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Yacht Club celebrates anniversary

By Carolyn Kormann

The Montauk Yacht Club will celebrate its 80th anniversary this weekend with a grand reopening and throwback to the days of moonshine, "Lucky Lindy" and jazz, when the resort was founded.

The club opened in 1929 as an exclusive, private yacht club for some of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the country, including the Chryslers, Astors, Vanderbilts, Fords and Doubledays. Charles Lindbergh, the aviator, was another founding member and used to land his seaplane in Lake Montauk and moor it at the club's marina.

Carl Fisher, the developer who envisioned transforming all of Montauk into a sprawling resort for the rich and famous, built the original structure known for its miniature replica of the Montauk Lighthouse.

Next door was the Star Island Casino, a popular speakeasy and gamblers' haven; it would later become part of the Yacht Club.

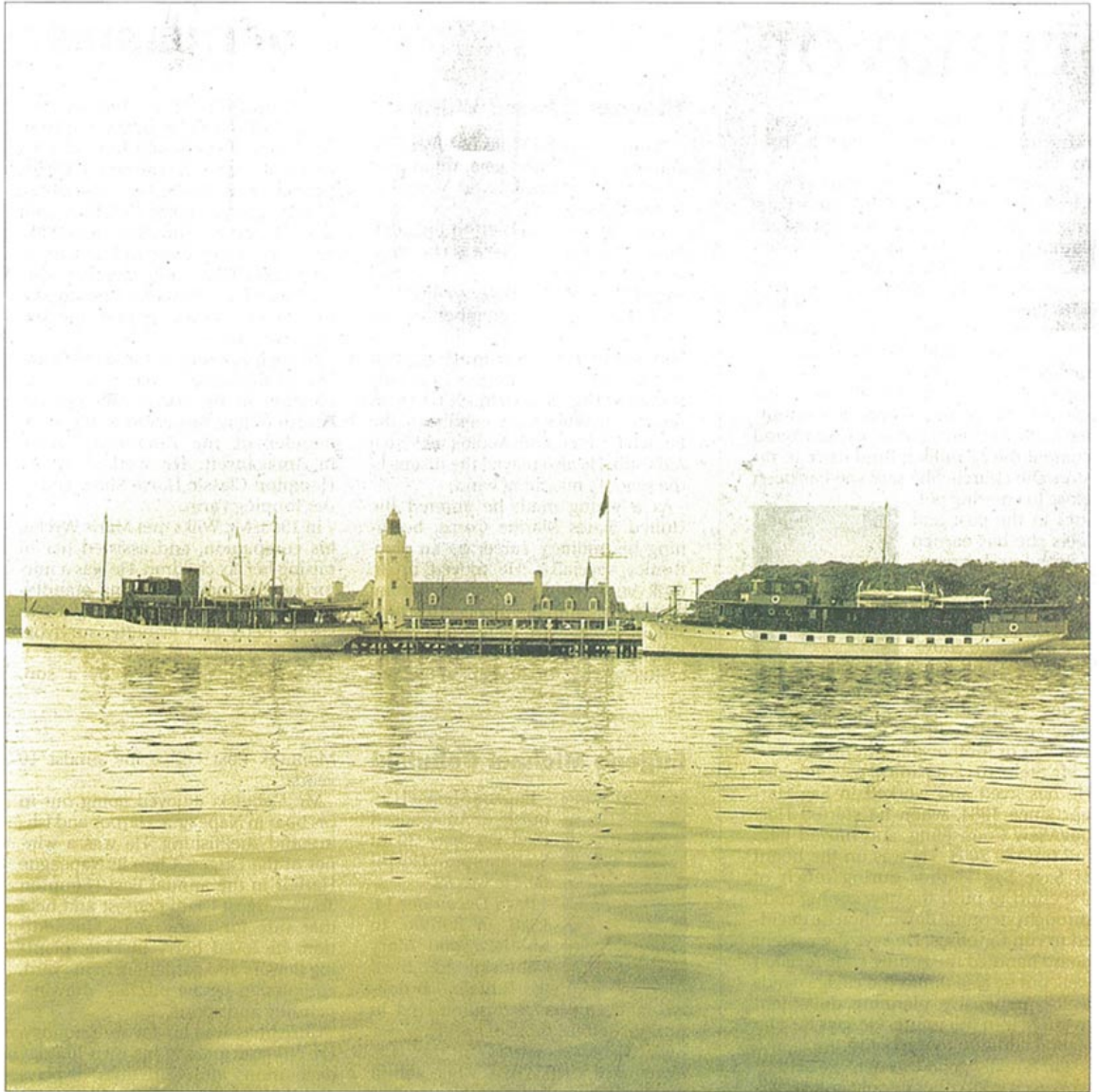
As the story goes, the club would post sentries at the stone stanchions at the end of the island's causeway. Whenever police arrived, the sentries would radio the club and the management would hide the liquor and gambling equipment.

