



Membership



# Rich in History



The Roaring 20s saw races and more parties aboard the Club Ship *Pere Marquette* (1925-1937).



For most of the 20th century, Columbia Yacht Club was housed aboard the *Florida* (1937-1982).



The MV *Abegweit* on her last voyage, traveling from PEI to her permanent berth as the Columbia Yacht Club.

*For more than 120 years  
Columbia Yacht Club has stood  
as an iconic symbol of Chicago's  
maritime tradition.*

“What is that big ship and where does it go?” Are the most frequent questions about the “big blue boat” tied up at the foot of Randolph Street. The ship is home to Columbia Yacht Club and she doesn’t go anywhere. This landmark vessel is the *Abegweit* or “Abby,” the most recent in a series of ships that have been the home to Columbia Yacht Club.

Founded in 1892 and named in honor of the Columbian Exposition, the history of Columbia Yacht Club is a mirror to the history of Chicago. We began just as the city opened her doors to the world 20 years after the great fire. We grew as Chicago grew. We roared in the 20s and struggled through the depression. We built a tradition of skill on the race course. We hosted legendary parties.



Restored by Columbia volunteers, the bridge of the *Abegweit* recreates her glory days.

We opened our doors to all who desired membership, without prejudice.

Columbia welcomes all who have an interest in our life on the water. Whether you are dedicated to racing, committed to cruising or simply looking for a way to enjoy the glory of Chicago’s lakefront, you’ll find other members who share your passion.

Columbia has the unique distinction of having always been a floating yacht club. The original Club Ship was a hand-built shack on a floating barge located at the foot of Randolph Street near our current location. Soon “the shack” was replaced by a two-story building, still afloat, to accommodate the new members. The tradition continued, as we moved from our floating club house to our first Club Ship, the *Pere Marquette* (1925-1937), the *Florida* (1937-1982) and the *Abegweit*.

## About the Abby

The MV *Abegweit* began service in 1947 as an icebreaking ferry, bringing passengers, autos and railcars from the mainland to Prince Edward Island in Nova Scotia. She was purchased in 1982 to become our new Club Ship, retaining the name, which means “Cradled on the Waves.”

Our Mission: to promote the sport of yachting, the sciences of seamanship and navigation, and to conduct sailing and yachting activities.

MORE HISTORY AT  
[columbiayachtclub.org](http://columbiayachtclub.org)



Our first Club “Ship” — a series of floating barges at the foot of Randolph Street (1892-1925).



# A Community of Members

Our unique Club Ship is only part of what makes Columbia exceptional. Sailors and power boaters, racers and cruisers, we are a welcoming home that promotes yachting, racing, Corinthian spirit and service to the community.

We foster a deep sense of pride and camaraderie among our members, officers and staff. Columbia Yacht Club members come from a broad scope of backgrounds, drawn together by their love of the water, desire to share knowledge and a passion for enjoying life.

At Columbia, members find ready-made groups of friends who share their common interests. On the water, connect through the Cruising Fleet, Power Fleet, Frostbite Racing, Hard-water (ice) boating, Sunday match racing and other organized events. Aboard the Club Ship, there are parties, activities, events, and fun gatherings all year long. Groups meet to indulge their taste for things like good wine and great books.

We join together to make a difference beyond our Club Ship, as well. Columbia is committed to our community, proudly hosting a series of fund raising events for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. Led by Columbia members, these efforts have raised more than \$3 million for the fight against blood cancers. As a Club we believe giving back to our community is a key pillar of the Corinthian spirit.



Always plenty of good friends and good times on the dock.



Columbia sailors proudly represent our city in local and national regattas.



Nothing beats the magic of a sunset sail.



Summertime dock parties are a fixture aboard the Abby.



The racing out of Columbia offers top-notch competition.



Junior sailors learn a love and respect for the lake.



Each summer Columbia members and guests participate in the Leukemia Cup Regatta, raising a sail—and funds—in the fight against blood cancers.



Everyone loves a day on the water.

There is absolutely nothing half so worth doing as messing about in boats.

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS  
KENNETH GRAHAME



# On the Water

“To the Columbia Yacht Club belongs the honor of arranging the first yacht race of the season.”

CHICAGO TRIBUNE, MAY 11, 1893  
ANNOUNCING THE CHICAGO TO  
MICHIGAN CITY RACE.



“A tall ship and a star to steer her by...”



Adult sailing classes on one of our J-22 fleet.

*The founding members of Columbia dedicated the Club with a mission to promote the sport of yachting and the Corinthian Spirit. This love of the water brings us all together.*

## Area III and MORF Racing

Columbia members can rely on their Club to deliver serious competition on the water for racers of all skill levels. Beginning with that first long-distance race to Michigan City more than a century ago, Columbia established a commitment to the skills and tradition of sailboat racing. Today, the Club hosts some of the most popular Chicago races, including the season kickoff COLORS Regatta, Fran Byrne, Chester Kuttner, Tri-State and, still today, The Michigan City-Chicago race.

