A guide to the San Francisco Yacht Club photographs, circa 1900-1960s

Processed by: M. Crawford and Amy Croft, May 2013.
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123
Phone: 415-561-7030
Fax: 415-556-3540
SAFR_Historic_Documents@nps.gov
URL: http://www.nps.gov/safr
2013
A Guide to the San Francisco Yacht Club photographs

P74-041L

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service

2013, National Park Service

Title: San Francisco Yacht Club photographs
Date: circa 1900-1960s
Date (bulk): 1920s-1930s
Identifier/Call Number: P74-041L (SAFR 23371)
Creator: Boye Photograph Studio
San Francisco Yacht Club
Physical Description: 98 items.
Repository: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department
Building E, Fort Mason
San Francisco, CA 94123
Abstract: The San Francisco Yacht Club photographs, circa 1900-1960s, bulk 1920s-1930s, (SAFR 23371, P74-041L) are comprised of one photograph album of yacht club member studio portraits and several photographs of Belvedere Cove, California and the San Francisco Yacht Club. The collection has been processed to the Series level with some Items listed, and is open for use.
Physical Location: San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department
Language(s): In English.
Access
This collection is open for use unless otherwise noted.
Publication and Use Rights
Some material may be copyrighted or restricted. It is the researcher's obligation to determine and satisfy copyright or other case restrictions when publishing or otherwise distributing materials found in the collections.
Processing Note
Each photographic image has been assigned an Item number, including those within the photograph album.
Description Notes: Dates refer to when the original photograph was taken. It is possible that some of the photographic prints in this collection could be copies that were made later than when the original photograph was taken.
The descriptions in this collection guide were compiled using the best available sources of information. Such sources include the creator's annotations or descriptions, collection accession files, primary and secondary source material and subject matter experts. While every effort was made to provide accurate information, in the event that you find any errors in this guide please contact the reference staff in order for us to evaluate and make corrections to this guide.
Please cite the title and collection number in any correspondence with our staff.
Preferred Citation
[Item description], [Location within collection organization identified by Collection Number/Series Number/File Unit Number/Item Number], P74-041L (SAFR 23371), San Francisco Yacht Club photographs, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
Acquisition Information
SAFR-00001
GOGA-00735
On May 29, 1974, the San Francisco Yacht Club (via Dick Griffith) donated photographs, scrapbooks, papers, and printed materials to the San Francisco Maritime Library and they were accessioned as 74-041.
On April 28, 1978, six photographic prints were accessioned into the Photo Archives as P74-041L (no transfer paperwork could be found). On March 20, 1994, a photographic album of members' portraits was transferred from the library collection 74-041, to the Photograph Collection P74-041L.
The San Francisco Yacht Club was founded in 1869 by an enthusiastic group of men that enjoyed the newfound popularity of Corinthian sailing. They formed the club based on the New York Yacht Club’s by-laws. The original anchorage and clubhouse were located in San Francisco at Long Bridge, near Mission Rock. From the onset, the club provided activities for both sport and social pleasure. In 1873, the club experienced some financial difficulty. The club was reorganized with new rules regarding membership and it has experienced stability since.

The Central Pacific Railroad Company owned Mission Bay and in 1870 it sold the property that the club was set upon. The club then moved to the Front Street Wharf in San Francisco. The shallow water at this location proved to be unusable overall, and the club was moved to Sausalito. The clubhouse was burned to the water in 1897, consequently destroying many trophies and club records. The clubhouse was rebuilt, and at this time still stands as a restaurant that is not affiliated with the club. Despite the setbacks from multiple relocations, by 1900 the club was known as the premier yachting facility on the West Coast.

Although the turn of the century brought a decline in the national interest for yachting, interest on the West Coast was increasing. There was a gradual trend that saw more and more small boats being sailed on the bay; the transition from centerboard construction with inboard ballast to ballasted keels occurred as more boats were brought out from the East Coast. The first small boat regatta was held by the SFYC in 1881, and the popularity of small boats only increased after this.

