

# Rafting the Waters and Pulling and Oar For Ecorse

## Rowing is An Art!

Rowing a race is an art and not a frantic scramble. It must be rowed with head power as well as muscular power. From the first stroke, all thought of the other crew must be blocked out. Your thoughts must be directed to you and your own boat, always positively and never negatively. Row your optimum power every stroke, all the while trying to increase your optimum.

Men as firm as you, when your everyday strength is gone, can draw on a mysterious reservoir of power far greater. Then it is you who can reach for the stars. That is the only way championships are made. That is the legacy rowing can leave you.

George Pocock

## **Chapter One – The Beginnings of Ecorse Rowing**

Since the time Indians and French voyagers paddled canoes down the green waters of the Detroit River to the Ecorse Creek centuries ago, Ecorse has been a maritime community. This maritime heritage has forged the social, economic and political destinies of Ecorse and other Downriver communities and shaped the personalities of both native and immigrant citizens. Rowing and regattas were and still are an important part of the maritime history of Ecorse and other Downriver communities that maritime historians often overlook. The history of rowing is woven into the history of Ecorse and the Ecorse Boat Club/Ecorse Rowing Club.

For nearly two centuries, the Riviere de Ecorces, or Ecorse Creek, the marsh and farm land surrounding it and the village of Ecorse presented a rural face to the world. Apple, pear and peach trees that the early French settlers had planted showered blooms into its water. The marshlands that filled its mouth as it flowed into the Detroit River produced aromatic grasses that people used to feed their horses and cattle and even to stuff their mattresses. Settlers along its banks fished and caught frogs and gathered wild berries beside it. Several saw and gristmills and coal and brickyards dotted the banks of the creek, but there was not enough industry located along it to affect the flow or purity of its water.

In 1901, G.A. Raupp of Ecorse, lumber dealer, guided a raft containing 2,500,000 feet of pine, hemlock, spruce and tamarack logs coming down the St. Clair River for use in his mill. One of G.A. Raupp's other endeavors, the Ecorse Rowing Club, proved to be even more lasting than his mill which went out of business in mid century. He was one of its founding fathers and helped organize its first crew in 1873.

## **The Wah-Wah-Tah-Shee Club and the Montie Brothers**

Less than a decade after the close of the Civil War, Ecorse became rowing conscious. Shells were unheard of in those early days, but huge crowds lined the river front to watch the competition of the first ten oar barge and later the eight and even six oar barge races that eventually turned the eyes of the world to Ecorse. Contemporary observers said that the interest in training created in this sport that eventually led to the world championships won by the famous Montie brothers "is what fanned the interest in rowing, not the large crews and cumbersome barges."

The names of some of the first rowers and generations of championship rowers also appear on the 1876 map as owners of farms and land near Ecorse Creek. They include Beaubien, LeBlanc, Champagne, and Montie. Richard LeBlanc was one of the first to visualize the possibilities of a rowing club in Ecorse. He promoted the idea among his friends and in 1873, they organized a rowing club of less than twenty members. They called their organization the Wah-Wah-Tah-Shee Club, an Indian name for Indian names were the general custom in those days.



The original membership of the Wah-Wah-Tah Shee Boat Club, the forerunner of the Ecorse Boat Club, that was organized in the early 1880s. The Montie brothers, who brought fame and glory to Ecorse through their championship performances in both barges and shells, are included in the picture. These men represented Ecorse in the old Northwestern regattas held in the central states and regularly won championships. Front row left to right are William Montie, Joe Sauch, T. Bondie, D. Osbourne, Charles Tank, Charles Montry, Alf Beaubien, Elmer Labadie, Alex Beaubien.

Back row: Frank Montie, George Clark, William Champagne, Frank Salliotte, and Ted Ferguson.

For a number of years the Wah-Wah-Tah-Shees rowed on the Detroit River in an eight oar barge. The Montie brothers-Will, John, Lige and Frank- practiced with and apart from the rest of the Wah-Wah-Tah Shees. They were sawmill workers at the mill of Salliotte and Raupp and they worked twelve hour shifts rafting logs on Ecorse Creek and the Rouge and Detroit Rivers. When their work day finished, they went out on the Detroit River and rowed until dark in a barge with ordinary oars. For ten years they rowed and saved their money as well and after that decade of training and saving, they purchased a four oar racing shell, the best of its day.

In the 1870s, Southern and Eastern capitalists had introduced the business of rafting lumber and timber through the lakes. This business involved rafting sawmill logs for tugs and steamers to pick up or continue moving to their final destinations. The steam tug *Vulcan*, was a striking symbol of the growth of this business. During the year 1871, the *Vulcan* transferred twenty-four rafts of timber from Au Sable East. As a whole, the rafts contained about 20,000 feet of timber and not one of them was lost. Many of these rafts floated down the Detroit River on their way to Lake Erie and Lake Ontario ports.

This maritime tradition in Detroit and the communities up and downriver from Detroit, including Ecorse produced badly needed revenue for business and people, and made the transition from rowing barges for business to rowing for sport and pleasure as smooth as a skilled oar stroke through Detroit River waters. These skillful rowers competed against each other in races and produced rowing clubs that produced community unity, pride, and tradition. The Detroit Boat Club began racing in 1839 and the Ecorse Boat Club in 1873,

The Montie brothers of Ecorse worked as raftsmen, riding the Rouge River outside of Detroit. Every day, dressed in their working clothes – red shirts, blue jean overalls and heavy boots-they wrestled logs into the Rouge River, created timber rafts, and shoved and guided them to their destinations up and downstream. The brothers earned an area-wide reputation for their strength, endurance and love of French songs and French partying. They were so widely respected for their skill that the members of the Ecorse Rowing Club implored the Montie brothers to come and row with them permanently.

Such founding members of the Wah-Wah-Ta Shees as Charles Tank, the Beaubien brothers and Frank Salliotte convinced the Montie brothers that their strength and skill would make the club a winner. The Montie brothers didn't know anything about strokes or the science of rowing, but their hands-on rafting experience had helped them develop great stamina. They could row all afternoon without getting out of breath and still sing their French songs, tell stories and celebrate their victories. When General Russel A. Alger presented the Wah-Wah-Ta-Shees with the best shell obtainable, the Montie brothers and other members spent many long afternoons rowing on the river.

The first real race that the Montie Brothers rowed took place at the Aragon Club in New York. They competed in a four oar shell that was extremely popular at the time and they won. Later they acquired a ten oar barge and this is the barge that the Ecorse men used to enter and win the Northwestern Amateur Rowing Association race at Bay City in 1880. The winning crew consisted of Will Montie, bow; John Montie; G. Beaubien; G. Sanch; Bob Montie; H. Seavitt; W. McLeod; M. Bourassa; H. Labadie. E.J. Montie pulled oars in the race and W.A. Ferguson served as coxswain.

From this crew the Montie brothers organized the legendary four oar crew that went on in later years to defeat all competition. In 1882 the Wah-Wah-Tah-Shee Club entered the six oar barge race held in connection with the Northwestern Regatta and they won this race also. The winning crew included Phillip LeBlanc; G. Reach; Louis Seavitt; M. Bourassa with Ted Ferguson as coxswain. They covered the two mile course in the extraordinary time of 13 minutes, 57 ½ seconds.

Also in 1882, the Montie's Wah-Wah-Tah-Shees teammate Charles Tank, Frank Seavitt, Lou Champagne and Elmer Labadie organized a crew and from 1882 until 1887 they rowed and won several races. Other Ecorse men who rowed during these years and established records for the Ecorse Club included Theodore Bondie, Alfred Beaubien, Charles Sesyer, Bill McGullen, Bill Clement, George Clark, Alex Beaubien, Henry Lange, Gus Gramer, at times keeper of the Mamajuda and Grassy Island lights and Mark Bourassa. These men rowed in fours barges and entered both junior and senior races.

In 1884, the Montie brothers rowed in the Regatta against such experts as the Excelsiors and the Minnesotas. After being beaten the first day of the Regatta when a broken rudder made their boat unmanageable, they came back on the second day to win the Regatta with a time of six minutes and  $5\frac{7}{8}$  seconds for a one and one-half mile straightway course, nearly one minute faster than the record.

The next year on July 29, 1885, the Monies pitted their rowing skills against the Hillsdales in the Belle Isle Regatta. The Hillsdales had just won the Canadian Henley Regatta held at St. Catharines, Ontario, and crowds cheered them all along the Detroit River. The Wah-Wah-Ta-Shees nominated the Montie brothers to row against the retuning champions. The three contenders lined up at the starting line-the Montie brothers, the Hillsdales and the Centennials. The starting gun retorted and the Monties shot their Alger shell ahead of the Hillsdales, leaving them trailing ten feet.

At the turn in the course, the Montie brothers were two lengths ahead and rowing at the unprecedented stroke of sixty to the minute. The endurance of the Frenchmen enabled them to hold that phenomenal stroke to the end of the race. They finished four lengths ahead of the Hillsdales and nearly a half mile ahead of the Centennials. Lige Montie summarized the race in his own words when he exclaimed that he and his brothers ha “beat de Hillsdales dat was just back from Hingland.”

One person on shore was certain as fog on the Ecorse, Rouge and Detroit Rivers about the outcome of the race. Old Alec Cicotte, John’s father-in-law (John married Eliza Cicotte and raised a family of three sons and two daughters) who had almost reared the boys from babyhood knew how strong and skillful they were. The story, probably embellished from telling and retelling but containing a kernel of truth, has it that when the Montie brothers won, old Alec sang and danced on the shore of the Ecorse River until he dropped from exhaustion.

On the day after the race, the four Monties were back on the Rouge River, wearing their blue-jean overalls and attending to their logging. On Sundays they would sit around old Alec Cicotte’s place near the Rouge River, wearing their Sunday clothes, their coats covered with medals. They won many other races, but they enjoyed talking about the one where they beat the Henley champions who had just returned from “Hingland” the most.

## **Chapter Two – Ecorse Grows in Rowing Strength and Competition**

The Royal Henley was introduced to Canada from England and took its name from the Royal Henley Regatta in England. It was held in Toronto in 1880, after the governing Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen was created, and during later years it was held at various times in Hamilton, Lachine, Ottawa, Toronto, Barrie, and Brockville.

By 1903, the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen was searching for a permanent home for the Henley. The Association listed its requirements as a straight mile and one half stretch of water, protected to ensure rowing on the windiest days, a course making it possible for each competing crew to win, and a course convenient to spectators. They found exactly what they were looking for at the St. Catharine’s Course on the original Welland Canal. The Royal Canadian Heneley has been held at St. Catharines since 1903, with the exception of a break during the First World War.

After beating the Hillsdales, the Montie brothers toured the country, rowing 33 races and winning 31 of them. One defeat happened when John's foot brace broke and the other came about when the choppy water on the Hudson River broke their shell in half. Their shell demolished, the Montie's quit the race but recovered the parts and mended the shell well enough for their children to use it.

George Clark built the first boat for the Ecorse Club and the Club used it in practically all of the races that it entered. In 1893, the Ecorse crew consisted of Frank Salliotte; Elmer Labadie; Charles Tank and Theodore Beaubien. This crew remained intact through the 1894, season but in 1895 Charles Tank was the only member of the crew left to welcome Bill Clement, George Clark and Alex Beaubien.

In 1896, another Ecorse crew composed of Alex and Alfred Beaubien, Charles Tank, Charles Sesyer and Louis Champagne set a world's record for the one and a half mile race around one buoy. In 1897 the crew was made up of Charles Tank, Louis Champagne, Alfred and Alex Beaubien and in 1898, Bill McGullin and Henry Lange joined the crew.

Just before the turn of the century rowing regattas were popular and the Wah-Wah-Tah-Shee Club entered every race it could. During these years the Ecorse men consistently won in the Northwestern on the Detroit River, Bay City, Orchard Lake, Lake St. Clair and at Monroe. Alvia Grant was among the famous Ecorse oarsmen just before the turn of the century. He was born in Ecorse on March 31, 1879, on the old Grant farm on Jefferson Avenue and lived there in a home listed as 3851 Jefferson Avenue all of his life. Besides rowing, Grant took an active part in the Macabees and worked as warehouse superintendent at the Worcester Salt Company. When he died on July 9, 1942, he was buried in St. Francis Cemetery.

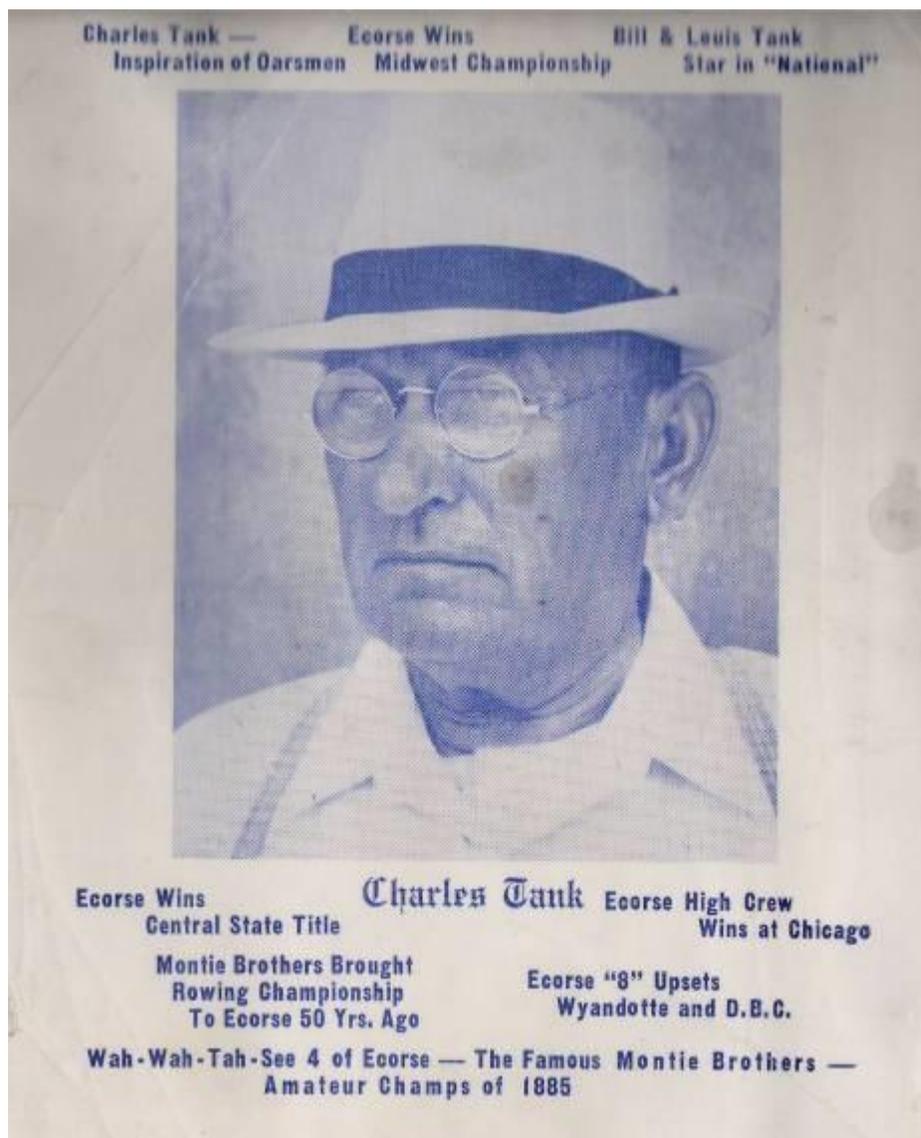
In 1901 at Orchard Lake, the Wah-Wah-Tah-Sees won easily with an entirely new crew consisting of Fred Vellmure, Frank Grant and I. Salliotte pulling oars in this race. Fred Vellmure was also the sculler for the Ecorse Boat Club. During these years Ecorse defeated the Detroit Boat Club, Excelsior, Zypher and Centennial, all of Detroit. In a wider circle of victory they conquered Bay City, Port Huron, Battle Creek, Monroe, Chicago, Wyandotte, Saginaw and Windsor, Ontario.

### **The Rowing Club Reincarnated**

The Ecorse Boat Club disbanded in 1906 and oarsmen from Ecorse raced under the Wyandotte Boat Club Banner. But the colorful memories of the Montie brothers kept alive the Ecorse tradition and inevitably the grandsons of William Montie, the Tank brothers, served as the backbone of the reorganized Ecorse Club. After rowing with the title crews in the 1890s, Charles Tank watched the Ecorse Rowing Club disband for lack of competition. For seven years he coached the boys in these clubs, including his own sons, to win competitions and helped make the Ecorse Club one of the best in the country.

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After the Ecorse Boat Club disbanded Tank continued rowing alone and in the middle thirties, his sons Louis and Red began to row for the Wyandotte Boat Club where their father coached them. In late 1938 and early 1939, Charles Tank and several friends reorganized the Ecorse Boat Club, starting out with a \$350 deficit for a note to purchase a second hand eight oar shell from the Detroit Boat Club. Charles Tank started out with the vintage shell – built in 1910- and large amounts of faith and courage.

The building that the rowing club used was the old brick building at the South end of Riverside Park that Mellon and Moran had once occupied as an auto, marine parts and machine shop. The east or river side had been adapted to boat repairing and withdrawal of motors and featured an I beam extending over the water to hoist motors by a chain pull. Wayne County bought M & M out, and the building was leased to the Ecorse Boat Club. Club members purchased two eight-oared shells and named them for Genevieve Tank and George R. Fink. These achievements were nearly eradicated by a tornado that whipped through the Downriver area one spring night in 1939, but the Ecorse Boat Club persevered and won the Intermediate "4" in the 1939 National Regatta at Detroit

Overcoming mishap and mayhem, the Ecorse Club struggled to glory by winning race after race. Ecorse won Schoolboy Championships and its lightweight crews won Royal Canadian Henley titles. Tank's two rowing sons, Red and Louis, won sculling event after event. His other sons, Vernon and Pete, also were involved in the Club, Vernon as president and Pete as a topflight boatman.

