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# Chapter 1

## Organizational History

### January 2024

Seldom does the complete story of an organization's founding survive the passage of time. Much of the following information was located in archived minutes, manuals, and magazines. Memories and assumptions of early members closed the remaining gaps. However, it is a certainty that the name of Roger Upton of Boston and Marblehead, Massachusetts, stands pre-eminently in the list of founding fathers. Without the vision and enthusiasm of Roger Upton, the national organization known as the United States Power Squadrons would not exist.

Recreational boating, in the early 1900s, largely consisted of sailing craft and a few larger steam yachts with professional crews. Commercial ships of the day were all steam-driven; steam propulsion had become king by the close of the previous century. Sailing schooners were fast becoming relics of a bygone era while internal combustion engine, gasoline-driven watercraft were coming into their own, albeit with little enthusiasm on the part of dedicated sailors. Yacht clubs taught and promoted the spirit of sailing. When the owners of motor-driven vessels joined yacht clubs, there were few activities for them. Yachting was still for the sailors, and the new breed of powerboat men found scant fun on club cruises and almost none in racing.

Laws of the United States governing navigation applied only to steam vessels. Governed by a board of steamboat inspectors, who were crusty, old, sea-going men, these inspectors had little use for the small internal combustion engine yachts. It was their fervent hope to gain control over these boats by placing them under the very same rules that governed ocean liners and other steam-powered vessels. Through education, the founders of the organization set out to protect power yachts from these steamboat inspectors and to disprove the claims of ignorance and foolhardiness with which professional captains and seamen disparaged power boaters.

It is unknown when Roger Upton first conceived the 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 types of yachts would allow. However, in the summer of 1911, Upton presented his thoughts before a small group of colleagues. With acceptance of his ideas, Upton was elected rear commodore of the Boston Yacht Club in 1912. His duties placed him in charge of the unofficial powerboat division of the fleet. A self-taught navigator and stickler for doing things correctly, Upton soon had the division's 36 members busy with studies, cruises, races, and drills modeled after U.S. Naval Maneuvers. To quote from one of his articles, *“To my mind the organization can be of use to yachtsmen for three major reasons: first, improvement in navigating ability of power-boat owners; second, promotion of acquaintance and social intercourse by the power-boat owners; third, the fitting of power-boat owners to be of possible use to the Navy in time of war so that they might be received as volunteers should they so desire.”*

The social side of the organization included monthly dinners at which ship and tow captains, marine inspectors, and other prominent persons were guest speakers. From these activities grew confidence in and a change of attitude toward the new breed of yachtsmen. Unintentionally, their quest for recognition improved during the summer of 1912 with the invitation of twenty vessels from the Boston Yacht Club's powerboat division to accompany the sailing yachts on their annual cruise to Portland, Maine. The powerboats cruised in squadron formation with an elaborate system of maneuvers executed using flag signals. During the cruise, a screeching nor'wester blew, and many of the sailing yachts suffered damage, including dismasting, and were disabled. It was then that the worth of the power yachts gained recognition. Under Upton's command, they sped to the rescue and towed all disabled craft safely to port. No lives or boats were lost. To quote the September 1912 issue of Motor Boating Magazine, in their six-page photo story, "*The fellows of the Powerboat Division provided meritorious service and emerged from the ordeal crowned with glory.*"

Received at the 14 October 1912 Executive Committee meeting of the Boston Yacht Club, a letter from Rear Commodore Roger Upton petitioned the club to establish officially the Powerboat Division. As minutes of that meeting disclose, the Executive Committee granted Commodore Upton's petition unanimously. Three months later, at the annual meeting in January 1913, the name of the Powerboat Division changed to Power Squadron. The club-within-a-club idea had become both a reality and an official entity. The Power Squadron's officers and rules appeared in the 1913 Boston Yacht Club Yearbook. Officers were Roger Upton, commander; C. N. Burnell, lieutenant commander; and Nathaniel L. Stebbins, a noted Boston marine photographer, secretary.

The new Power Squadron designed a distinguishing pennant that flew above the yacht club. The pennant featured a red field with a centered white star at the hoist; the center third was white and the outer end was blue. Prospective members were required to pass a detailed examination in advanced piloting before their admission into the Power Squadron and authorization to fly the pennant.

Sometime in January of 1914, the Power Squadron of the Boston Yacht Club called a conference of many yacht clubs throughout the country to determine if the "power squadron" idea merited development independent of yacht clubs. Those already active with power squadrons agreed that the movement was destined to grow beyond the yacht club confines, forming a national body of its own. Only some clubs along the Atlantic Seaboard attended, but the officials of existing squadrons found enthusiasm. Because no minutes of this meeting exist, the attendees, agenda, and meeting location are unknown. However, later evidence proves that the "power squadron" idea warranted nationwide action.

The exploratory group met for a second time on 2 February 1914. Minutes exist of this second conference and note that at eight o'clock in the evening, the following vote passed. Delegates, whose names appeared alongside their respective clubs or associations, signed the document. The United States Power Squadrons became an official national organization.

*“That we, the undersigned, duly authorized delegates of the club or association set against our respective names do hereby associate such clubs or associations together as a national organization to be known as United States Power Squadrons, and we bind our clubs to abide by the rules and regulations adopted by said United States Power Squadrons.*

- *Yachts men's Club of Philadelphia; C.L. Lagen, Commodore*
- *Power Boat Squadron of New Haven, Conn.; J.N. Champion, Commodore*
- *Larchmont Yacht Club; Francis M. Wilson*
- *Atlantic Yacht Club; Theodore D. Wells*
- *Corinthian Yacht Club of Philadelphia; C. Longstreth*
- *Rhode Island Yacht Club; William St. Streeter, Commodore*
- *New York Motor Boat Club; C.F. Chapman*
- *Hudson River Power Squadron; Franklin P. Pratt*
- *Lynn Yacht Club; A.D. Grover*
- *Knickerbocker Yacht Club; William E. Spencer*
- *Harlem Yacht Club; R.S. Haydock*
- *Portland Yacht Club; Holman F. Day, Rear Commodore*
- *Savin Hill Yacht Club; Charles A. J. Smith*
- *Kennebec Yacht Club; Charles E. Hyde*
- *Hudson River Yacht Racing Association; Worthington Scott*
- *Sachem's Head Yacht Club; W.C. Stringer*
- *Baltimore Yacht Club; Dwight F. Mallory*
- *Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club; Elliot Tuckerman*
- *Indian Harbor Yacht Club; Frank Bowne Jones*
- *Boston Yacht Club Power Squadron; William A. Hopkins*

*The signatures of Messrs. Longstreth, Stringer, Tuckerman, and Jones are affixed subject to ratification of their respective clubs.”*

The preceding document, along with other historical documents, resides in the archives at the organization's Headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina.

