



# THE WAVE CUP RESEARCH REPORT

R. Steven Tsuchiya

The discovery of the 190-year-old *Wave* Cup in January 2023 inspired me to explore the history of the trophy's winner—John Cox Stevens's yacht *Wave*—and its races against the yacht *Sylph*. The facts I found have revealed exciting new details about the origins of yacht racing in the United States, the founding of the New York Yacht Club in 1844, and the development of yacht design.

This report contains primary sources and information gleaned from secondary sources about the *Wave* Cup and the people associated with it. I'll eventually use it as a resource to compose a story for the public about the remarkable discovery of the trophy and its extraordinary history.

The *Wave* Cup. Research Report.  
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September 9, 2025. Ver. 10.4

+1.513.253.9069  
rstsuchiya@gmail.com

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## Vital Stats

Height	10.125 inches	(25.72 cm)
Top Diameter	11.0 inches	(27.94 cm)
Base Diameter	5.875 inches	(14.92 cm)
Material	Coin silver	
Weight	67 ozt 3.9 dwt	(2,090 g)
Maker	William Gale, Sr.	
When Made	Period of 1832-1836	
Where Made	New York City	



#### **Four views of the *Wave Cup*.**

The trophy is bent, having been crunched downwards on one side of the base. It is 10.125 inches (25.72 cm) tall on the highest side and 9.4375" (23.97 cm) tall on the lowest side. There are three sets of engraved inscriptions; see pages 10-12 for details.





Commodore John Cox Stevens  
(1785-1857)  
The Father of American Yachting

# Historical Significance

- The *Wave Cup*, awarded in 1835, is the oldest trophy in American yachting.

The Cup was the prize of the first yacht race in the United States reported by the press.<sup>1</sup> The media covered the race because it was an inter-regional contest—a novelty at that time.<sup>2</sup>

John Cox Stevens, who had organized inter-regional thoroughbred horse races in the United States in the 1820s, replicated that concept for yachting in 1835. Stevens sailed his yacht *Wave* from its homeport of New York to New England to race against *Sylph*, owned by John Perkins Cushing of Boston.<sup>3</sup>

*Wave* and *Sylph* raced twice during that summer of 1835: on July 30,<sup>4</sup> in Nantucket Sound near Handkerchief Shoal<sup>5</sup>, and on August 4, in the Vineyard Sound.<sup>6</sup> *Wave* won the first race (July 30<sup>th</sup>). The outcome of the second race (August 4<sup>th</sup>) is uncertain, given conflicting accounts; it was either another victory for *Wave* or an inconclusive result.<sup>7</sup>

- John Cox Stevens, the winner of the *Wave Cup*, is the “Father of American Yachting.” Stevens and eight of his friends founded the influential New York Yacht Club in 1844, and he served as the Club’s first commodore. Stevens earned international acclaim for winning the America’s Cup in 1851. Given his accomplishments, he’s an inductee of the America’s Cup Hall of Fame and the National Sailing Hall of Fame.
- The *Wave* is the earliest known yacht designed using experimental test models. Around 1832, the Stevens brothers (John Cox, Robert Livingston, and Edwin Augustus) built and tested six fully-rigged ½” = 1’ scale “pond yacht” models.<sup>8</sup> They selected one, and it was used to build the *Wave*, launched in 1832 at the Brown & Bell shipyard in New York City.

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<sup>1</sup> Articles include: Anon. “Sailing Match.” *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 4, 1835. See Annotated Bibliography for other examples.

<sup>2</sup> Adelman Melvin L. *A Sporting Time. New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Anon. *New York American*. August 6, 1835. And corroborated by Anon. “Visit Along Shore. History of Sachem’s Head.” *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 5, 1835.

<sup>4</sup> Anon. “Sailing Match.” *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 4, 1835.

<sup>5</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>6</sup> Anon. “Pleasure Yachts”. *The United States Gazette* (Philadelphia). August 12, 1835.

<sup>7</sup> *Wave* won according to these sources: one, Forbes, Robert Bennet. Letter to the Editor. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. August 10, 1835; and, two, Anon. “Pleasure Yachts.” *The United States Gazette* (Philadelphia). August 12, 1835. These sources however suggest that it was inconclusive: one, Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. (ref. *Topliff’s Bulletin*.) August 7, 1835 and, two, Anon. *Boston Traveler* (published as *American Traveller*). August 11, 1835. See Chronology for more details.

<sup>8</sup> Stevens, Jr., Colonel Edwin A. “List and Description of Models.” Manuscript. Archives and Special Collections of the Samuel C. Williams Library, Stevens Institute of Technology.

- The inventive Stevens brothers pioneered innovations for the *Wave*. For example, she was equipped with ballast tanks that could be emptied from one into the other when sailing to windward.<sup>9</sup>
- The race between *Wave* and *Sylph* is the first known test between a *centerboard* yacht and a *keel* yacht in the United States. *Wave*'s hull, with its centerboard, was optimized for sailing in New York Harbor with its many shoals. By contrast, *Sylph* did not need a centerboard, given the deep harbors of Massachusetts Bay and other areas in New England (ironically, she ran aground at Woods Hole though). The contests between centerboard and keel yachts became a defining theme in the early NYYC regattas and the first seven defenses of the America's Cup.
- The race may have inspired English yachtsman Joseph Weld of the Royal Yacht Squadron to challenge Stevens in 1837 for an international match to test the qualities of English and American shipbuilding.<sup>10</sup> While the proposed match between Weld's cutter *Alarm* and Stevens' schooner *Wave* fell through,<sup>11</sup> it was a precursor, in concept, to the America's Cup.
- Influential pioneers of American yachting managed *Wave* and *Sylph*: John Cox Stevens, as noted above, and Robert Bennet Forbes. Forbes served as Cushing's sailing master in *Sylph*'s first race against *Wave* and was the owner/manager for the second race. Forbes was a founder and the first commodore of the first American yacht club, the Dream Club (1835-1837).
- In August 1844, Forbes and Stevens made yachting history again. Forbes' Boston pilot boat *Belle* rendezvoused with the newly-formed New York Yacht Club in Newport.<sup>12</sup> On August 8, Forbes's boat defeated four NYYC yachts—including Stevens' *Gimcrack*—in the Club's first race, held in Newport just nine days after the Club was founded.<sup>13</sup> Forbes was elected to the Club in the following year. He was appointed to the NYYC's first Regatta (Race) Committee, which oversaw the Club's inaugural Annual Regatta.<sup>14</sup>
- The *Wave*, sold by Stevens to the U.S. Government in 1838,<sup>15</sup> became the first American yacht—of many—to be commissioned as a United States Ship in the U.S. Navy.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Stevens, Jr., Colonel Edwin A. "List and Description of Models." Manuscript. Archives and Special Collections of the Samuel C. Williams Library, Stevens Institute of Technology.

<sup>10</sup> Anon. "A Challenge - England Against the World." *Easton Gazette* (Easton, MD). (ref. the *New York Courier*.) October 21, 1837.

<sup>11</sup> Anon. "The Yacht Stag Launched." *New York Daily Herald*. July 30, 1839.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Bennet Forbes. Diaries. August 1844 entries. Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>13</sup> Prudence. "Yachts at Newport." *The Atlas* (Boston). August 12, 1844.

<sup>14</sup> New York Yacht Club. Minutes. June 3 and 17, 1845.

<sup>15</sup> Anon. "The Wave." *Albany Argus*. (ref. the *Spirit of the Times*.) July 3, 1838.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Navy. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (DANFS). Online edition at the Naval History and Heritage Command. Entry: "Wave I (Sch)".

## Inscription 1 of 3



*Wave*, a centerboard-schooner yacht, 72' LOA, was designed by John Cox Stevens in collaboration with his brothers Robert Livingston Stevens and Edwin Augustus Stevens.<sup>17</sup> It was built by Brown & Bell at its shipyard on the East River in New York in 1832.<sup>18</sup> Stevens sailed *Wave* to New England in the summer of 1835 to race against *Sylph*, a keel-schooner yacht of Boston.<sup>19</sup>

Because this inscription refers to John Cox Stevens as “Commodore,” the engraving may have been executed after he was elected Commodore of the New York Yacht Club in July 1844. But, it is possible that Stevens may have held that title before the founding of the Club given his leadership in the sporting world and as the owner of steamships. A newspaper article in 1840—four years before the founding of the NYYC—describes Stevens in such a manner:

The American yacht squadron is yet small, but we think it will soon increase. It is now a young family of beautiful active children, soon to grow up into as much importance as an older family, or as the royal yacht squadron of England. Of the American squadron, John C. Stevens, Esq. is the Commodore, as the Earl of Yarborough is of the English; the Vice Commodore has not yet been appointed.<sup>20</sup>

Please see “Civilian Commodores...” (pp. 34-35) for more information about this topic.

<sup>17</sup> Stevens, Jr., Colonel Edwin A. “List and Description of Models.” Six-page manuscript. Archives and Special Collections of the Samuel C. Williams Library, Stevens Institute of Technology.

<sup>18</sup> Stevens, John Cox. Half-Hull Model of *Wave*. Scale: ½” = 1’. New York Yacht Club Collection. No. 487.

<sup>19</sup> Anon. *New York American*. August 6, 1835.

<sup>20</sup> Anon. “Yachting.” *New York Morning Herald*. May 23, 1840.

## Inscription 2 of 3



On July 30, 1835, *Sylph* and *Wave* competed in an impromptu race off Handkerchief Shoal. According to John Perkins Cushing, his yacht *Sylph* “got handsomely beaten”<sup>21</sup> by *Wave*.

On August 2, *Sylph* ran aground at Woods Hole,<sup>22</sup> damaging the vessel’s false keel. While the yacht was still on the rocks, Cushing sold it to his shipmates Robert Bennet Forbes and Samuel Cabot, Jr.<sup>23</sup> The yacht was refloated the following day.

*Sylph* encountered *Wave* at anchor in Vineyard Haven on the morning of August 4. Forbes hopped aboard *Wave*, and he arranged a rematch with Stevens.<sup>24</sup> The two yachts raced that day from Vineyard Haven to Tarpaulin Cove. Accounts disagree on the outcome.<sup>25</sup>

The inscription of “1836” is an error. There is no record of a race between these two yachts that year.

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<sup>21</sup> Cushing, John Perkins. *Diaries. 1834-1836*. July 27, 1835 entry, which covers several days. Boston Athenaeum Collections.

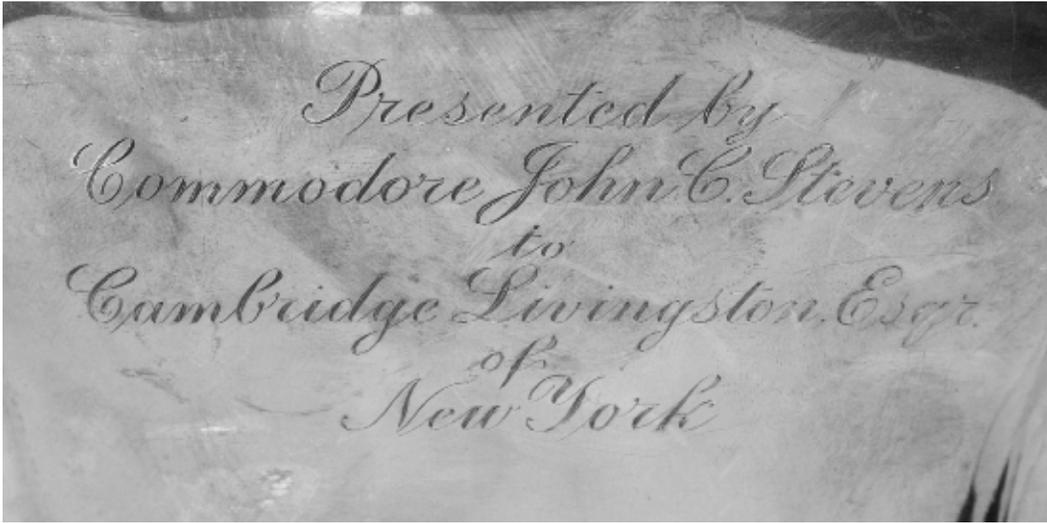
<sup>22</sup> Anon. “Marine Journal.” *New-Bedford Mercury*. August 7, 1835.

<sup>23</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Please see Footnote 7 and Chronology for more details.

## Inscription 3 of 3



Commodore Stevens, who died on June 10, 1857, bequeathed the Cup to his nephew Cambridge Livingston.<sup>26</sup> Thus, this inscription was likely engraved in 1857 or later.

According to master engraver Tony Gilson,<sup>27</sup> the quality of this engraving is not as good as the other two: he gives this work an "A-" rating and the other two an "A+."

This inscription also differs from the other two in specific details. For example, note that in inscription 3 the size of the letters "s," "q," and "r" in "Esqr." are of the same size. By contrast, in inscription 2, the "r" in "Esqr." is in superscript format.

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<sup>26</sup> Stevens, John Cox. *Will. Dated February 14, 1857. Codicils. Dated May 5, 1857, et al.* Wills and Probate Records. Vol. 120. Office of the Surrogate of the County of New York. His nephew Robert Cambridge Livingston was known by his middle name and last name.

<sup>27</sup> Tony Gilson examined the cup on February 6, 2023, at his workshop at 7116 Miami Avenue, Madeira, Ohio 45243.

## Maker's Mark



The maker's mark, W.G, of New York silversmith William Gale, Sr. and the pseudo hallmarks (portrait bust and eagle) indicate that Gale made the Cup sometime in the period from 1832 to 1835 when he was a sole proprietor, shown in **bold** below:

<i>FIRM</i>	<i>YEARS ACTIVE</i>	<i>MAKER'S MARK</i>
Gale & Stickler	1821-1823	GALE & STICKLER
[Unknown]	1824	??
John L. & W. Gale	1825-1827	??
Gale & Moseley	1828-1832/33 <sup>28</sup>	G&M
<b>William Gale</b>	<b>1832/33-1833/36</b>	<b>W.G</b>
Gale, Wood & Hughes	1833/36-1844/45 <sup>29</sup>	G.W&H
Gale & Hayden	1845-1849	GALE & HAYDEN <i>or</i> G&H
Wm. Gale, Son & Co.	1850-1853	??
Wm. Gale & Son	1853-1859	W.G&S <i>or</i> Wm GALE & SON
Gale & Willis	1859-1862	GALE & WILLIS
Wm. Gale & Son	1862-1867	W.G&S <i>or</i> Wm GALE & SON

William Gale, Sr (1799-1867) started his first silversmith business in 1821 with John Stickler in New York City. He subsequently worked as a sole proprietor or partner with others, including his son.

Gale patented a steam-powered process for manufacturing flatware in 1826 using steel roller dies to increase output and lower costs. As a result, his business enjoyed an advantage over his competitors until the patent expired in 1840. After that, other silversmiths borrowed his technique, which helped spur the growth of the silverware industry in the United States.

<sup>28</sup> The Gale & Moseley partnership ended in 1832, according to the Winterthur Museum. Other sources, such as Charles Venable's *Silver in America*, cite 1833.