### **The Tanks and Jim Rice Produce Championship Teams**

In 1940, the first Ecorse High School crew appeared on the Detroit River and reigned as undefeated champions of the Metropolitan area at the end of their first season. In 1941 Larry Smith and Pat Messler helped Charles Tank polish the crews that he had guided to championship status by teaching them rowing fundamentals. Even though some of his students did not become members of championship crews, they were the foundation of the Ecorse Rowing Club and passed on what they knew to the next generation of rowers.

### **Chapter Three- The Era of Jim Rice**

Charles Tank died in 1940, and Jim Rice, his close friend and internationally known rowing coach became the director of the rowing program in 1942. Coach Rice brought fifty years of experience coaching championship crews with him to Ecorse. His first coaching job was with the Toronto Rowing Club in 1893, and after that he coached the Detroit Boat Club and the Wyandotte Boat Club in the Downriver area. Moving East, he coached at Harvard University, Columbia University, University of Pennsylvania and Havana University. In 1933 he coached the Hamilton Leanders and in 1936, returned to the Detroit Boat Club. When he agreed to coach the Ecorse Boat Club at the request of his friend Charles Tank, Ecorse and almost every other rowing club in the country recognized him as one of the top ranking rowing coaches in America.

After he took over as coach in 1942, the Ecorse Boat Club with Rice at its helm was the crew to beat in any race it entered. The Tank brothers, Louis and Red were still active as scullers and coaches but the younger men were fast replacing the men who started the club in 1938. The club won many races and its trophy room was crowded with medals and trophies, won in Chicago, Philadelphia and all towns where rowing was recognized.

The Ecorse High School crew won its third straight race in the third annual Downriver regatta in August 1941. The winning crew consisted of: George Pappas, stroke; Virgil Cuingan, Harvey Kromrei, Bob White, Reggie LeBlanc, Bob Blair, Earl Newland, Bob Vollmar, bow and front and Bill Hughes, coxswain. The Tank brothers won the 140 pound doubles and placed second in the heavyweight doubles at the Canadian Henley that year and William Tank won second place in the quarter mile dash for singles and Louis Tank won second place in the heavyweight singles.

The Ecorse High School crew cinched the North American championship at the Henley and the 140-pound eight also won its race.

### **The Boat Club Enjoys Constant Winning in the Early 1940s**

The Ecorse “Golden Boys” of 1942 showed their stern to the best boats in the U.S. and Canada. In July 1942, Ecorse oarsmen exceeded hometown expectations when they performed like champions in front of a crowd of 25,000 people lining the Detroit Riverfront in the July 4 and 5<sup>th</sup> races. Even veteran coach Jim Rice who trained the Ecorse crews and usually accepted praise matter-of-factly, glowed with pride at the performance of his oarsmen. Ecorse won practically everything in the regatta, successfully defending their numerous titles and adding more championships to the Ecorse Rowing Club’s long list of achievements. Crew members added the Junior Point Trophy, the Senior Point Trophy, and the Senior Eight Championship Trophy to the trophy case at the Ecorse Boat Club as well as various plaques commemorating their Saturday and Sunday victories.

At the end of the Saturday events, Ecorse boasted a score of 61 points, 25 points ahead of the Central Rowing Club of St. Louis, its nearest opponent. On Sunday Ecorse continued to pile up points and records. In the first race Sunday afternoon the Ecorse club entered the high school and the 145 pound crews in the senior eight oar race..



The high school crew won the race and the Ecorse 145 pound crew came in third place to give Ecorse a 36 point lead. Manning the High school shell were Bob Vollmar, Harold Covert, R. Blair, V. Mitea, H. Marcott, C. Crunga, H. Kromrei, R. White and Whitefield as coxswain. An hour later this same high school crew came back to win the Schoolboy Championship

As two of the three remaining members of the original Wah-Wah-Tah-Shee Club, Alex Beaubien and Elmer Labadie, were two of the most interested spectators at the regatta. Alex Beaubien

rowed his last singles race in 1889, when he defeated Knight Wright at the Belle Isle races and he also served as coxswain in the ten oar barge.

From 1940-1942, the Ecorse High School eight lost only one race, rowed at Minneapolis in a borrowed shell set up directly opposite to the one they were familiar with. In 1942, they won both the Junior and Senior Central titles at the Central States Schoolboy Regatta in Chicago and both Junior and Senior races at the invitational meet at Culver Military Academy. The 1942 Senior Schoolboy crew also won all major events at the Canadian Henley held at St. Catharines, Ontario, and two eight oar events within an hour to set a new endurance record. There is no record of any crew ever before winning the Henley heavyweight eight and the high school eight events in a single day.

Old timers who saw the 1942 crew in action voted it one of the best crews in the history of rowing..



Jack Kernan, 13, getting rowing advice from Alex S. Beaubien, 74, of Birmingham, who has won many medals for his skill and in 1899 was senior singles champion.

By 1943, most of the “golden boys” of 1942 were serving in the armed forces, but Coach Jim Rice felt optimistic about the 1943 crew’s performance. The 1943 crew won the Central States Interscholastic championship and went on to win the Canadian Henley. They won six races, were second in one race and third in another to capture all of the major events and finish second in point totals. It was the second year in a row that Ecorse boys, under Jim Rice, veteran coach, swept the race in the Henley.

The 1943 crew also won the High School Eight Championship and the senior heavyweight as well. John Whitefield was cox, Harold Marcott, stroke, John Gregan, Harvey Kromrei, Corky Poppa, Erwin Kromrei, Paul Scott, John Ghindia and Gus Pappas, bow.

### **The Ecorse Boat Crews Go To War, But The Boat Club Survives**

The 1942, 1943 and 1944 crews won all events very regatta they entered, but World War II attrition continued to affect the Ecorse Club. In the spring of 1943 the Ecorse Club regretfully declined the University of Wisconsin invitation to participate in a special spring race including both college and high school crews to be held at the university.



The Ecorse Boat Club participated in only two regattas during the 1944 season, because the World War had halted most of the regattas. In the two regattas that Ecorse oarsmen competed in, the Royal Canadian Henley and the Detroit River, they established records that brought fame and glory to the club and to Ecorse. Ecorse won three first and five seconds in the Henley and the Ecorse High School eight captured the interscholastic championship for the fourth consecutive time. In winning the race, Ecorse defeated the favored Grosse Pointe crew, St. Catharine's and Buffalo, crossing the finish line nearly two lengths head and defeating the Gross Pointe crew.

The Ecorse victory was more remarkable because of its courageous race for the senior eight championship which carried with it the internationally famous Hanlon Memorial Trophy, less than an hour before the high school race. Jud Ross, Coach of the Detroit Club, scratched his crew for the senior race to have his boys in perfect condition. Ecorse became the first club in 59 years to win the Hanlon Trophy two years in succession and speculation had it that the Canadians picked an all star crew this year to prevent the Ecorse boys from winning permanent possession of the Hanlon trophy.

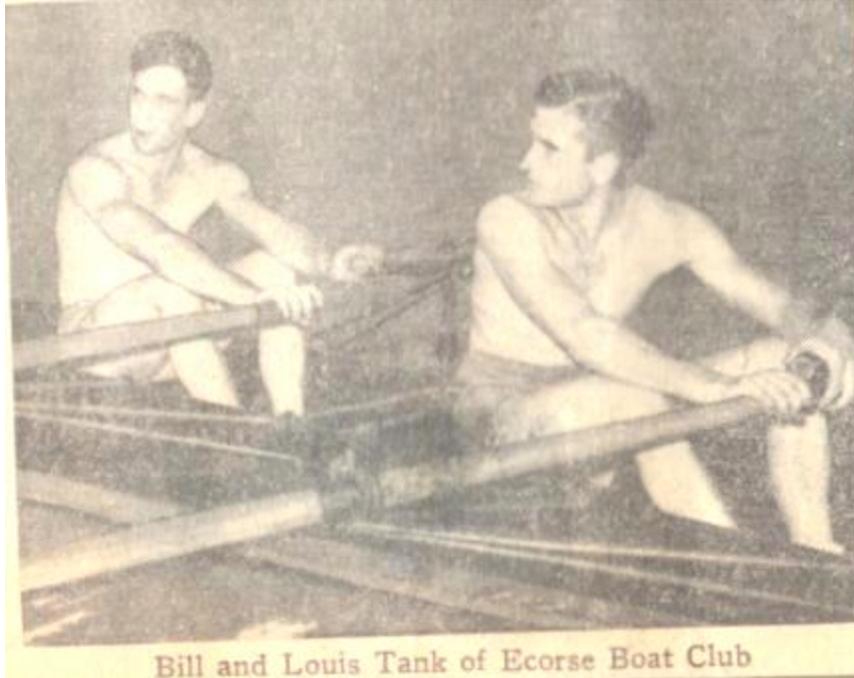
The 1945 senior crews were. Dallas Lett, Bob Pfeiffer, stroke; Lawrence Pulkownik, John Pulaski, Paul Hanusack, bow; Richard Emling, Joe Rawson, coxswain; James LeBlanc and Norman Mihatsch went on to win more rowing events.

### **Rowing Resumes Full Force After the War**

In 1946, the first year of peace with the return of many men from the armed forces saw a revival of rowing all over the country and Ecorse Boat Club with Jim Rice coaching came into its biggest season. 1946 Officials were: Vernon Tank, president; Edward Kromrei, vice-president; Albert Warner, treasurer; Arthur Sims, secretary; and Jim Rice coach. Coach Jim Rice had two teams competing that year. He selected Mike Stanovich, Bill Smith, Bob Hanusack, Dick Emling, Wayne Dupuis, Norman Mihatsch, Dallas Lett, Larry Pulkownik and Jimmy Osborn as the Ecorse High Varsity Eight to compete. The Ecorse Heavyweight Eight had already won the heavy weight event at the Shriner's Regatta two weeks ago and were practicing for the Central States Rowing Association Regatta on July 4<sup>th</sup> to compete for honors in their class. On this team were Bob Vollmar, Harold Covert, Walt Pooley, John Hill, Gus Pappas, Cam Wery, Bob White, George Pappas and John Whitefield.

Mike Tank was re-elected to head Ecorse Boat Club for the 1947 season at the annual election of the oarsmen in the main club room at West Jefferson and Mill Street. Tank had been president of the local rowing club for several years and guided the club into the favorable position of one of the best contenders in the country. Edward Kromrei was re-elected vice-president, an office he too held for several years. The club members re-elected Art Sims, Ecorse businessman as secretary and William Jones, affiliated with the Ecorse-Lincoln Park Bank, as treasurer, a first term for him. The club officials considered their most important task to be completing plans for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Oarsmen's Ball, slated for Saturday February 15, 1947 in the St. Francis High School auditorium.

Louis Tank, United States and international sculling champion since 1936, was appointed head coach for Ecorse Boat Club crews for the 1947 season. Club officials searched for a suitable coach to replace Jim Rice who retired from coaching that year and the name of Louis Tank shone above any other candidates. Tank had been an active oarsman since the Ecorse Boat Club reorganized and his achievements had been numerous and consistent in both national and international regattas. With this appointment he followed in the footsteps of his father, the late Charles Tank, who was first coach of the present club.



In 1947 the Ecorse crews brought honors to Ecorse by winning the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Central States Rowing Regatta held on July 3 and 4 in Ecorse, beating their closest rival, the Detroit Boat Club, by more than 200 points. The only crew to win both a Junior and Senior event was the Ecorse Boat Club's 145 lbs four with coxswain. In the junior event the winning oarsmen were Wayne Dupuis, Robert Short, Ed Lett and Bill Wilson who pulled away from the Chicago, Wyandotte and St. Louis clubs to win in seven minutes, sixteen seconds, just nosing out Wyandotte by a very small margin.

Charles Piros, Ecorse High School sculler, pulled to an easy ten length victory in the high school singles event. The next day he came back in the senior events with a second place finish in the 145 lb singles.

Bob Volmar, Harold Covert, Bob White and George Pappas captured the junior heavy fours without coxswain with a time of six minutes and 51 seconds. However, these boys lost out in the senior event the next day when they were beaten by Detroit in seven minutes and 54 seconds. A strong headwind slowed the time up on the second day.

Lou Tank, champion Ecorse sculler, led all oarsmen in total points with victories in the quarter mile 145-lb singles race, in the senior 145 lb singles, a first in the heavy quarter mile singles race, and second to Reynolds in the senior heavy singles event. Russ Reynolds, champion of three years ago, won this even in eight minutes ten seconds.

### **Jack Kelly of Philadelphia Trains With The Ecorse Boat Club**

The *Ecorse Advertiser* of April 1947 carried a discrete headline announcing that an Olympic contender was to train in Ecorse. The story explained that Mr. Jack Kelly of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania had recently qualified to represent the United States in the 1948 Summer Olympics. He planned to train the spring and summer of 1947 with members of the Ecorse Boat Club, rowing as a singles sculler and he would live in Ecorse while he trained. "We wish him well," the *Advertiser* story concluded.

Marvin Graves, a resident of Ecorse at the time, remembers Jack Kelly's time in Ecorse. He said that Jack Kelly quickly got to know Ecorse residents and he would join the other oarsmen in their morning and evening workouts. He would also jog at least three times a day for miles up and down Jefferson Avenue, the main street in Ecorse. As he jogged by, residents would speak and wave to him and he always waved back. Some people passing in their cars would honk a greeting at him and he would smile and wave back.

When he was 14 years old Graves worked at Loveland's Drugstore and Jack Kelly would stop in the Drug Store a few times a day for refreshment at the soda fountain. He remembers Jack Kelly as a pleasant and courteous person. Marvin had to sweep the floor as one of his daily duties and when Marvin swept near Jack Kelly, he would always smile and move his feet or move to another place at the counter without any hard feelings. Everyone working at Lovelands soon began calling him Jack.

One summer day Jack came into Lovelands with a very beautiful girl. He introduced her to the people working there as his sister Pat, who had come for a visit all the way from Philly. It wasn't until sometime later that Marvin realized that her middle name was Patricia and her first name was Grace. Grace Kelly was his sister! In 1947 she was not yet a celebrity. Her stage debut was in 1949 and her first picture, "Fourteen Hours," was released in 1951. "High Noon," her second picture was released in 1952, the year Marvin graduated from Ecorse High School.

Graves concluded, "There at the soda fountain in Loveland's Drug Store, Ecorse, Michigan, U.S.A., broom in hand, I stood face to face with Grace Kelly and didn't know it!"

### **Building Boats and Shells**

In the 1940s and beyond the Ecorse Boat Club members vied for championship titles in shells that they made. A score more or less of Boat Club members could be found any weekday evening busily building new boats and repairing others.

In January 1940 brothers William and Lewis Tank repaired boats and helped build others. They were helping to build seven singles and a double and did repair work on two eights and another double. A single shell cost approximately \$350 in 1940, and it cost about \$125 for the club members to build their own shell complete with oars. It took about 100 hours of labor to complete a single shell composed of four kinds of wood – spruce, mahogany, three-ply ash for ribs and cedar. Most of the club members were factory workers and built and repaired shells and rowed as a hobby.



But Thomas Gannon and Carl Peterson did not consider their boat building a hobby. Carl Peterson, proud of his Swedish birth and Thomas Gannon, equally proud of his Irish ancestry, gloried in the boats that built for the Detroit and Ecorse boat clubs.

Carl Peterson learned his trade as a cabinet worker in a piano factory in Goteborg, Sweden. He had been working at his trade for a long time before he came to the United States and began working at the Detroit boat Club in 1928.

Thomas Gannon came to the Detroit Boat Club in 1914, and spent the next 38 years there building boats and shells. He immigrated to the United States from Paris, Ontario, with his parents when he was a teenager and had been in sailing since he was a young boy. He developed his skills on jobs in boat works on the Detroit River front and he became an expert boat builder.

Detroit Boat Club's head rowing coach, Divie Duffield, hired Gannon in 1914, and the first shell he ever built was an eight-oar boat 61 feet long. After that first shell, Gannon went on to build more than \$100,000 worth of shells and his work was so highly regarded that top rowing people of the United States and Canada sought he advice, which he gave freely..



William and Louis Tank, brothers, doing repair work on their doubles shell. Louis won the single sculling championship of the river last year. The club now has seven crews — a light-heavy "8," heavy "4," light "4," two light doubles and two singles.

Coach Charles J. Tank, once a Detroit river champion, shows Lambert Pfeiffer (left) and John Labadie (right) a bit of construction. The Ecorse Boat Club was founded in 1873 and continued until 1901. In 1938 Pfeiffer, Labadie and John Brown sponsored a reorganization and the club now has 120 members. Right, Mike Tank, Walter Hancock and Don LeBlanc cutting materials.

