

THE HISTORY OF CASTLE RINGSTETTEN
EAST RIVER DRIVE ABOVE FALLS BRIDGE
FAIRMOUNT PARK
PHILADELPHIA, PENNA. 19129
1876 - 1976

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY
MAY 13, 1976

THE UNDINE BARGE CLUB OF PHILADELPHIA
PHILADELPHIA, PENNA. 19129
1856 - 1976

CONTENTS	PAGE
History.....	1
Historical Items.....	3
1. Reception Room.....	3
a. Buffet.....	3
b. Cartoons.....	3
c. Christening Shell.....	3
d. Decorations.....	4
e. Fire-place.....	4
(1) Mantel.....	4
(2) Ceramics and Undine Bust.....	5
(3) Flags and Coat of Arms.....	5
f. Log Books.....	5
g. Oak Dining Table.....	5
h. Oak Sideboard.....	5
i. Undine Pictures.....	6
(1) The Legend of Undine.....	6
(2) Undine Out of her Element.....	7
(3) How the Shad Were Caught.....	7
j. Plaques.....	8
(1) L. Wallace Egan.....	8
(2) Fifty Year Members.....	8
(3) William R. Tucker.....	8
k. Storage Cabinet.....	8
2. Buttery Hatch.....	9
a. Back Bar.....	9
b. Bar.....	9
c. Gondola Prow.....	9
d. Grandfather's Clock.....	9
e. Picture of 1923 Fight.....	9
f. Plaques.....	9
(1) Adolph Woll, Jr.....	9
(2) Edward Graef.....	9
(3) Franz Federschmidt.....	9
g. Shell Casings.....	10
h. Ships Lantern.....	10
i. Stained Glass Memorial.....	10
3. Womens Lounge.....	11
a. Six Oared Gig.....	11
b. Etched Mirror.....	11
4. Miscellaneous.....	11
a. Specifications.....	11
b. The Undinians.....	11
c. Edison Phonograph.....	11
d. Grace.....	12

HISTORY

Castle Ringstetten is located on the East River Drive a few yards above the Falls Bridge, Falls of Schuylkill. The ground comprise some two acres extending from the river bank, with a frontage of one-hundred and thirty feet to Ridge Avenue a depth of two-hundred and fifty feet. At the river front a floating slip long used for landing has washed away. On the Ridge Avenue side at the extreme end of the grounds is the Caretaker's House. In between is a lawn which is used for parking.

The Castle, which takes its name from the home of Prince Huldbrand, in the legend of Undine, was erected in 1875, upon leased ground, the contractor being J. E. Bozorth, at a cost of about seventeen-hundred dollars. The first lease was for a plot of ground sixty feet front by seventy feet in depth, for a term of seven years, at an annual rental of ninety dollars. In 1879 the balance of the land now held by the Club was leased.

An assessment of ten dollars was levied on each Active Member and the dues of the Contributing Members for the years of 1875 and 1876 increased five dollars, part of the money for building purposes being secured, the balance being paid out of current receipts.

It was dedicated on May 13, 1876, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the organization of the

Club, the event being celebrated by a large number of the members, accompanied by their friends, the entire party being taken to the Castle in the Steamer Gazelle, accompanied by a band of music, the house and grounds being beautifully illuminated with gaslights and Chinese lanterns and the rooms decorated with flags.

The Club continued to lease the ground until 1922, when it was bought for \$15,000.00, a certain amount of money being raised by the issuance of bonds to the membership, the balance being secured by a mortgage. The mortgage was in the amount of \$10,000.00, which thru the effort of Adolph Woll, President, was paid in 1953, so the property is now clear of encumbrance. Various improvements have been made to the house from time to time, and often through contributions from the members, until the building to-day represents an expenditure of approximately twenty-thousand dollars.

The Castle is a picturesque building, facing the Park Drive and River, one and a half stories in height, with peaked roof. It was originally twenty feet wide by forty-five feet in depth, but over the years has grown to forty feet wide by seventy-two feet deep. It consists of the main or Reception Room, twenty feet wide by thirty-one feet deep, where all the main events take place. Off the western side is the Buttery Hatch, a room ten feet wide by twenty feet deep, and filled with refrigerators, a bar, and other creature comforts. Off

the eastern side is the Ladies Lounge, twelve feet square and is for ladies and furnished the conveniences required by the guests of the Club. To the rear of and adjoining the Reception Room is the Cloak Room and Graef's Alley, a corridor leading to the Mens Room, which has been redecorated with a wonderful display of historic interest. It also includes a large display case filled with trophies of the Club. To the rear of that is the Kitchen, approximately twenty feet square, a large light and airy room, well equipped with batteries of kitchen utensils, and provided with broilers, ovens and ranges. Over the reception room is the storage room of the Castle.

HISTORICAL ITEMS

To facilitate the examination of our treasures we have divided the Castle into its various rooms, and have listed the contents of each.

