



Sezio photos

After 28 Years This 30-foot Pennant Will Be Returned to Competition

By RAY RUGE

SPANNING seven decades of winter sport is a slender 30-foot banner of silk, bearing in gold letters on a field of blue the simple but sweeping legend "Ice Yacht Challenge Pennant of America." With traditions and memories reaching back to the halcyon days of big-boat racing on the Hudson, and with names like Roosevelt, Rogers, Innis and Grinnell bound up in its every thread, the old pennant is to be brought out of a long period of retirement and returned to active competition this winter.

A glance at its history shows a faithful reflection of the sport of ice boating in this country—the rise along the Hudson, with big boats and wealthy sportsmen the order of the day, followed by the lean years with the cryptic entry "No Racing" in the record books, and eventually the passing to other courses of the boats and enthusiasm which had been its lifeblood through the years. But the old pennant remained—almost forgotten—in safe keeping in the little river town where it first flew to the winter winds. And now five surviving members of the original donating Club have done a fine sporting thing. They have charged the Eastern Ice Yachting Association with the trusteeship of the trophy, and with the running of an open event to re-launch it as an interclub challenge pennant "at the earliest possible date." This time next year should see the old flag back in its rightful place as the jealously guarded emblem of ice yachting supremacy, held by the best boats and challenged by the best, regardless of size, type or home port. Three 20-mile races are set for next February on the best ice then available within 100 miles of New York for two boats from any recognized ice yacht club. One word of explanation seems in order here: the original silk is now very delicate. An exact replica is being made and the original will be retired to safe keeping in the Roosevelt Memorial Library at Hyde Park, beside the famous *Iceicle* which won it many times.

The Record Books of the Hudson River Ice Yacht Club, kindly loaned to the author by Mr. Kunze Todd, of Hyde Park, reward the iceboat fan with a complete history of the Challenge Pennant. Originally placed in competition by the New Hamburg Ice Yacht Club through its Commodore, Irving Grinnell, it first carried a refreshingly simple set of

conditions. Competing yachts were unlimited as to size or number, and fleets of 14 or more were then the order of the day. First winner, March 5, 1881, was Wm. Van Wyck's *Phantom*, 450 sq. ft. *Phantom* was a bashful bride, for she contrived to run over the Pennant while streaming it from her gaff after the race, thereby shortening it some 18 inches! In '83 the real challenger-racers first appeared. E. Harrison Sanford's new 825 square-footer, *Avalanche*, snowed under the New Hamburg fleet and took the Pennant to Poughkeepsie. In the next two years, three challenges from Red Bank and one from New Hamburg were turned back by the big boats from the "Bridge City." Poughkeepsie reigned supreme.

Then came an accident, a protest, a dispute and a lot of hard feeling. A large group of sportsmen withdrew from the Poughkeepsie club, and under the leadership of John A. Roosevelt uncle of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, formed the Hudson River Ice Yacht Club at Hyde Park. One glance at the handsomely bound record books, the list of members reading like a select section of the Social Register, and the tremendous fleet of large ice yachts maintained on the River leaves no doubt that this was truly a major sport.

In 1887, *Jack Frost* won the Challenge Pennant for Hudson River and from this date on, the Hyde Park club never lost a match. In '88 first appears the gallant *Iceicle*, 735 sq. ft., every inch of her built of butternut grown right on the Roosevelt estate. She won the pennant again in '89 and '92, all three matches being with North Shrewsbury. In '93 *Jack Frost* clocked the fastest 20 miles (windward and return) on record up to that time—49 min. 30 sec.—against a lone challenger from Orange Lake. In '99, it was *Iceicle* winning for Hudson River against the Carthage Ice Yacht Club.

This was the end of the big fleets and—until now—of the

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"Scout" (left), last winner of the Pennant (1922). Capt. Drake, her skipper in '22, is here tending sheet with bare hands at the age of 72

Ice yachting on the Hudson in 1879. This type of boat first competed for the Challenge Pennant



ICE YACHT CHALLENGE PENNANT OF AMERICA

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unrestricted sail area. A new set of conditions were ratified by New Hamburg as donor and Hudson River as holder of the trophy. Fleets were limited to two yachts from each club, and sail area was bracketed between 400 and 850 sq. ft. covering all winners of the pennant up to that time. Courses were set at the traditional 20 miles.

Twenty years of the most active racing had established the Challenge Pennant as ice yachting's premier trophy. Yet oblivion was just around the corner. North Shrewsbury made one more gallant attempt, in 1902, sending *Scud* and *Dreadnought* up to the Hudson as the best and the biggest they had. They were met by the old reliables, *Icicle* and *Jack Frost*, and the record book tells the same old story—*Jack Frost*, followed closely by *Icicle*, led at every lap in every race. The winning margin varied from 5 min. 41 sec. to 8 min. 48 sec. The Hudson reigned supreme.

But even as the crackling silk flew from *Jack Frost's* main peak that February day—prophetically it was the 13th—the death knell of ice yachting on the River had sounded. The record book tells the bitter story—"1903, No Racing; 1904, No Racing; 1905, 1906, 1907, No Racing." Five years like this, taking their toll of both yachts and members, nearly finished the fine old Club. Boats were sold to the West, to Tuxedo Park, to the Shrewsbury. The fleet dwindled, the ice didn't return, and by 1922 Archibald Rogers decided the time had come to take the action prescribed in the Conditions in case the holding Club should dissolve. He returned the Pennant to the New Hamburg Ice Yacht Club.

The Rules and Regulations were amended to limit competition to yachts under 350 sq. ft., and a race was run, won by Jacob Millard's *Scout*, sailed by Capt. Frank V. Drake, of New Hamburg. Mr. Millard kept the Pennant, the Hudson was methodically ripped open by the Coast Guard every time it froze, and the years slipped by. The Pennant was almost completely forgotten. But it still carried that fine, challenging, sporting Deed of Gift—"This flag should be known as the ICE YACHT CHALLENGE PENNANT OF AMERICA, and shall be preserved as a perpetual Challenge Pennant for friendly competition between ice yacht clubs belonging to this or any foreign country."

By 1950 Mr. Millard had died and Captain Drake found himself in much the same position that had faced Mr. Rogers in '22—except that this time there was no other club to take over. Encouraged by Herbert L. Stone, the editor of *YACHTING*, Capt. Drake rallied to his support the surviving members of the New Hamburg Ice Yacht Club—William Workman, Charles Wickes, W. H. Losee and Claude Van Nostrand, and together they signed a Resolution, passing on the trusteeship, the traditions, and a completely wide-open set of Rules and Regulations for the challenge Pennant to the Eastern Ice Yachting Association. There is now no limit on sail-area, on locality, nationality or anything else—all they ask is that we race for this banner—and that we get busy and get it started. Ice yachting has needed one truly big trophy, with no strings and no self-aggrandizing titles attached. Thanks to the New Hamburg Ice Yacht Club, ice yachting has it. Captain Drake and his fellow-members have earned our respect and our gratitude.