— Photos by Anthony Maxmanian, News Staff

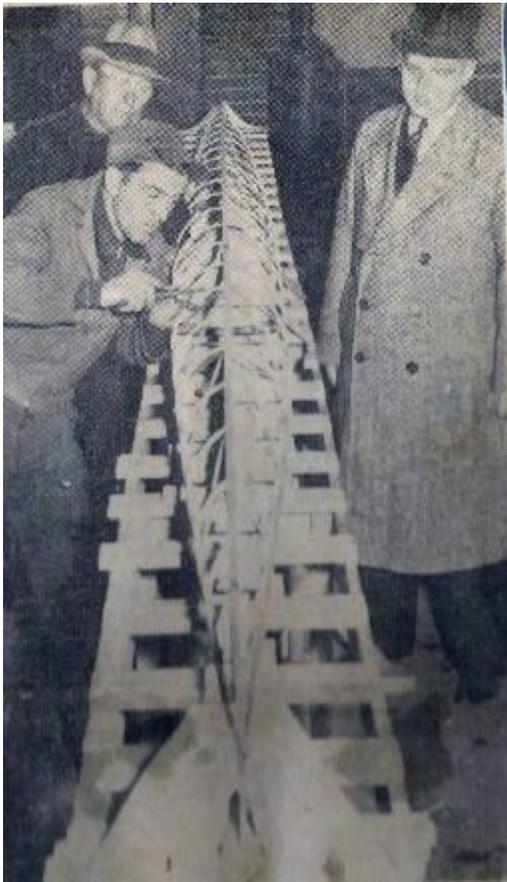
Gannon was the head rigger for the U.S. Olympic rowing team of 1928, and also created the slender, streamlined shells that comprised modern rowing equipment. He ranked with George Pocock and Frank Davy as the shell builder and Detroit Boat Club and Detroit Rowing Club crews pulled oars on his eights, fours, singles and doubles. He also invented a gateless oarlock and an adjustable rigger. He never built a shell from a blue print or a drawing. Everyone was an "original Gannon" and their qualities were so highly regarded that the top rowing people of the United States and Canada sought his advice which he gave freely. Rowing shells were not the only items he invented. He also designed and built sailboats and cruisers.

Together Peterson and Gannon constructed six eights, two fours, three doubles and several singles, all of which were in use. "We been workin' together 11 years and we ain't had much lip. Too busy," Gannon said.

In 1940, the Washington crew that had recently swept the collegiate rowing field at the Poughkeepsie Regatta, stopped in Detroit on the way to the big race and examined a shell that

Peterson and Gannon had built. Gannon who did the talking for the two of them commented, "They said they liked the boat."

The Peterson-Gannon duo fashioned boats for 31 years. According to coach Jim Rice, no one was better at the boat building craft than Gannon and Peterson. They did more than build boats, they "hovered" over them he said. They made the keels from spruce and from Spanish cedar and from British Columbia white cedar they constructed the hulls. They build any style of crew craft, whether it was an eight oared job like the one which fascinated the Washington eight or the tiny single shell for the sculler. The duo also did other jobs around the Detroit and Ecorse Boat Clubs, including hanging wall paper, blacksmithing, painting, piloting a boat, sharpening saws, repairing watches and even a turn in the kitchen. But they were happiest with a boat to be made.



In 1945 Detroit and Ecorse rowers gave a great testimonial banquet for Gannon and read some of the names of people who admired Gannon and whom he had helped. They included Jim Rice, Fred Standish, Roy Pingree, Jud Ross and Bill McBreeley.

Another memorable day in Gannon's life occurred when his wife Minnie died in 1944, and he told Jud Ross that he was through and that he would neither build, repair, nor letter another shell. Ross said, "Tom, if Minnie were alive she would say you are talking through your hat and that you know the Detroit Rowing Club needs you."

The grieving Gannon answered, "All right Jud, as long as you are the coach we'll stay together and work on."

And the two did until Gannon suffered a stroke and died in August 1954.

## **The Ecorse Boat Club's Next Fifty Years**

The Ecorse Boat Club continued its winning ways into the 1950s. In 1955, coach Bob Short gloried in the showing that his boys were winners during the weekend of the Mellus Newspapers' Schoolboy Rowing Regatta championship that was held on the Detroit River in mid-May 1955. The underdog Ecorse rowers piled up 80 points to win the team trophy, defeating second place Allen Park by 13 points. Chicago's Weber High placed third with 30 points, with Roosevelt and Mt. Carmel next with twelve points each.

The Ecorse Boat Club's senior heavyweight eight scored the big victory of the regatta featuring the top notch prep rollers and scullers of the Midwest, upsetting highly rated Allen Park by two lengths in the feature race. Allen Park's crew had been favored because of a win over the Ecorse rowers a week before in Chicago.

In the spring of 1956, Camille Wery, 31-year-old former rower and Ecorse Rowing Club vice-president was elected president, succeeding Joe Rawson of Allen Park. Wery had been a Boat Club member since 1942 and an army veteran. He worked at Great Lakes Steel Corporation and lived with his wife Jean and four children in Ecorse Township. Other officers named in the recent election were Fergus Judge, vice-president; Wayne Dupuis, treasurer and Art Sims, secretary.

Bob Short, club spokesman, said that Ecorse would be the host of the 1956 Central States Rowing Association's annual regatta scheduled for July 4 on the Detroit River. The Ecorse Club also was making an all out effort to qualify crews for the Olympic rowing trials set for June 28 at Syracuse, New York. Ecorse crews were planning to compete against Detroit Boat Club members for the right to represent the Greater Detroit area at the trials, Short said. He added that several Ecorse Boat Club members currently in the service had applied for transfers to the Detroit area so they could begin training for the Olympic trials.

Community support helped finance the numerous boat club crews and their equipment, and every year the young men in the Ecorse Boat Club would take part in fund raising activities to finance their seasons. On a Tuesday night in early July 1962 the young men of the Ecorse Boat Club canvassed the city between the hours of 6 and 9 p.m. They offered a decal with the Ecorse Boat Club emblem of crossed oars called "Blades" for sale.

Spokesman Dave Loveland explained that it was expensive to transport crews and equipment to regattas where the crews competed against national and international crews. The Crews did well in 1962. On July 4 the Ecorse Boat Club crews won their own Water Festival Regatta, rowing against crews from the Detroit Boat Club, Wyandotte, Roosevelt and Chicago. Ecorse emerged victorious in both heavyweight and 135 pound eights and fours and tied with the Detroit Boat Club in the quarter mile dash.

The Detroiters, Ecorse Boat Club's arch rivals, won their sculling specialties- light and heavy singles, open doubles and quarter mile single dash.

The weekend before the Ecorse Boat Club sent its junior crews to London, Ontario, for the Central Ontario Rowing Association Regatta. There they won two races in good competition and placed second in two others by close margins. They were pitted against crews from Wyandotte, Hamilton Leanders, Toronto Dons Rowing Club, St. Catharine's and London Rowing Club. Ecorse Boat Club emerged victorious in the 135 lb fours. Ecorse rowers were Jim Montie, Dick Thorburn, Sam Pappas and Bob Burkhardt. Jim Judge, Wayne Berger, Bill Nantau and Karl

Schwartz won the heavy fours without coxswain, even though they had never before rowed together as a unit. Ecorse took seconds in the 135 pound eight and junior heavy eights, the latter by half a boat length. Robert Walker coached the team.

Later that year, the Ecorse Boat Club's Intermediate eight crew beat the Detroit Boat Club in a preliminary heat at the National Rowing Regatta in Buffalo and then went on to place second in the finals of the event. Both the Ecorse oarsmen and the winning St. Catharine's eight broke records in the race, over a 2,000 meter Olympic course. St. Catharine's Club clocked 5:58.8 for the distance while Ecorse was timed at 6:02. The old record for the course set in 1909 was 6:03.

Ecorse also scored second in the Senior Heavyweight Four without coxswain, coming in behind a sharp Lake Washington crew. Still further back was the highly touted four of the Vespers Club of Philadelphia.

According to the club spokesman and later president, Dave Loveland, Ecorse racked up a total of 28 points to place seventh overall in the regatta, a creditable showing in the Nationals which attracted the finest crews from the United States and Canada. The Detroit Boat Club was the overall winner. The Ecorse Club had nine entries in the Canadian Royal Henley Regatta and Coach Walker felt that his oarsman would be "contenders in every race."

The 1964 Ecorse Boat Club brought home the winning trophy for the Senior 145 pound Four-without-Cox at the Canadian Henley races, which were held July 25, 1964, and televised on August 1. The winning crew was stroke Richard Thorburn; Three-man, Sam Pappas; Two-Man, Robert Burkhardt; and Bow Man, James Montie. Nick Pappas was the coach and David Loveland Club president. In 1965, the coaching staff was Louis Hawkings, assistant, Nick Pappas, head coach and Harry Miller, assistant.

Women continued to come into their own in the Ecorse Rowing Club and in the larger world in the 1970s and helped their male counterparts continue Ecorse's winning tradition. In May 1975, the Girl's Crew of the Ecorse Rowing Club rowed to a solid victory over a girl's crew from London, Ontario. The Ecorse girls traveled to London where they rowed the four-oared race on the meandering Thames River course. Members of the victorious girl's crew were Janine Morguet, Karen Hawkins, Mary Jane Hric, Debbie Comerzan, and Rose Sanflippo, cox. This was the only woman's race held.

There were also exhibition races in which the Ecorse Boys' Crew was victorious in four out of seven races. The Girls' Crew and the Ecorse High Rowing Team planned to complete the weekend at the Canadian Schoolboy Championships in St. Catharine's, Ontario. In a scrimmage race the day before, the girls defeated the Detroit Boat Club girl's crew in the two events that were rowed, the eight-oared shell and four oared shell. The girls in the eight were Denise Comerzan, Patty Lindel, Debbie Garza, Sherri Judge, Jayne Eberts, Mary Ellen Sizek, Marsha Hawkins, Kim Miller, Shevawn Enright, cox. Victorious Ecorse Four were Janet Scesney, Cindy Bair, Debbie Garza, Mary Ellen Sitek, Kathy Schrock, cox.

Councilman Kenneth Slifka, Al Ruthven, Pete Vukovich, Councilman Nike Pappas, Cam Wery and Jack LeBlanc presided over a ceremony in September 1976, to dedicate a four man skull to the name of Jim Rice. The dedication was part of the Ecorse Rowing Club's Old Timer's Regatta held at the Riverfront in September 1976.

The Ecorse Rowing Club also held its annual election of officers and board of directors on September 17, 1976. Al Sliwinski who rowed for Ecorse was elected president, Randy

Swartzbaugh, vice president, Joseph E. Rawson treasurer and Paul Hanuscak, secretary. Members elected to the board of directors were Charles Lange Sr., Robert Short, Paul Messineo, Harry Miller, Ron Lammers, Robert Kunitz and Jane Eberts. Ms. Eberts was the first woman to be elected to office in the history of the Ecorse Rowing Club.

In June 1987, the Ecorse Rowing Club appointed a new head coach, Ricky Pollack, from Philadelphia, who had an extensive rowing background and coaching experience. Having first rowed at Undine Barge Club and Vesper for eight years, he went on to various coaching positions at Philadelphia Barge Club, Clark and Worchester Barge Club and Mt. Holyoke Rowing Club. He led the Women's Junior National Team in 1980 and Senior B Crew in 1982. Pollack said that he saw a lot of promising potential in the high school boys crew currently rowing at the club from Carlson. "In another year or two, many will be ready for national competition. They are the future of the club and we should do our part to make sure that they are successful.

Pollack also planned to try to gain support from the community because community support through the years helped to make Ecorse a national rowing stronghold.

The 1987 season was the second that Carlson High School team had been based at Ecorse Rowing Club and although the school had just recently added rowing to the sports that it offered, the average turn out was close to ninety boys and girls. Head coach Ron Lammers worked to prepare the squad for competing in high school regattas across the United States and Canada.

Most of the boys and girls also rowed for the Ecorse Rowing Club. Girl's novice and varsity lightweight coaches Mary Ann Van Boxell and Beth Ann Gretka expected most of their girls to return to row in the summer as well. It had been many years since women rowed at Ecorse and this added new dimension to the Ecorse Boat Club.

In 1990 a women's crew, the Argonaut crew, convincingly won the Ecorse Rowing Club Arthur Sims Memorial Trophy and the Argonaut crew won the Intermediate Women's 125 lb eight event at the 1990 Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. This was the first year that the Arthur Sims Memorial Trophy was presented and Robert Sims, Arthur's son and Ecorse Rowing Club board member Joe Rawson presented the trophy.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty first century the Ecorse Rowing Club is continuing its 135 year tradition of winning crews. Ecorse Rowing Club has provided a source of community pride and recreation for 135 years and will continue to do so as long as the Riviere aux Ecorces and the Detroit River continue flow around the city of Ecorse.

## **The Boat Club Building/Rowing Club Clubhouse**

Ecorse Boat Club Facilities Best in Country, February 1947



With alterations already underway in the Ecorse Boat Club and with the addition of the new Quonset building, Ecorse Boat Club was rated one of the top clubs in the United States in providing facilities to its oarsmen. The regular club house included a recreation room, large shower and locker rooms and a small soft drink bar. All of the boat club rowing equipment was kept in the large Quonset building recently added to the club's facilities through the generosity of George R. Fink, Great Lakes Steel's president, and a group of Ecorse City officials and citizens headed by Mayor William W. Voisine. These club buildings were open to public inspection and boat club officials extended a cordial welcome to everyone to visit them at any time.

Final alterations were being made inside the Ecorse Boat Club to complete the large shower room and locker room being made ready to accommodate the large number of oarsmen expected in the spring.

An automatic heat hot water control for the shower room and lockers for 60 to 80 oarsmen in the locker room were installed.

The alteration of the club's locker room and shower was part of a long range plan to make the Ecorse boat club one of the best in the United States.

The Boat Club planned to add a lounge room and sun porch for club members and their families. A balcony was to be constructed for location of the huge lounge planned and the sun porch was to be extended to the water's edge from the rear of the building.

Also included in plans for the club were large lavatory facilities for both men and women. Plans also called for an addition of a kitchen and small soft drink bar to be adjacent to the lounge.

Although the Ecorse Boat Club is in construction this year. It is hoped that funds will be available so that the new club will be complete in the near future.

The building first used as a club was the old brick building at the south end of Riverside Park which was formerly an auto marine parts and machine shop operated by Mellon and Moran. The east or river side, was adapted to boat repair and the withdrawal of motors from ailing craft. An I-Beam extended over the water and hoisted motors by a chain pull. Wayne County bought out Mellon and Moran and used the building for a garage to store those rugged chain drive orange trucks that serve Ecorse and the new park. Later the county leased the building to the Ecorse Boat Club.



## **Rowing Club Retrospectives**

### **The Wah-Wah-Ta-See Club, 1880s**

The original membership of the Wah-Wah-Tah See Boat Club, the forerunner of the Ecorse Boat Club, that was organized in the early 1880s. The Montie brothers, who brought fame and glory to Ecorse through their championship performances in both barges and shells. The Montie brothers and Joe Sauch, T. Bondie, D. Osbourne, Charles Tank, Charles Montry, Alf Beaubien, Elmer Labadie, Alex Beaubien, Frank Montie, George Clark, William Champaigne, Frank Salliotte, and Ted Ferguson represented Ecorse in the old Northwestern regattas held in the central states.

### **Ecorse's First Rowing Club Raced in Ten Oar Barges**

Less than a decade after the close of the Civil War, Ecorse became rowing conscious. In those earliest days, shells were unheard of but huge crowds thronged the river front to watch the competition of first, the ten oar barges, and then later, the eight and even the six oar barge races that eventually brought world fame to Ecorse. It was not, however, the large crews in the cumbersome barges that won renown for Ecorse, but the interest and training created in this sport which eventually led the world championships won by the the famous Montie brothers.

Richard LeBlanc was the first to conceive the idea of a rowing club in Ecorse. Promoting the idea among his friends. An organization was formed in 1873. Probably less than twenty members became actively interested in the new club, but those men established a tradition that has now been carried on for nearly three-quarters of a century. The club was known as the Wah-Wah-Tah-See Club, an Indian name, because Indian names were the general custom in those days.

For a number of years the Wah-Wah-Ta-See Club rowed on the Detroit River in an eight oar barge. Later they acquired a ten oar barge and it was in this barge that the Ecorse men entered and won the Northwestern Amateur Rowing Association race at Bay City in 1880. Pulling oars in this race were: Will Montie, bow; John Montie, G. Beaubien, G. Sench, Bob Messic,

G. Beaubien, Bob Montie, H. Seavitt, W. McLeod, M. Bourassa, H. Labadie, E.J. Montie and W.A. Ferguson, coxswain.

From this crew the Montie brothers organized the now famous Montie brothers' four oar crew which went on in after years to defeat all competition.

In 1882, the Wah-Wah-Tah-See Club entered the six oar barge race held in connection with the Northwestern Regatta. The Ecorse men won this race also. This crew included Phillip Leblanc, G. Reach, Lou Seavitt, M. Bourassa and Ted Ferguson coxswain. They covered the two mile course in the extraordinary time of 113 minute, 57 ½ seconds.

In the same year, Charles Tank, Frank Seavitt, Lou Champaigne and Elmer Labadie organized a crew and from 1882-1887, they rowed and won seven races.

Other Ecorse men who rowed during those years and established records for the Ecorse Club included Theodore Bondie, Alfred Beaubien, Charles Sesyer, Bill McCullen, Bill Clement, George Clark, Alex Beaubien, Henry Lange, Gus Gramer and Mark Bourassa. These men rowed in fours and barges and entered in both junior and senior races.

The first boat built for the Ecorse Club was built by George Clark. That boat was used in practically all of the races in which the Wah-wah-Tah-See Club entered.

In 1893, the Ecorse crew was composed of Frank Salliotte, Elmer Labadie, Charles Tank, and Theodore Beaubien. This crew remained intact throughout the 1894 season and in 1895, Charles Tank was the only member of the crew to carry on. In this year, Bill Clement, George Clark and Alex Beaubien joined the crew.

