

THE HISTORY OF THE QUANTUCK BEACH CLUB

By Meredith Murray

The Quantuck Beach Club opened officially on September 21st, 1927, with the issuance of its Certificate of Incorporation. But its history really began 50 years earlier, at Mary Foster's Homestead Inn at the foot of Foster Lane in Quiogue.

Soon after Mary King Foster decided to take summer guests into her family's 100-year-old homestead in 1874, the boarding house became a popular vacation spot whose clientele included a number of prominent Presbyterian ministers as well as schoolteachers, most of them from Brooklyn. In time a number of these families built their own cottages nearby. "The Fosters sold to Presbyterian ministers," according to Ted Conklin, Jr. "[Former Homestead guest] Rev. Woodbridge got his friends -- schoolteachers, ministers, people who were looking for quiet -- to come to Quiogue. They were called the Brooklyn Presbyterians -- they were all friends, and they kept asking more of their friends."

Sailing to the beach was an adventure for both the Homestead's summer guests and for the new Quiogue home-owners who settled on Alden, Woodbridge and Foster Lanes. As early as the 1880s they gathered at the end of Foster Lane to be ferried to Quantuck Beach in large sailboats, which provided a breezier and faster trip than by overland horse-drawn buggy. In 1884 the owner of the property, John D. Hallock, began selling narrow ocean-front lots (running 300' long from the ocean to the bay) for approximately \$2 a running foot. A number of adjoining lots, in widths varying from 12 ½' to 100', were bought by the residents of Quiogue – the Corwins, Conklins and Beers all bought 100' wide pieces, Rev. Frederick purchased two 25' wide lots (for a total of \$37.50), and narrower lots were bought by the Homestead Corporation, Professor Kimball, John W. Patton and the Niebrugges.

Eventually, Theodore B. Conklin, Jr. recalled, "A board walk of four feet ran up through a double line of dunes, ending at a bathhouse no wider than the property. This gave the area a zebra-striped effect, and everyone was very close together. The bathhouses were *tiny*, and everybody in Quiogue went to the beach, whether or not they

owned any land or a bathhouse.” A shady oasis was provided on the beach by means of oak branches laid atop ropes connecting tall wooden posts. In time the Quantuck Association, as the Quiogue beach-goers called themselves, offered a power boat alternative to the sailboats for the Homestead boarders and other residents of Quiogue.

The lineup of bathhouses, according to Ted Conklin’s *On Quiogue*, was: “The Corwin’s Beach Plum Camp furthest west; next in order came Conklin, Beers, Kimball, Carter, Quiogue Homestead Inc., Halsey, Spink, Neibrugge, Kidde, Martin, Fancher and Brower.” The outhouses were on the bay side, Mary Morgan remembers, to the left of a path which ran between the bathhouses, from the bay to the ocean. An outdoor cold-water shower and a hose were attached to the southeast corner of the Homestead bathhouse.

The Quantuck Association’s beach was by no means the first “bathing station” along the Westhampton ocean-front. William and Beulah Raynor are said to have established the first one in the area in 1870 in the form of a few crude bathhouses at the foot of Beach Lane. A few years later, “Pop” Rogers took over the station and renamed it Rogers Bathing Beach. Boarders at Jagger’s Cedar Beach Hotel and the Apaucuck Point House were ferried across Moriches Bay to Herb Culver’s bathing station near Pond Point, and Quogue residents had a choice of John Hallock’s Bathing Station (built in 1880), the Post Bathing Station (1900), as well as the ever-popular Old Beach. By 1911 serviceable bridges provided access to the beaches from the mainland, and the Long Island Railroad brought a steady stream of summer vacationers to the area – 33,867,228 traveled the rails to the East End that year.

In 1914 Mary Foster Dobson passed away, and the owners of the cottages adjoining the Homestead Inn property -- led by Edwin P. Maynard – formed the Quiogue Homestead Co., Inc. “to prevent the property from going to a purchaser,” Edwin’s son Richard Maynard wrote in a 1978 letter to local historian Laurence Casey, “who might open a saloon in the Homestead and otherwise damage Quiogue.” The incorporators were Frederick A.M. Burrell, Lucius H. Beers and Edwin P. Maynard. The directors were Burrell, Beers, Maynard, Walter Kidde, Charles F. Halsey and William T. Calloway. These men

would all be prominent in forming the Quantuck Beach Club a few years later.

In 1927, the Roaring Twenties and the opening of a new beach club (the West Bay Bathing Corporation) proved too much of a threat for the Quiogue contingent. "The 'West Bay' had proved much too modern for some of the more staid and dignified folk of the time," recounts Beatrice Rogers in her *Historical Sketch of the Incorporated Village of Westhampton Beach*, "especially when it was discovered that women frequently bathed there without stockings."

In 1927 the families who had bought strips of land on Quantuck Beach pooled their property together and formed an incorporated private club. After leasing their lots to Quantuck Beach Club, Inc., they built themselves a club house -- a simple construction, consisting of an open-sided pavilion overlooking the ocean, with separate bathhouses behind for men and women. No gift shop, no tea room, no liquor, not even hot water -- the Quantuck Association landholders were intent on safeguarding their way of life.

And so the Quantuck Beach Club was born. On September 23rd, 1927, at 8:30 p.m., the first meeting of the officers and directors of the Quantuck Beach Club, Inc., was held at the Westhampton Beach home of George L. Hatheway. The incorporators -- Lucius H. Beers, Frederick A. M. Burrell, William T. Callaway, Dwight H. Corwin, Hatheway Edwin P. Maynard and, in absentia, Warren G. Kimball (all Quiogue summer residents) -- elected Mr. Maynard president, Mr. Callaway Vice President, Mr. Burrell Treasurer, and Mr. Hatheway Secretary.

