

## **Annals of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club Volume I 1852-1937**

C.H.J. Snider, Club Archivist 1937

Quotes of 16 foot Skiffs in the 1880s to 1905

### **1887**

In addition to the Toronto Yacht Club the Royal Canadian had a further rival in Toronto for the season of 1887, the Queen City Yacht Club coming into existence under commodore T. A. E. World. There was room for the new organization, for yachting was in a flourishing state and small-boat sailing had developed to such an extent that it was a sport in itself. Indeed the Toronto Skiff Club was an outcome of the great interest in racing small-craft about this time.

The popular small boat of the 1880's was a double-ended skiff, completely open or with a very large cockpit, and in both model and rig decidedly "unwholesome" judged by modern standards. Skiffs no longer than 16 feet over all, and 4 feet beam, would be rigged as schooners, with flying topsails and a tremendous sail area generally; or as sloops, with eight foot bowsprits and 17-foot spinnaker booms, and mainbooms to match. There is this to be said for these racing extremes - they bred a generation of alert, active and courageous sailors, and while sailing them was as much a matter of acrobatics as seamanship, the seamanship it demanded was of high order.

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### **1900**

A small boat development of pleasing and prodigious proportions began in the Lake Sailing Skiff Association in 1898 with the adoption of a new type of sailing skiff for all clubs within its membership. Replacing the old slack-bilged over-canvassed double-enders, these new skiffs were 16 feet on the waterline, unrestricted in overall length, but running around 24 or 25 feet, and between 6 and 7 feet in beam, with sail area limited to 330 square feet, in jib and mainsail. They were very shoal centreboard craft, wide enough to be stiff, and decked over with the exception of an open cockpit. They were built by the score by Toronto and Hamilton clubs, and over a hundred were in existence at the end of the century. The best of them could be built complete for \$200, and \$100 was considered a reasonable price for one. Some were clinker built, with wooden weighted centreboards. Mr. J. Wilton Morse designed a one-design class of six for the club, after this fashion. But the favorite sixteen-footer was smooth-skinned, with a steel centreboard and steel balanced rudder, there being no skeg or deadwood under the hull, which drew as little as 6 in.

Most famous of all the sixteen-footers was the White Cap, built by Aykroyd Brothers for Mr. A. J. "Plug" Phillips, and winner of the Challenge Cup offered by Commodore Gooderham for this season. White Cap had many imitators, but no superior, and "Plug" Phillips could do anything with her. After she tried the merits of a high cut jib others followed.

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### **1904**

The 16-foot class of centreboard skiffs passed out in 1904, there being no candidates in this year for the Gooderham Cup for that class. It was succeeded, if not replaced, by a ballasted class of 16-foot waterline which provided excellent racing on a much modified scale. Only a few boats were built for it, but they were good ones, including Kathleen, Little Nell, Clip, La Souris, Independence, Widgeon and Lenore.

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