



The Origin and History of:  
**UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS**  
and **NEW YORK SAIL AND POWER SQUADRON, Inc**

**R**ecreational yachting in the early 1900's was largely confined to sailing craft and large steam yachts manned by professional crews. The gasoline-powered craft was coming into its own by 1909, but not with much enthusiasm on the part of the out-and-out sailors. Yachting was still for the sailors and the new breed of powerboat men found scant fun on club cruises and almost none in racing.

Roger Upton was a sailing member of the Boston Yacht club in 1909, but, unlike so many other sailors, he was captivated by the newfangled powerboats. He owned a 50' ketch named "Nirvana" and often cruised up the coast of Maine with his 35' gasoline-powered motor launch to serve as a tender for the ketch and tow her when she was becalmed. The reliability of power appealed to him and he grew to love power boating.

In the summer of 1911, Upton presented his idea for a club-within-a-club to embrace a select group of "gasoliners"; who would develop such forms of cruising and racing as the new type of yacht demanded. Upton was elected Rear Commodore of the Boston Yacht Club in 1912, and was placed in charge of the "unofficial" Power Boat Division of the fleet.

There was a need for education at this time, for the U.S. laws governing navigation, applied only to steam vessels. Upton and other USPS founders set out to protect the power yachts from the steamboat inspectors and to remove forever the stigma of ignorance and foolhardiness. On 14 October 1912, the Executive Committee of the Boston Yacht Club unanimously granted Upton's petition to establish his Power Boat Division officially. At the annual meeting in 1913, the name was changed to Power Squadron, with its officers – Roger Upton Commander; C. N. Burnell, Lt/C; Nathaniel L. Stebbins, Secretary – and rules printed in the 1913 Boston Yacht Club yearbook.

Assisted by a three-page photostory in "Yachting Magazine," news of the Boston outfit's activities spread and other clubs began to plan along the same lines. In June 1913 Charles F. Chapman associate editor of "Motor Boating Magazine," gave the idea a full-page display, and additional interest was generated. On 12 November 1913, the Boston Yacht Club called together 30 delegates, representing 70 clubs and associations of powerboat owners at the New York Yacht Club to consider the formation of Power Squadrons. Cdr Upton explained the reasons which led to his forming the Boston Yacht Club Power Squadron and told of what was being accomplished in instructing power yachtsmen on the rules of the road and handling of their boats. A second Conference Committee meeting was held on 2 February 1914 and the final work of organizing and launching United States Power Squadrons was accomplished.

For purposes of instruction, the Atlantic Seaboard was divided into six districts and Boards of Instruction and Examination were appointed. In addition to knowing the rules of the road, the compass, buoys and flag signals, a member was required to attend at least three Squadron on-the-water drills yearly to hold his Certificate. When he attended twelve, he became a privileged Member, and thereafter, needed to attend only one yearly drill to hold his Certificate.

In November 1914, Commodore Theodore I. Coe of Huguenot Yacht Club, New Rochelle, NY, notified his club members to "Meet at the residence of Capt. George C. Allen...for the purpose of taking the steps necessary to organize a local unit of United States Power Squadrons". At the fourth meeting at Commodore Coe's residence, Charles F. Chapman of USPS Board of Examiners, was present to guide the men in preparing for the membership examination. On 6 April 1915, Mr. Chapman reported, "The Power Squadron of New Rochelle, whose members belong to the Huguenot Yacht Club, has had seven boat owners pass the examination and will have the necessary ten in a few days".

On 5 May 1915, the first meeting of the Huguenot Power Squadron of New Rochelle was held at the residence of George G. Bell. The twelve charter members elected T. I. Coe, Commander, G. G. Bell, Lt/C, and J. H. Woodward, Secretary. All were assessed \$2 to cover current expenses and Huguenot Squadron (HPS) became the 13th Squadron to join USPS.

On 9 May 1916 Charles F. Chapman was elected to membership in HPS, later to become Commander of New York Power Squadron. His book "Piloting, Seamanship and Small Boat Handling", is regarded by USPS members and recreational boatmen everywhere as their "Bible".

