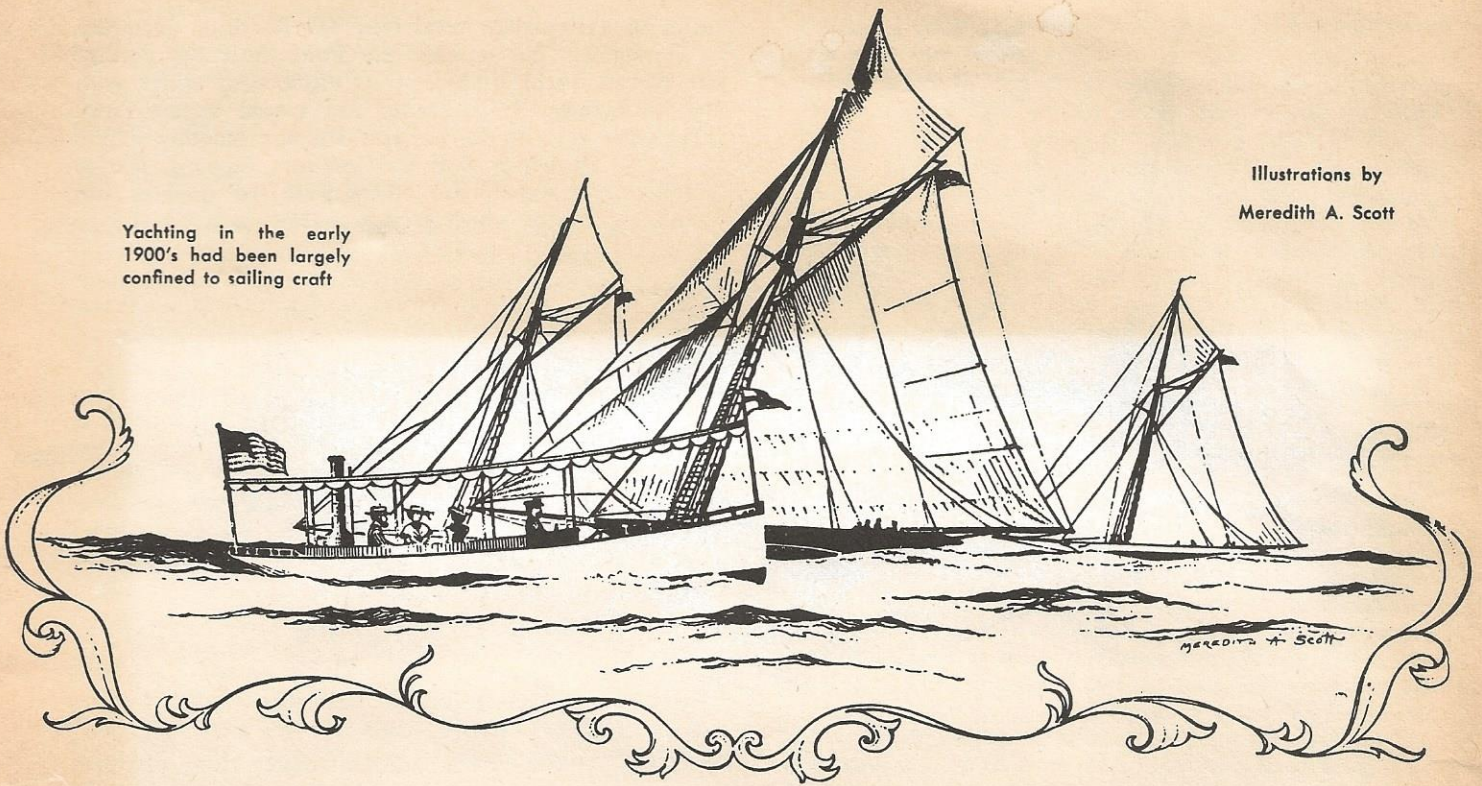


Yachting in the early 1900's had been largely confined to sailing craft

Illustrations by
Meredith A. Scott



Early History of the United States Power Squadrons

SELDOM does

the story of an institution's founding outlive the memory of those who founded it. The generations that come after search diligently among the midden and potsherds of tradition and fragmentary minutes for the story of their beginnings and often in vain.

