Nereid Boat Club: the first 100 years

N 160 EST. 1866



Image: City of Newark, N.J. / Detail of Centre Street Bridge, Bridge Street Bridge, D.L & W.R.R. Bridge, and the Passaic River / Parsons & Atwater (c.1874)



Nereid Boat Club: the first 100 Years

May 15, 2026

Presented to the membership to commemorate the 160 anniversary of the founding of Nereid Boat Club on May 15, 1866.

That's **58,439 days** of Nereid rowing (121 regular + 39 leap years).

Disclaimer: Research sources from 100+ years ago vary in quality and accuracy, so apologies in advance for any errors and/or omissions.

Kevin R. Maloney,

Board Chair + Club President

Epoch 1 – Newark (1866 – 1875)

Some context on 1865

In 1865: It would be another year before a permanent transatlantic telegraph cable connected the United States and Europe (1866). And, to the north, three British colonies wouldn't unite into a new nation – the Dominion of Canada – for another 18-months (July, 1867). The telephone wouldn't be invented for 10-years (March 1876), and the automobile wouldn't arrive until another 10-years after that. (January 1886).

Within a five-day period in April, 1856, the U.S. Civil War ended (April 9th) and President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated (April 14th). The mood of the American people was a mix of jubilation, relief, exhaustion, and sorrow.

Sport became a welcome and civilized distraction and was a source of great local, regional, and national pride.

"The years following the war saw a most remarkable revival of interest in athletic sports in general, but more especially in boating, and clubs formed all over the country within the next five years [**1866** to **1870**].

The professional racing drew the crowds and created the public excitement; a race between prominent scullers or crews was witnessed by from ten to fifty thousand people, and the betting was like that on a horse-race."

Source: Rowing and Track Athletes, S. Crowther, p. 151-153, (1905)

Passaic River Boat Clubs, 1865–1894

Club	Founded	Location	Status	Notes
Passaic B.C.	Jul 5, 1865	Newark	Dissolved unknown	First club established on the river. Boat-house on Passaic river, at Newark; furnished with closets, lockers, oar-racks, etc. Passaic BC obtained its NJ legislative Charter in 1868.
Nereid B.C.	May 15, 1866	Newark	Active	Obtained its NJ legislative charter Apr 14, 1868. Reorganized in Nutley 1875, then moved to Belleville in 1879 where it stayed until 1962. Reorganized in Rutherford in 1994.
Essex B.C.	Jun 1866	Newark	Dissolved unknown	Boat-house on Passaic river at foot of Bridge Street.
Woodside R.C.	c.1866		Dissolved c.1880	Its boathouse was purchased by Nereid in May 1882 and floated to Belleville, on the west bank, at the foot of Mill Street.
Triton B.C.	1868	Newark	Dissolved unknown	Formed around a 3X boat called *Flash*. Reorganized in 1873, and still operating as of 1909. *Affiliation: Newark Lime & Cement Co.*
Mystic B.C.	1869	Passaic River, Newark area	Unknown	A branch from Connecticut, making it unusual among the river clubs.

Source: 1. Book of American Pastimes, C. Peverelly, p. 192, (1868) // 2. History of Newark, Vol II, p.671 (1913)

Passaic River Boat Clubs, 1865–1894

Club	Founded	Location	Status	Notes
Eureka B.C.	1873	Passaic Ave, Kearny Twp.	c. early 1900s	An offshoot of the Triton Boat Club, founded the same year Triton was reorganized. *Affiliation: Clark Thread Mill*
Institute B.C.	Sep 3, 1878	Riverside & Chester Avenues	Dec 4, 1946	The club operated from a boathouse on Riverside Avenue, at the foot of Chester Avenue in Newark. For decades, its red and blue flag was a regular sight over the Passaic River.
Ariel B.C.	1879	Foot of Oriental St., Newark	Dissolved 1886	
Atalanta B.C.	1889	Passaic River, Newark area	Dissolved 1894	A second location for this Harlem River club. Established for members living in Newark just as the river conditions were beginning to deteriorate seriously.
Newark R.C.	1894	Newark	c. early 1900s	

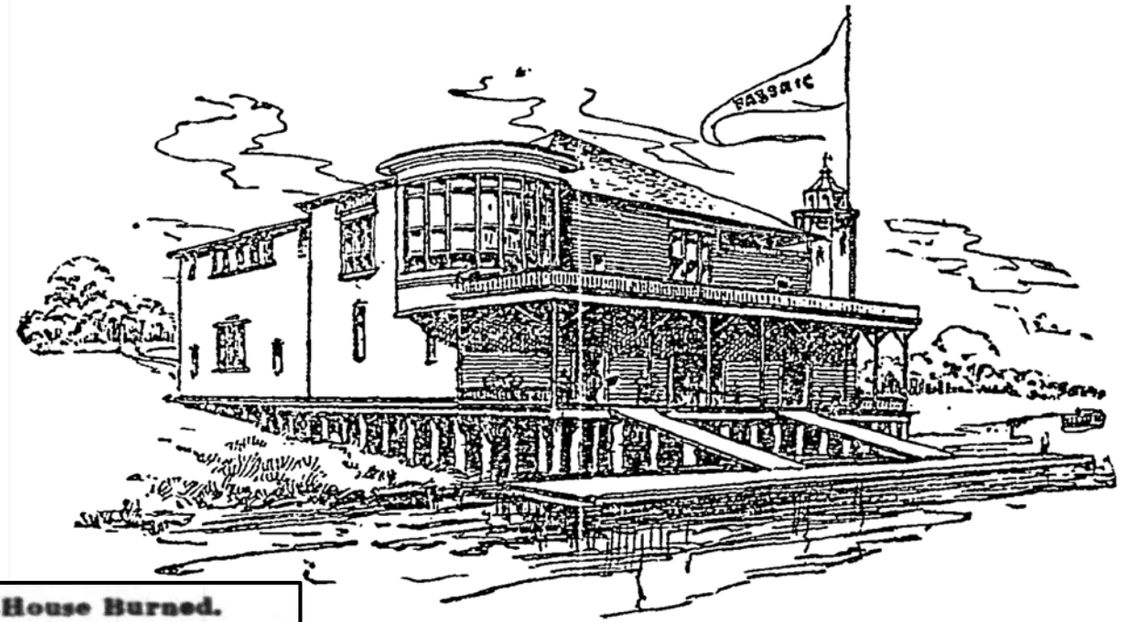
By 1890, the amount of money invested in boating interests in Newark is estimated at between $30,000 to $40,000. The membership of the clubs, including the Newark members of the Atalanta Club, is between four and five hundred.

Source: NYT (1890-04-20)

Boathouses – Passaic Boat Club

The Passaic Boat Club enjoys the reputation of being the largest and the oldest club on the Passaic River. It was founded in 1865, and is now rapidly approaching membership of 200. The enthusiasm over the new boathouse is doubtless increasing activity in this club. The club has bought a piece of property just above the Triton House, and is putting up what will be the most commodious boathouse on the river. The house covers a space 40 by 80 feet. The boatroom will be on the first floor. On the second floor will be a dressing room with 360 lockers, a bathroom, two committee rooms, and a ladies' room. The house will be ready tor occupancy within two weeks.[1]





Passaic Boat Clubhouse, Newark.

Passaic Boat Club House Burned.

Newark, N. J., March 1.—The Passaic Boat club's boat house was totally destroyed by fire yesterday afternoon. Loss estimated at $5,000. The club is the oldest rowing club in Newark.

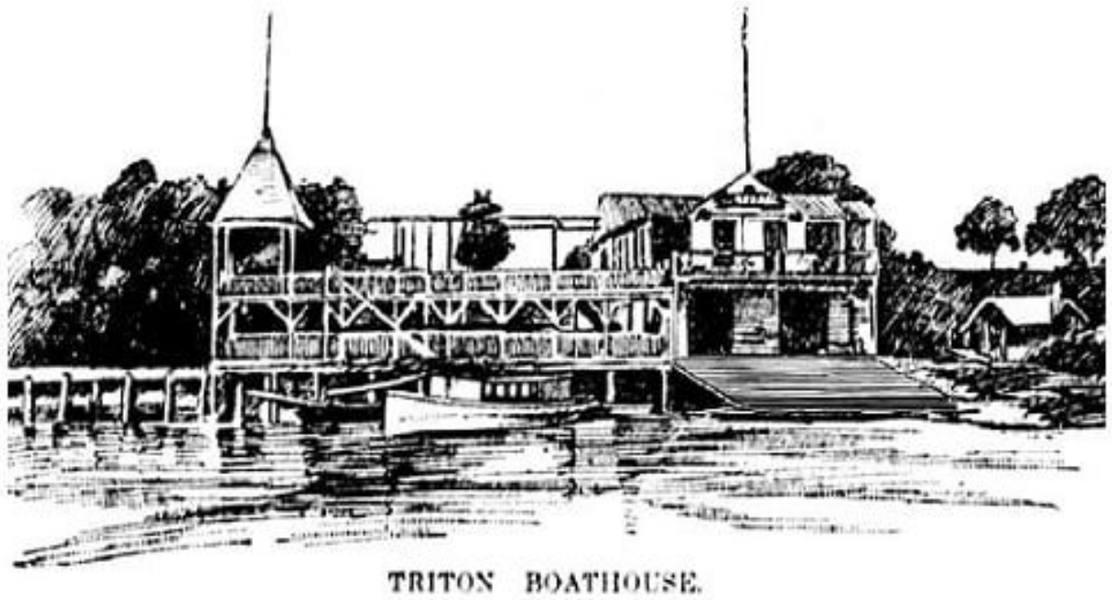
Sources: 1. NYT (1890-04-20), 2. Plainfield Daily Press (1897-03-01).

Images: NJ Historical Society, NYT (1893-07-23)

Boathouses – Triton Boat Club

The Triton Boat Club has the prettiest location on the river. In addition to its finely equipped house, with its grand stand seating 300 people, it has two tennis courts, where the oarsmen relieve the monotony of rowing. The property is worth about $10,000.[1]



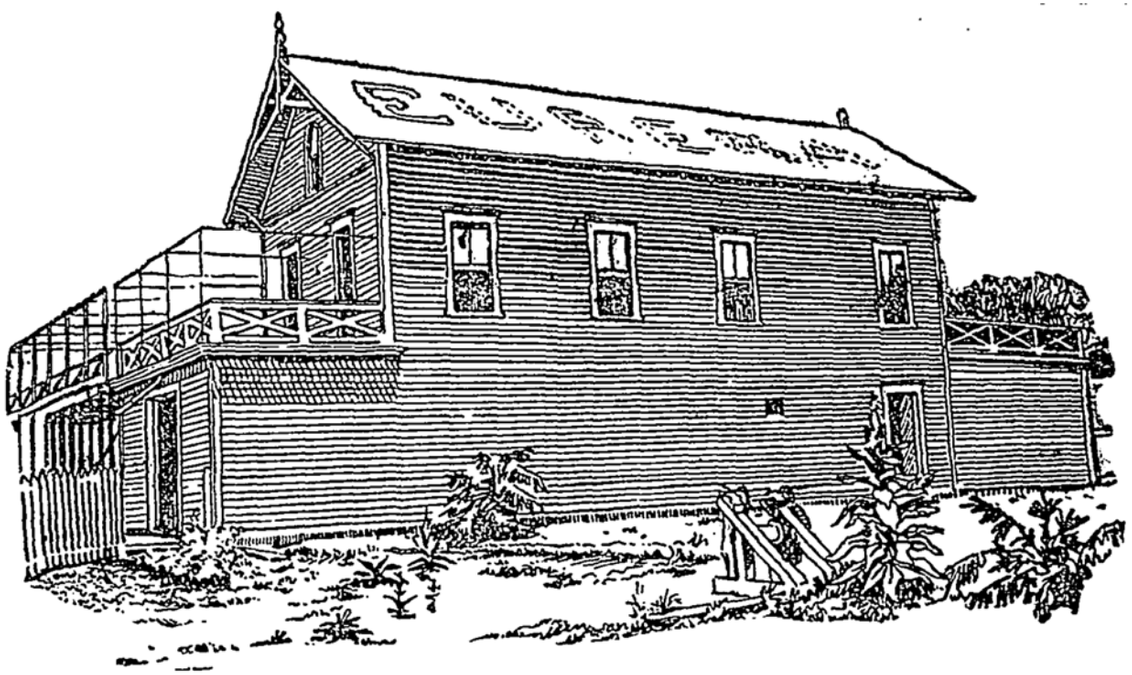


TRITON BOATHOUSE.

