

The Sycamore Islander

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Photo by Mark Friedrichs



Photos by Diane Noble

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November 11: Fall Work-Fest (rain date: November 18)

November 14: Monthly Club Meeting, 8 pm at home of Tryon Wells, 6216 Winston Dr. (last house on left, one block south of River Rd)

December 12: Annual Meeting and Holiday Party at Vicky Judson and Michael Esch's home, 6203 Dahlonega Road

Relief Caretakers' Schedule and Online Sign-Up System

To sign-up to be a Relief Caretaker (any Saturday), you can access the "Sign-Up Genius" app from the [SycamoreIsland.org scheduling webpage](#) (or by clicking the Relief Caretaker Schedule and Instructions icon on the Club's home page). Click on the link to the app. There are simple instructions. [You can also sign-up by

contacting the Relief Caretaker Coordinator, Madeleine Carter, at madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com]. The app provides a calendar that indicates ALL of the Relief Caretakers that have signed up (through February, but March - April will be added soon) and provides reminders. Relief Caretakers signed up for the coming month are:

November 3

10 am to 2 pm: Augustus Anderson
2 to 6:30 pm: Jennifer Urquhart

November 17

10 am to 2 pm: John and Susanna Membrino
2 to 5:30 pm: Margaret Barry

November 10

10 am to 2 pm: Catherine Seibert
2 to 5:30 pm: Eric Aaserud

November 24

10 am to 2 pm: Augustus Anderson
2 to 5:30 pm: Stephanie Lai

Thank You to ALL those who served as relief caretakers during October!

Come to the Sycamore Island Fall Work-Fest!

Sunday, November 11, 9 am – 4 pm
[Rain date November 18]

Bring tools, gloves and something yummy to share.

We'll supply the burgers, chicken and hotdogs.

See you then!



Photo by Anne Marie Cunningham

CARETAKER'S LOG

Thursday -- October 4, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.5 Water Temperature: 68

The river is slowly receding but it looks like the ferry will be closed today, tomorrow and Saturday at least. It's possible that we'll be closed on Sunday too.

The flood left huge piles of mud on the boardwalk. It's like those boardwalks you see being buried by shifting sand dunes, just obliterated. There is also a lot of work to be done to get the canoes back on the racks. For now we have to wait until the river goes down. I hope that the owners of all of these private boats realize that they need to come down and put their boats back on the racks.



The biggest bummers are that the bell rope broke again and the power line to the trail lights will have to be re-strung across the river. No trail lights for the meeting this month.

Monday -- October 8, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.7 Water Temperature: 72

The ferry is open!

It's been almost three weeks but I can finally cross the river in a standing position again! What a summer! And then the high water trickled right into the beginning of fall!? Four times over ten feet and twice over eight feet!



Friday -- October 12, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.4 Water Temperature: 70

It looks like we dodged another bullet, and Hurricane Michael passed by us without dumping too much rain in the mountains. They are predicting that the river will go above five feet on Sunday but I'm pretty sure that that prediction will change and the ferry will be open all weekend.

We actually had a quorum at the meeting on Wednesday night, good to see everyone. To my surprise and delight, the Club voted to give Mary and me a wedding gift. We feel so special, thanks everyone!

There are still no plans for a post flood clean-up so it's gonna be difficult to launch a canoe if you come down. There are still many canoes that need to be bailed if you want to come down and work, thanks.

Tuesday -- October 30, 2018

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 53

Well, I'm back from my vacation. It was so awesome to spend ten days camping and paddling down the remote and wild parts of our Potomac River, I even caught some fish! Thanks to everyone that came down and covered for me. Hope it was fun.



The trees on the far bank are turning yellow and with the mist on the river, it makes for a beautiful scene.

But I'm afraid that the leaves aren't turning and dropping fast enough. I'm afraid that the leaves will still be on the trees when we have our leaf clean-up work day.

There is talk of getting a new, state-of-the-art wood stove for the Clubhouse. How awesome would that be?!

