



# The Pelican Flyer

Online Newsletter of the Pelican Yacht Club

Issue Forty-five

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64<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY



## Commodore's Corner

On March 16, yes I know that is St Patrick's day, we are going to do an open sail at False River. Exact information will be sent in an email, posted to the Club's Facebook and website PYCL.org. False River is doing a drawdown this year, so I am trying to get as much use of the club equipment (actually, as much sailing!) there before the River is too low. We will be sailing from the New Roads Lake Front. It is easier to get in the boats from the floating docks there and hopefully we will have the Flying Scot relocated there by then. I am hoping to have two boats full of people, so please let me know if you plan to come out. I am also hopeful that we will get some Sunfish sailing on Wednesday nights or Saturdays after that until the water is too low. Please contact me if you are interested in Sunfish sailing. In May, I would like to do a sail from Madisonville using the club equipment there. Drew has been working on the 22-foot Eclipse and the plan is to replace the 19-foot Mariner with the Eclipse for sailing on Lake Pontchartrain. I am not sure that will happen by May, but either boat is fun on the Lake. I would love for you to send the stories of your sailing adventures as we may make them into a section in the newsletter.

Andrew Russell

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## Sailing Story Contributions Solicited

As suggested by Andrew in the Commodore's Corner, your "sailing stories"- good, bad or ugly- are solicited for publication in the Newsletter. You write it and I'll publish it! Surely, there must be some interesting, funny, frightening, or delightful sailing stories you would be willing to share? How about this very short story of mine....

When I joined the Club in the early 80's I owned a no-name 15-ft sloop-rigged sailboat that my granddaughter ably dubbed "tippy" because she was- very! It became very apparent that the sailboat of choice by Club members at that time was a Catalina 22. I can recall at least five, possibly 6, Catalina 22's. All had experienced, excellent skippers but the two standouts were Dick Davis and Bobby Eubanks. Not far off these two were Charlie Clement, Terry Teekell, and Bill Phillips (the current Commodore of the Northshore Corinthian Sailing Association). The fleet had a fairly active racing program. This circumstance motivated me to acquire a Catalina 22 and join in the competition. Luckily, I found a used one in good condition in Mandeville.

Rather than describe Carole Ann, her given name, here's a photo of her. You might not be able to tell but her bottom was red- definitely a patriotic Catalina 22. During the course of owning her, I sailed and raced her on False River, Lake Pontchartrain, Mississippi



Sound, Mobile Bay, and Perdido Bay, AL. My first race trophy was for a third-place finish in a Pontchartrain Yacht Club race. But I digress- the intent of the story was to describe my introduction to sailboat racing on False River. Having absolutely no racing experience and, frankly little sailing experience, I competed in my first legitimate sailboat race

only to steer Carole Ann into “irons” at the first mark. I think I was next to last at the time, so I only proved to be an obstacle to one other boat. Being so far behind also mostly saved me from the embarrassment of my fellow sailors. I sold Carole Ann to one of my graduate students who painted her hull fiery red, changed her name to Tabasco, and trailered her to Chicago.

I have to think that some of you can top that story?!



## Recent Board Actions

Lacking a quorum at its February meeting, the Board reverted to an online ballot for the following matters:

Question: Should the Flying Scot be relocated to False River and stored either at the New Roads waterfront parking lot or the side lot at the Sandbar Restaurant?

Decision: Yes, relocate the Flying Scot to the New Roads site at a cost of \$40/month. This decision is fiscally neutral since we are currently paying the Pontchartrain Yacht Club about \$40/month to store the Scot in their yard. In addition to having a sailboat at False River for cruises, open houses and sailing lessons, we will not be faced with the prospect of needing to relocate the Scot in the case of a hurricane.

Question: Should the Club accept John Simpson’s offer to loan the Club either or both of his sailboats- an 18’ catamaran and a “super Sunfish”?

Decision: Yes, in the case of the “super Sunfish” but no in the case of the catamaran. The “super Sunfish” will be stored at the Jarreau storage pavilion site whereas the catamaran would require storage at the Sandbar site at a cost of \$40/month.