At this same organizational meeting, the organization elected officers and members of the Governing Board including:

- Henry A. Morse;
- Captain DeWitt Coffman, USN (Boston Navy Yard);
- Charles Longstreth;
- Frank S. Cornwell;
- Francis M. Wilson, and
- members of the bridge.

Captain Coffman, USN, later Vice Admiral, served on the Governing Board for many years as the representative of the Navy Department. The Honorable A.J. Tyrer, Deputy Commissioner of Navigation of the Department of Commerce, was also an active member of the early Governing Boards. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then assistant secretary of the Navy, had been so impressed with the activities of the Boston Yacht Club's Power Squadron, that he sent his aide, Captain William F. Fullam, to attend the organizational meeting. As was reported in the press, Captain Fullam praised the organization in the highest terms possible.

April 1914 proved eventful. At a meeting held at the Harvard Club of Boston, the Governing Board approved bylaws. Dividing the Atlantic Seaboard into six districts for purposes of instruction, the Governing Board appointed boards of Instruction and Examination to administer the new districts. From the very beginning, the accent has been upon education, although it differed in the early days from the present system. Then, in addition to knowing the rules of the road, the compass, buoys, and chart bearings, a member was required to attend at least three squadron drills yearly to hold his membership certificate. When the member attended twelve, he became a privileged member. Privileged members needed only to appear at one drill each year. Not more than six drills counted in any one year toward the member's qualification.

Two of the organization's founding members, Charles Chapman of New York and Roger Upton of Boston designed the United States Power Squadrons' ensign shortly after the organization's establishment.

Roger Upton wrote a letter about the establishment of the Power Squadrons. Published in the US Naval Institute Proceedings for 1917, Vol. 43, Part 1, on pages 701-705 (1917), digitized in later years, Upton's article is freely available using an Internet search engine.

The thirteen stars and thirteen stripes in the Power Squadrons Ensign are from the United States Yacht Ensign and the National Ensign. Thus, those design elements have the same meaning as in the Yacht and National Ensign. In other words, the thirteen stars represent the original states and the thirteen stripes stand for the original colonies. Upton's article explained that the original idea was to have Power Squadrons' vessels operate as a form of naval reserve or as an auxiliary to the Navy. The intent was for the special ensign to identify the Power Squadrons' vessels. Since an ensign is a flag of national character flown from the stern of the vessel, the established icons of the American nation, white stars in a canton, thirteen stripes, and red/white/blue coloring, would naturally be used. In essence, United States Power Squadrons' Ensign is an adaptation of the national flag.

On page 701 of the 1917 article, Roger Upton said, "The idea advanced by the Navy Department was to have something on the lines of the Blue Ensign of England, which is used to denote naval reserve. Wherefore the design approximated our yacht ensign with the colors reversed and the stripes vertical instead of horizontal." Upton noted that the design of the United States Power Squadrons flag made it impossible to confuse with the flags of other nations.

Upton also led the Power Squadrons' founders in the effort to amend the yacht licensing law. The yacht licensing law, which had been on the books since 1848, required all "licensed yachts" to

fly the Yacht Ensign. The proposed amendment intended to add a provision permitting yachts of Power Squadrons to fly the Power Squadron Ensign in lieu of the Yacht Ensign. However, the attempt was unsuccessful and the yacht licensing law remained unchanged.

Designed as an ensign, the United States Power Squadrons flag is a flag of national character. However, in practical use, the Power Squadrons Ensign is an organizational flag and does not fly in place of the National or Yacht Ensigns.

Since the Yacht Ensign influenced the design of the Power Squadrons Ensign, one might ask the derivation of the design of that flag. As with the Power Squadrons Ensign, the United States National Ensign is the answer. Immediately following the passage of the Federal Yachts Ensign Act of 1848, the US Secretary of the Navy, by the authority delegated to him in the Act, requested the New York Yacht Club to submit a design. On 21 February 1849, the Navy Department approved the design of the present Yacht Ensign. Named the American Ensign, the flag retained the thirteen red and white vertical stripes of the National Ensign and featured a circle of thirteen stars surrounding a fouled anchor.

In March 1915, the Governing Board adopted the Power Squadrons Ensign. On 18 May 1915, General Orders No. 11, issued by Flag Lieutenant Stebbins from Boston, authorized the flying of Power Squadrons Ensign, with or without the Power Squadron pennant, which up to that time, had been the distinguishing flag of the squadrons. During World War I, the Governing Board ordered a new pennant of a somewhat different design from that of the original flown by squadron boats. The Governing Board further instructed that squadron vessels fly the new pennant and the American Ensign at the taffrail or gaff. Similarly, during World War II, Old Glory flew in her proper place and the United States Power Squadrons Ensign at the starboard spreader.

As the squadrons grew, both in number and size, the educational program developed to keep pace. There were continuous revisions and enlargements. Members submitted their suggestions and the educational program adopted many of those ideas. Highly skilled yachtsmen enthusiastically served on course committees.

By 1916, there were 500 members and many of these were clamoring for abolition of the on-water-drill requirements. However, it was not until some years later that a general uprising against the requirements caused official action. The leadership reduced the significance of the on-the-water maneuvers to a subordinate position as a second qualification to a new Junior Navigator course. Shortly thereafter, due lack of interest, the on-the-water maneuvers requirements disappeared altogether with further courses of study replacing them. In 1917, the educational program introduced a Navigator course. This was the course to end all instruction, comprising a detailed review of all courses the candidate had taken from his entrance examination to the JN course. It also included a practical demonstration of boat handling.

As World War I threatened to engage the nation, all Americans became very active in the preparedness movement. The United States declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917, and with the coming of hostilities, Charles F. Chapman sent a letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt,

Assistant Secretary of the Navy, volunteering the entire United States Power Squadrons instructional program for the training of men for naval coastal defense. Secretary Roosevelt accepted the proposal with gratitude. In New York City, four free nautical schools were established. Based on records, total enrollment exceeded three thousand students. Local squadrons in Boston, Detroit, Newburg, New Haven, and Washington, D.C. organized similar schools. Over five thousand men who attended these classes entered the armed services and, based in significant part on the quality of the training that they received, many received officer commissions. Squadron members themselves enlisted in the navy and many, because of their outstanding nautical education and background, soon earned commissions. Additionally, the Secretary of Commerce appointed some members as “Navigation Inspectors” with on-the-water duties similar to those performed by the Coast Guard Auxiliary during World War II. These men received a dollar per year for their services.

