

S. I. A. C. SENIOR EIGHT AT WORK.

THE HISTORY OF THE STATEN ISLAND ATHLETIC CLUB.

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ITS ORIGIN AND COMMENCEMENT.

STATEN ISLAND has always been looked upon as the home of the athlete. During the summer months the ranks of the resident population are very largely increased by the addition of hundreds of lusty young fellows devoted to the pursuit of base ball and cricket, of lawn tennis, yachting and rowing, who find on the grassy meads of the beautiful island the space for their favorite games that the bricks and mortar of Manhattan Island begrudge them. The Kill von Kull, or, the "Kills," as it is more familiarly known, is a broad sheet of lovely water between the Jersey coast and Staten Island, and forms one of the great arms of New York's magnificent bay, and, before the Standard Oil Works had polluted its clear and sparkling water with tons upon tons of filthy sludge acid and all the other noisome refuse from its factories, was as pretty a piece of water for the enjoyment of rowing and small boat sailing as could be wished for. Prior to the introduction of general athletics, inaugurated and so enthusiastically advanced, some ten or fifteen years ago, by the New York Athletic Club, swimming, rowing and boating were the chief amusements of the sons of the families that lived along the north shore of Staten Island, and to the Hesper and Neptune

boating clubs, two of the most famous aquatic organizations on the "Kills," most of the votaries of the sport belonged.

Several athletes of both clubs not content with seeking laurels with the oar had, during the year 1876, banded together for the purpose of keeping up other athletic exercises, such as running, jumping, walking, and hurdle-racing, and this, at that time, insignificant confederation, was known as the Staten Island Athletic Club, and became the parent of the present popular and famous club.

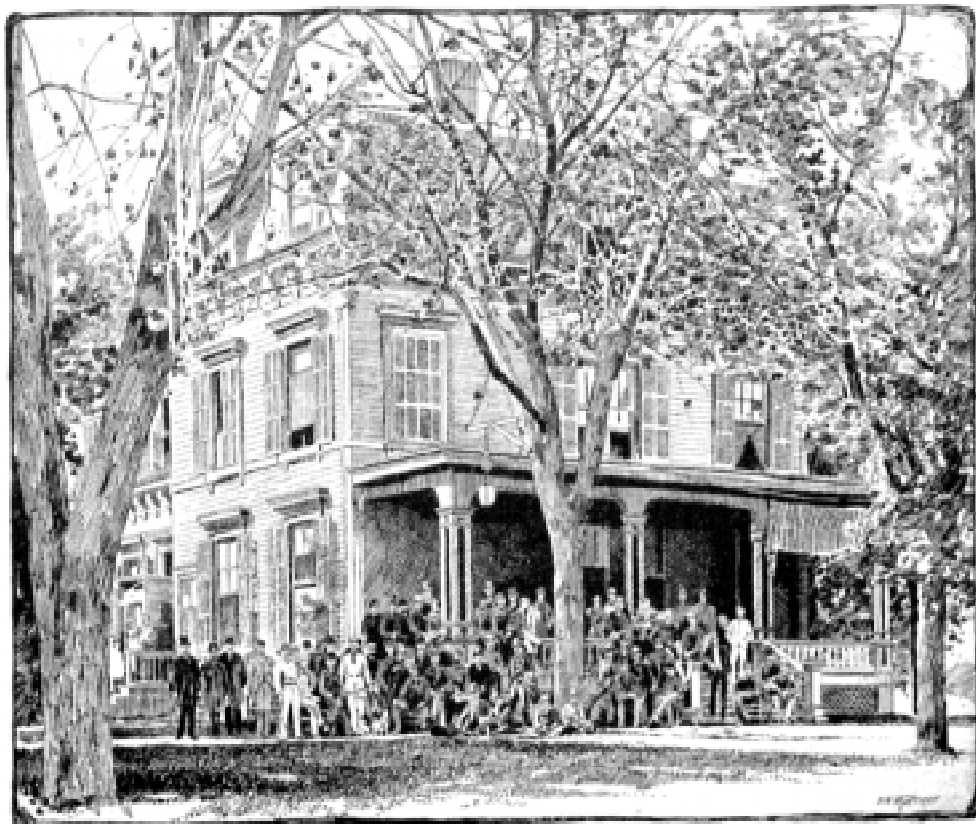
Among the original members of the club were such men as William Iken, Oliver T. Johnson, one of America's pioneer amateurs on the cinder path, John W. Edwards, captain of the Neptune Rowing Association, Wm. J. U. Roberts, Fred W. and Frank G. Janssen, Robert Fiske, Fred. Rodewald, Thomas Chute, and Henry A. Cæsar. These enthusiasts, after a great deal of difficulty, succeeded in hiring a piece of ground on Bement and Henderson avenues, New Brighton, and in 1878 attempted to hold their first athletic games, but rain and want of proper experience made the opening venture but a sorry success. Nothing daunted, however, the forlorn band went hard to work; greatly improved their running