In 1896, it was Tank, Alex Beaubien, Louis Champaigne and Charles Sesyer pulling for oar for Ecorse. However, in this year Ecorse was entered in the Detroit River races at Trenton, and Tank, M. Bourassa, Elmer Labadie and Alex Beaubien brought victory to their club.

In 1897, the crew was made up of Tank, Champaigne, Alfred and Alex Beaubien and in 1898, Bill McCullin and Henry Lange had been added to the crew.

Rowing regattas were popular just before the turn off the century and the Wah-Wah-Tah-See Club entered every race in which it could get. During these years the Ecorse men won consistently in the races in the Northwestern on the Detroit River, Bay City, Orchard Lakes, Lake St. Clair, and at Monroe.

Again in 1901, at Orchard Lakes, Ecorse won easily with an entirely new crew. Pulling oars in this race were Fred Vellmure, Frank Grant and Ignatius Salliotte. Fred Vellmure was also the sculler for the Ecorse Club.

During these years the following clubs were defeated by Ecorse: Detroit Boat Club, Excelsior, Zypher and Centennial, all of Detroit; Bay City, Port Huron, Battle Creek, Monroe, Chicago, Wyandotte, Saginaw and Windsor.

Ecorse Advertiser, Friday, July 3, 1947

### **Montie Brothers – 1880s**

### **The Fame of the Montie Brothers Still Remembered In All Rowing Circles**

Back in the early 1880s, Ecorse became famous for oarsmen. While the Wah-Wah-Tah-see Boat club had been organized many years, it remained for the Montie brothers to perfect a style of their own and go on to capture all the championships in America.

The four brothers: Will, John, Lige and Frank, were just ordinary Ecorse folk. All worked hard in the sawmill of Salliotte and Raupp. As early as 1875 they became interested in rowing and every night, weather permitting, they could be seen on the Detroit River practicing a sport in which they were to become world famous.

It has been over 60 years since they first won national acclaim, but at the Ecorse Boat Club, there is never a day passes but what the name "Montie brothers" enters into the conversation and the records they left have been an inspiration to the boys who now, after two score years, are again bringing fame to Ecorse through their magnificent rowing performances.

The triumph of the Montie brothers dates back to 1883, and belongs to the romantic chapters of the sport. They were, as has been related, sawmill workers who labored twelve hours a day. When their work was over they went out on the river and rowed a barge with ordinary oars. They would row until dark and they continued their practice for ten years. In the meantime they were saving their money and after nearly a decade of training and saving they purchased a four oar racing shell of the best type then used.

Their first real race was in New York at the Aragon Club, and they won. Racing in four oar shells at the time was extremely popular and competition was keen.

Next, the Montie brothers won the Northwestern Amateur Rowing Association Championship, drawing additional national repute.

It was about this time that the Hillsdale crew was racing in Europe and beating the best of the European four oar crews. They returned in time to enter the national rowing championships at Belle Isle in 1883. Newspaper clippings of the day, yellowed and faded, record what happened that afternoon. That race has become history in Ecorse and few youngsters here can't relate the story of the Montie brothers on that day.

According to reports of the race, the Montie brothers set the pace for the shells by rowing a beat of sixty, a beat that is incredible to modern rowing enthusiasts. Anyway, the newspaper clippings relate that the Montie brothers were rowing sixty and the crowd shrieked in amazement.

Hillsdale, however, gave the Montie brothers a hot chase, rising their beat to 54, then tired and fell far behind, leaving the Montie brothers to win by several boat lengths.

After winning the championship, the Montie brothers toured the country. They engaged in 33 races and won 31 of them. One defeat was caused when John's foot brace broke and the other defeat came when the choppy water on the Hudson River broke their precious shell in two. Their boat demolished, they quit racing. They received the parts and mended the shell well enough for their children to use the shell.

## **Ecorse Boat Club-1930-1939**

### **Ecorse Boat Club, 1939**

According to Ken Bolthouse, the editor of the *Oarsmen's News*, the Ecorse Boat Club lost its only eight-oared shell during a storm that practically destroyed the club house. However, club members got busy during the winter and entirely rebuilt the eight for the 1940 season. Since

then, many of the club members have built single sculls for their own use and donated them to the Club to use as part of its equipment.

Editor Bolthouse also wrote about the Ecorse Boat Club's most surprised winners of the Royal Canadian Henley race in Canada. During the 1939 regatta, three clubs were scratched from the 140 pound doubles even. Jim Cameron and Herb Beaubien from the Ecorse Club were elected to row to provide some competition for the remaining two clubs in the race. Beaubien and Cameron practiced on the course twice. When they raced, the unheralded duo easily won the doubles.

After the race, the other crews were slightly angry and in their disappointment they informally accused Ecorse of running in a 'couple of ringers.'

But we're not. We are the only junior rowers down here with Ecorse. Why I'm not even supposed to row. I have asthma so bad that I can't sleep on a feather pillow!" Cameron said.



### **Ecorse Boat Club-1940-1949**

In 1940, Ecorse captured a high position in the Henley Regatta. The Ecorse Boat club won the Detroit River Championships in 1941 with its high school and 140 pound crew which was made up of Chuck Trondle, Jim Cameron, George Oltean, Don Leblanc, Don Boseck, Kiff Hughes, Nick Pappas, Lou Tank and Warren Alexander, coxswain.

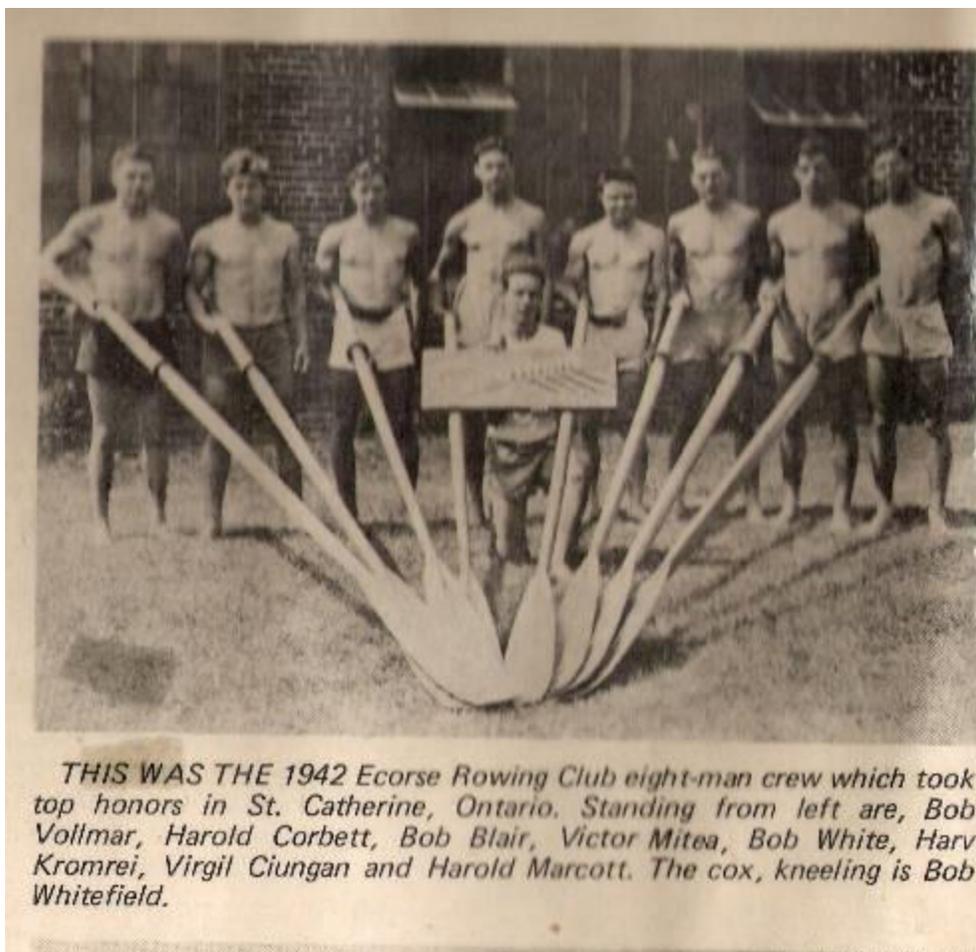
In 1941, the Ecorse High School won the Midwest Championship in Chicago. William and Louis Tank kept adding to their long list of victories by placing first in the Central States Regatta. Bill Tank won the national title that year in the National Association events at Minneapolis. The Club did not fare too well in the Henley that year, but won two thirds of the events in the local Downriver Regatta.



*THE SKIFF holding these Ecorse Rowing Club oarsmen raced in an exhibition race in Chicago in 1941. From left are Kif Hughes, Bosc, Don LeBlanc, Happy Oltean, Harold Jones and Preacher Trondle.*

The year 1942, was the banner year. At the Central State Regatta held in Ecorse, the Ecorse Boat Club won both the senior and junior point trophies against eight representative Rowing club in the Middle West.

Three weeks later the schoolboy eight made history at the Canadian Henley Regatta. At three in the afternoon they rowed and won the schoolboy championship and one hour later they won the senior heavyweight title. This was the first time this had been accomplished in the Henley Regatta.



*THIS WAS THE 1942 Ecorse Rowing Club eight-man crew which took top honors in St. Catherine, Ontario. Standing from left are, Bob Vollmar, Harold Corbett, Bob Blair, Victor Mitea, Bob White, Harv Kromrei, Virgil Ciungan and Harold Marcott. The cox, kneeling is Bob Whitefield.*

Harold Corbett is really Harold Covert. The newspaper reporter misspelled his name. I know this for sure, because I am his daughter!!!

The 1943 season was considered by many as the best. Russ Reynolds scored the biggest upset of the season when he won the National Sculling Championship. The school boy crew duplicated their 1942 record by taking the Ned Hanlon Memorial Senior title and the 140 senior crew captured two important victories that year. Harvey Kromrei won the heavyweight singles at the Henley that year and was winner of the junior doubles with his brother Irwin.

In 1944, the Ecorse senior eight raised its total wins to 17, with a victory over the favored Detroit crew. This Ecorse crew consisted of Jim LeBlanc, Bob Pfeiffer, Cecil Mobley, Leonard Antolezyk, John Pakaski, Jack Guthrie, John Gregan, Irvin Kromrei, and John Whitefield, coxswain. It was this year that the crew won the International title. Jim Cameron and Lou Tank captured the doubles title in the Henley that year. Harvey and Irvin Kromeri won the senior doubles at Philadelphia the same year in the Middle States Regatta.



**VICTORS**—Ecorse Boat Club's schoolboy crew that defeated the favored Detroit Boat Club eight in yesterday's regatta. From left, Jim LeBlanc, bow; Bob Pfeiffer, 2; Cecil Mobley, 3; Leonard Antolczyk, 4; John Pakaski, 5; Jack Guthrie, 6; John Gregan, 7; Irv Kromrei, stroke. Coxswain Johnny Whitefield is in the foreground.

In 1945 at the Central State Regatta, the schoolboy crew again captured the senior championship eights. The schoolboys lost to Grosse Pointe by inches on the final race of the year. At the Henley at Canada, Louis Tank again captured the senior 145 pound singles to give Ecorse its second win as he and Jim Cameron teamed up two in the 145 pound senior doubles.

The year 1946 was another banner year for the club, highlighted by sweeping the Central States Regatta Fourth of July with a high of 323 points. Detroit was second with 164 points. A new addition to the club was added when a large hut was put up to house all the Club's rowing equipment. Ecorse Boat Club also won the annual Shriner's Regatta at Elizabeth Park during the early part of the season.

Louis Tank took top sculling honors again by winning three events at the International Regatta held in Hamilton, Ontario. The senior high school four defeated the national champion, Wyandotte, in the schoolboy regatta held in Detroit early in June. At the close of the 1946 season, Lou Tank teamed up with Russ Reynolds to win the senior heavyweight doubles championship at the Royal Henley Regatta at St. Catharines, Canada, and also rowed with Church Piros to win the senior 145 pounds doubles. The Royal Henley Regatta closed the 1946 season for the Ecorse Boat Club.

## **1940-Building Boats and Shaping Shells**

In January 1940, Coach Charles Tank and Township Supervisor Bob Brown watched Lawrence Smith putting the finishing touches on the airplane-spruce and mahogany frame of his new racing shell.

Ecorse Boat Club members planned to vie for championship honors in shells of their own making during the 1940 rowing season. Any weekday evening a visitor could go to the Club's boat house at the foot of Mill Street and Jefferson Avenue and find a score of members busy building new boats and repairing others.

They were building seven singles and a double and repairing two eights and another double. A single shell cost approximately \$350 in 1940. If the club members built their own shell complete with oars, it would cost them about \$125.

About 100 hours of labor went into building each shell. The shells were made of four kinds of wood: spruce, mahogany, three-ply ash for the ribs and cedar.

### **Thanks to the Tanks – 1941**

Louis and William Tank are the individual stars of the Ecorse Boat Club. Through their training down to the 140 pound class their skill and stamina enables them to compete successfully in the open heavyweight class. In 1941, they achieved the following enviable record:

A Central State Regatta

Louie won the mile race for heavy singles.

William won the quarter mile dash.

Louie and William paired to win the mile race for heavy doubles.

At the Nationals

William won the quarter mile dash.

William and Louie paired to take second place in the 145 pound doubles.

At the Royal Canadian Henley

William and Louie paired to win the 140 pound doubles.

William and Louie placed second in the heavyweight doubles.

William won second place in the quarter-mile dash.

Louie was second in the heavyweight singles.

At the Downriver and St. Charles Regattas

Louie won the heavyweight mile and the quarter mile dash.

William suffered a fractured wrist which prevented his competing in the last two events.

### **1941 Oarsmen's News Advertisers**

Ecorse Presbyterian Young Peoples Society

Frankie's Place

Beer, Wine

New Bar and Fixtures

High at Goodell

Sycamore Bar

3764 West Jefferson

Roth's Department Store

Peter Reves Corps No. 270

Women's Relief Corps

Riopelle Radio Store

Expert Service on all home and auto radios

Nine Years for You

One Year For Us

V.F.W.

### **They Cooked Muskrats- December 1941**

Over two hundred people attended the first annual Muskrat Supper sponsored by the Ecorse Boat Club on a Saturday evening in December 1941. Everyone present was loud in his or her praise of the event.

As advertised, Gene Maurice, Sharkey Montie, Tom and Ari Drouillard, well known throughout the Downriver district, presided as chefs for the events. This fact attracted a large number who were familiar with the ability of these men to prepare muskrat as it should be prepared.

The Ecorse Boat Club will make the Muskrat Supper an annual event. It will revive the tradition of Ecorse and this section from the time that muskrat was first acclaimed a real delicacy.

Music was by Dick Poupard and his French Fiddle and admission was \$1.00.



## **Ecorse Day 1942**

Ecorse Day 1942 began at the Riverside Park on the morning of July 4, 1942, with the merry-go-round turning opposite the Ecorse Boat club at the Ecorse waterfront and it continued turning until late that evening. It was a huge success despite a runaway horse and a damaged Buick and hitching post. A crowd of over 10,000 spectators watched the junior events of the Central State Rowing Regatta in the evening. The Queen of the Rowing Regatta, Miss Elaine McDonald and her attendants, Miss Betty Ray and Miss Gladys Goodell received the ovation of the crowds following her crowning at the water's edge by Mayor W. Newton Hawkins. All afternoon, rowing enthusiasts congratulated the queen and cheered for the home rowers at the regatta.

Dignitaries included Judge and Mrs. "Doc" Salliotte, Mr. and Mrs. A.M. Sims, Mr. Sims doing the announcing from the official stand. Attending were Mr. and Mrs. F. Tank, Mr. and Mrs. Paul R. Hart, Mayor and Mrs. Jasper N. Howard of Lincoln Park, Mr. and Mrs. William McGatherin also of Lincoln Park and Captain Brinkman, formerly Commodore of the Western Yacht Club. Frederick Greig attended from Detroit as did Miss Eleanor Brinkman and Dorothy Pudrith who christened the new Detroit Boat Club shell recently. There was John Watt of Flat Rock, Judge John V. Moldovan and Elmer Labadie and Alex Beaubien. Elmer Labadie and Alex Beaubien were members of the first rowing crew that won the championship for Ecorse.

After the last husband had called his wife in the Wife Calling Contest, after the Oldest Bachelor had told the winter of the Largest Family Contest that he didn't think he'd enter the Wife Carrying Contest next year and after the Baldest Man in the events at the Municipal Field had congratulated the Fattest Woman winner, a rumor spread like wildfire.

"There's a runaway horse on Jefferson Avenue!" someone hollered.

"Shades of the mauve decade!" yelled Mayor Hawkins as he sprinted toward Jefferson Avenue. The beautiful black surrey and the fine carriage horse hitched to the surrey recently purchased by Clarence DeWallott took a quick trip down Jefferson Avenue when a motorcycle frightened the

horse. The runaway horse also dragged the hitching post that resembled a colored jockey that DeWallott had installed in front of his property for the use of the horse and surrey.

Pat Donnelly caught the horse after a two block chase and after the horse and surrey had scraped the right front fender of a shiny Buick. The surrey was unharmed, but the hitching post was in much need of repair.

The Ecorse Businessmen's Association sponsored the Ecorse Days events and the program was arranged under the supervision of a committee composed of Frank Butler, chairman; Ray Monite, James Pantagnes and Louis Rosenthal.

### **1942 is A Banner Year**

At the Central States Regatta which was held in Ecorse in 1942, the Ecorse Boat Club won both the senior and the junior point trophies against eight representative rowing clubs from the Middle West.

The Ecorse High School crew was the principal attraction in this regatta which won its own race and then went on to win the heavy weight championship against all comers.

