THE BOSTON YACHT CLUB

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Architecture at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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November 18, 1963

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Dear Dean Belluschi:

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture, I hereby submit the following thesis entitled "The Boston Yacht Club."

Respectfully yours,

Richard T. Hardaway Jr.
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I. PROJECT BACKGROUND

THE BOSTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S WATERFRONT RENEWAL PLAN

The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce is currently engaged in the preparation of a study for a sweeping renewal program for the downtown waterfront - Faneuil Hall area, now blighted and obsolescent. Toward the end of the last century the marine functions, the historic source of Boston's prosperity, began to withdraw to more favorable locations in East and South Boston, and industrial, wholesale, and storage functions ill-suited to the nineteenth century wharf buildings took their place. In the last forty years blight has accelerated, with the obsolete buildings allowed to fall into disrepair or demolished completely, while practically no new building has taken place. Accordingly, the Chamber's objective is to make the waterfront once again accessible to the people of Boston by removing the blight in the area, with its attendant detrimental effects on property values and neighboring districts. It wishes to use this area to help meet the demand for housing close to downtown as well as to provide for recreational facilities suitable to the waterfront, both commercial and public.

In June, 1962, a report was published explaining these objectives and illustrating how they might be realized with a plan prepared with the aid of John R. Myer and Kevin Lynch. The approaches to the waterfront were considered as well as the waterfront itself, especially the...
connection with the government center. The most viable buildings were preserved, especially those with historical significance, and many of them converted to housing, continuing a trend already started. Also included, on an altered configuration of what is now India Wharf, was a marine shopping center and yacht club, with a marine motel nearby. (See plan, page 6, nos. 26, 34) Its inclusion was based on a research study by John Gregory into the future of the boating industry in this area and its implications concerning the economic suitability of a marine sales center in this renewal project. According to the study, the industry is undeniably healthy in the U.S. in general, and especially so in New England, due partly to the desirable cruising and fishing areas. Hence, the demand for docking, mooring, and launching facilities far exceeds the supply. It was felt that a marina on the Boston waterfront should be planned to cater to the owner of the larger powerboat, due to the greater prestige and economic returns, and the undesirability of Boston Harbor for sailing, with its dirt, debris, and commercial shipping.

Also recommended for inclusion was a yacht club, and specifically the Boston Yacht Club, because of its size and importance as well as the fact that it is already a tenant in the renewal area. The club has been approached, and expressed a great deal of interest in building in this area what would become its principal station.
MODEL, WATERFRONT RENEWAL PROPOSAL
More recent work has modified this plan considerably, among other things excluding the marina, relocating the yacht club, and replanning the high rise housing complex. Since the plan is constantly changing, I have arbitrarily chosen to work with the stage of development attained at the beginning of October, the pertinent portion of which is shown on the following page.

As can be seen, the Yacht Club is located on the rerouted Atlantic Avenue facing directly into what would be its anchorage and adjacent to a cluster of high rise apartment towers. A parking facility is located a block away across Atlantic Avenue.
The Boston Yacht Club, organized in 1866 with a fleet of 26 yachts, has participated in a major portion of the years of yachting's history, and with a present membership of 700 and a fleet of 300 boats, it remains one of the largest and most important in the area. It is a dignified, prestigious organization, its members tending to be older (and more affluent) than in most clubs, and its boats tending to be larger and more luxurious.