Efforts to recruit new members into the organization declined during this period. With many of the officers of the local squadrons in service, interest in the United States Power Squadrons began to wane. With the coming of peace and the release from the Navy, many of the members desired a rest from anything pertaining to the sea, so without their leadership, local squadron activities all but ceased. In addition, one of the principal objects of the squadrons had been, up to that time, to be of service to the U.S. Navy in times of emergency. The emergency had passed, and most members had all they wanted of small boat maneuvers based on anything connected with the Navy. Conditions were not unlike those in most yachting organizations of that time. Interest was at a low ebb, and many yacht clubs and similar organizations went out of business. On 26 January 1918, Chief Commander Coe wrote the following in his annual report. *“The demands of war have affected all social, fraternal and economic life, and our organization has not escaped the problems and handicaps which have arisen from this abnormal condition.”*

At the fall meeting of the Governing Board in 1919, Chief Commander H.M. Williams reported that local squadron secretaries did not answer his letters; dues were uncollected; there was no money in the treasury; and, the organization's debt was \$450.00. He closed his report with two recommendations: 1) that the members of the Governing Board chip in to pay the debt and 2) that the United States Power Squadrons disband. Chief Commander Williams was not a defeatist, but he viewed the existing situation from a realistic standpoint. His recommendation brought the matter sharply to attention where it obtained immediate and definite action.

Vice Commander A.B. Bennett expressed the opinion that such action would be a mistake and that he was sure that with the adoption of certain changes, the squadrons could be revived. The changes he suggested were:

- 1) To change the certificate holder from being only a member of a local squadron, reached only through his local squadron secretary, to first being a member of United States Power Squadrons, thus making him answerable to the national organization and secondly, a member of the local squadron;

- 2) To eliminate all boat drills and maneuvers. The war was over, and men were through with such activities; and,
- 3) To eliminate the restriction of membership to members of yacht clubs and admit any worthy man who passed the examination.

Bennett further suggested that since the oldest institutions of man in the world were institutions of learning, the United States Power Squadrons should stress education and nothing else. He ended his suggestions by proposing the rewriting of the constitution to include his suggested changes. The Governing Board authorized Vice Commander Bennett to rewrite the constitution and to present it at the next annual meeting of the Governing Board.

At the annual meeting of 28 February 1920, Vice Commander Bennett advanced to chief commander; Rear Commander Harry Jackson advanced to vice commander; and James T. Bresnahan of the Potomac Squadron to secretary. The Governing Board adopted the new constitution. At that time, there was no list of members; however, *The Ensign* mailing list contained a thousand names. Chief Commander Bennett and Secretary Bresnahan drafted a letter to each name on the mailing list, informing them of the changes in the constitution; announcing the waiving of all unpaid dues; and, asking each person to enroll in the national organization by paying one dollar in dues for 1920. One hundred forty-two plus nineteen reinstatements enrolled - a few from each of the former squadrons. Appointed as local boards of examiners, the duties of these newly enrolled men were to start classes of instruction to prepare men for the spring entrance examination.

With the newly reorganized United States Power Squadrons, the leadership issued new certificates in 1920. Chief Commander Bennett hand-lettered the names of the members onto the certificates in Old English style. Charles F. Chapman received Certificate Number 1. As a founding father of the organization, his membership date was among the earliest.

Communication between the national organization and the local squadrons relied on the U.S. Postal Service. However, Chief Commander Bennett visited many squadrons, helping them to make a new start. This difficult task ended in success for Chief Commander Bennett, the only chief commander to serve more than two years. At the close of his fourth year, there were over four hundred members, over four hundred dollars in the treasury, and no debt.

Chief Commander Harry Jackson inherited this organization in January 1924. Following the plan that Bennett had implemented, Jackson wholeheartedly nurtured the reviving organization, enthusiastically supporting squadrons throughout his tenure. Credit for the perpetuation of the United States Power Squadrons is due to the efforts of the Bennett-Jackson team.

The Power Squadrons grew slowly during these formative years, and by April 1931, the organization reported a total membership of only 840 in 12 squadrons. However, if the quantity of members was disappointing in the early thirties, the quality of instruction taught by members was not. With the introduction of Advanced Piloting in 1932, the advanced grades program was established. By November of that year, the organization had 1,431 members in 13 squadrons.

In October 1933, the Committee on Rules presented a plan for creating bylaws from the constitution and writing a second set of bylaws containing details for the operation of a squadron. The Governing Board approved both sets of bylaws the following year.

The Governing Board, on 13 December 1938, approved the establishment of seven divisions consisting of thirty-three squadrons and the appointment of a rear commander to administer each division. A later Governing Board approved changing the division designation to “district”. The United States Power Squadrons had 4,406 members by the end of 1938.

On 14 January 1939, the organization celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Representatives from twenty-one squadrons attended a dinner dance at New York's Hotel Astor, one of the largest and most successful affairs ever held by the United States Power Squadrons. In honor of the occasion, President Roosevelt sent a letter of congratulations, praising the organization's civic service. Later that year, the president accepted an honorary membership bestowed upon him by vote of the Governing Board.





**Figure 1: Pictured with FDR is Charles F. Chapman, one of the founding fathers of USPS**

While 1939 was a milestone in the organization's history, tragic events shortly followed as the world once again erupted into war. On 8 December 1941, less than 24 hours after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Vice Commander William Sayers sent a telegram to President Roosevelt and to the Secretary of the Navy offering the United States Power Squadrons' support for America's war effort. For the second time in 24 years, President Roosevelt accepted this support with appreciation.

During World War II, over 3,000 members of the United States Power Squadrons entered the armed forces, including C/C William Anderson, who served as a lieutenant commander, U.S. Navy Reserve. In February 1942, the National War Course Committee was formed which set standards in the instruction of navigation and related subjects. Also in 1942, the Special Courses Committee was formed which developed curricula in first aid, signaling, motor mechanics, air navigation, meteorology, and seamanship. Classes filled with service personnel, civilians, and members, all eager for the instructional offerings to qualify for advanced ratings. Members

served with the Red Cross, merchant marine, and other war-related services, all contributing significant assistance to the nation. With the encouragement of the national organization, more than twenty-five squadrons actively assisted the Coast Guard Auxiliary during this period. Friendly cooperation between the two organizations has been traditional ever since.

The United States Power Squadrons grew during World War II. By 1945, the National Secretary needed a paid staff and office space to meet increased responsibilities. The Governing Board adopted a resolution authorizing Secretary Charles Leach to employ such clerical help as necessary. The organization rented a three-room ground-floor apartment in Englewood, New Jersey for the storage of supplies and records. Shortly thereafter, the organization hired an office manager and, with a staff of three, satisfied the clerical and storage needs of growing membership and educational programs.

With the war ending in September 1945, the educational program updated the courses developed by the Special Courses Committee - namely seamanship, first aid, signaling, and motor mechanics - to civilian standards. Meteorology transitioned into Weather. A new course, Instruction Techniques, was launched in this time frame also.