track, fenced in the ground, erected a clumsy grand stand roofed by an old tar paulin, and in the fall of the same year, gave the first successful field meeting open to all comers. The success of this event put fresh courage in the drooping spirits of the struggling club and foreshadowed the grand possibilities that were open to it in the future. In these early years of its existence the club was greatly benefited by the untiring efforts of its worthy president, Wm. K. Soutter, and the faithful and meritorious services of Messrs. D. J. H. Willcox and H. W. J. Telfair.

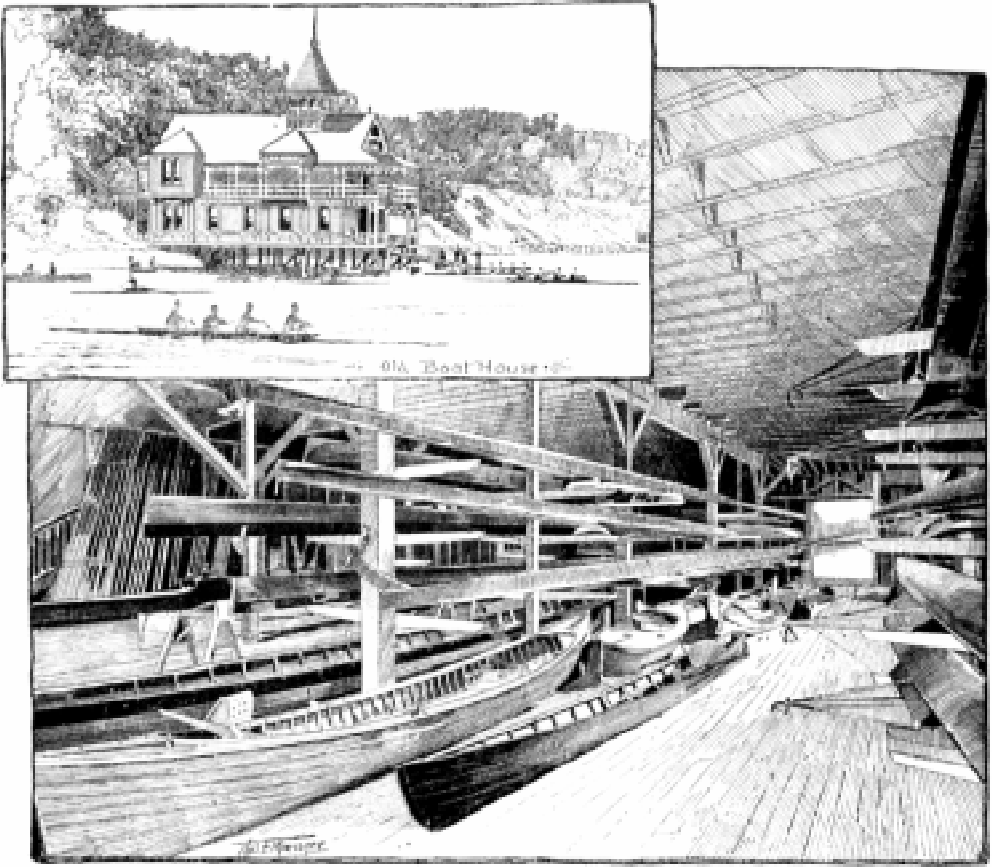
The year 1879 passed off rather quietly, although three meetings were held, as well as some private club events. The 100 yards "Soutter" medal, and the 440 yards "Sacks" medal being then on the programme for club members. The first competition for these medals took place in 1878, at the Fall Meeting, and early in the Spring of '79 members were in training to will the handsome trophies. First

De Garmendia and Rimmer won them respectively in 10 2-5 and 56¼ seconds, while later on the former went through the hands of Roberts three times, Beers once, Janssen three times, Fiske once, Morris once, and Rimmer five times, who finally retained the prize. The fastest races were the first and last, 10 2-5 and 10½ seconds by De Garmendia and Rimmer, while the "Sacks" medal was given up by Rimmer to Janssen, who walked over, but afterwards defeated Price Telfair, Fiske, Morris and Stursberg, running twice in 55¾ seconds. Mr. Telfair also won this medal twice before it became Janssen's personal property.

