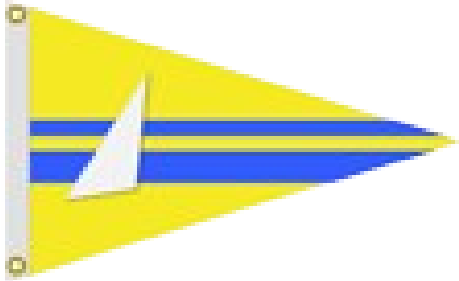


ORIGINS OF BOULDER VALLEY SAIL AND POWER SQUADRON

BY P/C CARL FORSBERG JN, CHARTER MEMBER



Part I

United States Power Squadrons Beginnings (Highlights from USPS 1981 Operations Manual Chapter 1)

Boating, at the turn of the twentieth century, was the domain of sailing yachts whose owners often associated with yacht clubs and of large steam driven yachts operated by professional crews and owned by wealthy citizens. Commercial ships were now being steam driven and the commercial sailing schooner was fast becoming history. But the love of sailing and racing lived on, probably in part borne out of the development of ever faster and sleeker fishing schooners of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, designed to race their catches to market, often upwind from down east and beyond.

USPS was the brainchild of Roger Upton, a sailing member of the Boston Yacht Club. Although a sailor, Upton was captivated by the new gasoline driven craft coming into its own in the early twentieth century. He installed an engine in his 50 foot sailing yacht, "Nirvana" in 1909 to compensate for the unpredictable winds during his summer cruises down east to Maine. Upton's idea was to form a "Club within the Club" for a group of power boaters he called the "gasoliners". He was made Rear Commodore of the Boston Yacht Club and placed in charge of this group.

Upton, a self-taught navigator and a stickler for doing things right kept the 36 members of the Power Division busy with studies, cruises, races and drills modeled after U.S Naval maneuvers. He developed a formal organization which included dress code and protocol which could be called quasi- military.

Upton sought three goals:

1. Improve navigating ability.
2. Promote social fraternity within the group.
3. Prepare these mariners to be of service to the U.S Navy in time of war.

There was a need for education at the time among power boaters. The laws of the United States governing navigation applied only to steam vessels and they in turn were governed by a board of steamboat inspectors who had no use for small internal combustion yachts. Their hope was to gain control of these boats and have them supervised by the same stringent rules that governed ocean liners and other vessels powered by steam. Upton's aim through education was to remove the stigma of ignorance and foolhardiness bestowed on power boaters by these inspectors. USPS was formed from these beginnings.

While Roger Upton was busy training his Power Boat Division at the Boston Yacht Club, another personality came into view by the name of George Chapman, a 1905 graduate in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering at Cornell University. By 1912 Chapman was a member of the New York Motor Boat Club and also the associate editor of a new publication "Motor Boating Magazine" a Hearst publication. He would go on in 1922 to author the all comprehensive Piloting, Seamanship and Boat Handling, some considered to be the "bible" of recreational boating." He served two years as USPS chief Commander, 1946 - 1947.

During the summer of 1912 The Boston Yacht Club sailing fleet invited twenty of Upton's Power Boat Division vessels to accompany the forty windjammers on the annual cruise to Portland, Maine. A violent storm enroute crippled the sailboats, dismasting some. The power boaters came to the rescue, towing the sail boats to safety and emerged from the ordeal "crowned in glory." The incident caught Chapman's attention and he wrote an article in Motor Boating Magazine which dramatized the rescue with a six page account including photos. Word quickly spread around other yacht clubs of the value of these skilled power boat mariners.



On 14 October of 1912 Upton petitioned the club's executive committee to establish his Power Boat Division officially. They accepted unanimously and in January of 1913 it received a new name - Power Squadron. Yachting Magazine wrote a three page article of the event. Then in June 1913 George Chapman also wrote about the new Power Squadron arm of the Boston Yacht Club. Other yacht clubs along the seaboard began to follow Upton's model and began working on power boat divisions in their own clubs.

On 12 November, 1913 The Boston Yacht Club convened a meeting at the New York Yacht Club with fifty power boaters representing seventy clubs and associations along the coast to discuss the possibility of forming a national organization. Upton's presentation was convincing and the work began. Following many months of meetings, assignments of duties and election of officers the United States Power Squadrons was born on 2 February, 1914 with 470 members representing 15 squadrons from Maine to Maryland. Among the other elected officers were Roger Upton, Chief Commander and George Chapman, Treasurer.

Boulder Valley Power Squadron Formed

June 1977 is the date shown on the charter for Boulder Valley Power Squadron, a unit of the United States Power Squadrons. We were assigned to District 28 which is centered in the south west part of the country including southern California. The charter lists 44 members, 28 of whom began with advanced grades earned from previous squadron memberships. Some transferred from Mile High Squadron of Denver, which was disbanded about ten years after Boulder Valley was formed.



