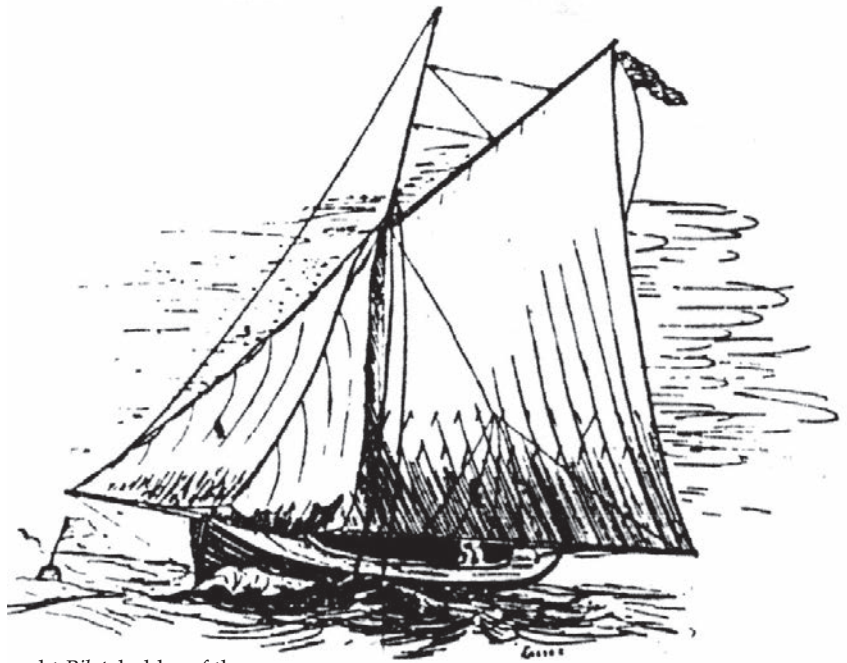


## Racine Yacht Club: Our Origins

According to an article in the September 8, 1894 *Racine Daily Journal*, the Racine Yacht Club—or at least a very early version of it—came into being in 1891. Prior to that time “...very little interest had been taken in aquatic (sic) sports.” The appearance of yacht designer Fred W. Martin at the Racine Hardware Manufacturing Company that year, the sailboats he created, and Racine’s burgeoning boatbuilding industry may have had a significant part to play in the RYC’s beginning. In any case a number of people owning sailboats or canoes at the time began to race amongst themselves for the fun of it. They finally got together and decided to organize. A constitution and bylaws were adopted, Jesse D. Sarles was elected



The yacht *Pilot*, holder of the Racine Yacht Club Cup

*Racine Daily Journal*, Sept. 8, 1894



*Racine Daily Journal*, Sept. 8, 1894

Jesse D. Sarles, first Commodore of the Racine Yacht Club

Commodore, and a committee was formed to manage racing. The first races, for the “Racine Yacht Club Cup,” were watched by several thousand folks on shore and by 1894 the cup was held by the gaff sloop, *Pilot*. By then the Club had grown to some 40 members who owned and raced about 20 sailboats of different designs.



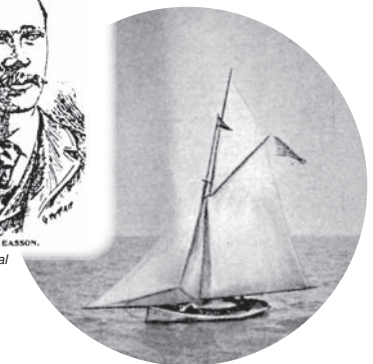
*Racine Yacht & Boat Works*, 1895 catalog

Albert Mickelson and *Dorothy*

Albert Mickelson, had *Dorothy*; *Alpha* belonged to Wallace Easson; and Sarles owned the yacht *Dione* along with Frank Naylor (photos on page 2). All of the boats pictured here, with the possible exception of *Pilot*, were designed by Fred W. Martin and their