Due to the rapid growth from 1935 to 1945, the organization underwent needed administrative changes. In 1945, the Governing Board approved the formation of the Planning Committee under the direction of P/C/C Frederic W. Keator, N. The Planning Committee conceived of a district organization. Until then, the “rear commander in charge of district” served without any staff. The Planning Committee then prepared district bylaws as a model. District 1, to which Keator and other Planning Committee members belonged, adopted the model bylaws. At the 14 April 1947 meeting, the Governing Board approved the model district bylaws, on the recommendation of the Committee on Rules. The United States Power Squadrons more than doubled its size during the forties. As the organization entered the fifties, the demands placed upon headquarters became even greater.

The first model district bylaws provided for the election of the district officers by the delegates to the district conference, rather than the Governing Board. The officers included the district commander (reserving the rank of rear commander for the national organization), staff captains (forerunners of the executive and administrative officers), the secretary and treasurer (serving without rank), and appointed officers as required. The district council including the district bridge and commanders of the squadrons of the district, met more frequently than the two conferences annually. The result was increased interest in district affairs, improved interchange of ideas between squadrons, and improved performance of the district commander.

During the testing of the pilot district operation, the Planning Committee developed plans for the national operation to provide for the executive, administrative, and educational departments, as well as the secretary and treasurer, each headed by a vice commander and assisted by rear commanders as required. The Planning Committee also recognized the need for legal officer, financial officer, and assistant secretary positions.

Contrary to the original concept, the squadron commanders had become a minority of the Governing Board, outnumbered by 20% by members-at-large (one for every 100 members). The Governing Board reduced this ratio to one for every 300 members (600 currently) in addition to restricting the number of members-at-large not to exceed the number of rear commanders.

With the success of the district pilot program, the first sixteen districts elected district officers at their conferences. The Governing Board approved the formation of a special district to represent unattached squadrons and members. The headquarters staff, which had increased to six, moved into a combination office and warehouse in the same NJ community. However, within five years, headquarters also outgrew those facilities. In 1958, United States Power Squadrons moved into even larger quarters located in Englewood, NJ. The organization grew significantly during the fifties. In May 1959, the National Secretary reported 45,000 members in 268 squadrons.

In 1960, the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey initiated a program to provide a series of specially designed charts for recreational boaters. To assist in this new program, the Governing Board approved the formation of the Cooperative Charting Committee to train members to participate. Although the program's first year produced fewer than 300 reports, by the year ending 30 September 1992, the United States Power Squadrons members had submitted nearly 60,000 revision data reports representing more than \$15 million in supporting services and taxpayer savings.

Recreational boating was booming as the United States Power Squadrons entered the sixties. The educational program added a sailing course in 1953 and a marine electronics course in 1961. By 1966, when Commander Chapman earned his fiftieth merit mark, the organization had recorded a membership of over 60,000 members in 348 squadrons.

In the early 1960s, the government of Portugal was planning the 500<sup>th</sup>-year commemoration of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator. In 1965, P/R/C James D. Paris, SN, then commander of District 4, was approached by the Portuguese Embassy in New York. The Portuguese government awarded an alabaster replica of Prince Henry to each of the districts of the United States Power Squadrons. After presenting the gift to District 4, Commander Jose Cabral, representing the Portuguese government, accompanied Commander Paris to twenty districts, presenting the replicas at their conferences. The deed of gift gave each district the authority to establish its own criteria for earning the award. Additional information about Prince Henry is contained in the Educational Department's Awards section of their web page.

On 13 April 1971, a new name appeared on navigation charts of the North Carolina coast. The efforts of 20 Carolina squadrons of D/27 of the United States Power Squadrons® were recognized by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Ocean Survey and the United States Board on Geographic Names by officially naming a spot of land on Cape Lookout, 2.5 miles north-northwest of the Cape Point, as "Power Squadron Spit."

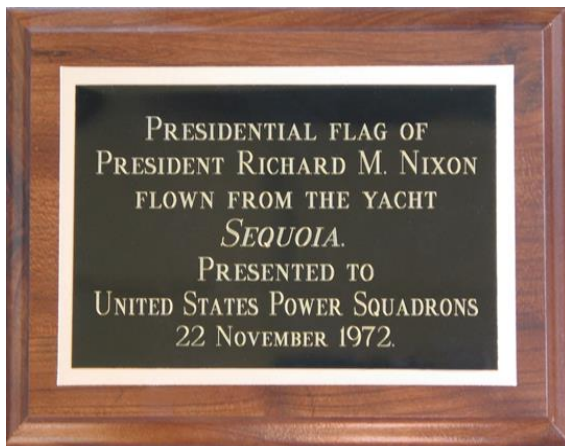
This honor is in recognition of the USPS Cooperative Charting Program working in close coordination with the Marine Chart Division of the National Ocean Service. A commemorative plaque honoring the service of the twenty North and South Carolina power squadrons was

originally presented to President Nixon in Washington, DC, in 1972 by a delegation of Power Squadron members from Winston-Salem, NC. P/D/Cs Ronald Rau and Don Soefker were joined by C/C Walter Cosdon and officers from the National Ocean Survey for this presentation. The visit was followed by one to the office of North Carolina 5th District Congressman Wilmer Mizell. The plaque's first home was the Cape Lookout lighthouse, then owned and operated by the U.S. Coast Guard. Since then, the plaque has made many travels.



**Figure 2: Commemorative plaque honoring the service of the twenty North and South Carolina power squadrons**

During the administration of President Richard Milhous Nixon, the United States Power Squadrons was honored to be presented with a presidential flag that was flown on the presidential yacht, **SEQUOIA**.



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON  
November 22, 1972

Dear Commander Griffith:

Earlier this year I wrote the Chief Commander of the United States Power Squadrons to express my deep appreciation for the outstanding work your members have done on the National Ocean Survey Cooperative Charting Program. I want to again thank you for that effort and to take this opportunity to commend your excellent safety education programs.

By instructing more than one hundred thousand boaters each year, the Power Squadrons have helped make boating safe as well as enjoyable. This is a proud achievement, and in recognition of your fine efforts, I am pleased to present to you a Presidential flag that has flown on the yacht, SEQUOIA. I understand the flag will be placed in your Headquarters Historical Exhibit, and I hope it will be regarded as a tribute to your important public service.

With my best wishes to all the members of the United States Power Squadrons,

Sincerely,  
*Richard Nixon*

Rear Commander F. Willard Griffith, N  
National Historian  
United States Power Squadrons  
855 Rahway Avenue  
Union, New Jersey 07083



Figure 3: Presidential Flag that flew on the Presidential Yacht, **SEQUOIA**.

In April 1973, on the advent of the sixtieth anniversary of the United States Power Squadrons, the organization presented a plaque to the Boston Yacht Club to commemorate the origin of the United States Power Squadrons in 1913. In October of the same year, the organization presented a plaque to the New York Yacht Club to commemorate the chartering of the United States Power Squadrons in 1914.

