

# History of The Beach Club

As prepared by Laurence B. Leonard  
President from 1968-1972

June 2010

To: Members and Friends of The Beach Club

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This year I decided it was time to do an update and, accordingly, you will find attached a copy of the 1988 presentation followed by a few pages on the major happenings taking place between 1988 and 2010, the past 22 years.

Repeating what I wrote in 1988, The Beach Club’s existence is a story of individuals with foresight, selfless dedication and plain, hard work. This certainly is demonstrated in the challenges that were successfully met during the last two decades.

The Beach Club is in its 82<sup>nd</sup> year, and you may find the enclosed information of interest. I take full responsibility for all errors and omissions.

Respectfully,

Laurence B. Leonard Jr.  
President (1968-1972)

June 1988

To: Members and Friends of The Beach Club

This year, 1988, The Beach Club celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. How it all came about, how it survived depression, war, change and the almighty Atlantic Ocean is a fascinating story, a story primarily of individuals with foresight and selfless dedication and plain, hard work over six decades.

Hopefully, someone, someday will document the Club's history and traditions. In the meantime, the following may be of interest.

**1928**

On June 5, 1928, the first meeting of Guarantors and signers of the Agreement of Association was held for the purpose of forming a corporation under the provisions of Chapter 180 of the General Laws, as amended, to be known as The Beach Club.

Annual dues were set at \$50 per membership, and \$5 for each family member using the pool. Stephen Paine was elected President.

The Beach Club leased the property from the Bradlee Avenue Trust for a term of 12 years. The financial success of the Club was not then determined, and in order to give The Beach Club the benefit of any doubt, the lessors agreed to rent the property for \$500 provided receipts exceeded expenses by that amount.

**1933**

Dues were reduced from \$50 to \$40. The United States was in depression.

A kitchen was added to the Clubhouse.

**1935**

Construction of cabanas was authorized. There were five private cabanas rented out. Each included changing facilities, bathroom and shower, and a small sitting room. In most cases, individual cabanas were shared by two or three families.

**1939**

The Beach Club purchased the two parcels of land then being leased from the Bradlee Avenue Trust.

**1944**

Lieutenant Commander Stephen Paine's resignation as President was accepted.

**1945**

Two tennis courts were authorized for construction. It was noted that the War Production Board would not sanction this work, but it was hoped that conditions would change soon.

During World War II, the beach was patrolled by the Coast Guard, and at one point there was an Army detachment on the former Curran property with barbed wire, search lights and small armaments.

### **1948**

Dues were \$75 plus an additional \$15 representing Federal Excise Tax of 20%.

### **1950**

It was felt that it was unwise to consider building more cabanas.

The property across the street from the main building was purchased (currently used for parking).

### **1961**

The Town of Swampscott voted against an article to take by eminent domain the adjacent Curran Property for bathing, swimming, recreation, etc.

### **1968**

After a number of years of discussion, heat was added to the pool for the first time.

### **1972**

Bert E. Preston retired after many, many years as Superintendent. A man of principle, discipline and hard work, Bert was “Mr. Beach Club”. Bert’s wife, known to most as Mrs. Preston, passed away in 1950, and the minutes record a “loss deeply felt by all her many friends.” From then on, Bert’s closest companion was “Duchess”, his German shepherd, with full privileges of the Club.

### **1975**

This is not the exact date, but sometime between 1970 and 1976 The Beach Club made the traumatic and controversial decision to change from salt water to fresh water.

### **1978**

In February, “The Blizzard of ‘78” leveled the entire property from front to back. A major rebuilding got underway against many odds, and a view by some that The Beach Club had come to an end after 50 years.

### **1979**

Two additional tennis courts were built within the main grounds of the Club.

### **THE POOL**

The pool was built in 1928 by Turner Construction Company at a cost of \$16,370. The pool was filled with salt water using cast iron piping that extended from the pump room through the wall and under the sand out to the low tide. Although there was a filtration system, the pool was cleaned from time to time by emptying the water, washing down the walls and then refilling it. Members often participated in the cleaning. During certain intervals, the water was dropped two or three feet just to get some good clean water in. This meant that the pool was always cold (freezing might be a better word). This presumably made for strong bodies and clean minds! Since the pool could only be filled at high tide, the cleaning process usually closed the pool for two or three days—inconvenient to say the least.

The introduction of heat in 1968 made a great deal of difference and was welcomed by all.

Another key change was the decision to move to fresh water. After 40 years of salt water, this was very controversial. There were basically two problems with salt water. One was that salt water, over time, made life difficult for the Club’s system of heating, filtering and pumping, and the electrical and moving parts of the entire operation. The second problem, and indeed the more critical, was that the Club was having increasing difficulty getting water from the ocean to the pool, and costs were escalating rapidly.