*Racine Daily Journal*



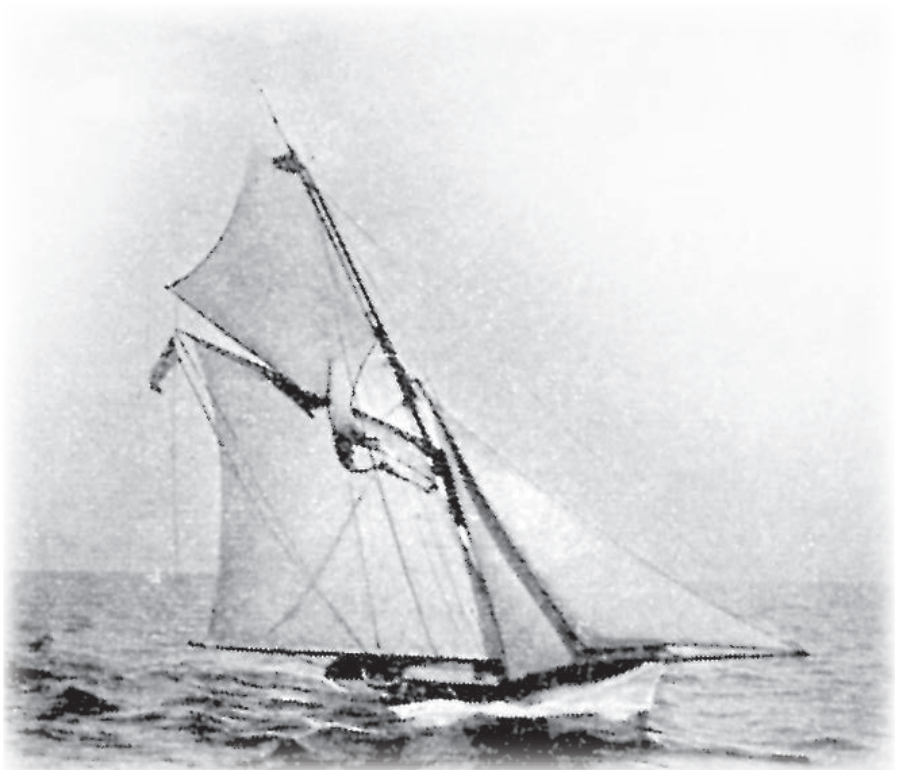
*Racine Yacht & Boat Works*, 1895 catalog