Photo by Mark Friedrichs



Minutes of October 10, 2018, Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club

Participants: Sally Strain, Karen Possner, Jeff Komarow, Ann Marie Cunningham, Gerry Barton, Sherry Fizdale, Richard Bertaut, Jim Drew, Florian Kogelnik, Meredith Griggs

President Bertaut opened the meeting by congratulating Joe on his recent marriage to Mary, and later the meeting approved a wedding gift of \$1,000 from the club, for which Joe thanked the group. Joe and Mary plan a canoe trip for their honeymoon.

Reports included:

Financial:

- Former treasurer Ned Goddard and current treasurer Florian Kogelnik met with President Richard Bertaut and Vice President John Noble to hand over all treasurer's work.
- The club is in good financial shape, with no big, unexpected expenses this year.
- Financial secretary Sherry Fizdale reminded the meeting that waitlisters need to pay for canoe racks, which they can get if space is available.

Maintenance:

- Joe suggested an extra work day to bail out and clean up boats and put them back on

racks and to clean up the Island, there being much to be done after floods September 11 and 30. Boat owners are responsible for caring for their own boats.

- President Bertaut thanked Joe for all the extra work he has done already.
- Club Captain Stan Fowler has approved a leaf blower and lumber for ferry rails.
- Joe has painted all clubhouse screen doors and is now replacing the hardware on them.
- Joe said that the refurbished ferry will have a name on it; the original name was "Mamie."

The meeting minutes for September were approved

The 2019 nominating committee: John Noble, Anne Waidmann, and Madeleine Carter.

Honorary memberships for Norman Metzger and his wife, and Trip Reid were approved, in recognition of their long service to the club. Norm was relief caretaker scheduler 1997-1998 and Islander editor for four and a half years. Trip was supervisor of the grounds 1999-2001.

Respectfully submitted,
Meredith Griggs
Co-recording secretary

Nominating Committee Recommendations for Sycamore Island Officers and Supervisors for 2019

(As of November 3, 2018)

The Nominating Committee of John Noble, Madeleine Carter and Anne Waidmann submit the following recommendations for Officers and Supervisors for 2019. This slate will be presented for a vote at the December 12, 2018 Meeting. Interested in vacancies? Contact johnanoble@mac.com.

Officers

President *	Richard Bertaut
Vice President *	John Noble
CoRecording Secretaries	Lucky* and Bill Marmon
Treasurer	Meredith*Griggs
Financial Secretary*	Recruiting
Membership Secretary*	Sherry Fizdale
Islander Editor*	Anne Waidmann
Archivist*	Mark Friedrichs
Captain*	Karen Possner
Deputy Captain	Stan Fowler
	Recruiting

Supervisors

Finance *	Ann Marie Cunningham
Law*	Rebecca Beynon
Clubhouse	Recruiting
Grounds *	Alice Bullard
Painting/Carpentry*	Karl Kosok
Website*	Tryon Wells
Entertainment	Recruiting
Camping/Parties*	Molly Newberry
Canoeing *	Joe Cecil
Swimming	Recruiting
Relief Caretaker Scheduling*	Madeleine Carter

History under the Pool Table

By Karen Possner, Archivist

Several months ago, former captain Drew Walsh called to ask if he could drop off a bunch of cartons he had rescued from beneath the pool table. He did not know what they held, but thought they might contain “treasures.” He did a good deed. I’ve just finished examining the last dusty, buggy box & can report that while most contained 3-ring binders full of Sycamore Islanders that are already on deposit at the D.C. Historical Society & available on-line, the trove yielded a small pile of worthwhile treasures.

For example, I had never seen a 1996 article published in the Montgomery Miscellanea section of the now-defunct “Quirks,” entitled “A ‘Country Club on the River’ written by a non-member who thinks we’re a pretty lucky bunch. One sentence in particular caught my attention: *“Although the clubhouse is included in the National Historic Registry, don’t look for Tara on the Potomac — the building is simple & rustic.”* The National Historic Registry is the Federal government’s official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures & objects deemed worthy of preservation for their historical significance & we’re on it? I never knew that & as club archivist, this is something I should have known. I decided to see if it was true.

