Riverton Yacht Club celebrates its 150th Anniversary season
Events and honors mark the club’s broad contributions to sailing

RIVERTON, N.J. – Riverton Yacht Club celebrates its 150th anniversary all season long with special events and honors befitting the oldest club of its kind on the Delaware River, oldest in New Jersey, and one of the oldest in the United States with continuous service. It will be a celebration of this club’s long history as a fixture in its community, an institution along the Eastern seaboard, and a contributor to the global sailing community.

Riverton Yacht Club engages more than members, with an open invitation for the public to enjoy the sights and sounds from the club’s pier during races. All season long the club’s unique swallowtail burgee flies from the mast. That symbol includes a stars-and-stripes design that reportedly was outlawed soon after RYC was formed, making it one of a kind among United States organizations. Before it pulls up docks and packs up equipment in late fall, RYC will be honored by the Historical Society of Riverton and the Riverton Fourth of July Committee.

“This yacht club is more than a collection of sailing enthusiasts who maintain a quaint looking building and very serviceable pier for their own purposes,” said Nick Mortgu, chairman of 150th Anniversary events. “We want to show members and non-members why Riverton Yacht Club holds a place in sailing history.”

In the late 1800s, the club’s pier was a transportation lynchpin and recreation hotspot that played a pivotal role in the establishment and development of the Borough of Riverton. Its remains a beloved landmark in the area where prom photos, marriage proposals and family portraits are staged year after year. Riverton Yacht Club started the town’s immensely popular Fourth of July Children’s Parade that will roll for its 118th time this summer, attracting an estimated 10,000 revelers to a town that is home to only 3,000 people. This year, all living past commodores are invited to lead the parade as the club is honored as Grand Marshal.

Riverton Yacht Club is a regional favorite, with youth and adult lessons as well as weekly races that draw sailors from up and down the Atlantic Coast. Most active fleets are J/22, Lightning, Mariner, Flying Scott, PHRF A and PHRF B. Wednesday night races have been known to involve 75 boats, plus numerous viewers who pack a picnic and stake a spot on shore. Of special note during the 150th Anniversary is the multi-fleet Governors Cup Regatta on June 6-7, destined to include about 100 boats. It has been held every year since 1948 when then-Gov. Alfred Driscoll donated the perpetual trophy to encourage continued racing in every class.
The club’s history includes more than 100 national and international champions who called Riverton Yacht Club their home base, including well-recognized names like Merrill, Lippincott and MacCausland. (See the full list at http://www.rivertonyachtclub.org/champions.shtml.) The impressive list with small-town ties includes three World champions, an Olympic medalist, a TransAtlantic Race winner and two America’s Cup holders.

Riverton Yacht Club is the 1933 starting point of the innovative and inexpensive Duster sailboat, established as a class in 1946. The flat-bottom, 14-foot boat was engineered as a build-it-yourself vessel perfect for sheltered indoor waters, and it caught on like wildfire among sailors young, old and in-between. The club’s first female winner of a significant race did it in a Duster in 1971, before women regularly played a lead role in the sport.

Only private boats are moored at Riverton Yacht Club, and its facilities are maintained by a separate nonprofit foundation. The club has about 250 members, many of whom play a hands-on role in club activities and building maintenance. Events throughout the season are open to the public, a friendliness that is not the rule at other sailing clubs.

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UPCOMING DATES:

April 29 – weekly Wednesday night racing begins (through Sept. 2)

May 3 – weekly Sunday racing begins (through Oct. 11)

June 1 – weekly Monday night racing begins (through Aug. 24)

June 6-7 – Governor’s Cup regatta and party

June 22 and 23 – sailing lessons begin for youth (daytime) and adults (evening)

July 4 – RYC honored in Riverton’s famous Fourth of July Children’s Parade