Three weeks later the schoolboy eight made history at the Canadian Henley Regatta. They raced the best high school eights in both the United States and Canada and won easily. Just one hour later, the Ecorse boys entered the Henley senior heavyweight eight and again won against the best crew on this continent.

There is no record of any crew every before winning the Henley heavyweight eight event in a single day.

This outstanding crew was coached by Jim Rice whose fame as a rowing coach is recognized throughout the entire country.

Old timers who saw the 1942 Ecorse crew in action voted it one of the best crews in the history of rowing.

### **Boat Club Now owns Eighteen Shells – 1942**

The Ecorse Boat Club which had been dormant since 1905 was reorganized in 1938. The Club started out with a negative balance in the form of a note for \$350 with which the Club purchased a second hand eight oar shell from the Detroit Boat Club. This shell was second hand and had been built in 1910, but with that old boat and a lot of courage the Ecorse Boat Club was resurrected.

Today, the Club has four eight oar shells, three four oar shells, three doubles and eight singles. All of the singles and doubles have been built in the Ecorse Boat Club.

Financially, the Club has had tough sledding. Only recently has this train been eased through contributions from various individuals, organizations, industries and the City of Ecorse.

### **1942-The City of Ecorse**

The City of Ecorse is proud of the Boat Club and its oarsmen who have brought honor and glory to Ecorse.

Your 1942 achievements will go in history as surpassing all records and many future crews representing Ecorse display the same courage and good sportsmanship that characterized the championship oarsmen of 1942.

Good luck for the 1943 crews!

W. Newton Hawkins, Mayor

Earl Hebert, Councilman

Albert Buday, Councilman

Robert Brown, Councilman

Don Beckman, Clerk

Francis Labadie, Councilman

Ormal Goodell, Councilman

Paul Movinski, Councilman

Paul Vollmar, Treasurer

Thomas Weber, Assessor

Alger E. Salliotte, Judge

John V. Moldovan, Judge

### **The Ecorse Boat Club Boasts 100 members: 50 Oarsmen-1942-1943**

The Ecorse Boat Club has enjoyed a phenomenal growth since it was reorganized some four years ago.

The Ecorse Boat Club in 1942 enjoys a membership of over 100 Ecorse citizens in addition to over fifty men and young men who are classed as oarsmen and have participated in the many regattas that the Club has entered.

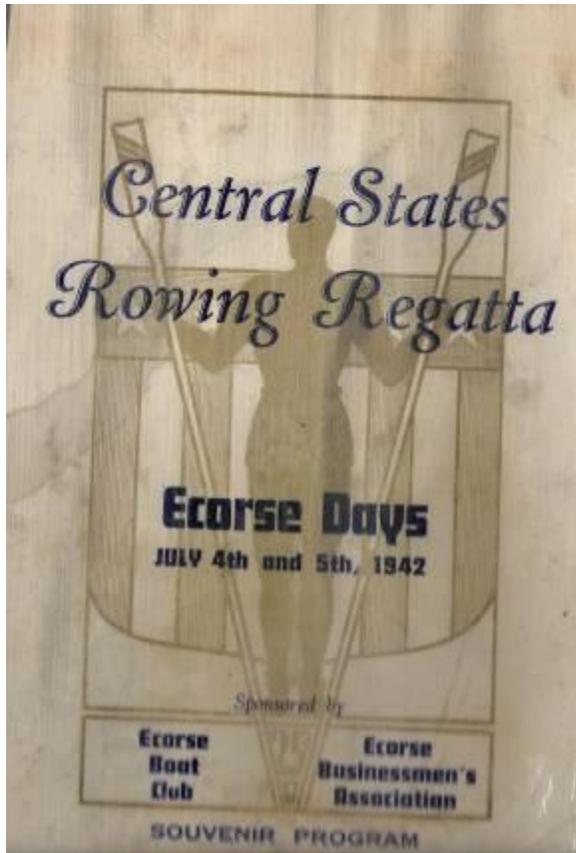
The late Charles Tank, a member of the Ecorse Boat Club back in the 1890s, was responsible for the reorganization of the Club. It was through his efforts that equipment was obtained and Ecorse lads once again became the fear of crews throughout the entire country.

In the four years that the Club has now been operating the crews have brought numerous championships back to Ecorse as in the 1890s. Ecorse crews met and defeated the outstanding organizations in this country.

Every member of the Club that is now in service is anxiously awaiting the time that they can return to Ecorse and carry on the fame and reputation that the Ecorse Boat Club has established in the rowing world.

For two years in a row the Ecorse Boat Club has won the international eight oar championship. Both in 1942 and again in 1943, the Ecorse schoolboy crew not only won the High School Eight Championship, but also the senior heavyweight title as well.

### **Oarsmen's News Advertisers, 1942-1943**



We deliver-AT 1595

M. Poppa – C. Poppa

Groceries & Meats

270 State Street

Tanks Groceries

Beer & Wine

D.T. & I. and West Jefferson, Ecorse

Loveland's Pharmacy

“Where People Meet and Eat” Ecorse

Jax 80 Bas

“Gateway to the Mill”

Jefferson and Tecumseh

Auburn Café

Ecorse

Don't Kill Your Wife-

Let Us Do Your Dirty Work At The Ecorse Cleaners & Laundry

## The Jim Rice Era: 1942-1946

By Larry LeBlanc



Coach Jim Rice and some of his crew.

Oarsmen from the 1942-1946 era of the Ecorse Boat Club always speak of their crews and club with a semi-religious tone. When they reminisce, they see visions. The younger, skeptical listener doubts the strength and beauty of those days. He tries to spoil the myths and crush the memories. Perhaps the later oarsmen are right: today's crews are bigger and faster and stronger. Weight lifting, they stop watch, and vitamins have invaded the sanctuary of rowing and rowing will never be the same again.

In 1942, Ecorse was a small place. She had modest ambitions; people were beginning to be sure the Depression was ending. Kids still rode bikes, took hikes, caught pollywogs, and went barefoot. Days were much longer, the sun was hotter, Kool-Aid was heaven, and mother was always home. Glen Miller played music that could be danced to, the Boblo Boat stopped at the State Street Dock (Southfield), marsh weeds grew ten feet tall on Slab Island, and a student could get lost at School "4". For a teenager of the early 1940s, the poet was right: "God's in his Heaven, All's right with the world."

When the post-war oarsmen attack the "Golden Years" of the Jim Rice era, when they compare their antics and exploits with the doings of that time, they must lose. Who can match or what can match the small dramas and large dreams of that time?

The splendid arrival of Jim Rice from New York City each wet, miserable, hopeful springtime when each oarsman hoped to catch the master's eye or evoke a comment that he had "gained weight", or had "shot up like a weed."

Cold showers between corrugated walls while an East wind pushed cold through the sliding doors that faced the river. The glowing pot-bellied stove in the club room around which sat Jim and well toasted oarsmen. The hub-bub of pool playing, ping-pong and the endless stream of creative profanity.

The sweet idle days of vacation spent talking with Jim as he dragged his chair inches at a time to follow the shade of our only tree at the water's edge. Home for supper, hearing the Angelus peal from St. Francis Xavier's steeple, and then knowing it was time to be on the water for a nightly epic row.

Sunday morning trips around Fighting Island. No simple row was this. Church at 6:00 a.m. and on the water at 8. This was a grand tour, an event. A flotilla of boats came for the trip. Red's venerable "coaching launch" cut a proud swath aside the "Big Crew" while the retinue of rowing lovers trailed behind the Kromreis with their smart speedboats, the PAULA, and the real Paula giving dash to the trip, a nice glamour in the scene, a nice glamour; Art Sims along, serious and adult, made the party seem official and solvent. This was security.

The ever-present Tanks; Red knowingly steering the launch through the mysterious channels and seaweed toward calm, green water, watching the RPMS for that magic 22-evidence of a powerful crew; Louie, paddling his single with grace and unsuspected wisdom; Mike and Pete Tank wielding hammers and beer with deftness and majesty while plotting crews' entries with the savvy of politicians.

The last week of July; Drab Port Dalhousie, the pinnacle of summer. It was the end of a tedious train ride, the scene of golden boy victories and minor tragedies. St. Kitts was Dianna Sweets, Scotch tartans, Canadian beer, the Henley Hotel, large money, and a fairyland ride through backyards, over timber trestles and into the valley of a permanent carnival.

The crews were tutored to a classic fineness. They drew every Canadian buffalo eye. They passed the finish line looking beautiful, with almost sarcastic aplomb – whether in defeat or victory.

The era of Jim Rice was a place in time that no one will ever see again – except in memory.

### **Rowing Out Until War Ends-1943**



By Jim Rice, Coach, Ecorse Boat Club

Rowing as a sport is out for the duration; at least the prospects for 1944 are so poor I am safe in saying there will be no activities.

The Ecorse Boat Club has lost approximately 60 men to the armed services and I was lucky to have a crew to take to St. Catharines.

I have completed my fiftieth year as a rowing coach and I am leaving tomorrow for my home in New York. I have enjoyed my two years here; they certainly have been productive.

I took 13 men to St. Catharines and I am more than satisfied with their showing: six races won; 40 points credited to Ecorse. Russ Reynolds was outstanding in the association singles. The two Kromrei brothers, Harvey and Ernie, have shown well in their various contests. Harvey will be in the Army in a few days. The brothers won the junior doubles unopposed and Harvey took the junior heavy singles.

Credits Charles Tank for Ecorse Rowing Talent

Although they finished in second place, Louis Tank and James Cameron, in the senior 145 pound doubles, made a sensational showing. We took the high school eight, but that did not add to our 40 points, since the school contest is not officially a part of the regatta.

Rowing seems to come natural to some of the boys around here. I credit the late Charles Tank for the popularity of the sport and support it gets in Ecorse. I remember him years ago when I was coaching for Detroit. He and Louis Champaigne were outstanding oarsmen of that day, a peculiar combination of names, Tank and Champaigne.

Yes, I've been at it half a century. I started with the Toronto Rowing Club in 1893. I was at Detroit six years, 1898-1904; Harvard University two years; 23 years at Columbia; several years at Penn and two at the University of Havana (Cuba). How old am I? That's secret, but I can say that I've been around some 69 years.

About the \$2,500 cup won for the second time by Ecorse in the Hanlon Memorial Trophy. It's coming to Ecorse this year. It's a perpetual trophy and is held by the team which wins the Hanlon Race each year. Last year because of complications it was not brought here. This year the necessary bond has been arranged to assure its protection and it will arrive in Ecorse within a week.

That eight oar new shell which was dedicated two years ago has now won 16 races and is still unbeaten.

### **1943 Season Greatest in History of Boat Club, Crews Set New Records**

Ecorse oarsmen again came through magnificently at the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta in the summer of August 1943 at St. Catharines, Ontario, when the Ecorse boys won six races, were second in one race and third in another to capture all of the major events and finish second in point totals. It was the second successive year that the Ecorse boys, under Jim Rice, veteran coach, have been outstanding victors in this international sports event.

On Thursday, the opening day of the regatta, Russ Reynolds scored the biggest upset of the day when he defeated Art Walker, United States National sculling champion in the Association singles. Reynold's victory against six outstanding scullers was one of the bright spots for the Ecorse club and was matched only by his second victory on Saturday when he also captured the Joe Wright Memorial Senior Sculls. Reynolds, twenty-one-years old, had been rowing for only three years and stepped up into fast competition for the first time in 1942.

The Ecorse school boys duplicated the record of the 1942 crew when they won both the Schoolboy Eight and also the Ned Hanlon Memorial Senior Eight over the mile and a quarter course. Both of these races were won on Saturday afternoon. In the Senior Eight race, the Ecorse boys finished fully five boat lengths ahead of their nearest rivals, the Detroit Boat Club in the fast time of seven minutes and one-fifth second. Two hours later the same crew won the Schoolboy Eight.

Earlier Irwin and Harvey Kromrei teamed up to win the Junior Doubles and then Harvey Kromrei went on to win the Junior Singles. Ecorse won second in the Schoolboy Four, with coxswain, on Friday crossing the finish line a scant three feet behind the Wyandotte Club. In the four oared shell were bow, Paul Scott; No. 2, Harvey Kromrei; Number 3, John Gregen and stroke, Harold Marcotte with John Whitefield, coxswain.

The Ecorse eight-oar crew were made up of bow, Gus Pappas; No. 2, John Ghinda; No. 3, Paul Scott; No. 4, I. Kromrei; No. 5, C. Poppa; No. 6, H. Kromre; No. 7, John Gregen; stroke, Harold Marcotte and John Whitefield, coxswain.

Both the Ecorse eight victories were made in the 'Charles Tank,' the new shell that was added to the Ecorse equipment that year. In the two seasons that this hell has been raced, it has won sixteen races without a defeat. Ecorse oarsmen are determined to keep the record of the 'Charles Tank,,,' clean in honor of Charles Tank, organizer and first coach of the Ecorse Boat Club.



### **1943 Oarsmen's News Advertisers**

R.R. Mathia Market

3894 W. Jefferson, Ecorse

West Side Pattern and Machine Works

4097 West Jefferson, Ecorse

Sims

A Complete Store For Men and Boys

Ecorse

Phil's Refreshment Stand and Used Cars

4453 West Jefferson, Ecorse

Phil Titof, Proprietor

### **Boat Club Has Fine Equipment**

**February 1944**

Equipment of the Ecorse Boat Club now ranks with that of many a larger club, it was announced this week when club members counted the shells and compared them with what the club started with six years ago.

In the racks at the clubhouse now are three eight oar shells, two four oar shells, two doubles and eight singles.

The "eight" which is the largest shell is from 62 to 65 feet in length and weighs from 250 to 275 pounds. They are constructed of Spanish cedar which is very light and has a thickness of from 2 inches to 2 eights of an inch.

The "fours" are between 40 and 50 feet in length and weigh between 150 and 170 pounds. The "Doubles" are 30 to 45 feet long and weigh 70 to 80 pounds, and the singles are 26 to 30 feet long and weigh 25 to 30 pounds.

Much work is required on every boat each morning before it is ready for racing. It requires at least two weeks to condition a shell.

The oars for the eights and fours weigh about nine pounds and are thirteen feet long while the oars for the singles weigh 3 ½ pounds and are eight feet long.

There is considerable activity around the clubhouse these days as plans are being made for the coming season and the boats are being made ready for practice and for the races that will follow.

#### Boat Club to Defend Titles This Year

"There will be no slowing up of activities at the Ecorse Boat Club during 1944," it has been announced by club officials.

War conditions have made it more difficult and the Army and Navy have accepted a majority of the oarsmen who in the past years manned the shells but club officials and coaches are confident that there will be a sufficient number of younger men coming up to fill the ranks and maintain the glorious reputation that Ecorse has won throughout the rowing world.

Probably no other organization has enjoyed more rapid growth or has done as much for Ecorse than the Ecorse Boat Club since it was reorganized five years ago.

The crews this year will probably be made up of younger men, but once they get the spirit that has been instilled into every Ecorse oarsman, they, too, will shoulder the responsibility of keeping the Ecorse Boat Club alive and alert.

#### **1944 Crews Win Many Honors**

Although Ecorse Boat Club participated in only two regattas during the 1944 season the local crews and oarsmen again established records that brought fame and glory to themselves, their club, and to Ecorse. Most of the regattas that Ecorse has entered in past years have stopped on account of the War. The Royal Canadian Henley at St. Catharines, Ontario, and the Detroit River events were the only two in which Ecorse competed.

In the Canadian event, Ecorse won three firsts and five seconds. It was the fourth consecutive time that the Ecorse High School eight had captured the Interscholastic championship.

In winning the race, Ecorse defeated the favored Grosse Pointe, crew, St. Catharines, and Buffalo, crossing the finish lines nearly two lengths ahead and defeated the favored Grosse

Pointe crew. Grosse Pointe won the National Championship at Philadelphia two months ago, only to lose to the Ecorse crew here on July 4 and again at the Henley.

Ecorse's victory was all the more remarkable because of its courageous race for the senior eight championship which carries with it the internationally famous Hanlon Memorial Trophy, less than an hour before the high school race. Judd Ross, coach of the Detroit Club, scratched his crew for the senior race to have his boys in perfect condition.

The Leanders of Hamilton, Ontario, won the senior eight race with Ecorse only a half length behind. Ecorse had won the Hanlon Trophy in 1942 and again in 1943. Ecorse was the first club in 50 years to win the Hanlon two years in succession and it was believed that the Canadians picked an all star crew this year to prevent the Ecorse boys from winning permanent possession of the Hanlon Trophy.

In both the High School and the Senior Eight events the Ecorse crew was composed of bow, Jim LeBlanc; No. 2, Bob Pfeiffer; No. 3, Cecil Mobley; No. 4, Leonard Aantolszy; No. 5, John Pokaski; No. 6, Jack Guthrie; No. 7, John Gregan; stroke, Irv Kromrei; and cox, John Whitefield.

After winning the first heat of the Junior Eight event by a record time of 6:40, the Ecorse boys lost to the Leanders in the final event on Friday after a Buffalo crew had locked oars with the local boys. The Buffalo crew was disqualified, but the incident prevented the Ecorse boys from winning the race.

In the Junior Eight crew were bow, Paul Hanusack; No. 2; Joe Rawson; No. 3, Paul Vukovitch; No. 4, Don Campbell; No. 5, Marvin Ouellette; No. 6, Lawrence Pulkovich; No. 7, Dallas Lett, stroke; Al Holmes and cox, Jack LeBlanc.

The Ecorse High School crew also won the High School four with cox event. In the shell were bow, John Gregan; No. 2, Bob Pfeiffer; No. 3, John Paskaski; and stroke, John Guthrie.