It will be seen, therefore, that the athletic interests of the North Shore centred in three principal organizations, viz., the Neptune and Hesper Rowing Clubs, and the Staten Island Athletic Club, and most of the participants in any pastime, whether aquatic or field, belonged to two if not to all three of these associations, and paid dues to all such as they



S. I. A. C. CLUB-HOUSE.



INTERIOR OF PRESENT BOAT-HOUSE

belonged. It was more than natural, therefore, that many of those who desired to enjoy both field and water sports thought it would be advantageous both to the interests of the existing clubs and of individuals who composed them, to consolidate their forces. The first attempt towards amalgamation was tried between the Hesper and Neptune Rowing Clubs, neither at this time being in such a flourishing condition as they had been, and each falling more and more into decay as the interests of the members leaned towards the rising Athletic Club. But neither of these old time rivals would listen for a moment of merging their identity in the other, until at length a happy idea occurred to the wiser heads that both should affiliate with the Athletic Club, and that the Athletic Club should incorporate rowing as a prominent department in the new organization which would thus be formed. This consolidation was finally effected and all members

of good standing in the Hesper and Neptune Boat Clubs were admitted to membership in the Athletic Club; the dues being fixed at ten dollars initiation fee, and twelve dollars a year for all. These amounts obtain to the present time.

The new life thus engendered bore rapid fruit. The track on Bement Avenue was much improved and the grand stand was made a permanent and serviceable structure, while underneath were arranged dressing-rooms and lockers for competitors, and comfortable lavatory accommodations were provided.

THE HISTORY OF THE OLD BOAT-HOUSE.

In the meanwhile the largely increased rowing fraternity had to be provided with a suitable boat-house and other facilities to carry on the sport. It was decided to build a new house of two stories, but a great difficulty was met in the fact that a suitable water front was not to be got. True, the Sailors' Snug Harbor authorities

consented to the erection of a house on their frontage, but they restricted the building to one story. After a great deal of pains Mr. D. J. H. Willcox procured a site at the foot of Franklin Avenue, New Brighton, and very soon the members possessed a very neat and picturesque two-story structure of Queen Anne architecture with ample accommodations for boats, lockers, shower-baths, and every other requisite. The only fault that could be found with it being that it was farther from the field than desirable.

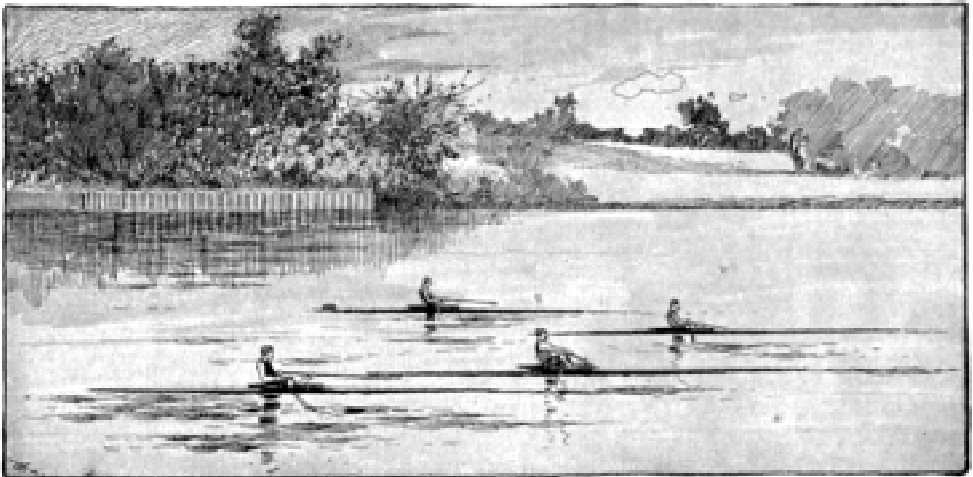
Up to this time the club was strictly athletic, that is to say, it devoted itself almost exclusively to the events of the cinder path, running, jumping and hurdle racing, and had not as yet taken up lawn tennis and baseball to any degree; but as the constantly increasing membership brought wider interests into prominence, these new departments were willingly set going by the directors, and in 1881 we find that baseball and tennis began to be taken up very generally, and the club also showed an inclination to cultivate lacrosse, as was evidenced by their sending a team to Waverley, N. J.

When, in 1879, the New York Athletic Club handed over the management of the Annual Meetings for the Amateur Championships into the hands of the National Association of Amateur Athletes of America, an organization called into existence for the purpose of carrying on the good work that the New York Athletic Club had so nobly begun, the Staten Island Athletic Club not only was one

of the first to join the Association, but was of sufficient strength and importance to merit the choice of its captain, Mr. O. T. Johnson, as the Vice-President.

