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*Nantucket's new yacht club  
is a fine choice for members  
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# a great harbor

by susan dewey | photography courtesy of great harbor yacht club



The nearly completed clubhouse of Great Harbor Yacht Club, Nantucket's first new yacht club in more than a century, opens in early July.



**For more than a century, Nantucket boaters looking to join** a yacht club have had to put their names on a long waiting list at the Nantucket Yacht Club, with little hope of ever gaining a membership berth. This summer, many of those people will be cheering when the brand-new clubhouse of the Great Harbor Yacht Club (GHYC) opens on July 1.

The first members of the Great Harbor Yacht Club actually joined in 2003, enjoying sailing programs and social events, albeit without a clubhouse. GHYC's Jobson Sailing Center at 96 Washington Street—home to the club's 30 boats, including 420s, Optis, and kayaks that is named after winning America's Cup sailor Gary Jobson—became fully operational in 2008. The center offers instructional and racing opportunities for both young and old sailors from a building designed to resemble an old-fashioned boat barn. GHYC also opened a new state-of-the-art Spa & Fitness Center in 2008, also at the Washington Street location. The former Nantucket Tennis & Swim Center at 23 Nobadeer Farm Road was renovated last year as GHYC's Tennis & Swim Center, offering club members a heated pool, squash courts, and clay tennis courts.

Following GHYC's clubhouse opening in early July, a grand celebration will be held on August 7. Modeled after the old Nantucket Steamship Building, and designed by the architectural firms of Hart/Howerton of New York and Lyman Perry of Nantucket, the elegant 25,000-square-foot structure on Nantucket Harbor will be the center of activities for the club's projected 465 members and their families. With numerous dining, function, and meeting spaces with nautical decor and a relaxed yet upscale ambience, the handsome clubhouse is all about making the most of spectacular views of Nantucket Harbor.

Gary McCarthy, cofounder of GHYC and a 25-year summer resident of the island, explains that the clubhouse is built on an approximately 150-foot bulkhead that extends out into the harbor, originally part of a marine railway system. "On three sides of the clubhouse, all the dining rooms and meeting rooms have water views," says McCarthy. "I honestly can say that our clubhouse has the best water views on all of Nantucket."





GHYC's Jobson Sailing Center, named after America's Cup sailor and ESPN sailing analyst Gary Jobson, offers a full slate of sailing programs for both adults and children.

McCarthy says that two restaurants anchor the clubhouse. On the first floor overlooking the harbor, the Grill Room offers casual dining with seating on a covered porch as well as inside seating around a handsome bar area. A second-floor dining room features more formal dining with a cathedral ceiling and outdoor dining on the second-floor deck. "We believe that our executive chef, Tom Berry, will make the cuisine at the GHYC clubhouse among the island's best of the best," says McCarthy, noting that Berry's culinary experience includes stints at several high-end New England restaurants.

The biggest challenge by far for GHYC has been getting the clubhouse built, according to McCarthy, who along with cofounder Blake Drexler paid \$12.5 million for the clubhouse property, formerly the site of Grey Lady Marine

"It's been a long process," says McCarthy, from his Connecticut home. "In a place like Nantucket, the entitlements process is thorough, to say the least. You have go through a number of different approval processes, including the Historic District Commission, which has to approve all of the aesthetics of the building, next the Planning Board, and then the Conservation Commission. After that there are state and federal processes that need to be completed." McCarthy and Drexler worked their way through 27 permit appeals.

"In a place like Nantucket, people are resistant to change," says McCarthy. "It's more fear of the unknown than anything else. A lot of the people who previously showed some concern have turned out to be happy neighbors." McCarthy says the long effort has been worth it. "It started off as a business venture and it has turned into a labor of love," he says.

Nantucket has very few access points for waterfront activities, other than the beach. On the south and east ends of the island, there is no access for boaters to get in and out of the water. "This property is unique in that it was a marina," McCarthy says. "It has all of the critical features for what can be the only other home of a Nantucket yacht club. It's on Nantucket Harbor; it has a deep-water channel and the appropriate zoning. We recognized a demand and we discovered a great opportunity for this unique piece of property."

Membership fees for GHYC are about \$350,000. "It's not inexpensive," McCarthy says, noting that despite the high membership fees, GHYC sold 275 memberships right off the bat in 2003. There are now more than 350 members. "The reasons for joining the Great Harbor Yacht Club are not that different from the reasons for joining the Nantucket Yacht Club: a love for Nantucket and for water-related activities. The waterfront is what makes Nantucket special."

To prove to many outspoken doubters that this project will benefit the island as a whole—not just sailors with deep pockets—McCarthy and Drexler adapted the club's original plans to include several community-

wide improvements, including contributing \$75,000 to a new bike path between the rotary and the town, putting in a groundwater filtration system which removes all impurities from the groundwater before it enters the harbor, and paying more than \$1 million to bury all the utility lines on Washington Street.

Speaking as the finishing touches were being put on the clubhouse for the July opening, McCarthy laughed and said he is certain that this will be the "last yacht club ever built on Nantucket," because anyone considering such a move would be stopped cold by GHYC's long struggle.

"It's been a challenge," says McCarthy. "However, Blake and I and all of GHYC's members feel a great pride at having been involved in the evolution of what we believe will be a fine Nantucket club, commanding a real presence on the waterfront." 🏠

For information on Great Harbor Yacht Club, call 508-325-5200 or go to [www.gbyc.com](http://www.gbyc.com).

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