So it is rapidly coming to be with the United States Power Squadrons. To those who could have recorded it, the work of founding was only their day-to-day activities; the thoughts and impulses that motivated their acts were their familiar processes and needed no recording.

So we grope for much of the story of our nativity. The chinks in what remains to us, though little more than a quarter-century has passed, must be filled with assumption and the passing memories of the early recruits.

This much is certain: that when the list of Founding Fathers is set up, the name of Roger Upton of Boston and Marblehead, Mass., must stand pre-eminent. The Power Squadron idea was the projection of his thoughts; the Power Squadron spirit was the reflection of his enthusiasm; the early Power Squadron growth (1914-16) was the fruition of his labors.

About this man with his idea, there quickly gathered a group who saw a bright future for this innovation in pleasure boating, the powered yacht; and so we were born though our nursing period was still before us. Out of these men's intelligence of approach to the organization's problems and needs our character was formed, that character which sets us apart as distinctive among yachting organizations.

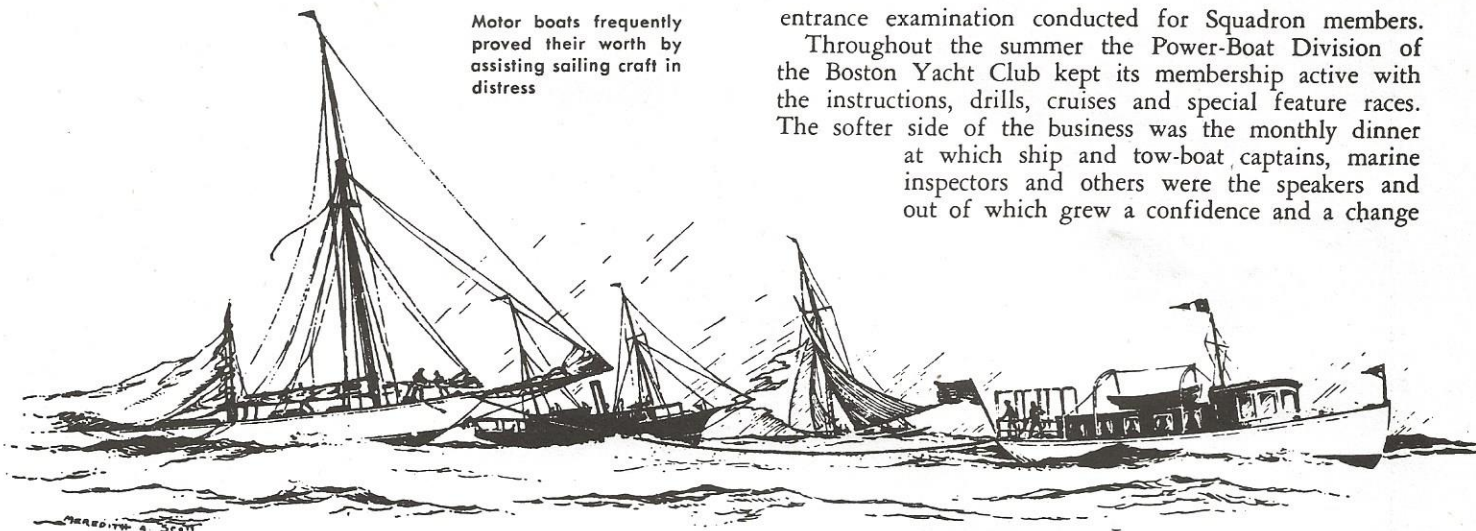
To put a date on our history, we must go back to the early Spring of 1912. How long the thought had incubated in the Upton mind, we will never know but while the last of the winter snow-drifts still lingered on the sunless sides of the boat-houses and the yachts still wore their winter garb of scantlings and tarpaulins, he

spread his thoughts before a little group of his fellows in the Boston Yacht Club.

