

History of the Quincy Tennis Club 1887 - 2012

The Quincy Tennis Club - now celebrating its 125th year - is well known to serious tennis players throughout New England - but remains relatively unknown in its own city. Players call it Quincy's hidden jewel. It's even hard to find, nestled behind large homes and surrounded by tall trees. A century ago it was called "the pleasantest place in Quincy on a summer day." It still is.

At 19R Glendale Rd the QTC lies at the end of a long driveway where the visitor will find a sturdy brick and concrete clubhouse and five of the finest red clay tennis courts in the area. A short walk from "Peacefield Farm", the Adams family mansion, this is the club's third location. The deed from 1913, the year it moved to Glendale Rd., bears the signature of Charles Francis Adams.

The club's origins began on June 17, 1887 when a meeting was held in Quincy "of those interested in the formation of a Lawn Tennis Club" and was organized with the following as the executive committee: Perry Lawton, President; Rev. H. E. Cotton, Vice President; William W. Osborne, secretary and treasurer, and board of governors Henry M. Faxon, Walter B. Holden, Walter N. Packard, and Paul R. Blackmur. The name Quincy Tennis Club was adopted and two courts were laid out on Bigelow Street at the back of Rev. Cotton's property.

These were the first tennis courts in Quincy. The formal opening took place on Saturday, September 3, 1887 and the first tournament was held starting September 17. In the final Herbert M. Federhen, Jr. defeated James F. Harlow 7-5, 6-1, 8-6. Dues were \$2.00 a year for men, and \$1.00 for women. By the close of the first season there were thirty-two members.

In September 1888 the first championship of the Norfolk Lawn Tennis Association was held at the club and Federhen defeated Walter M. Packard. The newspaper account stated that "The Quincy Club's pennant, consisting of a triangular red flag, bearing in white the letters Q.T.C. floated conspicuously from a pole near the courts."

The social angle was also important. At tournaments, refreshments were served by club hostesses where "colorful gatherings of blazer - bedecked men and well dressed women" watched from carriages and settees

placed along the courts. The 1889 annual dance was held at the Quincy Opera House. The Patriot Ledger wrote "It proved to be, as was anticipated, distinctly the leading society event of the winter in this city or its neighborhood. The evening toilettes displayed by the ladies were of exceptional beauty and elaboration, serving only to heighten the charms of their fair wearers." Over 350 people listened to the Harvard Glee Club, pianist Mr. Ethelbert Nevin, and danced to the music of Monk's orchestra.

At the turn of the century, the Bigelow Road site became increasingly unsuitable due to frequent flooding. A new location was chosen near Russell Park. For the first two seasons a settee with a canopy alongside the courts was the only club facility.

At the annual meeting in March 1902, the Executive Committee voted to build a clubhouse for \$600.00. The secretary's minutes describe the clubhouse as "well equipped with lockers, shower-baths, and this year a telephone is being put in for the convenience of members. The broad porch of the clubhouse was a social center where "almost any pleasant afternoon in the summer a group of wives and young ladies and men can be found there, watching the play on the courts and having a pleasant social time."

The club membership at the end of 1901 was 50 men and 9 women. These figures fluctuated somewhat from year to year and reached a high in 1909 with 65 men and 21 women. Junior membership started in 1907 at half the regular fee. Since a low point in membership during World War I and II, the Club has seen a steady increase over the years and now has an active membership of 185. There is a waiting list.

In 1912 the club purchased a plot behind the corner of Glendale Road and Goffe St (now President's Lane) from the Adams Family, its location for the past century. The shingle-style clubhouse - built in 1902 - was also moved. The next year the club was incorporated. The 1902 charter states the object of the Club as follows: "This corporation is constituted for the purpose of promoting the game of lawn tennis and for encouraging athletic exercise of any and all kinds tending to better the physical and social welfare of its members, and for the maintenance of such grounds, rooms, facilities and associations as will best serve such purposes."

In 1913 the club was raided by Quincy Police. The infraction: breaking the Sabbath. For weeks, the Rev. Mr. Willmott of Bethany

Congregational Church had denounced Sunday play from his pulpit. The police were informed and in September the Chief visited the Club serving summonses on 16 players plus the President and Treasurer. Women on the porch viewing area were warned that they were violating the law but would not be arraigned. The club voted to discontinue Sunday use of the courts, a rule that remained in effect for several years. Since then times have changed and the club rules have changed with them. Today the club is active from dawn to dusk on Sundays during the playing season.

In 1914 a new constitution was adopted which replaced the old Executive Committee with a Board of Governors, and set up the Club organization basically as it has continued to date. The Board of Governors consists of a president vice president, secretary, and treasurer. In addition five governors rotate in three year periods. The annual election is held in September; the annual meeting in March. A bylaw change on 1950 gave women the right to vote and hold office. In 1971 the Club elected its first woman president, Rachel White of Braintree who served for four years.

After World War I the Club slowly revived until it reached a peak of membership in the late 1920's. After a short period of decline, activity again increased until in 1941 the Club facilities were extended so much that a limit was placed on the membership at 100 men and 50 Women. Again war forced an end to this activity and the Club dropped to its lowest ebb.