On the sixtieth anniversary in 1974, membership exceeded 70,000 in 425 squadrons. Headquarters resided in a newly constructed building located in Montvale, New Jersey. However, due to a legal situation, in September 1975, the Governing Board voted to move its base of operations to Raleigh, North Carolina. The relocation was completed, and operations were well underway when, in 1978, construction started on a modern office and warehouse. Completed by the end of 1978, the Headquarters relocated to their present location. An additional two-story wing was added during 1990-91 to include a memorial library and up-to-date computerized procedures which would enable the staff to handle extensive printing requirements, control educational inventory, and respond to virtually every kind of membership request.

Because of litigation in New York and New Jersey during the latter half of the seventies and early eighties over the issue of private status versus public accommodation, coupled with a sagging national economy registering high rates of inflation and unemployment, membership fell to the low 50,000s in 454 squadrons and 33 districts. Governing Board actions in 1981 and 1982 addressed two important and significant aspects of participation. The Governing Board, in September 1981, expanded their ranks to include members who had earned 50 merit marks. Granted the status of Governing Board member emeritus, this position granted lifetime voting privileges. In 1982, changes to the constitution and bylaws eliminated the male-only membership rule and permitted women to become active members. Prior to that time, women could hold a Women's Certificate, entitling them to enroll in all of the courses. However, by 1982, it was more than apparent that boating had become a family-oriented endeavor. The bylaw change also made family membership available. In November 1982, the first females received active memberships. The first family memberships also occurred in November 1982. To accommodate the change, the Governing Board voted to establish a reduced dues structure. However, not all women chose to become additional active members and retained their status as Women's Certificate Holders. The Governing Board also voted to limit households to only one copy of the national publication, *The Ensign*. Concerning that publication, the Governing Board also approved the transferring of the editorial and publishing functions from San Mateo, California to Headquarters. Headquarters completed the transfer of operations in December 1982.

During the mid-eighties, the Educational Department introduced a new piloting course and added a new elective course - cruise planning. A varied curriculum of supplemental courses was also made available including a skipper-saver program which was designed to be presented by a Power Squadron member to any interested group. To assist public boating enthusiasts who preferred TV instruction to classroom attendance, the United States Power Squadrons and the William Morrow Company produced a boating course on video. The Leadership Development

Committee developed the Operations Training Program during this time frame as well. In 1989, the Governing Board elected the first female Rear Commander. By the close of the 1980s, the organization had also established its own marine insurance program with both low rates and sound coverage.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the organization, five large United States Power Squadrons ensigns traversed the United States and Canada, visiting every U.S. squadron and many of the Canadian Power Squadrons. Two special ensigns logged 1,000,600,000 miles in their journey over all seven seas on board the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) shuttle Atlantis, on 4-8 May 1989. Still, another went to Moscow and a replica of the ceremonial ensign flew at the Greenwich Meridian in England. Eventually, all of the ceremonial ensigns converged at the Governing Board meeting in Richmond, Virginia on 16 May 1989. Another part of the celebration included a visit to the White House by Chief Commander William D. Selden, IV, SN, where he looked on as President George H. W. Bush signed a proclamation honoring the United States Power Squadrons.



**Figure 4: P/C/C Bill Selden, SN, watches as President George H. W. Bush signs a proclamation celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the United States Power Squadrons on 15 September 1989**

In the 1990s, the organization began using a shorter, six-session boating course. At the same time, the Educational Department released a new video boating course. The Governing Board approved a new “Life Saving Award” to recognize members who saved the lives of others. The Governing Board also approved the reduction of dues for “additional active members” in the same household. The United States Power Squadrons assisted with the 200th anniversary celebration of the United States Coast Guard held in “Coast Guard City, USA” (Grand Haven, Michigan). The United States Power Squadrons also extended cooperation with the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, reaching an agreement wherein each organization would accept one another's basic boating course as the requisite for membership.

There were other significant commitments and changes as well during the 1990s, but the unity displayed by the organization's membership in donating to “The Headquarters' Building Fund” campaign was perhaps the most meritorious. To provide additional space that was desperately needed, members voluntarily purchased deeded square inches of North Carolina real estate, purchased bricks for a special wall, bought silver or gold anchors, and even purchased raffle tickets for talking toy parrots. Overall, the members raised in excess of \$450,000.00 - more than sufficient to pay for the expansion without touching the funds in the treasury.

In 1992, mariners celebrated the 500th Anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. More than 230 sailing vessels from around the world celebrated by gathering together on 5-14 June in the harbor of Old San Juan. The armada enjoyed the gracious hospitality of the Puerto Rican squadrons before making its way toward New York Harbor. Replicas of the three Columbus caravels made their first of 21 ports-of-call as local squadron vessels led the parade of boats into the harbor of Miami, Florida. The United States Power Squadrons rendezvoused with the armada as they participated in the parade of Tall Ships into New York Harbor for the Fourth of July Tall Ships Festival.

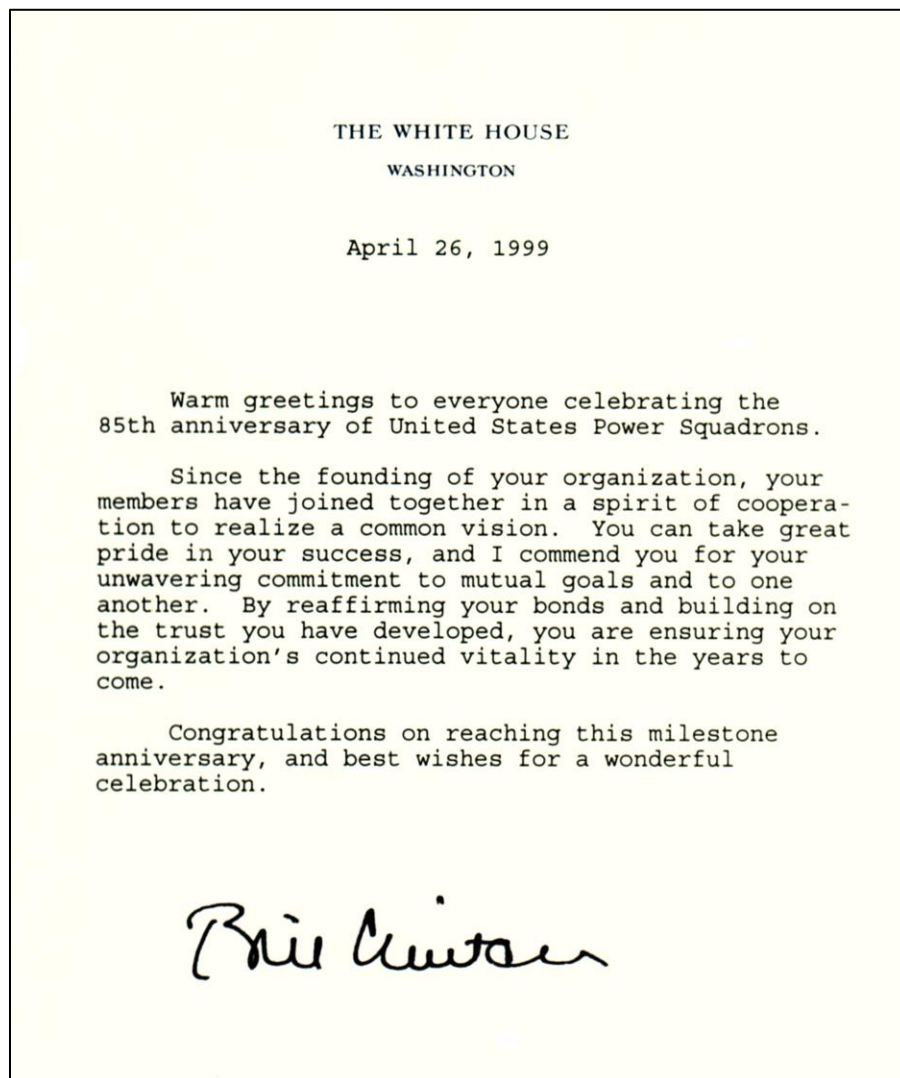
The United States Power Squadrons offered broadened coverage in a new On-The-Water Insurance policy. This policy aided squadrons in attracting new students and retaining members. The Governing Board also approved a youth program partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in a cooperative effort to prepare and teach the same youth course, namely Boating Safety, to any age group with the target audience of ages 10-16. The Treasurer's Department, in cooperation with a credit card company, offered a no-fee affinity credit card, which paid dividends back to local squadrons. The Governing Board adopted a new membership Pledge and approved new bylaws for the organization. These new bylaws combined the organization's constitution with the bylaws. Consequently, the Governing Board voted to repeal the United States Power Squadrons Constitution.