## LJT Youth Sailing Program Initiatives II

Bob Kennedy and I have ramped up our development efforts on a number of fronts.

Financial support: One of Bob’s associates has pledged \$1600 to support the sailing camp participation fee for eight youths from the underserved community. A letter of intent to determine grant eligibility has been submitted to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation whereas a grant proposal is being prepared for submission to The Boo

Grigsby Foundation. In addition, several other foundations have been identified to which grant proposals will be submitted.

**Collaborations:** Again, through Bob's efforts, a tentative commitment of collaboration has been achieved with 100 Black Men. Collaborations have also been established with the 4-H Agents in both Point Coupee and East Baton Rouge Parishes. Several additional potential collaborators have been identified but have yet to be contacted. Importantly, I'm scheduled to meet with BREC officials next week to hopefully secure a commitment of collaboration and logistical support. Jim MacPherson, Executive Director, Maritime Museum Louisiana, has also expressed interest in collaborating with the program.

**Learning Tools:** Last week, I acquired five Radio Control (RC) sailboat models from the Herons Bay RC Sailing Club in North Fort Myers. Given the current lack of an adequate sailing venue for the Optimist Prams in EBR Parish, the models will be used to help youths learn the fundamentals of sailing- steering and sail trim.



Thankfully, I have made a connection with two experienced RC sailors, one in Covington and one in Mandeville, who have agreed to help me learn how to sail and maintain the Victoria class RC models.

**Website Development:** Efforts are underway to develop a website exclusively for the youth sailing program. As the Club website includes information about the youth sailing program, the website for the program will include information about the Club.

**Social Media:** FB and Instagram pages have been established for the LJT Youth Sailing Program. At this time, there is only one posting on each of media sites. Please check them out and share with others.



## Shed Work

Earlier in the month, Bob Kennedy and I installed a shelf along the long wall of the shed that can be used to store sails, principally Flying Scot sails. We also extended the right-hand side loft by 18". Yet to be installed is a shelf above the bench to the left as you enter the shed to display several of the Club's trophies. Whereas the organization of the shed



and its contents have been improved more work is needed to finish the job. A workday is needed to fully organize the contents of the storage shed! Please be on the lookout for a workday announcement and join the workforce if available.



## Northshore CSA Sailing and Educational Opportunities

The Northshore Corinthian Sailing Association is again supportive of providing opportunities for Pelican Yacht Club members to participate as crew members on sailboats- spinnaker and non spinnaker- participating in their racing series. The intention would be for CSA to identify several upcoming races for which they provide such racing opportunities after which members of our Club would be given the opportunity to participate. I will be happy to escort participants to facilitate the process. After a couple of escorted trips, you can likely be on your own. **Interested? Let me know-[rkseals71@gmail.com](mailto:rkseals71@gmail.com)**

Northshore CSA also offers about 6 seminars annually via Zoom. These seminars can be attended by members of our Club. Be on the lookout for email announcements.

Of course, Northshore CSA would like you to become a member if you wish to continue to participate in their activities. The annual dues for a non-voting member is only \$60/year.



## New Member

We welcome our newest member, James Nix, the third in the line of Club James's- James Shaw, James Latour and now, James Nix. James Nix is a resident of New Orleans and reportedly owns a 23' O'Day. We look forward to his contributions and participation in Club activities.