Each spring, and for much of the summer, breaths were held as the pumps were turned on and valves were opened and shut. It was an art, not a science. All it took was one pin hole somewhere along the pipe. And invariably it happened as these pipes were pounded unmercifully by seas and rocks and tides. Often the problem would develop on a weekend, or a

holiday, or both—and of course you had to have low tide which seemed to be always at 4 a.m., and it was necessary to have heavy equipment and manpower. Slowly patience gave way to reason; the expense involved in each of these ventures began to have an impact. The final decision was difficult, and even in 1988 it is certain that you will find older members who miss the joy and pleasure of swimming in salt water.

### **ATLANTIC OCEAN**

If you stand on the steps of The Beach Club on a stormy day, you can understand why insurance agents are prone to tremble. The Club is vulnerable. The records are very clear on that subject. Looking at the past 35 years, The Beach Club has sustained damage of varying degrees in 1955, 1956, 1957, 1960, 1967, 1972, 1978 and 1987.

The 1967 storm hit two days before opening with all the chairs, umbrellas, tables, etc. in place and ready to go. It took three weeks to put things back together again.

The most extensive damage was in February of 1978 because it literally threatened the very existence of the Club. The key difference in this storm was that the clubhouse was battered and subsequently vandalized by fire, etc. Essentially, The Beach Club was a total disaster—the Clubhouse a wreck, fences down, pool and pump room filled with rocks and sand, and the entire property covered with debris, sand and water. Many said it was the end of the Club.

Within 24 hours, the Officers, Board and friends met and set in motion an extensive plan of rescue. Responsibilities were broken down as follows:

- Securing the property which included replacing washed out land and installing an entirely new fence in the dead of winter.
- Clearing and cleaning up huge amounts of sand, rocks, boulders and debris from the destroyed cabanas and Clubhouse.
- Finding an architect, developing a design and structure within the restrictions of Federal and local building codes, putting out to bid, and completing construction by Memorial Day weekend.
- Researching, filing documents, negotiating for property and flood insurance recovery, and Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Assistance. This latter effort culminated in a loan of approximately \$160,000 for 30 years at 3% interest.

Between February 15 and May 29, it all came together, and the Club opened –on time!

As suggested at the start, this is not history of The Beach Club, but rather a compilation of interesting dates and happenings from official records.

Happy Birthday! See you at the 75<sup>th</sup> in 2003!

Respectfully,

Laurence B. Leonard, Jr.  
Member, Board of Governors

# **The Beach Club Major Events 1988-2010**

**June 2010**

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**Respectfully,**

**Laurence B. Leonard Jr.  
President  
1968-1972**

**The Beach Club  
Major Events  
1988-2010**

**1991 - The No Name Storm**

**On October 31, 1991 a low pressure system, high pressure system, and fading hurricane (Hurricane Grace) collided over the Atlantic Ocean creating what became known as The Perfect Storm. Around our area, we called it The No-Name Storm; some called it The Halloween Storm. In any event, this storm slammed the eastern United States, causing millions of dollars in damages, rivaling the devastating Blizzard of '78.**

**The Beach Club got clobbered! A letter to members in early November stated: "clubhouse suffered substantial damage to both its structure and contents; all perimeter fencing torn from concrete footings; cabana destroyed; pool shed and tennis shed damaged; pool filled with sea water, sand and debris; seawall damaged at several points; all the property including vacant lot under two**

feet of water; tennis courts covered with several inches of sand.” There is a DVD on file showing the destruction.

The Officers, Directors and friends assembled almost immediately and once again set in place the plan for recovery. There was plenty to do: secure the property; clear the sand and debris; contact engineers, contractors, an architect; seek guidance and permitting from regulating bodies at the local, state and national level; talk with our insurers and financial intermediaries as to what this all was going to cost and figuring out how the bills were going to be paid. The goal was to get the Club in shape to open on Memorial Day weekend 1992---not an easy assignment given the facts that other entities were rushing to rebuild and regulators often were reluctant to make decisions without lengthy review.

The 1991-92 reconstruction cost approximated \$325,000 including \$188,000 to rebuild the seawall. Funding included roughly \$71,000 from insurance. Other funds were provided from an SBA Loan dated February 19, 1992 in the amount of \$304,300 with an interest rate of 4% and maturity of 27 years 4 months.

The general contractor for the seawall was Glover Construction Company, Swampscott. Childs Engineering from Medfield did all the engineering design; Joset Corporation in Ipswich provided the forms for the project and oversaw the pouring of concrete. Various contractors were used for repairing other damage and they were selected and monitored by the Board of Directors.

