

Henry Howard, Organizer

A Personal Sketch of the Owner of "Alice"

By WINFIELD M. THOMPSON



CAREFUL reading of the interesting series of articles by Henry Howard published in *YACHTING* last winter, describing the designing, building and testing under cruising conditions of the auxiliary ketch *Alice*, leads directly to the conclusion that the author has a genius for detail. If there are any particulars regarding his boat that he did not set down in concise and understandable terms, they may be considered immaterial.

In an acquaintance with Mr. Howard extending over a period of 23 years, I have observed many times his capacity for taking pains, which, some philosopher has told us, is a chief attribute of genius; but I have also seen other and broader traits in him that I think may interest the readers of his articles. It does not always follow that a man with a gift for detail is equally gifted in other directions that make for success in his daily life. Conversely, I have seen great captains of industry, bankers, financiers and the like, who could not have put together the necessary data for a personal directory of their most frequently used telephone calls. Henry Howard is unlike them in that he has capacity for doing things both great and small, and doing them with equal thoroughness. As an organizer I have never known his equal. He rides down all obstacles. He makes use of every circumstance, and every individual that can possibly be helpful to him; and in achieving some of his successes, I have seen him turn to account material, both human and otherwise, that seemed at first hopelessly unpromising and apparently useless to anyone.

Mr. Howard's methods are an interesting development of his training and personal traits. He is the original settler from Missouri, so far as taking anything for granted is concerned. He tests every statement made to him, every situation in which he finds himself, every fact of life, like a biologist or a chemist in his laboratory, which perhaps is quite natural, since he is a chemical engineer by profession. He looks through statements, figures, arguments, opinions, motives, as an X-ray machine looks through solids. When his test is finished, he is ready to discard what he considers waste, and proceed sure-footedly to his own conclusions.

This habit of thoroughness was reflected in everything he did in connection with the *Alice*. It seemed quite in order, therefore, for him not to accept the engine builder's statement as to the horse power of the machine he wanted for his boat until he had employed the Bureau Veritas to make a test of it. No reasonable manufacturer could object to such a sensible proceeding. Yet few of us consider it due ourselves to be so thorough in buying an engine.

Quite as a matter of habit, Mr. Howard says little about himself. It is therefore a pleasant duty to accept the editorial mandate to write something about him as I have seen him in an association of something more than two decades.

I owed my first meeting with Henry Howard to his interest in the literature of the sea. It was in 1903. I had just finished preparing a history of the *America's Cup*, a copy of which had come to Mr. Howard's attention. At that time he had recently taken up the task of popularizing the racing and cruising programs of the Eastern Yacht Club, and was casting about for material that might be shaped into a program of entertainments for the season. It having occurred to him that I might be able to talk passably, as well as write on the subject of yachting, he sent for me, and asked if I would like to give a talk before the members of his club. It chanced that I had recently purchased a set of lantern slides dealing with the subject of the *America's Cup*, and these I placed at his disposal. It was agreed that I should show the slides, and give an accompanying talk, on board one of the Eastern Yacht Club's vessels, on the occasion of a week-end run to Gloucester.

On the appointed day I reported at the Eastern Club-house on Marblehead Neck, and was taken on board the schooner yacht *Hoosier*, owned by Colonel William R. Nelson, owner of the *Kansas City Star*. The *Hoosier* was a glorified Gloucester fisherman, big and powerful, and was then in her first or second season. Her owner, a genial, hearty middle-Westerner, was on board, and greeted me cordially, inviting me to spend the week-end with him. That evening, after the fleet had anchored in Gloucester Harbor, I rigged up my projecting lantern and sheet on the starboard side of the *Hoosier's* deck and prepared to do my stuff.

The lecture went off very well. The next day the *Hoosier* cruised offshore, running before a light northerly wind until the land was left behind, and then joggling about until nightfall, while Colonel Nelson and his guests loafed in expansive luxury. On our return to Marblehead that evening, Mr. Howard presented me with one of the club racing cups as a souvenir of the occasion. I have it now, and while the circumstances of the lecture mean little in themselves, this reminder of the event has a double significance, since it marks the occasion of my meeting Henry Howard, which proved a turning point in my life.