Eleven years later, on Sept. 21, 1938, the clubhouse was destroyed by a devastating hurricane that razed nearly all of the 179 houses on Dune Road, killing 29 people in Westhampton Beach alone. The new 1939 clubhouse included a glass-enclosed sun-room on the upper deck from which older members of the club could look at the beach and the ocean from the comfort of rocking chairs.

As the original leases for the strips of land upon which the Club had been built began to expire, the Beach Club started purchasing, piece by piece, the land it had been renting. In 1936 the Club purchased

the Quiogue Homestead Company's 12.5 feet of beach front for \$500; in 1940 the property of Richard M. Martin just east of the Club was purchased from his estate for \$500; the 90-foot-wide piece of property owned by Mr. Fancher just east of the Martin property was purchased for \$1,149.50 at the same per-foot price as the Martin piece; the Stebbins' property (formerly owned by the Wursters) was purchased in 1941 for \$1,274.80; and in 1941 land previously owned by the Kidde, Niebrugge, Kimball and Halsey families was exchanged for other plots. By 1946 Quantuck Beach Club was carrying 165 feet of property running from ocean to bay, representing a book value on land and improvements (less depreciation) of \$13,865. In 1949 Mrs. Bessie Hallock sold to the Club the 30-foot strip that adjoined the Club's eastern boundary for \$1200, and the following year the Dana family's 50-foot wide strip west of the Club was also purchased.

Edwin Post Maynard stepped down as president of Quantuck in 1948, after 21 years in the post. The grandson of a gardener and the son of a Brooklyn Savings Bank teller, E.P. left school after the eighth grade and started as a page at the Brooklyn Savings Bank, where he quickly rose above his father's level and, as a result of his extraordinary talent for bringing in business, became the president of the Brooklyn Trust Company across the street from the Brooklyn Savings Bank. E.P.'s son Richard replaced his father as president of Quantuck Beach Club.

In 1954 the key office was moved to the north against the side of the women's bathhouse so that a cafeteria could be designed into that space in a rectangular, four-window format, with a wide walkway around the west side of the Club to accommodate a circular traffic pattern. Quantuck Beach Club was soon providing weekday lunches - hamburgers and hot dogs served out of one cafeteria window, hot entrees from another, salad plates and desserts from a third window, and sodas and a variety of ice cream concoctions from a fourth window.

In 1944 Quiogue resident Andy Jacobs, who with his wife Marjorie had managed the club since 1928, retired as QBC's first Superintendent, and Wilson Reynolds took over. He would prove to be a mainstay of the Beach Club for the next 37 years, 16 of them as manager. In 1961 Wilson retired as manager (he stayed on as the

club bookkeeper and advisor for nearly 20 more years) and Bruce Federico became manager.

The clubhouse held its own against the hurricanes of 1944 and 1954, but in March, 1962, a five-day, pounding, surging, winter storm washed away the glassed-in pavilion, the shady verandas and the wicker rocking chairs, the four-window cafeteria, the roof-covered picnic tables and the spacious lifeguard room. The Board of Directors chose to rebuild the Club as a very simple structure, consisting of nothing more than the bathhouses and an upper deck with a small kitchen shed, plus a boardwalk to the beach. The price tag for the reconstruction was \$37,728.91.

In July of 1962 another milestone was reached when Richard Maynard stepped down after 14 years as Club president, thus ending the Maynards' remarkable 35-year-long era of Quantuck Beach Club leadership. In 1964 the stockholders decided for tax reasons to transfer the assets of the Company to a new non-profit membership corporation, ending its status as a profit-making, dividend-paying business. On April 17, 1964, a new Certificate of Incorporation was issued and Quantuck Beach Club Inc. became Quantuck Beach Club Corporation, Inc.

Tom Muhs took over as manager of the Club in 1970 and as of this writing has held that position for 39 years. The son of a charter boat captain, Tom was born and raised in Westhampton. He first came to Quantuck in 1964 when, as a junior at Westhampton Beach High School, he worked as a lifeguard for Wilson Reynolds. After earning a degree in business administration from Bryant College, he became QBC's manager (at the age of 23), and subsequently went on to earn a master's in education from Long Island University. In his non-Quantuck life, he has worked as a business teacher at the Westhampton Beach High School and has coached both the football and tennis teams. In 1985 Tom's wife Karen joined the Quantuck team and took charge of the kitchen, a post she held for more than 15 years, until her untimely passing from a respiratory disease.

For more than 80 years Quantuck Beach Club has been run by a staff of caring and highly trained personnel, under the direction of an

involved membership led by an ever-changing board of volunteer directors and officers.

Quantuck beach and its ocean are still awesomely beautiful, but the original members of the Quantuck Association who sailed across the bay from the Homestead Inn would have difficulty understanding some of the modern day accoutrements that adorn their former bathing station – cell phones and blackberries, folding umbrellas and surf boards, veggie burgers and panninis.

But the essence of Quantuck remains the same as it was decades and decades ago. Looking back almost 40 years after he retired as QBC's manager, Bruce Federico described the Club this way:

“Quantuck is known as a quiet, quiet, very un-obnoxious club where people mind their own business. I don't think it'll ever change, and it shouldn't. The members have somehow been able to maintain it just the way it's always been. I don't think it could ever be done again, staying the same way without getting out of hand. It's absolutely amazing – to have the people band together the way they did, first with just their own lockers on land they owned and then building a club and staying together. Quantuck is a simple affair, no great big fanfare. It's very, very nice.”

--- MEREDITH MURRAY, May, 2009

For more on the history of Quantuck Beach Club, see *Steamed Crabs and Cranberries, The Story of Quantuck Beach*, available from Meredith Murray at meredithmurray@optonline.net/.