Early in the club’s history, there was a high level of involvement from women and with youth programs. In the 1920s, club activities were not limited to racing: cruises to California locations such as Vallejo, Antioch, Napa and Sacramento; dances; clambakes; and parties at fashionable hotels were all sanctioned club events.

By 1926, the club found that high traffic and congestion at their current site was no longer manageable and Commodore Clifford Smith led the campaign to move the club to Belvedere Cove. Not all of the members agreed with this new location choice, and a more affluent group of 49 members split, leaving to form the St. Francis Yacht Club in San Francisco. A small SFYC clubhouse was completed at Belvedere in 1934, and is part of the club’s facilities today.

The 1930s, overall, were challenging for the SFYC because of the Great Depression. Social events were cut, small boats were primarily run and the larger boats were left unsailed. During this time, the Star Class, introduced by Commodore Clifford Smith in 1923, was proving to be both easy to use and cost effective to maintain. The 1940s brought the incorporation of the Richardson Yacht Club, doubling memberships. World War II proved to be difficult as members were absent and there were restrictions placed on sailing in and around the San Francisco Bay.

Racing picked up again in the 1950s, along with the role women played in the club with the formation of the Women’s Auxiliary in 1953. A 190 berth harbor was completed in 1957; an overhaul of the club and berthing facilities had been in the works since 1933, but storm damage in 1952 accelerated the process, bringing many necessary updates.

By the end of the 1960s, membership was at capacity and was therefore closed at 700 members, 460 boats, and a wait list was established. This decade proved to be successful in both adult and junior class racing and in hosting club social events. The 1970s proved to be a successful decade for trace competitors: overall, from the 1970s on, the club has won regional and national championships and has had a presence in the international racing scene as well.

The 1980s brought continued improvements and emerging leadership to the club. In 1983, the Harbor Maintenance Committee was formed and in 1984 the grounds to the west of the clubhouse were purchased and renovated for organized and social events. Other committees, such as the Housing Committee and the Race Council, as well and the Women’s Auxiliary, continue to provide strong leadership and facilitate the club’s functions. The Board of Directors and five officers ensure leadership and overall direction for the club.
Today, the club serves an active and diverse membership body. It offers a full racing schedule with 45 on-the-water days; a robust training schedule for those members that volunteer with race activities; and hosts a speaker series that presents authors, artists, experts and sailors that is offered at no cost to members and their guests. The SFYC continues to provide facilities, formal and informal events, and programs to provide pleasure and encourage a spirit of competitive racing.

Written by M. Crawford in 2013. This history was primarily written using "125 Years of the San Francisco Yacht Club," published by the San Francisco Yacht Club in 1994.


Collection Scope and Content
The San Francisco Yacht Club photographs, circa 1900-1960s, bulk 1920s-1930s, (SAFR 23371, P74-041L) are comprised of one photograph album of yacht club member studio portraits and several photographs of Belvedere Cove, California and the San Francisco Yacht Club. The collection has been processed to the Series level with some Items listed, and is open for use.

Contains one photograph album with portraits of San Francisco Yacht Club members, approximately 1933, and photographs of Belvedere Cove, California, a lumber dock, FRISCO STAR (yacht) and the San Francisco Yacht Club, circa 1900-1960s. There are 98 unique photographic images (1 photograph album containing 92 black-and-white photographic prints and 6 loose black-and-white photographic prints).

Collection Arrangement
Due to the small size of the collection, the photographs have been arranged in one Series: Series 1: Photograph album and photographs. The photograph album is described first; the loose photographic prints are described following that, arranged in chronological order.

Related Materials
Related photograph collections: Dick Griffith photographs, circa 1933-1934. SFMNHP, (SAFR 19454, P78-409a). 15 black-and-white photographic prints showing construction and activities of the San Francisco Yacht Club in Belvedere, California, photographer unknown.

San Francisco Yacht Club photographs, 1917-1918. SFMNHP, (SAFR 19218, P78-274a). 26 photographic prints showing the Rolph Shipbuilding Company yards in Eureka, California and vessels built at that yard. Various unknown photographers.