The club currently maintains a large station in Marblehead and an eating place on Rowes Wharf in downtown Boston; its South Boston station was recently sold. The Marblehead branch, looking out on the harbor, is open year round, and provides for the social, book-keeping, and yachting activities, racing and otherwise. During the Winter a dance or function of some sort is held every Saturday, there are bridge and cribbage tournaments, and frost-bite sailing when the weather permits. The building itself, a converted hotel, faces a hopeless parking lot on one side and the water on the other. Off to one side of the parking area is a smaller building housing gear lockers and a large room called the "Yard-Arm," used for teen-age parties and the like. The first floor of the main building
contains a dining room seating about 60, and a somewhat larger lounge in which cocktails are served and parties held at various times, both of which rooms look out over the water (through very small windows) and are respectively served by a newly remodeled, very efficient kitchen and an inadequate bar. The desk in the lobby is attended round the clock. There is a deck across the entire water side of the building built over the water on piles, on which meals are served in the Summer; immediately in front of the deck are the floats at which the boats land. A walkway along the side of the building connects the parking lot to the floats so that members in sailing dress won't have to walk through the club. The boats are kept at moorings rather than tied up to piers, and access to them is had via the club's launches or one's personal dinghy, which may be kept at the float. On the second floor is a smaller lounge with an adjacent pantry, known as the "commodore's lounge", in which small meetings, receptions, and dinners are held, and the club's accounting offices, a small lunchroom for the help, and several sleeping rooms. The top floor contains all sleeping rooms of various sizes, which are simply the old hotel rooms, and are rented on a somewhat similar basis. (In fact, the assistant manager is himself a hotel man.)

These facilities have unfortunately been found to be extremely inadequate for a club of this size; the dining room is too small, there is no ball room or meeting room
large enough to accommodate even half the members, the bar is inadequate, parking isn't half what is needed, and in fact even the available mooring space for the boats is becoming crowded. Furthermore, its location, although on one of the finest boating harbors in the East, tends to be rather far from many of the members' homes, particularly those on the South shore. Hence, there is a genuine need for more commodious accommodations, and the club feels that it would like to become a part of Boston's renewal effort.
Boston Yacht Club, 1 Front Street, Marblehead, Mass.
II. THE ACTIVITIES AND THEIR ARCHITECTURAL REQUIREMENTS

A. This building would become the principal center for the social activities of the club as well as a base of operation for its larger yachts, the sailing and racing activities remaining in the more felicitous waters at Marblehead. Its proximity to downtown would make it a popular place for lunches, client entertainment, dinner before theater and the like; all functions of importance, such as dances, meetings, and banquets, would now be held here. Hence, the club sees this building as an expression of its identity, an image of dignity, solidity, and permanence; a prestige symbol, to put it crassly. The atmosphere would be that of well dressed men and women, not that of children in bathing suits buying candy at the snack bar. Yet it must not be forgotten that this is still a yacht club, that some 100 sizable boats will be moored here, and that a common interest in the sea is what presumably binds its members together. Thus the boats will be of prime interest even to those not actually using them, and for those who are, landing space, lockers, and rooms to spend the night are needed.

Yachting and social life will thus become two separate, although mutually reinforcing, aspects of the building's existence, separated by the degree of informality of dress and, presumably, behavior. Furthermore, the social life revolves about two types of use: everyday use by
individuals and small groups on the one hand and events bringing together large numbers of people on the other. The architecture must therefore encourage and comfortably accommodate interaction between small numbers of individuals in the first case, and amplify the drama of a mass of people on a festive occasion in the second.

Because a club is a vehicle for social intercourse, a single strong space could unify the various activities and amplify them so that the entire club would become involved in any major event taking place. People could look across, down, and up, watching the movement of other club members coming and going, dancing, lounging, and so forth. There would be certain areas, of course, where privacy would be needed, but a club by its very nature is not a place to which one retreats to be away from people.
B. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

SOCIAL:

Communal Room: This would be a large, free space, the background for all the collective events of the club. Its multi-purpose use would indicate the need for sufficient and accessible storage space for the furniture not in use. Meetings, film showings, lectures, dances, and banquets would be held here; the room would probably take the following three configurations, and be rearranged to serve as a lounge during the week in addition. Some sort of informal stage would be necessary to accommodate a dance band, head table at a banquet or meeting, or a speaker.

Meetings  Banquets  Dances

Lounge Areas: To be used during the week as well as to accommodate the clots of people which would typically form in corridors and the lobby at a dance or banquet. Might be the same as the cocktail lounge.
Commodore's Lounge: To be used for executive committee meetings, small receptions and dinners, this room would accommodate a table seating eight and a small lounge area.