A unique feature of the club started in the spring of 1903 and has continued every year since except for the war years. The Lobster Tournament is open for members who have never won a club prize. Charles W. Bates was the 1903 champion. The winners in 2011 were Darren Murphy (men) and Madonna McNichol (women).

Inter club competition has been in force for over 100 years with both men's and women's doubles teams competing throughout Eastern Massachusetts This activity reached a high level in 1914 when the Club was represented in both the Suburban and Mystic Valley Leagues. Quincy won the Suburban League Championship in 1912 and 1915, finishing one point ahead of Wollaston in the latter year. The Men's Suburban Tennis League for the past 25 years has been an active force in bringing together teams from various Clubs. The Quincy Tennis Club, fielding teams in the A, B, and C categories, has consistently won league championships or placed high in each division.

In 1964 the Club entered the Suburban Tennis League. Quincy won the championship in 1968, and since then has been either a winner or a top contender every year since. In addition to these outstanding A teams, the Club also has successful teams in the B and C class competitions as well. This record testifies to the high caliber of men's tennis at the Club, and every year there are Club players in the New England rankings.

Both men and women compete against teams from Hingham, Cohasset, Needham, Wellesley, Concord, and other Suburban towns. A high point in men's competition occurred in 2011 when QTC men's 65's won the prestigious New England Title and competed in Arizona in April of 2012. The team of Joe Ryan, Paul Ajemian, Ted Underwood, Dan Vaughn, Pat Rossetti, and Anthony (Butch) Gulizia lost in a tie breaker to the national champions.

Junior tennis has been a major activity throughout the Club's history, and many leading New England players have learned their tennis at Quincy. In 1955 the Massachusetts State Championships for boys were held here and continued for eighteen years. Quincy won the championship in 1956, 1961 and 1963, retiring the championship trophy, the only team to win more than once. In 1956 Quincy entered the Junior Wightman Cup league for girls' teams and competed successfully for fifteen years. Clinics for beginners and junior competitions continue as factors in the Club's junior development program. For four years from 1983 to 1986 junior NELTA tournaments were held at the Club.

In the mid seventies, the Club began to have problems. On the night before Thanksgiving in November, 1978, the clubhouse burned beyond repair. The 76 year old shingle-style building was a total loss.

Dr. Philip L. Maloney, then President, spearheaded the building of a new facility. The presence of the new clubhouse was instrumental in returning the Club to a healthy financial condition

A strength of the Quincy Tennis Club is its membership, comprised of players representing all levels of tennis skills, from the beginner to the advanced player. Every year QTC players receive New England and national rankings. A number of players have been honored by the New England Lawn Tennis Association.

Another feature is its recognition of outstanding members who have contributed over many years. Quincy civic leader George Pfaffman had been president for 23 years when he died in 1936. These people are granted honorary memberships. At its 100th celebration - held at The Neighborhood Club in 1987 - four members were named for dedication and long service: H Hobart (Hoby) Holly, Shirley Laing, Philip Maloney, and Hildegard Gillis. Honorary members now are Philip Maloney and the late Ken Rickson, and his wife Mili - all of Quincy. Since the 1950's Phil has won a record 42 club championships, including men's singles, doubles and mixed, often with members of his family. He served on the Board of Governors for 20 years, including two terms as president and was instrumental in the clubhouse rebuilding. He considers the club "a gift to all of us".

Ken Rickson loved the QTC and was known as "the matchmaker." He played with new members and gave them names of players with similar abilities. He introduced a popular senior men's tournament, now named The Ken Rickson Tournament in his honor. His funeral in December 2010 held at Bethany congregational church, the club's critic 100 years ago, attracted members from both organizations.

A typical summer day at QTC goes as follows: Club manager and pro Richard Mount gets an early start in court preparation - watering, raking and brushing each court. At 8 am the courts open to a group of four to five doubles teams. The next shift occurs at 11 when hardy singles players take to the courts - often in intense summer heat. Several courts are reserved for juniors under the guidance of Mount and his assistants. The action picks up around 4 pm when working players arrive and take to the courts. Ensuring that everyone gets a chance, a clock system - an hour for doubles, forty five minutes for singles - keeps the courts filled with newly arrived players. Those who are "bumped" can socialize on the shady porch while waiting to play again. On a given summer day 50 to 100 people take to the courts.

Late season tournament play brings out the best players competing for various QTC titles. Spectators view the action from the porch while having "a pleasant social time" as members did a century ago.

The clubhouse and courts are essential components of the club, but character makes it unique. Membership is first come, first served, interest in tennis the only criterion for admission. Gone are the Yankee aristocrats and wealthy bankers of the early years. Today's membership reflects 21st

Century diversity and all level of tennis ability. In its 125th season The Quincy Tennis Club continues to foster the finest in athletics and sportsmanship in one of the most beautiful tennis venues in New England. So enjoy our 125th anniversary and come to The Quincy Tennis Club for the best in tennis and fellowship.

James Haviland May 2012