In the years 1880 and '81 the club colors, the famous orange and black, were carried victoriously to the front in all parts of the country. The athletes who thus gained glory for the club were Messrs. Janssen and Rimmer, while such men as W. C. Rowland, W. G. Dedrichsen, C. A. White, R. T. Fiske, John Edwards and H. Telfair upheld the fair fame of the club upon the water.

To furnish the interior of the boat-house it was proposed to hold a mammoth fair, and Messrs. Janssen, Rowland, Carroll and Davis undertook the arduous duties of managers. The lady friends of the club entered most enthusiastically into the scheme, and the fair was held on December 12th, 1881, and proved an unprecedented success, the net profits of the undertaking aggregating \$975. A large portion of this sum was expended in fitting up the upper story of the boat-house. Some idea of the progress and improvements in the condition of the club at this time may be gathered from the fact that at the completion of the house on Franklin Avenue, the property was valued at thirteen thousand dollars, and the shells, boats and barges of the organization consisted of one eight-oared shell, four four-oared shells (racing), four four-oared barges, three pair-oared shells, two pair-oared gigs and twenty sculling shells, the property of private individuals.



PRACTICING FOR THE CHAMPION SCULLS.



THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATIVE GROUP S. I. A. C.

REMOVAL TO WEST NEW BRIGHTON.

But the boat-house was not destined to remain long at the foot of Franklin Avenue. It was rumored that the property on which the house stood had changed hands, and that the club would have to seek a new abiding place. A water front was always a most difficult thing to find, and the Directors were almost at their wits' end to know where to locate. It was most desirable that the next move should bring the boat-house nearer the ball ground and race-track, and good fortune seemed to come in the very nick of time. The President heard that the water front of the Campbell property was available, and this was at once secured. To remove such a bulky building was an arduous as well as a hazardous performance, but it was most happily accomplished without detriment to building or the precious boats that were stored within, although not a single thing was removed from the house during its transportation.

It was always the practice of the club from its inception almost, to hold two games at least in each year, the first in the spring and second in the fall, and a little while after the consolidation of the land and water interests of the North Shore the club also held an annual regatta. These regattas were the means of bringing together crews of the various rowing and boating clubs around the Kills, which were united into one common organization under the title of the "Kill von Kull Rowing Association." In the contests against Newark, Elizabethport, Bayonne and Argonanta Rowing Association the Club more than held its own.

During all these years by wise and careful management, and by a close attention to the various duties of their important trust, the officers of the club had kept the financial condition of the organization in a splendid status, and any extra strains upon the exchequer were met by the liberal efforts of individual members, and the hearty co-operation of the younger contingent in getting up minstrel shows and various entertainments of a remunerative kind.

THE CHARLESTON BLUES.

Among the minor combinations originated by this enterprising club must be mentioned the famous military organization of the Charleston Blues, who under the captaincy of W. C. Davis and

his able lieutenant F. W. Janssen have oftentimes covered themselves with glory. They are uniformed in dark blue tunics with red facings, white cross-belts and white trousers, with a most imposing bearskin for a head covering. They are well drilled, and on parade look a fine soldierly set of young fellows.

THE CLUB'S BASEBALL HISTORY.

From the earliest days the club has had the reputation of possessing excellent material for forming a powerful baseball nine, and the national game was played in a desultory kind of way every season, but during the past five years the Staten Island Athletic Club Baseball Team has been recognized as one of the strongest leading amateur nines in the country. Among the first players may be mentioned the Janssen brothers, and Mr. Fiske, who founded and led to repeated victory the famous old Alpha Baseball Club, which during the years 1870 to 1877 was credited with more triumphs than any other amateur team in America. As the game increased in science and skill, so did the S. I. A. C. continue to capture many of the finest college exponents of the game, so that its nine always had the best of coaching, and with unremitting practice has continued to hold the lead it had successfully gained. The Club has been a member of the National Amateur Baseball Association since the birth of that organization, but the resignation of the Nassaus and Brooklyns of Brooklyn has virtually narrowed the Association to two Clubs—the Bergen Points and the S. I. A. C.—but it still plays against the representative nines of the country. The team never was stronger than it is to-day, and the club may well feel proud of its recent creditable performances. The leading players are James A. Tyng, a veteran pitcher of Harvard College whose wonderful dexterity in the "box" has led to his services being sought by some of the leading professional nines of the League. Besides his qualities as the best pitcher, he is a brilliant field anywhere, and a free and successful scorer with the bat. Finley and Larkin are sure and safe catchers, the former, I am told, being the best man to understand Tyng's peculiar eccentricities of curve. De Garmendia is a free hitter and reliable first baseman, while burly Arthur Cater does excellent work at right field, but can be put anywhere, being a quick and brilliant field and



THE S. I. A. C. BASEBALL NINE OF '87.

safe catch. Moore and Tyndale are excellent left and centre fields, and both may be counted on to get runs. Brush, Wyllis Terry, Shaw, Dick Halstead, and a host of others are active players, and the club can at any time turn out a couple of really representative teams.