Note: With reference to Page 4 and the Blizzard of '78, the financial audit dated December 31, 1978 indicates a cost to rebuild of \$194,856 with \$50,166 coming from insurance proceeds and \$165,000 from a SBA Loan dated April 4, 1978 at 3% interest with 30 year amortization. The building architect was James I. Starratt Architect, Lynn; the general contractor was Connolly Brothers Inc., Beverly Farms.

### 1999-2003 Facility Renovation

Discussion of major renovation of the Club began in 1999. The principle questions for the clubhouse were size, configuration and location. Location was an issue because new regulations established the fact that the 1999 clubhouse site was too close to the ocean and, furthermore, the structure would have to be on stilts to mitigate storm damage. The fact that we would be building on a different “footprint” introduced a new set of problems as they related to permitting and the process of approvals.

Many opinions were expressed and debated; there were numerous points of view driven partly by cost considerations and partly from the question of what

was actually needed for a seasonal swimming and tennis club. The pool had its own set of issues. It was leaking and it was becoming increasingly difficult to solve the problem. The pool was too shallow at the deep end for a serious diving board; the pool was out of code under current regulations. In short, this was a 70 year old pool showing its age and the effects of numerous repairs from storm damage.

Costs became an obvious point of discussion here also as people debated doing a full and complete reconstruction versus major repairs and/or putting in a liner. The decision came down to some rather simple facts: If we put in a liner (still fairly expensive), we still had an old pool, still out of code on a number of fronts and it was concluded that we would be back in another 8-10 years (or earlier) faced with the same problems and questions. Decision made.

The Club was cognizant that it was important to work with neighbors and the neighborhood but, in retrospect, it is safe to say that the Club was surprised at the level and intensity of opposition to the proposed plans. There were many meetings. Allegations were made, voices were raised and there was a high degree of unpleasantness. At one point, discussions broke off; meetings stopped being scheduled.

While this was going on, officers were meeting with the Conservation Board, Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

On February 26, 2002 there was a meeting with the Swampscott Zoning Board of Appeals in a highly charged atmosphere. Presentations were made by the Club and neighbors; questions were asked. There was a point when the actual existence of The Beach Club was in jeopardy. The Beach Club was a nonconforming use-a private club-in a residential zone. The fact that the Club was there first in 1928 when there were no houses counted for little. Finally, The Beach Club was able to produce documents that gave legitimacy to the Club's location and operation. That turned out to be critical. William DiMento of DiMento & DiMento, Swampscott represented The Beach Club on legal matters. A DVD of the above referenced meeting is on file.

Under date of June 20, 2002 the Swampscott Zoning Board of Appeals granted approval of The Beach Club's application for a special permit with conditions. These conditions addressed the concerns of the neighbors on several levels: hours of operation, length of season, number of evening functions, not seeking a liquor license. What was originally thought to be a 1 to 2 year process

to receive permits came closer to 4 years.

Reconstruction began after the Club's closing after Labor Day 2002. The total cost was approximately \$1,650,000 with the pool at \$400,000 (including \$90,000 for excavation and removal of peat), seawall \$182,000, landscaping \$32,000, building etc. at \$1,050,000. The architect was William A. Hall Architects, Swampscott. The general contractor was R.C. Griffin of Peabody and the pool contractor was South Shore Gunitite in Chelmsford. A DVD of the reconstruction 2002-2003 is on file.

A storm with high tides and coastal flooding on January 4, 2003 removed 65 feet of seawall. Total cost was estimated at \$185,000 with design and rebuilding at \$120,000 and emergency work at \$60,000.

In order to finance the new facility, the Club entered into a construction loan convertible to permanent financing with Eastern Bank in the original amount of \$1,400,000 (subsequently raised to \$1,550,000). The Club subsequently established a program of assessments with payment options covering 1 to 10 years.

With construction set back from the January storm, The "New" Beach Club opened its 2003 season on July 1.

### 2000-Guarantors

The Club increased the number of Guarantors from 30 to 45. This change was to enhance overall governance and facilitate those who were writing letters of recommendation for new applicants for membership.

### 2003-ByLaws

In April 2003, the Club voted approval of updated and amended bylaws, the first major overhaul since 1928.

### April 2010

In late April an All Member Meeting was held at Marblehead High School. The agenda included governance, financials, capital plans, staff, committees, survey results, 2010 season preview. The purpose was to improve member communications and foster a better understanding of how the Club is governed, organized and operated.

### Final Comment

**While there were the normal comings and goings on a daily, weekly and monthly basis during the years 2004 thru June 2010, there were no major events that affected the direction of the Board/Officers in operating The Beach Club. The above information was assembled by the undersigned based on Beach Club documents and discussions with officers and friends of the Club.**

**Laurence B. Leonard Jr. -- Member 2010**