

DID YOU KNOW?

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REVIVAL OF THE EIGHT METERS by Jo Anne Calkins

A legend is re-born! 1953 marks the return of that great fresh water classic, the race for Canada's Cup.

The challenge is on! The summer of 1953 will see the once-familiar sleek 48' racing sloops--the Eight Meters--sail again on Lake Ontario, out of RYC. The Royal Canadian Yacht Club has challenged the Rochester Yacht Club for the Canada's Cup once again--the race to be sailed in 1954. Rochester has accepted, and both Canadian and Rochester skippers are preparing for the race, which has a long and colorful history.

Eight Meters were unknown on Lake Ontario until the RCYC challenged for the Canada's Cup in 1928 to be sailed in 1930. At that point, neither club had any Eight Meters! The RCYC built one or more of the racing sloops for the competition, and the RYC and a syndicate of members each built an Eight Meters. Bill Barrows brought "Thisbe" up from Long Island with which he successfully defended the Canada's Cup in that year. And, in 1932 and 1934, the RYC repeated the 1930 victory by winning the cup again with the famous "Conewago," sailed by Rooney Castle. By the end of 1934, there were four Eight Meters in Toronto and three of the racing sloops in the RYC, forming the nucleus of a very good class.

The RCYC stopped challenging after their three-fold defeat and the three Eight Meters disappeared from the Rochester basin. Toronto did keep her boats. The sleek racing sloops virtually disappeared from the lake with the exception of "Bangalore," which Bud Doyle sailed out of Youngstown.

From 1934 until 1952, the Eight Meters depended for inter-club competition largely on the Barthel Trophy Series for Eight Meter Competition on the Great Lakes. Most of the Eight Meters had been converted into semi-cruising boats by the addition of auxiliary motor and cruising gear. It seemed as though the old, exciting Canada's Cup racing days were only a memory and fascinating tales of the skippers who once competed in them.

But the RCYC has challenged the RYC again and, having accepted the challenge, skippers from each side of the lake are preparing to renew the race for the Canada's Cup. The "Isclarene," the last Eight Meter designed and built by Sparkman-Stephens, is being imported to Rochester from Scotland by Herbert Wahl. But the RYC members aren't resting upon this boat alone to defend the cup for them. Preparations are being made by other skippers to buy or build Eight Meters. And the RCYC has bought at least one of the racing boats and is reconverting some of her older Eight Meters to racing trim.

By 1954, when the race is scheduled, more Eight Meters will probably be added to both clubs. Once again, the Canada's Cup will be defended and the International class racing sloops will sail across the starting line--the old race no longer a memory but an exciting reality.

From the HISTORICAL COMMITTEE