

# 1926-1929

## History by Mark Howard

### Early Lakes Region Boating

The very first boating around Lake Winnepesaukee was likely accomplished by, of course, local Indian tribes. The largest being the Aquedoctans (part of the Iroquois) followed by their rivals, the Chocoruas. The first recorded white settler boating was the 1652 survey ordered by the Massachusetts' governor, John Endicott. The governor wanted to firmly establish his boundaries and the best way to accomplish this was to find the source of the Merrimack River. In conducting this exploration, the survey party encountered the Aquedoctans who lived at what we now call the Weirs. The surveyors chiseled their initials, and those of Governor Endicott, in a large rock and returned to Massachusetts confident their mission was complete.

Early steam boating started with the "Belknap" launched in June of 1833. Steam boats slowly replaced the horseboats so that by 1880, the lake was in its steamboat heyday. This heyday lasted almost 20 years and was spurred by the intense railroad rivalry that existed between the Concord and Montreal railroad and the Cocheco railroad (which was part of the Boston and Maine railroad network). Early passenger and freight steamers were heavily supported, and in some cases owned, by the different railroads. Gradually, as the railroads consolidated and the "freshness" of the area wore off, private boating and vacationers declined. The decline was gradual but very real, and was both measured and commented on by local communities, area newspapers and the state capitol.

Although difficult to imagine today, the lakes region of the mid 1920's was an isolated area that remained in a slow decline. New Hampshire's total population in 1920 was 440,000 with only 36,000 recorded in both Carroll & Belknap Counties. Travel in and out of the area was primarily by train as most roads were simple one or two lanes and unimproved. Travel during the winter months was very difficult and attempted only by the hearty. Only the western portion of the lake, specifically Weirs, Lakeport, Laconia, and Alton Bay, had any sort of substantial buildup. The eastern shore of the lake, from Meredith clockwise around to Alton, had no connecting paved road. Travel around the east side of the lake was accomplished over rough dirt roads. Electricity had not yet been run to smaller communities like Mirror Lake. Rail service was available into Wolfeboro four times a day, but was both slow and laborious, requiring layovers and/or train changes in both Rochester and Sanbornville. People who lived in Concord, Manchester or Nashua had no direct route they could take to the eastern shore of Lake Winnepesaukee and instead were required to take the railroad east to Rochester or even Portsmouth before they could head north into Wolfeboro. Route #28 from Alton to Wolfeboro wouldn't be paved until late 1929.

The Lakes Region's long, slow decline in travelers and vacationers concerned local business people. One way to help entice people into the area was organized boat racing. Boat race organizers were hoping the scheduled races would draw people into the region but knew great efforts would have to be made to insure easy travel in and out of the area.

## 1926 & the Irwin Cup

In late 1925, a few boating enthusiasts decided to generate some excitement on Lake Winnepesaukee by establishing a Winnepesaukee speed boat championship. Boaters, of course, had been racing each other since their boats had been traveling around the lake but most races had been impromptu and poorly documented. The history of boat racing in the early 20's is still under research, but for now, our story starts in 1926. On the western side of the lake, a local businessman named James R. Irwin of the Weirs, donated a prize cup to be awarded at the end of the boating season. This beautiful silver cup stood two and a half feet high and had at its base, a motor boat in action. The prize, called the Irwin cup, would be awarded to the fastest boat that completed six, 2 ½ mile laps over a triangular course. Points were awarded to all entrants with a maximum of 200 points awarded for 1st place. At the end of the season, the owner with the greatest number of points would be awarded the cup. Further, if any owner could win a series of races three times over the summer, he would be able to keep the cup permanently. The races were scheduled to be run at Weirs Bay three times every two weeks starting on the July 4th weekend, but were extended to include a fourth race that was scheduled to be run over the Labor Day holidays.

To help people attend the Weirs races, Irwin, along with city officials and other local businessmen, worked closely with the local Boston & Maine railroad executives to finalize plans for advancing their mutual interests. Funds were raised for a series of band concerts that were given every Sunday through Labor Day. Music hours were scheduled from 2-3 and 4-5 in the afternoon. The band that regularly performed was the 387<sup>th</sup> Infantry Band stationed in Laconia and other plans were put in place to help provide amusements for the expected crowds. Railroad officials scheduled special excursion trains that left Boston at 8 o'clock and ended up at the Weirs at 11:20. The trains came to the Weirs not only from Boston, but also Lynn and Lowell, as well as southern NH. Local hotels scheduled special meals to coincide with the arrival of all excursionists. People started arriving at the Weirs before the holiday weekend to enjoy an extended time in the lakes region, many courtesy of the special Boston & Maine RR service. By Saturday afternoon, hotels, camping grounds and boarding houses were all full to capacity with weekenders and other vacationists. Monday, 5 July, started early at the Winnepesaukee Gardens for the thousands of spectators that packed the Weirs. The Infantry band was busy entertaining the crowds that were estimated at over 6,000 strong and the race judges were setting up their official barge. By 10:00, the last of the speed trials were held and all handicaps were set. Spectators arrived by land, and by boat. Every type of craft from canoes to cruisers were milling about the Weirs to witness the afternoon's racing program. At 1:00 in the afternoon, the steamer Mt. Washington left the Weirs and a few hours later, the afternoon's racing events began in earnest. The first race was an outboard motor race that started sharply at 3:30. The second race was a semi-speedboat event, with older boats that raced between 15-30 mph. The third race was for the Irwin cup, and was the crowning event of the afternoon. Boats were expected to reach up to 55 mph and represented some of the fastest on any lake in New England. This third and final race began at 4:22 in the afternoon and the starter's flag was dropped by the Mayor of Laconia, the Honorable George Stevens.

Only four contestants made it for this final race, the fifth scheduled contestant was Sam Dunsford who had already entered one of his other boats, Babs II, driven by a friend. Dunsford was saving himself to drive his new racing boat, Rainbow IV, which was delivered to the Weirs earlier in the morning. Dunsford had been racing on the water for a number of years and with the growing success of his business supplying the burgeoning automobile industry with electrical parts, was in a position to spend serious money on his favorite hobby. Rainbow IV was a perfect 'step up'. Built in 1924, she had a most distinguished, if controversial, racing career, having won the 1924 Gold Cup race, only to be disqualified by the APBA. The Gold Cup races were seen as among the greatest of all international powerboat racing events and the chance to buy a racer like this, one designed by the noted designer George Crouch, must have been irresistible. As a racer, Rainbow IV held numerous records, including a 24 hour speed record set in October the previous year, in Canada, while powered by a Liberty V-12. Dunsford bought Rainbow IV from Harry Greening and had a Packard Gold Cup engine installed. To Dunsford's considerable dismay, she could not be readied in time for the inaugural Irwin cup race.

The race started well, with all four contestants close together but after six laps around the triangular course, twenty eight minutes after the start, RIP III, a Chris-Craft driven by owner Robert Peterson, crossed the finish line and carried away the honors. Wildcat, a Ditchburn designed and built boat driven by Glenroy Scott came in second and Babs II, Dunsford's Chris-Craft driven by Arthur Smith, came in third. The fourth boat, Jean L driven by Frank Lane was forced to withdraw on the second lap due to a broken rudder. The head race official was Jim Irwin and his daughter Eleanor presented a metal shield to Robert Peterson signifying the win.

## Wolfeboro jumps in

As relatively isolated as the town of Wolfeboro might have been, over on the eastern side of the lake, the town fathers couldn't help but notice the size of the crowds that were generated by the racing at the Weirs.

The second race in the series was held two weeks later on July 18, again at Weir's Bay, on a triangular course laid out by Jim Irwin and Sam Dunsford. Dunsford's mechanic, Elmer Folsom, had worked around the clock over the previous two weeks while located on Dunsford's estate on Tuftonboro Neck. By race time, Folsom had Rainbow IV's Packard engine ready and the crowd was very excited. Rainbow IV's reputation as a fast, record holding boat was well publicized and known. Her running style was also very distinctive as her surface piercing propeller threw up a spray almost 20 feet in the air when she was at speed. When Dunsford, accompanied by his trusty mechanic Folsom, finally rounded Governor's Island a few minutes before the races were to begin and came in full view of the assembled throng, there was much cheering and horn blowing. She was clearly the favorite. However, there were a number of competitors who took up the challenge including the first race winner, Robert Peterson in RIP III. Also racing were Jean L, Wildcat and Babs II. The crowds were again

estimated at over 6,000 people on land and over 100 craft of all sizes were surrounding the edges of the bay. Rainbow IV did not disappoint as she easily won the race with an average speed of 50 mph. Dunsford and Folsom were given a standing ovation. Jean L and Wildcat were second and third respectively. Both Babs II and RIP III were disqualified as they ran faster in the race than in the trials.

