

## A Phenomenal Journey

As a lifelong resident of Bay Shore and a past Commodore at Bay Shore Yacht Club, I have an interest in local history and the happenings “along the Great South Bay.” When I saw an old trophy that was once won from a local yacht club on EBAY (the Internet auction site) several years ago, my interest was peaked. The sterling silver loving cup was presented from the Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club. I recalled reading that the Bay Shore Yacht Club and the Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club had an intertwined history. Harry Brewster was instrumental in the founding of both clubs. The clubs were in Bay Shore- with the Penataquit Corinthian located at the end of Penataquit Point during its final years in the early 1900’s.

A picture on the auction site showed an attractive silver trophy with a small



porcelain burgee of the former club on its front.

Around the burgee was engraved the words “Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club, Bay Shore, L.I.” An inscription on the back read “Presented by Commodore J. Adolf Mollenhauer.” On the side it was inscribed “Won by “Muriel”, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1898.” The cup appeared to stand about 5 inches tall, had three decorative handles and rested on three spherical legs. It was striking. I really was

drawn to this unique item – probably, I felt at the time, because of its local significance.

Several days before the bidding ended, I discussed the item and the auction with my wife, Lynn. She was extremely supportive and suggested I “go for it”, if I really wanted it. Well I did . . . and so did several other bidders. The bidding started around \$75 and went up quickly in the last few minutes. With 20 seconds left, I threw in a lofty bid and then it was all over. . .



The cup became mine - for several hundred dollars. Although that was more than I really wanted to pay, I also wanted to win this item. After all, a beautiful sterling silver

trophy of local interest doesn't come up that often, I reasoned. With several other active bidders, I guess supply and demand sets the true value. Regardless, I was very happy with my newly acquired piece of local antiquity.

About a week later a well wrapped package arrived from Fedex. The trophy was even more beautiful than pictured on the auction site. My curiosity was getting to me, so I emailed the seller and asked him what he knew about the trophy. The seller informed me that he was an antique dealer and bought the cup at a junk trade show in Atlantic City along with several other unrelated items. Unfortunately, this was a dead-end on the trophy's ownership.

As mentioned earlier, I'm interested in local history. I collect old postcards and photographs and find our local history interesting. Harry Havemeyer's books about the Great South Bay and Fire Island are among my favorites. Part of the fun of collecting, of course, is uncovering new facts that are relevant to a particular situation. Soon after the Penataquit Corinthian YC trophy arrived I started digging into all the records I could find. What kind of boat was the "Muriel?" Who owned it? What happened to it? I had many questions and no answers. I checked archives at the local library and found nothing. I spoke with my friend Barbara Forde, who has worked on many historical projects for the Long Island Maritime Museum and Bay Shore Yacht Club. Even Barbara who is great with these kinds of investigations couldn't find anything about a boat named "Muriel" who won a race in 1898 at the Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club. I showed my Mother, Harriet Camp Mason, the trophy. Her family went back decades in Brightwaters and Bay Shore. Unfortunately, she too had no information or recollection of the "Muriel." I finally believed that the story



of the "Muriel" would forever remain a mystery. After more than one hundred years events often fade into obscurity. Of course on a positive note, I was happy to have "won" such a beautiful and unique loving cup on the Internet. Sadly, I believed that the answers to our mystery would remain a secret of time.

It's been nine years since I made that purchase in early 1999. Occasionally I'd show the prize I won (bought is more accurate, I guess) on the Internet to a friend and explained that this trophy was awarded to someone during the golden age of sailing on the

Great South Bay. Beyond telling a little history of the Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club, I knew little else about this unsolved mystery.

January 7, 2008 I was surfing the Internet and decided to Google the words “Penataquit” and “Muriel”. Thirty hits appeared but about six lines down I found my answers! In an article from the “Outing’s Monthly Review of Amateur Sports and Pastimes” written in 1898, I came upon the following: “The Penataquit Corinthian Yacht Club, of Bay Shore, L.I., sailed its spring regatta on the Great South Bay, in a reefing southwest wind and a jump of a sea, three times round a course of two miles to windward and back, making an exciting race. In Class L, Frank Camp’s Muriel, a Boston importation, beat Richard Hyde’s *Gayety*, whose steering gear was carried away.”

I was in shock! The haunting discovery I made was the “Muriel” belonged to my great grandfather, Frank L. Camp! Lynn and our daughter Emily were as surprised and amazed as I was about this phenomenal series of events. With this find, I called Barbara Forde. She suggested I check the Brooklyn Public Library web site and search the old Brooklyn Eagle Newspaper archives to corroborate my findings. I did and several articles confirmed that the “Muriel” was a sloop that belonged to Penataquit Yacht Club’s Vice Commodore Frank L. Camp. What are the odds of finding my great grandfather’s trophy more than a hundred years later, by chance through an Internet auction site? Even my Mom, who saw the trophy before she died in 2005, didn’t make the connection that it was her Grandfather’s sloop that won that cup. It’s not that surprising, since Mom was born in 1923, 25 years after Muriel won the race.

Some of this remarkably strange mystery is now uncovered. There are still lingering questions and more to be learned. I’m very interested in seeing a picture of the Muriel. What happened to the boat? How did the trophy find its way to Atlantic City? And what brought this heirloom back home one hundred and ten years later? Was it destiny? I feel it definitely was!

Bob Mason

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[My Great Grandfather Frank Camp went on to become Vice Commodore at the Bay Shore Yacht Club in 1923.]