<sup>29</sup> The partnership of William. Gale, Jacob Wood and Jasper W. Hughes was formed in 1836 according to the Winterthur Museum and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Other sources state 1833 as the start of the partnership, such as Venable's *Silver in America*. Because Wood and Hughes were apprenticed to Gale (according to Deborah Dependahl Waters in her essay in *Art and the Empire City New York*. pg. 373), it is possible that the "W.G" mark was used in the early years of the partnership.

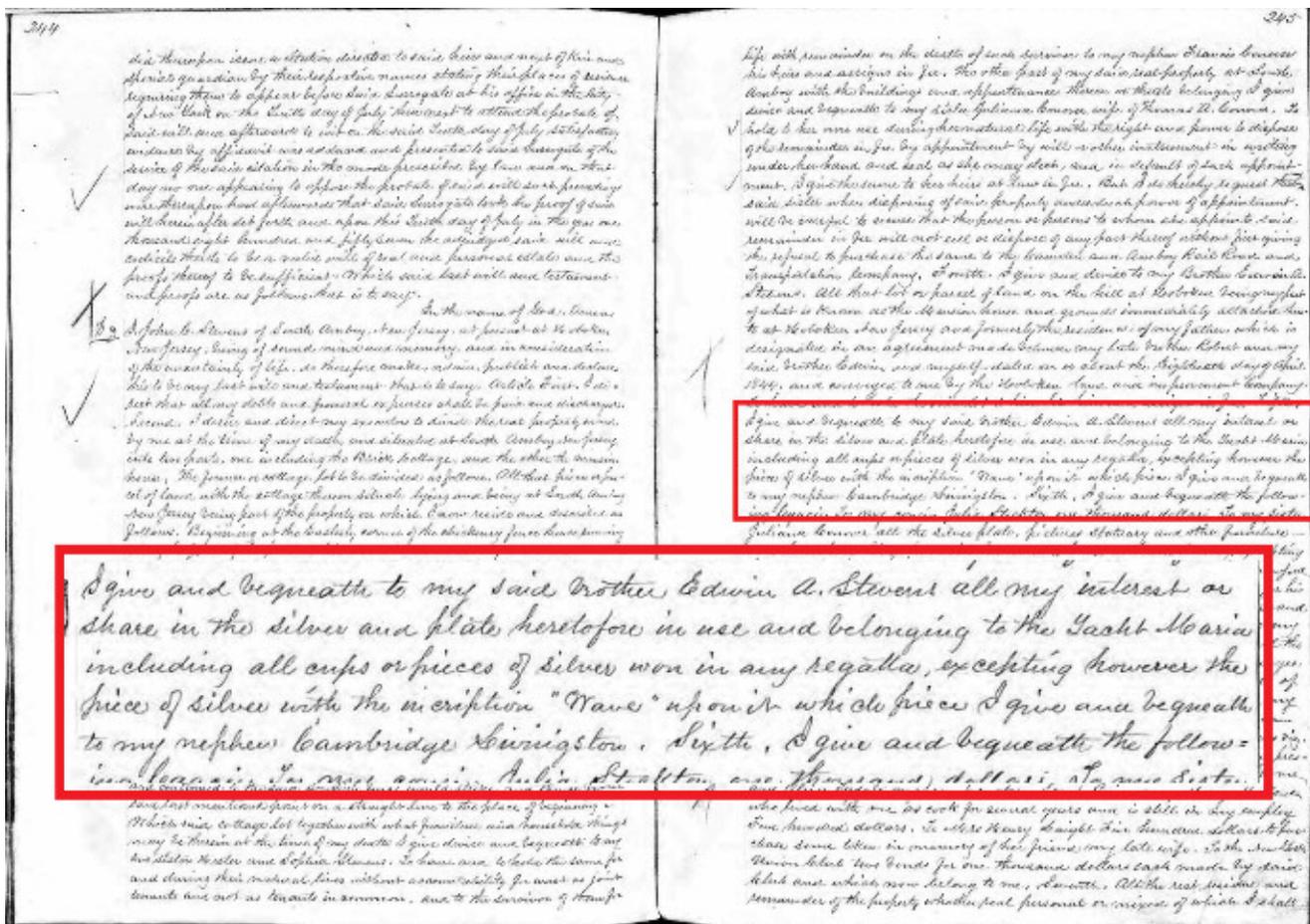
# Provenance

1857

John Cox Stevens (1785-1857), who died on June 10, 1857, bequeathed the Wave Cup to his nephew Cambridge Livingston (1812-1879).

Excerpt of Stevens' will<sup>30</sup>, dated February 14, 1857.

I give and bequeath to my said brother Edwin A. Stevens all my interest or share in the silver and plate heretofore in use and belonging to the Yacht Maria including all cups or pieces of silver won in any regatta, excepting however the piece of silver with the inscription "Wave" upon it which piece I give and bequeath to my nephew Cambridge Livingston.



I give and bequeath to my said brother Edwin A. Stevens all my interest or share in the silver and plate heretofore in use and belonging to the Yacht Maria including all cups or pieces of silver won in any regatta, excepting however the piece of silver with the inscription "Wave" upon it which piece I give and bequeath to my nephew Cambridge Livingston. Sixth, I give and bequeath the following...

<sup>30</sup> Stevens, John Cox. *Will. Dated February 14, 1857. Codicils. Dated May 5, 1857, et al. Wills and Probate Records*. Vol. 120. Office of the Surrogate of the County of New York.

## 2012-2022

Silver Plate Buyers, a family-run metals recycling business in Goffstown, New Hampshire, acquired the *Wave Cup* sometime from 2012 to 2022. Scott and Gloria Lindsey, the company's co-owners, do not know who they bought the Cup from or in what year.<sup>31</sup> Scott Lindsey, in replying to an inquiry about the Cup's provenance, writes:

As far as the previous ownership, we buy from all over the country, and we've had this piece for a while. We won't be able to trace it to the exact seller this far out from the buy, sorry about that. I've talked to several other people here, and unfortunately we don't remember who it came from.<sup>32</sup>

Silver Plate Buyers and its sister company, Aurum Recovery Group, is a high-volume operation that recycles various objects from non-ferrous metal items to electronic equipment.<sup>33</sup>

The majority of the metal objects they purchase “are shredded into small pieces and sent through a chemical refining process that separates mixed materials into purer forms of metal...”<sup>34</sup> But objects that the company deems historically or aesthetically significant, or have the potential for reuse, are preserved and sold to consumers. One such object was the *Wave Cup* which they put up for auction on eBay in January 2023.

## 2023

R. Steven Tsuchiya purchased the *Wave Cup* on eBay for \$2,113.25<sup>35</sup> from Silver Plate Buyers (its seller name on eBay is “NH Silver and More” with a username of “Silverbucks”) on January 28, 2023. UPS delivered the Cup to Tsuchiya's residence on February 1, 2023.

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<sup>31</sup> Interviewed Gloria Lindsey on March 24, 2023, via phone.

<sup>32</sup> Excerpt of Scott Lindsey's reply to R. Steven Tsuchiya's inquiry via eBay's buyer/seller communication portal. February 2, 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Both businesses are located in a 32,000 square-foot facility at 10 Lamy Drive in Goffstown, New Hampshire.

<sup>34</sup> Silver Plate Buyers company website: <https://silverplatebuyers.com/faq/>

<sup>35</sup> \$1,950.00 (winning bid price) + \$138.25 (sales tax) + \$25.00 (shipping) = \$2,113.25 (total).

# Chronology

- c.1816 John Cox Stevens designs and launches the 64' LOA periauger<sup>36</sup> *Trouble*.<sup>37</sup> This is the Stevens Family's first yacht. Within several years, Stevens also designs a catamaran, *Double Trouble*.
- 1820 Stevens convenes fellow horse-breeders to found the New York Association for the Improvement of the Breed of Horses (NYAIBH).<sup>38</sup>
- 1821 The NYAIBH successfully lobbies the New York State York Legislature to repeal the 1802 New York "Act to Prevent Horse-Racing".<sup>39</sup> Legalized horseracing—and gambling on it—resumes in New York. One of the first horse races at the NYAIBH's Union Course racetrack in Jamaica, Long Island, is an inter-regional contest between New York's American Eclipse and North Carolina's Lady Lightfoot. American Eclipse wins.<sup>40</sup>
- 1823 Stevens organizes a match between American Eclipse and the Southern colt Sir Henry at the Union Course. On May 27, this contest, interpreted as a battle between North and South, draws an astonishing 60,000 spectators—roughly half the population of New York City at that time. Dubbed the "Great Match," it is by far the largest sporting event in the United States up to that time. American Eclipse wins, and Stevens' bet pays off.<sup>41</sup>
- Dec. 7, 1826 New York silversmith William Gale, Sr. receives a patent for flatware roller dies.<sup>42</sup> Gale becomes a dominant player in the silversmith industry, and his manufacturing process revolutionizes the silverware industry in the United States.

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<sup>36</sup> A periauger is a two-masted inshore sailing vessel with a shallow draft and flat bottom.

<sup>37</sup> New York Yacht Club Model Committee's data for the Half-Hull Model of *Trouble*. Made by John Cox Stevens. Scale: ½" = 1'. New York Yacht Club Collection. No. 486.

<sup>38</sup> Eisenberg, John. *The Great Match Race. When North met South in America's First Sports Spectacle*. Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006. Page 67.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* Page 67.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* Page 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* Multiple pages.

<sup>42</sup> Venable, Charles L. *Silver in America. 1840-1940. A Century of Splendor*. Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1995. Pg. 319.

- 1832 Schooner yacht *Wave*, designed by the brothers John Cox Stevens, Robert Livingston Stevens, and Edwin Augustus Stevens, is built and launched at the Brown & Bell shipyard on the East River in New York.<sup>43</sup>
- June 1833 Schooner yacht *Dream*, designed by Isaac Webb, is built and launched at Webb's yard in New York. Henry Bohler is listed as the yacht's owner in July 1833.<sup>44</sup>
- 1834 Schooner yacht *Sylph* is built and launched at Whitmore and Holbrook shipyard in Boston for John Perkins Cushing; his cousin Robert Bennet Forbes is an advisor and sailing master.<sup>45</sup>
- At this time, there are only three known yachts in the mid-Atlantic and New England states.
- Summer 1834 Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Jr. (a cousin of John Perkins Cushing) purchases the schooner yacht *Dream* in New York and brings the yacht to Boston Harbor.
- 1834 or 1835 Thomas H. Perkins, Jr.'s *Dream* defeats John Perkins Cushing's *Sylph* in a race in Boston Harbor. While this is the first known yacht race in the United States, contemporary newspapers have no record of the match. The only information discovered about this race is in the pamphlet *Some Merchants and Sea Captains of Old Boston*.<sup>46</sup>
- March 1835 *Sylph* is lengthened by approximately 8 ½', as measured by length-on-deck, in Medford, Massachusetts.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> New York Yacht Club Model Committee's data for the Half-Hull Model of *Wave*. Made by John Cox Stevens. Scale: ½" = 1'. New York Yacht Club Collection. No. 487.

<sup>44</sup> Napier, Rob. *Schooner Yacht Dream of 1833*. 21 September 2019. Unpublished.

<sup>45</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>46</sup> State Street Trust Company. *Some Merchants and Sea Captains of Old Boston. Being a collection of sketches of notable men and mercantile houses prominent during the early half of the nineteenth century in the commerce and shipping of Boston*. Boston: State Street Trust Company, 1918.

<sup>47</sup> Cushing, John Perkins. *Diaries. 1834-1836*. March 12, 1835 entry. Boston Athenaeum Collections.

- April 1835      John Cox Stevens organizes a running contest, open to people of all nationalities, at the Union Course. Stevens offers \$1,000 to the first contestant who completes a 10-mile run in one hour or less. He also offers bonus money to the top three finishers. The novelty of the contest and the prize money attracts nine contestants and thousands of spectators. Henry Stannard, a farmer from Connecticut, is the only runner to finish in time. The contest, now known as the “Great Footrace,” popularizes pedestrian races.<sup>48</sup>
- Spring 1835      Thomas H. Perkins, Jr. forms a syndicate with nine others<sup>49</sup> to own *Dream* as a private club, “The Dream Club.” Robert Bennet Forbes is elected commodore.<sup>50</sup>
- July 1835      *Wave* departs New York for Boston to race her against John Perkins Cushing’s yacht *Sylph* of Boston.<sup>51</sup> The people aboard *Wave* include John Cox Stevens, one of his brothers (likely Robert Livingston Stevens but possibly Edwin Augustus Stevens), Lt. Joshua R. Sands USN (a brother-in-law of Stevens<sup>52</sup>), and a Mr. Thomson (or Thompson<sup>53</sup>) of Princeton.
- They sail towards Boston via Long Island Sound, stopping at one point at Sachem’s Head, Connecticut.<sup>54</sup>
- July 27, 1835      *Sylph* departs Boston for Newport. The people aboard *Sylph* include John Perkins Cushing, Robert Bennet Forbes, Samuel Cabot, Jr., William Sturgis, R. D. Stephen, and D. C. Bacon.<sup>55</sup>
- July 29, 1835      *Wave* visits Newport.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Adelman Melvin L. *A Sporting Time. New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. Pg. 212.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Bennet Forbes, Thomas G. Appleton, Daniel C. Bacon, B. Bangs, John Bryant, Jr., J. S. Copley Greene, Samuel Hooper, John A. Lowell, and William F. Otis. Source: Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>50</sup> Forbes went by the title of “Commodore” beginning in 1834 when he formed a rowing club in Boston—according to his memoirs *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>51</sup> Anon. *New York American*. August 6, 1835. And corroborated by Anon. "Visit Along Shore. History of Sachem’s Head." *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 5, 1835.

<sup>52</sup> Lt. Sands was married to John Cox Stevens’ sister Harriet (1801-1844), and, earlier, to the late sister Mary (1799-1825).

<sup>53</sup> Spelled “Thompson” in this article: Anon. *New York American*. August 6, 1835.

<sup>54</sup> Anon. "Visit Along Shore. History of Sachem’s Head." *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 5, 1835.

<sup>55</sup> Cushing, John Perkins. *Diaries. 1834-1836*. July 27, 1835 entry. Boston Athenaeum Collections.

<sup>56</sup> Anon. *New York American*. August 6, 1835.

- July 30, 1835     **RACE 1 of 2:** *Wave*, heading eastbound to Boston, and *Sylph*, sailing westbound, encounter each other by accident near Handkerchief Shoal on Nantucket Sound. Stevens and Cushing hold an impromptu race. *Wave* wins.<sup>57</sup>
- August 1, 1835     *Wave* arrives in Boston.<sup>58</sup> She departs the following day.<sup>59</sup>
- August 2, 1835     *Sylph* runs aground at Woods Hole<sup>60</sup> on a ledge near “Lone Rock”; the yacht’s false keel and copper plating are damaged.<sup>61</sup> Cushing sells the yacht to his shipmates Robert Bennet Forbes and Samuel Cabot, Jr. for just a fourth of its cost.<sup>62</sup> Cushing departs for Boston by land and there is no record of him yacht racing again.<sup>63</sup>
- August 3, 1835     *Sylph* is refloated.<sup>64</sup>
- August 4, 1835     **RACE 2 of 2:** *Sylph* encounters *Wave* at anchor in Holmes Hole (Vineyard Haven) in the morning. Forbes boards the *Wave* and proposes a rematch. Stevens accepts the challenge and they race that day. The course is from Holmes Hole to Tarpaulin Cove or to Newport—there are conflicting records of the location of the finish. *Wave* reaches Tarpaulin Cove first and is reported as the winner by most articles in the contemporary press and by Forbes at that time.<sup>65</sup> But, two contemporary articles<sup>66</sup> and Forbes’s 1888

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<sup>57</sup> Anon. “Sailing Match.” *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 4, 1835.

