

MONROE YACHT CLUB

1886 - 1945

The Monroe Yacht Club was organized May 27, 1886. Its purposes were the promotion of yachting, rowing, boating and the aquatic sports. During the 1st season of the club's existence the officers were Commodore W. C. Sterling, Vice Commodore S. J. Reynolds, Rear Commodore W. C. Walldorf, Secretary T. Wing Little, Treasurer J. C. Sterling, Measurer Capt. J. W. Louttit, Directors J. C. Whipple, C. R. Wing, L. O. Goddard, R. C. Fuller, and W. P. Sterling.

The club joined the Inter-Lake Yachting Association and in its fleet had the following boats: Emma G. Reynolds I, Reynolds II, Nell-Ad, L. B. Sink, Emma N., Daniel Brown, Beulah, and John Cooper. The Emma G. Reynolds I carried off the top honors in her class at the Inter-Lake yachting event at Put-In-Bay in 1888.

In 1901, there was renewed local interest in yachting. A meeting was held at the Park Hotel and the Monroe Yacht Club was re-organized. The by-laws stated "its object shall be the promotion of yachting and boating as a healthy and manly pastime and to encourage young men to follow it, and to promote sociability among its members." Stock shares were sold for \$10 and no member was allowed more than 2 shares. A resolution was adopted to grant privileges of the club on the payment of \$1 per year ladies not of the families of members. A small clubhouse was built in 1902 on the south side of the "Piers" - on the west shore of Lake Erie. On the adjacent pier was the Park Hotel, and the Monroe harbor light was located at the end of the north pier along the government canal.

In 1905, the Monroe Parks and Resort Co. erected a new building on a pier adjacent to the Monroe Yacht Club. This building, the "Casino", was serviced by the Detroit and Toledo Short Line and brought in many Sunday bathers and picnickers from Monroe, as well as Detroit and Toledo. By 1916 the increasing popularity of the automobile had undermined patronage of the pier trolleys. The Monroe Yacht Club, when faced with expensive repairs to the original clubhouse, purchased the Casino building for \$1,000. The club operated for several years at that location. During the winter of 1927, the building was moved - across the ice! - to the Monroe Piers Land Co. property (the current Sterling State Park).

After the move, the club property was landscaped and Monroe Yacht Club was to become not only the social hub of Monroe, but also the focal point of yachting activities in western Lake Erie. Famous for its muskrat suppers after the turn of the century, the club revived the custom and thousands of "rats" were parboiled, roasted and consumed at the dinners. The regattas hosted by Monroe Yacht Club were renowned throughout the area. Yawls, sloops, ketches, schooners and power yachts of all descriptions rode in a flag-bedecked splendor at their moorings along the club canals. The regattas always featured Venetian Night parades in which cruisers were dressed for the occasion with colored pennants from stem to stern as they passed before the club. The parades were followed by dances in the second floor ballroom and general merry-making in the building and aboard the visiting flotilla.