On Sunday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, the third series of races were held, again in Weir's Bay around the same type of triangular course the previous two races were held. Many new boats from Alton and Wolfeboro joined in the competition. The races were open to all and the attention paid to the whole event combined with a strong marketing effort helped push the Irwin cup starting field to 11 strong. Flyers were distributed to all the local towns and anyone who owned a boat was heartily encouraged to show their support for the lakes region. Reading through the literature of the time, boat owners were encouraged to support the local area, and were clearly told they had it in their power to make the event a time to remember. The race winner was Nilly driven by Eben Parsons from Alton Bay. Rainbow IV came in second with Wildcat in third. Alice came in fourth driven by Carl Cram, also from Alton Bay. Thousands of spectators lined the shore with hundreds boats and crafts lining the sides of the bay.

After three races of tight competition, the standings were very close. None of the boats won more than once and each of the three leading contestants had enough points to win the cup if they could win the last race. The point standings were:

Rainbow IV	350 points
RIP III	300 points
Wildcat	225 points
Babs I	220 points
Nilly	200 points
Jean L	100 points
Babs II	66 points
Alice	25 points
Echo Jr.	20 points

The last race of the series was run on Sunday, 12 September. As before, the race was held in Weir's Bay. A full starting lineup of race boats was on display ready for the race. Although postponed for a week, there was no fall-off in attendance. The Boston & Maine RR came through again by assisting thousands of fans who dotted the shore. Hundreds of others attended in their own boats in the spectator fleet. 23 minutes and 27 seconds after the start, Sam Dunsford, driving his Rainbow IV, won in a convincing fashion. He picked up 200 more points giving him a total of 550 points for the racing season and won the beautiful Irwin cup. RIP III took second place with Wildcat in third.

With the racing season over, all participants agreed the season was very successful and plans were made to expand the racing in future years. Local media and businesses were complimentary in the way the boat racing generated interest in the whole area and helped to attract vacationers into the lakes region. All agreed the races provided the largest attraction around the lake and were easily the fastest in the New England area. The racers agreed amongst themselves they should plan for a more extensive series of speed boat races. This necessitated forming a boat association that could formally sponsor the racing events. Membership would be open to anyone in the lakes region and application blanks were handed out to all who expressed an interest.

This formal association would provide structure and organization to the regions racing events. It was hoped it would not only make it easier to plan the racing regattas, but could also represent Lake Winnepesaukee in other competitions outside the region. Looking towards the future, this was a critical factor. For, in the minds of all the racers, it was known the Gold Cup racing committee dictated competitors could not enter as an individual, but must be sponsored by an association. In June 1927, the Winnepesaukee Power Boat Association (WPBA) was born, complete with a meeting place, the Oakbirch Inn in Alton Bay and its own burgee. Key members of the Winnepesaukee boat racing community were selected to lead the club. Jim Irwin was elected as Secretary and

Nathaniel Goodhue, from Wolfeboro, was elected as Treasurer. Heading the club and entire Winnepesaukee racing effort, and granted the title of 'Commodore', was a wealthy industrialist from Concord, Samuel Dunsford.

## 1927 – Start of the Winnepesaukee Power Boat Association

At the end of the 1926 boating season a few of the lake's racers decided to formalize their hobby in order to better promote racing on the lake. Other areas of the country that raced boats were organized around associations that helped foster competition and the New Hampshire racers decided they needed a similar body. Such a group would help provide a bond of friendship and would place Lake Winnepesaukee on par with other similar organizations around the country. The fall and winter of 1926 saw numerous discussions that culminated in January 1927. Fourteen lakes region boosters met at the Hotel Belmont in New York City while attending the annual New York Boat Show. Discussions were finalized and the Winnepesaukee Power Boat Association (WPBA) was born. In short order, by-laws were adopted, officers were elected, three race courses around the lake were sketched out and even a burgee was designed. All major lakes region and capital city newspapers were notified and the call went out for members and volunteers. Within a few months, there would be 42 members representing every major community around the lake.

The WPBA decided to hold 12 races around the lake over the 1927 boating season, starting in July. There would be four races held in three different locations; the Weirs, Wolfeboro & Alton Bay. The first three races would be in the form of a handicap trial for the remaining races. Trophies would be awarded at every race and points for every racer would be summarized at the end of the season. These points would be awarded not only for participation but also finishing order.

The first major racing of 1927 occurred not on the lake, not even in New Hampshire, but in Massachusetts in June. The Gold Cup Association was hosting the Governor Fuller Gold Cup sweepstakes in Boston's Dorchester Bay and the organizers expressed the desire for some of the "New Hampshire Navy" to make the trip south to participate in the competition. The only NH racer able to make the trip was Samuel Dunsford and he elected to bring his Gold Cup racer, **RAINBOW IV** which was powered by a 240 hp Packard Gold Cup six cylinder engine. At the time of the invitation, Dunsford planned on entering the Gold Cup Regatta but found on his arrival in Boston there were so few entries, the race organizers changed the rules from Gold Cup to Sweepstakes, meaning any power craft regardless of power could enter. This forced Dunsford to compete with other boats whose power was over twice what Rainbow carried, including some boats that were powered by 500 hp Liberty V-12's. This power discrepancy, coupled with an awkwardly designed course that forced very tight turns, placed Dunsford at a severe disadvantage. Still, Dunsford managed to come in third place and caught the attention of Charles Chapman, editor of Motor Boating Magazine who commented Dunsford's driving was "marvelous".

Due to the short notice of the Boston race, Dunsford was not able to arrange rail transportation, but was forced to trailer **RAINBOW IV** over the roads. Although this method is obviously the preferred transportation method today, in 1927 the roads around New Hampshire were so poor this method of shipment carried risks. Loaded and unloaded from Lakeport, she was trailered to Boston down Route #3. During the trip back to the lake, **RAINBOW IV** suffered damage to her hull that was severe enough to require some reconstruction of her bottom. She would make the opening races on 3 July, but would not be back in full racing trim until 10 July. The 12 races officially sanctioned by the WPBA were the backbone of the 1927 racing season, but were not the only planned racing events. The Weirs Business Association, 22 members strong, met in June to plan their own series of races that would be held in conjunction with the WPBA. While boat racing was the major draw for the Weirs, the association had other activities planned in conjunction with the races including band concerts, the Veterans Reunion week and a newly rebuilt Weirs beach. Spring had been marked by poor weather and the association was concerned about guest attendance in the summer. Hotel bookings were starting to improve in late June, but the members felt there was plenty of room for improvement. A strong showing of boat races was expected to insure a steady draw of tourists. As in the previous year, the Boston & Maine Railroad agreed to provide special runs from Boston and southern New Hampshire to the Weirs. The association voted to sponsor races during the off Sundays, not to conflict with the WPBA races. The upshot of these plans was racing could be expected at the Weirs every Sunday during July and August. The WPBA would race every other Sunday with the Weirs association races held on alternating Sundays. The associations' races would still follow the WPBA rules and regulations and would be run on the same course, but all prizes and racing points would remain separate from the WPBA totals.