<sup>58</sup> Anon. *New York American*. August 6, 1835.

<sup>59</sup> Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. (ref. *Topliff’s Bulletin*.) August 4, 1835.

<sup>60</sup> The dates of *Sylph*’s accident and its refloating are noted in Anon. “Marine Journal.” *New-Bedford Mercury*. August 7, 1835. The accident is corroborated by Cushing, John Perkins. *Diaries. 1834-1836*. Boston Athenaeum Collections. His July 27, 1835 entry, which covers several days of activities, mentions the accident but Cushing does not specify the date of the accident.

<sup>61</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>62</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>63</sup> Cushing, John Perkins. *Diaries. 1834-1836*. Boston Athenaeum Collections. Cushing describes his departure in his entry of July 27, 1835, which covers several days of activities.

<sup>64</sup> Anon. “Marine Journal.” *New-Bedford Mercury*. August 7, 1835.

<sup>65</sup> There are two sources that support this outcome of the race: Forbes, Robert Bennet. Letter to the Editor. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. August 10, 1835; and, Anon. “Pleasure Yachts.” *The United States Gazette* (Philadelphia). August 12, 1835.

<sup>66</sup> Two articles report that *Wave* retired early from the race: one, Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. (ref. *Topliff’s Bulletin*.) August 7, 1835 and, two, Anon. *Boston Traveler* (published as *American Traveller*). August 11, 1835. But Forbes refutes the August 7 article in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* via a letter to the editor: Forbes, Robert Bennet. Letter to the Editor. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. August 10, 1835. Forbes writes: “Allow me to state, through the medium of your paper, that the account of the second race between the boats *Wave* and *Sylph*, as

memoir report that the *Wave*, laboring in heavy seas, took shelter in Tarpaulin Cove; thus, as a result, did not complete the race.<sup>67</sup>

Newspapers such as the *Commercial Advertiser* (New York)<sup>68</sup> begin reporting an account of the first race (July 30<sup>th</sup>).

- Sept. 28, 1835 Forbes and Cabot put *Sylph* up for sale.<sup>69</sup>
- 1836 Forbes and Cabot sell *Sylph* to pilot boat operators in Boston.<sup>70</sup>
- May 1837 The Panic of 1837 begins, followed by a major depression that persists until 1844.
- 1837 The depression leads to the demise of the Dream Club.<sup>71</sup> Forbes uses *Dream* as a Boston Harbor pilot boat.<sup>72</sup> He returns to China to rebuild his fortune.
- July 17, 1837 English yachtsman Joseph Weld, a founder of the Royal Yacht Squadron, challenges yachtsmen for a match race. The press believes that Weld has John Cox Stevens and *Wave* in mind as a potential contestant.<sup>73</sup> Stevens accepts the challenge but no race is held.<sup>74</sup>
- October 1837 *Sylph* is acquired by the New Jersey Sandy Hook Pilots.<sup>75</sup>
- May 1838 The United States, engaged in the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), seeks a vessel to patrol southern Florida to stop arms

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published in your paper, was totally unauthorized by me. The *Sylph* was fairly beaten in both trials.”

<sup>67</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

<sup>68</sup> Anon. “Sailing Match.” *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 4, 1835. This article mentions that newspapers in Boston have reported the race as well; therefore, the earliest reports were published prior to August 4.

<sup>69</sup> Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. October 19, 1835.

<sup>70</sup> Eastman, Ralph M. *Pilots and Pilot Boats of Boston Harbor*. Boston: Second Bank-State Street Trust Company, 1956.

<sup>71</sup> Napier, Rob. *Schooner Yacht Dream of 1833*. 21 September 2019. Unpublished.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Anon. “A Challenge - England Against the World.” *Easton Gazette* (Easton, MD). (ref. the *New York Courier*.) October 21, 1837.

<sup>74</sup> Anon. “The Yacht Stag Launched.” *New York Daily Herald*. July 30, 1839.

<sup>75</sup> Eastman, Ralph M. *Pilots and Pilot Boats of Boston Harbor*. Boston: Second Bank-State Street Trust Company, 1956.

traffic from the Caribbean, assist mariners, and conduct riverine operations. Lt. John T. McLaughlin USN (1812-1847) recommends a fast schooner with a shallow draft and one that could accommodate a couple of armed barges.<sup>76</sup>

- June 1838      The U.S. Navy sends Lt. McLaughlin to New York to purchase Stevens' yacht *Wave*; <sup>77</sup> Stevens sells the yacht for \$8,000.<sup>78</sup>
- Aug. 1, 1838      U.S.S. *Wave* departs New York for Florida under the command of Lt. McLaughlin, who remarks that the schooner is "as fine a sea-boat as She was known to be a Sailor."<sup>79</sup> The U.S.S. *Wave* serves in the war in southern Florida until 1842 (except during the summer of 1839, when it was repaired in Brooklyn or New York).<sup>80</sup>
- Aug. 23, 1839      The Navy dispatches the U.S.S. *Wave* and another warship, also based in New York Harbor, to search for a suspicious slave ship that had passed by Sandy Hook earlier that week. That ship was the *La Amistad*.<sup>81</sup> The U.S.R.C. *Washington*, while on surveying duties, discovers the *La Amistad* on August 26 near Montauk, Long Island.
- 1841              George L. Schuyler of New York purchases *Dream*.<sup>82</sup>
- 1844              U.S.S. *Wave* begins service as a surveying vessel, charting the Atlantic seaboard, under the command of Lt. John R. Goldsborough (1809-1877)<sup>83</sup> and others for the United States Coast Survey until at least 1858.<sup>84</sup> The boat's ultimate fate is a mystery.

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<sup>76</sup> Buker, George E. *Swamp Sailors in the Second Seminole War*. Gainesville, FL: University Press@UF, 2017 (reissue; originally published in 1997). Page 72.

<sup>77</sup> Buker, George E. *Swamp Sailors in the Second Seminole War*. Gainesville, FL: University Press@UF, 2017 (reissue; originally published in 1997). Page 72.

<sup>78</sup> Anon. "The Wave." *Albany Argus*. (ref. the *Spirit of the Times*.) July 3, 1838.

<sup>79</sup> Lt. John T. McLaughlin to the Secretary of the Navy, Aug. 21, 1838. Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers below the Rank of Commander, 1802-84. Record Group 45, National Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Buker, George E. *Swamp Sailors in the Second Seminole War*. Gainesville, FL: University Press@UF, 2017 (reissue; originally published in 1997). Page 97.

<sup>81</sup> "Our Navy". *New York Daily Herald*. September 5, 1839.

<sup>82</sup> Napier, Rob. *Schooner Yacht Dream of 1833*. 21 September 2019. Unpublished.

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Navy. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (DANFS). Online edition at the Naval History and Heritage Command. Entry: "Wave I (Sch)".

<sup>84</sup> Title. *Report of the Superintendent of the Coast Survey, showing the progress of the survey during the year 1858*. Washington: William A. Harris, Printer, 1859. Pages 46, 80, and 132.

- July 30, 1844 On the day of the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Wave's* victory over *Sylph*, John Cox Stevens, George L. Schuyler, and seven others found the New York Yacht Club aboard Stevens' yacht *Gimcrack*, moored off the Battery in New York. The founders elect Stevens as the Club's commodore and they pass resolutions, including the development of rules and regulations to govern the Club and a cruise to Newport.<sup>85</sup>
- August 2, 1844 The NYYC fleet of eight schooner yachts departs New York for Newport in the Club's first Annual Cruise. The fleet includes Stevens' *Gimcrack*, Schuyler's *Dream*, William Edgar's *Cygnnet*, and Hamilton Wilkes' *Spray*. They are joined by two North River sloops including the *Eliza Ann*. They hold informal trials of speed on the cruise to Newport, making stops along the way at ports on Long Island Sound.<sup>86</sup>
- Robert Bennet Forbes, aboard his pilot schooner *Belle*, departs Nahant at 1800 to rendezvous with the NYYC fleet in Newport.<sup>87</sup> His guests include R.S. Fay, David Sears, Jr., Sam Hooper, Joseph Lyman, and Fred Sears; and a Mr. Fowler who was likely the boat's captain.<sup>88</sup>
- August 5, 1844 Forbes' *Belle* arrives at Newport in the morning. The NYYC fleet arrives later that day.<sup>89</sup> (Two more boats from Boston, including William Winchester's *Northern Light*, would arrive in Newport later that week).<sup>90</sup>
- August 6, 1844 Forbes challenges New York's *Eliza Ann* to race to Point Judith. compete in an inter-regional match race. But an uninvited NYYC yacht, *Cygnnet*, owned by William Edgar, joins the contest and beats both boats.<sup>91</sup>
- August 7, 1844 The NYYC and Bostonian yachts participate together in a cruise, with female guests included, around Prudence Island in the Narragansett.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> New York Yacht Club. *Minutes*. July 30, 1844.

<sup>86</sup> New York Yacht Club. *Minutes*. August 2-5, 1844.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Bennet Forbes. Diaries. August 2, 1844 entry. Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Bennet Forbes. Diaries. August 3, 1844 entry. Massachusetts Historical Society. "Mr. Fowler" is likely William C. Fowler.

<sup>89</sup> New York Yacht Club. *Minutes*. August 5, 1844.

<sup>90</sup> New York Yacht Club. *Minutes*. August 11, 1844.

<sup>91</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. Letter to the Editor. *The Atlas* (Boston). August 19, 1844.

<sup>92</sup> Voyageur. "Letters from the East. Boston, August 19, 1844." *Saturday Courier* (Philadelphia). August 24, 1844.

- August 8, 1844 The NYYC holds its first race—a 23-mile fleet race around Conanicut Island in the Narragansett. Five boats compete: Forbes' *Belle*, Stevens' *Gimcrack*, Edgar's *Cygnets*, Schuyler's *Dream*, and Wilkes' *Spray*.<sup>93</sup> This is likely the first race between Stevens and Forbes since the 1835 races between *Wave* and *Sylph*.<sup>94</sup> *Belle*—the only non-NYYC boat—wins the race; Forbes finally bests his rival Stevens.
- June 3, 1845 Robert Bennet Forbes is elected to the New York Yacht Club (proposed by George L. Schuyler and seconded by G. W. Blunt).<sup>95</sup>
- June 17, 1845 The NYYC appoints Forbes and two others to serve as the first members of the Club's Regatta (Race) Committee to oversee the Club's first Annual Regatta, scheduled for July 17 in NY Harbor.<sup>96</sup>
- August 22, 1851 Yacht *America*, owned by a syndicate of NYYC members led by John Cox Stevens, defeats a fleet of English yachts in the celebrated race around the Isle of Wight to win the Royal Yacht Squadron £100 Cup.
- May 6, 1853 Cambridge Livingston is elected to the New York Yacht Club (proposed by Stevens and seconded by William Laight).<sup>97</sup>
- March 2, 1857 *Sylph* is lost with all hands in a gale near Barnegat, New Jersey.<sup>98</sup>
- June 10, 1857 John Cox Stevens dies. His nephew Cambridge Livingston inherits the *Wave* Cup.<sup>99</sup> Livingston serves as one of the three executors<sup>100</sup> of Stevens' estate.
- 1888 Robert Bennet Forbes publishes his yachting memoir *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. It includes a

<sup>93</sup> Prudence. "Yachts at Newport." *The Atlas* (Boston). August 12, 1844.

<sup>94</sup> Having reviewed newspapers and Forbes' diary, I haven't uncovered any races between Stevens and Forbes in the nine-year period after the 1835 match and the NYYC race of August 8, 1844.

<sup>95</sup> New York Yacht Club. Minutes. June 3, 1845.

<sup>96</sup> New York Yacht Club. Minutes. June 17, 1845.

<sup>97</sup> New York Yacht Club. Minutes. May 6, 1853.

<sup>98</sup> Anon. "News Summary." *Brooklyn Evening Star*. March 16, 1857.

<sup>99</sup> Stevens, John Cox. *Will*. Dated February 14, 1857. *Codicils*. Dated May 5, 1857, et al. Wills and Probate Records. Vol. 120. Office of the Surrogate of the County of New York.

<sup>100</sup> The other two being John Cox Stevens' brother Edwin Augustus Stevens (1795-1868) and nephew Richard Stevens Conover (1832-1912). Richard S. Conover was a son of Commodore Thomas A. Conover USN (1791-1864) and Elizabeth J. Stevens (1787-1881), sister of John Cox Stevens.

narrative about the 1835 match between *Wave* and *Sylph*<sup>101</sup> but he infers that *Sylph* won both races—contradicting the testimony he made in 1835.<sup>102</sup>

- June 1904 Using Forbes' memoirs and other sources, yachting historian Winfield Thompson elevates the stature of the *Wave* vs. *Sylph* match by recognizing it as the first recorded American yacht race in an article in *The Rudder* magazine.<sup>103</sup>
- 1905 Colonel Edwin A. Stevens, Jr., son of NYYC Commodore Edwin A. Stevens, donates a ½" = 1' scale test model of *Wave* made by John Cox Stevens *et al* (along with models of *Trouble* and *Maria*) to the New York Yacht Club. The Club's Model Committee saws the model's hull in half to mount it as a half-hull artifact in the Model Room and returns the other half to Colonel Stevens.<sup>104</sup>
- June 1935 Yachting historian William U. Swan publishes an article in the *Boston Globe* about the history and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Wave* vs. *Sylph* match.<sup>105</sup>
- August 3, 1935 The Centennial Race (start at Vineyard Sound, then around Block Island and finish at Edgartown), organized by the William U. Swan, the Southern Massachusetts Yacht Racing Association, *et al*, commemorates the *Wave* vs *Sylph* match. Charles Rockwell's *Belisarius*<sup>106</sup> and Jack Parkinson's *Praxilla* are winners of their respective classes.<sup>107</sup> Silver bowls, presented by the descendants of John Cox Stevens and Robert Bennet Forbes, are awarded to the winners.<sup>108</sup>
- 2008 John Rousmaniere rejuvenates the story of the 1835 *Wave* vs. *Sylph* match in his 2008 book, *The New York Yacht Club, A History*

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<sup>101</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888. Chapter III.

<sup>102</sup> Forbes states: "The *Sylph* was fairly beaten in both trials." Forbes, Robert Bennet. Letter to the Editor. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. August 10, 1835.

<sup>103</sup> Thompson, Winfield M. "Historic American Yachts Some Early Boston Vessels, *Sylph* and *Dream*." *The Rudder*. Vol XV, No 6, June 1904.

<sup>104</sup> New York Yacht Club. Model Committee Card Catalog Entry for *Wave*.