Of major significance in 1995, the Caribbean squadrons became District 33. In October 1995, Headquarters listed 59,746 active members, of whom 16,060 were women - about 27% of the membership. Women had been eligible for membership for fifteen years, and their numbers were growing.



In 1997, the United States Power Squadrons adopted the slogan T.E.A.M., “Together Everybody Accomplishes More,” which challenged the membership to greater heights. Policy changes permitted boating courses in squadron-owned or leased facilities. Significant bylaws and policy changes were also made to move the organization from a strictly “by invitation” type of membership procedure to membership by “application” with a means to determine membership interest while retaining selectivity. The Marketing Committee received direction to redefine the United States Power Squadrons as the premier educational boating organization worldwide. To help solve an identity problem, the bylaws were changed to allow squadrons the option of adding “Sail and” to their squadron name.

In 1999, the United States Power Squadrons celebrated its 85th Anniversary with enthusiasm.



**Figure 5: In 1999, President William Jefferson Clinton sent a congratulatory recognizing the 85th Anniversary of the U.S. Power Squadrons.**

The Public Relations Committee released a stylized logo to commemorate the 85th Anniversary. The Ship's Store stocked all types of anniversary items, including embroidered ensigns. The 2nd Voyage of The Ensign began in San Juan, Puerto Rico, at the 1999 Spring Governing Board meeting and concluded in Orlando, Florida, at the 2000 Annual Meeting. Five commemorative ensigns traveled thousands of miles throughout the squadrons of the United States and Canada. During that year, the ensigns also flew aboard the Challenger spacecraft and the USS Kanawha. Those ceremonial ensigns visited Turkey, traveled through Switzerland, and France, and flew on an armada that sailed from St. Petersburg, Florida, to the Annual Meeting to be welcomed home with music and a laser light show. There had been dinners, boat parades and rendezvous all across the nation. These ensigns are now on display at Headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The organization commissioned the renowned marine artist Donald Demers to create a historic painting depicting a 1915 scene in Marblehead Harbor. This painting included a limited edition of 2000 signed and numbered prints. Demers presented the completed painting to the United States Power Squadrons at the anniversary party held at the Boston Yacht Club where the organization's history began so many years ago.

With the arrival of the Year 2000 and the new millennium, the United States Power Squadrons set new goals and reorganized to meet the needs of new and existing members. To meet the needs of the membership, there were many changes and updates to bring the organization into the electronic age. One example was DB2000, a computer program designed to build local databases for squadrons, districts, and national to use in maintaining records, submitting forms, and providing contact information. Over the years, DB2000 expanded to facilitate the entry of electronic merit mark and historian report submissions, educational department updates, and officer slate (OD-1 and OD-2) submissions. This action saved storage space and postage costs, and reduced manual data entry at Headquarters. The organization also established standards for web access at the national, district, and squadron levels. The Committee on Rules updated the model bylaws for squadrons and districts and, for the first time, offered the documents online to streamline the process of changing and updating existing bylaws.

In the summer of 2002, Commander Dean Lee, commanding officer of the U.S. Coast Guard Group at Fort Macon, informed P/R/C Ken Link that he was removing the "Power Squadron Spit" plaque from the Cape Lookout lighthouse (See Figure 2) as the Coast Guard was transferring management of this sentinel beacon of safety for ships plying the waters near the Cape to the National Park Service.

To reduce expenses and become more environmentally responsible, the organization started offering many newsletters and *The Ensign* online. Another cost-saving measure was the reduction of national meetings from three to two per year. On 10 May 2003 approved the elimination of the Spring Governing Board Meeting with the effective date of 2006. In September 2003, the Governing Board also ratified the Operating Committee's establishment of the P/C/C Raymond A. Finley, Jr., SN, Sea Scout Service Award.

The Governing Board approved structural changes and consolidation of committees with overlapping or obsolete missions to make the organization more efficient in meeting the needs of members. The Governing Board also authorized the formation of the Environmental Committee, created to promote the conservation of environmental resources, to educate the membership, and to publicize efforts both internally and externally.

The Educational Department continued to evolve into the new millennium with some major changes and revisions to bring members the most current and accurate information in the available courses for members. The introduction of the USPS University and seminars expanded the offerings to the public. The first online offering, America's Boating Course, replaced The Squadron Boating Course. The Executive Department also stepped forward by introducing a new program: Vessel Safety Checks, established in a working partnership with the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The United States Power Squadrons developed many working partnerships and negotiated memoranda of understanding (MOUs) within the boating industry - the Coast Guard, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA), and other organizations.

In 2004, the United States Power Squadrons celebrated its ninetieth anniversary. In January of that year, the First Aid Support Team (F.A.S.T.) was established. In May, the Governing Board approved motions to amend the by-laws to allow family members to serve on squadron committees and to serve as chairs on non-elected committees. Also approved was the motion to extend the age limit of the apprentice membership to the age of twenty-three.