Throughout New Hampshire, boat registrations were up to over 1,000 boats licensed to use New Hampshire's inland waterways. Over two thirds of those boats were expected to be on Lake Winnepesaukee. One local

marina operator, Jim Irwin Sr., had the exclusive agency to sell Dodge Watercars on the lake. Jim had a sample boat available for review and actively solicited demonstrations to any interested people, complete with door to door service. Local newspapers commented on Jim doing “all sorts of stunts with his demonstrator” that included water skiing and loading down the 26ft boat with up to 30 passengers to demonstrate seaworthiness. Chris-Craft’s were on the lake, but only in limited numbers when compared to Hackers and Dodge boats. In fact, only two years earlier, Sam Dunsford was credited with importing the first Chris-Craft onto the lake. Dunsford named the boat **BABS II** and raced her extensively throughout the twenties and thirties. Dozens of new boats were expected to make their appearance, both standard runabouts built by established manufacturers, and custom built boats designed and built by local craftsmen. The practice today is to purchase boats from established companies, but the situation in 1927 was very different. Local boaters would readily approach boat builders and commission a craft. Boatyards that serviced the lake, such as Goodhue & Hawkins in Wolfeboro advertised their boat building capabilities. The yard was willing to sell customers Chris-Craft or Gar Wood boats, but was fully capable of designing and building anything the customer might desire. Boat builders that wanted to break into the market tried even selling their boats through local lumber yards. The Florida Variety Company designed and built sled type “Speed Hulls” and proudly offered them for sale through the Carroll County Land and Lumber Co.

One such custom boat was commissioned by Fred Johnson of Concord and named **PSYCHE**. He was a frequent summer visitor and during the winter of 1926, had a 28ft speed boat designed and built on the second floor of an old highway department garage in downtown Concord. In early July she was transported to Lakeport and launched to much fanfare. Painted battleship grey with a red, white and green waterline, she was powered by a 220 hp Wright Hispano-Suiza V-8.

Other new, custom built boats were scheduled to make their appearance, **PATS 2** and **MURIEL**. **PATS 2** was owned by two brothers from Tilton and was a 20 ft single step hydroplane powered by a Renault airplane motor that put out 300 hp. **MURIEL**, 29 ft long, was built in Manchester on the third floor of the Sanborn Carriage Factory. Completed in June, she was lowered onto a trailer and shipped to Glendale. She was constructed by a team of local craftsmen and was powered by a Wright Hispano-Suiza V-8 engine. Additional new boats were, a “Baby Gar” runabout named **SAY WHEN** raced out of Black Cat island and **YANKEE FLYER**, a 26 ft Hackercraft runabout out of Alton Bay. **SAY WHEN** was a large boat, 33ft long and was powered by a Liberty engine. She would prove to be a fierce competitor who raced all over the lake at all three racing venues. Also making their introduction were the 151 class ‘Pelican’ race boats powered by 50 hp Universal motors. These boats were all made to a standard design and shared the same type of engine and so were expected to generate very close racing. They were 16 ft long and could carry two people. These snappy little craft had a very tight turning radius, could reach 40-45 mph, and had overall remarkable running qualities.

The first races of the season were scheduled for Alton Bay on Sunday, July 2. These races were managed by the WPBA and nine classes were expected to compete. There were enough classes to encompass any type of powerboat on the lake and speeds were expected to be between 20–60 miles per hour. The first three races at Alton, the Weirs and Wolfeboro acted as handicapping races where the boats would all be given the handicap they would race with for the remainder of the season. The first competitive races were scheduled for the following week, 6 July.

Racing for the 1927 season started well with dozens of boats making the effort in the three locations on 2, 3 and 4 July. Although some racers made it a point to compete at all three locations, there were other racers who elected to contest only one of the races. These local favorites were cheered on by the crowds as they rooted for their home town boys against the other major contenders. The Alton Bay race on 2 July was won by **YANKEE FLYER** with **WILDCAT**, a 1925 Hall-Scott “special” powered Ditchburn taking a close second. The following day at the Weirs saw seven boats compete for the open handicap sweepstakes. The course was 2 ½ miles long and had been laid out by a local engineer over the winter at the request of the WPBA. The course allowed for a one mile straightaway and easy radius turns to help keep lap speeds high. This race was won by **PAMKIN** with **RIP III** in second. Robert Peterson, owner and driver of **RIP III**, wasn’t pleased with his performance and vowed his next boat, already under construction, would run much faster. As we will see, he was right. Sam Dunsford showed up with **RAINBOW IV** but was unable to run her at full speed due to the recent structural upgrades and repairs. Dunsford had much better luck racing his new 151 class Hacker speedster, **TIRED TIM**, as he won both heats.

Wolfeboro had high hopes for the races held on Monday, 4 July to be the crowning races for the weekend. The Wolfeboro Chamber of Commerce had taken over the planning of both the parade and boat races from the American Legion and had taken out ads in the local papers for people to come to town and support the local festivities. These activities weren’t seen as money making opportunities but more an opportunity to give

Wolfeboro a good time and draw a certain amount of positive publicity. Townspeople were urged to patronize local businesses and turn out with “spirit and enthusiasm befitting the day”. The town drew over 10,000 visitors but poor weather placed a considerable dampener on the boat racing.

A strong west wind blew steadily all day making the water unusually rough with high white caps. Most of the classes of racing had to be cancelled because many of the boats that had intended to race couldn't make it to Wolfeboro. Even the judges' float anchored in the bay broke loose and began to drift toward the shore. Quick thinking by Nat Goodhue on board his steamer **ROWENA** saved the day by pushing the float back out to its intended location. Still, two of the nine classes managed to complete a race, the Handicap speedboat and the Hacker-Dolphin.

A third class, outboard motor boats, had to be stopped after one lap due to a serious injury that occurred when the driver was thrown out of his boat in such a way that his right shoulder and arm were severely lacerated. The driver, Walter Meloon, was turning up the motor of his boat when he got up on one knee to see over the waves when suddenly he saw a large powerboat in front of him. He tried to swerve and his steering handle broke, sending him into the water. He was treated at Huggins hospital and released a few days later.

The next weekend saw better weather and races were held at the Weirs on Sunday, 10 July. The race saw the return of Dunsford's **RAINBOW IV** as well as the new racer, **PSYCHE**. **PSYCHE** won her debut race, but broke her propeller shaft on the last heat and so was knocked out of contention. Fred Johnson, the owner/driver, wasn't deterred and promised he would be back. Glenroy Scott's **WILDCAT** won the last heat while Dunsford came in second in both heats with **RAINBOW IV**. Dunsford went on to win the following week at the Weirs and finished third a week later. Racing on the 23<sup>rd</sup> in Wolfeboro saw a large crowd and some new boats making their racing debut. Weather was poor as there was a light rain falling all day, but the water was very smooth making for fast heats. The spectators numbered over 5000 and were scattered on shore and out in the bay. Of the top three boats, two, **MISS WEIR & RAM**, had no previous racing record and demonstrated the close nature of the competition. Both **WILDCAT** and **RAINBOW IV** raced and actually finished first and second, but as they were the most heavily handicapped boats racing on the lake, were awarded 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> places.

By the end of July, the WPBA race standings were published:

Boat	Driver / Owner	Points
<b>RAINBOW IV</b>	Commodore S. Dunsford	525
<b>WILDCAT</b>	Vice Commodore G. Scott	440
<b>DODGIT</b>	J. R. Irwin Sr.	335
<b>JEAN L</b>	F. L. Lane	315
<b>SAY WHEN</b>	A. F. Doty	225
<b>PSYCHE</b>	F. L. Johnson	220
<b>YANKEE FLYER</b>	C. Cram	150
<b>PAMPKIN</b>	H. O. Whitney	45

While the point spread looks daunting, especially for the bottom two boats, it should be noted the winner of a race would be awarded 200 points, with the number of points trailing off significantly for the lower finishers. The point system was geared heavily toward the winners and gave short shrift to boats that ran consistently, but finished 4<sup>th</sup> or lower. This seems very different from many racing point systems today that value consistent performances, but the emphasis in 1927 was on speed, Speed and more SPEED. Further, since the racers were largely out of town businessmen and other amateurs, it was not unusual for the principals to miss one or two weeks of racing. In order to keep things competitive, the point system was thought to give these racers a fair chance of catching up with their opponents.

Racing continued every weekend throughout August on every Saturday and Sunday. Earlier engine problems that hampered the racers were gradually ironed out and the boats really started to hit stride. **SAY WHEN** and **DODGIT** stand out as performing very strongly. **SAY WHEN**'s engine was racing in full form while Jim Irwin Sr. and his 'mechanician' Frank Brooks, finished sorting out his favorite Dodge Watercar, **DODGIT**. **SAY WHEN** managed to beat both **WILDCAT** and **RAINBOW IV** at the fourth series of merchant races held at the Weirs on 7 August. The crowds lining the banks and on the water were so large local papers claimed it was impossible to count how many thousands of people witnessed the race as “every available space along the water front was taken up by spectators. The Weirs Bay was crowded with craft of all kinds, the largest number ever seen assembled in the bay, and the automobiles were parked everywhere”. Crowds were so thick on the water at Alton Bay the Mount Washington had trouble getting to the pier. So much

so, she ended up inadvertently ramming a patrol boat, throwing the officer into the water as the patrol boat was unable to get out of the Mount's way.