**You are encouraged to talk to your friends about the Club and the benefits of Club membership- free sailing lessons, free access to Club boats, participation in Club activities, etc.**



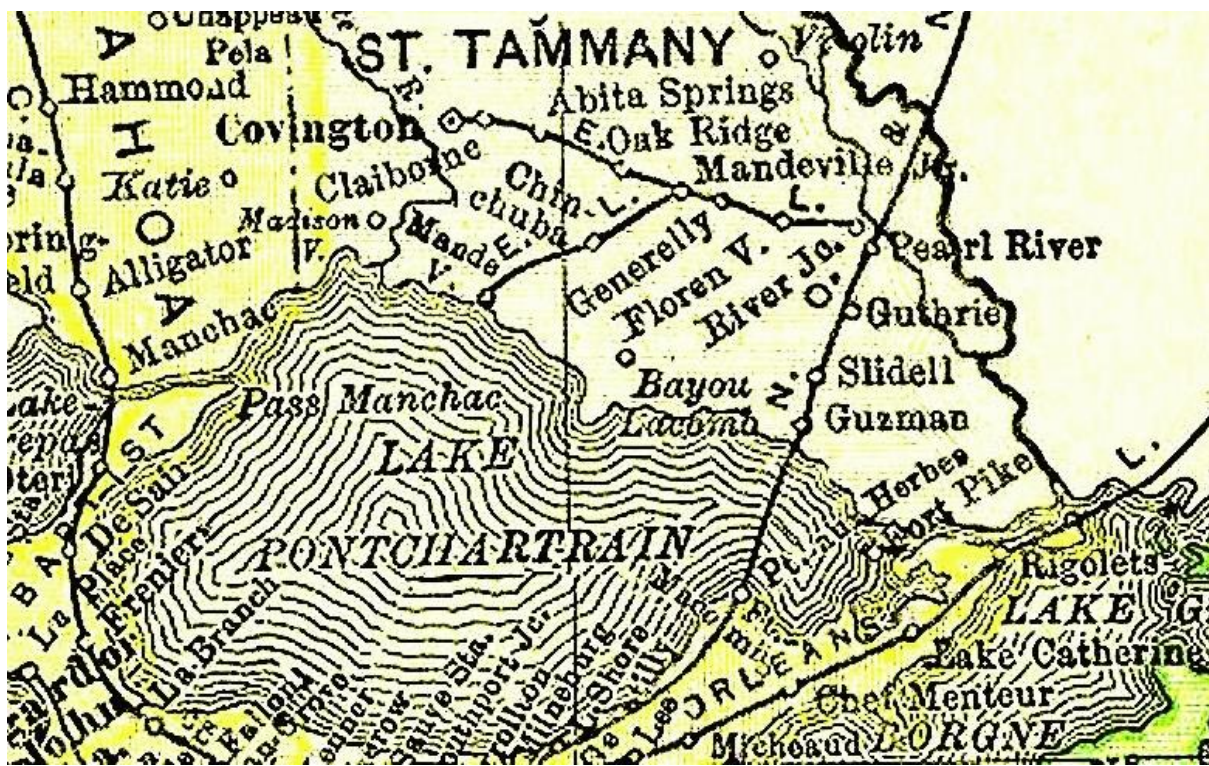
## Bill Herke's Sailboat

Thankfully, Bill's sailboat has finally been sold. Because of the accrued storage fees, the Club will only realize a net benefit of about \$500. However, we have eliminated the monthly storage fee of \$55. The 9.9 hp Honda outboard from Bill's sailboat has yet to be sold and is currently being serviced by James Shaw. We are hopeful of being able to sell the engine for at least \$1000.

# Maritime Museum Louisiana History Briefs

## Lighthouses of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin- Part B

Informed of a so-called “backdoor” to the Mississippi Sound from the Mississippi River by native Indians in 1699, d’Iberville travelled through what is now known as Bayou Manchac (Iberville named it the d’Iberville River at the time) into first one lake and through a pass into a second lake. He named the former, Lake Maurepas, and the latter, Lake Pontchartrain. While not named by d’Iberville, the pass became known as Pass Manchac. Ship captains used this route extensively subsequent to its discovery, but it wasn’t until 1837 that Congress appropriated \$7000 to build a lighthouse marking the pass from Lake Pontchartrain into Lake Maurepas and thence into the Mississippi River. The original lighthouse, completed in 1839,



was constructed as a conical tower of inferior materials that deteriorated rapidly requiring it to be rebuilt in 1842. Unfortunately, more serious stability problems began to beset the lighthouse, specifically

undermining its foundation by the waters of Lake Pontchartrain. This required yet another lighthouse to be constructed at the site. This version of the lighthouse was constructed of cypress harvested from the nearby swamps and consisted of a two-story Victorian house with a 45-ft tower at its center. Unfortunately, it suffered from being built too close to the water that soon encroached on the structure requiring yet another replacement structure as of 1855. Thus, in 1856, Congress appropriated \$10,000 to underwrite the cost of new construction.