Source: 1. NYT (1890-04-20). Sources: NJ Historical Society

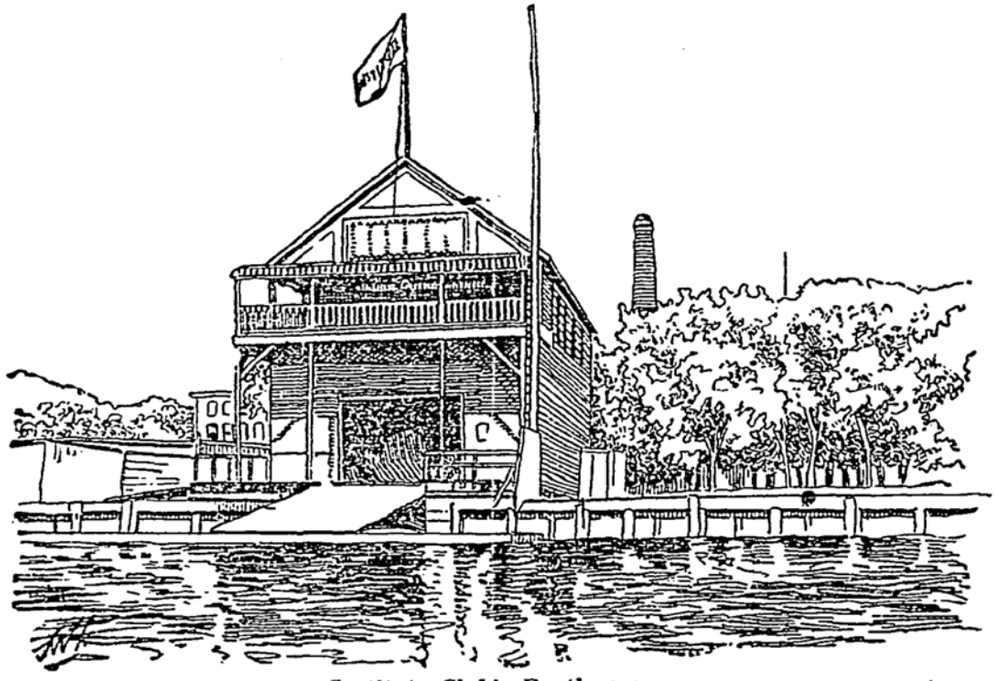
Boathouses

Eureka Boat Club



Eureka Boat Club House.

Institute Boat Club



Institute Club's Boathouse.

Sources: NYT: Eureka (1893-07-20); Institute (1893-07-23)

Boathouse Locations

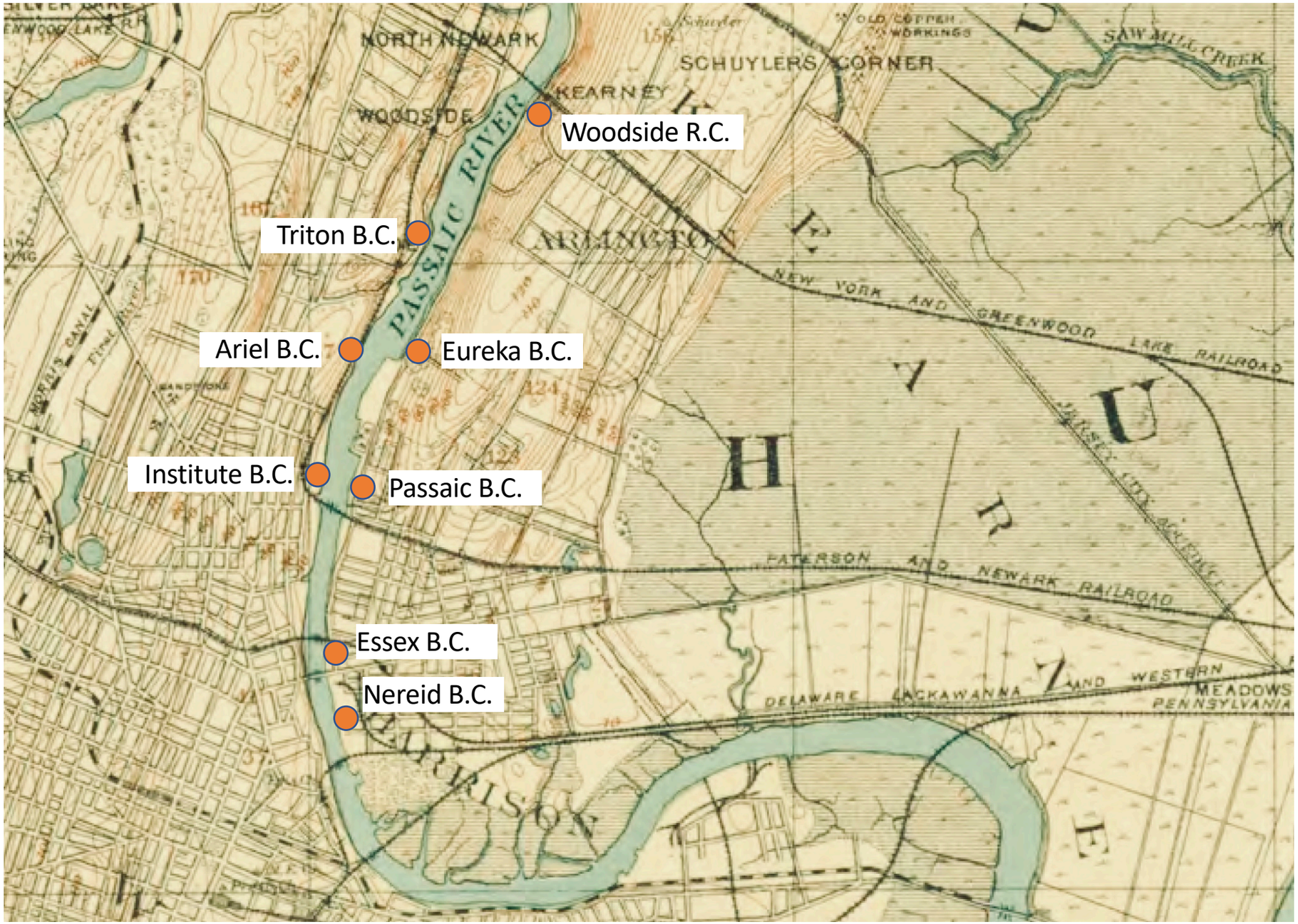


Image: Topographical Map of Bergen, Hudson, and Essex (1890)

A bit about Nereids

A Nereid (pronounced NEER-ee-id) is a sea nymph from ancient Greek mythology. The Nereids were the fifty daughters of the sea-god Nereus and the Oceanid Doris, making them granddaughters of the Titans Oceanus and Tethys. They were conceived as beautiful, benevolent spirits who inhabited the Mediterranean Sea, riding on the backs of sea creatures, accompanying ships, and coming to the aid of sailors in distress.

The most famous of the Nereids were: Thetis, mother of Achilles, Amphitrite, who became the wife of Poseidon and queen of the sea, and Galatea, the object of the Cyclops Polyphemus's ill-fated love.





Rowing clubs across the English-speaking world favored names drawn from classical sea mythology: Triton, Ariel, Nereus, and so forth. These names announced a club's aspirations toward speed, grace, and dominion over the water, while also signaling the classical education of their founders.

As early as 1843, Yale had a Whitehall 4-oared boat named *Nautilus.* For a brief time, there was a second *Nereid Boat Club* based in Brooklyn (c.1867) which was later absorbed by the Crescent Athletic Club in 1889. Even the Staten Island Boat Club used a Hippocampus as its logo c.1880.

Sources: History of Rowing in America, R. Johnson, p.90 (1871) // Image: 1. Mosaic with Nereid riding a hippocampus from Kos, 3rd century, Grand Masters Palace built in the 14th century. 2. Staten Island BC logo

A club named Nereid

The **Nereid Boat Club** was founded on **May, 15, 1866** in Newark, with a boathouse at the foot of Bridge Street.[1]

Six months later, on **November 26,** Nereid became a founding member of the **Hudson Amateur Rowing Association.** The object of the Association was to better promote the interests of Rowing, and to inaugurate and perpetuate a series of Annual Regattas.[2]

Very few details are available about the club during its nascent years.

- Neried is believed to be the 2nd rowing club established in Newark (after Passaic B.C. in 1865)
- Initially, there were twelve active members and two honorary. Known members include:
  F. J. Stevens (President); C. H. Pollard (Vice-President); W. B. Stevens (Treasurer);
  G. C. Wilde (Secretary); S. Carter, Monroe Harring, J. Osborn.
- The club uniform was a blue flannel shirt, blue cloth navy cap, pants and jacket.
- The club motto: "Try, try again."
- The club owned one boat, the *Nereid*, a 6-oared lapstreak outrigger; built by James.

Sources: 1. Book of American Pastimes, C. Peverelly, p. 192, (1868) // 2. History of Rowing in America, R. Johnson, p.159 (1871)

A boat named *Nereid*

In the spring of 1855, **George W. James**, a well known boatbuilder in Brooklyn, completed the build of a 6-oar lapstrake outrigger with coxswain. The new boat, which would be named the ***Nereid***, was made for **Yale (class of '58)**, and was raced against Harvard University in their second official race at Springfield, MA on July 21st of that same year.

1855.

NEREID, OF YALE, 23.38.

ADRIAN TERRY, S. S., Knoxville, Tenn.
CHARLES F. JOHNSON, '55, Owego, N. Y.
HENRY W. PAINTER, Med. Dept., West Haven.
THEODORE W. E. BELDEN, '57, W. Springfield, Mass.
STORRS O. SEYMOUR, '57, Litchfield.
†JOSEPH W. WILSON, Law Dept., Norwalk.
NATHANIEL W. BUMSTEAD (cox.), '55, Boston.

IRIS, OF HARVARD, 22.

JOSEPH N. WILLARD, '57, Boston.
WILLIAM G. GOLDSMITH, '57, Andover.
CHANNING CLAPP, '55, Cambridge.
CHARLES F. WALCOTT, '57, Salem.
BENJAMIN W. CROWNINSHIELD, '58, Boston.
WILLIAM H. ELLIOTT, '57, Savannah, Ga.
JOHN HOMANS, '58, Boston.
†SAMUEL B. PARKMAN, '57, Savannah, Ga.
JAMES M. BROWN (cox.), '53, Boston.

NAUTILUS, OF YALE, 24.38.

JEPHTHA GARRARD, '58, Cincinnati, O.
EDWARD CURTIS, S. S., New York City.
GEORGE LAMPSON, '55, Quebec, Canada.
GRANVILLE T. PIERCE, '55, South Britain.
GEORGE M. DORRANCE, '56, Bristol, Penn.
†SAMUEL SCOVILLE, '57, West Cornwall.
GEORGE TUCKER (cox.), '57, Hamilton, Bermuda.

Y. Y., OF HARVARD, 22.3.

ALEXANDER AGASSIZ, '55, Cambridge.
STEPHEN G. PERKINS, '56, Boston.
LANGDON ERVING, '55, Baltimore, Md.
†JOHN ERVING, '53, Law Dept., Charleston, S. C.

On race day, Yale had in the *Nereid* and Nautilus, six-oars, and Harvard the Iris, eight-oars, and the Y. Y., a four without a coxswain. The smaller boats had a time allowance of 11 seconds per oar; the distance was three miles – 1 ½ down-stream and back, the first time a turn was introduced in college races.

Attending as one of the Yale judges was **George W. James** of Brooklyn, builder of Yale's favorite boat, *Nereid*. The *Nereid* took the lead at the start and kept it for the first four hundred yards, but at the stake-boat both the Harvard crews were ahead.

Sources: 1. The Harvard-Yale Boat Race 1852-1924, Mendenhall T (1993); 2. Rowing & Track Athletics, Crowther S (1905) 3. Yale College II (1897), Image: Yale University Boat Club

A boat named *Nereid*

Records show that Yale classmen raced the ***Nereid*** with great success between 1855 and 1860, but there is no evidence that it saw any use after that period.

At the time, Yale was a loose federation of individual rowing clubs with each new class forming a club purchasing boat(s) under shared ownership. Whenever a club was broken up, either by the graduation of its members, or for any other cause, its boat was sold, sometimes to outsiders, but more frequently to a club in a lower class. The Nereid was procured by the class of '58, then later sold to the class of '61.

At some point, before September of 1866, the newly founded **Nereid Boat Club** of Newark became the owner of a 6-oar lapstrake outrigger with coxswain, '**built by James of New York**', which was called the *Nereid.*

Was it the same boat that had been owned by Yale?

Sources: 1. Yale College II (1897)

I. **JULY 26, 1853.**—Thulia ('54), eight oars, 15.32 ; Halcyon ('54), six oars, 16. ; Ariel (S. S.), four oars, 16.45 ; Nepenthe ('55), four oars, 18.15. Course, about two and a half miles ; weather bad. Prizes : silver cup and salver valued at $20 ; blue and white silk jack and ensign valued at $10.

II. **JULY 22, 1854.**—Nautilus ('57), six oars ; Atalanta ('55), six oars ; Transit (S. S.), six oars ; Rowena ('57), four oars. No correct record made of times. Prizes : black-walnut back-board ; pair of black-walnut sculls.

III. **JULY 4, 1855.**—Nereid ('58), 22.58 ; Transit (S. S.), 25.27 ; Halcyon, under the name Atalanta ('58), 26.17 ; Thulia ('56), 27.2 ; Rowena ('58), 30.42. On the Connecticut River at Springfield ; wind violent and water rough. Prizes : silver goblet and salver valued at $50 ; telescope valued at $25 ; set of silk colors valued at $15.

IV. **OCTOBER 25, 1856.**—Transit (S. S.), 21.12 ; Nereid ('58), 22.45 ; Nautilus ('57), 22.55 ; Halcyon, under the name Wa-Wa ('58), 26.30. Transit and Nautilus fouled. Nereid rowed the last half-mile with five oars, and Wa-Wa broke an oar. Prize : boat-lantern valued at $20.

V. **JULY 27, 1857.**—Nereid ('58), 22.51 ; Olympia (S. S.), 22.52, lengthened by handicap to 23.14, by reason of being an eight-oared craft ; Wenona ('60), 23.16. Prizes : set of silk boat-flags ; pair of brass-mounted boat-hooks.

VI. **JULY 26, 1858.**—Varuna ('60), 22.33 ; Nereid ('61), 25.26 ; Omicron (S. S.), 25.56, decreased by handicap to 25.36, by reason of being a *five*-oared craft ; Olympia (S. S.), distanced. Prizes : set of oars, with championship flag "Pioneer No. 1 ;" pair of silver-mounted boat-hooks.