<sup>105</sup> Swan, William U. "Yachting 100 Years Ago." *The Boston Globe*. June 19, 1935.

<sup>106</sup> *Belisarius* was the last large yacht designed by N.G. Herreshoff. The yacht resides at the Herreshoff Marine Museum.

<sup>107</sup> Anon. "Belisarius takes Block Island Sail." Edgartown, Mass. Aug. 5. (AP). *New York Times*. August 6, 1935.

<sup>108</sup> Anon. "Fleet of 13 gathers for Centennial Race. Sail around Block Island starts off today." Special Dispatch to the *Globe*. Vineyard Haven, Aug 2. *The Boston Globe*. August 3, 1935.

1844-2008.<sup>109</sup> In his telling of that story, he also places a spotlight on how John Cox Stevens and Robert Bennet Forbes maintained a link between the yachtsmen of New York and Boston in the development of organized yacht racing in the United States. He explains how Stevens and Forbes were instigators of both the 1835 match and the 1844 rendezvous of the fleets of New York and of Boston in Newport, which led to the first race of the New York Yacht Club on August 8, 1844.

- 2012-2022 Silver Plate Buyers, a metals recycling company in Goffstown, New Hampshire purchases the *Wave* Cup from a now forgotten seller.
- January 2023 Silver Plate Buyers puts the *Wave* Cup for auction on eBay via its ecommerce store, "NH Silver and More".
- Jan. 28, 2023 Yachting historian Robert Kamins discovers NH Silver and More's eBay listing of the *Wave* Cup. He alerts fellow historian R. Steven Tsuchiya. Tsuchiya, the only bidder, wins the auction and purchases the trophy for \$2,113.25.
- Feb. 1, 2023 UPS delivers the *Wave* Cup to Tsuchiya's residence.
- Feb. 15, 2023 Tsuchiya studies John Perkins Cushing's diaries at the Boston Athenaeum (10 ½ Beacon St, Boston, Massachusetts).
- Feb. 23, 2023 Tsuchiya shows the *Wave* Cup to Commodore Paul M. Zabetakis, Rear Commodore Clare G. Harrington, and curator Alice Dickinson in the library of the New York Yacht Club, 37 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street, New York.
- Tsuchiya and Dickinson study the model of half-hull model of *Wave* in the NYYC Model Collection.
- April 19, 2023 Silver experts Timothy H. Martin and James R. McConaughy of S.J. Shrubsole examine the *Wave* Cup at the firm's gallery at 26 East 81<sup>st</sup> Street, New York.<sup>110</sup>
- May 24, 2023 Tsuchiya views the Stevens family archives at the Stevens Institute of Technology (1 Castle Point Terrace, Hoboken, New

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<sup>109</sup> Rousmaniere, John. *The New York Yacht Club, A History 1844-2008*. New York: The New York Yacht Club and Seapoint Books, 2008. Pages 20-21.

<sup>110</sup> On June 6, 2023, Tim Martin furnished Tsuchiya with an insurance valuation of the Cup.

Jersey). He discovers Edwin A. Stevens, Jr.'s notes about *Wave* and other vessels designed and/or owned by the Stevens family.

June 7, 2023      Tsuchiya studies Robert Bennet Forbes' diaries at the Massachusetts Historical Society (1154 Boylston St, Boston, Massachusetts).

June 10, 2023      Tsuchiya shows the *Wave* Cup to yachting historian John Rousmaniere in Westwood, Massachusetts.

Tsuchiya visits the Forbes House Museum (215 Adams St, Milton, Massachusetts). Because the Museum's is hosting the Seafarer's Festival that day, the museum's leadership including Executive Director Heidi Vaughan and Trustee Patricia Bulman are in attendance. Also present is Ebenezer "Eben" Forbes, a direct descendant of one of Robert Bennet Forbes' brothers. They are surprised to see the *Wave* Cup; in turn, the Museum staff surprises Tsuchiya by showing him the builder's model of *Sylph*, which hangs in the "Captain Robert Bennet Forbes Room."

June 18, 2023      Tsuchiya visits Robert Kamins in Wilmette, Illinois.



Robert Kamins and Steve Tsuchiya with the *Wave* Cup at the Wilmette Sailing Beach on June 18, 2023. Kamins discovered the eBay listing of the trophy on the morning of January 28, 2023 and he alerted Tsuchiya, who went on to bid on it and won it later that day.

Oct. 13, 2023      Tsuchiya delivers a presentation about the *Wave* Cup to the flag officers of the New York Yacht Club and other members at a reception, organized by the Club's Fine Arts Committee, at Harbour Court in Newport.

## People Associated with the *Wave* Cup

First	Middle	Last	YOB	DOD	Age Jul- Aug 1835	Connection
John	Cox	Stevens	1785	1857	49	Owner/designer of <i>Wave</i> , built in 1832
John	Perkins	Cushing	1787	1862	48	Original owner of <i>Sylph</i> , built in 1834
Robert	Bennet	Forbes	1804	1889	30	Sailing master and next co-owner of <i>Sylph</i>
Samuel		Cabot, Jr.	1784	1863	50	Co-owner of <i>Sylph</i> with Forbes
William		Gale, Sr.	1799	1867	36	Silversmith of <i>Wave</i> Cup
[Robert]	Cambridge	Livingston	1812	1879	23	Nephew of John C. Stevens, Recipient of <i>Wave</i> Cup in 1857
Maria	Cambridge Livingston	Stevens	1799	1865	35	Wife of John Cox Stevens
Robert	Livingston	Stevens	1787	1856	47	Brother of JCS - may have been a guest on <i>Wave</i>
Edwin	Augustus	Stevens	1795	1868	40	Brother of JCS - may have been a guest on <i>Wave</i>
Joshua	Ratoon	Sands	1795	1883	40	Guest on <i>Wave</i> - a brother-in-law of JCS
William	F.	Sturgis	1782	1863	53	Guest of Forbes/Cushing on <i>Sylph</i>
Daniel	Carpenter	Bacon	1787	1856	48	Guest of Forbes/Cushing on <i>Sylph</i>
Thomas	Handasyd	Perkins, Jr.	1796	1850	38	Owner of <i>Dream</i> which defeated <i>Sylph</i> in 1834 or 1835
William	Carlton	Fowler	1809	1892	26	A Boston pilot and skipper [?] of <i>Sylph</i> in July/Aug 1835
Jacob		Bell	1792	1852	42	Built <i>Wave</i> in 1832 in New York East River yard
Joseph		Weld	1777	1863	58	Challenged JCS and <i>Wave</i> for a match in 1837
Edwin	Augustus	Stevens, Jr.	1858	1918	n/a	Donated model of <i>Wave</i> to NYYC in 1905



**John Cox Stevens (1785-1857)**, the winner of the *Wave* Cup, is the “Father of American Yachting.” Stevens and eight of his friends founded the influential New York Yacht Club in 1844, and he served as the Club’s first Commodore. Stevens earned international acclaim for winning the America’s Cup in 1851.

Stevens was born on September 24, 1785, at his family’s estate in Hoboken, New Jersey. He was the eldest son of Colonel John Stevens III (1749-1838), a lawyer, engineer, and inventor of steam vessels and locomotives who established patent law in the United States.

John Cox and his brothers shared their father’s inventive mind and engineering skill. John Cox’s yacht designs include *Trouble*, the catamaran *Double Trouble*, and *Wave*. He was also a notable figure in American horse racing and society during the first half of the 19th century. He organized the 1823 Great North-South Match, a race that heightened sectional tensions when the Northern horse, “American Eclipse”, triumphed over the Southern colt, “Sir Henry”. The victory sparked a newfound enthusiasm for horse racing in the United States. Stevens was a founding member of New York’s oldest private city club, the Union Club, and served as its second president.

Given his accomplishments, John Cox Stevens is an inductee of both the America’s Cup Hall of Fame and the National Sailing Hall of Fame.



**John Perkins Cushing (1787-1862)** was a prominent merchant, opium smuggler, and philanthropist. He was born in Boston to Robert Cushing and Ann Perkins.

After Cushing’s mother died of smallpox when he was a child, he was reared by his uncle Thomas Hannasyd Perkins (1764-1854). At age 16, Cushing went to work at his uncle’s mercantile firm in Canton, China. He excelled in his role and was soon appointed the firm’s resident agent, a position he held for nearly thirty years, amassing a great fortune. In 1830, he returned to Boston, where he married Mary Louisa Gardiner (1799-1862).

Cushing is a pioneer of early American yacht racing. In 1834, he commissioned the yacht *Sylph* with guidance from his cousin Robert Bennet Forbes, who served as the boat’s design consultant and sailing master. Cushing raced his new yacht against his cousin T. H. Perkins, Jr.’s *Dream* in Boston Harbor in 1834 or 1835 in the first known yacht race in the United States; however, unlike the match against *Wave* in 1835, there is no record of this race in contemporary newspapers.



**Robert Bennet Forbes (1804-1889)** was a sea captain, a merchant engaged in the opium trade in China, and a ship owner. Later in life, he was a philanthropist and a prolific author of books and pamphlets about his career in China, commerce, yachting, improvements in ship-building, and maritime safety.

Forbes was a co-founder and the commodore of America's first yacht club, the *Dream Club*, established in Boston in 1835. The Club dissolved in 1837.

Similar to John C. Stevens, Forbes was a hands-on yacht owner. Forbes helped design, oversaw its modifications,

and served as the sailing master to the yacht *Sylph* in 1834-1835. Forbes was the yachts' sailing master when it lost to Stevens' *Wave* in the trial of speed on July 30, 1835. After the yacht ran aground on Woods Hole on August 2, he and Samuel Cabot, Jr. bought the boat from its original owner, John Perkins Cushing. On August 4, Forbes arranged a rematch with Stevens.

Forbes and Stevens would not race against each other until nine years later on August 8, 1844. Forbes redeemed himself when he defeated Stevens and three other New York Yacht Club members in the Club's first yacht race—held just over a week after the Club was founded. Forbes was elected to the Club in the following year. His nephew, J. Malcolm Forbes (1847-1904) was the head of the syndicate that built and campaigned the America's Cup defender *Puritan* in 1885.



**Cambridge Livingston (1812-1879)** was a nephew of John Cox Stevens. Stevens' wife, Maria Cambridge Livingston, was a sibling of Cambridge's father, John Swift Livingston (1785-1867).

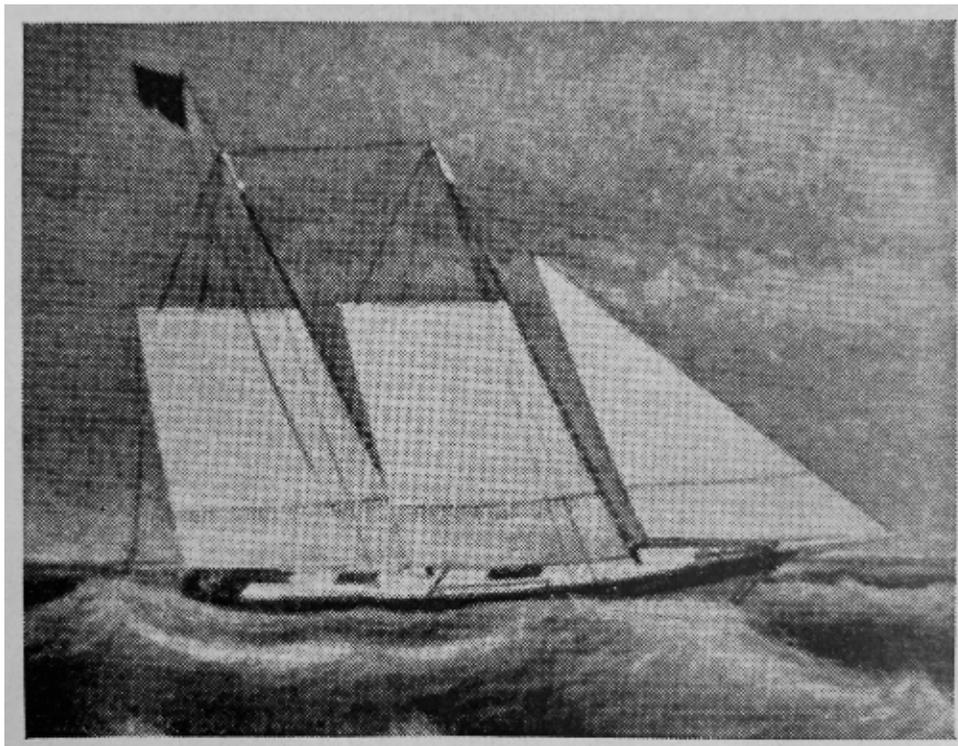
Although Cambridge Livingston was elected to the New York Yacht Club (proposed by Stevens and seconded by William Laight in 1853), there is no record of his yachting activities and he resigned from the Club in the 1860s.

Why Stevens bequeathed the *Wave* Cup to Livingston remains a mystery.

Livingston was a lawyer who specialized in patent cases and referring disputes. He also served as an executive of companies engaged in transportation and communication; his roles included President of the Hoboken Ferry Company, director of the American Telegraph Company and the Western Union Company.

Livingston was a co-executor of Stevens' estate.

## Wave



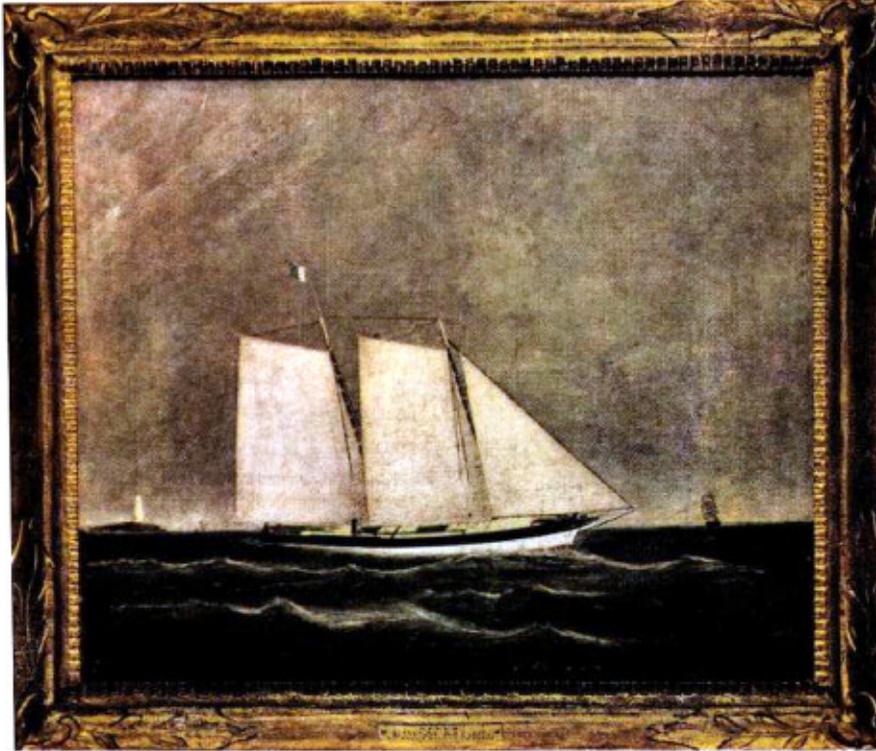
Designer	John Cox Stevens <i>et al</i>
Builder	Brown & Bell (New York)
Built	1832
Owner (1835)	John Cox Stevens
Type	Centerboard Schooner
LWL	65'
LOA	72' 3"
Beam	22'
Draft	8'
Draft with Centerboard	18'
Comments	Featured movable ballast on deck and/or had water tanks in the hold to shift weight. Ultimate fate of vessel unknown.

