The Columbia Sailing Club wrapped up their 60th Midlands regatta, with 150 boats out on the water on the first week-end of November, 2019. Looking back to previous years, Josh Putnam recalled sailing an Optimist Dinghy the first year they were represented, and apparently, it was as popular a fleet as it is now, as he won the Midlands award for placing first in the biggest class. I remembered racing a Y-flyer with my mother, Judy, and having to haul her back into the boat when we were in a close race with Robby Wilkins going to the finish. Dick Dommel made a comment, when I was objecting to starting different classes together, that he recalled when it used to be a *fun* regatta, with all the fleets racing under the Portsmouth handicap. At any rate, it was quite a sight, seeing all these boats spread out across 4 race courses, stretching 2 miles across the water in front of the dam.

The Lightnings shared a course with the Vanguard 15's (10 boats), a fleet of three 420's, a couple of Y-Flyers , and an MC scow, who didn't care who he was starting with, as he got bounced around between the Vanguards and Y-Flyers. The Vanguard's starts were interesting, as there would invariably be 5 boats about ¼ boat length from the line, with the other boats below them. But no one would get pushed over! Quite different from a typical Lightning start. I was amazed at how continuously the wind was shifting. You don't get the feel for this when you're in a sailboat, unless you're taking wind shots every couple of minutes. We would see oscillations of about 20 – 45 degrees, most of the time we were out there, both days. On Sunday, the wind was NE 10 – 15 with some higher gusts during the first race and a half. You can see from a couple of photos how bundled up people were that day.
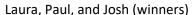

Paul and crew headed upwind Sunday

John coming into the leeward mark, race 3.

After the first day, Paul Whiteside, with Josh Putnam and Laura Johnson, were tied for first with John and Rebecca Sawyer, and Jared Cronin. In the 2nd race, Paul got around the top mark and headed to the finish, just before I noticed glassy water developing just above the mark. The last 4 boats struggled to get up to the mark, and Paul fought to finish within the time limit, as the hole caught up to his boat. In the end, they all managed to finish within the time limit. On Sunday, Paul and his crew won the next 2 races handily, just in time to beat the fading wind. John followed in 2nd, and Briggs Monteith, with his brother Martin and Chip Crawford, finished third.

1. Paul Whitesides, Josh Putnam, Laura Johnson   2 1 1 1   5
2. John Sawyer, Rebecca Sawyer, Jared Cronin   1 2 2 2   7
3. Briggs Monteith, Martin Monteith, Chip Crawford   3 5 3 3   14
4. Bill Jones, Jo McGlew, Tree Martschink/John Majkut   4 3 4 4   15
5. Ryan Smoker, Ryan Hargrave, Catherine Bost   5 4 5 5   19

The results can also be seen here: https://www.regattanetwork.com/event/19464#_newsroom+results

Laura, Paul, and Josh (winners)

Rebecca, John, and Jared (2nd place)

 Although I have to say that I prefer going to one design regattas, because I don't like putting up with the hassle of so many boats, participating as a non-competitor this week-end allowed me to see some of the good qualities of an open regatta. Take the entertainment and food – on both nights, CSC brought in really good bands, and had a Mexican food truck on Friday night, along with their regular fare on Saturday. You get to see sailors that you normally don't, all in one place. Charleston has their open regattas, yes, with lots of boats, but everyone spreads out among all the clubs, so it doesn't has the same festival-like feel. And there's a feeling of participating in history. For CSC, it was their 60th Midlands regatta, which goes back to almost when the club started, in '57 or '58. At the CYC and ChYC regattas, when they give their special annual awards, you get to learn, or be reminded of all the great sailors that came before. I think it would be a shame if the Lightning class faded into history. These open regattas are an excellent place to keep the fleet in the spotlight, keep the class relevant, and make new sailing connections.