Yachting in the early 1900's had been largely confined to sailing craft. The motor driven boat was coming into its own but not with much enthusiasm on the part of the out-and-out sailors. The older yacht clubs promoted the sport of sailing and as the motor yachts joined the fleet, there were no activities for them. The Boston Yacht Club, the third oldest in this country, founded in 1865, found its fleet being increased year by year by motor craft. Their owners demanded activities and some part in the Club's affairs.

Roger Upton was the Vice Commodore of the Club and was placed in special charge of the motor boat division of the fleet. He had sought by every means suggested or conceived to promote this branch of the sport and make it interesting. But yachting was still for sailormen; not for engineers and motors mechanics and the new-idea-men found scant fun on the club cruises and none in racing. Upton's idea was a club within the club, to embrace only motor boat men, who would develop such new forms of cruising and racing as the new-type yachts demanded. To this was added the idea of such nautical education as would remove forever the stigma of ignorance and plain fool-headedness which professional ship-masters had put upon them. Beyond these, the idea was developed that motor boat cruises should be modeled on the maneuvers of a naval fleet and a series of fleet drills with flag signals was worked out. This last tied the motor fleet to the United States Naval Forces and though there was no definite agreement, it was understood that here was being developed men whose skill would well serve their country in any time of need. The prompting of this part of the fleet's activities can

Motor boats frequently proved their worth by assisting sailing craft in distress



No organization in the world has done more to develop an interest in yachting and the proper handling of small boats than the United States Power Squadrons. Founded February 2, 1914, at the New York Yacht Club, it has grown to a membership of over 69,000 with more than 368 Local Squadrons located throughout the United States, Okinawa, Panama Canal Zone, Yokohama, Puerto Rico and a fleet of many thousands of motor and sailing craft. Countless other thousands of persons, interested in boating, have received instruction in the free piloting courses, open to all, which are conducted by the Squadrons. While women are not admitted to membership, they are permitted to attend the classes, both elementary and advanced, and are permitted to take the examinations. Miss Meredith Scott, who has drawn the illustrations for this article and whose cover paintings and drawings are frequently published in *MoTOR Boating*, is a graduate of the Advanced Piloting course given by the Boston Power Squadron. — Editor.

easily be understood when it is remembered that already the turmoil in Europe was pointing with certainty at the great war which broke two years later.

In May 1912, with the coming of the warm weather, the organization in the Boston Yacht Club was accomplished, with Roger Upton as Commander; C. N. Burnell as Lieutenant Commander, Nathaniel L. Stebbins, veteran yachtsman and marine photographer, as Secretary; William A. Hopkins as Flag Lieutenant; B. R. Miller and F. P. Huckins as First and Second Lieutenants. A distinguishing pennant was designed to be flown above the Boston Yacht Club burgee. It was a streamer, one and a half times as long as the Club burgee with a blue field containing a white star at the hoist, the center third white and the outer end red. Only when an applicant was able to pass what seems now to have been a fairly stiff examination in our present Piloting and Advanced Piloting subjects, was he allowed to fly the streamer.

A Board of Instruction and Examination was set up with Commander Upton, Flag Lieutenant Hopkins and Secretary Stebbins as its members. All these were seasoned yachtsmen and capable in piloting. Upton held a license for vessels propelled by steam and was the owner of a steam yacht. He was proud of his license and insisted on what many considered a very high standard for the

entrance examination conducted for Squadron members.

Throughout the summer the Power-Boat Division of the Boston Yacht Club kept its membership active with the instructions, drills, cruises and special feature races. The softer side of the business was the monthly dinner at which ship and tow-boat captains, marine inspectors and others were the speakers and out of which grew a confidence and a change

of attitude toward these play-boat sailors. During the winter the dinners and education sessions were continued and in that time the name was changed to Power Squadron of the Boston Yacht

Club and thus the name Power Squadron was passed on to us when the national organization was formed.

During the summer of 1912 or '13, the Power Boat Division was allowed to go along with the sailing yachts on the annual Club Cruise to Maine. The former cruised in Squadron formation with an elaborate system of maneuvers executed by means of flag signals. During the cruise, a gale developed. Many of the sailing yachts were dismasted and otherwise disabled. The boats of the Power Boat Division went to their rescue and towed the disabled sailing craft to port. The worth of the organization was at once established in the Boston Yacht Club.

