bridge, by Lewis Thomas, ca. 1875, collection of the Boston Athenaeum

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