The club has an excellent diamond and practice is indulged in every day in the week. Their principal rivals are the Bergen Points and the Young Americas, and the meeting of these teams invariably brings about a stubbornly contested game. The other teams against which the Athletic Club play with more certain hopes of victory are the baseball nine of the S. I. Cricket Club, the Newarks, the Columbia College, the various amateur clubs of Brooklyn, Jersey City and Philadelphia. In fact, from May till October, there is a match game on the card for almost every Wednesday and Saturday. Thus it will be seen that while the older and larger organization of the Staten Island Cricket Club confines itself principally to the maintenance of a high degree

of proficiency in the cricket and tennis field, the men at the Athletic Club go in for fame on the cinder path and are also more prominent with the oar and baseball. It may be well to mention just in this connection that the two clubs are now situated almost side by side, and though they are keen in their rivalry at baseball and tennis, yet the emulation is healthy and carried on in the most generous and manly spirit. Socially the two clubs fraternize most cordially and many of the men in each belong to both. There is ample room, so great the interest in all sporting matters, and so diversified the pastimes of the rising generation, for both clubs to flourish and grow yet larger, and future years will show how wrong and unfounded were the creakings of those who kept constantly saying that there was only room for one good club on Staten Island. I know that even in the two years the Cricket Club has been located at Livingston, it has already begun to show signs that more field space and more ample house accommodations

must be found in the near future; and it is exactly the same conditions at the Athletic Club, for no sooner have they got into their present elegant house than they are beginning to find that more room is needed, so rapidly is the membership increasing.

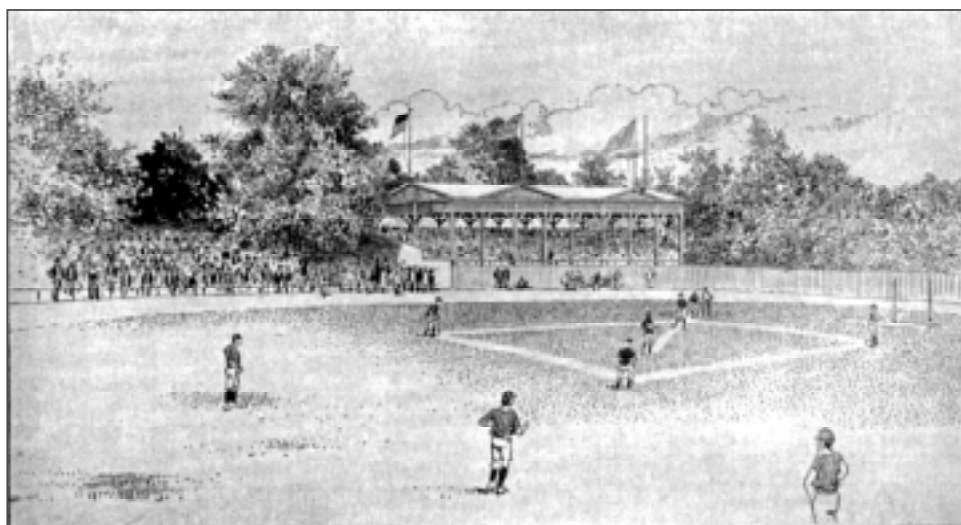
Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly the fact that at about the time the Rapid Transit Company were preparing to turn the Cricket Club out of their quarters at Camp Washington, there was a serious effort made to consolidate the two clubs. The proposed basis was that the Athletic Club should put in their field, track and boating plant and the Cricket Club should purchase the house and ground of the Campbell property. This proposition I give just as broadly as possible, because the actual details for amalgamation were never entered into. The first overture, I believe, came from an authorized member of the Cricket Club and the same club were the ones to withdraw from the negotiations without giving any reasons for so doing. The original basis for joining forces was about as fair a one as could have been made. The Athletic Club valued the ball field, with running track and grand stand, etc., at about \$12,000 and their boat-house and boats at \$13,000, and this was certainly a very fair as well as a moderate valuation, and the Campbell property was thought to be obtainable for \$25,000. But there the matter ended.