San Francisco Yacht Club photograph album, circa 1870-1880. SFMNHP, (SAFR 15275, P79-018a (SCR 18)). 1 photograph album containing 89 photographic prints and 1 cyanotype, entitled "Marine souvenir of cruises in San Francisco Harbor on the yacht Emerald, Presented to Joseph Moore Esq. By W. Letts Oliver." Contains photographs of the yacht EMERALD along with other sailing and steam vessels on San Francisco Bay and Lake Merritt, compiled by William Letts Oliver.

San Francisco Yacht Club photographs and scrapbook, 1926-1933. SFMNHP, (SAFR 20934, P06-012). 1 International Star Class, Yacht Racing Association scrapbook from 1931-1933, possibly assembled by Clifford A. Smith; 7 black-and-white photographic prints of yachts; the temporary club on June 16, 1927; and Carl J. Rhodin and shipmates, 1926.

Related manuscript collection: San Francisco Yacht Club records, 1880-1958. SFMNHP, (SAFR 4834, HDC 645). The collection contains yearbooks, scrapbooks, souvenir programs, brochures, articles, clippings, illustrations and sketches, membership rosters and by-laws, race charts, reports and results, correspondence, architectural drawings and specifications for vessels and buildings, development plan, contracts and a building permit. There are also club histories in Folders 3 and 18.

Researchers should note that there are other books and collections with materials related to San Francisco Yacht Club in the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. They can search the Park's web catalog for more information.

This material is located at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
San Francisco Yacht Club—History
Yacht Clubs—California—San Francisco—History
Yacht Clubs—History
Yachting—California—San Francisco
Yacht racing/cruising
20th century portraits
Smith, Clifford A.
San Francisco Yacht Club
Boye Photograph Studio
Frisco Star (yacht)
San Francisco Bay (Calif.)
San Francisco Bay Area (Calif.)
San Francisco (Calif.)
Belvedere (Calif.)
Sausalito (Calif.)
Pacific Coast (Calif.)
Black-and-white prints (photographs)
Gelatin silver prints
Photograph albums
Portraits
Studio portraits
Commercial portraiture
Extent: 98 photographs (1 album containing 92 photographs, 6 loose prints of various sizes ranging from 8 x 10 in. to 8 x 14 in.)

Scope and Content Note

Items 1-98. Photograph Album: Items 1-92: 1 photograph album of headshot portraits of San Francisco Yacht Club members photographed by Otto H. Boye of San Francisco, approximately 1933. Photographs of men and one boy. "San Francisco Yacht Club" and "By Boye" are embossed on the cover. Several of the album pages have "Boye" embossed on them. Photographs are 6.25 x 8.75 inches each, printed on 9.5 x 14 inch album pages. Some have annotations on the back of the page, which were likely done by Boye. Annotations occur in different combinations: numbers (all five-digits long, in this form: 54###); names, mostly surnames but sometimes included are initials or first names; and "Yacht," or "S. F. Yacht." It appears as though some individuals signed their name on the page near their photograph. The following signatures are in the album: Commodore Cliff Smith (Commodore in 1926 and 1933), Edgar M. Nelson, Wm. A La Violette, Robert M. Gunn, and [Herber] Hanley. In the instance of Commodore Smith's signed photograph, the name written on the back of the page ("Cohen") does not match the name on the front ("Commodore Cliff Smith"). Other names that appeared on the back of the pages (more than just surnames) are L. Baer, G.C. Boardman, M.R. Gibbons, M. Green, B. Hamlin, F. Homer, and D. Lewison.

Loose photographic prints:

Item 93: Aerial view of Belvedere Cove, California, circa 1900-1920. There are annotations and a caption on the front of the print; "Clifford A. Smith" and "Gabriel Moulin Studios" are stamped on the back. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8 x 10 in.

Item 94: FRISCO STAR (yacht) underway in the San Francisco Bay, California, view off starboard quarter, full sail, circa 1920-1930. Two unidentified men are visible on board, one most likely Clifford Smith. "Frisco Star" is written on the front and "Clifford Smith" and another indecipherable name are written on the back. Smith introduced the Star class in 1923. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 9 x 12 in.