## Wednesday Night Beer Can Racing

Our Beer Can summer series draws hundreds of boats to the starting line every week, helping hone skills for weekend races and introduce others to the sport. While competition is still real, vying for bragging rights and prizes, the attitude is more relaxed, with a focus on crew skills and team development. After the races, captains and crews gather at Columbia for the post-race party, complete with fireworks.

## Cruising Fleet

It's not just racers who find a home at Columbia. For those who enjoy a more relaxed pace, the Cruising Fleet organizes port-to-port voyages, day-long cruises, marine education events and parties throughout the year. Both sail and power boaters join these journeys, with others traveling by “land yacht” to be part of the onshore festivities. It's a perfect way to meet new friends and explore new shores.

## Power Fleet

Watercraft of all kinds find a home at the Columbia docks. From vintage runabouts to state-of-the-art dream yachts, the Power Fleet at Columbia welcomes everyone into their ranks. Besides joining in on Cruising Fleet adventures, the Power Fleet hosts several parties and events throughout the year.



Whatever your skill level, from collegiate competitor (above) to interested novice (below left) to old salt or experienced racer, you'll find a place at Columbia.



Racers approaching the mark on a Wednesday night spinnaker run.





Columbia members have access to our fleet of J-22s for classes, cruises or Wednesday night races.



Even junior sailors get into the action and support the Leukemia Cup Regatta.



Summer weekends were made for racing.



Wednesday night is training camp for buoy racers.

(below) The cruising fleet leaves Chicago astern en route to a not-too-distant port.



The best of maritime traditions live on at Columbia, including the time-honored annual fleet review.



Rollin' on the river with the Power Fleet during a night cruise on the north branch.



“I can draw a direct line between my place on the Olympic team and the skills I learned in the Columbia Sailing School.”

BOB WILLIS,  
U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM  
LONDON, 2012

# Learn to Sail

*Whether you are brand new to sailing, need a refresher course, or want to introduce a new generation to boating, Columbia is dedicated to teaching the art of seamanship.*

## Junior Sailing School

Columbia has a long-standing tradition of training some of Chicago's finest sailors. Young sailors just getting their first life jacket, students interested in the sport and teenagers eager to race competitively can all benefit from classes at Columbia Sailing School and Summer Camp.

All classes are taught by licensed instructors who enjoy working with children, nurturing a love and respect for the water. Columbia Sailing School isn't just about instruction; it's about young people becoming part of a sailing community.

Our programs cater to students ages 5-18, combining classroom and on-the-water training. In the spring and fall, classes are offered in the evening. During summer months, the school has both day and evening classes.

## Adult Sailing Instruction

Even if you're not (yet) a sailor, you are interested in joining a Club on the water, so let's get you on a boat! The Adult Sailing School offers classes at all skill levels. We offer private lessons and certification classes, ensuring there's a program that will get you ready to sail your own boat.

For those with a desire to race, the Sailing School hosts Sunday morning fun races on the 420s throughout the year. These informal races are perfect for getting your competitive fix in with a fun social group.



"Shark Bait" sailors start as young as age five in the Opti program.



(top) Columbia High School teams compete in regattas across the country.

(below) Our sailors learn teamwork on and off the water.



Adult sailing classes are tailored to fit every skill level.



Columbia proudly supports the Sea Scouts.



Columbia Sailing School creates confidence to take the helm.

If you're not certain you're "race ready" in terms of skill, no problem. The Sailing School will pair you with someone who is approved to skipper.

## Skipjacks

For more than 35 years, Columbia Yacht Club members have introduced sailing to the public through the Skipjacks Program, a fun, casual, and friendly way to learn to sail. More than 3,500 people have successfully completed this program, going on to enjoy their new knowledge of sailing through cruising activities, racing, and club membership.

MORE SAILING AT  
[columbiayachtclub.org](http://columbiayachtclub.org)



# Aboard the Abby



*Dancing under the stars, celebrations on the dock. Sunrise breakfasts and sunset dinners. The hustle and bustle of crews preparing for a race, the quiet peace of a night spent aboard your boat. All day, every day, Columbia captivates.*

Life aboard the Club Ship *Abegweit* delivers a membership experience unlike any other. As a Club founded to promote the skills and traditions of yachting, summertime is high season at Columbia. The Club is abuzz with parties, events, regattas and more.

Good times continue after boating season ends, with a full calendar of activities for all ages. Even the most frigid winter days bring members together in the warm, welcoming atmosphere of the *Abby*.

The Columbia Yacht Club food and wine menus are second to none. Whether you're dropping in for a quick burger or celebrating a special occasion, the delicious food and sweeping city views make the *Abby* a perfect setting for any gathering.

Club parties and private events are magical at Columbia.



The Commodore's Reception is just one of the formal events for members.



Wedding memories last forever at Columbia Yacht Club.



Dinner aboard the *Abby* combines gourmet dishes and stunning skyline views.



The dining room is perfect for family brunch (left) or a romantic dinner featuring our innovative and delicious cuisine (right).



Hosting parties aboard the Club Ship is a privilege reserved exclusively for members. From small dinners to large corporate functions or weddings, no setting in the city can rival the *Abegweit* for location and ambiance.



