

R CLASS

The R Boat Class came to Rochester Yacht Club in the mid-1920's and were the queen of the lakes prior to the introduction of the meter boats. As with most of the larger class boats, Bill Barrows was instrumental in their migration from Long Island Sound to the Great Lakes.

From the R's came the most notable RYC skippers and crews that were to dominate the Lake Ontario scene during the 30's. Together with Bill Barrows were skippers Peck Farley, Phil Farnham, Rooney Castle, Newton and Kendall castle, Bob Gordon, and Carl Bechtold and the crew members Mort Anstice, Bun Farley, Sherm Farnham, Phil Whitbeck, Walt Brown, Art Mohr, Eugene Brennan, Howard and Jay Weller.

Boats named *Rogue*, *Kathea II*, *Safara*, *Ardelle*, *Shadow*, *Secret*, *Bobcat*, *Momeji*, *Vitesse*, and *Cotton Blossom* provided excellent racing and were consistent winners at LYRA and Canadian National Exhibition Regattas where they were joined by others from the Youngstown, Hamilton, and Toronto fleets.

Beauty was the middle name of this boat built to the Universal Rule. Who could forget Gus Cunningham's green *Secret* with all chrome fittings — a novelty in those days — swinging at anchor on the east side of the basin, or Bob Gordon's natural finished, matched mahogany *Vitesse*. However, beauty sometimes turned to beast as was the case when Jim Dwyer's *Bob Cat* appeared on the scene with a grotesque "Park Avenue" boom and high freeboard, definitely not in the R tradition.

Given a light to moderate breeze, these 35 to 40 footers (little sisters to the P's) performed beyond expectations; but, given a good wind and large seas, there probably was nothing wetter. Shallow cockpits provided little protection against the elements and the unfinished cabins with wood slot bunks provided little solace for the damp and hungry.

One of the memorable Freeman Cup races was from Cobourg to Rochester by way of the Ducks. Postponed for a day because of high winds and reported snow — Canadian whiskey always expands stories — the race started with heavy N.W. winds and high seas. On the run to the Ducks, the R's ran side by side with spinnakers up for the eighty miles and there was never more than fifty yards between them.

The rounding and turn for Rochester was an unbelievable event. Clubfooted jibs, shackled to jib travelers, saved the crews from going forward during the night, but there was little other comfort as seas filled the cockpits. Kerosene running lights refused to stay lit and, as always, the fleet disappeared into the night not to be seen together until the finish off Rochester.

When the R's gave way to the meter boats, Newt and Ken Castle's *Shadow* alone remained to represent RYC through the 1950's and 60's. The other drifted to other ports on the Lakes, notably those around Cleveland and Chicago.

Finally, as often happens to things of beauty, the lovers of tradition have recently given a rebirth to the class. Once again the R's are being pampered and raced at Sodus and the past of RYC lives again with the names of *Kathea*, *Vitesse*, *Shadow*, and others.



R Boats ARDELLE, SAFARA and KATHEA II in the mid 1920's. ARDELLE and KATHEA are still sailed in Sodus by Bob Dodge and Stu Sill.