Item 95: Unidentified lumber dock, circa 1920-1930. Lumber is piled on a dock with a barge or other work vessel on the other side of the dock. What appears to be a Marin County coast is visible in the background. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 6 x 9 in.

Item 96: Portrait of eleven members of the San Francisco Yacht Club wearing suits, standing behind the [I. A.] Perpetual Trophy, circa 1930. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8 x 10 in., affixed to cardboard of the same size.

Item 97: Men working on the exterior of the San Francisco Yacht Club, Belvedere Cove, California, circa 1934. Two men are sitting, one is on a ladder and another is carrying a bucket. There is neither trim nor rails on the docks surrounding the building, most likely placing this photograph at the time of the building's construction. This view is similar to that of Item 98. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 7 x 10 in.

Item 98: Side view of the San Francisco Yacht Club, Belvedere Cove, California, circa 1930s-1960s. There are people sitting outside in a seating area and several men are leaning over looking at something on a dock in the foreground. "S. F. Yacht Club 5-29-74" is written on the back of the print (this is the date that the materials were donated to the SF Maritime Museum by the SFYC). This view is similar to that of Item 97. 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8.5 x 14 in. "Photographed by Will Geisman; Credit Appreciated" stamped on the back and "S. F. Yacht Club 5-29-74" written on the back of the print.

Biography/Organization History

Some of the photographs in this series are related to Clifford A. Smith, who was active in the SFYC during the early part of the 20th century, and was elected Commodore of the SFYC in 1926 and 1933. According to a history of the San Francisco Yacht Club written for its 100th Anniversary, Smith worked as a law research clerk for the Market Street Railway. (This biographical information was taken from the P06-012 (SAFR 20934) catalog record, written by SFMNHP staff member Charles Miller.)
Box 1

Item No. 04. **Portrait of Commodore Cliff Smith, approximately 1933**

Creator/Collector: Boye Photograph Studio
Extent: 1 photograph.
Physical Description: 1 black-and-white photographic print, 6.25 x 8.75 in. Printed on an album page, 9.5 x 14 in. Signed "Commodore Cliff Smith" under the portrait.
Scope and Content Note
Headshot of Cliff Smith. This photograph is one in a photograph album of members of the San Francisco Yacht Club. The page is signed "Commodore Cliff Smith." Smith was Commodore of the club in 1926 and 1933.

Box 1

Item No. 94. **Frisco Star (yacht) underway, full sail, view off starboard quarter, circa 1920-1930**

Extent: 1 photograph.
Physical Description: 1 black-and-white photographic print, 9 x 12 in. "Clifford Smith" and an indecipherable name are written on the back of the print. "Frisco Star" is written on the front of the print.
Scope and Content Note
There are two people visible on board: one is Clifford A. Smith, Captain of the vessel and two-time San Francisco Yacht Club Commodore. The vessel is most likely in San Francisco Bay. There is an unidentified coast and open water in the background.

Box 1

Item No. 97. **View of the San Francisco Yacht Club exterior, near completion, Belvedere Cove, California, circa 1934**

Extent: 1 photograph.
Physical Description: 1 black-and-white photographic print, 7 x 11 in.
Scope and Content Note
Men appear to be doing finishing work on the newly constructed club. There are two men sitting, one on a ladder and one walking at the side of the club. The deck around the building and a dock to the building are in the foreground; they do not have rails, indicating that it is near completion.

Box 1

Item No. 98. **View of the San Francisco Yacht Club exterior, Belvedere Cove, California, circa 1930s-1960s**

Creator/Collector: Geisman, Will
Extent: 1 photograph.
Physical Description: "Photographed by Will Geisman; Credit Appreciated" stamped on the back of the print, and "S. F. Yacht Club 5-29-74" is written on the back of the print (this is the date that the materials were donated to the SF Maritime Museum by the SFYC).
Scope and Content Note
The club construction appears to be complete. Decorative trim and awnings on the facade are in place and the deck and dock rails are completed. There are several men sitting outside in a patio area. There are other men on the deck and dock area as well. This view is similar to that of Item 97.