1. RECEPTION ROOM:

- a. BUFFET: On the south wall is a large buffet whose main purpose is that it holds the book case for The Log Books.
- b. CARTOONS: Adjacent to the Buffet are two Cartoons showing the members doing their own cooking, as they originally did.
- c. CHRISTENING SHELL: From the ceiling at the same end of the room hangs a miniature shell large enough for a child, with a pair of

sculls, complete in everything except the sliding seat. It was donated to the Club by someone who wanted to use it for his son's christening, and I understand it was used more than once.

d. DECORATIONS: Around the walls and from the ceiling hang trophies of all sorts, mingled with stands of champions flags and penants. Grouped artistically on the eye line are photographs, plaques, tiles, sketches, etchings, and paintings, most of them boating scenes and other aquatic material.

e. FIRE-PLACE: At the oposite end, and filling almost all of the wall space, is a large old fashioned, brick fire-place, guarded by two large andirons, this was the original source of heat.

(1) It is surmounted by a smoke dried mantel of oak, which bears the carved inscription:

" Let no one bear beyond this treshhold

hence,

Words uttered here in friendly confidence"

This motto was taken from " The Beef-steak Club " of London, England, one of the oldest clubs in the world. As Addison says of that club in the Spectator, " Our Modern celebrated Clubs are founded upon Eating and Drinking, which are Points wherein most Men agree,___", and it

surely applies to Ringstetten.

(2) CERAMICS AND UNDINE BUST: Over the fireplace are some fine specimens of the ceramic art, together with a bust of Undine. The bust was left at the door of Fairmount by Mr. B. P. Mansfield, a stranger to the Club.

(3) FLAGS AND COAT OF ARMS: Also displayed on the wall are the American and Club Flags, and the Club Coat of Arms,

f. LOG BOOKS: The archives and history of the Club are contained in 23 Log Books, listing the event, menu and names of those present. The first formal entry was made on May 30, 1876 and the last will follow tonights banquet, with the same information, just one hundred years later. These pages, many artistically adorned are filled with accounts of happy and brilliant parties, including many family affairs, so that over the years Ringstetten has become a part of many families. There is also a Visitors Book which has not been used for many years. They are all contained in a book case as mentioned before.

g. OAK DINING TABLE: In the center of the room stands an old scrubbed oak table, which is capable of almost indefinite extension and support the weight of good cheer.

h. OAK SIDEBORD: On the east wall this sideboard originally contained the silver and

crystal of the Club. On a shelf in a closet portion is contained a Hi Fi donated by Urban North, in 1975, so that we may have music with our dinner.

1. UNDINE PICTURES:

(1) THE LEGEND OF UNDINE: Over the side-board are five of the pictures of The Legend of Undine, the other five are facing on the west wall. These ten constitute a set of beautiful water colored engravings, illustrating Undine's story. The author Friedrich de la Motte Fouque tells us himself how the subject was suggested to him by Paracelsus' description of the spirits of the earth, air, fire and water. He chose Undine a water sprite, based on the traditional story popular among the Romantics of the spirit who seeks a soul through marriage to a human. Fouque gave the story a twist by implying that a soul was not really worth possessing as it brought nothing but distress and sorrow. The story proceeds towards the inevitable doom so characteristic of Greek Tragedy, because a human cannot marry a water sprite, nor a water sprite marry a human without the conflict between Earth and Water destroying their happiness. The development is beautiful and creation

of the spirits fascinating. It would have made a great Wangerian Opera, such as the Ring, and was once considered. These engravings are captioned as follows:

- (1) The Story of Undine.
- (2) The Fishermans Cottage.
- (3) The Meeting of Undine and Huldbrand.
- (4) Huldbrand Finds Undine after the Flood.
- (5) Marriage of Undine and Huldbrand.
- (6) Kühleborn Interrupts the Bridal Journey.
- (7) Undine Reveals Bertalda's Parentage.
- (8) Undine Disappears in the Danube.
- (9) Undine Reappears in the Fountain.
- (10) Tomb of Huldbrand.

These were purchased in Europe and presented to the Club by Mr. H. C. McIlvaine and Mr. Herman Hessenbruch in 1888.

(2) **UNDINE OUT OF HER ELEMENT:** In the southwest corner a picture shows Undine playing Golf, presented by The Philadelphia Sketch Club, with whom the Club frequently associated at that period of time.

(3) **HOW THE SHAD WERE CAUGHT:** In the southeast corner a picture showing Undine in the waters was also presented by The Philadelphia

Sketch Club.

j. PLAQUES:

(1) L. WALLACE EAGAN: At the northwest corner are three memorial plaques, first one for L. Wallace Eagan, who served as President from 1946 until his death in 1948. This was presented by Mortkin Witkin, Mr. Eagan's life-long friend and law partner, at the annual meeting on January 1950.

(2) FIFTY YEAR MEMBERS: Another one is dedicated to those members who have been members of Undine for fifty continuous years. Some 18 have achieved this, remarkable in these days of mobile Americans.

(3) WILLIAM R. TUCKER: Adjacent may be seen a plastic plaque to which are attached a set of gold cuff links, tie pin, and stud embossed with the colored chevrons of the Club. These were used by William R. Tucker, Esquire, who became a member of Undine on August 3, 1867, and served as President from 1903 until his death in 1920. They were presented to the Club by Dr. Robert C. White.

k. STORAGE CABINET: At the northeast corner is a cabinet for storage of the leaves for our ever expanding table.