In a weird coincidence, I know the article’s author (it contained a by-line) & also knew she was vacationing in Italy. Nevertheless, I contacted her & not only did she recall the article, she remembered interviewing club members & meeting with the librarian & archivist at the Historical Society in Rockville. She added, regrettfully, that all her research notes had been lost in a computer crash years ago so could not name her source. Next, I checked with a reliable source of all things Sycamorean, Tryon Wells, who said he could neither confirm nor deny the assertion & suggested I contact Anne Marie Cunningham, who actually turned out to know a lot. Without hesitation, Anne Marie replied “it is not.” But there was more to the story. She explained that should there be a big flood (again), or any other event that damages more than 50 percent of the clubhouse structure, we would not have the right to rebuild or repair the damage because it is located in a floodplain. If the clubhouse sustained damage to less than 50 percent of the structure, we could undertake necessary repairs, but only to a degree that honors the building’s original contours. In other words, we could not expand our footprint or build up. Thus, if the clubhouse was registered as an historic structure, Montgomery County would permit us to rebuild only in a manner that would restore the current building.

Years ago, Anne Marie & our late friend Jane Winer considered the idea of seeking historic designation status for the clubhouse. Of their several discussions, one was with the architect who was then trying to change the zoning of the Sycamore Store so he might be permitted to locate his office there; the store’s historic status is recognized by the county, but not by the State or nationally. Another was with someone from the county’s historic preservation office who encouraged their efforts based on the club’s history & its collection of historic documents. One such document (which I have not seen), is a letter presumably written by one of the architects who designed/built the National Cathedral. Because two of the Cathedral’s architects, George Frederick Bodley & Henry Vaughan, died prior to 1920, the likely author is Philip Hubert Frohman, who died in 1972. Anne Marie added that Jane pursued this line of inquiry because she knew someone who worked at the Cathedral, but it never bore fruit. Around this same time, club members debated the pros & cons of seeking historic status, but the issue was divisive, encountering strong opposition. This may have been due to members needing to focus on a more pressing task, i.e., rebuilding the caretaker’s quarters, which proved challenging & time-consuming.

The question of seeking historic status came up again years later & our then-captain objected on the grounds that if it were granted & major repairs were necessary at some time in the future, the club would be limited to making repairs using essentially the same type of materials as had been lost or damaged, in order to preserve the character of the building. He argued this would

be detrimental to the integrity of the structure going forward.

So, what about the 1996 statement that our clubhouse is on the National Historic Registry?

Probing a bit further, I spoke to the executive director of the Montgomery County Historical Society, Matt Logan, also a co-founder of Potomac Riverkeeper. He is familiar with Sycamore Island & also thinks we're a lucky bunch, but could not provide a definitive "yes" or "no." He suggested contacting Sarah Hedlund, archivist & librarian for the Society. She's only been in that post a few years but also serves as archivist for the Montgomery County Archives, so is a terrific source of information & interesting research ideas. Conceding that the database is tricky to navigate, Sarah nevertheless conducted an exhaustive search of properties in the State of Maryland that are on the National Register of Historic Places & was able to state definitively that our clubhouse does *not* appear in the registry.

That may be the end of this story, but Drew's cache did yield some gems, including:

- a copy of the official program distributed at the June 17, 1938 dedication of the New Chain Bridge;
- an undated note from Mrs. Arthur D. Bailey, appended to the July 1924 issue of the Sycamore Islander (Vol. IV, No. 1, 15 cents a copy), thanking John Seabury Thomson for sending her a copy of her wedding announcement which she had not seen; Miss Naomi Parker & Mr. Bailey, who met on the Island when she was 15 & he was 23, married on the Island on June 11, 1924;
- a suggestion that the club issue membership cards to be shown when boarding the ferry; the editor notes that such cards have been issued periodically over the previous 93 years but have fallen into disuse;
- a faded typewritten document (n.d.) headed "Mile-posts in the history of Sycamore Island" stating that the club's [1914] elections resulted in control going to the conservative faction & the subsequent resignation of about one-third of the membership, due, presumably to admitting [10] women for the first-time;
- an original copy of the 16-page July 1923 Islander (printed by Jas. C. Wood of E Street, N.W., whose motto is "What I do, I do well"); and finally,
- a motion to prohibit livestock from being kept on the Island was approved August 7, 1902.



Islander Editor: Mark Friedrichs; suggestions or contributions of content or photos welcome to mark.d.friedrichs@gmail.com