Restaurant:
1. Dining Room: This would be a typical restaurant dining room or rooms, seating 150, with the usual flexibility in table arrangement and service requirements.
2. Cocktail Lounge: Must also be suitable to handle overflow from the dining room.
3. Bar: Men only.
4. Entrance Space: Requires adjacent coatrooms, toilets, separate entrances to bar and dining room.
5. Kitchen: The following functions must be provided for:
   a. Receipt, storage of food, waste disposal.
   c. Cooking, baking area.
   d. Preparation of salads, fruit, desserts, sandwiches.
   e. Area for coffee, tea, cream, ice, juice, rolls, etc.
   f. Dish-washing machine, dish storage.

The circulation of the waiter coming from the dining room is normally as follows: washing station - cold food area - hot food - dessert, beverage station. The kitchen should obviously be acoustically isolated from the dining room, and should itself be kept as quiet as possible through the use of (washable) absorbent material, damping of metal surfaces, and vibration-free mounting of machines. Adequate
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ventilation must be provided.

Deck: To accommodate outdoor dining and lounging.

Steward's Office: Should be located in a controlling position, with access to boats as well as social areas.

Sleeping Rooms: These would in effect be small studio apartments, with a Pullman kitchen and small bath adjoining a single room. Various sizes to meet differing needs would be desirable. They would not be rented on a hotel basis, but rather by the season for an individual's overnight or weekend use, especially in conjunction with his boat.
YACHTING:

**Gear Lockers:** Stand up lockers, these would be limited in number, as the owner of the larger boat generally will stow his gear aboard.

**Floats:** Two or three long floats, totalling 150 feet in length, with gasoline, diesel fuel, electricity, and fresh water available are required. As at Marblehead, the boats will swing to moorings, so this landing space is for loading, taking on fuel, and launch use.

**Flagpole, yard-arms:** To carry the United States flag and the club's pennant.
ACCESS:

**Main Entrance:** To the social portion of the club. Should be under cover and easily accessible from the parking area, designed to facilitate letting off a party before parking as well as in and out use by taxicabs.

**Boating Entrance:** For people informally dressed to reach their locker and the floats without entering the club proper. Must be close to (live) parking area for transfer of gear between car and boat.

**Service:** For deliveries, primarily to the restaurant, pick-up of refuse, and maintenance of machinery.

**Parking:** It will be assumed that live parking for the drop-off and pick-up of people and unloading of gear would be the only parking the club would provide. Other parking would be taken care of at the nearby garage, where an appropriate amount of space would probably be rented by the club.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Square Feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal Room</td>
<td>2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodore's Lounge</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining Room</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocktails, Bar</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen, Storage</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deck</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steward’s Office</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steward’s Apartment</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sleeping Rooms</td>
<td>5625</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gear Lockers</td>
<td>240</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulation, Mechanical, Toilets</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Building Area</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,240</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Aspects of the Building Site

On the given site, the club-house would be the last building of the new waterfront development. It would also be immediately adjacent to some relatively large, massive buildings, while itself fairly small. Furthermore, it would be desirable for it to be recognizable from great distances across the water. For these reasons as well as to satisfy the club's desire for a symbol of identity, strong permanent forms and a distinctive profile would be called for.

Since the members will come here to be close to the sea, the building would involve itself with the water in some strong way. Control of the sunlight would pose no obstacle to opening the water side of the building, as it would face directly only the early morning sun.

The wharf line as it is now runs roughly through the center of the proposed site; the existing pile structure is in poor condition due to a recent fire. I shall therefore assume that the foundations for this building would have to be new. And because the depth of the water at that point is roughly only 15 feet, I shall further consider myself free to use either fill and retaining walls or pilings, whichever proves most suitable.
The Site from the Customs Tower

The Site from the Water
180° PANORAMA FROM SITE
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ENTRANCE ELEVATION
Boston Yacht Club  R.T. Hardaway