In the middle of August, the Weirs merchant race standings were published:

Boat	Driver / Owner	Points
<b>DODGIT</b>	J. R. Irwin Sr.	700
<b>WILDCAT</b>	Vice Commodore G. Scott	660
<b>RAINBOW IV</b>	Commodore S. Dunsford	560

The Weirs was Jim Irwin's home race and he made every effort to compete in every possible race. He had been trailing Dunsford and Scott all season but a first and second place in the two heats run on 14 August allowed him to overtake the other two. Observers weren't sure if Irwin's performance was the result of **DODGIT**'s even running or Jim's very spirited driving.

In mid-August Commodore Dunsford presented a large trophy to the WPBA to be used "as the association saw fit". It was Dunsford's hope the trophy could be used to crown the fastest boat on Lake Winnepesaukee, and he left it up to the association to decide how this should be accomplished. The WPBA decided to hold a 25 mile free-for-all race where there would be no handicap. The race would be held at the Weirs on Labor Day and competitors would race 10 times around the standard course to determine the winner. Further, because of the special nature of the trophy, the WPBA elected to make it a permanent award. If any person could win the trophy three times, it would become their permanent possession. This would be an annual event, to be held on Labor Day until the trophy was claimed by one of the racers. The list of boats likely to compete was short, but included the best and fastest the lake had to offer. They included **RIP IV**, which was the follow on boat to **RIP III** Robert Peterson had promised back in early July. An unusual Hacker design that was locally built, she was powered by a Liberty V-12 that was rated at 500 hp. Another Liberty powered boat was **JAYEE II**, a custom built Gar Wood that had been delivered to the lake a few weeks earlier.

Labor Day proved to be the grand finale for the 1927 racing season, not only as it decided the WPBA champion, but also crowned the fastest boat on Lake Winnepesaukee in the Commodore's cup race. The WPBA series winner was A.F. Doty in his "Baby Gar" out of Black Cat Island, **SAY WHEN**. Second place went to the custom Ditchburn **WILDCAT** raced by Vice Commodore G. Scott. Jim Irwin Sr. came in third with his Dodge Watercar, **DODGIT**. Although Commodore Dunsford was the defending champion from the 1926 races, he and **RAINBOW IV** could only manage fourth place.

The Commodore's Cup race turned out to be, in the words of a local writer "unquestionably the greatest and most thrilling in the annals of boat racing on Lake Winnepesaukee." Four boats contested the 25 mile race; **RAINBOW IV** raced by Commodore S. Dunsford, **WILDCAT** raced by Vice Commodore G. Scott, **JAYEE II** owned by W. Corby and **RIP IV** raced by Robert Peterson. The race started with all four boats abreast the starting line but within a lap, turned out to be a heated contest between **RIP IV** and **JAYEE II**. **RIP IV** was clearly the fastest boat down the straightaway due to her unique hull design that more closely resembled a modern hydroplane than the conventional runabout design of the times. However, Peterson was forced to slow way down to make the turns, and that allowed **JAYEE II** the opportunity she needed to catch up. Being a more conventional hull design, **JAYEE II** was able to take the turns at almost full speed. But as soon as the boats came out of the turn, **RIP IV** "would literally walk away from the Corby entry." In the end, Peterson and his 500 hp Liberty were too much for the Gar Wood and she took the Commodore's Cup with an elapsed time of 30 minutes and 25 seconds. Her fastest lap was run in 2 minutes and 50 seconds, which considering the laps were 2.5 miles long was quite an achievement. Observers on the shore and in the bay couldn't believe how fast Peterson was going. Her speed down the straightaway was estimated at 65-70 mph, which for 1927 was simply unbelievable.

Later that evening, the WPBA held its first Ball in the Winnepesaukee Gardens. All the season awards and trophies were handed out, including the Commodore's Cup. Boatmen from all across the lake came to enjoy the festivities and applaud the accomplishments of their fellow racers. A writer earlier in the season, commenting on the racing at the lake wrote, "we are witnessing speed boat racing that is second to almost none in the United States. We are not always fully aware of the fact that the speed attained by our contenders is equally as fast as that in the majority of the Gold Cup races held in this country." If there were any doubts, they were swept away by Peterson's performance. The fact that **RIP IV** was locally built made the victory all the more impressive. There were many motivations behind all the racing that was taking place; a sincere desire to

promote the local region, pride in local craftsmanship and capabilities, and no doubt strong egos that just wanted to show off. Whatever the reason, the racers on the lake were part of an effort that not only showcased the best current marine technology in the country, but also helped advance the state of the art.

## 1928 – Boat Racing Picks Up The Pace

The boating season started out a difficult one as ice-out damage to docks and moorings around the lake was one of the worst on record. One writer described the “spasmodic weather conditions” raising all sorts of havoc with both new and old docks and wharves all across the lake. Many small, private landings were completely destroyed while even larger landings were substantially damaged. Birch Island’s public landing was still in the process of being rebuilt as late as 30 June. When the wind, rain and waves weren’t howling, the fog could be so thick it would last all day. The early spring seemed to be an endless cycle of heavy weather, followed by a few days of dead silence and fog, only to see the heavy weather return. Unfortunately, the rest of the boating season’s weather would parallel this early weather pattern.

The Weirs officially opened for business on May 29, with over one thousand people attending the festivities. Terry Page and his Atlantic Orchestra were present, courtesy of Jim Irwin who also took the opportunity to commission what he called “Chris-Craft Row” on the south side of the Winnepesaukee Gardens. He had 12 new boats on display and hoped the new models would draw in customers. To make buying a boat easier, ads were taken out in the local papers hawking the incredible new opportunity to buy a Chris-Craft out of income. This brand new idea for a recreational boat allowed people to place only 40% of the purchase price down and then equal payments on the remaining balance for 12 months. The ads stressed how no other boat company could offer such generous terms, the closing line read “A year to pay – A lifetime to enjoy!”.

Two challenges were received by the Winnepesaukee Power Boat Association (WPBA), one from the Portland Yacht Club and the other from the Narragansett Bay Regatta Association. Both organizations challenged the “New Hampshire Navy” to match races. The Portland Yacht club proposed match races to be held on Casco Bay while the Narragansett Regatta would be held in Newport, RI. These races were tentatively scheduled for late July and the middle of August. Many WPBA members on Lake Winnepesaukee promised to attend, with Commodore Dunsford promising to take his speed boat **RAINBOW IV** to both challenges.

There were over 35 new runabouts expected to make an appearance on the lake. All major models were offered, as well as locally designed and produced craft. By the end of June, the officers of the WPBA were formally elected and once again, Sam Dunsford was made Commodore, Glenroy Scott; Vice Commodore, Jim Irwin; Secretary and Nat Goodhue; Treasurer. The remaining board of judges for the season had not been decided, but was finalized in time for the July 4<sup>th</sup> opening races. A major addition the WPBA hoped to introduce was a new judges barge that would be a significant improvement over the old barge. Judges would be able to view the races from a double-decker, and it was hoped this new craft would offer more amenities to the racers as well as judges. [photo] While the barge served primarily as a judging platform, it had many other useful purposes. Racers and other boaters could tie up and grab a lunch or snacks. Remembering that prohibition was in full swing at this time, having a barge anchored in the middle of a bay, far away from any law enforcement, made it a breeze to open up a speakeasy for the afternoon.