### Sources

All data from the New York Yacht Club Model Committee Card Catalog entry for *Wave* except for the draft with centerboard and the comments about the moveable ballast on deck, which are from Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. (ref. *Topliff's Bulletin*.) August 7, 1835.

*Wave* was designed by the "Stevens brothers" according to Anon. "From the Newark Daily Advertiser" *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). June 19, 1838. Colonel Edwin A. Stevens, Jr. cites John C., Robert L, and Edwin A. as the designers in his "List and Description of Models" (Stevens Institute of Technology collection); he also mentions in that document that *Wave* "was furnished with tanks that could be emptied from one into the other on going about."

# Sylph



Designer	Unknown
Builder	Whitmore & Holbrook (Boston)
Built	1834
Owner (Up until Aug. 2 1835)	John Perkins Cushing
Owners (Beginning on Aug. 2, 1835)	Robert Bennet Forbes and Samuel Cabot, Jr.
Type	Keel Schooner
LWL	Unknown
Length on Deck	66' 5"
Beam	18' 4"
Draft	7' 4"
Comments	Original LOD 58'. Lengthened in March 1835. <i>Sylph</i> , as a pilot boat, was lost with all hands in a gale near Barnegat, New Jersey in 1857.

## Sources

The Length on Deck and original LOD are from the March 12, 1835 entry of John Perkins Cushing's diary. The other dimensions are from Anon. "Early Yacht and Pilot Boat..." *The Boston Globe*. September 18, 1904.

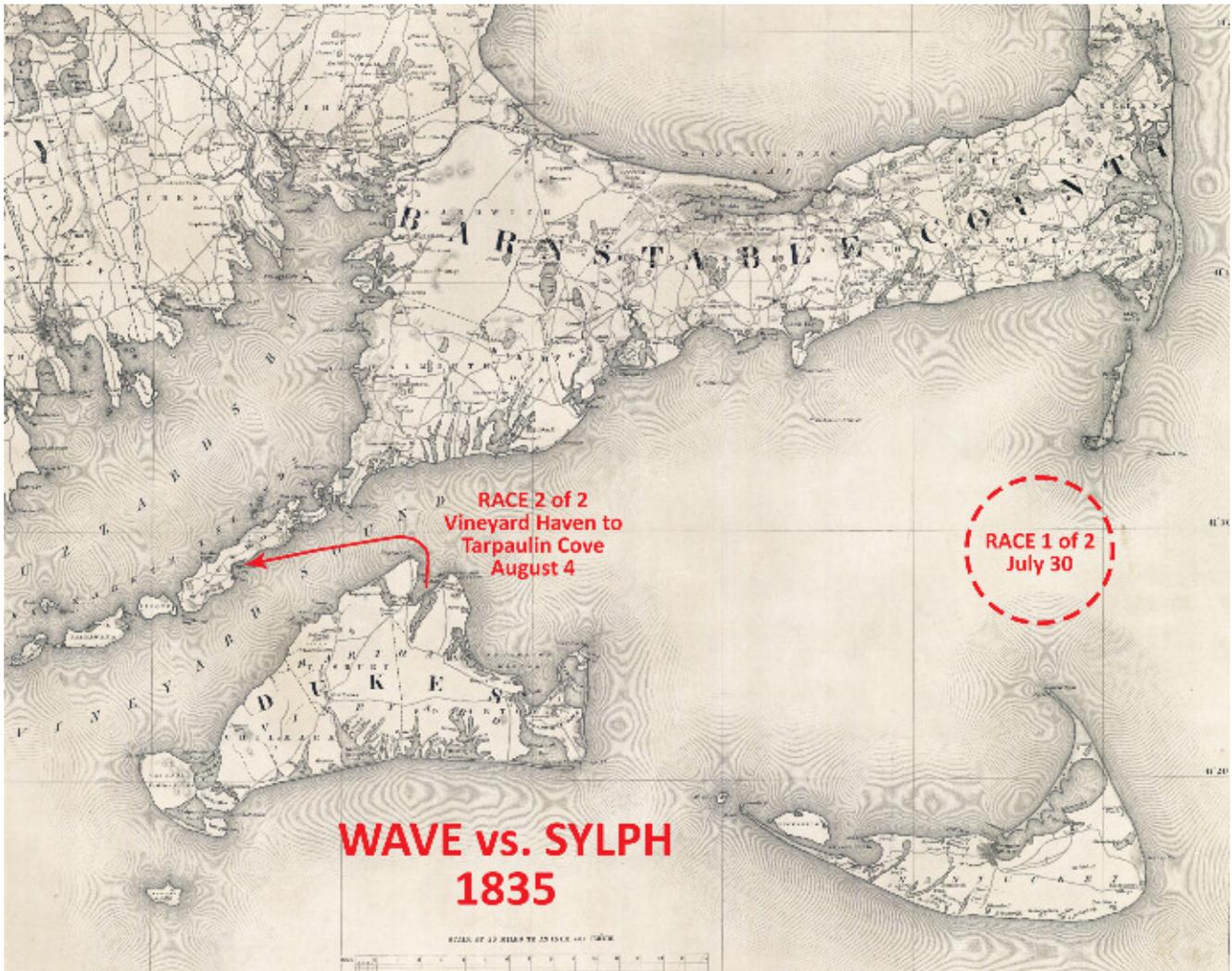
The other information is from:

Anon. "Marine Journal." *New-Bedford Mercury*. August 7, 1835.

Anon. "News Summary." *Brooklyn Evening Star*. March 16, 1857.

Robert Bennet Forbes' *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting...* (1888).

## Locations of the Races



### RACE 1 of 2 July 30, 1835

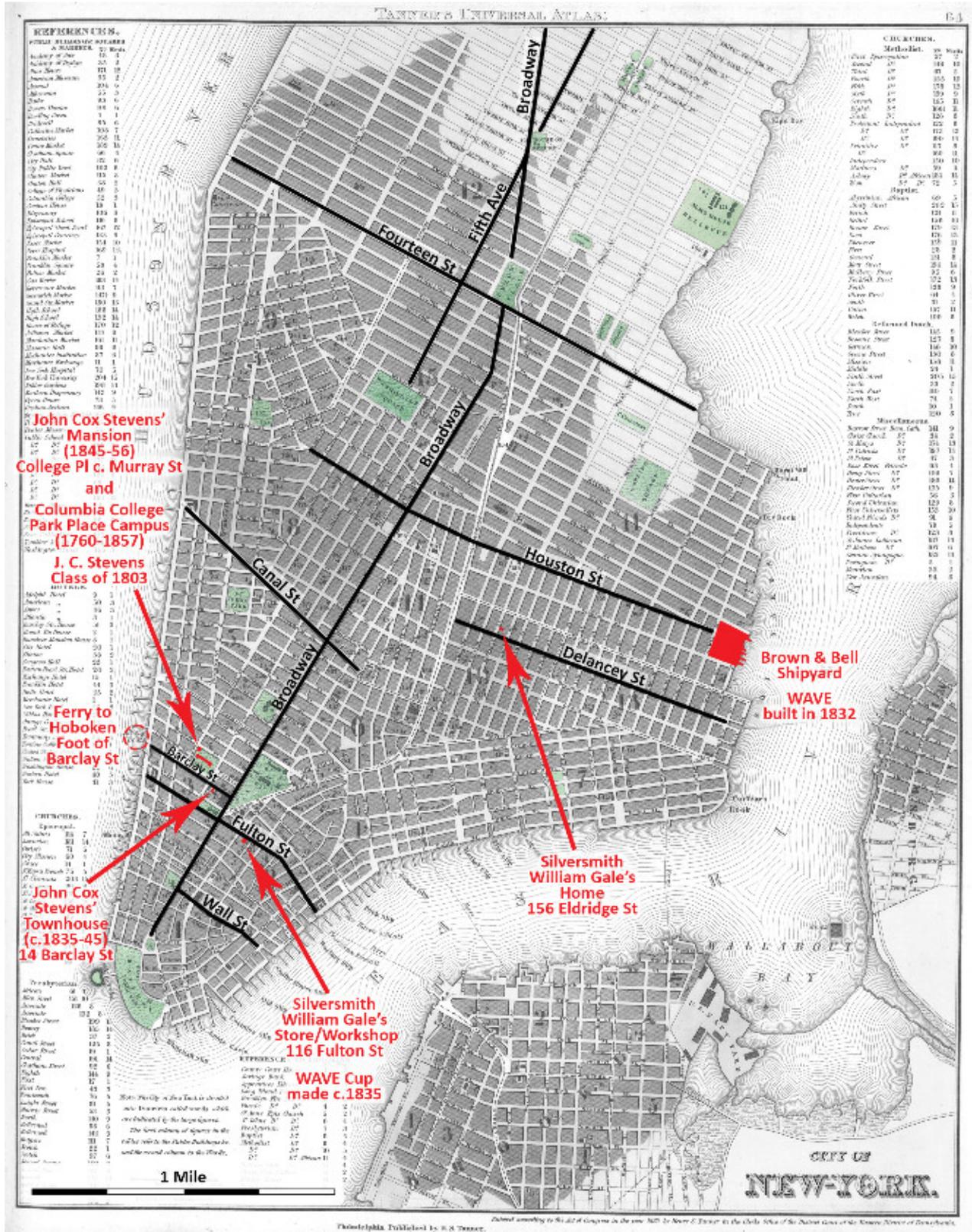
*Wave*, heading eastbound to Boston to race *Sylph*, accidentally encountered her opponent near Handkerchief Shoal. *Sylph*, which had departed Boston on July 27, was sailing to Newport. Stevens and Cushing agreed to a race. The water was smooth which benefited the centerboard schooner *Wave*. Cushing admitted in his diary that *Sylph* “got handsomely beaten” by the New York boat.

On August 2, *Sylph* ran aground on a ledge near “Lone Rock” at Woods Hole. Cushing sold his yacht to two shipmates, Robert Bennet Forbes and Samuel Cabot, Jr. On the following afternoon, the yacht was successfully refloated.

### RACE 2 of 2 August 4, 1835

On the morning of August 4, *Sylph* sailed into Vineyard Haven and found *Wave* at anchor. Forbes jumped aboard *Wave* and proposed to Stevens, who was having breakfast with his guests, to a rematch. Stevens accepts the challenge to race from Vineyard Haven to Tarpaulin Cove or Newport (the records are unclear on this point). *Wave* took an early lead in the smooth water of the harbor. Contemporary newspapers and Forbes’ memoir report that *Sylph* began to gain on *Wave* on the rough waters of the Vineyard Sound. *Wave* entered Tarpaulin Cove first, about a quarter of a mile ahead of her rival. The race’s outcome remains disputed, with conflicting reports suggesting either an inconclusive result or *Wave* as the victor. (Please refer to the Chronology for details).

# Annotated Map of New York City in 1835



# Civilian Commodores of the 1830s

The *Wave* Cup's inscription, presumably made in the 1830s, references John C. Stevens as a "Commodore." However, newspapers and other contemporary sources did not refer to him as "Commodore" until he was elected Commodore of the New York Yacht Club in 1844. There remains the possibility that Stevens may have held that title at the time of *Wave*'s victory in 1835 because he owned a fleet of steamships and other vessels. At least four of his colleagues who owned or operated steamships carried that honorific title in the 1830s (see the list below: Bunker, Chaytor, Mauran, and Vanderbilt).

The *Encyclopaedia Americana*, published in Philadelphia in 1830, defines "Commodore" as the eldest captain of three or more vessels cruising in company by courtesy.<sup>111</sup> In the U.S. Navy, the term "Commodore" dates from 1775 (then the Continental Navy) when it was established as a courtesy title reserved for officers, typically a Captain, in command of a fleet or squadron.

The following are examples of seven civilians in England and the United States who held the honorific title of "Commodore" in the 1830s:

## **1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Yarborough (1781-1846) (English)**

The Royal Yacht Squadron, founded in 1815 as "The Yacht Club" (the first to use that now ubiquitous term), appointed Lord Yarborough as its first Commodore in 1825 (or perhaps in 1822).<sup>112</sup>

## **William H. Harrison (English)**

Harrison was the first Commodore of the Royal Thames Yacht Club, founded in 1823 as the Thames Yacht Club. This yacht club is a descendant of the Cumberland Fleet, founded in London in 1775; the Cumberland Fleet was the first sailing club to refer to its leader as "Commodore"; it had been using that title since at least August 1815.<sup>113</sup>

## **Robert Bennet Forbes (1804-1889) (American)**

Forbes, the second owner of *Sylph*—held the title of "Commodore" as early as 1834 upon his founding of a rowing club in Boston; he was subsequently elected Commodore of the *Dream* Club, founded in 1835.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *Encyclopaedia Americana: a popular dictionary of arts, sciences, literature, history, politics and biography brought down to the present time* (ed. Francis Lieber). 1st edition, 1829–47 (14 vols.). Philadelphia. Volume III. 389/2.

<sup>112</sup> In *The Royal Yacht Squadron 1815-1985*, historian Ian Dear states that Lord Yarborough may have been appointed commodore as early as 1822, citing an *Illustrated London News* article in 1843 and that "local newspapers refer to [Yarborough] as Commodore a good deal earlier than 1825." (pg. 33).

<sup>113</sup> An article in *The Morning Chronicle* (London). August 4, 1815. Pg. 3 is the earliest reference I've discovered of the use of "Commodore" as the head of a sailing club.

<sup>114</sup> Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

**Elihu S. Bunker (1772-1847) (American)**

The *Providence Journal* on June 15, 1836 conferred the title to Bunker<sup>115</sup> who operated steamship lines on the Hudson River, East River, and Long Island Sound.

**James Chaytor (c.1770-1846) (American)**

The *Baltimore Sun* on August 6, 1846 writes, "Commodore Chaytor, the Prince of steamboat captains, and one of the best natured, most thoughtful old gentlemen alive."

**Oorandantes Mauran (1792-1846) (American)**

Phillip Woolfe, a fare collector for the Staten Island Ferry in 1838, testifying in court in 1847 about Mauran, the Ferry's president, said: "We always understood him to be the general agent as well as the president. That is what we call 'Commodore.' His word was will there."<sup>116</sup>

**Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1877) (American)**

The *Norfolk Herald* on October 25, 1837 was the first newspaper to call Vanderbilt (1794-1877) a "Commodore" according to biographer T.J. Stiles.<sup>117</sup> The *Baltimore Sun* on November 28, 1837 referred to Vanderbilt (as well as Chaytor and Bunker) by that title as well:

The steam packet North Carolina...arrived at Norfolk on Saturday... She is said to be a splendid boat. She is owned by our old friend Commodore Vanderbilt, a brave and gallant commander, equalled only by Commodores Chaytor and Bunker.

