

The Fisher Cup
1882 - 1982

Canada had tried twice to win the America's Cup but had failed both times.

The first in 1876 by the Cuthbert built "Countess of Dufferin", flying the Royal Canadian Yacht Club burgee. The second one in 1881 by another Cuthbert built yacht "Atlanta". "Atlanta" flew the burgee of the Bay of Quinte Yacht Club and had the distinction of being the first sloop rigged vessel ever to race for the America's Cup. Cuthbert was one of the most famous competition yacht builders of the era.

After these two unsuccessful challenges, the deed of gift on the America's Cup was altered to state that no further challenges from a fresh water club would be accepted. The America's Cup was now the exclusive property of salt water sailors.

The following year A. J. Fisher presented to the Chicago Yacht Club a challenge cup to be raced for by sloops. This trophy still bears his name and is the oldest international cup on the Great Lakes.

The first race for the Fisher Cup was held on July 8, 1882 and was won by Chicago Yacht Club's sloop "Cora" and she was successful in defending it in a second race in September of that same year.

The following year, 1883, an International Regatta was sponsored by the Chicago Yacht Club. The Fisher Cup and \$500.00 was to be the prize. In a race held on August 4th, the 65' cutter "Aileen" and "Atlanta", the defeated challenger for the America's Cup, represented Canada. "Cora", the defender of the cup, and "Wasp" sailed for Chicago and "Cora" won, retaining the Fisher Cup.

Though the deed of gift stated that another challenge could not be accepted for thirty days, Captain Cuthbert asked Chicago to waive the time limit and allow another race almost immediately. They agreed and, on August 8th, a race was sailed around a twelve mile triangle. This time "Atlanta" was the winner and she brought the Fisher Cup to the Bay of Quinte Yacht Club and to Lake Ontario.

In the winter of 1883-84, Cuthbert designed and built a sloop for John Bell, who named it "Norah" after his daughter. The "Norah" was built along the lines of "Atlanta" and, on September 17, 1884, "Norah" lifted the Fisher Cup.

The Bay of Quinte Yacht Club had to reject a challenge in 1885 from the Chicago Yacht Club. They no longer had the Fisher Cup, "Norah" had won it and she defended it successfully on July 30, 1892.

In September of that same year, Rochester Yacht Club's "Onward" won the cup and brought it back to the United States and to Rochester.

In 1895 the Fisher Cup was deeded to the L. Y. R. A. by J. W. White, Arthur Hagen and Fred S. Todd, owners of "Onward". The Fisher Cup was now a trophy for 35' and over yachts of the Lake Ontario clubs forming the L. Y. R. A. The club to which the winning yacht belonged was to be the holder of the cup.

This change in the deed effectively ended Fisher's attempt to establish an international trophy for overall Great Lakes competition, since the cup was now limited to L. Y. R. A.

In the Winter of 1895-96, Chicago sent a challenge to the R. C. Y. C. and the following season the "Canada" defeated Chicago's "Vencedor". This was the start of the "Canada's Cup" competition, which to this day is the most prestigious trophy on the lakes.

Meanwhile, the Fisher Cup sat on a shelf for eight years until 1900 when it was won by one of Rochester's most famous boats "Genesee". "Genesee" had been the first club boat to win the Canada's Cup.

Six years later R. C. Y. C. challenged and, on August 13, 1906, "Zoraya" beat R. Y. C.'s eight meter "Iroquois" who had won the Canada's Cup the year before. It is ironic that "Zoraya" had lost the decision to represent Canada in the 1905 cup races to "Temeraire". Had it been the other way, the cup could have gone back to R. C. Y. C., but as they say, "that's what makes horse races".

In September, 1911, "Patricia" added her name to the winners and then the Fisher Cup went back on the shelf for 14 more years when "Bernice" was the successful challenger. Two years later, when "Alloede" brought the cup back to Rochester in 1927, the competition for the Fisher Cup came to a halt.

It's difficult for this writer to fathom why a trophy with as much prestige and longevity should have been raced for only 12 times in its long history. After all, the Fisher Cup will be one hundred years old on July 8th of this year.

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