There's always something to celebrate at Columbia.



# The Membership Experience



The Wine Club is another way members come together to share common interests.



Only Columbia members can host parties aboard the vintage Club Ship.



Dedicated to giving back to Chicago, Columbia combines fun with fundraising.



Parties on the aft deck deliver great times and fabulous harbor views.



Columbia parties have always been legendary...a tradition we're proud to continue.



The beauty and romance of our ship are the perfect backdrop for a wedding.

*As distinctive as the architecture of the Chicago Skyline, the Abby graces the shores of Lake Michigan.*

Everyone has their favorite aspect of the Club Ship: the historic and stunning member's bar, the gracious dining room, the gorgeous views from the outdoor dining room or the relaxing prospect looking south across the lake. But what is it about the membership experience that makes Columbia different?

**It's being on the water.** Whether you own a boat or not, a love of the water is what draws Columbia members to the *Abegweit*.

**It's the racing.** For our members who race, Columbia is home port for Wednesday night beer can racing and the COLORS Regatta, which launches the season each year. We are proud of our racing tradition and are dedicated to keeping vibrant competition on our lake.

**It's the camaraderie.** A Club by and for its members, Columbia is our home away from home. Join a committee that sparks your interest, meet new friends in the bar, celebrate long summer nights on the dock. Young or old, flip-flops or formal, you'll find your niche.

**It's the food.** No view rivals the one from the bow of our ship, where you can enjoy gourmet offerings or a famous Columbia burger. When the weather turns colder, the gracious and inviting dining room is perfect for business lunches and family get-togethers.

**...and it's the drink.** The bar at Columbia harkens back to the speakeasy days of Chicago, with a vintage decor that is warm and welcoming. Just don't ring the bell.



A fleet of boats and paddle boards are available for rent to Club members.



Competition on the beach during the Tri-State Regatta.



Raise a glass to toast the fleet at Fleet Review.

**It's the fun.** Take a look at the Columbia activities calendar. From our opening night beach party to the New Year's Gala, the parties go all year long. Dock parties, family events, wine dinners, holiday festivities, trivia night and more, there's always something fun to do aboard the *Abby*.





Competition and camaraderie are the cornerstones of the Columbia experience.



Columbia goes to the dogs every year with "Dog Days on the Docks."



Trivia night brings the competition off the water and into the bar.



Traditions old and new are celebrated during the holidays.



Gourmet food for parties of two or two hundred.



Our annual traditions are a feast for all the senses! (top) Lobster Fest (left) Easter Brunch, (below) The Pirate Ball.



The Cruising Fleet's Chili Cook-off is always a fun (and delicious) event.



Ghosts and goblins and chickens and more at the Children's Halloween party.

“Having this magnificent old ship permanently docked on the Chicago shoreline is a much-needed reminder of Chicago’s proud maritime history.”

GEOFFREY BAER  
WTTW HOST, CHICAGO  
ARCHITECTURE HISTORIAN





# Join Us

## Membership Benefits

Access to the Club Ship 24/7

Dining privileges in the dining room, on the bow and in the bar

Use of the ship's private meeting rooms and party facilities with minimal fees

Reciprocal privileges with yacht clubs around the world

Transient docking at the Club's private dock with water and shore power at no extra cost

Ability to participate in Club committees

Year-round boating and social events

Access to J/22, 420 and stand up paddleboard rentals

Discounted rates for adult and youth sailing programs

Storage facilities for sails, boards, clothing and engines

Complimentary registration to select, top-notch buoy and distance races

Organized Club cruises for power and sailboats

Locker rooms and shower facilities

Free mast stepping

Boat-owning and social memberships

Dry storage for dinghies

In-water dinghy space for Monroe Harbor moorings

## How to Join

### 1. Identify your membership category

**Regular Member:** Persons applying for Club membership who own any interest in a vessel moored within 35 miles of the Club Ship. Regular Members receive docking privileges, voting privileges and the ability to hold office.

**Associate Member:** Persons applying for membership who do not own any interest in a vessel moored within 35 miles of the Club Ship. The Associate Membership is very much a social membership with full Club access, but excluding the ability to bring a boat to the dock, vote or hold office.

**Junior Member:** Persons applying for membership in this Club who have not reached the age of 21. Please request a Junior Member application from the Main Office.

### 2. Secure three sponsoring members

Membership candidates must be sponsored by three current Club members who are in good standing. If you do not know any Club members, the staff and Membership Committee will be happy to host you at the Club and introduce you to current members.

### 3. Orientation & approval

After your application has been received, you will be contacted by a representative of the Membership Committee to schedule an orientation. Once completed, your application will be forwarded to the Board of Directors at their next scheduled meeting.







## Columbia Yacht Club

ESTABLISHED 1892

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 [Instagram.com/ColumbiaYachtClub](https://Instagram.com/ColumbiaYachtClub)

### Mission Statement

To promote the sport of yachting, the sciences of seamanship and navigation, to conduct sailing and yachting activities and to maintain suitable Club quarters for the entertainment and convenience of the members.





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