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<sup>115</sup> Stiles, T. J. *The First Tycoon. The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*. New York: Knopf, 2009. I do not have a copy this article

<sup>116</sup> Stiles, T. J. *The First Tycoon. The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*. New York: Knopf, 2009. Oliver Vanderbilt v. the Richmond Turnpike Company, July 17, 1848, file 1848-1238, Superior Court, NYCC.

<sup>117</sup> Stiles, T. J. *The First Tycoon. The Epic Life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*. New York: Knopf, 2009. I do not have a copy of the *Norfolk Herald* article or the *Journal of Commerce* which reprinted the *Norfolk Herald* article on November 30, 1837.

## Annotated Sources Bibliography and Artifacts

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Dr. Adelman, an eminent sports historian, cites John Cox Stevens as an influential sportsman in 19th-century New York. Adelman states that the *Wave* vs. *Sylph* match is American history's first recorded yacht race. He includes a chapter on yachting history in New York and the America's Cup.

Anon. *Sylph*. Builders Model. Circa 1834. Collection of Forbes House Museum. Milton, Massachusetts.



Anon. *Daily Advertiser and Patriot* (Boston). (ref. *Topliff's Bulletin*.) August 4, 1835.

PORT OF BOSTON.  
MONDAY, AUGUST 3.

SAILED---Wind NW. brig Napoleon. Brig Oswego, and pleasure yacht Wave, (for New-York) sailed on Sunday.

Anon. "Sailing Match." *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 4, 1835.

SAILING MATCH.—We did not know it before, but it seems that arrangements were made, some time ago, for a trial of speed between the WAVE, a pleasure yacht of high reputation, owned by John C. Stevens, Esq. of this city, or rather of Hoboken, and the SYLPH, another pleasure yacht, belonging to a gentleman named Cushing, of Boston, and considered by the Bostonians—and they have judgment in such matters—one of the prettiest and fastest pieces of workmanship that were ever put together.

The Sylph, however, was destined to defeat; she was accidentally met by the Wave, off Nantucket shoal, on Thursday<sup>118</sup> of last week, the trial took place on the spot, and the report is that she was handsomely beaten on every tack. This intelligence reaches us through the Boston papers, and is given by them on the authority of passengers or officers on board the victorious Wave.

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<sup>118</sup> Thursday, July 30, 1835.

Anon. "Visit Along Shore. History of Sachem's Head." *Commercial Advertiser* (New York). August 5, 1835. Here is an excerpt from Chapter IV.

It need not be added that we returned to Sachem's Head<sup>119</sup> in due season, all highly gratified with the excursion. Towards evening, the heavens became overcast, and a tempest was threatened—to avoid which a sharp yet beautiful vessel, which came dancing over the billows like a spectre, shot suddenly into the harbor of Sachem's Head. She had a signal flag which we could not understand, and we knew not but the old pirate<sup>120</sup> had come back to see what we had been about among his own islands.—However, our minds were soon placed at ease, by ascertaining that the suspicious stranger was none other than the WAVE, from Hoboken, Captain Stevens, having on board one of his brothers, Lieut. Sands, of the navy, and Mr. Thomson, of Princeton, bound along shore for pleasure, and to Boston for a race.

Anon. "Sailing Match." *New York Spectator*. August 6, 1835.

[This is identical to the *Commercial Advertiser* article of Aug. 4.]

SAILING MATCH.—We did not know it before, but it seems that arrangements were made, some time ago, for a trial of speed between the WAVE, a pleasure yacht of high reputation, owned by John C. Stevens, Esq. of this city, or rather of Hoboken, and the SYLPH, another pleasure yacht, belonging to a gentleman named Cushing of Boston, and considered by the Bostonians—and they have judgment in such matters—one of the prettiest and fastest pieces of workmanship that were ever put together. The Sylph, however, was destined to defeat; she was accidentally met by the Wave, off Nantucket shoal, on Thursday<sup>121</sup> of last week, the trial took place on the spot, and the report is that she was handsomely beaten on every tack. This intelligence reaches us through the Boston papers, and is given by them on the authority of passengers or officers on board the victorious Wave.

Anon. *New York American*. August 6, 1835.

The Boston Daily Advertiser of Monday<sup>122</sup> says, "the pleasure yacht Wave, Capt. John C. Stevens (owner) arrived here on Saturday morning,<sup>123</sup> from New York, for the purpose, so said, of engaging in a sailing match with Sylph of this place; but meeting with the S. off Nantucket Shoal on Thursday,<sup>124</sup> last, the trial took place on the spot, and resulted, (as we are informed on board the Wave,) in handsomely beating the Sylph in every position tried.

The Providence Journal also contains the following notice of "the Wave."—"A rare specimen of naval architecture made its

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<sup>119</sup> A peninsula near Guilford, Connecticut.

<sup>120</sup> A reference to Captain Kidd, the pirate.

<sup>121</sup> Thursday, July 30, 1835.

<sup>122</sup> Monday, August 3, 1835.

<sup>123</sup> Saturday, August 1, 1835.

<sup>124</sup> Thursday, July 30, 1835.

appearance at Newport on Wednesday<sup>125</sup> last. It was of about 93 tons burthen, schooner-rigged, finished in a novel and beautiful style, and excited the admiration of all beholders; and is ready at all times to try its speed with any vessel in this country. A party of gentlemen, desirous of viewing the *Wave*, were received in a most cordial and gentlemanly manner by its owner and commander, John C. Stevens, Esq., of New York, and its officers, Messrs. Sands,<sup>126</sup> Stevens, and Thompson. It is expected the *Wave* will shortly visit this place, in company with the revenue cutter *Vigilant*; when those to whom we are incompetent to give any adequate description, may have an opportunity to see and admire its striking features."

Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. August 6, 1835.

Sailed from Holmes' Hole, 4<sup>th</sup>,<sup>127</sup> pleasure yachts *Sylph*, of Boston, and *Wave*, of New York.

Anon. "Marine Journal." *New-Bedford Mercury*. August 7, 1835.

Here is an excerpt which describes *Sylph's* accident:

The pleasure boat *Sylph*, of Boston, went on the rocks in Woods Hole, Sunday<sup>128</sup> afternoon, and was got off Monday<sup>129</sup> afternoon.

Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. (ref. *Topliff's Bulletin*.) August 7, 1835.

*Yachts Sylph and Wave*.—

The pleasure yacht *Sylph* returned this morning from the Vineyard Sound, and as we have given the statement of those on board the *Wave*, it is but just that we should state what those on board the *Sylph* have to say on the subject. From the pilot and others we learn that on the first trial the water was smooth, which enabled the *Wave* to beat the *Sylph* a little; but the trial was on *one* tack, and not on several as stated by those on board the *W*. On the second trial, 4<sup>th</sup> inst. From Holmes's Hole to Tarpaulin Cove, the water was again very smooth, and on the first part of the trial the *Wave* went ahead; but the moment the sea presented a rougher surface, the *Sylph* gained on her, and had the trial been prolonged would no doubt have resulted in a complete triumph. The *Wave* finding that likely to be the case ran into the Cove about one fourth of a mile ahead of the *Sylph*, and anchored. The *Sylph* appeared off the Cove, and challenged her to a renewal of the contest, which was very prudently declined on the part of the *Wave*, altho the *S*. had recently been ashore and knocked off part of her false keel. She had to contend against other

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<sup>125</sup> Wednesday, July 29, 1835.

<sup>126</sup> Joshua R. Sands (1795-1883). U.S. Navy officer. Husband of John Cox Stevens' sister Harriet Stevens (1801-1844). He was previously married to another sister of John Cox Stevens: Mary Stevens (1799-1825).

<sup>127</sup> Tuesday, August 4, 1835.

<sup>128</sup> Sunday, August 2, 1835.

<sup>129</sup> Monday, August 3, 1835.

disadvantages. The Wave has cars of ballast on deck to shift as occasion may require, which gives her a decided advantage over the Sylph, she has a shifting board, let down through the centre, 10 feet below the keel, which no one will deny operates greatly in her favor; add to which she spreads one third more canvass than the S. Yet against all these disadvantages the pilot and crew of the S. state that they are ready to volunteer their services to go to New York and give challenge to the Wave, under the full conviction that in a fair trial of rough and smooth weather, by, off and before the wind, the Sylph will show her stern some distance ahead of the Wave. On the trial from Holmes's Hole, Mr. Cushing, the owner of the Sylph, and the gentlemen who accompanied him, were not on board. Since then Mr. C. has sold her to Capt. Forbes. The Sylph is about 90 tons, the Wave about 95.— *Topliff's Bulletin*.

Note: Robert Bennet Forbes took issue with the above article:

*Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. August 10, 1835.

To the Editor of the Daily Advertiser and Patriot.

Sir—

Allow me to state, through the medium of your paper, that the account of the second race between the boats Wave and Sylph, as published in your paper, was totally unauthorized by me. The Sylph was fairly beaten in both trials. What might have been the result, under other circumstances, I leave for future experiments to decide.

R. B. FORBES.

Anon. "Pleasure Yachts." *National Intelligencer* (Washington D.C.). (ref. *New York Star*). August 10, 1835.

PLEASURE YACHTS.—These pilot-boat built vessels, chiefly owned by the English noblemen and gentry, for pleasure excursions along the coast and to the Mediterranean, are, we perceive, for the first time, introduced in our country. That of Mr. J.C. Stevens of New York, called the Wave, we have before alluded to. She is built on the model of our famed New York pilot-boats or Baltimore clippers, and has lately, it appears, had a contest with one belonging to a gentleman of Boston, as we perceive by the following:

*Boston, July*<sup>130</sup> 3.—The pleasure yacht Wave, Capt. John C. Stevens (owner) arrived here on Saturday morning,<sup>131</sup> from New York, for the purpose, so said, of engaging in a sailing match with Sylph of this place; but meeting with the S. off Nantucket Shoal on Thursday, last, the trial took place on the spot, and resulted, (as we are informed on board the Wave,) in handsomely beating the Sylph in every position tried.

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<sup>130</sup> This is an error. It should be "August".

<sup>131</sup> Saturday, August 1, 1835.

We hope the number of these boats will increase, and the matches for their respective qualities for sailing often repeated. Everything that can preserve our maritime skill should be encouraged.—*New York Star*.

Anon. *Boston Traveler* (published as *American Traveller*). August 11, 1835.

*The Rival Yachts*.- The Wave and the Sylph had a second trial of kill on Monday.<sup>132</sup>

"The Wave took the lead in still water, but when they came to where it was rough, the Sylph gained, and the Wave ingloriously down foresail, and put in to Tarpaulin Cove. The Sylph challenged her out, but she would not "take." The Wave carries a third more canvass, and has several extra "appliances" which the Sylph has not—but the pilots say the S., will sail the fastest in the open sea, though not so fast in still water. If Capt. Stevens wants a fair trial, there is no doubt he can be accommodated.

Anon. "Pleasure Yachts". *The United States Gazette* (Philadelphia). August 12, 1835.

The *Wave* and the *Sylph* made another trial of their speed on Tuesday last.<sup>133</sup> The race took place from Holmes Hole<sup>134</sup> to Tarpaulin Cove<sup>135</sup>—distance about 12 miles—both having the first pilots that sail the Sound. Mr. Stevens the owner of the *Wave* and Mr. Cushing the owner of the *Sylph*, were on board their boats, and the spirit of rivalry beat high. The *New-Bedford Gazette* remarks that the *New-Yorker* beat the *Bostonian* as 6 to 5.<sup>136</sup> It is not so clever to have the Knickerbockers come on here, and throw us so far in the shade. Albeit—John C. Stevens aside—we defy them.

Anon. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. October 19, 1835.

FOR SALE

The Pleasure Boat SYLPH, 73 88-95 tons. in complete order, with two chain cables and two anchors; she is in every respect a superior boat, not 2 years old, and considered as fast as anything of her size. For further particulars, apply at No. 17. Commercial wharf, Boston, or to Messrs. CARY & CO. New York. Boston, Sept. 28. Istf

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<sup>132</sup> This is in error. The second race occurred on Tuesday, August 4, 1835.

<sup>133</sup> Tuesday, August 4, 1835.

<sup>134</sup> Renamed "Vineyard Haven" in 1871.

<sup>135</sup> In Robert Bennet Forbes' recounting of the race decades later in his *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting* (1888), they were racing to Newport, RI. But *Wave* retired from the race given the heavy seas, taking shelter in Tarpaulin Cove.

<sup>136</sup> The idiom "as 6 to 5" means a close contest.

Anon. "A Challenge - England Against the World." *Easton Gazette* (Easton, MD). (ref. *New York Courier*.) October 21, 1837.

A friend has handed us for publication, the following challenge of an English gentleman to sail his yacht *Alarm*, against any vessel in the world of about the same tonnage!

We understand that this challenge is sent by Mr. Weld in the true spirit of a sportsman, in consequence of an American gentleman having given it as his opinion and that of the 'knowing ones' in this city that the yacht (sic) of our townsman John C. Stevens, the *Wave*; cannot be beaten.

We confess we are of the many who entertain this opinion; but it will be seen that the challenge is based upon broad grounds and that both parties may build a vessel for the purpose of testing the respective nations in building fast sailing yachts. The place of determining the wager, and indeed almost everything connected with the challenge, including the amount to be sailed for is left open for future arrangement. In short the challenge is couched in the most liberal term and will, we trust, be accepted.—*N. Y. Courier*.

"Mr. Weld will sail his cutter *Alarm*, either cutter or yawl rigged as he may think best against any schooner now existing, near her own tonnage (193 tons,) round a mark or vessel anchored, and back again, for one thousand pounds, or more, as may be settled hereafter. The course to be no farther than can be performed in one day, and the vessel which comes in first, twice out of three days trial, will win the race. Each vessel to carry what sail they please—sail or pay. But if the schooner is not built, Mr. Weld may have the power of building also.

"JOSEPH WELD.

"Pylewell, July 17th 1837."

Anon. "A Challenge—England Against the World." *Pensacola Gazette*. (ref. *New York Courier*.) November 4, 1837.

Among other things, the article cites:

We understand that this challenge is sent by Mr. Weld<sup>137</sup> in the true spirits of a sportsman, in consequence of an American gentleman having given it as his opinion and; that of the "knowing ones" in this city<sup>138</sup> that the yacht of our townsman. John C. Stevens, the *Wave*; cannot be beaten.

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<sup>137</sup> Joseph Weld (1777-1863) was one of the original founders of the Royal Yacht Squadron. His yacht *Alarm* raced in the famous 1851 race around the Isle of Wight won by yacht *America*.

<sup>138</sup> New York City.

Anon. "The Wave." *Albany Argus*. (ref. the *Spirit of the Times*.) July 3, 1838.