THE PURCHASE OF THE CLUB-HOUSE.

It has always been the maxim of the Athletic Club, first to feel that certain things are needed for the welfare and prosperity of the club, and then to set to work, with every shoulder at the wheel, and the thing is put through. So it was with the purchase of the Campbell property. Once the idea of owning the house entered their minds, they were bound to have it.

Mr. John W. Edwards first ascertained that the property could not be had for \$25,000, as the owners were asking \$30,000; he then, I believe, made an offer of \$26,000, though what amount was finally paid I am not able to state positively. This was indeed a bold measure to take, and the management might well have had grave doubts of the club being able to carry so great an amount, but Mr. Eberhard Faber, a warm friend to the boys, and an enthusiastic lover of all sports, stood behind to help in case of need, and the club hold to this day a deep sense of their indebtedness to Mr. Faber, and would be ready at any moment to testify their appreciation of such generous conduct, by electing him to the highest office in their power to bestow, but Mr. Faber, secure in their goodwill, finds that he has all he can manage in attending to his important business engagements.

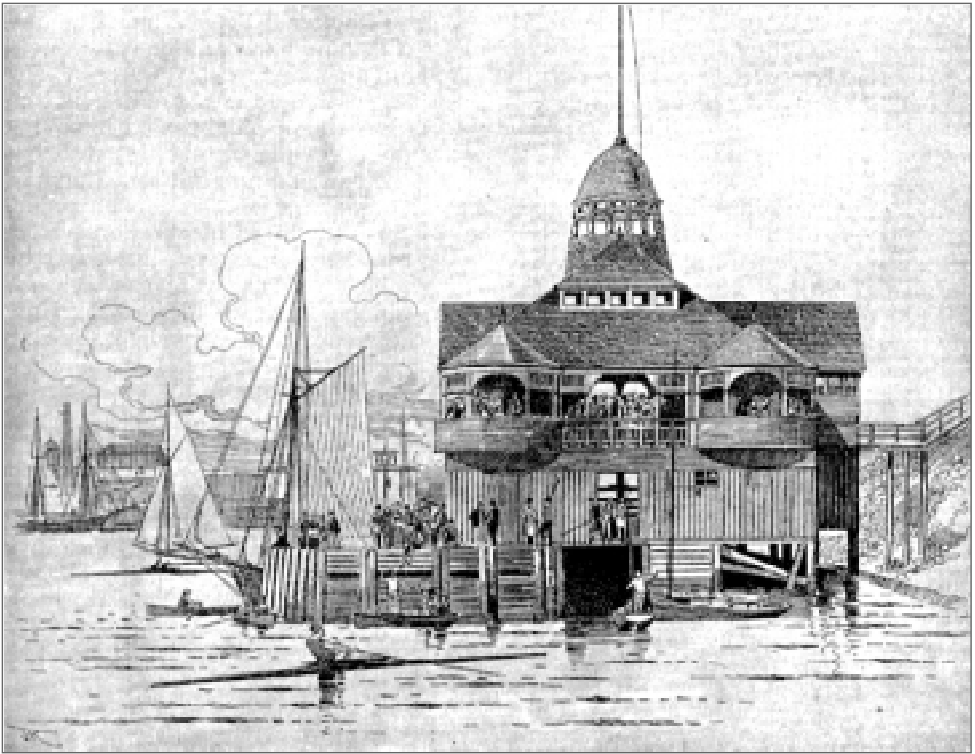
This purchase was completed in 1885, and the money was subscribed for in \$10



THE S. I. A. C. DIAMOND AND GRAND STAND.

scrip payable in five years, and bearing interest at 6 per cent. How the membership of some zoo was to bear all these extra expenses was met with the energetic answer that every man must bring a friend into the club ranks, and so well did the President know the mettle of his men, that it did not cause him any surprise to find that on the same evening on which the purchase was concluded, fifty new names were on the books waiting election.

the early morning of Tuesday, October the 5th of last year. Two tugs with a number of heavily laden coal barges in tow were coming down the Kills, and before they were aware of the strength of the current setting towards the Staten Island shore, the tow had drifted into the boat-house, and torn the building from the piles and was dragging it towards St. George's Ferry, where the unfortunate structure was carelessly beached. The tide soon floated it again, and smashed



S. I. A. C. BOAT-HOUSE.

And so the good cause advanced, and by the time the boys were able to get once again onto the grounds in the following spring, there were 450 "brave men and true" that donned the "orange and black." This year learn the number is between nine hundred and a thousand, and the slogan is, "still they come."

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BOAT-HOUSE.

