

A Little History  
by Jack Parker

It was in this harbor that the Great Lakes Cruising Club was born. Here is Jack Parker's summary of the Club's origins:

It seems incredible in today's modern space age, and with a full third of our 20th century's history already recorded by 1934, that 95,000 square miles of water surface of the Great Lakes, to say nothing of its 8,300 miles of shore line, should still stand as raw "wilderness waters" to the yachtsmen of those times. Yet it was so.

FDR was well-settled into his favorite "fireside chair" in the White House and yet not a single freshwater yachting chart or harbor report existed beyond those published by the Government for commercial shipping! The yachts that cruised the virtually uncharted waters of the lakes in those days were skippered by bold and daring adventurers; men who would consider a passage from Chicago to Milwaukee and return as the inland equivalent of a journey by Christopher Columbus!

Fortunately a handful of these yachtsmen had the vision to look upward to strive for something beyond the stars and the horizon.

Arch Gibson of Chicago, who had cruised with Commodore George O. Clinch from 1911 to 1930, the year of the Commodore's untimely passing, was one of those star-crossed visionaries. He'd been "out there" and sensed the magic that may be found in the more remote areas of the lakes; he wanted to return to those breath-taking hideaways and thought he had an idea that would make his discoveries, as well as those of other yachtsmen, an "open sesame" to the romance, adventure, and exciting escapism that existed beyond the horizon of all these great freshwater seas.

Generally acknowledged to be "The Chicago yachtsman who has cruised farther, crossed more uncharted waters, and opened up more secret passageways than any other amateur sailor on the lakes," Arch already had an outstanding record of accomplishment for any pioneering yachtsman of the 1920's; in his case even more incredible inasmuch as he didn't own a boat and never would.

GLCC Past Commodore John T. ("Bud") Snite was one of the small group of visionaries who first heard that Arch Gibson had an "idea" worth sharing. Why not over lunch?

"A few of us got together at the Art Metz's apartment in the University Club," Snite said, "where Arch was given the floor to unfold his thoughts. Basically," Snite continued, "Arch had made several rough sketches of many of the uncharted coves, harbors, and gunkholes he had explored while crewing with the Commodore as well as on other friend's boats. He thought, and rightfully so, that if a bunch of us sailors could be organized to do the same thing—sketch and chart the remote areas we had explored, and would be exploring—we could then

exchange them with one another. If it worked," Arch concluded, "it might turn into something really worthwhile."

Past Commodore Snite said that he and his fellow sailors all agreed that the idea really was worthy of investigation and so a series of informal luncheon meetings began, moving from the Metz apartment to the Chicago Yacht Club where he (Metz) was Commodore. "It provided the perfect nautical background," Snite added, "and our discussion and debate continued there for a number of weeks."

Among issues debated and determined during those early Chicago meetings were such items as a name for the fledgling organization; Great Lakes Cruising Club, membership dues of \$5 per year; a burgee logo of 5 interlocking links of anchor chain in white on a field of blue; a Port Pilot and Log Book, to contain all of the member-researched harbor reports and to be edited and compiled by Arch Gibson.

The official signing of the Treasurer's Book took place on May 23, 1934, and the new freshwater baby was ready for her shakedown.

Of the seven yachtsmen whose names appeared in the first Treasurer's Book, four would serve as Commodore, two as Treasurer and one as Secretary. Oddly, Arch Gibson whose "idea" was the catalyst for the new-found club, served two terms as secretary but never climbed the ranks to fly the Commodore's burgee.

Those seven whose names appeared in the May 23, 1934, Treasurer's Book were, in order signed, D.E. Currier, Ralph B. Cobb, Charles N. Steele, Melvin Olson, Kenneth Ball, John T. Snite, and Wells A. Lippincott. Four of these men would fly the Commodore's flag at their masthead; Cobb, Snite, Ball and Lippincott. Other names that weave in and out of the fabrication of the early chapter of GLCC's history were Nathaniel Rubicam, the club's second Commodore; Christen Peterson, first Vice Commodore, Arthur Anderson, who succeeded Donald Currier as Treasurer; George Catto, who showed up twice in meeting notes but obviously held no office; Harold Wood, Logan McMenemy and Kenneth Brown, each of whom served as Vice Commodore.

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