[From the *Spirit of the Times*]

THE WAVE.—Mr. John C. Stevens sold his beautiful yacht bearing this name to the United States Government for \$8000. She was one of the most masterly and splendid specimens of naval architecture ever in our waters. She was built some six years since by Messrs. Brown & Bell, of this city from models of the Messrs. Stevens, and to this day has never met her match.—

Capt. Stockton, when last abroad, matched her against a crack yacht of the Royal British Yacht Club for \$100,000; the English gentleman who made the match visited Liverpool a few days after to consult the captains of the different packets there upon the merits of the WAVE, and finding they had waked up the wrong passenger, asked leave to withdraw the match, to which Capt. S. reluctantly consented. We are pleased to learn that Mr. Stevens is engaged upon the model of a new yacht to replace "the Wave"—a perfect out and outer.

Anon. "The Yacht Stag<sup>139</sup> Launched." *New York Daily Herald*. July 30, 1839.  
References the *Wave* vs *Sylph* match:

Among other things, the article cites:

There was some excitement respecting the launch of the "Stag," because there are so few vessels of her description in this country. At this moment there are not half a dozen yachts in the American waters. About five years ago there were three not to be surpassed in speed in the world. Two belonged in Boston, and one here. Their names were—

Wave, of N. York, about 150 tons, owned by Mr. J. R. (sic) Stevens,			
Dove (sic), <sup>140</sup> of Boston, 160	"	"	T.H. Perkins,
Sylph, "	160	"	J. Cushing,

The latter was built at an expense of \$10,000, and recently sold to the New Jersey pilots, for \$3,500. The "Wave," was purchased of Mr. Stevens by the United States' government, and has been stationed on the Florida Coast, under Captain M'Laughlin.—  
What has become of the "Dove," we know not; but presume she is still in the possession of Mr. Perkins.

Five years ago the 'Sylph' and the 'Wave' made a trial of speed off Nantucket for a purse of one or two thousand dollars. The latter came in a few lengths ahead, but there was scarcely any difference in their sailing, the wind having varied their speed but little. About one year after this, Mr. Weld of England offered to run his yacht 'Alarm' against 'Wave' for £10,000, or he would build a schooner which he would run with any yacht that Mr. Stevens or any other American gentleman might build. This challenge Mr. S. has accepted, and the 'Stag' he has had constructed at the cost of nearly \$50,000 to test the qualities of English and American ship building.

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<sup>139</sup> There is no record of a yacht *Stag* under the ownership of the Stevens brothers. This yacht was likely the *Onkahye*.

<sup>140</sup> *Dream* is the correct name of the yacht.

Anon. "Yachting." *New York Morning Herald*. May 23, 1840.

This article refers to John Cox Stevens as "Commodore" in a roundabout manner (see excerpt below). Thus, it is possible that Stevens may have held the title "Commodore" prior to his founding of the New York Yacht Club in 1844. To put this into further perspective, Stevens' peer and rival, Robert Bennet Forbes, was referred to as "Commodore" as early as 1834 after he organized a rowing club in Boston; Forbes was also a Commodore of the Dream Club, founded in 1835.

The American yacht squadron is yet small, but we think it will soon increase. It is now a young family of beautiful active children, soon to grow up into as much importance as an older family, or as the royal yacht squadron of England. Of the American squadron, John C. Stevens, Esq. is the Commodore, as the Earl of Yarborough is of the English; the Vice Commodore has not yet been appointed.

Anon. "American Yachting." *New York Herald*. September 13, 1846.

Mr. Perkins of Boston challenged John C. Stevens for a yacht race. *Coquette vs. Maria*.

Anon. "News Summary." *Brooklyn Evening Star*. March 16, 1857.

"...the pilot-boat *Sylph*, (No 1, Jersey), which has been missing since the last of February, supposed to have been lost in the gale of the 2d of March..."

Anon. "Still Hale and Hearty. Capt. Fowler Celebrates His 81<sup>st</sup> Birthday." *The Boston Globe*. March 11, 1890.

Excerpt:

Capt. William Carlton Fowler, the oldest pilot in New England, celebrated his 81st birthday yesterday at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. William Evans of Everett.

Capt. Fowler was born in Wiscasset, Me., the 10th day of March, 1809, and went to sea when but a lad of 11 years, in a coasting vessel. He remained in that trade until 1822, when he shipped before the mast in the schooner Reunion for Labrador. After encountering the gales along this bleak coast for several years, he went South and cruised for some time in the Spanish main.

While in these waters he saved sufficient money to purchase part of the schooner Sea Flower, and went master of her on the coast.

Through adversities of fortune he was afterwards obliged to fill a lower place on the ships Octavia for Savannah. Restless for South America, and Liverpool, Capt. Howes, for Liverpool.

After leaving the latter vessel in 1833, he joined the pilot boat Favorite (there were no numbers to the boats in those days), Capt. Benjamin Swett.

He stayed in he one year, and was then made captain of R. M.(sic) Forbes' and it was through the instrumentality of this gentleman that he received a full "branch" commission on the 3d day of March, 1835.

This commission was signed by Gov. Lincoln, and is the only one for a pilot held at the present time that was issued direct from the chief executive of the Commonwealth.

Capt. Fowler next joined the pilot boat Boston. On May 18, 1835, he changed to the boat Spy, Capt. Henry Gurney, the elder.

Anon. "Early Yacht and Pilot Boat. Historic vessel was the Sylph, which, with the schooner Wave, sailed the first American yacht race—story of a valuable painting of the craft, and how it was restored." *The Boston Globe*. September 18, 1904.

This article may have been written by Winfield Thompson or someone who was influenced by Thompson's article about *Sylph* in the June 1904 issue of *The Rudder*.

Anon. "Fleet of 13 gathers for Centennial Race. Sail around Block Island starts off today." Special Dispatch to the Globe. Vineyard Haven, Aug 2. *The Boston Globe*. August 3, 1935.

Among other things, the article cites:

The boats will race around Block Island and finish at Edgartown in competition for silver bowls given by the descendants of John Cox Stevens of New York and Robert Bennett (sic) Forbes of Boston, whose schooners Wave and Sylph sailed the first recorded yacht race in America off this port just a hundred years ago.

Anon. "Belisarius takes Block Island Sail." Edgartown, Mass. Aug. 5. (AP). *New York Times*. August 6, 1935.

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Cushing, John Perkins. *Diaries. 1834-1836*. Boston Athenaeum Collections. Entry of March 14, 1835.

*Sylph* was lengthened at a yard in Medford, Massachusetts. This entry contains data about the yacht's new dimensions.

This image is for research purposes ONLY.  
Source: the Boston Athenaeum

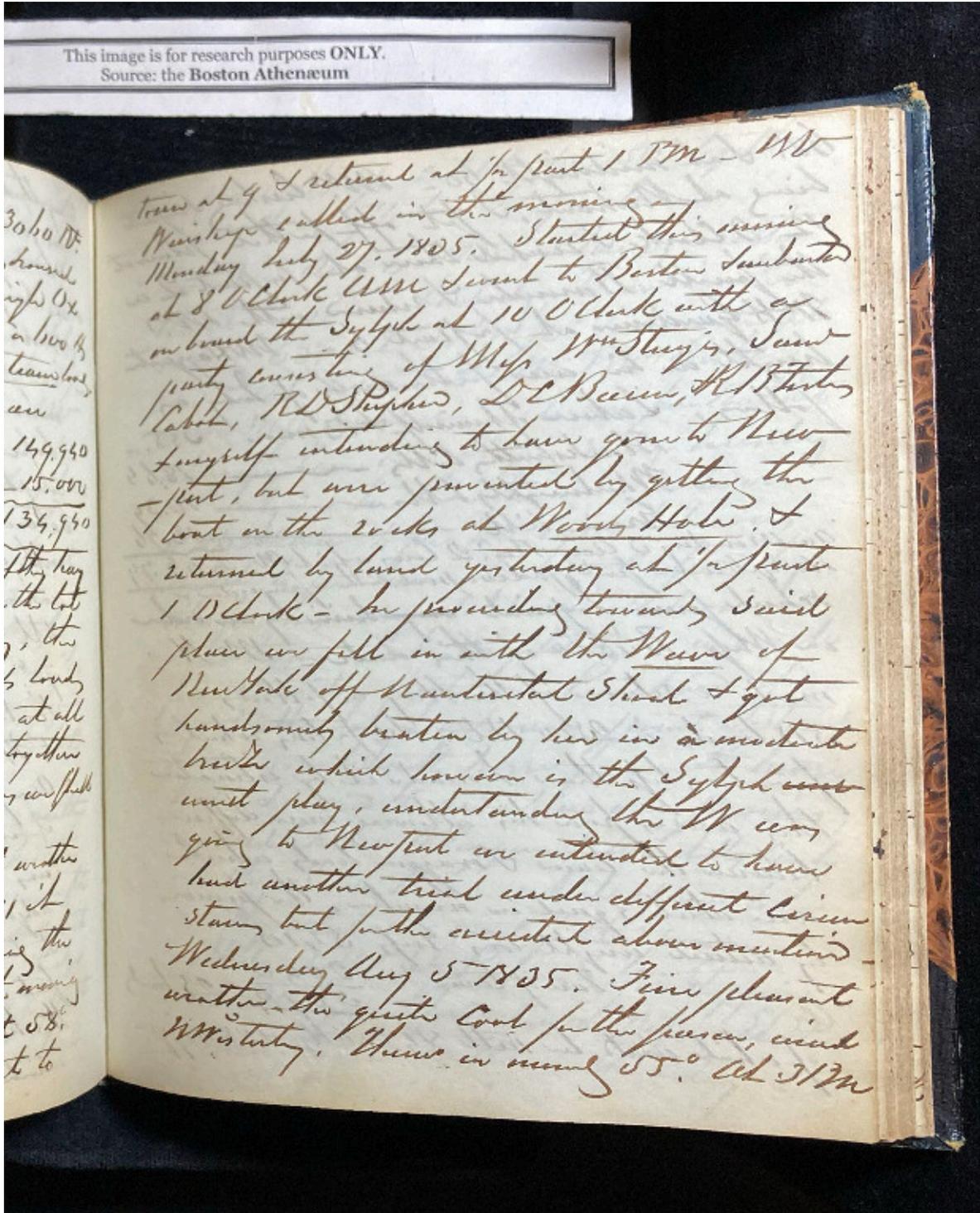
midnight 38°. In the forenoon Mr Wainwright called & brought us four barrels of the best corn of two kinds, from Holland & Italy the latter an fine appearance the best; In the afternoon I went to Medford to see how Mr Fells progress with the *Sylph*, found that he had nearly completed her, her dimensions are now as follows viz

From stem to center of Foremast	11.8
From center of Foremast to center of Main	21.8
From center of Main to Taffrail	28.1
Total	61.5

Making her length 8 feet 5 inch more than it was before - At 9 o'clock I returned home & found Mr Wainwright & Mr W Ward, who after remaining a short time returned to town -

Friday March 13, 1835. Pleasant weather throughout, wind very strong from W West, therm. in morning 42° at 3 PM 50° & at midnight 38°. Mr Wainwright F Weller R D Shepherd & Mrs Pratt & called in the morning; In the afternoon I rode in the gig to Medford to reconnoiter the *Sylph* supposing I had made a mistake yesterday

Entry of July 27, 1835 covers the period from July 27 to August 4.  
 It includes a description of Sylph's first race against Wave and where Sylph  
 ran aground.



Here is a transcription of the diary entry:

Monday July 27, 1835. Started this morning at 8 O Clock AM I went to Boston I embarked on board the Sylph at 10 O Clock with a party consisting of Messrs. W<sup>m</sup> Sturgis, Sam<sup>l</sup> Cabot, R D Shepherd, D C Bacon, R B Forbes, & myself intending to have gone to Newport, but were prevented by getting the boat on the rocks at Woods Hole. I returned by land yesterday at ½ past 1 O Clock - In proceeding towards said place we fell in with the Wave of New York off Nantucket Shoal & got handsomely beaten by her in a moderate breeze which however is the Sylph [word crossed out] worst play, understanding the W was going to Newport we intended to have had another trial under different circumstances but for the accident above mentioned.

Dickerson, Mahlon (Secretary of the Navy). Letter to Lt. John T. McLaughlin USN. June 12, 1838. Adjutant General Office. M234. Record Group 94, National Archives.

Navy Department  
12 June 1838

Sir

Please receive your letter of the 9<sup>th</sup> inst informing me that under the instructions of the War Department you have purchased the schooner Wave of New York to employ on the coast of Florida for the purpose of cooperating with the Sylph - you have the permission of this Department to take command of said schooner and to proceed on the service above mentioned under the instructions of the Director of the Sylph, but whilst so engaged you will regard yourself as attached to the U.S. Squadron in the West Indies and you will make report a part of your movements and operations to the commanding officer of that Squadron as well as to the Department. Com<sup>dr</sup> Dallas is instructed to give you all the aid in his power in the service in which you are engaged will be employed. Com<sup>dr</sup> Paul has been directed to furnish you with part, more able detachment and the officers designated by you how this day have been to report to you - you are hereby authorized to act as commander of the expedition under your command.

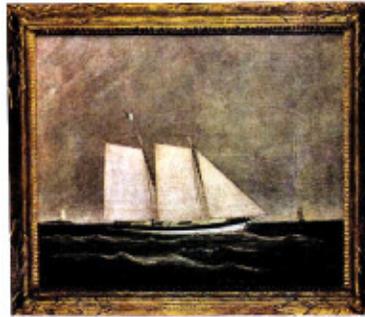
I am respectfully,  
Signed - M Dickerson

Lt. Comdr J T McLaughlin  
U.S. Navy  
Washington

Copy

Dickinson, Alice W. *Significant Trophies of the New York Yacht Club*. Volume 5 of the New York Yacht Club 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book set. New York: NYYC, 2019.

Eastman, Ralph M. *Pilots and Pilot Boats of Boston Harbor*. Boston: Second Bank-State Street Trust Company, 1956.  
Pages 28-32. This pamphlet includes a history of *Sylph* and an image of the painting of the yacht.



*Caption:* The Sylph, Yacht and Pilot Boat, 1834-1851. Courtesy of Mrs. Allan Forbes. The painting reproduced above was given to Allan Forbes by Charles H. Taylor many years ago. It seems especially appropriate to include it here as it was Mr. Taylor who suggested the subject for this brochure and Mr. Forbes who launched the author on its preparation.

Eisenberg, John. *The Great Match Race. When North met South in America's First Sports Spectacle*. Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006.

Forbes, Robert Bennet. Letter to the Editor. *Boston Daily Advertiser and Patriot*. August 10, 1835.

To the Editor of the Daily Advertiser and Patriot.