SPECIAL RACE, June 8, 1859.—Varuna ('60), 22.6 ; Olympia (S. S.), 22.30, increased by handicap to 22.54 ; Cymothoe ('61), distanced. Prize : the championship.

SPECIAL RACE, July 4, 1859.—Thulia ('62), 23. ; Eolus (Law School), 23.37, decreased by handicap to 23.15 ; Wenona ('60) ; Cymothoe ('61). Prize : silver goblet.

SPECIAL RACES, July 5, 1859.—*First Race :* Varuna ('60), 22.26 ; Olympia (S. S.), 23.30 ; Atalanta ('61), withdrew with broken oar. Prize : the championship.

Second Race : Wenona ('60), 25.30 ; Naiad ('62), manned by the Thulia crew of the day before, 26.50 ; Eolus (Law Students), Cymothoe ('61), Lorelei ('61), Atalanta ('61), Nautilus ('62), Thulia ('62). Prizes : two sums of money.

VII. **OCTOBER 19, 1859.**—*First Race :* Atalanta ('61), 21.45 ; Olympia (S. S.), 22. ; Cymothoe ('61), 24.15 ; Nereid ('61), 24.15. The two latter were ruled out for jockeying. Prizes : the championship ; $15 in money.

Second Race : Thulia ('62), 23.45 ; Nautilus ('62). Prize : $10 in money.

SPECIAL RACE, May 26, 1860.—Thulia ('62), 20.15 ; Nereid ('61), 20.45 ; Volante (S. S.), 22.45.

SPECIAL RACE, May 27, 1860.—Thulia ('62), 19.16 ; Nereid ('61), 19.35 ; Atalanta ('61), 20. Prize : the championship.

VIII. **OCTOBER 20, 1860.**—*Shell Race :* Thulia ('62), 19. ; Atalanta ('61), 19.37 ; Glyuna ('63), fouled and withdrew. Prize : the championship and $15.

A boat named *Nereid, some Theories…*



Theory #1 – It's the same boat: It's possible that one of the founders of Nereid BC had a direct or indirect **connection to Yale** and was able to purchase the 1855 *Nereid* at some point in 1866. They then used that boat as the foundation to start a new rowing club in Newark using the same name. A direct Yale connection might also explain why the club's initial uniform color was Navy Blue, which was the color Yale had used for rowing since 1853.

Key questions: What was / who had the connection to Yale? Did Yale keep a record of the boat being sold?

Theory #2 –It's the same boat: Perhaps, one of the founders of Nereid BC had a **connection to George W. James**. Yale classmen often sold their boats to other classes or outside clubs and they could have returned the 1855 *Nereid* to James in Brooklyn for his help selling it. That certainly would have allowed Nereid BC to purchased her in 1866. As early as 1856, building techniques had advanced and the boats were much lighter and faster carvel-planked shells with iron outriggers. That means that the 1855 *Nereid* was likely among the last of her design that was ever built.

Key questions: Would Yale have asked, and would James have agreed, to help facilitate a sale? Why would Nereid BC knowingly buy an older technology boat when much better boats had been available for a decade?

Theory #3 – It's not the same boat: It could have been a different 6-oared lapstrake outrigger with coxswain, built by James. Surely, there would have been others in the area and maybe the Nereid founders discovered one that was for sale.

Key questions: How many boats of that configuration did James build before 1866 and where did each of them end up?

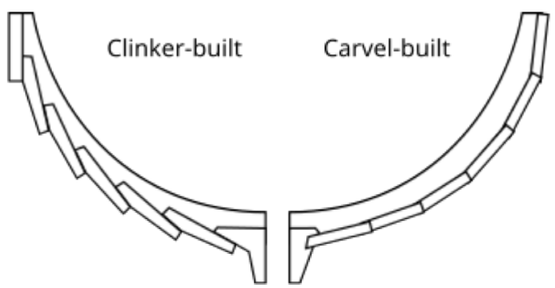
Sources: 1. The Harvard-Yale Boat Race 1852-1924, Mendenhall T (1993), 2. Book of American Pastimes, C. Peverelly (1868), 3. The American Rowing Almanac, Engelhardt F.J. (1874)

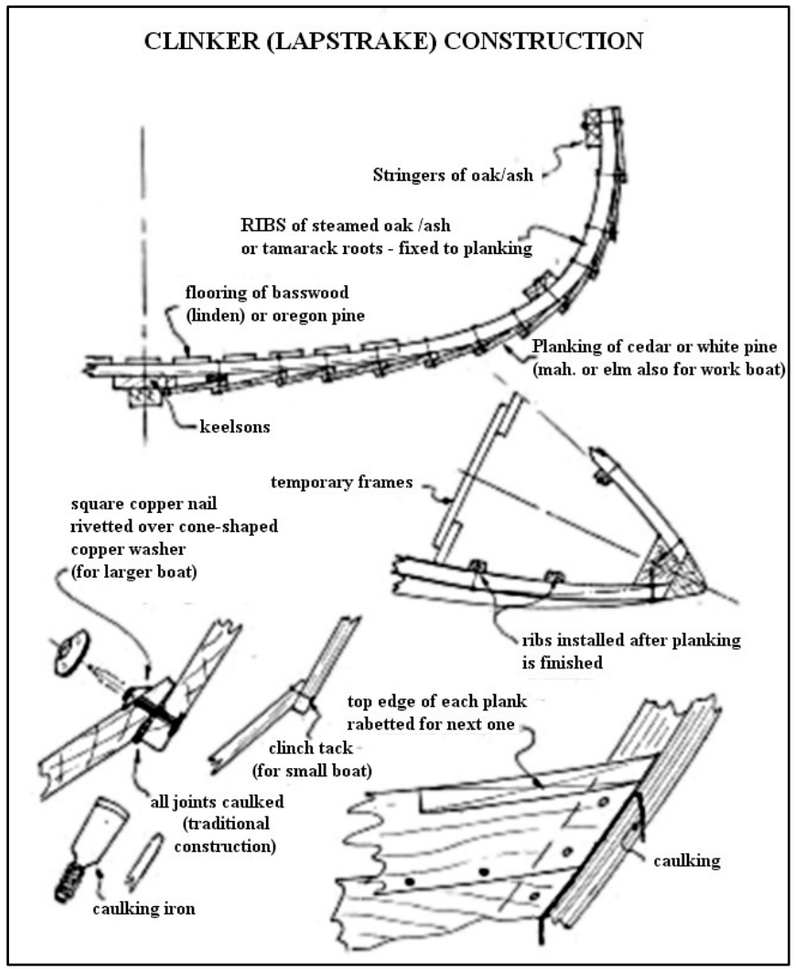
A bit about Lapstrake Boats

The first racing shells were four and six oared Whitehall fishing and yawl-boat skiffs or other pulling boat designs. Somewhat more slender boats evolved with lapstrake construction, although these boats continued the use of a fixed seat and oars that were set between two pins on the gunwales.

Lapstrake, or clinker boats — hulls made from overlapping wooden planks called strakes. Clinker-built (also called lapstrake-built) is a method of boat construction in which the edges of longitudinal hull planks overlap each other, with overlapping planks joined by nails driven through the lap.

These overlapping planks are also fastened to the frames, and the method gives the boat its characteristic shape. The result is a lightweight, very strong, stable, and maneuverable vessel, with sufficient strength to allow thinner planking than would be used on a **carvel-planked** (smooth-sided) boat.





Sources: Rowing & Ice Yachting: The Hudson River & year- Round Sport, p. 83 (2022); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinker_(boat_building)

Nereid's First Race in 1866

The first documented inter-club match race of Newark's fledgling rowing community took place on **September 3, 1866** for the Amateur Rowing Championship of the city

The contestants:

- 3 ½ month old **Nereid Boat Club** → rowing the *Nereid,* a 6-oar lapstrake outrigger with coxswain, painted green with a gold stripe. The crew consisted of: F. J. Stevens (stroke); W. B. Stevens, G. C. Wilde, S. Carter, Monroe Harring, J. Osborn (bow), and coxswain, C. H. Pollard.
- 14 month old **Passaic Boat Club** → rowing the *Brunette,* a 4-oar lapstrake outrigger (purchased from Alcyone BC of Brooklyn), painted red with a gold stripe. With its 2-oar deficit, Passaic BC was given a 16-second handicap

The course:

The course was a 2-mile circuit, out and back around a stake boat moored 1-mile away.

The Outcome:

Apparently, the outcome became fairly obvious early on in the race as the Passaic Club's boat finished ahead of Nereid by several lengths. In the end, Passaic finished in a time of 17:50, easily winning the Championship against Nereid's time of 18:20. In all, Nereid lost by a total of 46 seconds, including the 16-second handicap.

Source: 1. Book of American Pastimes, C. Peverelly, p. 180, 190-192, (1868)

Hudson Amateur Rowing Association

"The first appearance of the Association in public, occurred on the **29th of May, 1867**, which was designated as the opening day of the season. On this occasion, [the clubs present lined up for inspection by Commodore B.F. Brady], thence a pull of about three miles up the river, ending with a dinner, at which about one hundred and sixty oarsmen were present."[1]

"Although the clubs of New York in yeas past have been vastly inferior in most everything that constitutes rowing associations, the officers of the Hudson river amateur organization are striving arduously to repair this…"[2]

Boat Club	City	Boat Name, Class	Dimensions	Coxswain
Atalanta	NY	Excelsior, 8-oars	44' L x 4' W	J. Ogden
Atalanta	NY	6-oars	45' L x 3'4" W	John King
Atlantic	Hoboken	10-oars	50' L	C.B. Tuthill
Waverley	NY	Meg Merriles, 8-oars	41' L	J. Fortmeyer
Waverley	NY	Ivanhoe, 4-oars		Geo. Lawrence
Gulick	NY	Shanghai, 6-oars		Geo.L. Devoe
		Flora, 6-oars	45" L	Henry G. Hashagen
Columbia	NY	6-oars	46' L	Jas. R. Burnett
Hudson	Jersey City	Hudson, 6-oars	46' L x 3'6" W	H. Walils
Oneida	Jersey City	Shantamuc, 6-oars		H.J. Hardenburgh
Nereid	Newark	Nereid, 6-oars		W.B. Stevens
		Swiftfoot, 6-oars		Robert Fawcett
		Euroclydon, 6-oars		J. Lugar

Sources: 1. History of Rowing in America, 1871 (p.159-160) // 2. New York Herald (1867-05-30) pg.7

Nereid Incorporated in 1868

On **April 14, 1868** The House Assembly #523 of the State of New Jersey enacted special legislation and passed a bill to incorporate The Nereid Boat Club of Newark, in Essex county. A few days later (April 16th),The Senate passed the bill and the incorporation was complete.

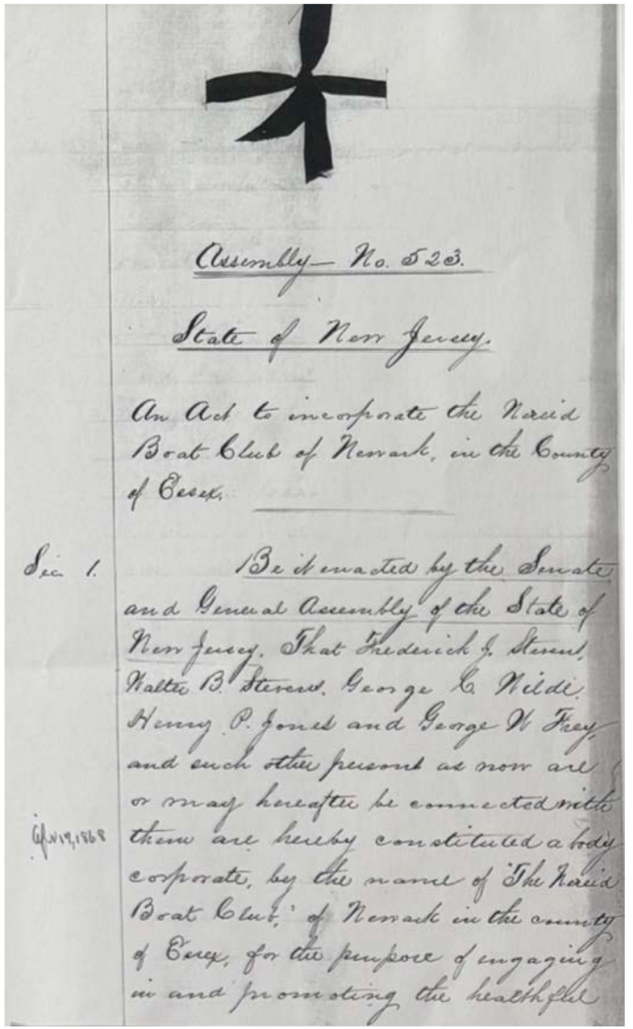
Nereid was recorded as 'chapter #534' which means there were at lease 533 other bills to incorporate during that same legislative session. At the time, this was the standard method for creating a legal entity before general incorporation laws became the norm in 1875.

Incorporation made practical sense for a rowing club because it allowed them to:

- **Own property** – a boathouse, dock, or land
- **Enter contracts** – purchasing boats and/or equipment
- **Have legal continuity** – the club could survive beyond its founding members
- **Limit personal liability** of the members

The stated purpose of the club:

"..engaging in and promoting the healthful and manly exercise of rowing and in other lawful ways improving and perfecting physical education and social intercourse among its members."



Assembly— No. 523.

State of New Jersey.

An Act to incorporate the Nereid Boat Club of Newark, in the County of Essex.