Other charter members were also members of Carter Lake Sailing Club in Berthoud, CO, eager to learn more about safety and navigation on the water. USPS in those days offered a thirteen week boating course to the general public which was taught by members of the squadron. Upon passing this course a student was invited to join the squadron if he wished. USPS offered members courses to earn advanced grades – Seamanship, Piloting, Advanced Piloting, Junior Navigation, Navigation and a variety of elective courses including Weather, Engine Maintenance, Electronics, Cruise Planning, Sail and others. These are all taught by members of the squadron who have previously gained knowledge within the squadron and elsewhere.

Boulder Valley Power Squadron Begins to Grow

The enthusiasm to learn more about seamanship and boat handling was contagious among the members. Under the leadership of Bob Barrell, First Squadron Commander, we probably resembled a maritime academy. Each of us worked up through the advanced grades and some members began to teach classes to new members from our gained knowledge and experience on the water. Others turned to teaching the public boating class at various sites around the city. The first squadron meeting was held at Arnold Brothers Ford located then on East Arapahoe Avenue.

Bob Swartz conducted classes at his store, Mountain Sports, on 9th street. Bob Barrell and Frank Drexell, taught classes in their new business building off East Arapahoe. Classes were taught at the Magnetek Building off 75th Street for 17 years. Some classes were taught in the homes of members. Squadron general meetings were held at various sites including The Bureau of Standards, NCAR and Best Western Hotel.

Now our eye was on taking this new found knowledge on cruises to the BVI, Florida, Yellowstone Lake and the Pacific. Landlocked though we are, we were ready for adventure.

Part II

The November 1913 conference (cited earlier) at the New York Yacht Club, to consider the formation of power squadrons, drew great interest from the yachting community and was editorially applauded by leading newspapers in the Northeast.. On 5 December, 1913 a second meeting was held to work out details of the organization. A final meeting was held on 2 February, 1914 at the New York Yacht Club when the final work of organizing and launching the United States Power Squadrons was accomplished. Among the five officers elected were Roger Upton Chief Commander and Charles Chapman Treasurer.

A Governing Board (Board of The Directors) was established to oversee the organization and included the elected officers and five additional individuals including Rear Admiral Dewitt Coffman, Commandant of the Boston Navy Yard. Arthur Tyrer, Deputy Commissioner of Navigation of the U.S. Department of Commerce, was also an active member of the board.

USPS was incorporated on 19 February 1915. By January 1917 USPS had 477 members in twenty squadrons divided into six districts along the eastern seaboard. The United States declared war against Germany in April of 1915. USPS volunteered its entire instructional program to Franklin Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, for training men in Naval Coastal Defense. Free nautical schools were established in the major cities along the coast and in Detroit for the purpose. USPS was on its way to becoming a major nautical educational organization, training several thousand participants in the war effort.

BVSPS continues to Grow

Boulder Valley quickly took up the formal rigors of the USPS as called out in the USPS Operations Manual. Sharp new uniforms were purchased by many members and worn at squadron and district meetings. Flag etiquette was observed with the Stars & Stripes and USPS Ensign proudly on display at gatherings. Officer flags were also proudly displayed on our boats and elsewhere. A new squadron burgee design was created by Jerry Shepherd which described graphically sailing the near waters of sunny Colorado and the far waters of our various adventure destinations.

Two early boating destinations were a boat trailering caravan to Yellowstone Lake in Wyoming. The second was a BVI cruise in 1980. Our commander, Chuck Ruebel exclaimed that he and his wife Roberta, just married, took 74 squadron members on their honeymoon. Hurricane Alan greeted us during the cruise making for memorable moments.

One issue hounded us in those early years. USPS was a men's organization, allowing women to be certificate holders, but not members. Since men could earn merit marks for meritorious service, we initiated our own merit mark system for women in the form of gold nuggets placed on their name tag for meritorious service. We actively pursued National to accept women as members. Eventually USPS granted membership to women. We have had several outstanding women commanders beginning with Gwen Andersen and many women have served with distinction on the bridge and elsewhere in the squadron.

Boulder Valley shared a booth at the Denver Boat Show with Mile High Squadron for several years. We eventually made the choice to go it alone with a separate booth to promote our own ideas. Our theme was to create an interactive educational experience for visitors. One display in particular showed much interest for many years, especially for the children, an idea from Dulcie Harris who suggested having a wheelbarrow filled with sand in which several miniature versions of various anchor designs were placed. Each could be set by pulling by its anchor rode to compare each design's setting ability and holding strength. We also signed up many visitors for our public boating course at the show which were offered in Boulder and in a West Denver library.

Boulder Valley Sail and Power Squadron has a proud heritage of excellent nautical education and life-long fellowship among its members. It has attracted numerous boaters well beyond Boulder Valley, sharing many adventures on and off the water, nearby and throughout the world.

Part III

To be continued...