In an effort to avoid problems with future flooding, a site some 200-ft northwest of the present site that had not been subjected to flooding was selected. Illustrated to the right, the new design was a 1 ½ story brick and mortar house with a connected tower of similar height and construction. Fourth order Fresnel lens were installed in the tower but were removed by Confederate forces in 1861 for safe keeping. Damage sustained during the Civil War required extensive repairs including replacement of the lantern and installation of fifth order Fresnel lens, but the lighthouse was back in service by December 1865.

Despite the previous attempts to isolate the lighthouse from flooding and undermining problems, they persisted, resulting in the construction of a 200-ft driven pile breakwater barrier. The barrier was effectively breached during the Hurricane of August 1888 requiring remedial construction including the placement of rockfill behind the breakwater barrier. A fog bell was added to the tower in 1898 to aid mariners during conditions of low visibility.



PASS MANCHAC.



Similar to the story of the female keeper at the Port Pontchartrain Lighthouse, Mary Succow (1844-1911) served nearly 37 years as the lighthouse keeper at Pass Manchac. The Succow family lived at the lighthouse for over 50 years. Originally, Mary's husband Anthony served as the keeper starting in 1868. Upon his death in 1873, Mary assumed the lighthouse keeper position as was consistent with the policy of



the US Lighthouse Service at the time. In her letter of resignation in 1909, she touted her son Hugo as an able replacement keeper citing his efforts over the years as well as his knowledge. Apparently, the Lighthouse Board found her rationale convincing because Hugo was appointed



as Mary's replacement in that same year and remained in that position until 1921. The previous photo is of the lighthouse and dwelling as they stood in 1914. The precarious condition of the various structures is clearly evident.

The lighthouse was automated in 1941 at which time the dwelling was abandoned. In 1956, the dwelling was demolished to prevent unwelcome occupants. Efforts were initiated to stabilize and restore the lighthouse but in removing the lantern room, it broke in two. Efforts to stabilize the remaining tower were undertaken in 2002 at which time it was now located some 1,000 ft from shore. While withstanding the forces of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the tower finally toppled into the waters of the Lake during Hurricane Isaac in 2012.

On a positive note, the lantern room of the lighthouse was restored and is on display at the Maritime Museum Louisiana in Madisonville. The Pass Manchac Lighthouse is the last of the five lighthouses located on Lake Pontchartrain that are addressed in Parts A and B of the Maritime History Briefs on lighthouses. The remainder of the lighthouses to be considered are located outside of the Lake.

Two lighthouses were located in the Rigolets, one at the east end and one at the west end. Let's consider the lighthouse located at the west end first. It should be recalled that the Rigolets is a natural channel or bayou connecting Lake Pontchartrain with Lake Borgne and subsequently with the Mississippi Sound. Its existence was revealed to d'Iberville by native Indians as early as 1699.



Congress authorized the construction of the lighthouse in 1831 but it wasn't actually built until 1855. It was located to mark the entrance to the Rigolets from Lake Pontchartrain. It stands unique in lighthouse history as being the only lighthouse for which the keeper was murdered. At the beginning of the Civil



War, the light was extinguished but relit by Union forces in November 1962 with a ship's lantern. Two days later the keeper, Thomas Harrison, was found shot to death. Notwithstanding that tragedy, the lighthouse was renovated a year later, and its light equipped with fifth-order Fresnel lens. Similar to the other lighthouses in the Basin, the West Rigolets Lighthouse was damaged on a regular basis by hurricanes necessitating the need for repairs and new breakwaters. It was finally deactivated in either 1939 or 1945 depending on the reference source. Its condition continued to deteriorate until 2005 at which time it was completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.