Sec. 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey, That Frederick J. Stevens, Walter B. Stevens, George C. Nicoll, Henry P. Jones and George W. Frey, and such other persons as now are or may hereafter be connected with them are hereby constituted a body corporate, by the name of 'The Nereid Boat Club,' of Newark in the county of Essex, for the purpose of engaging in and promoting the healthful

Source: 1. Assembly # 513, Chapter # 534, Act to incorporate The Nereid Boat Club of Newark, in the county of Essex, State of NJ (1868)

Nereid Incorporated in 1868

Club members listed on the Charter were:

- **Frederick J. Stevens** (President), **Walter B. Stevens, George C. Wilde, Henry P. Jones,** and **George W. Frey**.[1]
- The Charter document is the first known publication giving the full names of Nereid members
- There were likely other club members who were not required to be named in the charter

In 1866, Newark was a bustling industrial and commercial city of roughly 100,000 people.[2] These men were probably merchants, tradesmen, or professionals in a social class that would have had leisure time for rowing as a sport. They were almost certainly young men in their prime, meaning they were likely born in the late 1830s to the late 1840s, and quite possibly immigrants from Europe or first-generation Americans.

Frederick (President) **and Walter Stevens** (Treasurer) were probably brothers or cousins and, considering their roles in the club, are quite likely to have been key drivers behind launching a new rowing club. The founding and chartering of Nereid BC predates the establishment of any formal regional rowing organization on the Passaic, suggesting that these Nereid members were early pioneers of the sport in the Newark area.

Source: 1. Assembly # 513, Chapter # 534, Act to incorporate The Nereid Boat Club of Newark, in the county of Essex, State of NJ (1868) // 2. Industrial Interests of Newark, W.F. Ford (1874) // 3. Book of American Pastimes, C. Peverelly, p. 192, (1868)

Nereid Profile: **George Cobb Wilde (1837-1894)**

George C. Wilde was from a prominent Boston Family and could very well be Nereid's primary **Yale connection**. George graduated Yale in 1860 and was a student during a formative period for the Yale Navy, including the 1855 *Nereid* placing first at several Yale Commencement Regattas (1855, 1857, and 1860). As a founding and chartering member of Nereid BC, he could have marshalled the resources to acquire Yale's 1855 *Nereid* and help get the fledgling club off the ground. He also served as the club's first Secretary and its second President.



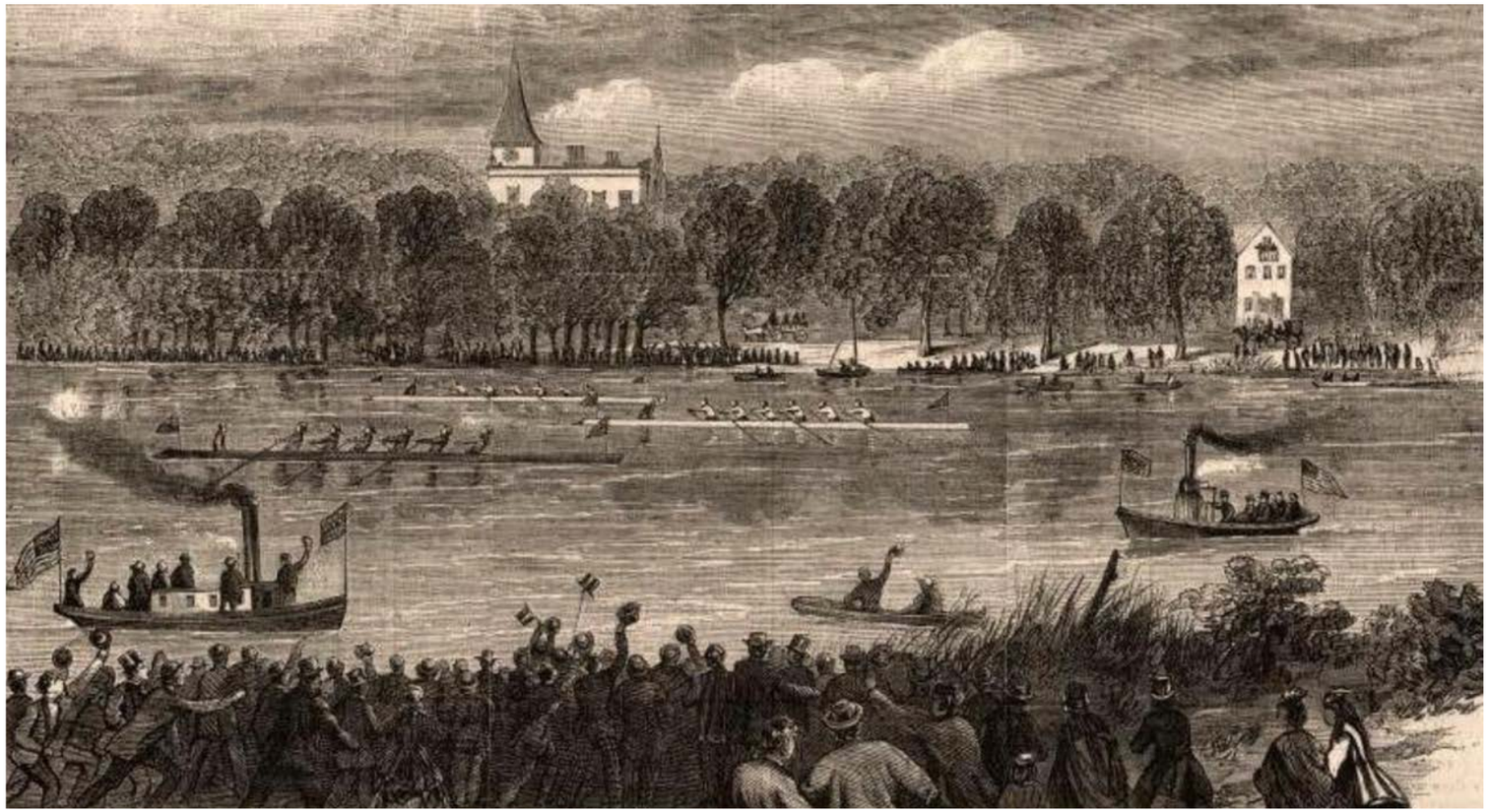
George was admitted to the bar in the early 1860s and moved to Newark/New York area to practice law. Getting a boat club incorporated by an act of the New Jersey state legislature was not a casual affair, it required legal expertise, civic connections, and social standing. A Yale-trained lawyer newly established in the region was exactly the kind of person who could have navigated such a charter through the legislature.

He would have been roughly 29 years old when he joined Nereid in 1866 and may not have been much of a oarsman. Recall that Nereid lost its first race that year against a smaller boat with George rowing in 4th seat.

Sources: 1. Book of American Pastimes, C. Peverelly (1868) // 2. History of Rowing in America, R. Johnson (1871) // Image: Yale University Boat Club, Yale College II (1897)

Nereid raced again in 1868

The **New Jersey State Rowing Association** held its first annual regatta on the Passaic River on **Oct 10, 1868.**



The regatta consisted of four events, single sculls, double sculls, four-oar lapstrakes, and 6-oared gigs. **Nereid** entered in the four-oar category, on a three-mile course, one and a half miles out to a stake-boat and back.

'*Quickstep*' of Passaic BC, won the race in 26:08.5. '***Wink*' of Nereid BC placed second in 27:56**.

'*Brunette*' of Hudson Club in Jersey City didn't finish the race due to an early collision with the *Wink* and its failure to go around the stake boat.

Image: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, NJSRA 6-oared gig race, p105 (1868-10-30)

A bit about Sliding Seats

The invention of sliding seats for rowing shells is attributed to Mr. J.C. Babcock of the Nassau Boat Club in Harlem, NY c.1857, but not perfected until c.1869.[1]

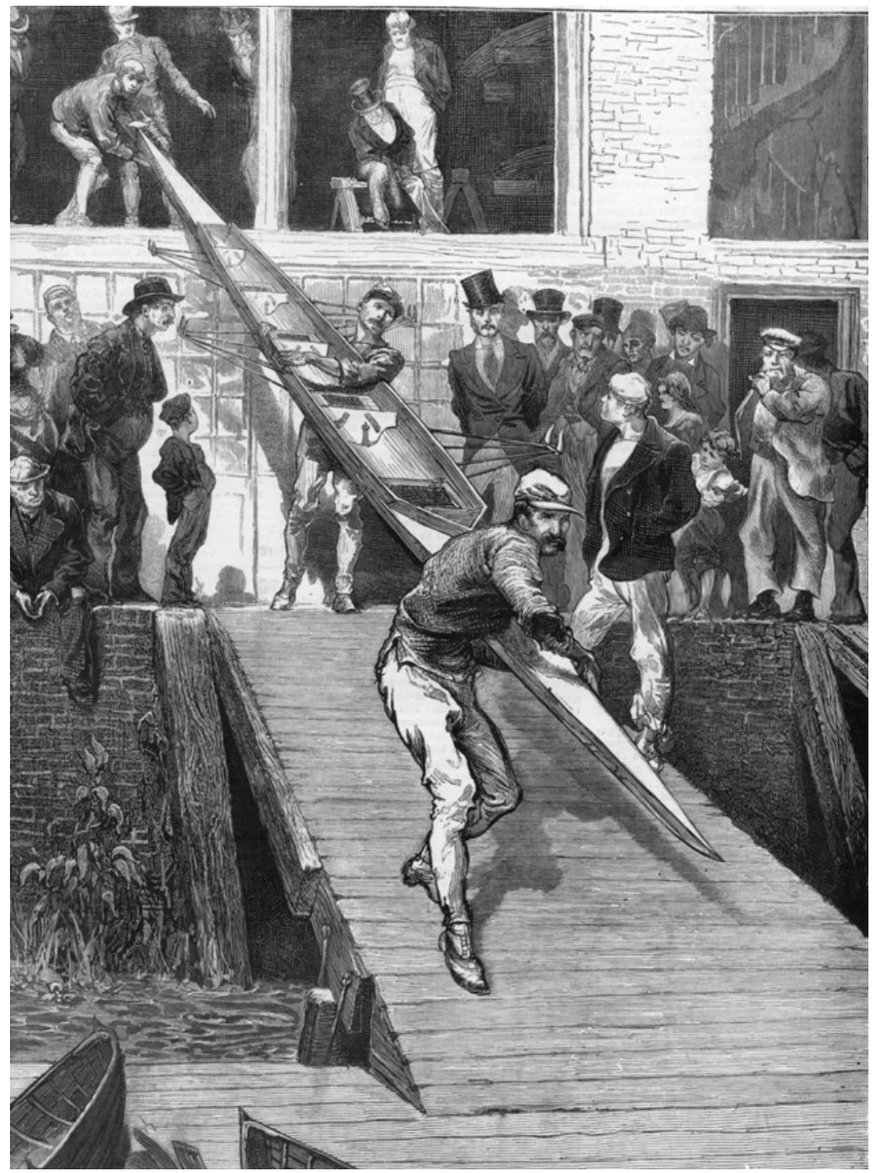
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After decisive wins over both Harvard and Yale in 1871, a crew from the Atlanta Club in New York considered themselves the champion amateur crew of the United States and issued a challenge to the London Boat Club in early 1872.

On **June 10, 1872**, the Atlanta Club and London Boat Club rowed a 4-oared match race on the Thames River from Putney to Mortlake. The illustration appears to show that the Atlanta shell had fixed seats while it was well published that the LBC boat was outfitted with sliding seats. Slides notwithstanding, LBC were widely viewed to be stronger and better oarsmen than the Americans and they won the race with a decisive victory of about 45 seconds.

While not the first, this race was likely the most public use of sliding seats to date and so news of this event became a catalyst for rapid boat upgrades on both sides of the Atlantic.

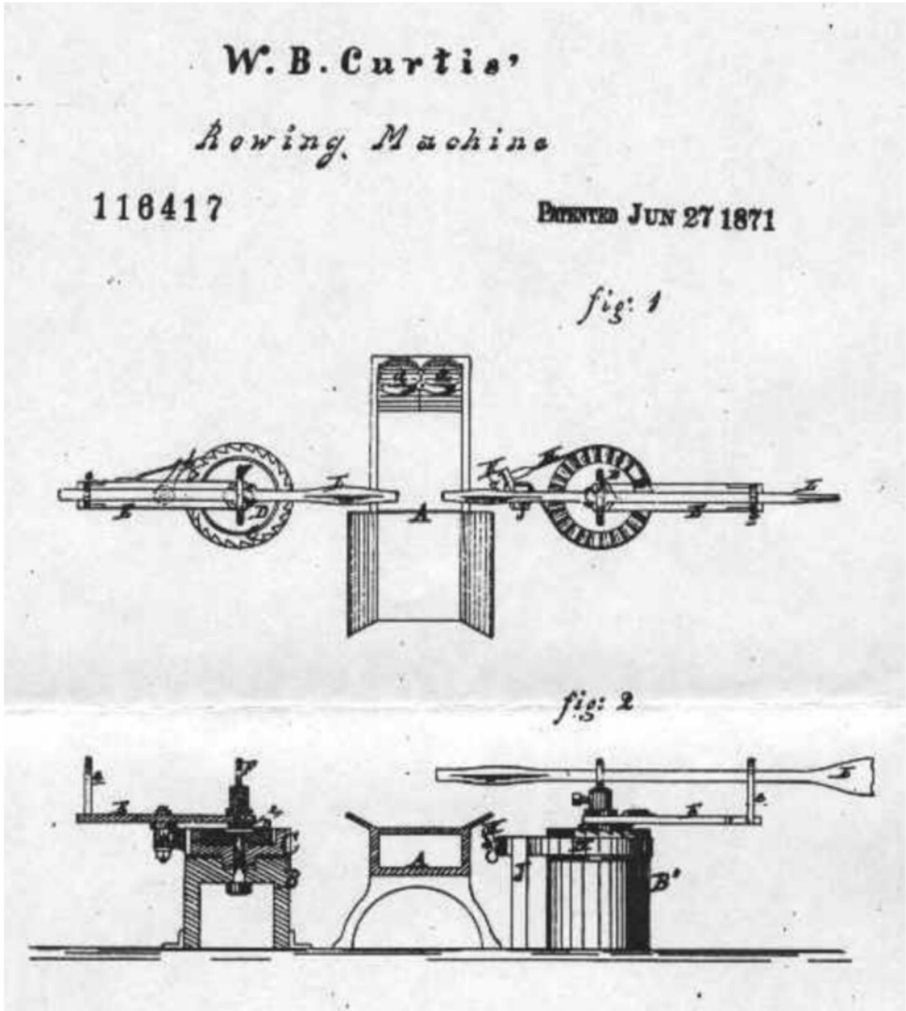




The Atlanta Club launching from Biffen Boatbuilders Boathouse, London (1872)

Sources: 1. Boating, W.B. Woodgate, p.79 (1888) // Image: The Graphic Illustrated Newspaper, London (1872-06-01)

A bit about Indoor Rowing



In June **1872**, a patent was issued to **Mr. W.B. Curtis** of the United States for the first rowing machine. The patent included a flywheel and a ratchet system. In the decades to follow, many variations appeared, all attempting to improve upon the overall design and rowing feel.