Louis Tank with Jack Cameron won the 145 senior doubles. Tank also placed second in the 145 pound quarter mile dash and fourth in the Association singles over the mile and 550 yard course. In this latter event, Harvey Kromrei took second place. Earlier Kromrei finished fourth in the heavy weight open quarter mile dash in a field of eight. It was Kromrei's first singles race.

Tank and Kromrei teamed up to enter the heavyweight doubles and placed second, losing to the Argos Club by less than two feet.

In the senior eight oar race on Saturday, the "Charles Tank" met its first defeat. It lost its eighteenth race but an hour later came back to win its nineteenth victory.

In the Detroit River regatta held on July 4, 1944, in Ecorse, Ecorse won the Senior Heavyweight eight, the Junior Heavyweight four, placed second in the Junior Lightweight eight and the Senior Heavyweight four. Harvey Kromrei won the mile single and Louis Tank won the quarter mile dash.

#### **Men in Service Aid Boat Club-1944**

To make certain that the Ecorse Boat Club continues and prospers a great many of the former crewmen that are now fighting in Uncle Sam's Army and Navy are maintaining their memberships. A considerable number of service men have, in addition to their membership dues, sent a donation to the Club.

Interest in the Boat Club has not lessened for these boys in service. They want the Club to be maintained and improved, while they are away and on their return they will again become active members.

### **194 Members Now Enjoy All of Club's Facilities – 1944**

Plans for a membership campaign will be announced by Boat Club officials in the very near future. At the present time the Club has 194 paid up members which is the largest roster the Club has ever enjoyed. With the building program just announced and fine club rooms and facilities available, it is expected that the Club will attract many new members.

### **1945 Champions**



### **The Ecorse High School Crew Wins in 1946**

Ecorse High School rowing crews came in for one major victory in the Great Lakes Rowing Association Championships held in Detroit in June 1946. This was the first scholastic rowing meet of the 1946 season and was held on the Detroit River off the Detroit Boat Club at Belle Ile.

The Ecorse Senior High School four won an important victory. This crew was made up of Mike Stanovich, bow; N. Mihatsch, No. 2; D. Lett, No. 3; W. Pulkownik, stroke; and J. Osborn, coxswain. They got off to a good start in the race and pulled away to a half boat length ahead of

Roosevelt High School, the National Rowing Association champions sponsored by the Wyandotte Boat Club. Also entered in the race was the Grosse Pointe High School, but the race centered around the Wyandotte and Ecorse crews.

After Pulkownik stroked the local crew up to an early lead, the crew matched every bid by Wyandotte's championship crew and held the front position throughout the race. After a final bid near the end of the course the Wyandotte crew dropped back to less than half a boat length. It was the first competition for the local four and a clean cut victory over the much heralded Wyandotte crew.

The last and most important race of the regatta was the senior championship eights race. Although the Ecorse High School crew made a determined bid for victory, they were defeated by the Grosse Pointe High School crew by a scant few feet in the last quarter mile.

The Downriver eight got off to a slow start, but through steady rowing passed the entire field of Wyandotte, Detroit and Buffalo to gain a half boat length lead in the last quarter mile. In the final spring of the Detroit crew pulled through with a fast stroke and just passed the Ecorse eight over the finish line, setting a record of four minutes and forty three seconds for the mile course. The Ecorse crew was one second behind. The Wyandotte eight came in third with Buffalo last. The boys in the Ecorse boat were as follows: M. Sanovich, bow; R. Hanusack, No.3; W. Wilson, No. 4; E. Winslow, No. 5; N. Mihatsch, No. 6; D. Lett, No. 7; and W. Pulkownik, stroke. J. Osborn was the coxswain.

The junior championship eight from the Ecorse Boat club qualified in the heats held the first day of the regatta, but lost out to the St. John's Military Academy in the final race after the boat sank near the finish line. All the boys had to swim ashore.

Chuck Piros, the Ecorse High School sculler, lost out to the more experienced William Couch of Buffalo in the junior championship singles event.

Although Reggie LeBlanc lost out in the lightweight exhibition singles, Russ Reynolds, the Ecorse heavyweight singles champion, pulled away to open water victory over Lou Tank, also of the Ecorse Cub, in the heavyweight singles event.

### **Mayor Voisine's Two Week Dream Campaign-1946**

As well as coach Mike Tank, a man named Bill had big plans for the Ecorse Boat club in 1946. The rowing bug bit Bill four years ago and his conversion to the sport was important for Ecorse oarsmen and Ecorse itself. Bill was more formally known as Mayor William F. Voisine, mayor of Ecorse by avocation and head of a prosperous steel company by vocation.

The Ecorse Rowing Club was hosting the Central State Association annual rowing regatta on the Detroit River on July 3 and 4, 1946, and Mayor Voisine recognized the possibilities for Ecorse. With the enthusiastic support of Ecorse Boat Club President Mike Tank, the Mayor acted. His first step was to improve the club's facilities. He headed a drive recently that raised \$4,000 in one night to purchase a Quonset hut for a boat shed. His chief concern was to make the regatta attractive for spectators and with that goal in mind, he combed the Downriver communities for bleachers. He wanted to obtain 5,000 free seats for the races.

Mayor Voisine's vision stretched far beyond the 1947 Central States Regatta to making Ecorse the American capital of rowing. He said:

We have everything here. An ideal stretch of water that is largely wind shielded, real public spirit and a wealth of rugged young men who, now the war is over, will make Ecorse oarsmen respected all over the country.

In spring of 1946, Mayor Voisine announced a successful two week campaign to raise funds for a new building for the Ecorse Boat Club to store all of its rowing shells and equipment. He announced the beginning of building construction and promised that the building would be ready by the Central States Regatta in July.

As the first step in his campaign, Mayor Voisine appealed to George R. Fink, President of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation. Fink agreed to donate a 60x70 Quonset building. The Mayor discovered that Federal permission was necessary to erect the building, so he conferred with federal officials in Detroit and Washington. Next, he raised 4,000 dollars for the foundation and construction of the building, including a brick front to match the front of the existing building.

In an Ecorse Advertiser story, the Mayor detailed a list of Ecorse businesses and individual citizens contributing to the new clubhouse for the Ecorse Rowing club, including National Steel and the Ecorse Kiwanis Club. The Club planned for the new building to be used exclusively to store equipment.

He concluded his story for the Advertiser by saying, "It is my desire to provide and do everything within my power to further recreation facilities for Ecorse. And I know of no better organization, that in addition to providing unparalleled recreation facilities to the young men of Ecorse has brought honor and glory to this city. It was a real pleasure to assist this wonderful project."

### **Doners to the Ecorse Boat Club Building Fund-1946**

Ecorse Advertiser, May 4, 1946

The list of donors to the Ecorse Boat Club Building Fund is an interesting community cross section.

Mayor William F. Voisine-\$500

Nicholson Dock-\$250

Louis Epp -\$200

\$100 Dollar Donors

Robert Voisine, Helen Voisine, Clyde Hinckle, Newt Goodell, James R. Adam, Louis Parker, Nick Stroia, Lambert Pfeiffer, Roy B. Salliotte American Legion Post, Ecorse Goodfellows, Ed Levy, Earl Hiebert, Burt Loveland, Drs. Roberts, Knox, and Tenaglia, National Sheet Steel, Louis Magyer, Ecorse Kiwanis Club, Estate of Charles Tank, James Pantages, Joe Poremba, Joe Magyar, Ed Kromrei, Art sims, Charles Montry, Carl Vollmerhausen, Paul Vollmar, Frank Morris, Ecorse Kiwanis Club, Guy Pooley.

\$50 Dollar Donors

John Moldovan, Drs. Kemler, Lee, and Walter Hileman, Ellis Underill, Modern Collet

\$35 Donors

Charles King

### \$25 Dollar Donors

Don Dodge, Frank Butler, Albert Buday, William LaJoie, Ecorse Ice & Coal, Oliver Raupp, James McCarty, Louis Muche

### \$20 Dollar Donors

Merle Torango

### **Rowing Club Personnel in 1947**

Ken Bolthouse, Editor of the Oarsmen's News, wrote in February 1947, that the Ecorse Boat club had several brother combinations rowing with the Club that year. Harvey and Erin Kromrei, Dallas and Edward Lett, Gus and George Pappas, and Jack and Reggie LeBlanc.

Harold Marcott, rated as one of the finest strokes in rowing, will be with the Boat Club crews again this year. After a stretch in the Army, Marcott anxiously awaited the rowing season. He was stroke of the unbeaten championship crew of 1942 and 1943. Marcott was reported to have taken an active part in rowing while with the Army of Occupation in Germany.

Ken Bolthouse took a brief stab at sculling while on leave in Brisbane, Australia. He visited the Brisbane Rowing Club and found there an Australian soldier who was also anxious for a little row. After two hours boasting of the respective achievements, the two "world's sculling champions" took to water in a double. After one hard pull the shell over turned and the two "champs" set out again. After a good hard stroke the shell again over turns. After swimming back to the landing, Ken Bolthouse looked the Aussie in the eye and said "Guess I'd stretched the truth a little chum because I have never been a sculler."

The Aussie replied, "Strike me pink mate. I'd never been in a boat before, but I didn't want to be outdone by a Yank."

Although the local oarsmen failed in an attempt to win a sweep oared event in the 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta held at St. Catharine on July 1, 1946, they did come up with a good showing in the regatta totals. Finals standings were:

Hamilton Leanders of Hamilton, Ontario, 188 points.

West Side Boat club of Buffalo New York, 153 points

St. Catharine's Rowing Club of St. Catharines, Ontario, 134 points

Ecorse Boat Club of Ecorse, Michigan, 70 points

In a field of twenty other entries from the United States and Canada, Ecorse was fourth. The Detroit Boat Club was 5<sup>th</sup> with 49 points and the Wyandotte Boat Club placed 15<sup>th</sup> place with 10 points.

### **Marvin Graves Remembers A Rower-1947**

Marvin Graves, a young resident of Ecorse in 1947, remembers Jack Kelly in Ecorse. Jack Kelly quickly became familiar to Ecorse residents as he would join the other oarsmen in their morning and evening workouts on the Detroit River. He would also jog a least three times during the day for miles up and down Jefferson Avenue, the main street in Ecorse. As Jack jogged by, resident would speak or wave to him and he always waved back.

Lovelands Drug Store was one of the first places that 14-year-old Marvin worked and Marvin recalled that Jack Kelly would stop in Lovelands Drug Store maybe once or twice a day, pausing for refreshment at the soda fountain. Marvin said that Jack was a pleasant and courteous person.

One of Marvin's jobs at Lovelands was sweeping the floor. When Marvin had to ask Jack to move his feet, Jack would always smile and move his feet or change to another place at the counter without any hard feelings. Everyone working there soon began calling him Jack. One summer day Jack came into Lovelands with a very beautiful girl. He introduced her to the people working there as his sister, Pat, who had come for a visit all of the way from Philadelphia. It wasn't until sometime later that Marvin and the other Loveland customers realized that the full name of Jack's sister was Grace Patricia Kelly. The movie star Grace Kelly was Jack's sister!

In 1947, Grace Kelly was not yet a celebrity. She had made her stage debut in 1949 and her first picture, "Fourteen Hours," was released in 1951. "High Noon," her second picture, was released in 1952, the year Marvin graduated from Ecorse High School.

Marvin said, "There at the soda fountain at Lovelands Drug Store, Ecorse, Michigan, U.S.A., broom in hand, I stood face to face with Grace Kelly and didn't know it."

### **The Boat Club Building- Rowing Club Residence**

#### **Ecorse Boat Club Facilities Best in the Country-1947**

February ,1947

With alternation already underway in the boat club and with the addition of the new Quonset building in 1946, Ecorse Boat Club is rated one of the top clubs in the United States in providing facilities to its oarsmen. The regular club house will include a recreation room, large shower and locker rooms and a small soft drink bar. All the boat club rowing equipment is kept in the large Quonset building recently added to the club's facilities through the generosity of George R. Fink, Great Lakes Steel's president, and a group of Ecorse City officials and citizens headed by Mayor William W. Voisine. These club buildings are open to public inspection and boat club officials extend a cordial welcome to everyone to visit them at any time.

Final alterations are being made inside the Ecorse Boat Club this month to complete the large shower room and locker room being made ready to accommodate the large number of oarsmen expected this spring.

Important to the club members will be the installation of an automatic heat hot water control for the shower room and lockers for 60 to 80 oarsmen in the locker room. The alteration of the club's locker room and shower is part of a long range plan to make the Ecorse Boat Club one of the best in the United States.

As soon as funds are available, a lounge room and sun porch will be added for club members and their families. A balcony is to be constructed for location of the huge lounge planned and the sun porch is to be extended to the water's edge from the rear of the building.

Also included in plans for the club will be construction of large lavatory facilities for both men and women. Plans also called for an addition of a kitchen and small soft drink bar to be adjacent to the lounge.

Although the Ecorse Boat Club is in construction this year, it is hoped that funds will be available so that the new club will be complete in the near future.

The building first used as a club was the old brick building at the south end of Riverside Park which was formerly an auto, marine parts and machine shop operated by Mellon and Moran. The east, or river side, was adapted to boat repair and the withdrawal of motors from ailing craft. An I-Beam extended over the water and hoisted motors by a chain pull. Wayne County bought out Mellon and Moran and used the building for a garage to store those rugged chain drive orange trucks that service Ecorse and the new park. Later the county leased the building to the Ecorse Boat Club.

### **The Boat Club Has A New Barge -1947**

When the Ecorse Boat Club crews take to the water early this spring they will be making use of a forty foot rowing barge built during the winter months by Jim Cameron and his crew.

At present, work is being rushed to complete the barge in time to recondition the shells and ready them for the crews in April.

The barge was designed by Lou Wokas early last fall and final plans were made by club officials to work on the barge during the winter months.

Jim Cameron, who in the past few years has built several racing shells for the club members, was selected to construct the barge, assisted by Bill and Pete Tank.

Measuring 40 feet in length, the barge will hold 12 men, the coxswain and coach. It will be approximately seven feet wide and 15 inches deep. A catwalk will be constructed through the center so the coach can walk up and down, correcting the oarsmen as they pull the barge through the water.

The entire bottom and sides will be covered by sheet aluminum and the keel and ribs of the craft will be of solid oak. Present work is being completed on the barge inside of a specially constructed shed inside the boat club. This shed is heated so that both men and material will be protected from the winter's cold.

The barge will be named when it is launched early this spring.

### **Mike Tank to Head Boat Club- 1947**

Mike Tank was again elected to lead the Ecorse Boat Club during the 1947 season when the oarsmen held their annual election in the main clubroom at West Jefferson and Mill Street, Ecorse.

Tank had been president of the local rowing club for several years and it was under his guidance that the club grew to one of the best in the United States.

Edward Kromrei was reelected to the post of vice president, an office he ably served for several years. The club members also reelected Art Sims, popular Ecorse businessman, to the all important post of secretary.

William Jones, local member of the Ecorse-Lincoln Park Banks, was elected to the office of treasurer for his first term. It is expected that his vacancy on the board of directors will be taken by an older member of the club. Ken Bolthouse, editor of the *Oarsmen's News*, was reappointed publicity director by the club president.

The most important and immediate task the club officials faced was to complete the elaborate plans being made for the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Oarsmen's Ball to be held Saturday, February 15, in the St. Francis High School auditorium, West Jefferson at Outer Drive, Ecorse.

### **Club Will Raffle 1947 Car**

A new 1947 car will be raffled by the Ecorse Boat Club again this year in keeping with the custom established last Ecorse Day.

During the 1946 Ecorse Day's celebration, a drawing was held for a Tudor Mercury car and Mayor William W. Voisine pulled out Ticket No. 21707, for the lucky winner, Edward Pietras, of Portland Street in Detroit.

Pietras, an employee of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation, had been looking for a car since leaving the service several months before that.

### **Ecorse Days Celebration, 1948**

A total of twelve events are scheduled to be the highlight of the Ecorse Day Celebration on July 5, 1948, including the annual Downriver Regatta sponsored by the Ecorse Boat Club. Crews from Detroit, Wyandotte, St. Louis, and Ecorse will take part in the regatta.

Ecorse, the host, will enter the races minus the services of its coach, Lou Tank, one of the nation's best scullers. Tank will leave early Sunday for an Olympic trial. Accompanying Tank will be Russ Reynolds who will row with him in the doubles. Harvey and Erwin Kromrei are another doubles entry.

The Ecorse Boat Club will have an Olympic Four composed of the veteran crew of John Vukovich, Chuck Schmauch, Harlow Wilson and Dick Emling. Arthur Sims and Milton Montie will also accompany the crews east Sunday, serving as managers and trainers.

Rowing at Princeton, New Jersey, the four will take to the water against the Buffalo West Side Boat Club while Tank and Reynolds will row against George and Jim McIntyre of the Philadelphia Vesper club. The Kromrei brothers are matched against Art Gallagher and Ole Angyal of the New York Athletic Club.



Mayor William Voisine shows Charlie Tank, 6, the model shell that builder Jim Cameron made for him as a homecoming gift from Ecorse Boat Club, in 1949.

## 1950-1959

### Forty High School Athletes Scramble for Berths on Top Boat Club Crews in March 1955

Forty young oarsmen are working out daily on the Detroit River for a purpose- They aim to return Ecorse to its place in the sun, to recapture the golden days when the Ecorse Boat Club was a formidable foe and winning adulation as world champions.

The campaign for recognition began last year when the Boat Club crew pocketed the North American Rowing Championship. The Club's sights are set on repeating the feat again in July.

Seven members of the 1954 championship crew are still on the Club and Coach Bob Short is building this year's crew around them. They are: Joe Partiepillo, Jack Kernan, Louis Hawkins, Steve Marth, Tom Judge, Dorn Kernan and Charles Maida.