Local papers were all abuzz with news of fast boats expected to make their appearance, with the high horse powered models making most of the splash. The two boats that drew the most attention were custom models powered by Liberty engines. One had raced the previous year, but only in Alton Bay. **DEUCES WILD** was a custom runabout powered by a 400 hp Liberty engine. She was considered a real dark horse as she had only been seen once, but the rumors were flying about how this year might see much more of her running all across the lake. The second boat that drew attention was the custom twin Liberty powered racer that was being built for W.A. Corby by Gar Wood. This hydroplane would be fashioned after the ‘Miss America’ series Gar Wood raced, and had Gar’s personal guarantee of reaching a minimum of 80 mph. Powered by two 500 hp Liberty engines, Corby was anxious to keep his claim as owning the fastest boat on the lake. He had won the Commodore’s free-for-all trophy the previous year in his Gar Wood **JAYEE II**, and didn’t want to leave anything to chance. This new racer was scheduled to be delivered at the end of July and would include representatives from Gar Wood to help tune and properly rig the boat, to insure the guaranteed speed would be reached. As the world record at the time was 87.75 mph, the papers commented how the addition of this boat on the lake might help bring national championship races to Winnepesaukee.



An entirely new class of race boats, known as "Pelican" race boats, was scheduled to make their debut. They were 16 feet long, and were powered by a purposely-built Ford engine called "Fronty" engines. Sam Dunsford personally oversaw the building of these engines, as he had close contacts at Ford due to his business interests supplying electrical parts. The boats were designed by John Hacker and were meant to be built by individual racers, or other, local boat builders. It was hoped their "Fronty" engine could propel them up to 50 mph. Eight such boats were registered for the racing season by the end of June and it was expected up to twelve more boats of this type would be racing by the end of August.

At the other end of the boating spectrum were small, inexpensive one-person outboards powered by 5-20 hp engines. These boats were making headlines all over the lakes region and were expected to be a big part of the racing scene. They were tiller-steered by the driver sitting or kneeling amidships. The boats were well within the financial reach of the average boater, and were expected, as a class, to make the biggest improvements over the previous year's racing. A plethora of models were offered, along with over a dozen different motors. They were not only inexpensive to buy, but inexpensive to operate and could provide hours of fun. With hindsight, modern historians mark 1928 as the beginning of outboard racing's Golden Age. Major manufacturers like Elto, Johnson and Evinrude would introduce new engines, many models specifically targeted the racing crowd. The manufacturers formed the National Outboard Association (NOA) and by the end of 1928, membership stood at over 5000 people all over the country.

Racing began in earnest on the lake over the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. All three major locations, Alton Bay, Wolfeboro and the Weirs held racing matches. The lakes region would be joined this weekend by a special guest, the US Navy's airship Los Angeles. She was traveling all over New Hampshire over the holiday and spent most of the weekend circling the lake. Nat Goodhue of Wolfeboro won the first race of the season in a Chris-Craft with Jim Erwin coming in second. Fred Johnson made a strong third in his custom built **PSYCHE** runabout. Sam Dunsford could not make the first races of the season as the Packard factory was still overhauling his 'Gold Cup' engine. He wasn't scheduled to get the engine back until the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, but that date would slip into August. Elmer Folsom, Dunsford's mechanic, would end up working overtime to install the engine back in **RAINBOW IV**. As fate would have it, **RAINBOW IV** would be lucky to make any races over the 1928 season. The following weekend Glenroy Scott driving his 1925 heavily customized Ditchburn runabout, **WILDCAT**, managed to finish second overall in the point standings. The Hall-Scott 'Special' six cylinder engine proved more than a match for the other competitors.

On Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, Lake Winnisquam held its first series of races with up to 7,500 people watching from the shore. The main attractions were boats built by the Laconia Car Company. This company was a major employer in Laconia and specialized in building railroad cars, but decided in late 1927 they should try to branch out into other business opportunities and building small racing boats seemed like a good place to start. The races were held over a one-mile triangular course laid out between the Winnisquam Bridge and Mohawk Point, keeping the racing action well within view of the spectators. Racing was performed exclusively by various outboard powered models between 5 and 20 hp. The winner of the afternoon's racing was A.A. Doherty driving his Pen Yan outboard **BABY BUZZ**. Other racers drove Hacker designed racers, Aquafliers and even a Cute Craft.

Racing at the Weirs had to be postponed a week from July 21 & 22 as the bodies of two vacationers who drowned while canoeing were being recovered. While several racers departed for Portland, ME, to take up the challenge the Portland Yacht Club had issued, other racers were selected to take on racers from Lake Sunapee. Teams of six boats were selected to represent each lake and these team members raced, as a team, against the opposing lake. These match races helped build and sustain interest in the local area as many people, not just full time residents, had strong feelings of loyalty toward their particular region.

As the summer moved into August, it was hoped **RAINBOW IV** would finally be back in commission. The completion of her racing engine overhaul from the Packard factory had been delayed, and Dunsford was unable to race in the style to which he was accustomed. He chose to use one of his Chris-Craft runabouts, **BABS II**, and scored many points in the weekends he was able to race, but was not able to directly challenge the other purpose-built racers. Throughout the racing held in July, Glenroy Scott driving **WILDCAT** had built up a formidable lead in points. He not only regularly finished in the top three positions, but also managed to participate in almost every weekend's racing. By the third week in August, he had accumulated over 600 points. The point lead over his nearest rival, Fred Johnson, was considered insurmountable and the racing season was conceded by all to belong to Scott. Still, the boating events were far from over.

A most unique event was planned that was hoped would hold spectators interests. A local aviator, Bob Fogg, flying his Waco seaplane would attempt to 'bomb' Jim Irwin driving one of his Chris-Crafts. The event mirrored one that had been held in England weeks earlier, and it was hoped the addition would create a higher level of excitement around the lake. The course started in the Weirs, at Endicott Rock, and ran toward the Cummings Light House on Meredith Neck, a distance of approximately 1.5 miles. Once Irwin reached Meredith Neck, he would turn around and race back toward Endicott Rock. Irwin had to maintain a 'reasonably' straight course between the two points, while Fogg was given freedom of the sky. His 'bombs' were ~2 pound sacks of flour that were expected to burst open on contact with the boat, but, it was hoped, not harm Irwin should one hit him on the head. The proposed date was Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup> at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. As the course ran directly in front of the Winnepesaukee Gardens, a capacity crowd was expected to attend.

The contest was held and as expected, the crowds were enormous. A throng lined the course, with every possible spot on the Gardens and beyond filled with thousands of cheering spectators. Commentators couldn't be sure which man was being cheered the most, Fogg in his seaplane or Irwin in his runabout. Fogg flew at an average altitude of 20 – 40 feet in a crisscross fashion over the Chris-Craft as Irwin attempted to get to Meredith Neck and back as fast as possible. Although Irwin was running flat out in his runabout, the Waco was moving at around 100 mph and the speed differential was so great, Fogg had no choice but to try to weave a course back and forth over Irwin. After every pass, Fogg would pull up to a few hundred feet and bank over as hard as he dared, then come diving down onto Irwin. At the finish, Irwin was declared the winner of the contest as he received only one direct hit, with two that came dangerously close, out all the bombing attempts Fogg made. All who were present agreed they had never seen anything like it.

By September, the racing season was winding down but there remained three notable races to be run. The Commodores Cup, the Wright Trophy Race and a special outboards only race called the Winnepesaukee Outboard Marathon. This last race was sponsored by the outboard motor and boat dealers across the lake and was intended to highlight the capabilities and reliability of outboard engines. The race had no entry fee, would be held rain or shine, and was 50 miles long with a prize of \$100 to the winner. Starting in Wolfeboro Bay, the course ran to Glendale, through the Locke Island Channel, past the "Witches", down to Alton Bay, then back to Wolfeboro. Thirty-four boats had entered, but only seventeen actually started the race and only six managed to finish. While this sounds at odds with the main purpose of the race, the race organizers were actually pleased as the lake experienced very rough water conditions. Some of the boats were reported leaping out of the water by over two feet. Even the eventual winner, Elbridge Robie in an Elto Quad powered 14 ft 'Pigeon' boat, had to unplug his drain while underway in order to empty the cockpit of all the water that cascaded in when he jumped the Mount Washington's wake. Robie's average speed was 34 ½ mph and people commented that for someone who was new to the lake, his performance and skill at driving was extraordinary.