Images: W.B. Curtis Rowing Machine (1871) // Columbia University rowers training (c.1900)

Newark City Directory

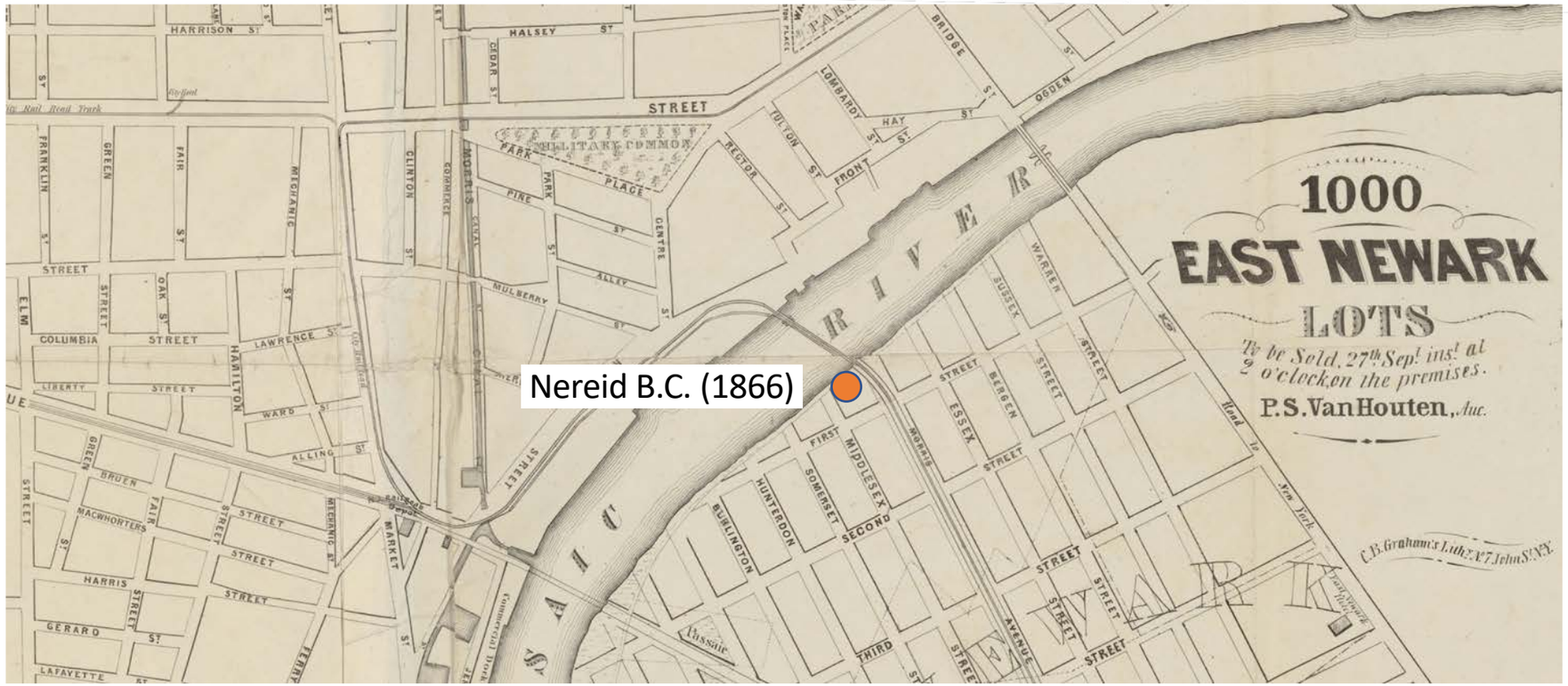
After incorporating in 1868, Nereid BC began listing in the Newark City Directory.

1869-70

NEREID BOAT CLUB.

Organized May 16, 1866.

President.—George C. Wilde. *V. President.*—J. Nelson Day.
Secretary.—R. Newton Crane. *Treasurer.*—George W. Frey.
Boat House on Passaic River, adjoining Middlesex St., Harrison, N. J. Meets on second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, at 8 o'clock, P. M.



Sources: Holbrook's Newark City Directory (Holbrook, S.A.), 1869-70, 1870-71, 1871-72; Image: Map of Newark and East Newark (1836)

Newark City Directory

Nereid's directory listings only lasted three years, stopping abruptly after 1871-72, and not appearing again.

Why would that happen?

Theory #1 – Clerical Error: Nereid BC might have been late or simply forgot to submit its listing in the City Directory.

Theory #2 – They Left Newark: Nereid BC might have moved its operation out of Newark and so decided to stop listing in the City Directory.

Theory #3 – Something Far Worse: In 1873, a major economic downturn that triggered a prolonged depression in the United States and parts of Europe. It marked the end of a post–Civil War boom and exposed deep weaknesses in the financial system.

1869-70

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1870-71

NEREID BOAT CLUB.
Organized May 15, 1866.
President.—Geo. C. Wilde. *Vice-Pres.*—Thos. T. W. Muchmore.
Secretary.—Clinton B. Price. *Treasurer.*—J. Nelson Day.
Boat-house on Passaic River, adjoining Middlesex street, (near Centre street bridge,) Harrison, (E. Newark,) N. J.
Meets on second and fourth Mondays of each month, at eight o'clock P. M.

1871-72

NEREID BOAT CLUB.
Organized May 15, 1866.
President.—Geo. C. Wilde. *V. Pres't.*—Walter B. Stevens.
Secretary.—Clinton B. Price. *Treasurer.*—Henry P. Jones.
Boat-house on Passaic River, adjoining Middlesex street, (near Centre street bridge,) Harrison, (E. Newark,) N. J.
Meets on second and fourth Mondays of each month, at eight o'clock P. M.

Sources: Holbrook's Newark City Directory (Holbrook, S.A.), 1869-70, 1870-71, 1871-72

The Panic of 1873

Often called the **Long Depression** (roughly 1873–1879)

Several forces came together:

- **Railroad overexpansion**: After the Civil War, railroads were the hottest investment. Companies borrowed heavily to build more track than the market could support, creating a speculative bubble.
- **Banking fragility**: Key financial institutions were tied to investments in the railroad. When those investments faltered, banks became vulnerable.
- **Collapse of a major firm**: Jay Cooke & Company was deeply involved in railroad financing, its failure in September 1873 sparked a general panic.
- **Tightening money supply**: The move toward the gold standard limited available credit, making it harder for businesses to stay afloat.

What happened during the panic?

- **Banks failed** and the stock market shut down for about 10 days.
- **Businesses collapsed**, especially in railroads and manufacturing.
- **Unemployment surged**; millions were out of work at the worst points.
- **Wages dropped**, and labor unrest increased.

→

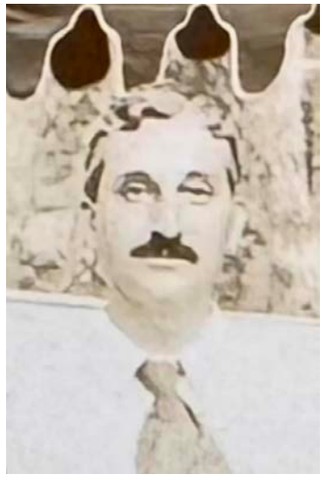
Impacts to Rowing Clubs

1. **Membership and dues dropped**: Clubs saw shrinking rosters with working- and middle-class members unable to afford dues
2. **Reduced competition and events**: Regattas were expensive to organize. Economic strain led to fewer or scaled-down events.
3. **Maintenance and equipment suffered**: All the shells, boathouses, and docks required constant upkeep.
4. **Shift in purpose**—from elite sport to social refuge. For the clubs that remained, they sometimes became elevated socially.
5. **Club closures or mergers**: Smaller or newer rowing clubs didn't survive the downturn.

Nereid reorganized in 1875

The 1874 American Rowing Almanac lists the Nereid Boat Club as being active and having its boathouse near the R.R. Bridge on the Passaic River.[1] Yet, on **July 10, 1875** the club was **re-organized in Nutley** by a different group of men. It's very possible that **The Panic of 1873** could have caused the club significant financial strain that eventually led to shutting it down and/or handing over the reins to another group.

The re-organized club retained the Nereid BC name and the 1868 charter, but were not otherwise aligned with the original founders. **Joseph (Joe) Roger Kingsland** became the new president, and there were eight other members.



Joseph Roger Kingsland
(August, 1897)

As it turns out, the Kingsland family is one of the oldest and most storied families in the entire Passaic River corridor and served as an integral part of the development of the North Belleville, Franklin, and Nutley areas from 1787 to 1905. Besides their lumber and paper interests, they also ran a grist mill and sold ice and coal. The family also had a dock at the confluence of Third River.

It is not a stretch to suggest that Joe Kingsland didn't merely join the reorganized club, he may well have been the reason it remained viable and found a new home in Nutley / Belleville, using family land or connections to secure the boathouse site there. As such, the reorganization may have been more of a pivot from potential closure to a social elevation for the club

Source: 1. American Rowing Almanac, p.127 (1874) // 2. History of Newark – Vol II, Urquhart, F.J. (1913)

A club named Nereid – Epoch 1

Year	President	V. President	Treasurer	Secretary	Lieutenant	Captain
1866	**Frederick J. Stevens**	C. H. Pollard	Walter B. Stevens	George C. Wilde	--	--
1869	George C. Wilde	J. Nelson Day	George W. Frey	R. Newton Crane	--	--
1870	George C. Wilde	Thomas T.W. Muchmore	J. Nelson Day	Clinton B. Price	--	--
1871	George C. Wilde	Walter B. Stevens	Henry P. jones	Clinton B. Price	--	--
1875	**Joseph R. Kingsland**					

Sources: 1. Book of American Pastimes, C. Peverelly, p. 192, (1868) // 2. Holbrook's Newark City Directory (Holbrook, S.A.), 1869-70, 1870-71, 1871-72

Epoch 2 – Nutley & Belleville (1875 - 1962)

Proliferation of Associations

Rowing had been hugely popular as a *professional*, betting-fueled spectator sport long before the Civil War, with prize matches and heavy wagering on races as early as 1824[1].

After the war, this created a backlash among the emerging urban middle and upper-middle classes. In the **early 1870s**, professionalism, coupled with gambling, raised concerns about the threat to *amateur* ideals.

1866 – New York Rowing Association (Harlem, 1873)
1866 – Hudson Amateur Rowing Association
1868 – New Jersey State Rowing Association
1872 – National Association of Amateur Oarsmen
1874 – Passaic River Amateur Rowing Association
1890 – Middle States Regatta Association

- **Amateur vs. Professional Divide** – Postwar backlash against gambling-driven professional rowing led elites to found 'amateur' clubs to distance themselves from paid competitors.
- **Rise of Governing Bodies** – Groups like the Schuylkill Navy (1858) and National Association of Amateur Oarsmen (1872) provided shared rules and a way to certify qualifications as an 'amateur'. This system also required local affiliates, spurring new city and state associations.
- **National Reconciliation** – Regattas became symbolic venues for civic pride in the years following the Civil War.
- **Urban Growth & Waterway Access** – Industrial-era cities with rivers (Newark, Philadelphia, Boston, etc.) provided the infrastructure for clubhouses, regattas, and social boating culture.
- **Status & Physical Culture** – Rowing clubs served as exclusive social institutions, letting the emerging middle/upper class showcase health, respectability, and class standing.

Source: 1. History of Rowing in America, p.47 (1871)

New York Rowing / Harlem Regatta Association

The **New York Rowing Association** was founded by returning civil war veterans in **1866**. New York City generally, and the Harlem River in particular, was at the time a hub of rowing in the United States. On the Harlem River alone there were over 30 rowing clubs and it was during these years that John C. Babcock of the Nassau Boat Club invented the tracked sliding seat.
By **1873** the Association officially adopted the name **Harlem Regatta Association**, a designation it kept until the early 20th century. On July 2, 1873 the Association held its official first regatta in which the local clubs participated such as Atlanta, Nassau, Nautilus, Harlem, New York Athletic Club, etc.



