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THE ROCHESTER RACE

When a group of sailors get together and start talking about racing, the outcome is anybody's guess.

By Jo Anne Calkins

Six years ago, at a CUPS'N FLAGS dinner, enthusiasts huddled together and began reminiscing about the "good old days" of racing on Lake Ontario. They decided the present races weren't as challenging as the old ones. And, they combined their ideas--the first outline of the Rochester Race was born. It would be a rugged race to put to test both "men and gear" - a race to separate the men from the boys. The triple play from Earl Snyder, to Commodore Bill Calkins, to Sportswriter Cliff Carpenter, got the ball rolling and soon the newspapers began publicizing the new race. Then the long, hard process of planning and organizing the arrangements began with all the Rochester Yacht Club members pitching in.

In August of 1948, the RYC played host to skippers and crews of boats from all over the Great Lakes. Enthusiasm reached an unequaled fervor and members and guest crowded around the yacht basin to watch the brightly dressed boats, colored pennants flying in the wind, be geared for the long race ahead. Early on a Sunday evening, with a brisk wind filling the sails, the starting gun boomed across the water and the race was on! The boats sailed across the starting line, bunched and set out on their triangular course to Stony Point, through the Toronto Harbor, and back to Rochester--300-odd miles of gruelling work and rugged sport. The weather was so challenging that many boats had to drop out of the race. Wives and friends listened to the reports on the radio and followed the course on maps. But, "Avillion", skippered by Freddy Temple of Toledo, finally sailed into the Rochester Harbor, the triumphant winner of the first Rochester Race.

During the past five years, the Rochester Race has become legendary for its ruggedness--a tough course for the best of sailors. Each year the entries

for the race increased, with the largest number of competitors reaching nineteen. The race was now nationally known as the "Longest Fresh Water Race in the World" and for the next two years it was won by Rochester boats--first by Bill Barrow's "Chance" and then by George Ford's "Venture III". After the first two years, the course was altered and lengthened. The boats now sailed clockwise instead of counter-clockwise and the course 377 miles. Still a triangular course from Rochester, to a buoy off Hamilton, east to Stony Point and back to the home port. The course itself was widely talked about, as it is unusual to race such a long course on the triangular plan. But, because it includes all points of sailing, it is considered an especially hard race. Heavy weather, in all but one year, has characterized this race.

In 1951 and 1952, "Escapade", owned by Wendell Anderson of Detroit, won the Rochester Bowl, adding another laurel to her already long list of victories. The Rochester Race has now become a national fixture in the yachting world, and it has proved a real test for "men and gear". To sail in the Rochester Race is the dream of all fresh water sailors, and to find a berth as a crew member on one of the entries is stiff competition as the young sailors will tell you.

This summer will mark the 6th annual Rochester Race. Entries are already arriving at RYC. With the competition getting tougher each year, the 1953 Rochester Race promises to be an exciting one. The race has come a long way from the pipe dreams of three sailors discussing the racing of the old days. In years to come, the Rochester Race story will prove to be a famous one, and tales of the skippers and crews will expand with each telling of their never-to-be forgotten experience on the "Longest Fresh Water Race in the World".