The Commodore's Cup was postponed due to heavy rain on the scheduled weekend so was held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September. The postponement was a shame as many racers who traveled from Portland, ME and Newport, RI had to return home and so could not participate. Most notable of the visiting racers was Mr. Philip James, winner of the Portland Yacht Club races in his custom built Liberty powered racer **MISS BARBETTE**. The Commodore's Cup race was restricted to craft that could travel faster than 45 mph. It was not intended to accommodate all racers, but was meant to be the premier race for the season, highlighting the fastest boats on the lake and around the region. The course was a 2.5 mile oval, and racers would drive the course for 10 laps. Robert Peterson driving his **RIP IV** won the previous year's race, and bearing in mind any racer who could win the race three consecutive years would permanently keep the beautiful trophy, Peterson was expected to mount a stiff defense. His boat was a locally built hydroplane designed by John Hacker. A 500 hp Liberty engine powered her and the previous season had seen her virtually walk away from all competitors. Her only issue, which Peterson had been working all season to correct, was her poor handling in turns. The main two competitors were Sam Dunsford in **RAINBOW IV**, Glenroy Scott in **WILDCAT**. In the end, the race was no contest as **RIP IV** easily won. Her speed down the straightaway was estimated at nearly 70 mph and no boat could keep up with her. With her exhaust stacks pointing straight up in the air, she made a very impressive sight as she tore around the course. The handling issues Peterson experienced the previous year had all been ironed out.

The following day all the same boats entered the Wright Trophy Race, along with other specially prepared and powered runabouts. This race was 65 miles long and was meant to highlight the sea keeping abilities of the various hull designs and overall endurance. The course was open to all racers in any boat, but there was a time limit of 2.5 hours after which the race would be ended. The track the racers followed was identical to the Mount Washington, and along the way the racers progress would be telegraphed to officials at the Weirs, the race start and end point. As the race was meant to be a test of endurance, only heavy rain could force a cancellation. On

the appointed day, the weather was rough, but thousands of people crammed into the Weirs to watch this race. The day's racing program started in the morning with smaller classes racing around a closed course and later in the afternoon, the main event was run. Peterson in **RIP IV** took the lead by the time the boats entered Alton Bay, and remained in front for the run back to the Weirs. Unfortunately, Peterson and his mechanic had misunderstood the course and rules, and so went off in a direction not authorized. By that time, he was so far in front of the other competitors, none could see the mistake, and the onlookers from the shore could only stand back and watch in amazement as Peterson headed in the wrong direction. That opened up the race to the second fastest boat, **JAYEE II** driven by the owner's daughter, Justine Corby. **JAYEE II** was a heavily customized Gar Wood runabout powered by a Liberty V-12. Corby's father was unable to get his custom Gar Wood race boat in time for the season and so sat out the race in favor of his daughter. She had a distinguished racing record around the lake and the boat, while not the fastest when compared to **RIP IV**, could still run over 60 mph down a straightaway. The end of the race declared **JAYEE II** the winner. All agreed **RIP IV** would have won, but for her extracurricular excursion.

Although many enjoyed the racing activities, all the fast and loud boating across the lake and throughout New Hampshire had a negative effect, one that remains in the news today. People complained about the noise and speed the boats made as they made their way across the lake. A boater on Lake Sunapee was charged with running an outboard engine too loud and the Concord based judge overseeing the case traveled to Sunapee for his own sake to listen to the offending motor. The case made front page, headline news in the main NH papers and writers spoke of the future of outboards in NH being in the balance. The case dragged on through the summer and was finally dismissed in September. In Wolfeboro, the Granite State News published a poem in August that spoke not only to the noise of the boats, but the speed they were traveling. Quoting a few lines:

*Twass' left for white men, civilized  
This Holy Eden to profane  
With gibbering, spluttering, roaring Noise  
With whiz – and jazz – and speed insane*

These issues of speed and noise have been with us for decades only to wane and ebb as the nature of the vacationers and the boats they use change. Changing tastes, fashions, desires and goals all contribute to the way people use boats, then as now. Today, owners and drivers of fast power boats are again in the spotlight for making too much noise and speed. One more gas hike might well send these people back to sailboats, just as it did back in the 70's. What seems like a crisis today is forgotten, only to be resurrected decades later.

As the 1928 racing season came to a close, attention turned to more serious matters, the presidential election between Herbert Hoover and Alfred Smith. Hoover won in a landslide with 444 electoral votes.

## 1929 – Racing expands

1929 started out as an unusual weather year around the Lakes Region. The previous year had not been considered normal for the freakish weather patterns, but the winter of '28 and early '29 had been worse. There was far less snow fall than in previous winters and when winter turned to spring, much less rain. As a consequence, the lake fell to the lowest level ever seen. The low water caused rocks and other navigation hazards to appear where before, the lake had been high enough to allow boaters to simply glide over obstructions. While highlighting the need for increased navigation aids across the lake, this low lake level prompted many people to worry about the lake herself. Had she sprung a leak? The Lake Company, a firm in Laconia that controlled all water power and dam facilities across Winnepesaukee, was prompted to release notices in local papers assuring the public the low lake level did not mean the lake was shrinking or in some way failing, but was a consequence of the poor snow fall and light rain over previous months. They urged people not to lose faith and that the lake would bounce back in time. On a state level, boat registrations increased to an all time high of over 2200 boats. Although this number were scattered all over the state, well over 1/2 were expected to call Winnepesaukee their home.

Back on the lake, Elbridge Robie, who won last year's outboard race around the lake was busy selling and servicing the new motors from Elto, Evinrude, Johnson and Watermota. To expand on the previous years' racing success up to three 'Outboard Only' events were planned, including another marathon around the lake. The number of outboards buzzing around the lake made outboard specific racing almost mandatory. A new wrinkle in this year's racing would be an increased emphasis on safety. The high attrition last year and events the previous month in England drove a safer, more cautious attitude towards the outboard racing events.

The race held in England that drove the cautious attitude was run in June. That race started off with high hopes but ended in disaster. The first ever cross channel 'dash' for outboard motor boats was meant to highlight the increased capabilities of the outboards. The rules were simple, starting in Dover, the first outboard to make it to Calais won. Organized by the British Motor Boat Club the event stipulated boats must carry at least three signal flares and carry some buoyancy in case the hull spring a leak. Compasses were recommended, but not required. The distance was short and direct enough, the organizers thought no one could get lost. As it happened the day began with fog that quickly settled in and reduced visibility to 500 yards. The 49 racers who signed up were not deterred and at 4:30pm, the race began. By 6:30 the race was abandoned and papers the following day ran headlines that started: "Names of the Missing". This wasn't the kind of coverage the organizers or manufacturers were hoping for. As it turned out, by the grace of God, none of those who entered were injured, but over a dozen had to be plucked out of the water by rescue craft the following day.

Race organizers on Lake Winnepesaukee were well aware of the English debacle and were determined it would not happen here. Even though racing on an inland lake was very different from racing on the ocean, no foolish chances would be taken. Every entry would be checked for seaworthiness and safety.

Stocks were setting all time highs and it seemed there would be no end to the climbing prosperity thanks to the robust market. Early in June Sears Roebuck set a record high of 155 1/8 while Woolworth was trading at 217 1/2. A month later Sears was at 167 1/2; Woolworth 230. Union Pacific led most railway stocks closing at 241 while General Electric set a new high of 333 a share. There was some commentary about margin calls sending 'chills' through the stock market, but most commentary highlighted how there was no dampening of Wall Street's mood. The market climb seemed to have no end. Local papers set up special delivery by boat to lakeside residents in case they could not make it into town. The papers stressed they could help summer residents keep abreast not only of local and national news, but the stock market as well. Patrons were told even though they were on a vacation; they could keep up with all market moves and analysis.

Racing was scheduled to start in earnest on Sunday, June 29 but due to very heavy rain all across the lake, racing was postponed at the Weirs. Weather had always been a factor in deciding whether or not to run a race, but in 1929 the weather would play a strong role almost every weekend. Many races had to be postponed or cancelled all together due to bad weather. Either high winds, waves or rain made running races impossible. The bad weather would plague the WPBA for the rest of the season.