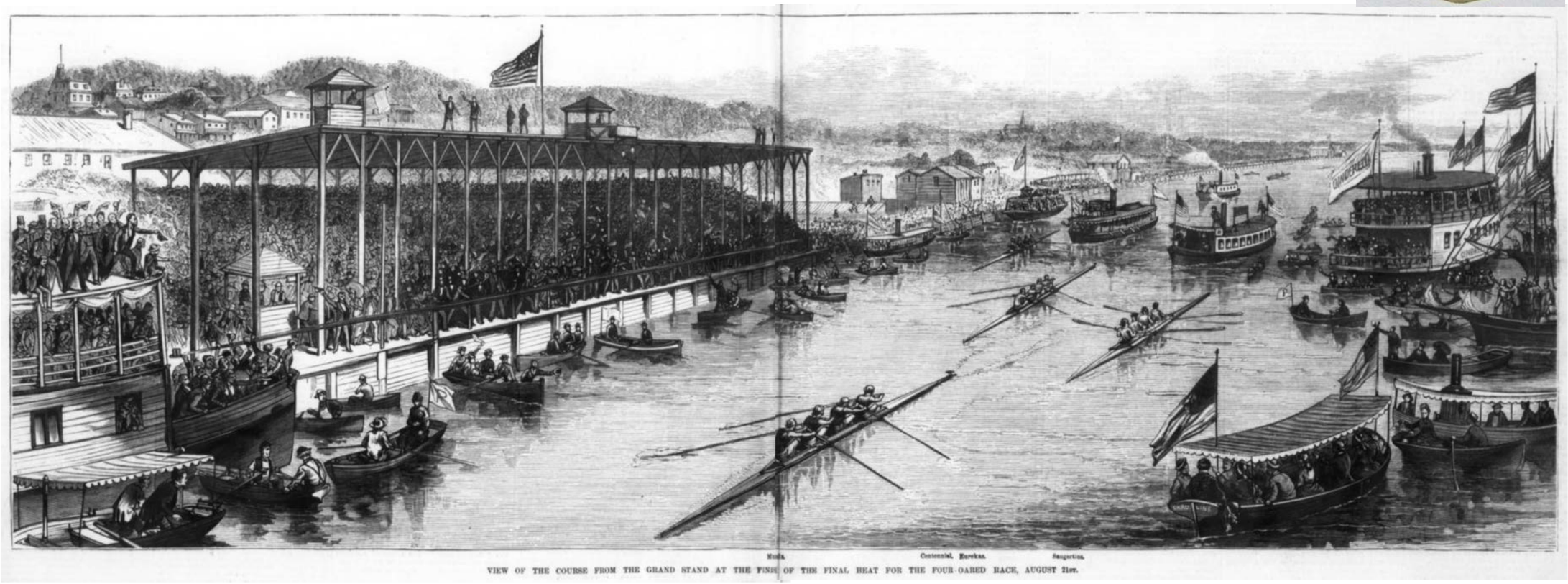
Image: 'Scullers Row' Boathouses on the Harlem River, NYC, c.1900, https://lccn.loc.gov/2014682096 // https://www.nyrowing.org/history.html

National Association of Amateur Oarsmen

Founded in **1872**, the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen (NAAO) established its National Championship regattas in **1873**. Two of these early regattas were held in Newark **on the Passaic River**: **1878** (the 6th) with 30,000+ spectators attending, and **1883** (the 11th) with 25,000+ spectators.

The NAAO would eventually become the primary regulating body and rebrand itself as US Rowing.





VIEW OF THE COURSE FROM THE GRAND STAND AT THE FINISH OF THE FINAL HEAT FOR THE FOUR OARED RACE, AUGUST 21st.

Sources: NYT (1878-08-22), (1883-08-08)// Image: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, (1878-09-07)

Passaic River Amateur Rowing Association

By this time, the Passaic River was already one of the premier rowing destinations in the United States, rivaling Philadelphia's Schuylkill River. Things on the Passaic really began to take off with the formation of P.R.A.R.A. in **1874** and its annual regattas which started in **1875** (and continued until 1901).

P.R.A.R.A. was formed to:

1. **Regulate competition.** With over a dozen clubs, such as the Triton, Eureka, and Nereid, operating in the Newark area, the PRARA provided a standardized set of rules and a centralized authority to manage inter-club rivalries.

2. **Organize Major Regattas.** The association's primary operational goal was the hosting of the Passaic River Open Regatta. By its 12th annual event in the late 1880s, these regattas had become massive social and sporting spectacles, drawing "crack crews" from New York and Pennsylvania to compete before thousands of spectators lining the riverbanks.

The 1.5 mile rowing course in Newark "extends from just below the bride of the Greenwood Lake Railroad, popularly known as the Midland Bridge, to a point directly opposite the Institute Boat Club's house, about a hundred yards north of the Erie Railroad bridge. This entire distance has only a single turn, and that is very slight, about half a mile from the Midland bridge. The course is entirely protected on both sides by the hills which border on the Passaic River.[1]"

Sources: 1. NYT (1890-04-20)

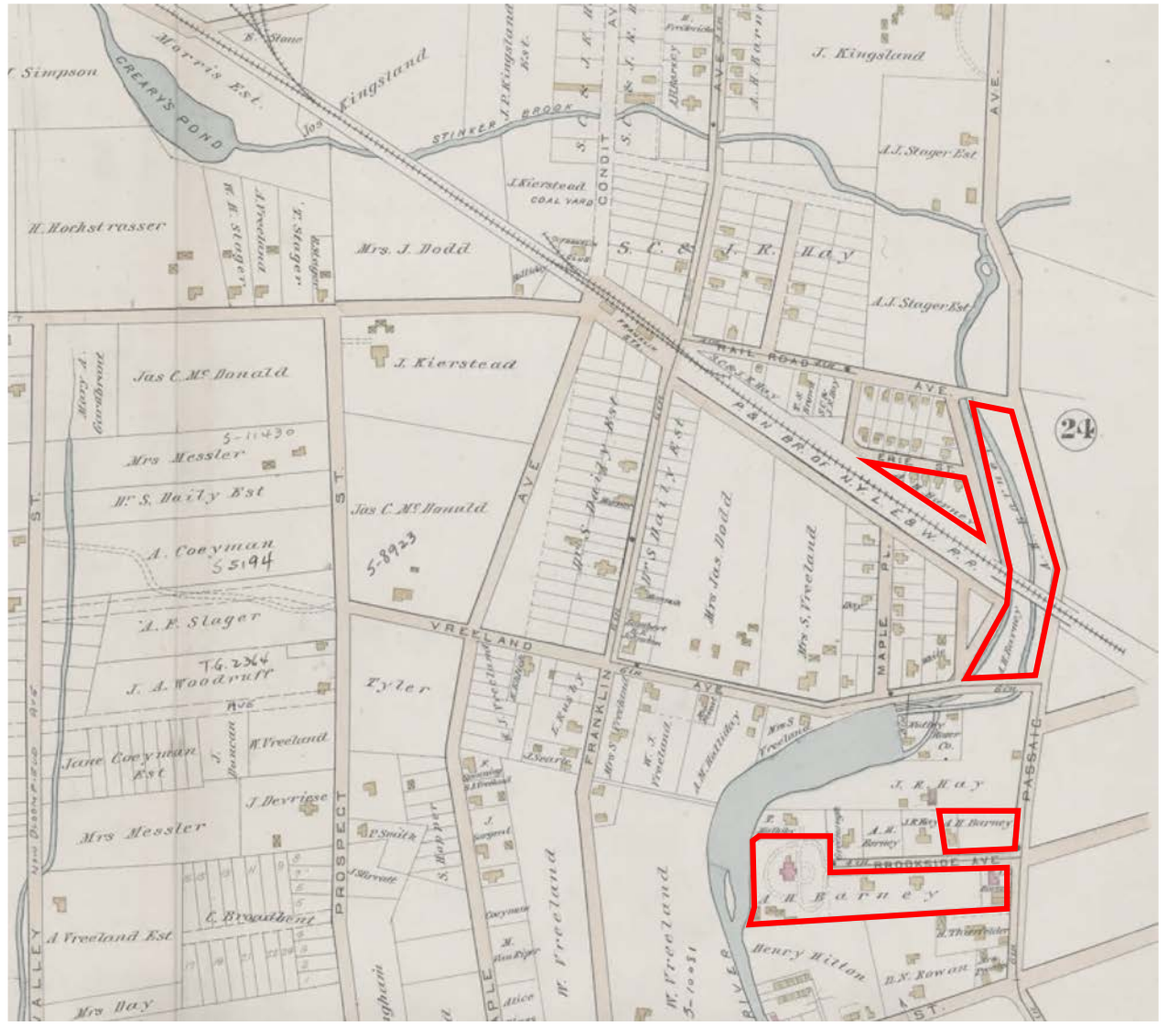


Nereid reorganized in 1875

It was within this period of growth that **Joseph R. Kingsland** and seven other gentlemen met together, becoming Nereid's second set of founding members on **July 10, 1875**.

The club initially occupied a building then owned by **Ashbel H. Barney**, once a partner of Nutley's most famous architect-builder, William Lambert. It was 'Barney's Store' building on Passaic Avenue in Frankiln, NJ (now Nutley) that served as the club's temporary meeting place.

On the map, A.H. Barney has several properties on Passaic Avenue, two with a siding on Third River. Perhaps Nereid got established here, rowing on the river and the pond, until something better came along on the Passaic River? Also, note the number of Kingsland family properties nearby.



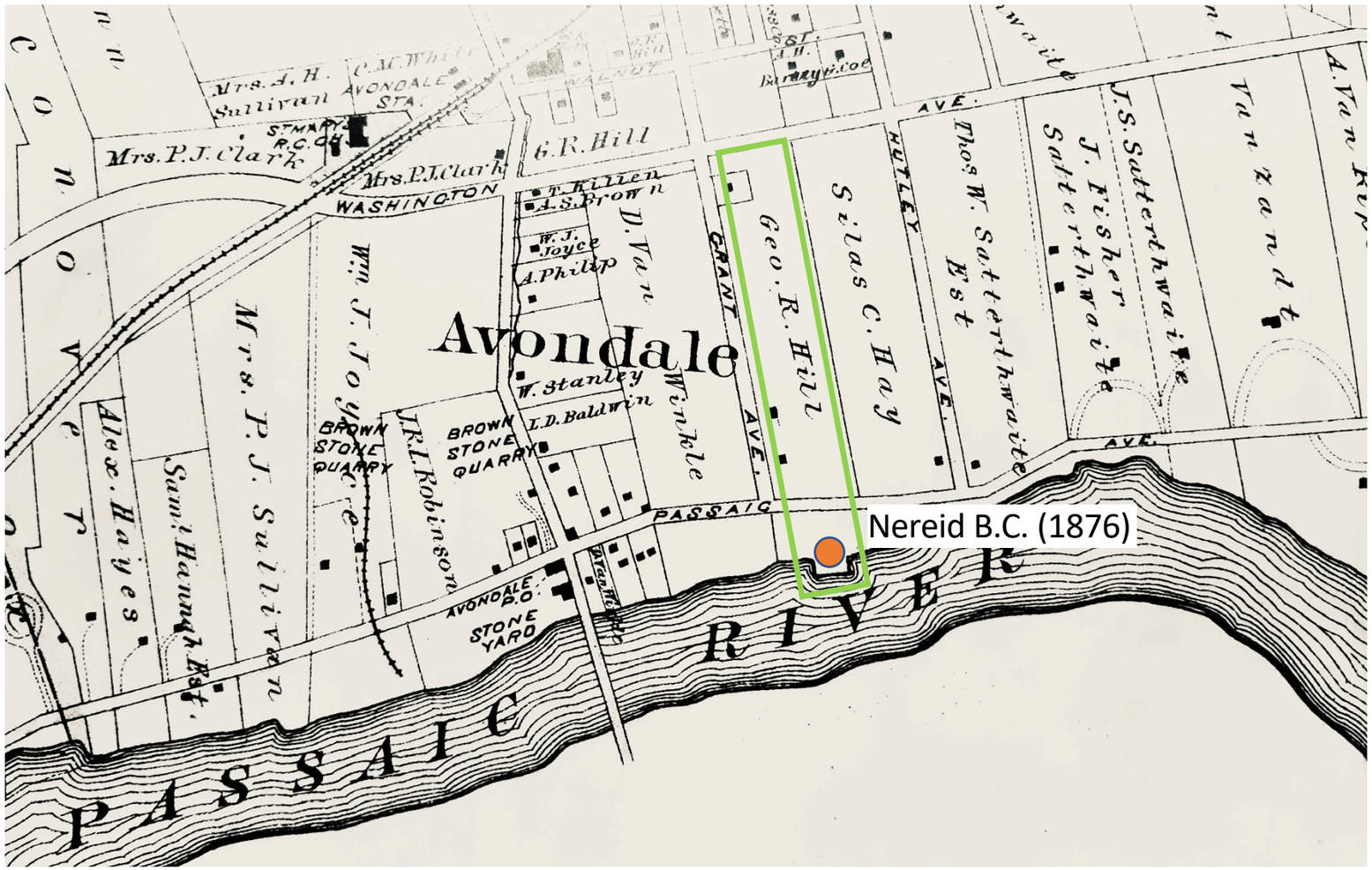
Source: www.NutleyHistoricalSociety.org/books/history_of_Nutley (1907) // Sketch of The Nereid Club 1875 – 1937, Nereid BC Dinner Program (1937-05-06) // BOAT CLUB REMAINS IN BOROUGH'S BLOODSTREAM ,South Hackensack, Page A8 // Image: Map of Franklin, NJ (1890)

Getting Settled in 1876

In the spring of **1876** the new Club House was built. The site was on property owned by George R. Hill on the west side of the Passaic River just north of the North Belleville Bridge (Avondale). The Club bought the lumber and hired a man by the day to build it.