On 15 May 2004, members of the USPS again visited Cape Lookout to rededicate themselves to the purpose of Cooperative Charting which focuses on reviewing marine charts and making comparisons between actual and charted depths, navigational, aids and changes in topography so that corrections may be made to improve safety for mariners. At the rededication, D/27 Commander Stephen Puckett thanked all who attended and commented that Cooperative Charting is part of the civic service arm of the USPS' three arms (education, public service, and fraternity) which keeps USPS members active in their efforts to improve boating safety for the mariner. Members attending with D/C Puckett, were: National Executive Officer V/C Ernest Marshburn, SN; Rep. Jean Preston of the North Carolina House of Representatives; Bob Vogel, Superintendent of the Cape Lookout National Seashore, and thirty members of D/27. V/C Marshburn stressed the dedication of not only the members of D/27 but all members of USPS in their continuing efforts in the cause of Cooperative Charting. Rep. Preston thanked the Power Squadrons for its dedication to public safety, particularly boating safety, and their support of recent legislation regarding personal watercraft use near the Cape.

In September, the Governing Board approved motions to amend section 3.8.1 of the by-laws to allow family members, Women's Certificate holders, and apprentice members to serve on appointed committees.

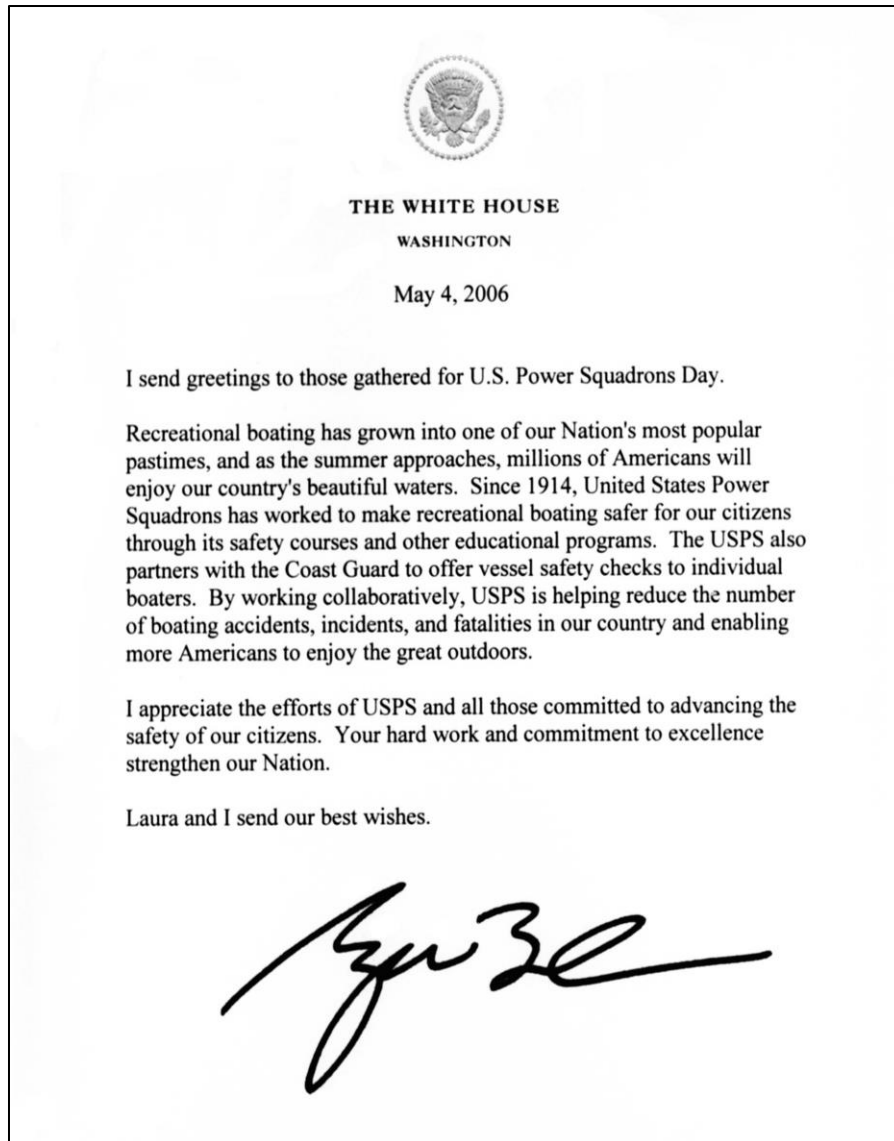
On 30 March 2006, members of the Fort Macon Sail and Power Squadron presented the "Power Squadron Spit" plaque to the Acting Superintendent, Cherry Payne of the National Park Service,

Cape Lookout National Seashore, at the Headquarters on Harkers Island. The plaque is installed in the Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters Museum at Cape Lookout National Seashore. Power Squadron members everywhere can be proud of this recognition of their efforts and take pride in the naming of the spit of land as Power Squadron Spit.



**Figure 6: From Left to Right: Chief Ranger Wouter Ketel, Resource Management Specialist Michael Rikard, Acting Superintendent Cherry Payne, 2006 FMSPS Cdr Robert Howd, JN, and P/R/C Ken Link, SN.**

During 2006, several more organizational changes occurred to streamline operations and promote growth. Accordingly, the Rules Committee updated the bylaws and the Planning Committee revised The Strategic Plan for Membership and Education, adding financial stability as a goal. The Treasurer's Department introduced Voluntary Headquarters Anniversary Billing featuring a centralized billing and collections process at Headquarters. The Governing Board also approved a revision to the dues structure and a \$25 entrance fee for primary members joining the organization.



**Figure 7: President G. W. Bush sent his greetings on U. S. Power Squadrons Day and his appreciation of the organization’s contributions to America**

In 2007, the election of the first female Assistant National officer and the recognition of the first women life members occurred. In 2009, the organization moved forward with more efforts to streamline and remove duplication. For the preceding five years, the annual appointment of an independent auditor to ensure the organization's compliance with the bylaws and charter was necessary due to the increasing complexity of tax laws. As a result, the Governing Board voted to eliminate the National Auditing Committee. Anniversary billing became mandatory for all members. In 2010, the Governing Board approved unified membership classes.

At the 23 February 2008 Annual Meeting, the Governing Board approved the reorganization of the national structure to resemble more closely that of a national corporation as opposed to a

local boating club. Implemented at that meeting was the Board of Directors. The purpose of the new structure was to increase the organization's competitiveness, visibility, and voice as a leader in recreational boating. More importantly, the new structure created a more efficient and effective leadership grounded by sound fiscal management and accountability for its actions. As part of a continuing effort to streamline and consolidate committees the National Historian Subcommittee and the Flag and Etiquette Subcommittee (FECOM) were merged into the Heritage and Protocol Committee in 2013. The Public Relations Committee, the Government and Partner Relations Committee, and the Program Partner Relations Committees merged to become The Public Affairs Committee (PA-Com) at the Annual Meeting in Orlando in February 2017.