Lake Winnisquam was expanding operations at Aviation Point by combining fast boating with aircraft related activities. A J-5 Whirlwind powered seaplane was making a summer base offering rides across the lakes region. The pilot, Gordon Berry, was reported to have over 4000 flight hours and had spent the winter in Florida watching Gar Wood and Major Seagraves race each other over the Intercoastal waters. The unique combination of aircraft with high-speed runabouts was being sponsored by the New Hampshire Aviation & Marines organization. Included at aviation point was a 'Sign of the Wings' club, dining quarters and three speed boats ranging from a 26 ft Gar Wood to a 12 ft Laconia craft boat powered by a Johnson sea horse. Located directly on the Daniel Webster highway at the Winnisquam bridge, the facilities were opened to the general public.

Unfortunately, Berry made the type of headlines he would much rather have avoided when his seaplane crashed into a motor boat driven by Carlton Williams of Weirs. The two craft collided head on as Berry was forced to make a dead-stick landing owing to his running out of fuel shortly after take off from the Weirs. He assumed he had enough fuel to make it back to Winnisquam, but found out very shortly after his take off how wrong he was. His engine quit only a few minutes into the air and efforts to restart were for naught. He landed near Little Island in Paugus Bay. Meanwhile, Williams was showing a friend of his, Mr. Kenneth Davison from Yonkers N.Y., the beauty of the lake when the airplane 'appeared' directly on their bow. Williams dove into the water but his passenger Davison elected to remain in the boat as he could not swim. Although both men were shaken up by the incident, apologies were made and accepted all around. Williams even drove back to a local marina to get Berry some gasoline and once refueled, the plane took off and made it safely back to Aviation Point, Lake Winnisquam. Of course, that was after the crowd and media had gathered to see the commotion.

Aircraft activity was picking up across the lakes region and making headlines. The area was remote enough that road travel was difficult; the dominant mode of travel to the lake was via rail. Most roads remained unpaved and were a single car width. The poor road infrastructure coupled with the increased level of activity around the lake opened up a business opportunity to help people get to and from the area. The Curtiss Flying Service seized this opportunity. Curtiss was more than an aircraft manufacturer; they operated their own airline service at 28 locations across the eastern seaboard of the United States. On 14 July, Weirs became the twenty ninth

location. Using a 5 passenger amphibian plane known as a Keystone-Loening, passenger service began between Manchester and the Weirs Garden.

Jim Irwin owned and operated the Weirs Garden and while the primary purpose was to provide a dance hall for entertainment, Irwin, being an energetic entrepreneur, used the Gardens as a sales location for his line of Chris-Craft runabouts, large dining hall and other money generating ideas that came into his head. Starting the previous month, Mal Hallet and his orchestra came back to the Garden to help act as both a draw for crowds into the facility and provide dancing music all weekend into the wee hours of the morning. Irwin's motives weren't entirely commercial; instead he had a genuine interest in promoting the lake and surrounding area. Active in the WPBA since inception, he could always be counted on as a man who would generously back any local organization in their effort to better the surrounding area. Irwin was Treasurer of the WPBA and his efforts this year would focus on both expanding business and helping the WPBA run races at the Weirs more efficiently than before.

The WPBA was always having trouble with it's 'Official's Barge' as it was proving to be a hassle to place the barge in a central location and anchor it in place for the racing weekend. Irwin offered to solve this problem at the Weirs by building up a corner of his Gardens to include a judges' stand. Irwin thought the high location would give the judges the ability to monitor all boats racing at Weirs. He was right and the WPBA was grateful for his support.

Early in July, the WPBA received a formal invitation from the Narragansett Bay Regatta Association to attend the third annual Newport Motor Boat Regatta held the next month on 2-3 August. WPBA officers thought the time frame was a little short and conflicted with a busy racing calendar on Winnepesaukee but Irwin replied the WPBA would try to send a representative fleet of racers. His plan was to convince a few of the local racers who used Hacker 'Pelican' class race boats to make the journey. These boats were restricted to running inboards of 151 cid and most of them used the Ford 'Fronty' engine. There were over a dozen 'Pelican' 151-class racers on the lake and the number was growing every season. The WPBA Commodore, Samuel Dunsford raced one named "Tired Tim Too". Jim Irwin raced one named "Miss Fit II". Others were named "Betty S", "Wee Scamper" and "Baby Wildcat".

Local papers were beginning to write stories calling out what many called the 'Speed Boat Nuisance'. The authors highlighted the fact many of the drivers were boys and girls in their early teens who could not qualify for a car driver license yet were able to drive high-powered boats without any sort of license. Most articles mentioned it was fine for boats to travel at high speed out on the open water but when they got closer to the shore, they needed to slow down. The noise and wakes were troubling canoeists, fishermen and summer guests who wanted a little peace and quiet. Papers urged parents to educate their children better about boating in such a way that would remain mindful of those around them and in the case parents failed in their parental duty, then the state Public Service Commission was urged to step in and start to regulate "these insensate speed maniacs" who operate their boats "with reckless abandon and without a decent regard to the safety and enjoyment of others." Today in 2007 we face these same issues, but now the focus has shifted to the exclusive use of state regulations by forcing all boaters regardless of age or experience to slow down.

Racing events that were scheduled for Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup> had to be postponed until Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup> due to heavy rains. Never the less, over 6000 people watched the Weirs race to see a new racer, Mr. Lawrence Lacaver win the feature stock runabout race in an unnamed Chris-Craft. Second place in the runabout class was won by Mr. William Cannon with his son, Andrew Cannon, coming in third. Samuel Dunsford won the 151-class race in his Pelican class speedster named "Tired Tim Too". Second place in the 151-class went to A.F. Doty in "And How". Dunsford did not always drive his 151 boat but regularly turned over the driving opportunity to his trusted mechanic, Elmer Folsom.

As a rule, Dunsford concentrated on the larger class of racers, and this would normally have included his new Gold Cup race boat "Scotty". However, while "Scotty" made an appearance at Weirs she was not race ready. "Scotty's" appearance was more meant to show support for the WPBA and the racing program. Dunsford's eyes were on the upcoming Gold Cup race to be held in August off Red Bank, NJ. As "Scotty" was delivered so late, there had not been enough time to properly break her in and make her race ready.

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, most of the scheduled races ultimately had to be cancelled, this time due to very high winds and waves. The only events that took place were some aircraft flybys and takeoffs and landings, which, due to the winds and waves, made for a very interesting spectacle for the observers. The papers all commented on the massive amounts of spray kicked up by the aircraft propellers as they struggled to take off.

Later that same week, on 18 July, four of the 151-class boats, "Miss Fit II", "Betty S", "Wee Scamper" and "Tired Tim Too" along with the Gold Cup racer "Scotty" were shipped to Portland, ME. They participated in the annual regatta sponsored by the Portland Yacht Club. This was in measure a return match of the previous year's race where Portland racers came to Winnepesaukee to participate in the WPBA races. Among them was a custom built racer powered by two Liberty V-12 engines named "Miss Barbette". Regrettably, rain, fog and very rough seas forced the cancellation of most of the two days of racing. The Portland club attempted racing Saturday morning, but the seas were so bad only one event for outboards was completed. In the afternoon, with over 8000 spectators on hand, a few races in the 151 class ran with Sam Dunsford taking the prize driving "Tired Tim Too". In all, the New Hampshire navy took 5 trophies home.

A banquet was held that night to honor the New Hampshire visitors but upon their return, most of them were unsure they would try to race next year at Portland. Shipping the five boats across the dirt and gravel roads was an all day affair, both going and coming, and making matters worse, they had very little water time to show for their efforts.

Back on the lake, W.A. Corby's new Gar Wood runabout "Jayee III" was making headlines in the New York Times. "Jayee III" was named as the fastest runabout in the world due to her power plant, a Packard aircraft engine that had been modified for marine use. At 1500 cid, she was reported to put out over 880 HP and could travel over 70 mph. She was running away with almost every race she entered. Her only weak point was her inability to turn well. In a straight line she was all but unbeatable but was forced to slow way down to make the turns at the buoys. Her racing in Alton Bay was noticeably weak as turning around the bandstand in the southern end of the bay forced her to a slow crawl.

The Alton Bay race carnival committee selected August 10<sup>th</sup> for the carnival date and published notices all over the lakes region. All boaters were invited to come and take on the Alton Bay favorites. The local boats were very familiar with the racecourse and knew how to handle the sharp turns the narrow bay demanded. The program would run all day and night judging by the funding the committee had in place, enthusiasm was running high. A band would be on hand to play off and on all day, trophies would be awarded and every class of racing would be represented, from stock runabouts to an unlimited event. Last year's race was won by Peterson in his "Rip IV".