Looking qt the map, the property already had a dock or a wharf, which is likely why this location was selected.

Two boats were purchased: a single shell and a six-oared barge. The racing barge, named the *Lady Chair,* came from the old USA wooden navy.



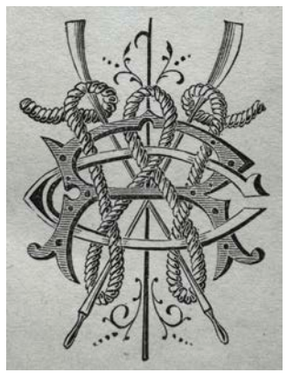
Source: Sketch of The Nereid Club 1875 – 1937, Nereid BC Dinner Program (1937-05-06), Image: Map of Franklin, Nutley Historical Society (c 1875)

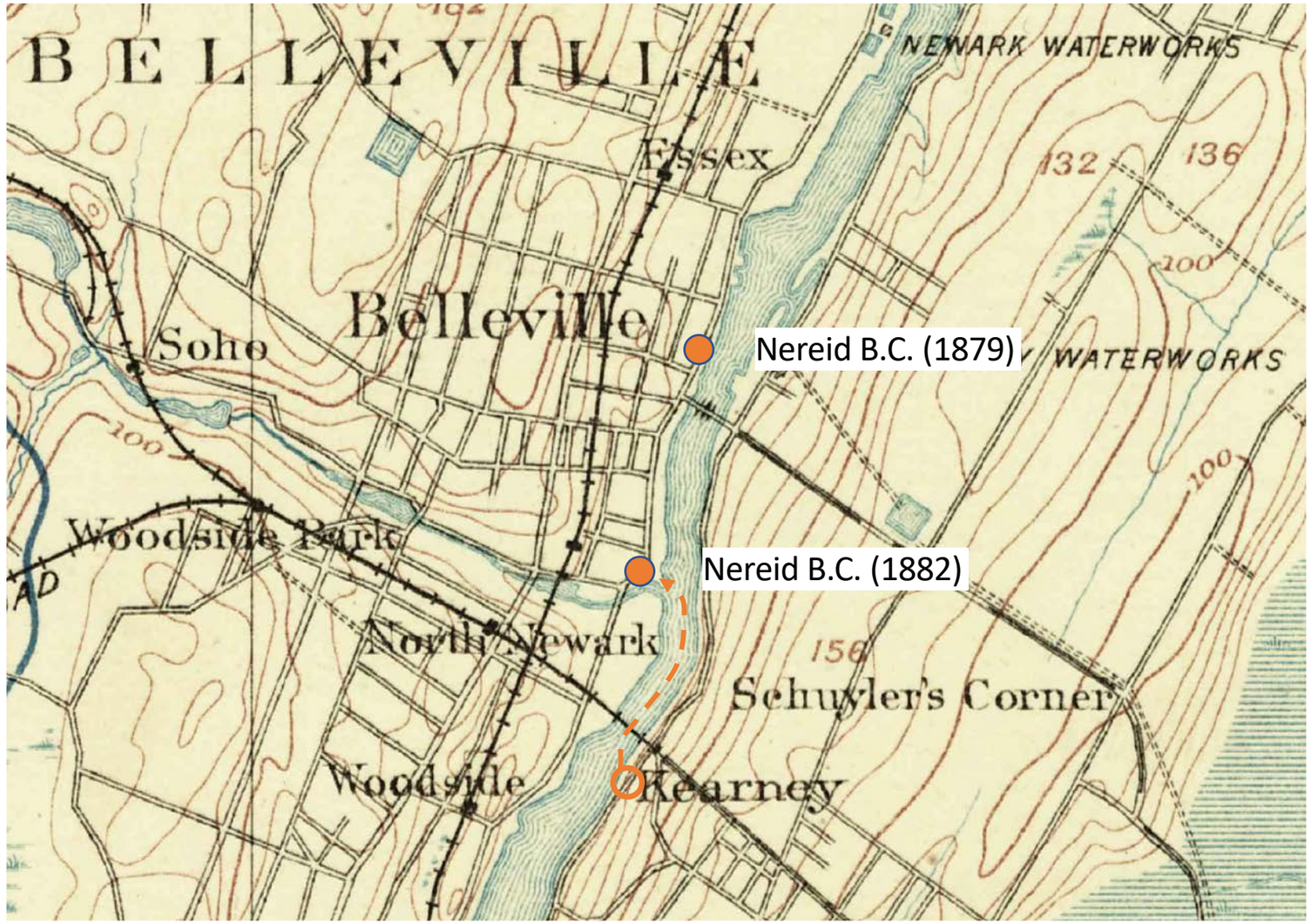
Moved again in 1879, and 1882

In **1879**, the club moved to Belleville, about two-fifths of a mile above the Belleville bridge on property owned by John Spear.

In May, **1882**, Nereid purchased the old Woodside Rowing Club boathouse and floated it to the west side of the river.

It's new location, at the foot of Mill Street just north of Second River, would be Nereid's home for the next 80-years.





Images: USGS Map (1888); Logo of Woodside Rowing Club (c.1877)

Nereid's Boathouse – Mill Street at Second River, Belleville, NJ c.1895

The back of the boathouse and the side facing Second River.

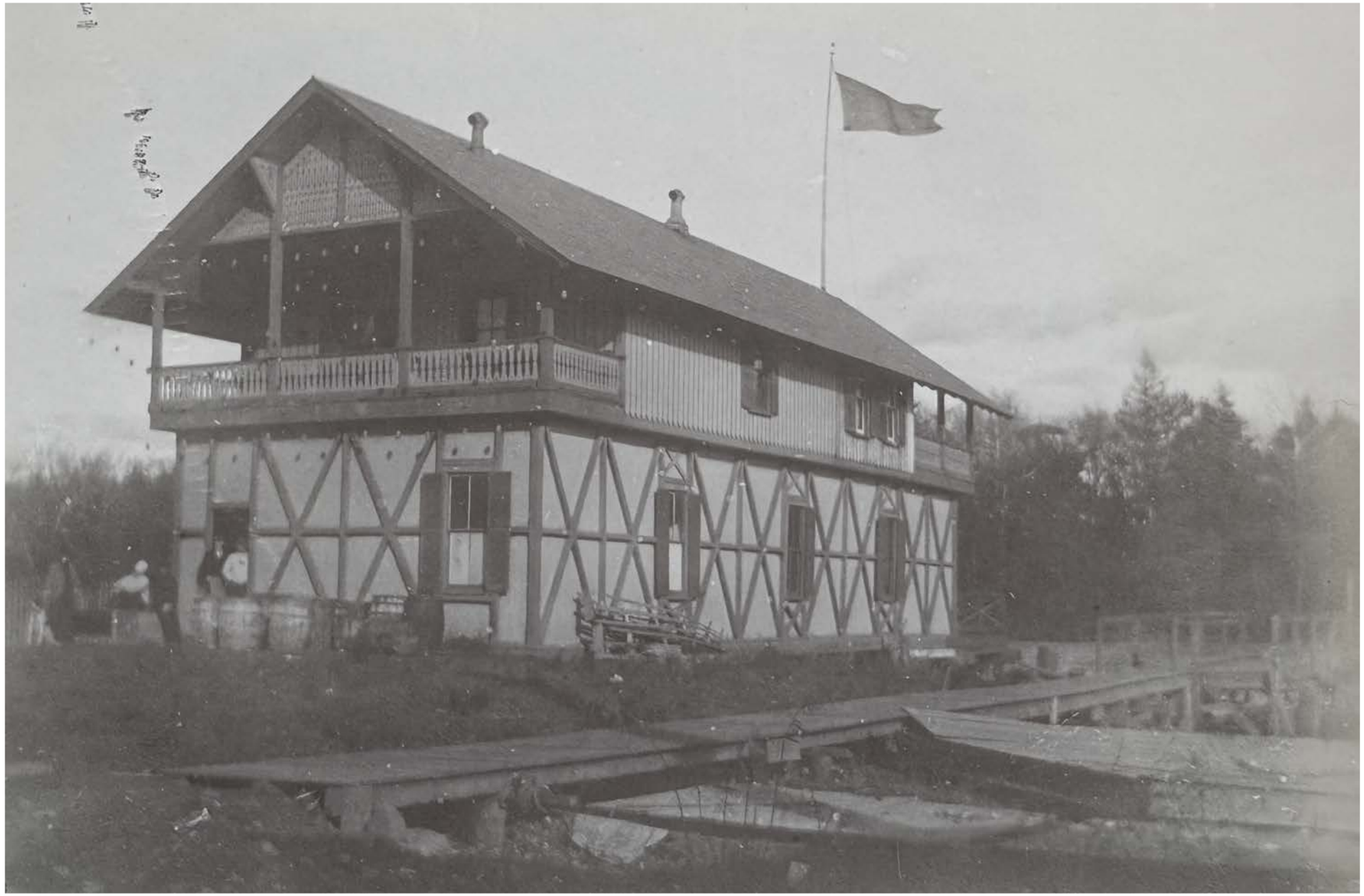


Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter to Nereid G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

Nereid's Boathouse – Interior Views, Belleville, NJ c.1895

Inside the boat bay showing various boats, shells and oar storage.

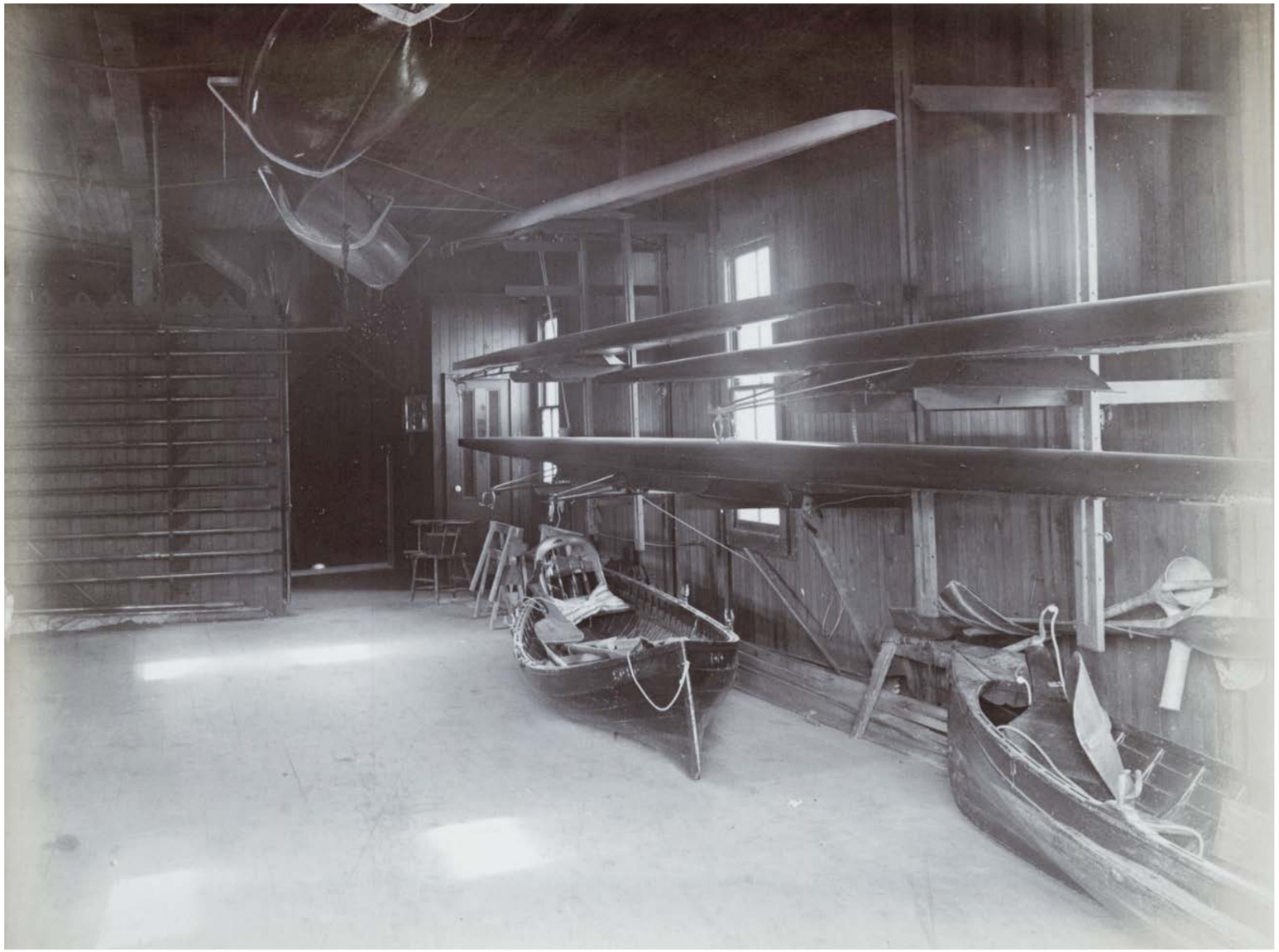


Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter to Nereid G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

Nereid's Boathouse – Interior Views, Belleville, NJ c.1895

The upstairs lounge complete with pool tables and a map of the river on the wall.



Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter to Nereid G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

Nereid's Boathouse – Interior Views, Belleville, NJ c.1895

The upstairs parlor with a stove, Nereid pillows and a table for their pipes.