Scrambling for berths on the first crew are 35 Ecorse High School students and five from St. Francis Xavier.

Short, an Ecorse police officer, coached the title winning crew last year and has been reappointed by the Club's board of directions to shape up another prize winning crew.

“We’re not going to be content with having just one first-rate crew. With the manpower we now have and others who would like to work out with us, we’ll eventually have five and perhaps six well trained crews,” Short said.

Mayor William W. Voisine conferred with Short regarding the program he has lined up for the 1955 season and commended the patrolman for devoting his free time to working with the young athletes.

“These young men brought honor to Ecorse last year and from all appearances they’re going to be winner again this summer,” the Mayor said.

### **Cam Wery Will Serve as 1956 Ecorse Rowing Club President-1956**

Camille Wery, 31 year old former rower and Ecorse Rowing club vice president will serve as president of the Ecorse Boat Club in 1956, succeeding Joe Rawson of Allen Park.

Wery has been a Boat club member since 1942 and an army veteran. He is employed by Great Lakes Steel Corporation and lives with his wife Jean and four children on Birrell in Ecorse Township.

Other officers named in the recent election were Fergus Judge, vice president; Wayne Dupuis, treasurer, and Art Sims, secretary.

Bob Short, club spokesman, said Ecorse would be the site of the 1956 Central States Rowing Association’s annual regatta scheduled for July 4 on the Detroit River.

### **Ecorse Rowing Club: A Historical Reminiscence-1958**

By Larry LeBlanc – 1958

Schoolboys always complain that whenever they begin studying American History, they must first study Europe. Oarsmen should not be impatient, then, if in studying the Ecorse Boat Club’s beginnings we must first turn to Wyandotte.

Back in 1937-1938, we find young Louie and Red Tank sculling for the Wyandotte Rowing Club. Lee McClenahan was the head coach there. Of course, Charles Tank was vitally interested in rowing then and spent time coaching his two boys to rowing excellence. While at Wyandotte, Louis and Red scored over a dozen victories in the sculls events. They were notable in both the United States and Canada. Louie’s forte was grace and that seeming lack of effort; Red was the fire and courage of their duo. Ask anyone at the Henley, someone who rowed back when... They stored a single and a double just south of Hogan’s Alley, near where boats are launched today at Southfield Dock. The narrow body of water used to launch their shells was a “beer slip” which led toward Jefferson Avenue.

Among the young Ecorse oarsmen who learned their rowing at Wyandotte in 1938 were Nelson Bolthouse, Bob Carley, Alger Ruthven, Don LeBlanc, Pat Messler, Jim Cameron, Larry Smith, Hank Schmelter and Jiggs Digue. Our present coach Nick Pappas was fooling around with an oar then, too.

Before the 1939 season began, a meeting was held in the office of Ecorse Village Justice of the Peace. Alger (Doc) Salliotte. A nucleus of rowing enthusiasts met to form an Ecorse Rowing Club. Those charter members who made that meeting were: Nelson Bolthouse, Jack Sharon, Bernie Seneski, Art Sims, Bob Carley, Nick Pappas, Don LeBlanc, Red, Louis, Pete, Mike, and

Charles Tank, Newt Goodell, Lambert Pfeiffer, Bob Brown, and Larry Smith. The first president was Mike Tank and the coach was Charles Tank.

The building first used as a club was, and still is, the old brick building at the south end of the park. This building was formerly an auto, marine parts and machine shop operated by Mellon and Modsrn. The east, or river side, was adapted to boat repair and the withdrawal of motors from ailing craft. An I-Beam extended over the water and hoisted motors by a chain pull. The Wayne County people bought M & M out, and used it for a garage to store those rugged, chain drive orange trucks that serviced the city and the new park. Later, the building was leased to the Ecorse Boat Club.

In the 1939, the National Regatta held in Detroit. Ecorse won the Intermediate "4". In 1940, Ecorse won the Junior 150 "8" race at the Henley in Canada. In 1941, Ecorse was convincingly on her feet as a rowing threat. After the new club lost Coach Charles Tank in early spring, Pat Messler took over as coach of the high school boys and Larry Smith handled the rest; especially those vigorous light-weights who consistently defeated Jim Rice's big heavyweight "8" from Wyandotte. Messler's boys won the high school "8" race at the Henley. Among those rowing for Ecorse High School were: George Pappas, Bill Hughes, Red Alexander, Bob Blair, Bob Vollmer, Earl Neuland, Bob White, Harold Covert, Vic Mitea, Harvey Kromrei, Virgil Ciungan, Reg LeBlanc, Art Bourassa and Harold Marcott. Even before the renowned Jim Rice came onto the scene, Ecorse Boat Club was a tough, unique group of rowers.

## **1960-1969**

Ecorse Advertiser

Thursday, July 12, 1962

### **Ecorse Boat Club Needs Your Help**

There will be a hard striving group of young men attempting to call on every house in Ecorse between 6 and 9 p.m. Tuesday. They'll be selling something – a bronze colored decal with an emblem of crossed oars. "Blades," they would call them.

The decals bear the emblem of the Ecorse Boat Club and the young salesmen are members of the Club's high sculling crews which are stroking Ecorse to a place in the national rowing limelight. The trouble is, if they're going to go on bringing glory to their home town, they need more money than they have. According to spokesman Dave Loveland, it's expensive to transport crews and equipment to regattas where they can show their prowess.

Hence, the decal sale.

The crews are doing well. On the Fourth of July, Ecorse Boat Club crews "won" their own Water Festival Regatta, rowing against crews from the Detroit Boat club, Wyandotte Roosevelt and Chicago.

Ecorse emerged victorious in both heavyweight and 135 pound eights and fours and tied with the Detroit Boat Club in the quarter-mile dash. The Detroiters, Ecorse Boat Club's arch rivals hereabouts, won their sculling specialties-light and heavy singles, open doubles and quarter-mile single dash.

Ecorse Boat Club emerged victorious in the July Royal Canadian Henley Regatta in the 135 pound fours with a crew comprised of Jim Montie, Dick Thorburn, Sam Pappas and Bob

Burkhardt. The heavy fours without coxswain, Jim Judge, Wayne Berger, Bill Nantau and Karl Schwartz, a group which never before rowed together, also won. Ecorse took seconds in the 135 pound eight and the junior heavy eights.

Ecorse coach is Robert Walker.

### **Boat Club Does Well in Nationals**

Thursday, July 26, 1962

Ecorse Boat Club's Intermediate eight crew beat arch-rival Detroit Boat Club in a preliminary heat at the National Rowing Regatta held in Buffalo on Saturday, and then went on to place second in the finals of the event.

Both the Ecorse oarsmen and the winning St. Catharine's eight broke records in the race over an Olympic course. St. Catharine's Club clocked 5:58.8 for the distance while Ecorse was timed at 6:02. The old record for the course set in 1909 was 6:03.

The Ecorse Club scored second in the Senior Heavy Four without coxswain, coming in behind a sharp Lake Washington crew. Still further back was the highly touted four of the Vespers Club of Philadelphia.

According to the Ecorse Club spokesman Dave Loveland, Ecorse racked up a total of 28 points to place seventh overall in the Regatta, a creditable showing in the Nationals which attracts the finest crews from the United States and Canada. Detroit Boat Club was overall winner.

### **Boat Club Elects Officers**

Thursday, September 20, 1962

At its meeting last Thursday evening the Ecorse Boat Club elected Dave Loveland to serve as president for the 1962-1963 term. Loveland had served the club as treasurer for five years.

Donald Lynch was elected vice president, Edward Revesz, treasurer, and Harry Miller was named secretary.

Named to the board for the 1962-1963 year were Virgil Ciungan, Nick Pappas, Fergus Judge, Gus Pappas, Harvey Kromrei, Ray Montie, Edward Monoyian, Jack Scrimshire, Bill Nagy, Larry LeBlanc, Arthur Sims and Robert Short.

The Boat Club is planning a dance on October 6 with Eddie Pittrangelo and his Collegians playing.

### **Ecorse 8 Upset Winners at Henley**

Thursday, August 1, 1963

Ecorse Boat Club's Junior light-weight eight team took top honors in its class competition last Wednesday through Saturday during the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Royal Canadian Henley Rowing Regatta near St. Catharines, Ontario. The four day events were held on the Welland Canal of Lake Ontario at Port Dalhousie, where the mile and five sixteenths long course was marked on this point of Lake Ontario strictly designated for rowing.

Looking a little worse for the wear, but still feeling proud of themselves and their efforts at this particular time, the Junior Light-Weight team took first in three events as well as second and third in competitions. There were thirty clubs participating at this meet.

The Junior light-weight eight includes Sam Pappas, Frank Ardanowski and Bruce Bretsch.

**1970s**



### **Girls Compete**

A contingent of girls from the Ecorse Rowing Club made up a crew to row against the boys and old-timers during the annual Old Timers Day in September 1974. From left are Karen Hawkins, Sue Kupovits, Kathy Swatski, Jane Eberts, Debbie Garza, Dorothy Lendel, Denise Comerzan and Debbi Comerzan. The Old Timers won the race. The girls also competed in the Rowing Regatta on July 4, the first time girls raced in the Regatta.



During the Award Banquet of the Ecorse Rowing Club the first week of March 1976, the top oarsmen, oarswomen and novice of the year received awards. Oarsman of the year award went to Dr. Donald Schipper (third from left), who continues to row with the club. Oarswoman of the Year award went to Mary Ellen Sikek (fourth from right), and novice of the year award went to Michael Kerekes (third from right). Present during the award ceremony were rowing coaches Robert Short and Joseph Rawson (left and second from left), Mayor Charles G. Coman, (second from right), and Louis Hawkins (right), coach of the women's team.

1980s



1990s



## **ECORSE 1999 CREW**

Don Treadwell  
Bob Rudowski  
David L. Robinson  
Cathy Williamson  
Jeff Gilliland  
Mary Ann Toth  
Steve Cloutier  
John Babchek  
Rick Pollack  
Mary Ellen Fernandez  
Paula Labadie  
Elsa Cereghini  
Sharon Dmochowski  
Wayde Worley  
Lori Redick  
Krishelle Kohlen  
Carol Kaplan  
Brenda Thompson  
Marilyn Engfehr  
Virginia Klinkman  
Bing Asuncion  
James Ross  
Sabrina Payment

Judi Treadwell  
Ann Van Boxell  
Patrick Clarke  
Bob Jarosz  
Phil Bozenski  
Denice Snyder  
Rick Gordon  
Michael Raisky  
Tony Rinna  
Julia Garris  
Beth Kusisto  
Michael Caprapro  
Robert Shurmur  
Lisa Redick  
Richard Schmidt  
Steve Bassham  
Shari Sulkes  
Marina Padmos  
Hubert Russell, Sr.  
Dakota L. Collett  
Evan Williamson  
Cathy Gilbert  
Rod Lively

### **SPONSORS**

Biddle Bowl

Gerald McNew

Roll Models

**THE ARTHUR SIMS MEMORIAL TROPHY**  
**Being presented at the Canadian Henley Regatta 1990**



The Arthur Sims Memorial Trophy being presented to the Argonaut crew for winning the Intermediate Women's 125lb Eight at the 1990 Royal Canadian Henley Regatta. The inaugural presentation was made by Robert Sims (Arthur's son) and ERC Board Member Joe Rawson.

**2000**

## BOATS FOR SALE

ERC has the following boats for sale:

- Dory. To be awarded to the highest bidder with bids starting at \$650. Bidding is now opened to non-members as well as members. Contact Phil Bozenski at [bozenski@comcast.net](mailto:bozenski@comcast.net).
- Early 1980s Kaschper Vac Shell Lightweight 8. The "Spirit" has been stored inside for the past 15 years and is in fair condition. All sweep riggers, seats and other parts included. Delivery not included – the "Spirit" is available now in Ecorse, MI. Price: \$2,000.
- Early 1980s Kaschper Vac Shell Heavyweight 8. The "Pappas" has been stored inside for the past 15 years and was recently completely refinished to like-new condition. All sweep riggers, seats and other parts included. Delivery not included – the "Pappas" is available now in Ecorse, MI. Price: \$2,300.

Interested? Contact Ecorse Rowing Club through our website: [www.ecorserowingclub.com](http://www.ecorserowingclub.com)

## ERC PINS

Pins with the ERC logo are also available for \$5. Contact Mary Ann MacLaren (734) 354-5160 or [maryanntoth@wideopenwest.com](mailto:maryanntoth@wideopenwest.com).



2004-2005 Officers	
President	John Fletcher
Vice President	Bob Jarosz
Secretary	Lisa Redick
Treasurer	Phil Bozenski
Board of Directors – 3 year terms	
Term Expires	Members
2007	Carol Gaffke, Paula Labadie, Bob Powell, Ann VanBoxell,
2006	Elsa Jarosz, Tim Cardanha, Jeff Gilliland, Chris Nestor
2005	Julia Garris, Beth Kusisto, Mary Ann MacLaren, Rodney Tank

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Articles and information for newsletters are due by **the second Wednesday of each month.**

Do you have an item of interest to share with fellow ERC members, equipment to sell, or committee news? How would you like to tell us about yourself – how you got into rowing, where you erg, what your favorite workout is, etc.? Send information or articles to Ann VanBoxell by email to [avnbxl@aol.com](mailto:avnbxl@aol.com) or call (734) 283-8715.

## CAN WE REACH YOU?

Have you had an address, phone number, or email address change in the last year or so?

If so, contact Paula Labadie of the Membership Committee at (313) 882-0412 or by email at [ecorserowingclub@hotmail.com](mailto:ecorserowingclub@hotmail.com) with your information so the ERC membership list can be updated.

## LIMITED EDITION PRINTS OF OLD ERC BOATHOUSE

Would you be interested in a print of the former ERC club and boathouse?

The club would like to commission local artist, Leo Kuschel, to preserve – in print - the ERC club and boathouse on the Detroit River at the end of Dingell Park.

Leo Kuschel is a renowned Great Lakes marine artist whose work has been collected by thousands of people throughout the world. One of Mr. Kuschel's paintings was even presented to former President George Bush and hung in the Oval Office of the White House.

A limited edition of 150 prints and the original would be available for purchase. Cost for the prints would be approximately \$50; framed originals are usually about \$700. A portion of the proceeds would be donated to ERC.

Because of the costs involved, we need to assess how many people would be interested in purchasing a print. If you would be seriously interested in pre-ordering a print – or the original – contact the club at [ecorserowingclub@hotmail.com](mailto:ecorserowingclub@hotmail.com).

To see the artist's works visit the following websites:

[www.leokuschel.com/](http://www.leokuschel.com/)  
[www.biddlegallery.com](http://www.biddlegallery.com)

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteers are needed to prepare the equipment and launches for the upcoming Ecorse High School program.

Stop by the club on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings to assist.

[The Ecorse Rowing Club](#) is participating in a National Learn to Row Day in June 2011, and offers lessons to local prospective rowers.

## Rowing Queens and Oarsmen's Balls

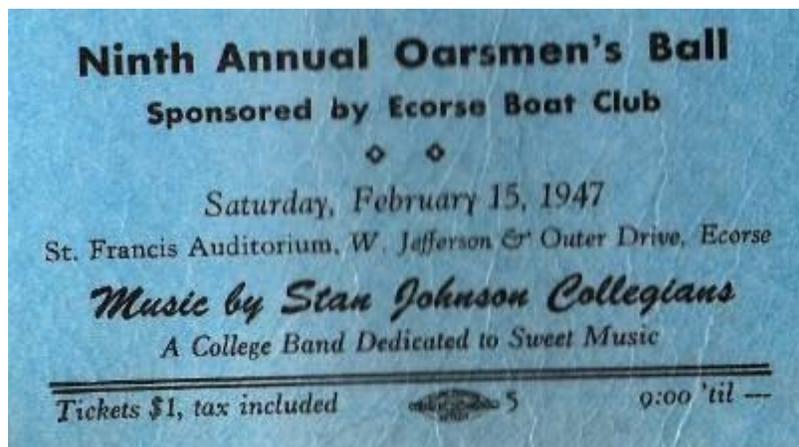


An Ecorse Boat Club Oarsmen's Ball was a gala event, usually held at St. Francis Xavier auditorium.

### College Band Debuts in Ecorse, February 1947

Stan Johnson and his Collegians, an orchestra composed chiefly of musicians from the University of Michigan and Michigan State Normal College,, will furnish dance music Saturday night, February 15<sup>th</sup>, at the Ninth Annual Oarsmen's Ball being held in the auditorium of the St. Francis School at Outer Drive and West Jefferson, Ecorse.

The Collegians have gained popularity in the vicinity of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, where they have performed for many college functions, and in keeping with past customs of presenting something new in music each year, the Ecorse Boat Club officials contracted this popular band to play here Saturday night. Music will start 9 o'clock sharp.



As usual, the auditorium will be gaily decorated in a motif that represents the Boat Club and the activities. Hard-earned trophies will be on display as will much other Boat Club equipment that will fit into the decorative scheme.

This annual dance, which is given midway between rowing seasons, brings memories of past victories and anticipation of a new season to add to the glory of the club.

The party is not an ordinary dance. It sparkles with gaiety and the members of the Boat Club spare no effort and expense making the ball a memorable event. A grand march will be held during the gala occasion, led by club officials and notable guests. Novelties and favors will also be distributed to those present.

Refreshments will be served in the dining hall adjoining the dance floor.

Everyone from Ecorse and the other Downriver communities will meet at the annual celebration, the Ninth Annual Oarsmen's Ball.