So ends the birth of the idea and its development into an active movement, but this is only the beginning. News of the Boston outfit's activities spread and other Clubs began to plan along their lines. *MoTOR BOATING*, periodical of the motor-powered yachts, took notice of the movement and in June of 1913, Editor Chapman gave it a full page display with illustrations. Various yacht clubs around the metropolitan New York section started talking Squadron ideas and qualifying men.

Men of the Portland Yacht Club did more than talk. They organized and qualified and so to the State-O'-Mainers goes the honor as our second oldest unit. They were formed in April of 1913, just a year after the Boston Squadron was born. Frank W. Wardwell of the Portland Squadron later became Secretary of the USPS.

Yacht Clubs along the Hudson River were not idle. They combined and qualified men and organized as the Hudson River Power Squadron on January 28, 1914, just five days before the national organization was definitely formed.

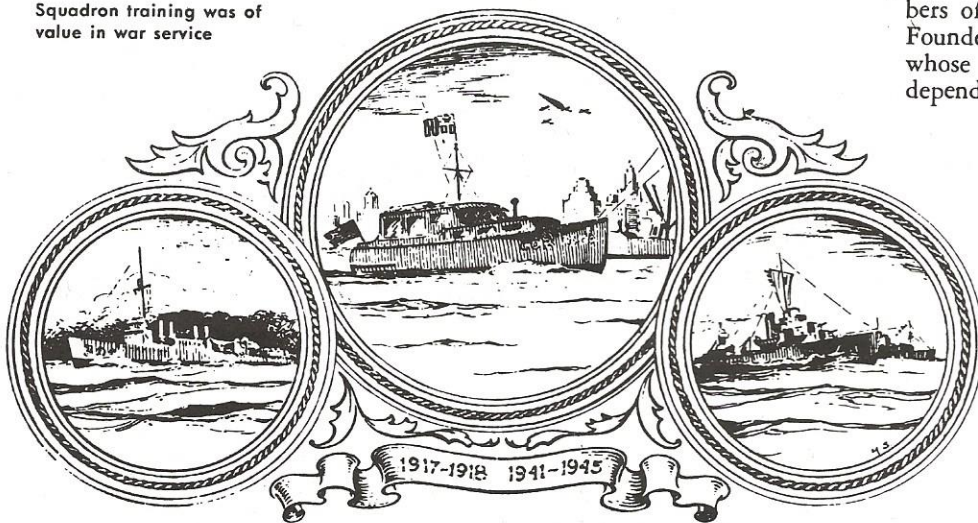
Sometime in January of 1914, the Power Squadron of the Boston Yacht Club called a conference of many yacht clubs throughout the country to see if the Power Squadron idea could be developed among them and a national body formed, for those already active had come to a realization that the movement was destined to grow beyond its present limits. Only some clubs along the

Atlantic Seaboard attended, as naturally could be expected, but among them the officials of the existing Squadrons found a surprisingly great enthusiasm.

Who attended and what was discussed or where the meeting was held is not known as no minutes exist. Nor is there anywhere a definite reference to it in *MO TOR BOATING* or any other periodical but it evidently showed plainly enough that the time was ripe for nation-wide action. Accordingly a second meeting was called, to be held at the city station of the New York Yacht Club on February 2, 1914 and here the final work of launching was accomplished.

Present at this February meeting were representatives of Squadrons and Yacht Clubs from Maine to Maryland.

Squadron training was of value in war service



How quietly great movements start, destined in time to reach beyond the limits of our dreams. How quietly, like the first slow stirring of a ship upon the ways, this gleaming new hull slid down to her launching is shown in the simple, one-page recording of our birth certificate.

"At the second conference to consider the question of formation of Power Squadrons, held at the New York Yacht Club on February 2, 1914, at eight o'clock in the evening, the following vote was passed and signed by the delegates whose names are set against their respective clubs or associations:

"That we, the undersigned, duly authorized delegates of the club or association set against our respective names, do hereby associate such clubs or associations together as a national organization to be known as the *United States Power Squadrons* and we bind our clubs or associations to abide by the rules and regulations adopted by said United States Power Squadrons.