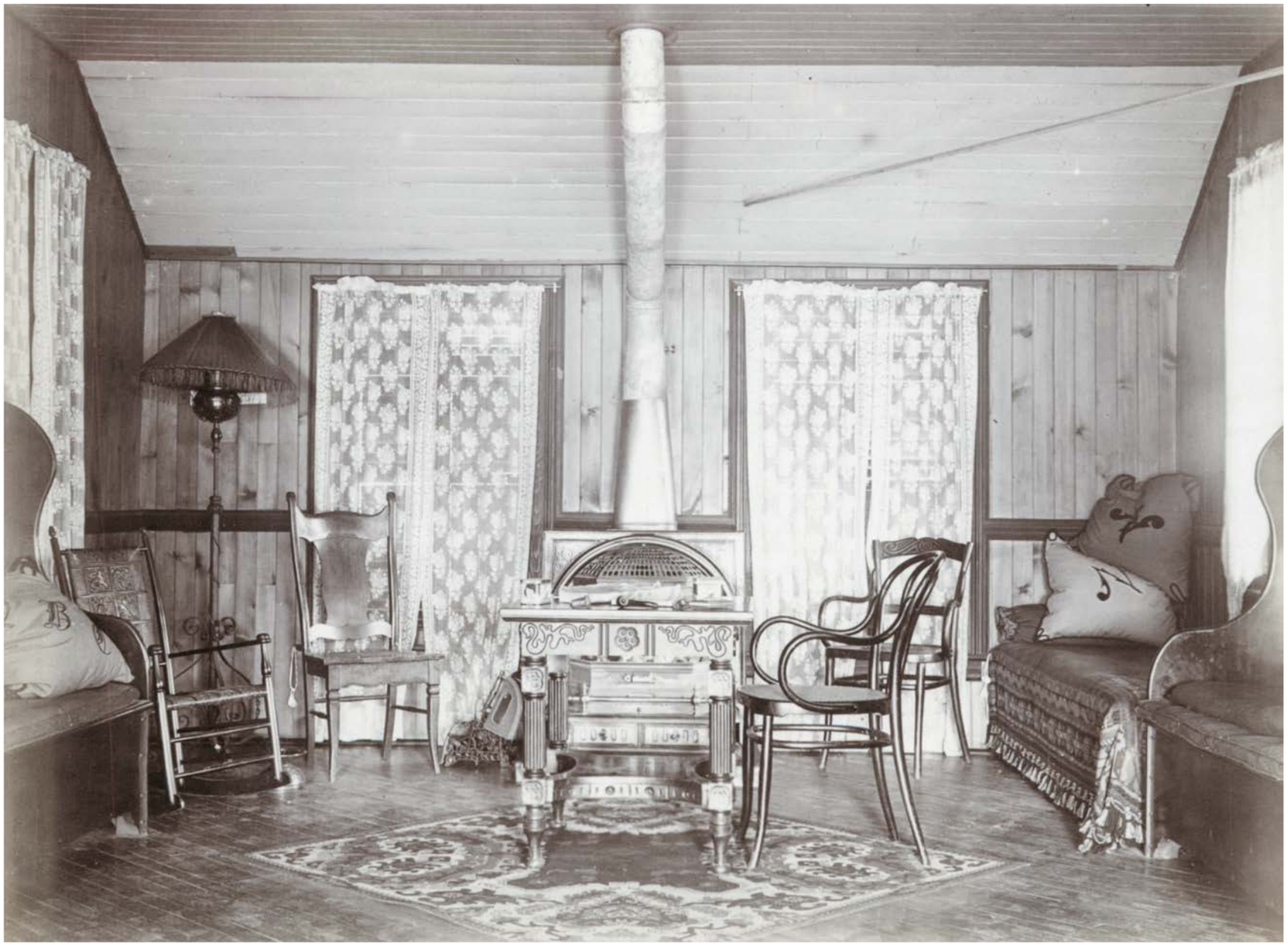
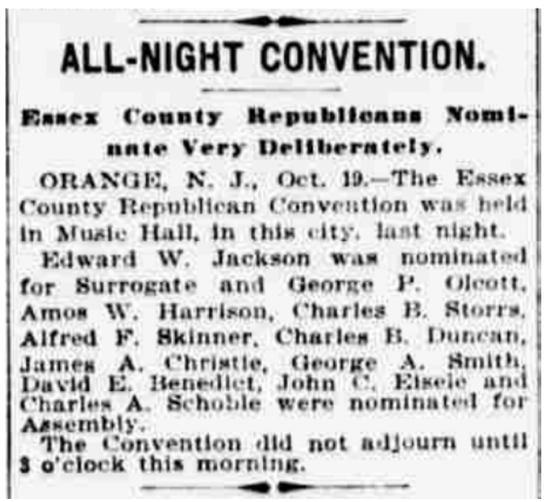


Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter to Nereid G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

Nereid Profile: **Edward Woolsey Jackson (1861 – 1941)**

Edward W. Jackson and his brother **Percy** were both Nereid members**;** he was married to F. Casebolt, the older sister of fellow Nereids **G.H. and E.T. Casebolt**. He attended Yale (1880), Columbia (1882), was a Newark lawyer and prominent Republican politician, served as Essex County Freeholder (1888 & 1889), and as a member of the New Jersey General Assembly for Essex County from (1890 – 1891). He was elected Surrogate of Essex County in **1894** and he served in that role until 1899.



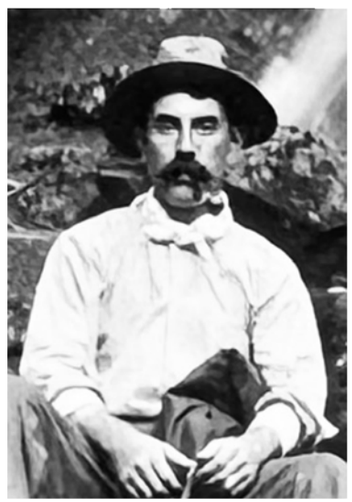
ALL-NIGHT CONVENTION.

Essex County Republicans Nominate Very Deliberately.

ORANGE, N. J., Oct. 19.—The Essex County Republican Convention was held in Music Hall, in this city, last night.

Edward W. Jackson was nominated for Surrogate and George P. Olcott, Amos W. Harrison, Charles B. Storrs, Alfred F. Skinner, Charles B. Duncan, James A. Christie, George A. Smith, David E. Benedict, John C. Eisele and Charles A. Schoble were nominated for Assembly.

The Convention did not adjourn until 3 o'clock this morning.





Source: The Evening World (1894-10-19) // Images: E.W. Jackson (c. 1896); Pictured from L to R: Roger W. Brett (w sign), ?, ?, ?, ?, Frank Skinner (hand in pocket), Harry Clark (in back), Herbert Clark (w Flute), Will Van Houten (in back w sign), G. Harry Casebolt (w Drum), David Abercrombie (in back) Schuyler Webster (kneeling w broom)

Political Rally on the Boathouse Dock, Belleville, NJ, November **1894**

Nereid's Boathouse

On the Dock, Belleville, NJ c.1895



Nereid members L to R:

Will Van Houten,
Al Walker,
Schuyler Webster,
G. Harry Casebolt

Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter of G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

N 160 EST. 1866

Nereid's Boathouse
On the Balcony,
Belleville, NJ c.1895



Nereid members L to R:

Unknown

Nereid Rowers, Passaic River, Belleville, NJ c.1895

Unidentified Nereid oarsmen rowing what appears to be a 6-oar lapstrake outrigger with coxswain.

Possibly the “Lady Chair,” which was purchased in 1876, and eventually lost in the great flood of 1903.



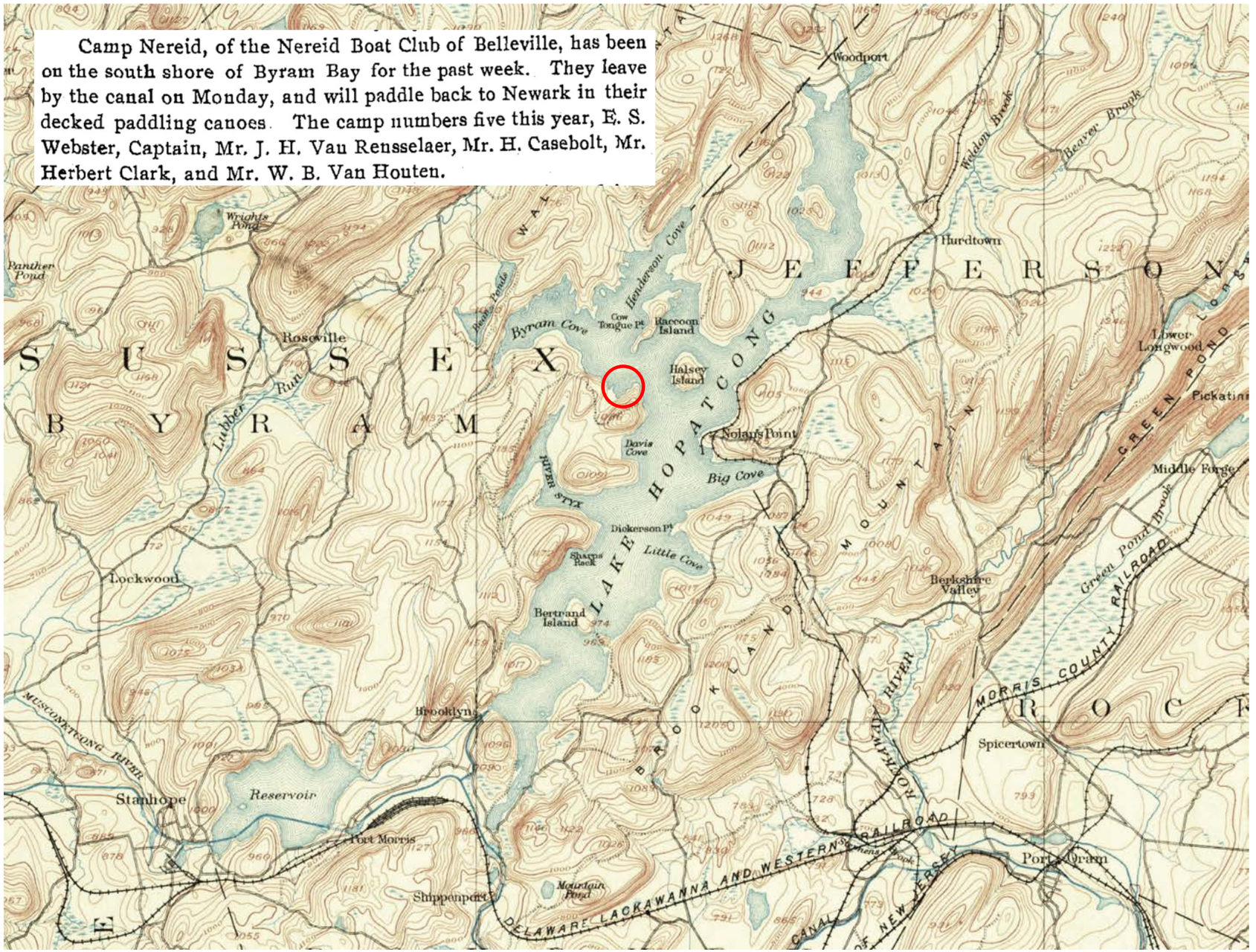
Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter of G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

Camp Nereid

c.1894, Nereid BC members established '**Camp Nereid'** on Lake Hopatcong, south shore of Byram Bay, at Bonaparte Landing.

The property may have been owned by **Edward W. Jackson.**

They would arrive / leave in boats using the Morris Canal, paddling back and forth from Belleville / Newark in their decked pack canoes.



Source: Dover Angler (1894-07-28)
Image: USGS Map (1894)

Camp Nereid, Lake Hopatcong, c.1896



Nereid Members L to R:

Schuyler Webster
Percy Jackson
Edward W. Jackson
Unknown
Al Walker

Camp Nereid, Lake Hopatcong, c.1896



Nereid Members L to R:

Percy Jackson
Edward W. Jackson
Al Walker,
Schuyler Webster

Camp Nereid, Lake Hopatcong, August 1897

Back Row L to R:

G. Harry Casebolt, David Abercrombie, Joseph R. Kingsland, E. Schuyler Webster

2nd Row L to R:

Harry Clark , unknown, Herbert Clark, Will Van Houten, Percy Jackson,

Front Row L to R:

Al Walker (chair), Edwards T. Casebolt,



Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter of G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

Camp Nereid, Lake Hopatcong, August 1898



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Source: Dover Angler (1898-08-06) pg.11

Camp Nereid,
Lake Hopatcong,
August 1898



N 160 EST. 1866

Camp Nereid, Lake Hopatcong, August 1898



Back Row L to R:

Edward W. Jackson, Al Walker

3rd Row L to R:

Herbert Clark, Percy Jackson, Charlie Brower (standing), Harry Clark

3nd Row L to R:

John H. Eastwood, Edwards T. Casebolt, Schuyler Webster

Front Row L to R:

Joseph R. Kingsland, G. Harry Casebolt, David (cook)

Image: From a set of photos gifted to the club in 2025 from Barbara Weldon, granddaughter of G.H Casebolt, and grandniece to his brother E.T. Casebolt.

Camp Nereid, Lake Hopatcong, August 1898



Around Table L to R: G. Harry Casebolt, Herbert Clark, Charlie Brower, Edward W. Jackson, John H. Eastwood , Joseph R. Kingsland, Al Walker, Edwards T. Casebolt, Percy Jackson, Harry Clark , E. Schuyler Webster

To be continued…


NEREID
BOAT CLUB, est.1866