Wallace Easson and *Alpha*



Racine Daily Journal, Sept. 8, 1894

Frank Naylor, along with Jesse Sarles, owned *Dione*

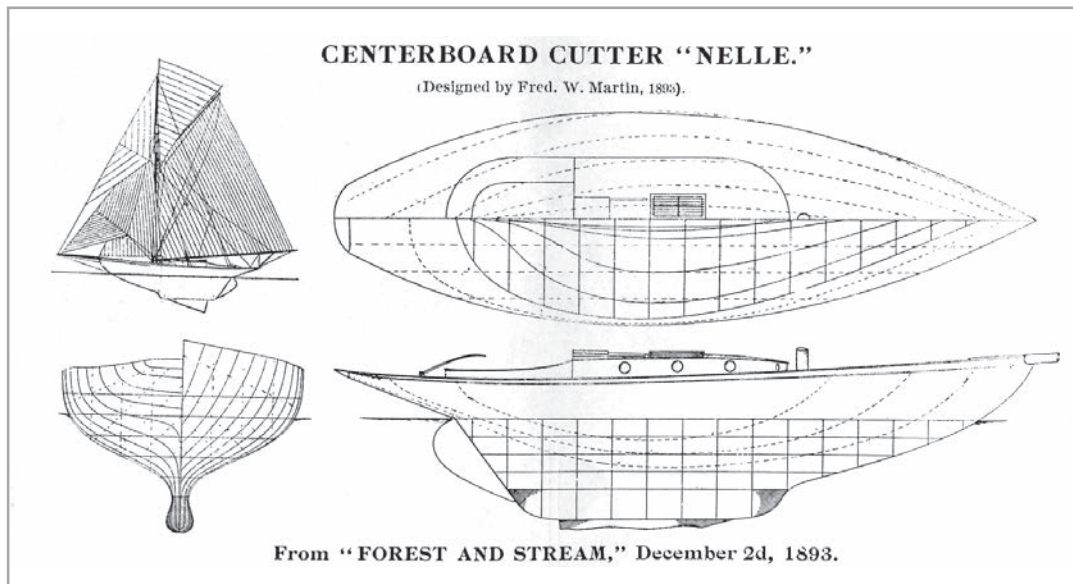


Racine Yacht & Boat Works, 1895 catalog

images are reproduced from Martin's 1895 publication, his Racine Yacht & Boat Works catalog. Sarles would eventually go on to build the 42-foot *Nelle*; she was designed for him in 1895 by Martin and is also pictured here.

By 1894 some of the original players had changed. Easson had become Commodore, Edward Milstead was Vice Commodore, Gus Sonneman (who raced *Volunteer*) was the Club's treasurer, and Mickelson had the

position of secretary. Everything seemed rosy but 1897 brought trouble in the form of that year's LMYA regatta.



From "FOREST AND STREAM," December 2d, 1893.

Racine Yacht & Boat Works, 1895 catalog

*Nelle*, the yacht Sarles had built in 1895





## The Lake Michigan Yachting Association and RYC

In 1894 Sarles and Naylor floated the idea of creating a body to govern yachting on Lake Michigan. In June and July that year meetings, the first of which was in Racine, were held between members of a number of yacht clubs and the Lake Michigan Yachting Association (LMYA) was born. Minutes of those two meetings, reproduced from an LMYA yearbook, are reprinted on this page.

The first two LMYA regattas held by the new organization were sailed in Milwaukee and Chicago that summer; the third, on September 8, was in Racine. It was organized by a large committee of Yacht Club members and drew some 27 boats, nine of which were from Racine. They sailed a course consisting of a 15-mile triangle for the smaller boats and, for the larger yachts, one of 24-1/2 miles. \$100 for prizes had been raised and the overall winner was Mr. Wilson's yacht *Hattie Bradwell* out of Chicago's Lincoln Park Yacht Club.

**Formation of the  
Lake Michigan Yachting Association**

*Following are the minutes of the first two meetings of the yachtsmen organizing the L.M.Y.A. back in 1894. These minutes are copied from the original Minutes Book, still in existence, and are of historic interest.*

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Racine, Wisconsin, June 2, 1894.

On May 30th representatives from Green Bay, Milwaukee, Chicago, and Racine were assembled in Racine, where steps were taken to form an association of all the Yacht Clubs on Lake Michigan. The objects were to adopt a uniform set of rules, racing measurements, time allowance, etc.; also a code of signals; and to further the interests in yachting generally.

At the aforesaid meeting E. C. Berriman of Chicago was elected Chairman and J. D. Sarles, Secretary. The membership dues were fixed at \$10.00, to be paid to the Secretary on July 4th at Milwaukee, the time and place set for a formal meeting of the various clubs, when the association would be permanently organized, and officers elected.

J. D. SARLES,  
*Secretary Protem.*

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Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 4, 1894.

Plankinton House 8:00 P. M.—A meeting of the various clubs on Lake Michigan took place for the purpose of forming a permanent organization of a Lake Michigan Yachting Association. E. C. Berriman of the Lincoln Park Club of Chicago presided. The minutes of the previous informal meeting held at Racine were read and approved. The rules and regulations of the Lake Yacht Racing Association of Toronto were adopted, subject to revision by the committee.

E. P. Warner was elected President.  
C. J. Williams was elected Vice President.  
Thos. Boyle was elected Second Vice President.  
C. O. Andrews was elected Secretary.  
J. C. Follett was elected Treasurer.