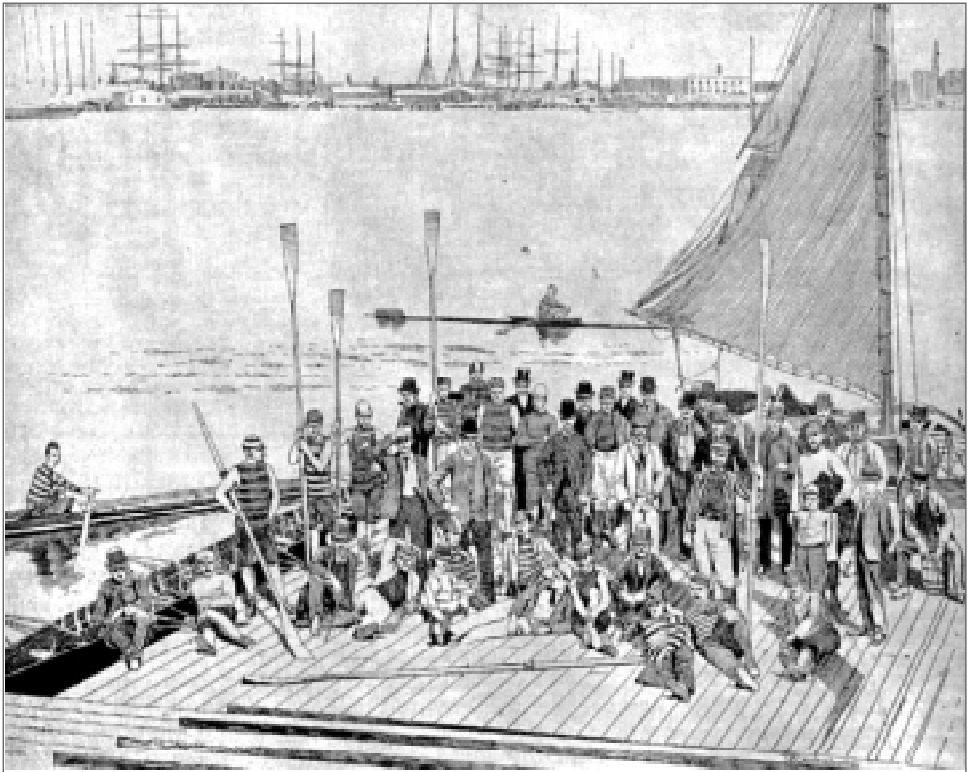
The first, and I am glad to say, the only serious calamity that ever befell the club, was the total destruction of their beautiful boat-house. This occurred in

it entirely to pieces, by driving it against the jetty.

The house and every boat that it contained, including also the furniture and piano in the upper story, was completely demolished. The Pennsylvania Railroad was responsible for the disaster, and they and the company in which the house and fixtures were insured, made good the pecuniary loss, I believe; but in spite all such solid consolation, the accident was a terrible blow to the club, handicapped as it was with the expenses of improvements then in progress on their lately purchased property. However, their

energy and indomitable pluck was equal to even this severe trial, and hardly had the news of the loss spread among the members, than the board of management had new plans to rebuild on a more extensive and elaborate scale, ready to lay before the members. The work was commenced at once, and last summer saw them comfortably installed in the handsomest boat house that exists in the country to-day.

fought struggle. Handsome cups and other trophies ornament the mantelshelves. Pictures of most of the famous athletes in all the pride of their "war paint," surround you on all sides. A fine piano stands ready for use, and not a few of the boys can touch the notes with a practiced hand. Beyond, through an archway, is a smaller room, in which there is an excellent pool table. On the right of the hall are the dining-rooms,



THE LANDING STATE S. I. A. C. BOAT-HOUSE.

THE CLUB-HOUSE.

The house is situated on Richmond Terrace, a couple of hundred yards to the west of the Livingston Rapid Transit Station, and is built on a little knoll rising gently from the road. On entering the hall a broad stairway faces you, leading to the bed-rooms and private dining-rooms, which are on the upper story. On the left hand on the ground floor is the great reception-room, a fine rectangular chamber, with bow windows. The walls are prettily festooned with flags won by the victorious crews in many a hard

capable of seating fifty to sixty of the members at a time. There are verandas on two sides, and, during the warm summer evenings, it is pleasant to dine outside, while the silvery moonbeams dance and shimmer through the whispering leaves of the surrounding trees. Beyond, through the hallway, is the bar, and in rear of that is the kitchen and the other offices. The meals are all that a hungry athlete could wish for, and the cooking and attendance excellent. If you want a more elaborate spread and the uninterrupted companionship of a few kindred spirits, there are the private dining-rooms



RECEPTION ROOM.—S. I. A. C.

up-stairs. There are ten or twelve large and airy bed-rooms on the upper story, where the belated loiterer and transient guest find comfortable quarters. In rear of the house the first of the fields you come to is the tennis courts. At present but seventeen nets can be spread, but this portion of the ground has been the last to receive attention, and is not yet put in perfect condition. Nets are up all day long, and you can play to your heart's content without fear of interruption from the ball players, whose field is divided from the tennis courts by the grand stands.