Yachtsmen's Club of Philadelphia, C. L. Lagen, Commodore.

Power Boat Squadron of New Haven, Conn., J. N. Champion, Commodore.

Larchmont Yacht Club, Francis M. Wilson.

Atlantic Yacht Club, Theodore D. Wells.

Corinthian Yacht Club of Philadelphia, C. Longstreth.

Rhode Island Yacht Club, William S. Streeter, Commodore.

New York Motor Boat Club, C. F. Chapman.

Hudson River Power Squadron, Franklin P. Pratt.

Lynn Yacht Club, A. D. Grover.

Knickerbocker Yacht Club, William E. Spencer.

Harlem Yacht Club, R. S. Haydock.

Portland Yacht Club, Holman F. Day, Rear Commodore.

Savin Hill Yacht Club, Charles A. J. Smith.

Kennebec Yacht Club, Charles E. Hyde.

Hudson River Yacht Racing Association, Worthington Scott.

Sachem's Head Yacht Club, W. C. Stringer.

Baltimore Yacht Club, Dwight F. Mallory.

Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club, Elliot Tuckerman.

Indian Harbor Yacht Club, Frank Bowne Jones.

Boston Yacht Club Power Squadron, William A. Hopkins.

"The signatures of Messrs. Longstreth, Stringer, Tuckman and Jones are affixed subject to ratification of their respective clubs."

That is all. Yet it contains what our national body prescribes we shall know: the names of the Founding Fathers. These men, though they were but the representatives of organizations whose members all became members of our body, must be regarded as our Founders as truly as those immortal men whose names adorn the Declaration of Independence. Did they not merely represent their constituents too?

At this meeting, the organization was made complete by the election of officers and members of the Governing Board as follows:

Chief Commander: Roger

Upton, Boston, Mass.

Vice Commander: Holman

F. Day, Portland, Maine.

Rear Commander: Worthington

Scott, New York, N. Y.

Treasurer: Charles F. Chapman, New York, N. Y.

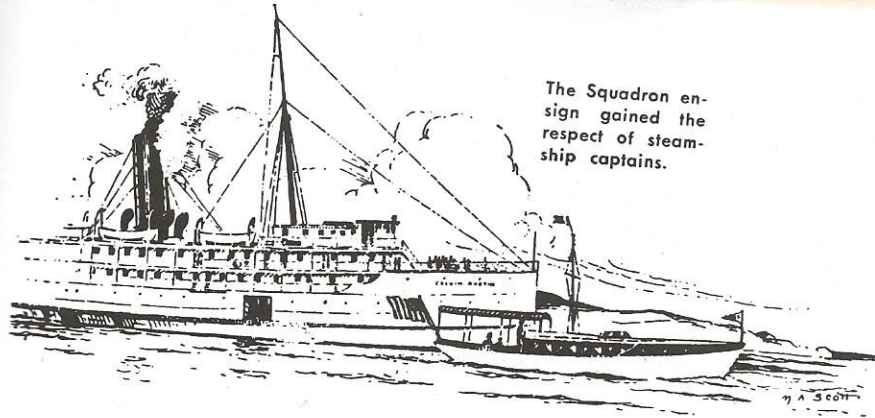
Secretary: Bryan L. Permar, Boston, Mass.

Governing Board: Roger Upton; Holman F. Day; Worthington Scott; Charles F. Chapman; Bryan L. Permar; Henry A. Morse (Boston, Mass.); Capt. DeWitt Coffman, U.S.N. (Boston Navy Yard); Charles Longstreth (Phila., Penna.); Frank S. Cornell (New Haven, Conn.); Francis M. Wilson.

Captain Coffman USN, later Vice Admiral, served on the Governing Board for many years as the representative of the Navy Department. He took a keen interest in all Squadron activities. Many Governing Board meetings were held aboard his flagship and on numerous occasions he reviewed the USPS fleet from a naval vessel. On at least one occasion, a United States battleship was assigned to and was in attendance at a USPS official maneuver off Boston Harbor.