The Ecorse Rowing Club sponsored the Oarsmen's Ball in conjunction with the rowing regattas and usually held them at St. Francis High School auditorium. The first year that the Ecorse Boat Club held the oarsmen's Ball was in 1939, and by the 1940s, the Ecorse Businessmen's Association had taken on the job of planning and sponsoring Ecorse Days over the July Fourth holiday and in conjunction with the rowing regattas, they chose a Rowing Queen and court.



Candidates for Ecorse Boat Club Rowing Queen.

Elaine MacDonald was crowned rowing queen in July 1942, at the Central States Regatta before the first Saturday afternoon race. Nellie Muntcan was the 1945 Queen, Donna Schappat won in 1946, twins Clara and Clarice Willis in 1947, and Donna Lewerenz in 1948.



**ECORSE 1952 ROWING QUEEN**



ARTIS BARNEY, winner of the 1952 Ecorse Day Rowing Queen Rowing Contest is shown as she tries out a single scull for exercise. Artis works for the Engineering Department of the City.

1952 Rowing Queen Artis Barney.



## **Boat Club Biography Briefs**

### **Alvia Grant**

Alvia Grant was among the famous Ecorse oarsmen just before the turn of the century. He was born in Ecorse on March 31, 1879 on the old Grant farm on Jefferson Avenue and lived there in a home listed as 3851 Jefferson Avenue all of his life.

Alvia Grant worked as a warehouse superintendent at the Worcester Salt Company and also took an active part in the Macabees.

When Alvia Grant died on July 9, 1942, he was buried in St. Francis Cemetery. His wife survived him as well as three daughters, Mrs. Louise Sclater, Mrs. Ruth Geckler, and Mrs. Bernadette Raupp, nine grandchildren, and his mother, Mrs. Matilda Grant.

### **Doris Heyart, Former Rowing Queen, Becomes a Nun**

The 1950 Ecorse Rowing Queen changed her regal robes for a simple Franciscan habit the last week in August 1952.

Miss Doris Jean Heyart, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Heyart of 16 West Alexis, Ecorse, became a novice in the Felician Sisters Congregation on Wednesday, August 13, 1952. In

reception ceremonies held at the Sisters' Motherhouse in Livonia, she was invested in the brown habit of the Congregation.

From now on Miss Heyart will be known in religious life as Sister Mary Jeanne d'Arc. Together with the 18 other young women invested on the same day, she will spend the coming year in seclusion studying the Rule of the Congregation before she is assigned of any of its apostolic works.

Prior to her entrance into religious life, Miss Heyart attended St. Francis Xavier Elementary School and Ecorse High School. In July 1950, she entered the rowing queen contest and was chosen queen from among 18 applicants.

In August 1951, she was admitted as a postulant into the Felician Sisters Congregation. During the past school year, she was a full time student at Madonna College conducted by the Sisters. After this year of novitiate she will resume her studies in preparation for teaching which is the major work of the community.

Miss Heyart has a younger sister, Joan, a sophomore at St. Francis Xavier High School. Eli Salliotte of 1047 Coolidge is her paternal grandfather.



### **William Montie, First of the Famous Ecorse Four to Die**

William Henry Montie, aged 45 years and proprietor of the Ecorse Hotel, died in Ecorse of cancer. He was survived by his wife and four children. His funeral was held at St. Francis Xavier Church and he was buried at the Ecorse Cemetery.

He was one of the four famous Montie brothers, William, Elijah, John, and Frank, who were the champion oarsmen of their time and who won the championship in 1885 from the Hillsdale Club at Belle Isle.

As far back as 1875, the Montie boys began rowing on the Detroit River in a ten oar barge. Winning from all other teams in the neighboring country villages the four brothers rowing in a shell began to look around for larger game. They raced the Northwestern and National teams at St. Clair in August 1888, and made a mile and a half straight away in 6:32. The Montie team won the Russel House Cup in 1881.

They went to New York City in 1893, but the Argonaut Club there defeated them because a foot brace broke just after the start of the race. The Hillsdale Club having won all the championships of the east, had come to London and cities of the old world where they took first prize in all races. When they returned to the United States they were challenged by the Montie Four. The race was pulled off at Belle Isle in 1885. The Montie boys won the race and were given the world's championship. They traveled all over the United States and out of 33 races, lost only twice.

A few years ago the boys divided up the trophies. In the house of each is a wealth of blue ribbons, medals and flags, all telling stories of past triumphs. The boys at that time worked in the saw mill of Salliotte & Raupp. All their training had to be done at night or early in the morning before they went to work.

In the Montie family there were several boys and three girls. Their father was a blacksmith and the boys all grew up to be strong and hardy men.

### **Elijah J. Montie**

Funeral services were held for Elijah J. Montie, 81 years old and pioneer downriver businessmen and former holder of the amateur rowing championship of the world. He died at his home at 226 State Street in Ecorse, in 1918.

Mr. Montie who until 1916 ran and managed a hotel on the present site of the Wyandotte General Hospital at the foot of Van Alstyne Boulevard, was a member of one of the French families which settled downriver near the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

With three of his brothers, John B., William H., and E.J. Montie, he attained wide recognition as a rower. In 1884, he defeated the Hillsdale team to set a new world's record for four man boats over a mile and one half course on the Detroit River. Only one member of the team, John, survives.

The Requiem Mass was read by Msgr. Raymond Champion at St. Francis Xavier Church in Ecorse and he was buried at Holy Sepulcher Cemetery.

Elijah was survived by a son Elijah J. Jr. of Ecorse, a daughter, Mrs. Marshall Gilmore of Fremont, Ohio, six grandchildren, one great grandchild, three brothers and a sister.

### **Richard A. Montie**

Richard A. Montie died at his home at 4337 West Jefferson on the Fourth of July 1946, at the same time his beloved Ecorse oarsmen were rowing Ecorse to regatta victory. Richard was a member of the old ten oared barge crew that was a forerunner of the later championship crews his famous brothers sponsored in the 1870s.

The fifth child in a family of ten, Richard was born in Ecorse Township on February 6, 1855. His father, John Baptiste Montie, settled in Ecorse after leaving Quebec and married the former Amelia Goodell of Grosse Ile. They had a family of four sons: John, Richard, Benjamin, and Joseph, and two daughters, Mrs. E.R. Labadie and Mrs. Bella Durocher.

After a stint farming, Richard worked for the Detroit, Toledo & Ironton Railroad. He was described as a man whose chief interest was his church and his family. He was a charter member of the Holy Name Society of St. Francis Xavier Parish and served on the Ecorse Township School Board, District No. 3.

### **John B. Montie**

John B. Montie, the last of a famous crew of oarsmen who brought national and world championships to Ecorse more than half a century ago. John B. Montie of Ecorse died in his home at 4183 West Jefferson Avenue in Ecorse. He was 74 years old.

His three brothers William, Frank, and Elijah, who pulled the other three sweeps in the championship boat, are all dead. Elijah died about a year ago.

The brothers, members of a pioneer French family in the Downriver area, worked in a lumber mill in their early days saved their money and bought a four oared racing shell to replace the barge they had been using when they rowed after hours in the Detroit River.

In those days, four oared racing shells were very popular and when the Montie brothers entered a race in New York – their first real contest-they were meeting some of the best crews in the country. They won easily and they went on to win the national championships.

Then came their greatest victory over a four from Hillsdale, Michigan, which had toured Europe without a loss.

After this victory the brothers rowed in many parts of the country, defeating all others until their shell broke in the choppy waters of the Hudson River. They patched the shell and their children used it.

Mr. Montie was in the lumber business for most of his life and was ill for nearly three years.

He was survived by two children, John B. Montie, Jr. and Mrs. Elsie Stover, both of Ecorse. Funeral services were held in the St. Francis Xavier Church and burial was in Holy Sepulcher Cemetery.



Frank Montie, member of the Montie four. He was the last to join, but shared in all of the triumphs that the brothers achieved in rowing.

### **Jim Rice, A Larger Than Life Coach In a Small Town**

Talented rowers from small towns competed with nationally and internationally famous rowers. Jim Rice was the talented coach who coached the Ecorse Boat Club team.

Rowing is an intellectual sport that dates from ancient Egypt and Rome. The first rowing race in America took place on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia in 1762, and by the 20th century rowing had gained a quiet but firm niche in sports. He didn't arrive quietly, but Coach Jim Rice firmly brought international renown and fifty years of experience coaching championship rowing crews with him when he accepted his niche coaching spot at the Ecorse Boat Club in the small town of Ecorse, Michigan, in 1942. Its location about eight miles outside of Detroit along the Detroit River made Ecorse a good training ground for rowers.

A tall, strapping man, six feet in his stocking feet, Rice developed the two fisted manner and the roaring voice that were his trademarks early in life. He was born on Hiawatha Island in Lake Ontario off of Toronto, but he usually waxed vague when asked his age. Hiawatha Island was also the home of Ned Hanlan, one of history's greatest singles scullers, who taught Rice the fine points of rowing.

## **Jim Rice Coaches at Harvard and Columbia**

Rice's first coaching job was with the Toronto Rowing Club in 1893, and in 1899, he came to coach at the Detroit Boat Club. He stayed until 1904 when he accepted an offer from the Weld Boat Club at Harvard. After a two year stay at Harvard, he transferred to Columbia University where he served as head coach for 17 years until 1923. In 1927, he returned to the Detroit Boat Club, staying through 1932.

The Hamilton Leanders then obtained his services and he coached them for three seasons, returning in 1936 for three more seasons at the Detroit Boat Club. He coached for three years at Wyandotte Boat Club and finally went to the Ecorse Boat Club in 1942, where he stayed until his retirement in 1947. When he agreed to coach the Ecorse Boat Club after the death of his friend Charles Tank, Ecorse and nearly every other rowing club in the country recognized him as one of the top ranking rowing coaches in America.

## **An Oarsman Recalls His Coach**

Larry Le Blanc, one of his oarsmen, recalls the sights and sounds of the 1940s Ecorse Boat Club clubhouse and the presence of Coach Rice. "Cold showers between corrugated walls while an East wind pushed cold through the sliding doors that faced the River. The glowing pot-bellied stove in the club room around which sat Jim and well toasted oarsmen. The hub-bub of pool playing, ping pong and the endless streams of creative profanity."

## **Small Town Coaching in Ecorse**

After Jim Rice took over as coach in 1942, the Ecorse Boat Club began a long, steady winning tradition. He used his roaring voice and two fisted manner to inspire rowers to pull the extra oar. In the five years that he coached Ecorse crews-1942-1947- Coach Rice produced many winning teams and a proud tradition for Ecorse. His Ecorse crews topped the Canadian Henley in 1942,1943, and 1944, and he was very successful with other Boat Club crews during this time. His 1945 record was outstanding, and during the 1946 season, Coach Rice's crews were among the best in the United States.

In 1947, after over fifty years of coaching, Jim Rice told the Ecorse Boat Club that he would not be able to resume his coaching duties because of ill health. A story in the August 18, 1953, Detroit News by George E. Van announced the death of Coach Jim Rice. "The Jim Rice story ended in New York today when they buried the great rowing coach."

## **The Measure of a Coach**

Van said that Big Jim's boys didn't win all the races or even a large part of them in those years at Toronto, Detroit, Harvard, Columbia, Pennsylvania, Wyandotte and Ecorse, but they came across first often enough to give him a top ranking forever in the sport. Those who knew the

venerable mariner, and he definitely was a man of the water, remember the salty, blustery character of the man rather than his accomplishments as a coach.

As fine as his record was in rowing, those who knew Rice always will talk of Rice, the man, a fellow who loved life and lived it to the hilt. He was somewhere in his mid eighties at his death. "He always kidded about his years, but when pinned down would tell the story about his father having put the date down in the family Bible as 1872," Van concluded.

### **William A. (Red) Tank**

Wednesday, November 29, 1972

Ecorse Advertiser

Considered at one time to be one of the best oarsmen in the United States and Canada, William H. (Red) Tank, of Ecorse, died November 21, 1972, at Riverside Osteopathic Hospital in Trenton.

Mr. Tank, of West Jefferson Avenue and his late brother Louis, at one time was considered the best light weight double oarsmen in the United States and Canada. "Red" Tank won seven major national and international rowing regattas from 1936 to 1946. He was the last surviving Tank brother of Ecorse who reorganized the Ecorse Rowing Club in 1938. His brothers were Louis, Charles and Vernon. "Red" Tank had served in various capacities in the Rowing Club ever since. From 1941 until the present time he was a coach and a boat repairman.

Mr. Tank is survived by his wife, Petula of Ecorse, sons, John and Peter, one grandchild, and a sister, Mrs. Rhea Messler.

Funeral services were conducted at the Ballheim Funeral Home and at St. Francis Xavier Church in Ecorse. Burial was at Ferndale Cemetery in Riverview.

### **Charles and Genevieve Tank**

When Charles Tank was born in Ecorse in 1870, twelve hour work days at the shipyards and foundries were considered the lot of the working man. In the summer time when the working day ended, men who wanted to relax and enjoy the cooling Detroit River breezes or hand their wives a strong of fresh fish for supper would take to the river in rowboats or barges. Charles worked those days to support his wife Genevieve, sister of the famous rowing Montie brothers, and their children Louis, William, Vernon, Charles and Mary. But Charles loved rowing. For seven years he rowed with the prize winning crews of the 1890s, and when the Ecorse Boat Club disbanded in 1906 for the lack of competition, he still pursued his passion and rowed alone. In the middle 1930s, his sons Louis and William began to row for the Wyandotte Boat Club and he coached them and shared his extensive experience with them.

In 1938 and 1939, several Ecorse rowing enthusiasts decided to reorganize the Ecorse Boat Club. Charles Tank, Judge Alger Salliotte and several other friends reorganized the Boat Club and they appointed Charles as coach and adviser on rowing activities. The newly organized club had to weather natural disasters like storms destroying their equipment, but Charles Tank and his rowers pushed on to become a well established organization that gained Ecorse international fame. The proudest moment of his rowing life came in 1939 when he saw his two sons William

and Louis, win the doubles championship of the Royal Canadian Henley Regatta against the world's best crews.

Genevieve, his wife, was also born in Ecorse. She was the daughter of William Montie, who with his brothers Eli, Frank and John, won the world's rowing championship in 1887, and held that title for years. They traveled all over the world to defend it, racing in heavy barges.

Genevieve Montie and Charles Tank were married in 1893. Her husband, Charles, coached the Ecorse village boat club, and her son Vernon was president of the club in 1939. Her sons William and Louis were the Boat Club's mainstays and held a string of American and Canadian rowing championships.

The Ecorse Tribune said that "it was largely through Mrs. Tank's efforts that the Ecorse Boat Club was revived in 1938.



Genevieve Tank died in 1939 of a stroke at the age of 56. Her Requiem Mass was sung at St. Francis Xavier and she was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in Rockwood.

Charles Tank died in the fall of 1940 while on duty as a traffic policeman for the Ecorse Fire Department.

Surviving the Tanks were their sons Louis, William, Vernon, and Charles and their daughter Mrs. Edward Messler. A sister of Mrs. Tank, Mrs. Elmer Goodell, survived her as well as her brother, Lieutenant William Montie of the Ecorse Police Department.

### **Ecorse Veteran Was A Member of World Championship Crews**

Charles Tank, a memorable name that will long be remembered in the Downriver district, more so in Ecorse and to the rowing enthusiasts. Born in 1870, Charles Tank was a few years younger than some of his fellow oarsmen. Age did not keep him back when twenty years later, he was a

member of some of our world championship crews. Then Ecorse was a well established club and he helped bring it to its peak when it became a world feared club.

A few years back it was Charles Tank who helped establish the present club and the boys whom he coached, including his own sons, are helping to make the club one of the country's best. After rowing with the title crews in the nineties he had to dispense with any rowing notions as the club disbanded for lack of competition. Charley had put seven years in on some of his best crews ever to row. Still he followed his greatest love after the club dispensed, by rowing alone. He faded out of the rowing picture for a few years only to return in a silent position. In the middle 1930s, his sons began to row for the Wyandotte Boat Club where he gave them most of his knowledge.

In late 1938 and early 1939, the idea came up about reorganizing the Ecorse Boat Club. There was no question of who should be coach. In 1939, the present club was started by Charles Tank with the aid of several friends. He served the club in the capacity of coach and adviser on rowing activities. The club met with mishap after mishap, but they went on to become a well established organization that has carried the name of Ecorse over the wide continent. The boys whom Charley coached in 1939 and 1940 have made the club a respected name in the annals of rowing.

Old Charley passed away in the fall of 1940 while on duty as a traffic patrolman on the local force. The club went on, not forgetting Charley, and many a time the crews of 1941 often heard their coxswain give a loud holler to win this one for Charley. Even though gone, he was the inspiration for many a victory.

The boys he coached form the basis of the club by passing on what they learned to the newcomers. The Ecorse Boat Club owes much to Charles Tank for his aid. A few words cannot express the members' thanks, but the way they carry on and on toward higher honors for the club is a tribute to Charles Tank.

Ecorse Advertiser

July 3, 1942

### **Ecorse Rowing Club Presidents**

Alger "Doc" Salliotte

Vernon "Mike" Tank

Ed Kromrei

W.W. Voisine

Art Sims

Lou Wokas

Camille Wery

Peter Vukovich

David Loveland

Donald Lynch

Louis Hawkins

Clifford Ballheim

Paul Hanuscak  
Al Silwinski  
Al Ruthven  
Paul Messineo  
Joseph Rawson  
Frank Morris  
Virgil Ciungan  
Cathy Rawson  
Jeff Loveland  
Tony Goretta  
Dick Weise  
Doug Milkins  
Derek McKenzie  
Robert Jarosz