In years that followed I had many yachting contacts with Mr. Howard. Through the position I then held, as yachting editor of a leading Boston newspaper, I was able to assist him in his work for the sport. I was also in a position to observe and note his sporting activities. These were varied, and successful. He drew the Eastern Yacht Club out of its position of reserve, and made it known to and appreciated by the public. He built up the club's racing and cruising fleets. He inaugurated, single-handed, the first international team races between small yachts, the Sonder Class series of 1905. The story of the many months of planning, the many interviews, the many moves in the game of diplomacy necessary to bring about this event — destined to usher in a new era in interna-

(Continued on page 94)



Henry Howard, on board *Alice*.

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FOR THE GUMS

MORE THAN A TOOTH PASTE . . . IT CHECKS PYORRHEA



Henry Howard, Organizer
(Continued from page 55)

tional racing — would make a book. It is not my purpose to review those races here, nor those that followed them; but in thinking today of the international six-meter races, which have greatly enriched American yachting, we should not forget that it was Henry Howard, single-handed, who set such events as these on foot.

While it was never my good fortune to make a long cruise with Henry Howard, I saw enough of him as a yachtsman to show me that his thoroughness extended to every branch of the sport which he took up. He was a master of the theory and practice of navigation, familiar with all the methods, and a writer on the subject. He knew perfectly how to handle any type of sailing boat, and he was never happier than when off for a week-end on his yacht. He had a habit of sending his boat to some port he wanted to reach, and joining her there, for a return voyage, this being a method of making the most of his limited time for sport, for he was one of the busiest men I knew, and one of the hardest workers I ever saw. He played just as hard as he worked, and thought nothing of taking a rail journey of a thousand miles for the sake of a week-end aboard his boat.

These attributes are mentioned particularly here because of their effect in one of the outstanding chapters of Mr. Howard's career, in which it was my good fortune to share in his activities in an intimate degree. This was his work for the Merchant Marine in the World War.

One morning in April, 1917, shortly after the United States entered the war, my employer telephoned me. His message was: "Henry Howard has some scheme for training officers for the merchant service, and wants you to help him. Better go see him."

I sought him out forthwith, and found him abed, at his home in Brookline, convalescing from a throat affection. He was eager to do his bit in the war, and while laid up had developed a plan that had been in his mind for some time, for training merchant officers. At first he had thought of taking a few seamen at a time on his yacht, and teaching them the art of navigation. As he turned the plan over, it grew. He now had the thought well developed of starting schools, in various parts of the country, to accomplish his desired end. The country had embarked on a program of building a thousand vessels to meet England's cry for "ships and more ships" with which to bridge the Atlantic. Mr.

Howard foresaw that the demand for officers would become acute long before all these ships were finished, unless some plan for intensive training of available raw material was adopted promptly. He had not presented his plan to the U. S. Shipping Board — then but recently formed — and wanted first to test its soundness by putting it before the public through the press. He had an exact understanding of the power of publicity, and knew that if his idea was endorsed by the people it would be accepted at Washington. He felt that the kind of men he wanted to reach could be found through the newspapers. New England ports were full of them — sailors and engineers and lads with a love of the sea. With a good handful of applications for training in hand, the rest would be plain sailing.

I left Mr. Howard thrilled with the possibilities of the idea he had put before me, and made the necessary publicity spread. The response was instantaneous. Within a fortnight Mr. Howard had brought into being the Recruiting Service of the United States Shipping Board, vested with power to train the necessary officers for the new ships, with himself as its Director. Business was started in a vacant floor of the Custom House tower at Boston, which I found furnished with an ancient flattopped desk and a rickety chair. In a few days we had a class in navigation going at Harvard, and an engineers' class at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In another week we had classes at other points on the New England coast, and were reaching out to establish classes along the South Atlantic and Gulf seaboards, and on the Great Lakes. In two months the chain had been extended to the Pacific Coast.

All this is easy in the telling, after nine years; but it came about only through the indomitable energy and intensive application of Henry Howard. He had a way of drawing to him the kind of men he wanted for the work to be done, drafting them from among his acquaintances in yachting, in business and in social life at Boston, New York and other cities. He called on his friends to volunteer, as he had done. Before peace put a period to his work, he had trained more than 15,000 officers, and 32,000 men. Anyone who meets Mr. Howard today is not likely to hear from him anything about this subject. He is not strong at talking about himself. But if you want to know anything about the *Alice*, he will take an hour of his time, if needful, to give you the information you desire. Wherein, it seems to me, lies a certain measure of character.



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