In order to help navigation around the lake three new lights were installed. One at the Witches, a second off Randlett's Island the third between Timber and Governor's Island. The lights were also the newer type that that used electricity in place of the more common for the day 'acetylene' lights. The hope was with over 1000 boats on the lake, nighttime navigation would be improved to a point where anyone traveling from Wolfeboro to the Weirs or Meredith would always have at least one light in view. This was a significant upgrade from the current situation where nighttime navigation was done purely by moonlight.

On Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> of July, Dunsford was visited at his estate by William Chapman, the editor of Motor Boating Magazine. Other nationally known boatmen were present and the media coverage of the visit was lake wide. There were many topics of discussion from the local racing program the WPBA sponsored to the upcoming Gold Cup race to be held in Red Bank, NJ. Dunsford was trying to get his racer, "Scotty" ironed out but she was proving to be troublesome in both handling and the fitting out of the Packard engine. Still, the dignitaries were visibly impressed by the performance of W.A. Corby's speedboat, "Jayee III". Her speed over her rivals was so great some reporters complained the racing was getting boring as "Jayee III" simply walked away from the competition.

The following week the WPBA received two invitations for the New Hampshire navy. The first was to race at Lake Memphremagog in Vermont. There were a series of races to be held and over a thousand dollars in prize money to be handed out. The races would be held on August 16 and would be run under the auspices of the American Legion and the International Power Boat Association. Racers from all over Canada were expected to attend and try their luck against the Americans. The second invitation was received from the New Bedford Yacht Club in New Bedford, MA, and was for a series of races to be held two weeks earlier. This conflicted with an earlier invitation the WPBA had received to compete at Newport, RI. In all cases, the WPBA was beginning to be a little overwhelmed by all this attention and no firm commitments were made to attend. The WPBA did promise to ask its membership if there was any interest and stated if anyone attended, it would likely be the 151 class boats as they were the most easily transported.

By the beginning of August, the leaders in racing across the lake were Jim Irwin in his "Miss Fit II" and "Polly Enna" owned and driven by William Hoyt of Concord. Corby was winning almost every race in the unlimited

category with "Jayee III" and the expected competition with "Scotty" was not taking place as Dunsford was very busy trying to get "Scotty" ready for the Gold Cup race to be held in a few weeks.

Jim Irwin made more news with his purchase of "Miss Massachusetts". Irwin was not satisfied with being the leader in the 151 class but decided to increase his racing to include a boat for the unlimited class. Something that might give Corby a run for his money. Technically "Miss Massachusetts" was a 151 racer, similar to "Miss Fit II", but was larger and had two steps in the hull. Further, she was powered by a Miller 151 engine that had a supercharger. The combination of steps in the hull with a very powerful engine drove her to well over 60 mph. She had a reputation as being very difficult to handle and had been involved in some earlier crashes. Two years earlier, she threw her propeller and driver out of the boat rounding a turn. The previous year, she had been shipped out to San Diego for some races but the driver had not been able to tame her. Still, Irwin was a very experienced boater and was certain he would be able to get the best performance out of her. Classified as an unlimited racer, Irwin would race her in the Commodores Trophy free-for-all.

Racing that was scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> at Weirs was postponed until the following weekend due to high wind and waves. This bad weather did not affect the Weirs so much as the other racers who would have driven to Weirs and would have to cross "The Broads". Some races were held in Meredith and top honors were taken by "Deuces Wild", a Liberty engine powered Chris-Craft owned and driven by W.A. Irving. Knowledgeable observers commented the win must have been an easy one as the sounds coming from the Liberty engine's gearbox was not the familiar 'hum' she usually put out when at top speed.

Later in the week Dunsford shipped "Scotty" to Red Bank, NJ for the Gold Cup Race. She wasn't ready for the race, certainly not as well as Dunsford wanted but he was running out of time. He decided he had to ship her early to NJ and hoped to find out if there were small changes that could be made to optimize her running in salt water. Ready or not, Dunsford had been building up to the Gold Cup races for many years and he wasn't about to miss his debut. When held, "Scotty" and Dunsford, along with his trusty mechanic Elmer Folsom did quite well finishing second in all heats, but lost the overall race to "Imp". The first heat was closely contested with "Scotty" coming in second by a few seconds. The New York Times reported "Scotty" ran down the straights "like a freight train" but had to slow way down for the turns, allowing more than enough time for "Imp" to pass. In the second heat, "Miss Los Angeles" flipped upside down in Scotty's wake.

Dunsford, ever the honest and true sportsman, turned around and waited by the two competitors who were in the water near their upside down craft for the safety crew to come by and take control of the situation. Dunsford even shut off his engine to make sure his competitors could hang onto "Scotty's" gunwale while they all waited for the safety crew. The delay, although only minutes, cost Dunsford the second heat. Papers covering the race called Dunsford's actions magnificent and hailed him as one of the true gentlemen of the boating world. While Dunsford appreciated the accolades, he came away disappointed his best efforts failed and he was not able to bring the Gold Cup to Lake Winnepesaukee. The third heat was a disaster as Dunsford's oil pressure was so low he had to slow to idle speed and putter his way around the course, allowing "Imp" an easy win.

Back on Winnepesaukee, "And How" driven by A.F. Doty won the Weirs race followed by "Shoo Fly" and "Polly Enna". The following weekend "Fee Fee" took top honors over "Shoo Fly". Most of the racers were veritable new comers to the lake area as many of the racers from the previous years were having severe mechanical problems with their race boats. It seems most of the hulls and engines had two good years in them before they began breaking down. Most unfortunately, on August 25, the well-known racer "Deuces Wild" burned to the waterline after winning the free-for-all-race in Wolfeboro. The cause of the fire was not known as W.A. Irving made it back to his lakefront property in Loon Cove. The most racing success Irving had was in Alton Bay, where "Deuces Wild" was almost unbeatable. The Liberty engine was reported to put out over 500 hp and where ever she went; she was touted as one of the fastest boats on the lake.

Over Labor Day weekend, the final races of the year were held including the grand Free-for-All where the fastest boats on the lake would compete for top honors. Most people thought the race would boil down to two boats, "Jayee III" and "Scotty". As it turned out, "Scotty" was not able to race as she was held up from her return from the Gold Cup Race. A wildcat railway strike ground rail service to a halt and so "Scotty" was sitting somewhere in New England, many miles from Lake Winnepesaukee when the final race was held. "Jayee III's" performance was exemplary as she won at an average speed of 71.53 mph, a stunning achievement that made her one of the fastest boats in the country. In fact, as the race was held over a measured course, the WPBA submitted "Jayee III" for a world record. The Chris-Craft runabout "Alalou" came in second with "Wildcat" coming in third. The WPBA annual ball handed out the Commodore's Trophy and the ceremonies and celebration continued on to the wee hours of the morning at the Irwin Gardens.

The rail strike that stranded "Scotty" had one knock on effect; Dunsford was forced to cancel his plans to attend the President's Cup to be held on September 14/15 on the Potomac River. By the time "Scotty" arrived back in Lakeport and was launched back on the lake, there wasn't enough time to turn her around and ship her south to Washington, DC. "Scotty's" racing season was over. At the time, Dunsford was determined to iron out the problems he faced and get ready for the Gold Cup race the following year. At least that was his tentative plan. As we will see, he ultimately decided to commission a new racer from Hacker, a boat a little less radical in appearance and one that promised to be more easily maintained. He would come to name that new craft "Scotty Too". With a little luck, he would be able to not only race in the Gold Cup, but also race her on Lake Winnepesaukee with regularity.

By the end of September 1929, the racing season was declared a huge success and the future look even brighter. The New Hampshire navy was recognized nationally as some of the fastest boats on any body of water. They could be counted on to put on a wonderful show for the thousands of spectators that lined the shore and were invited all over New England to compete against the best locals could offer. With unstinting support from men like Jim Irwin and Sam Dunsford, the WPBA helped set the standards other boat associations wanted to follow.

On a national note, after a bit of a tumble in late August, the stock market recovered and stocks were back to setting new highs. General Electric led the field closing at \$387 a share. Nothing, it seemed, could stop American prosperity.