The Honorable A. J. Tyrer, Deputy Commissioner of Navigation of the Dept. of Commerce was an active member of the early Governing Boards and a regular attendant at its meetings. Excellent relations were maintained between the Squadrons and the Dept. of Commerce.

For many years, boats flying the Squadron Ensign were exempt from inspection by officers looking for violations of the equipment requirements. In 1916 and 1917, when the authorities were considering the numbering of undocumented boats, the Squadron officers were called in for suggestions which were formulated into the bill which finally became the "Numbering Act of 1918." Squadron members were given priority in the numbers assigned by the Dept. of Commerce. P-C-C Chapman was assigned No. 1; P-C-C Williams, No. 2; and P-C-C Jackson, No. 3; etc., which numbers they carried on the bows of their boats until the numbering law was revised and the present law went into effect in 1935.



The Squadron ensign gained the respect of steamship captains.

Roger Upton had a long background of things nautical and particularly those related to the Navy. He numbered many Naval Officers among his friends and their interest and encouragement in his ideas contributed to the formation of the Squadrons. He entertained many of his naval friends at his home in Marblehead, Mass., on the third floor of which was a large platform where naval problems were worked out.

Commander Upton's Flag Lieutenant, N. L. Stebbins, was equally enthusiastic about the merchant marine and the old steamboat inspection service. He had a large acquaintance among this personnel who from the advent of the motor boat were bitterly opposed to this new form of motor craft, so much so, that they proposed much hostile legislation which sooner or later might have meant the end of pleasure motor boating. Mr. Stebbins, by interesting many of these men in the Squadrons and their objectives, caused them to become friendly to our organization and friends of the small-boat man. This undoubtedly killed the sentiment prevailing at the time that the owners and operators of all motor boats should be required to pass an examination and hold a license the same as those in charge of large merchant ships. Capt. Henry E. Sweet of the (old) U. S. Steamboat Inspection Service was also most co-operative during the early Squadron years.

The Atlantic Seaboard was divided into six districts for purposes of instruction and Boards of Instruction and Examination appointed therefor. Always from the beginning our accent has been upon instruction though it differed in the early days from our present system. Then, in addition to knowing Rules of the Road, the Compass, Buoys, Chart Bearings etc., a member was required to attend at least three Squadron drills yearly to hold his membership certificate. When he had attended twelve, he was a Privileged Member and thereafter need only appear at one each year to hold his certificate. Not more than six drills counted in any one year on his score. This promoted facility in boat handling and also contributed to his usefulness if ever the Navy needed him, though such service was known to be purely voluntary.

In March 1915, the present USPS Ensign was adopted. General Orders No. 11, issued by Flag Lieutenant Stebbins from Boston on May 18, 1915 is of interest as it authorized the flying of our Ensign with or without the USPS Pennant which up to

this time had been the distinguishing flag of the Squadrons. General Order No. 11 is quoted below:

"Commanders of local Squadrons are authorized to permit their members to display, in addition to or instead of the United States Power Squadrons distinguishing flag, a pennant. Said pennant to be a red, white and blue streamer one and one-half the length of the club burgee, with one white five-pointed star in the red in the luff of the streamer. Said pennant when displayed should be considered as a commission pennant

and be flown continuously day and night at the mast or at the bow on boats without mast. Sample pennants, with explanation of method of flying, may be procured from Flag Lieut. Stebbins.

The display or non-display of said pennant is optional with each Local Squadron. Said pennant is not legally protected.

Commanders will also note that the manner of displaying the United States Power Squadrons distinguishing flag is left optional with each Local Squadron. The customary method is to display said flag as an ensign, which method is commended but the flag may be displayed at the mast, in place of the private signal or club burgee, or at the bow, in place of the club burgee, as may be preferred. When displayed at the mast or the bow, said flag should be of smaller size than when displayed as an ensign. Such display at the mast or bow is the only method in which said flag can at present be legally displayed on boats over 15 tons.