The different clubs represented at this meeting, as follows:

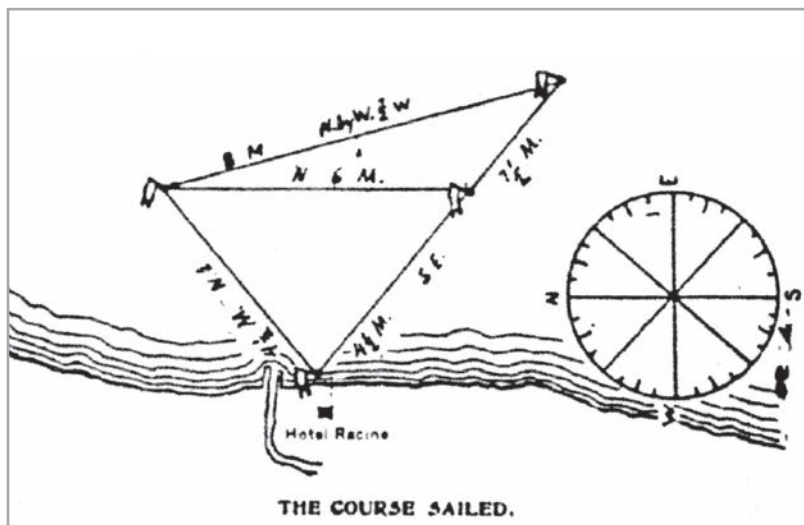
Milwaukee Yacht Club .....	Milwaukee
Racine Yacht Club .....	Racine
Green Bay Yacht Club .....	Green Bay
Columbia Yacht Club .....	Chicago
Lincoln Park Yacht Club .....	Chicago

J. D. SARLES,  
*Secretary Protem.*

LMYA annual yearbook, 1969

The minutes from the first two meetings that formed the LMYA

The regatta was a complete success. As a side note, one of the competitors was C. E. Berriman's 42-foot yacht *Valiant* (see photo on next page). *Valiant*, yet another Fred Martin design, was built here in Racine, as was Berriman's earlier boat, the 25-foot *Sandbagger*, *American Girl*. Berriman was Commodore of Chicago's Lincoln Park Yacht Club and was active in the formation of the LMYA. He liked the work that came out of the Racine boatyards and would come back one more time, in 1896, for *Vencedor*, his entry for an international series that he had proposed with the Canadians. The prize for that series would become the "Canada's Cup," which is still raced for today—but that is another story.



Racine Daily Journal, Sept. 8, 1894

The 1894 LMYA Regatta's Race Course, sailed off of Racine's lakefront  
Triangles were longer then!

1897 brought another LMYA regatta to Racine. It was a disaster. Boats had arrived from Chicago and elsewhere to find Racine "totally unprepared." The *Chicago Tribune* of July 6, 1897 published an absolutely scathing article noting that, "the regatta is a failure" and "Racine pays little attention to its guests and leaves them to shift for themselves" and "Chicago sailors take charge of affairs, draft rules, and endeavor to make preparations for the contest." When the Racine Yacht Club's Commodore Bull (possibly Stephen Bull, president of the

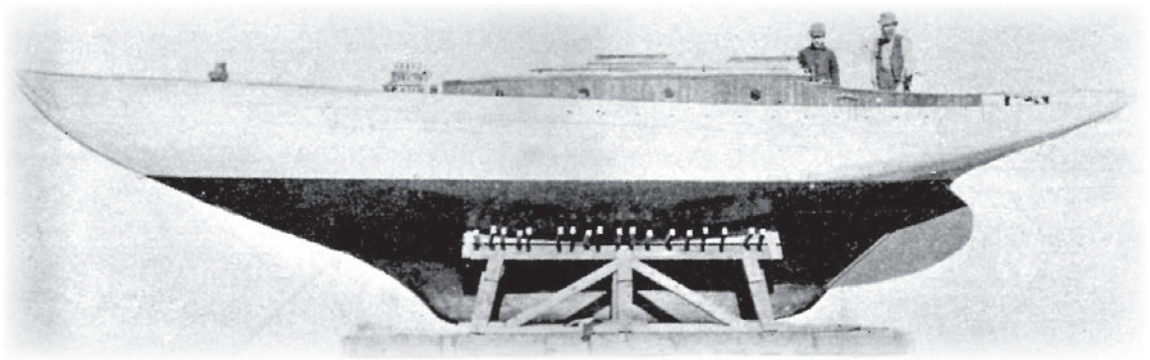


Case Company at the time) arrived at the scene, yachtsmen and guests demanded to know what the plans were and found there were none. The regatta did get off but the article also goes on to say, "Even the prizes were laid out in an undertaker's basement" and "the Racine Yacht Club boasts (only) two boats and four members." The Club's reputation was drawn through the mud.