As the Squadron grew, the internal educational program developed to keep pace. By January 1917, a Junior Navigator course was published in "The Ensign", in installments. A Navigator course was also established, including a review of all lessons each candidate had ever been taught.

USPS had 477 members in 20 Squadrons in January 1917 and as World War 1 threatened, all citizens became active in the preparedness movement. During March 1917, HPS held its first classes for the public and a series of instruction lessons for new members was held every Monday night at the New York Athletic Club. Lectures were open to all, whether intending to join the Squadron or not, with average attendance being fifty. In 1918, HPS's free Navigation School met nightly—with up to 300 men enrolled – and at the conclusion of the course, most enlisted in the Navy or Merchant Marine. In January 1919, HPS offered a Nautical Astronomy (N) course and in November Junior Navigation (JN). A new USPS Constitution, adopted in 1920, authorized the Chief Commander to issue no more than one Merit Mark annually to a member who served the Squadron. In 1922, the extensive boat drill program was discontinued and HPS became a full teaching organization.

At the annual Meeting, 8 January 1926, it was unanimously voted to change the name Huguenot Power Squadron to New York Power Squadron (NYPS).

A Piloting Course, introducing piloting and chart work as a preliminary to JN was

given to the general public every year in New York, with JN and N being offered only to NYPS members. USPS grew slowly and by April 1931, reported a total membership of only 840 in twelve Squadrons. If the quantity was disappointing in the early Thirties, the quality of instruction taught by members was not and with the introduction of Advanced Piloting in 1932, our Advanced Grade Program was established. By the end of 1938 USPS had over 5,000 members.

On 8 December 1941, less than 24 hours after the attack of Pearl Harbor, V/C William Sayers sent a telegram to President Roosevelt and Secretary of the Navy offering USPS support for America's war effort and for the second time in 24 years, Mr. Roosevelt accepted this support with appreciation. During World War II, over 3,000 UPS members enlisted in the armed forces. Although strictly a civilian organization, NYPS found itself firmly established and ready to serve its country. The Commander, other Flag Officers and members of instruction groups joined the U.S. Army Amphibian Command, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard with many turning to temporary duty with the coast reserve. Those members who remained with the Squadron continued teaching Navigation. Besides regular courses, special classroom sessions were held to prepare the public and NYPS members for the war years ahead. Attendance in the Piloting course increased and it was not unusual to see eight or nine hundred attending these classes. Seamanship had been added to the Advanced Grades in 1942, followed in 1946 by an Elective Course program offering Engine Maintenance, Weather and Instruction Techniques.

After the war NYPS returned to the business of education and offered all the Advanced Grades and Elective courses in addition to many social parties and boat rendezvous. On 10 April 1950, the USPS Governing Board approved the distinguishing pennant for NYPS which we now fly. A sail course was added in 1953 and by May 1959, USPS had 45,000 members in 268 Squadrons.

Recreational boating boomed in the Sixties. A Marine Electronics course was published in 1961 and by 1966, when P/C/C Charles F. Chapman received his 50th Merit Mark, USPS had a membership of 60,000 in 348 Squadrons. By 1974, May 1959, USPS had succeeded beyond our founder's fondest dreams and membership exceeded 70,000 in 425 Squadrons.

On 12 September 1982, at a special Membership Meeting in San Antonio, Texas the vote to admit women to full membership was passed. Soon thereafter Family Membership was approved.

Started as a club-within-a club in the early 1900's, USPS today is a private, self-supporting, non-profit fraternal organization with an incomparable record of achievement. No other enterprise can boast of more dedicated or more productive members – members who have given generously of their time and resources to educate each other in all aspects of boating, promoting safe boating through the offering of boating courses to the public, and other civic services

In June 2003 the Squadron formally changed its name to New York Sail and Power Squadron, Inc. This more descriptive reflects the makeup of our squadron with the increasing number of people who sail.