How District 1 and SPS Came to Be

In the long story of USPS, there are many interesting events that have helped to mold the greatness and esprit de corps of our organization. Most of them are long forgotten in the archives, and are not even known by many members who have come aboard in the last few decades. Here's a part of that story.

How many of you have thought of our Founders as stodgy old men?

Not so! They were young bold adventurous men with vision. Men who gave unselfishly of themselves. It is their active participation at the Squadron level that has made USPS what it is today.

On 4 February 1914, USPS was founded at the New York Yacht Club in New York City by 20 distinguished yachtsman from Maine to Maryland. Roger Upton of Boston was elected as first Chief Commander.

From 1917 through 1919, USPS experienced many difficulties. With no money in the treasury and a debt of $450, it was recommended by Chief Commander C.N. Burnell and his successor, Chief H.M. Williams, that the Governing Board pay the bill and disband the organization.

Vice Commander Adolphus Bennett, JN disagreed. He felt the following changes in the bylaws would revitalize the organization:
-- a man should be a member of USPS as well as a local squadon;
-- all boat drills and maneuvers should be eliminated;
-- membership invitation should be based on a man's proficiency in boating and not restricted to yacht club members;
-- all USPS members should be encouraged to take advantage of USPS educational opportunities.

At the 1920 Annual Meeting, the bylaws were revised. One thousand letters were sent out advising recipients of the bylaw changes and requesting them to rejoin by paying dues of $1 each. One hundred forty-two responded, a few from each squadron. Of all the squadrons who signed on in 1914, only New Haven remained intact. Even Roger Upton's Boston Yacht Club had dropped out.

By 1924, through the unselfish dedication of those who stayed on, USPS had 388 members, over $1000 in the Treasury and no debt. Today we all profit from their example.

With the help of New Haven Squadron, Middletown Squadron was chartered on 2 June 1931 and Hartford followed on 28 November. These three squadrons formed the beginning of District 1.

District 1 began to grow. On 14 April 1939, again with New Haven's help, New London was chartered. One day later Springfield received its charter. And, on 25 April 1940, New Britain followed suit.

Throughout WW2 to 1950, these six squadrons made up District 1. On 11 January 1947, Rear Commander S. Barry Jennings became the first Commander of District 1. On 17 January 1950 Westerly was chartered.

On 6 February 1953, 22 members from the Middletown and New London Squadrons who lived near the mouth of the Connecticut River came together to receive their charter as Saybrook Power Squadron. Edward Robb was elected the 1st Commander. At the charter presentation, the New London Commander gave Saybrook their old set of flag staffs which are still used today.

District 1 still continued to grow. Norwich chartered on 27 April 1953; Meriden on 2 February 1954; and Milford on 8 April 1957. Finally, on 14 January 1961, Manchester received its charter, the last Squadron to make up the 13 in District 1 today.

If you delve into the founding of each squadron, the inter-relationship becomes obvious. Members of one squadron helped to form other squadrons.

That's how we got here today.