The election of the first female National Secretary occurred in 2011. By 2014, women comprised approximately 34 percent of the membership and were actively involved at all levels of the organization. In 2014, the United States Power Squadrons celebrated its 100th Anniversary. In 2016, the election of the first female National Administrative Officer occurred. In 2018, the election of the first female National Executive Officer took place. Finally, in 2020, the organization elected its first female Chief Commander.

Recognizing that some districts and squadrons have disbanded over the years, the Board of Directors, Planning Committee, and Marketing Committee developed a branding strategy to enable the United States Power Squadrons to continue to meet its mission. The Marketing Committee discouraged members from referring to the organization as USPS. Research indicated that the acronym's use resulted in target markets confusing The United States Power Squadrons with the U.S. Postal Service. After developing a new, lettered logo, the Marketing Committee began publishing an annual guide to establish branding standards and to downsize the local squadron names.

In 2016, the Governing Board authorized the name America's Boating Club® as a trade name for the United States Power Squadrons. In the first year of implementation, both names and logos appeared in a co-branding strategy. The Ship's Store began to feature items with both logos. Throughout the three-year transition period, squadrons moved to promote the America's Boating Club name as being more appealing and informative to the public. There was, and is, no plan to change the name of the legal entity, United States Power Squadrons. However, the Strategic Implementation Plan called for the trade name America's Boating Club to be fully implemented with all local squadrons and districts having registered fictitious names and doing business as America's Boating Club of {squadron, district} by the end of 2019. The May 2003 Governing Board approved "America's Boating Club" as a tagline for the cover of *The Ensign*.

In 2019, the United States Power Squadrons doing business as America's Boating Club, expanded its electronic presence to the public and membership with "America's Boating Channel" on the video-sharing website, YouTube. The organization also produced several mobile applications. Marketing campaigns advertised America's Boating Club via online, television, social, and printed media. Expanded Educational offerings included a wide variety of online courses and seminars for the public and membership including America's Boating Course, Boat Operator Certification for advanced on-the-water training, and over 30 additional seminars.

The United States Power Squadron continued to work in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary as well as with NASBLA to provide the best in boating education and civic involvement in local communities.

2020 was a year of firsts for America's Boating Club. The Governing Board elected the first female chief commander and the first female treasurer at the Annual Meeting in February. This was the first time that women constituted one-third of the National Bridge.

In March 2020, the country entered various stages of quarantine for the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many districts and squadrons started exploring ways to conduct meetings, Changes of Watch, and classes virtually to protect their memberships. The Vessel Safety Check program was suspended for safety purposes along with in-person classes as most locales encouraged populations to self-isolate. As the COVID-19 Pandemic infections continued to increase during the summer, state travel restrictions were implemented with many restaurants and hotels affected. These restrictions made the physical meeting of the Fall Governing Board impossible. Several national committees and the Board of Directors (BOD) had held some of their meetings via assorted web platforms for a couple of years. This experience helped build the basis for the Fall Governing Board sessions to be held virtually. Lessons learned from that first virtual Governing Board meeting and the various platforms used enabled the BOD to begin development on a plan for future virtual meetings including an electronic voting function.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the virus mutation into new strains continued to present challenges in 2021. Due to continuing quarantine restrictions, the Annual Meeting in February 2021 was held as a two-week virtual meeting with all departments presenting seminars and holding interactive meetings. The Annual Meeting was conducted virtually and votes were conducted electronically. With the implementation of safety restrictions, the Fall Governing Board of 4 September 2021 convened in Raleigh and approved several bylaws amendments including allowing in-person, electronic, or hybrid meetings throughout the organization per North Carolina law; eliminating the vetting requirements before the nomination and election of district and squadron educational officers; and permitting districts and squadrons to combine the secretary and treasurer positions.

2022 was a year of transition, as the organization examined its mission and repositioned itself to grow after two years of COVID-19 Pandemic isolation. In 2021, Chief Commander Abbott had appointed an *ad hoc* Committee on Regionalization. This effort was continued by Chief Fraser as he expanded the mission of the *ad hoc* committee. After conducting several surveys, reviewing data for member retention, and researching multiple other factors, the *ad hoc* committee was renamed Committee for Reorganization. The committee recommended some major changes to the organization including eliminating districts. Strong opposition from some of the members led the committee to recommend to the BOD that the district issue be referred to the Planning Committee for further study.

The BOD tasked the Planning Committee with district simplification. The Planning Committee, in conjunction with the Committee on Rules, developed flexible district and squadron structures

to reduce the number of squadron dissolutions. The Committee on Rules codified the changes to Articles 6 and 7 of the *Bylaws of the United States Power Squadrons* which were approved at the Fall Governing Board in Raleigh on 17 September 2022. In October, the revised model bylaws for both districts and squadrons were published. In brief, the flexibility introduced into the bylaws enabled districts and squadrons to structure their bylaws and organizations corresponding to the number of resources available to perform the work that they wished to accomplish, while still ensuring that every member who wanted a job was accommodated.

The calendar year of 2023 saw the completion of many improvement and support projects. In February, electronic voting was launched at the Annual meeting in Orlando. This new system enabled all voting members to cast their vote whether they attended the meeting in-person or viewed the proceedings via live-stream.

With continued funding from the U.S. Coast Guard, America's Boating Channel launched a live-stream network incorporating boating safety and education and maritime-related programming from multiple platforms in April 2024 at the International Boating & Water Safety Summit in Little Rock, Arkansas. The initial availability was through Roku and Apple streaming services, reaching not only members, but the larger viewing public and presenting many opportunities to expand brand recognition and partnerships in the future.

The *ad hoc* Committee for Reorganization presented its final recommendations to the BOD and disbanded in June of 2023. Also in June, the Educational Department released their strategic plan to improve the type and quality of materials while streamlining the development cycle. Substantial progress was made prior to the year's end as the department continued to update existing and introduce new educational materials to meet the needs of the membership and the public.

At the Kansas City Governing Board, the Heritage and Documents committee unveiled the Document Library, a new database to maintain an index with access to the excellent documentation - past and present - created throughout the organization.

A new, commercial information management system was approved for Headquarters, iMIS Association and Member Management Software. Implementation was continuing in the final months of 2023 with the launch expected to begin in early 2024.

The efforts of the United States Power Squadrons, America's Boating Club continue, with all national committees working with the Board of Directors to streamline and strengthen the organization as it moves into a new and more challenging era. The challenge of meeting the needs of the membership while growing the organization itself, as with all civic organizations, is a learning experience that must evolve in a changing society. As the organization seeks to become more accessible to the public, the primary focus continues to remain on its membership. After all, the members have always been, and continue to be, the backbone of the organization.