

City Beat

There are eight million stories in my albums. This is one of them...

The New York Athletic Club is a private social club and athletic club in New York City. The club has approximately 8,600 members and two facilities: the City House located at 180 Central Park South in Manhattan and Travers Island in Westchester County. Membership in the club is by invitation only. The club offers many sports, including rowing, wrestling, boxing, judo, fencing, swimming, basketball, rugby union, soccer, tennis, handball, squash, snooker, lacrosse and water polo.

In 1866, William Buckingham Curtis, Harry Buermeyer, and John C. Babcock opened a gymnasium on the corner of 6th Avenue and 14th Street in their New York City apartment, after discussing the rapid rise of organized athletics in England. Interest in their gym grew, and the three men decided to found the New York Athletic Club on September 8, 1868. The club was modeled after the London Athletic Club. Their goal was to sponsor athletic competitions in the New York area, and to keep official records for different sports. In the beginning there was no initiation fee, but \$10 was required for the first six months of dues.

In 1879, with 170 members, it published rules in various amateur sports, including fencing, sparring, and Greco-Roman wrestling. The NYAC can be considered the foundation for amateur athletics in the United States. It was the first organization to compile and apply a code of rules for the government of athletic meetings, the first to offer prizes for open amateur games, and the first to hold an amateur championship.

NYAC members have won 119 Olympic gold medals, 53 silver medals, and 59 bronze medals. Presently, the NYAC has top-ranked competitors in wrestling, judo, rowing, fencing, water polo and track and field, among other sports. Forty NYAC members competed for three countries at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, winning 16 medals.

The NYAC was once an all-male club. A New York City law was passed in 1984 requiring "the admission of women to large, private clubs that play an important role in business and professional life." In June 1988, this was unanimously upheld by the Supreme Court. After continuing to challenge the statute on the grounds that the club was not business oriented, the NYAC voluntarily admitted women members in 1989. There were also claims, over the years, that the club discriminated against blacks and Jews. In 1989, Olympic gold medal winner Antonio McKay became the first Black track and field athlete to compete for the NYAC.