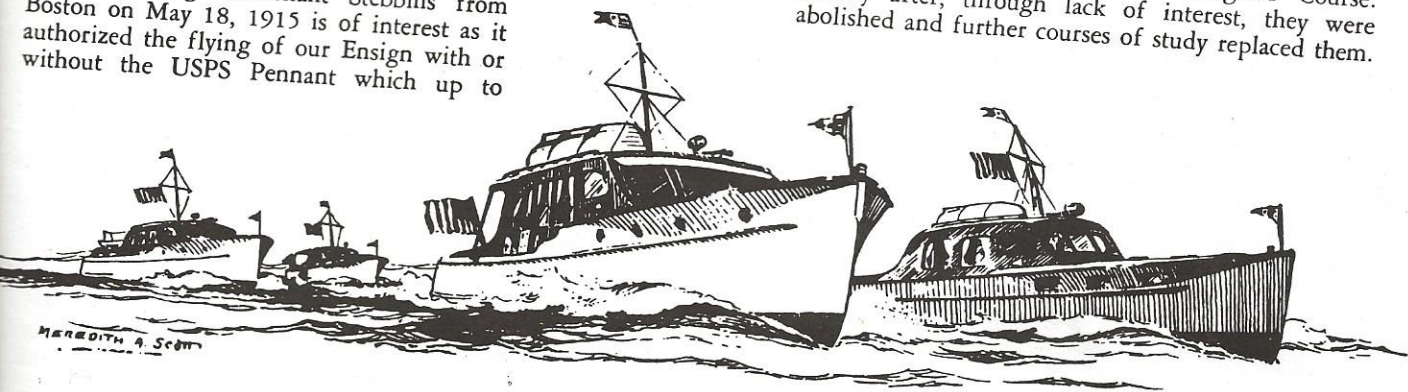
By order of the Chief Commander"

N. L. Stebbins,
Flag Lieutenant.

During World War I, the Governing Board ordered that a pennant of somewhat different design from that of the original pennant be flown by Squadron boats and that the American flag be flown at the taffrail or gaff. Similarly during World War II, Old Glory was flown in her proper place and the USPS Ensign at the starboard spreader.

As the Squadrons grew, both in number and size, the educational program developed to keep pace. There was a continuous revision and enlargement by the adoption of many suggestions from members and the constant labor of committees on which the most highly skilled yachtsmen served with enthusiasm.

By 1916, there were 500 members and many of these were clamoring for abolition of the drill requirements. However, it was not until some years later that a general uprising against them caused decided official action, when they were reduced to a subordinate position as a second qualification to a new Junior Navigator Course. Shortly after, through lack of interest, they were abolished and further courses of study replaced them.



By 1917, a Navigator Course was worked out. This was the course to end all courses, comprising a real review of all the candidate had ever been taught, from his entrance examination to the J. N. Course. It also included a practical demonstration of boat building.

AS World War I threatened, the Squadrons became very active in the preparedness program. Their activities on the water were patterned after naval maneuvers and, on land, classes were held to prepare those desiring to enter the Navy. With the coming of hostilities, the USPS offered its services as a body.

The entire USPS program was then given over to educational work. Nightly, classes were held — open to both members and non-members for the study of all branches of seamanship, navigation, signalling, boat handling and naval procedure. Over 5000 men who attended these Squadron classes entered the armed forces, many of them receiving a commission on the basis of their training by the USPS.

A great number of the Squadron members also joined the Navy. Many of them made outstanding records. Others served in various civilian capacities. A number of members were appointed by the Secretary of Commerce as "Navigation Inspectors" with duties on the water much similar to those performed by the Coast Guard Auxiliary during World War II. These men were paid a dollar a year for their services.

Little effort was made to recruit new members in the USPS during this period and with many of the officers of the local Squadrons in service, interest in the USPS began to wane. With the coming of peace and the release from the Navy, many of our members desired a rest from anything pertaining to the sea so, without this leadership, local Squadron activities all but ceased. In addition, one of the principal objects of the Squadrons had been up to this time, to be of service to our Navy in time of emergency. The emergency had now passed and most members had had all they wanted of small boat maneuvers based on anything connected with the Navy. Conditions were not unlike those in most yachting organizations at that time. Interest was at a low ebb and many yacht clubs and similar organizations went out of business.

