



HOW THE PENOBSCOT BAY SAIL AND POWER SQUADRON BEGAN

By: Lt. Sandra Homer, AP

The idea of the Penobscot Bay Power Squadron was conceived at the Friendship Sloop Races in July of 1963. While there on the Friendship Sloop "Chance", Ambrose Higgins, (later to be the first Commander of the Penobscot Bay Squadron) heard Past Rear Commander William Danforth of the Wawenock Squadron discussing boating education. This was the first time Ambrose had heard of the United State Power Squadron and its programs.

In 1964, Jay Benton, Bill Deighan, George Byant and Ambrose Higgins studied the piloting course by mail. After passing the examination in Waterville, they joined the Kennebec River Squadron from which the Bangor Division of the Kennebec River Squadron was established. All four taught in the first Piloting Class of eight to ten students and, at the same time, studied for the Seamanship exam. About this time, Carl A. Anderson, AP, transferred from Darien, CT., joining the Bangor Division. Under his able tutelage most of the early members progressed to Advanced Piloting.

With these new members, the USPS ensign appeared regularly in the Penobscot Bay area as well as along the coast to the east and west. Many questions were asked of members and increased interest generated, resulting in much growth in the Bangor area. Since the Kennebec River Squadron meetings were such a distance from the Bangor area, it was logical to make plans to establish a Penobscot Bay Squadron. Initially, there was some opposition from some members of the Kennebec River Squadron- after all, these were their members! In reviewing correspondence from the time period, the Kennebec River Commander was rather curt in dismissing the Bangor Division request for endorsement to become the Penobscot Bay Squadron. Ambrose remained undaunted, reminding the commander that the Bangor Division had been teaching Piloting, Seamanship and Advanced Piloting classes and had over 30 members in the Bangor area.

In July of 1967, at the USPS Governing Board Meeting in San Francisco, Penobscot Bay was awarded their own Charter with an enrollment of close to 40 members. The March 1969 issue of the "NOW HEAR THIS" states: "We are greatly indebted to the Kennebec River Squadron for their assistance and guidance toward establishing Penobscot Bay and especially to Kennebec River's incoming Commander Frank W. Packard AP, and to Past District Commander Richard E. Davies N, all of whom were made Honorary Members of Penobscot Bay for distinguished service to the squadron."

By this time, membership had to 81, a 25% increase over 1968. The early years of the squadron showed tremendous growth in membership and participation in advanced courses. One Rendezvous per summer was the norm-access by boat or car. Early growth was aided by Bud Leavit of the Bangor Daily News, frequently mentioning the Penobscot Bay Power Squadron in the paper as well as doing an interview on his weekly television program. Local radio station WLBZ also offered good coverage of announcements and events. It is interesting to note that the following are listed as both 1966 members of the Bangor Division of the Kennebec River Squadron and 2001 members of the Penobscot Bay Power Squadron: Jay G. Benton AP; P/C William Deighan Jr. AP; Christopher Hutchins AP. 1967 members of the newly formed Penobscot Bay Power Squadron as well as the 2004 Penobscot Bay Sail and Power Squadron are Carroll C. Allen AP, Franklin W. Eaton AP, Florence P. Eaton AP and Marion Vafiadas AP.