The other neighboring property that would become part of the club was originally built as the private summer home for the Indy racer Caleb Bragg, and later purchased by Florenz Zeigfeld, creator of the Zeigfeld Follies.

The stock market crash followed soon after the club opened, but "the property did function quite well for the first few years," said Lloyd Van Horn, the club's new general manager. It was a private club so it was supported by membership rather than the public. "I don't think the Chryslers were affected like the rest of the country," he said.

In the 1950s, Frank Tuma Jr., a local sport fisherman, took over the club and ran it until the 1970s, when it was shut down. Next door, the casino became the Deep Sea Club in the

The club opened in 1929. Charles Lindbergh was a member.



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1940s, but it was destroyed by fire in the 1980s.

Two and a half years ago, the 32-acre resort, with a 232-slip marina, was bought by Island Global Yachting, a company that "focuses on acquiring, controlling and/or servicing luxury yacht marinas and the surrounding upland real estate properties," according to a press release. Since last winter, the resort has undergone extensive renovations.

"Architecturally, it's a very interesting property and also very well thought out," said Mr. Van Horn. "A lot of properties that started out 70 or 80 years ago don't make sense today. But this property has a lot of real retro aspects that work," he said, pointing out an historic indoor pool with a domed ceiling and glass roof that opens.

Originally, the marina had just one grouping of docks and it now has

three major groupings with 217 slips that are currently usable out of 232. It is also the only marina on the South Fork that can handle mega yachts besides Sag Harbor. The club expects some this weekend, Mr. Van Horn said.

Kicking off the weekend will be a "Brooklyn Brewery Bash" barbecue on Friday night with acoustic guitar music by Walter Finley and two-for-one beers in one of the resort's restaurants, the Gulf Coast Kitchen. On Saturday afternoon, there will be lunch and games including potato sack races, bocci, croquet and volleyball with food and drink served on the Great Lawn, including a "burger bash," hosted by celebrity chef and author Katie Lee Joel.

On Saturday night, from 5 to 7 p.m., there will be a "bootlegger's happy hour," at the Barracuda Bar, featuring spicy margaritas and mint juleps.

The "Roaring '20s Anniversary Bash," will follow from 8 until midnight, with live jazz, a waterfront tent on the Great Lawn and a faux casino with blackjack, roulette, craps and poker.

For anyone still standing on Sunday, there will be a "super Sunday brunch," featuring 16-ounce Bloody Marys at the Gulf Coast Kitchen.

Tickets are required for all the weekend's events. Friday night's "Brooklyn Brewery bash" is \$25, not including drinks. Saturday's lunch and lawn games on the Great Lawn costs \$30 for adults and \$15 for children, including all food and drinks. Saturday night's "Roaring '20s" party is \$50 for dinner only, \$85 for dinner and an open bar. Sunday brunch is \$29.95 per adult and \$12.95 per child not including drinks. To make reservations call 631-668-3100 or e-mail 80thanniversary@montaukyachtclub.com.