2. BUTTERY HATCH:

- a. BACK BAR: A handsome piece carved from oak and including oars and a boat hook.
- b. BAR: A later addition was a bar with Undine coat of arms built by Ed Graef.
- c. GONDOLA PROW: On the west wall, in the bay window, and over a table hangs the prow of a gondola, presented to the Club by Dr. W. H. Finn.
- d. GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK: This was presented to the Club in 1898 by Mrs. James Keen, at the request of her deceased sister.
- e. PICTURE OF THE TWENTY-THREE EIGHT: On the east wall adjacent to the clock is a picture of this eight, which is famous for Undine because it was the only National Champion Heavyweight Eight the Club has ever won. Of the eight oarsmen two are still with us Ed Graef and Schuyler Jenkins.
- f. PLAQUES:
 - (1) Adolph Woll, JR: He has one on the east wall celebrating his fifty years of membership May 1911 to 1961, and for his service to the Club during those years.
 - (2) EDWARD GRAEF: He has one on the north wall, in recognition of his many services including as an Oarsmen, Coach, and Captain, and more important as the Club's Craftsman.
 - (3) FRANZ FEDERSCHMIDT: He has one over

the refrigerator, donated by his brother Eric, and Ed Graef, all members of the twenty-three

Eight, April 1956 on rebuilding the refrigerator.

g. SHELL CASINGS: On the mantel on the west wall stands two World War One Shell Casings, which have been remade into pitchers. Forty years ago they were used for pouring coffee into demi-tasse cups, by Mr. George G. Melloy, a Treasurer and Benefactor of the Club, who was busy every night.

h. SHIPS LANTERN: The following note was found in one of the Log Books: " Smoking Lamp of the Spanish Cruiser 'Maria Teresa ' sunk off Santiago, Cuba, July 3rd, 1899, by the blockading fleet under Rear Admiral W. T, Sampson, U. S. N. Picked up on the protective deck while she was still on fire, by Captain John H. Russell, U. S. Marine Corps, then of the " U. S. S. Massachusetts " and presented by him , to " The Undine Barge Club of Philadelphia."

March 4th, 1899.

i. STAINED GLASS MEMORIAL: This is over the back bar and displays the emblem of the Club. It was presented in 1893 by Dr. Conrad Berens and Mr. J. B. Townsend, Jr. To this has been added a lettered memorial to our late members L. Wallace Eagan, Edward G. Schmidtheiser, and Charles V. Doyle, who served as President, Vice-President, and Captain respectively.

3. WOMENS LOUNGE:

- a. SIX OARED GIG: On the mantel of this room is a small model of the original six oared gig, which preceeded the present eight oared shell so famous in College Rowing and the Olympics.
- b. ETCHED MIRROR: Back of the gig is a mirror beautifully etched with the Club Emblem, donated to the Club by G. Chester Turner, a member of the Rowing Hall of Fame.

4 MISCELLANEOUS:

- a. SPECIFICATIONS: A hand written copy of the " Specification: of Club House for Undine Barge Club at Falls of Schuylkill." Dated October 22, 1875 rests with the Log Books. These prove Frank Furness the Architect, at that time with the firm of Furness and Hewith, who later was also the Architect of The Boat House at Fairmount. Included is an additional specification for " Wing and Piazza ", dated May 1, 1877.
- b. THE UNDINIANS: Also we have a bound copy of " The Undinian " a copy of each one from January 1926 to December 1965, on display on the Log Books. Ed Graef has lent us his personal copy for your perusal. .
- c. EDISON PHONOGRAPH: We also have a cylinder type Edison Standard Phonograph and a Speaker, and while not assembled are located on the Buffet.

d. GRACE: One of the great traditions we should mention is a special Grace. Asked before dinner and very applicable to rowing. The President issues the following commands:

- (1) TUMBLE DOWN MEN ! (Attention!)
- (2) READY MEN ! (Seat yourselves!)
- (3) HANDLE OARS ! (Grab silverware!)
- (4) TOSS ! (Bang enda on table!)
- (5) LET FALL ! (Bang flat sides on table!)

These are familar commands issued by a coxswain who commands a whaleboat, or as now called a lifeboat, to get underway. The first two are obvious. The third, " Handle Oars " is instructions to take hold of your oar and free it from under the thwarts or seats, to be ready to toss. The fourth " TOSS " instructs to raise the oar vertically, all in line, and with the blades athwart*. The fifth " LET FALL " instructs to drop the oar into the oarlock. The next two we do not use, one " READY MEN " ! (Attention!), and two " ROW " ! (Start rowing!), which get you underway. No dinner ever gets underway at Ringstetten without these first five commands.

* Should be For and Aft.

"The Undine Barge Club of Philadelphia building has been certified by the Philadelphia Historical Commission. In addition, as a part of Fairmount Park, it has been entered on the National Register of Historical Places. Incorporation in the Fairmount Park National Historic District affords the structure full protection as provided by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966."

12 April 1976

Richard Tyler
Historian
City of
Philadelphia