AT the fall meeting of the Governing Board in 1919, Chief Commander H. M. Williams reported that Local Squadron Secretaries did not answer his letters, no dues could be collected, there was no money in the USPS Treasury, the USPS debt was \$450.00 and he recommended that the members of the Governing Board chip in and pay the debt and that the USPS disband. Chief Commander Williams was not a defeatist but he viewed the existing situation from a realistic standpoint. His recommendation might well have been made to bring the matter sharply to attention with a view to obtaining some definite action.

Vice Commander A. B. Bennett said he thought that such action would be a mistake and that he was sure if certain changes were adopted, the Squadrons could be revived. The changes he suggested were:

1. To change the certificate holder from being only a member of a Local Squadron reached only through his Local Squadron Secretary to first a member of the United States Power Squadrons, thus making him answerable to the USPS and secondly, a member of a Local Squadron.
2. To eliminate all boat drills and maneuvers. The war was over and men were through with such activities.
3. To eliminate the restriction of membership to members of Yacht Clubs and admit any worthy man who passed the examination.
4. Inasmuch as the oldest institution of man in the

world were institutions of learning, the USPS should stress education and nothing else.

Vice Commander Bennett suggested that the constitution be rewritten to include the above changes and submitted for adoption at the annual meeting in January 1920.

The Governing Board authorized Vice Commander Bennett to re-write the constitution and the Nominating Committee nominated him for Chief Commander. At the annual meeting in January 1920, Vice Commander Bennett was elected Chief Commander, Rear Commander Harry Jackson was elected Vice Commander and James T. Bresnahan of the Potomac Squadron was elected Secretary. The new constitution was adopted. There was no list of members but there was a mailing list of The Ensign of 1000 names.

C/C Bennett and Secretary Bresnahan then drafted a letter and sent it to each one on the mailing list, informing them of the changes in the constitution, also that all unpaid dues had been waived and asking each one to sign on the new ship and pay \$1.00 dues for 1920. One hundred signed on, a few in almost each of the former Squadrons. These men were appointed as local Boards of Examiners and were urged to start classes of instruction to prepare men for the spring entrance examination. Much of this was done by letter but the Chief Commander visited many groups and helped them to make a start. This was an uphill and difficult task, lasting four hard years and ending in success. At the close of the fourth year, there were over 400 members, over \$400.00 in the Treasury and no debt.

NEW certificates were issued to the hundred re-joining and to the succeeding admissions. The Chief Commander himself printed the names of the members on the certificates in old English. This also explains why Certificate No. 1 was issued to P-C-C Chapman who was the senior of those rejoining and No. 33 was issued to the then C/C Bennett.

Chief Commander Bennett served for four terms, 1920-23, being the only Chief Commander to serve more than two.

This was the United States Power Squadrons which C/C Harry Jackson inherited in January 1924 and this young and tender organization received from Chief Commander Jackson his enthusiastic and wholehearted care which meant so much to it in those early days. It was a going concern and he kept it going.

From this it will be seen that if credit for perpetuating the USPS should go to any two men, it should go to this Bennett-Jackson team. It was a natural in very way — enthusiastic, hard working and a stickler for observing everything which was best in the original United States Power Squadrons' traditions. Until his death in 1943, P/C/C Henry A. Jackson carried on, giving the Squadrons of his advice and mature judgment, much of which has been responsible for bringing the organization to its present high state of perfection. With P/C/C Bennett, Commander Jackson served on the Committee On Rules until he sailed on his last voyage.

One of the earliest Squadrons, the Huguenot Power Squadron of New Rochelle later combined with the Hudson River Power Squadron to form the New York Power Squadron, contributed many members to the USPS who served the organization long and with much distinction. These included Chief Commanders Theodore I. Coe, 1916-17; H. M. Williams, 1919; Henry A. Jackson, 1924-25; Frederick W. Horenburger, 1928, and C. F. Chapman, 1946-47. Its successor, the New York Power Squadron, contributed C/C Dean Potter, 1926-27 and C/C William A. Earl, 1934. The Stratford Squadron, now the Housatonic River Squadron, contributed C/C Benjamin S. Coe, 1932-33; the original Boston Power Squadron C/C C. Neal Burnell, 1918.