As yet there seems to be no inclination to ingraft a ladies' club onto the sturdy bachelor-stem, but the fair sex are always sure of a gallant and most cordial welcome. When relatives of members or ladies introduced by them are present, they are privileged to the use of the nets, and it is seldom that one walks along the courts without seeing half a dozen pretty girls hard at work with the racquet.

THE BASEBALL FIELD AND RUNNING TRACK.

The baseball field is a magnificent rectangular piece of beautifully green and

level turf, round which a twenty-yard-wide running track is laid. The baseball field proper is about 420 feet square, but the board fence which surrounds the inclosure takes in about 500 feet every way. Along the north side are erected the grand stands—for there are two—one covered and the other not. The covered stand is for ladies and their escorts and members who will forego the luxury of tobacco while seated there, and has a seating capacity of about 550. The other stand is simply a succession of seats rising tier above tier and seats 400. The home plate is directly below the ladies' stand and the batter faces south-east. The public entrance is on Bement Avenue. The club makes a small charge of twenty-five cents admission to all their games of baseball. There is also a charge to the public for entrance to the athletic competitions, which varies according to the importance of the meeting. The money thus collected goes into the general club funds.

Beneath the ladies' stand are the dressing-rooms and lockers, and, also, shower-baths and lavatory.

THE BOAT-HOUSE

is immediately across the road from the house and is reached by a bridge crossing the Rapid Transit Railroad. It is a very picturesque and commodious two-story wooden building, with a spacious room on the top story, surrounded by broad verandas, from which the whole of the regatta course, as well as a charming view of the surrounding country, can be had. The lower story is fitted up with racks for the boats, oars and other paraphernalia, and there are also dressing-lockers, shower-baths of fresh and salt water, and every toilet convenience.

MANAGEMENT.

The interests and management of the club is in the hands of fifteen members, who form the Board of Direction. All the officers of the club are elective, but the President appoints all committees. The best praise that can be given to the wise and prudent counsels of those hard-working, self-sacrificing individuals who have guided the club into this, its noontide of prosperity, is simply to point to the gigantic results that have been achieved,

THE DECENNIAL CELEBRATION.

The crowning effort and most glorious exploit yet achieved by the club, was the successful carrying out of the jubilee celebration of the decennial games, last "Labor Day," Monday, Sept. 5th. During the day, upwards of ten thousand spectators were present, and thoroughly enjoyed the day's programme, which included a magnificent exhibition of lacrosse, between the New York Lacrosse Club and the Niagaras, won by the former; a very fine game of baseball, be-

tween the home team, and their most persistent rivals, the Young Americas of Philadelphia, in which the visitors were victorious; a splendid tennis tournament, athletic games of all kinds, a bicycle race, won easily by Mr. Rich, the representative wheelman of the club, an eight-oared shell race on the Kills, in which the laurels were gained by the Potomacs of Washington; the whole winding up with a lively dance and grand display of fireworks.

YACHTING DEPARTMENT.

The latest addition to the Club's numerous interests is the establishment of a yachting department. Formal and definite action was taken last spring and resulted in the election of Mr. J. Eberhard Faber, as Commodore; Mr. K. K. McMurray, Vice-Commodore; Mr. A. L. Faris, Secretary, and Dr. A. L. Carroll, Fleet Surgeon. The fleet already numbers 25 or 30 sail, mostly catboats from 18 to 27 feet in length, with a good sprinkling of canoes and open sailing craft. Although not positively registered on the Club roll of yachts, the Athletic Club is proud of claiming Mr. Morgan of the *Mayflower*, and Mr. Chapman of the *Rambler*, as members. The Club has a capital anchorage, and the boat-house affords a jolly rendezvous for the boats, and I feel sure that the yachting element in the Club will flourish just as strongly as the other pastimes that have existed for longer periods.

The S. I. A. C. to-day is one of the finest in the country, in first rate financial standing, where the visiting athlete will be sure of a cordial welcome, and where he will meet as jolly a lot of enthusiastic sportsmen as can be found anywhere on the globe.