Something seems to have happened to cause the Club's membership to decline from its 1894 levels but no evidence as to what actually occurred has surfaced so far. If that decline really happened, as the *Tribune* reported, it is probably a sign of trouble of some sort and it may account for the lack of any information about the Racine Yacht Club from 1897 forward. The Club may have actually disappeared completely during this period but that, too, is unknown.

In any case our yacht club has had a long association with the LMYA and many of our members have served as officers of either the main body or its sail and power squadrons.

Among them are A. M. Herrmann Sr., Chuck Veenstra, Arthur Peterson, A. B. Bradley, and Andy Vaash. The 1897 debacle was eventually forgotten and LMYA regattas were again held in Racine in 1936, 1949, and 1967. Jim Rooney notes that the '49 regatta was marred by a strong Southeaster after racing concluded. Many boats were tied up on the north pier near the location of the present Club (dockage was limited in those days) and suffered heavy damage when they were driven into it.



*Racine Yacht & Boat Works, 1895 catalog*

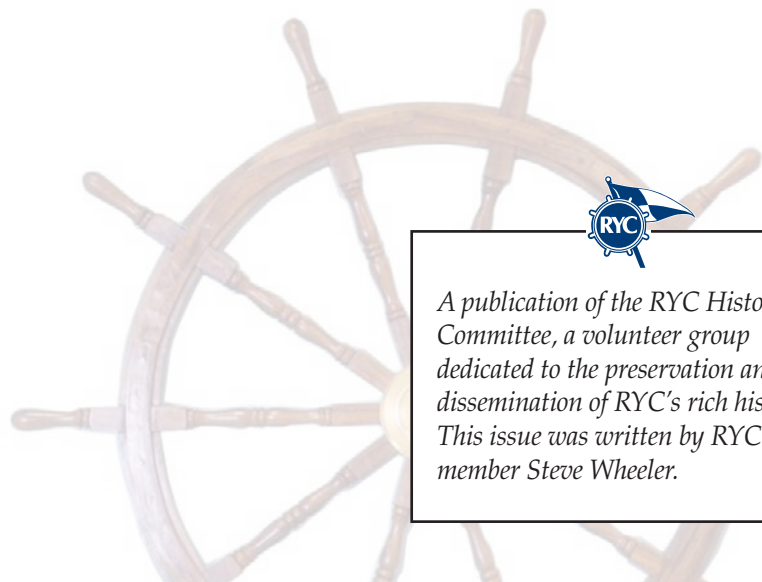
*Valiant*, C. E. Berriman's second Racine-built yacht (1893), a Martin design

The LMYA continues on today but is no longer the sole governing body for yachting on Lake Michigan.

### **The Racine Motor Boat Club and RYC**

The Racine Motor Boat Club, which was also called, at times, the "Racine Motor Boat and Yacht Club" and the "Racine Power Boat Club" appears to have been the immediate forerunner to the Racine Yacht Club we know today. Like the Yacht Club of the early 1890s, though, little is known of its origins. The first known mention of it to surface was in the *Racine Journal* of May 4, 1909 which stated that the club's new building, then under construction on North Beach, was destroyed in a storm

and a number of boats, probably power boats, which were being stored there were damaged or destroyed. Just a year later the club moved into new quarters on North Beach near the bathing pavilion (*Power Boating* magazine, January 1910). That building was leased from its owners and, as reported in *Open Exhaust* magazine in July 1915, it was finally bought outright. The article also reported that fifteen new members had been initiated, bringing the total membership to 60. The club by this time was known as the Racine Motor Boat and Yacht Club. As we shall see, the Racine Yacht Club that we know emerged directly from this organization in 1916.



*A publication of the RYC Historical Committee, a volunteer group dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of RYC's rich history. This issue was written by RYC member Steve Wheeler.*