The East Rigolets Lighthouse was located at the entrance to the Rigolets from Lake Borgne, specifically on Rabbit Island at the mouth of Pearl River. At the time, Rabbit Island was known as Pleasonton's Island after Stephen Pleasonton who oversaw the operations of the US Treasury Department's Lighthouse Establishment. Authorized in 1831, it wasn't constructed until two years later. Commonly known as Pleasonton's Light, the conical

masonry tower reached some 60 ft above the elevation of the island. The lighthouse was originally equipped with ten Argand lamps with reflectors that were later replaced with fourth-order Fresnel lens. Like other lighthouses in the South, the light was extinguished at the beginning of the Civil War but was relit in 1862. A new lantern room was added in 1868 that required rebuilding the top of the existing tower. However, only a few years later the lighthouse was deemed unnecessary and permanently extinguished in 1874. It remained as a landmark for many years but was sold to private interests in 1923 and ultimately destroyed, a sad end to an iconic structure.



Constructed at the entrance to Bayou Bonfouca in 1848, the lighthouse was destroyed in 1862 by Confederate forces during the Civil War. The keeper at the time, Vincenzo Scorsa, was captured and incarcerated only to subsequently escape. As originally configured in the 30-ft tower, the light was provided by four small lamps in a 3 ft x 6 ft lantern. In 1857, the lantern was replaced by a light equipped with 5<sup>th</sup> Order Fresnel lenses. Given the location of the lighthouse in reference to the Rigolets, the major channel in the region, the light did not need to be seen from more than five miles.

It wasn't until 1875 that a replacement lighthouse was constructed. But rather than Bayou Bonfouca, the replacement lighthouse was located at Pointe Aux Herbes (see illustration below). This action resulted in relegating Bayou Bonfouca to a secondary port. At the new location, the lighthouse could serve to guide vessels traversing either the Rigolets or Chef Menteur Pass, both of which were principal passages from the Mississippi Sound to Lake Pontchartrain. Both passages are labeled on the illustration. The light was located in a 38 ft tower and equipped with 5<sup>th</sup> Order Fresnel lens. The light was not deactivated until



1945. A tragic accident occurred near the Pointe in 1852 when the boilers of the steam vessel *Saint James* exploded, and the vessel caught fire. The explosion and subsequent fire resulted in the death of 20 passengers. Said to be contributing to the accident was a purported race between *Saint James* and another vessel.

1880 saw the appropriation of \$3000 for the construction of a lighthouse at the mouth of the Amite River on Lake Maurepas. Constructed was completed in 1882 at

which time the lighthouse settled almost 2 ½ ft. The lighthouse was subsequently raised and provided with a satisfactory substructure support system. Cipra (1997) concluded that “The Amite River station can barely be considered a lighthouse.” He noted that the keeper “hoisted a small “Western River Lantern” on a mast over the dwelling roof, 45 ft above the lake. The lighthouse was replaced in 1934 by an automated acetylene lamp.

The commonality between the lighthouses that were identified and discussed appears to be two-fold: (1) the issue at all the lighthouses with continual maintenance usually due to the impacts of hurricanes and (2) the roles and contributions of women to lighthouse keeping. Notable, and in my judgment, under recognized and appreciated is the historic nature of the construction and operation of the Bayou St. John Lighthouse, purported to be the first lighthouse constructed outside to original 13 US Colonies. It served to guide vessels transporting goods to the French Quarter during the earliest stages of the development of New Orleans. Still to be addressed are lighthouses and lightships located along the southern coast of Louisiana.

*References-* [Pass Mancha Lighthouse, Louisiana at Lighthousefriends.com](http://www.lighthousefriends.com/passmancha/)

By USCG - <http://www.uscg.mil/history/web/lighthouses/LH1A.asp>, Public Domain,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8967459>

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