Sir—

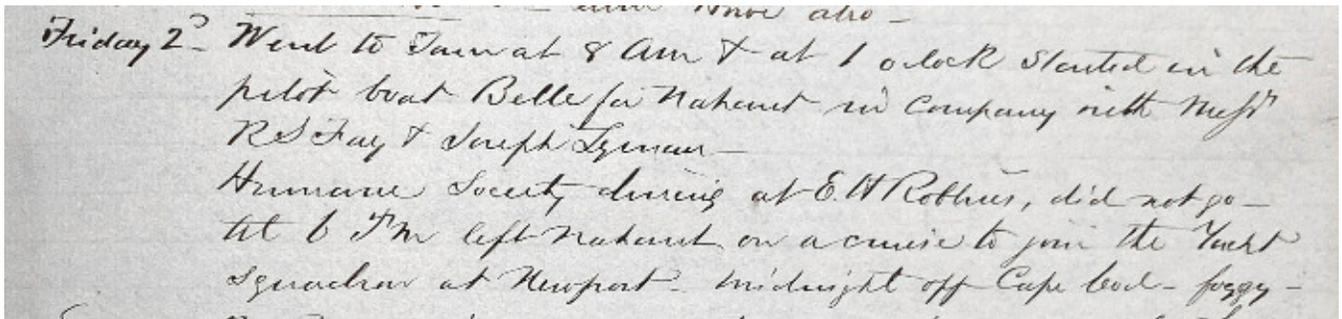
Allow me to state, through the medium of your paper, that the account of the second race between the boats Wave and Sylph, as published in your paper, was totally unauthorized by me. The Sylph was fairly beaten in both trials. What might have been the result, under other circumstances, I leave for future experiments to decide.

R. B. FORBES.

Forbes, Robert Bennet. Letter to the Editor. *The Atlas* (Boston). August 16, 1844.  
Forbes' letter explains the two races he had with his pilot schooner *Belle* against yachts of the NYYC in Newport in August 1844.

Forbes, Robert Bennet. Diaries. 1840-1869. Massachusetts Historical Society.  
R. B. Forbes Papers. 4.1.  
Examined the first volume which covers the period from December 10, 1840  
to March 28, 1847.

Forbes' Friday, August 2, 1844 entry (below) is evidence that he sailed to  
Newport to rendezvous with the fleet of the New York Yacht Club. This  
answers in part why Stevens and his fellow members of the newly-formed  
NYYC resolved to hold their first races in Newport instead of its home  
waters of New York Harbor. It seems that Stevens and Forbes selected  
Newport as the venue because it is located roughly about the same distance  
away from their respective homeports.



Friday 2<sup>d</sup> - Went to Fair at 8 Am & at 1 o'clock started in the  
pilot boat Belle for Nahant in company with Messrs  
Robt Jay & Joseph Lyman -  
Humanity Society dining at E. W. Robbins, did not go -  
at 6 Pm left Nahant on a cruise to join the Yacht  
Squadron at Newport - midnight off Cape Cod - foggy -

While Forbes frequently visited New York City, he does not report any  
meetings or correspondence with Commodore Stevens prior to the  
rendezvous in Newport. When and how the rendezvous was arranged  
remains a mystery.

The following are images of the diary entries of July 30 to August 11, 1844. It  
includes an account of the Newport event.



Diary 1842

Continued -

Monday  
August 5 -

Schooner - Capt Dupau 45 Tons  
 " Coquette - " Day - 20 - "  
 Sloop Robert - " Rollins 14 - "  
 " Eliza Ann - " Rutherford 67 - "  
 Schooner - Smith 10 - " more or less -

put myself under the orders of Comd Stearns & all the Squadron came too at 6 PM.

Challenged the Eliza Ann to beat up Point Tuesday 6  
 Judith - with a moderate breeze at SW.

Schooner also joined - & among lower boat being  
 out of trim - we were beaten by both on a round  
 & before the wind by the Sloop -

Returned to port at 3 o'clock & laid -

John & Edward King went with us - also Capt Ross  
 of the Topographical Corps & others -

Repacked with King -

Wednesday, 7.

PM - the Squadron went to sail in line  
 under full & main sail to give the ladies a  
 sail - returned at 6 1/2 o'clock -

Fire works in the evening -

At 10 AM the following regatta of the Squadron Thursday 8  
 started for a race round Commodore Island

Belle, Unicorn, Cygnets, Dream, Spray - the Belle  
 took the lead & kept it - beating the other boats in  
 a sail of 2 1/2 miles as follows -

Cygnets 11 1/2 minutes - Unicorn - 15 1/2 minutes

Dream - 24 - " Spray - 27 - "

returned & anchored about 3 1/2 o'clock -

At 5 1/2 got under way for home - the Cygnets  
 started with us & was again beaten, parted  
 with her off to the SW of the Ocean house

at 6 o'clock - fine breeze at SW - at 7 1/2 o'clock  
 spoke the Northern light - bound to Newport -

at 12 o'clock anchored in Fairport Cove.

Diary 1847

- Friday 4- After breakfast landed & hired a waggon & our whole party excepting J Lyman made an excursion to see the West end of Newham.  
Returned on board at 2 o'clock & dined.  
At 3 1/2 got under way with a croaking SW wind for Woods Hole & in 30' anchored there.  
Hired a boat to take us to Mr Thomas & at 6 o'clock arrived there after a most exciting sail, the wind blowing a gale & the tide running quite.  
Spent the night at Mr Thomas -
- Saturday 10- Rose at 5 Am. Saw few Deer near the house started with gun in pursuit & saw no more of them - but succeeded in shooting a fine young Buck with a ball right through his vitals - weighed 100 lb cleaned - returned to home at 7 Am!  
At 8 1/2 got under way in the Fair for Woods hole & at 9 1/2 Am got under way in the Bell for home.  
At 10 gave the Gov. three sheers  
passed over the shoals with fine weather & a pleasant breeze at 10 - to S - went between the Great Little round Shoal at about 3 o'clock & soon after the fog shut in thick - hauled round the Podock up & ran along the Cape Shore in fine style clear in to the beach -  
Midnight wind hauled to W & NW -
- Sunday 11- At 7 Am off Nahant took breakfast & at 8 hauled Miss<sup>rs</sup> Gray & Hooper & proceeded to Barter with our fine brace at NW - got up at 11 1/2 o'clock -  
Mr David Stear, drove me home just in time for dinner -  
Thus ended one of the most satisfactory expeditions ever got up by me -  
My children all well -
- Monday 17- In at 10 Am - out at 3 1/2. I must to Providence with Rose - Heard of Harry Hubbards death.

Forbes, Robert Bennet. *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting, forty and more years ago*. Boston: 1888.

Pages 10-14.

...it was not until after my return from China in 1832 that my own experience of yachting, (except in small boats on Canton river,) began by building for Mr. John P. Cushing a boat of about 70 tons called the *Sylph*. She was built in 1833-4, by Wetmore (sic)<sup>141</sup> & Holbrook, Boston. After sailing her one season Mr. Cushing hauled her up at Medford and lengthened her bow about seven feet making it more like the English cutter bow; it was generally thought that the fine lines of the fore body and the rather full lines of the after body would cause her to be uneasy and wet in rough water, but on loaning her to pilots of Boston she proved dryer forward than before and considerably faster; her original bow was rather full at the water line and flaring out in the upper part; in a chop of a sea she would keep the deck wet by spray: after the change she opened the water more gradually and was much dryer; though slightly longer in stays, but she continued to range ahead.

I was practically the sailing master but her first skipper was William C. Fowler a branch pilot still living; On the occasion of her first cruise around Cape Cod, William Sturgis and Dan. C. Bacon were my guests; we left Boston in the evening just as the nine o'clock bells were ringing and anchored at Woods Hole at 11 a.m. the next day. When approaching the shoal, off Chatham and Pollock rip the wind was strong on the quarter, and she jumped from sea to sea in fine style. My guests were sitting on the cabin floor with a bucket between their knees posting up their accounts. Mr. Sturgis begged me to shorten sail, but as we were in a position where we should soon bear away I concluded to rig out a long bumkin and set the outer jib. By the time this was done Mr. Sturgis poked his head out of the companion-way and cried out, "My God, instead of double-reefing the main-sail, Forbes has just put the flying-jib on her!"

After lengthening the bow, the second season (probably 1835) we went round the Cape: passengers, the owner, Mr. S. Cabot, Mr. R. D. Shepherd and others.

When past Handkerchief Shoal we were beating against a very moderate S. W. breeze when a sail was made which proved to be the *Wave*, Commodore John Stevens, bound to Nahant; we hove-to for him to come within hail; he came booming along at full speed hauled-to close under our lee, and before we could draw jib and get a going he had run by and hove-to on our weather bow; it was then found that he could not keep on with us and we parted. We arrived at Woods Hole in good time when Governor Swain, of Naushon, came on board and offered to pilot us through "Lone Rock" passage where the tide rushes through like a mill race. Our pilot, Sylvanus Daggett said it would not be safe, but Mr. Cushing having faith in the Governor concluded to try it; the breeze was fresh and all went well until we had got by "Lone Rock" when the tide caught her and she went on the ledge opposite to the "Lone Rock." At the moment I saw the cutter

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<sup>141</sup> *Whitmore* & Holbrook was the correct name of the shipyard.

*Hamilton*, Captain W. A. Howard, in the sound, bound West. I fired a gun and lowered our flag, and Howard instantly came and anchored as near as was safe. Our ballast was taken out and finally the *Sylph* was floated. Captain Howard hove her out and smoothed the broken false keel and the copper. While she was on the rock with one end out of the water and the other submerged Mr. Cushing proposed to sell her by auction, and she was knocked off to me for about one fourth of her cost; my guests went home by land, and I proceeded towards home having a piece of the false keel on board about seven feet long; as we opened out Holmes' Hole we saw the *Wave* at anchor, and immediately hauled up for her and passing near I jumped on board; Mr. Stephens [sic] and his guests were at breakfast; I invited him to a trial of speed to Newport and we were soon under way; running down towards West Chop and while in smooth water the *Wave* gained rapidly but when we got nearly up to Tarpaulin Cove the sea became rough and it soon became apparent that the *Sylph* was gaining; I had remained on board the *Wave* and watched every movement of both boats; it soon became certain that the *Sylph* was gaining and Commodore Stevens concluded to bear away and wait in Tarpaulin Cove for better weather.

We anchored there and my captain, W. C. Fowler, came within hail and was ordered to go home and repair the *Sylph* now owned by Mr. Samuel Cabot and myself; he had not proceeded more than five or six miles when Commodore Stevens double reefed the sails and put out; by this time the wind had freshened and the tide setting to the westward caused quite a rough sea; the *Wave* behaved very badly, shipping a good deal of water, and Commodore Stevens again bore away and anchored in Tarpaulin Cove.

Forbes, Robert Bennet. *Notes on Ships of the Past*. Boston: 1885.  
Pages 108-111.

Foster, Charles H.W. *The Eastern Yacht Club Ditty Box, 1870-1900*. Norwood, Massachusetts: The Plimpton Press, 1932.

French, Hollis. *A List of Early American Silversmiths and Their Marks*. New York: The Walpole Society, 1917.  
Pages 49-50. Notes that William Gale's maker's mark was occasionally accompanied by marks of an eagle and a portrait—as marked on the *Wave* Cup.

Garland, Joseph E. *The Eastern Yacht Club. A History from 1870 to 1985*. Marblehead, MA: Eastern Yacht Club, 1989.

Goldman, Kenneth Howard. *American Yachts in Naval Service: A History from the Colonial Era to World War II*. McFarland & Co., 2020.

Guest, Montague and William B. Boulton. *The Royal Yacht Squadron. Memorials of its members, with an enquiry into the history of yachting and its development in the Solent. And a complete list of members with their yachts from the foundation of the club to the present from the official records.*

London: John Murray, 1903.

Excerpt (page 216):

Seven years later, viz. in 1816, Mr. Stevens had produced perhaps the first American yacht in the *Trouble*. There followed a series of yachts to bear witness to his ingenuity and to his restless search for the true model, the *Double Trouble*; the *Wave*, which was one of the fastest yachts of the few years following 1832; the *Onkahya*, a schooner of 120 tons, of a very curious section like an inverted ace of clubs; the *Gimcrack*, which as early as 1844 foreshadowed the fin keel of the modern racing boat, and finally the famous *Maria* sloop of 1846, the fastest yacht of her tonnage in American waters.

Mr. Stevens was thus the pioneer in American yachting, but there were others among his contemporaries who had the same tastes, and by degrees a respectable fleet of pleasure yachts assembled each year in those waters. As early as 1835 a crack yacht called the *Sylph*, hailing from Boston, raced Mr. Stevens' *Wave* at Nantucket, and was handsomely beaten, the first recorded race in America. By 1838 there were numbers of fast-sailing yachts afloat, of which the principal were *Mahomet*, *Dream*, *Raven*, and *Breeze*, and in 1845 was organised the first regular regatta, in which *Cygnets* was the winner.

Hofer, Margaret K. With Debra Schmidt Bach. *Stories in Sterling: Four centuries of silver in New York.* London: The New-York Historical Society in association with D. Giles Limited, 2011.

Hone, Philip. *The Diary of Philip Hone. 1828-1851.* Edited and with an introduction by Bayard Tuckerman. In two volumes. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889.

Hone's son, Robert, was once a part-owner of the yacht *Dream* prior to her being sold to T. H. Perkins, Jr.

The famous diarist socialized with John Cox Stevens, John Perkins Cushing, Robert Bennet Forbes, and others associated with *Wave*, *Sylph*, and *Dream*. On September 10, 1835, Hone cruised as a guest aboard *Dream* in Boston Harbor and encountered *Sylph*—then owned by Forbes and Cabot.

Hone was elected to the New York Yacht Club on June 24, 1846, proposed by Commodore Stevens.

Landsman. *Commerical Advertiser* (New York). (ref. "Correspondence of the Boston Atlas".) August 16, 1844.

Landsman, a Bostonian, compares and contrasts the qualities of yachts of New York and Boston. He also describes the last race of the yachts that rendezvoused in Newport in August 1844.

He expresses scorn for centerboard yachts and Stevens' *Gimcrack*, but he admires William Edgar's *Cygnnet* and the interiors of NYYC boats:

Here is an excerpt:

Some of [the New York yachts] have centre boards—a machine which, in my judgment, entirely alters the character of the vessel, and which should not be tolerated in any boat which pretends to sail in blue water. The boat of the commodore, the *Gimcrack*, is well entitled to her name. It would be idle for me, in the limits of a single letter, to describe her peculiarities and contrivances to enable her to go ahead—and, inasmuch as it is probable that her highly scientific and liberal owner will abandon these notions, and build for himself a vessel according to legitimate rules, adapted to the high position to which he has been unanimously chosen, I pass all her oddities by. The handsomest boat in the squadron, to a sailor's eye, and the admitted fastest boat, is the *Cygnnet*. Her rig is that of Boston boats, but her model is entirely different.

In interior arrangement, the New York boats are entirely different from ours. They cannot carry so many—but the passengers they do take have the comforts of shore life, with the excitement of the sea. We commend their interior to the careful scrutiny of our builders and their employers.

McLaughlin USN, Lt. John T. Letters from U.S.S. *Wave*. September 1838. *Daily Globe*. (Washington D.C.). October 16, 1838.

Lt. McLaughlin, the commanding officer of U.S.S. *Wave*, describes the vessel's activities in southern Florida in the aftermath of gale.

McLaughlin USN, Lt. John T. Letters to the Secretary of the Navy, Aug. 21, 1838. Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Officers below the Rank of Commander, 1802-84. Record Group 45, National Archives.

McLaughlin USN, Lt. John T. Letters to the Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of War, June-August 1838. Adjutant General Office. M234, M339, and M369. Record Group 94, National Archives. Here is an example of one of the letters, which references *Wave's* water tank system:

U. S. Sch: Wave 'Ocracoke Inlet'  
August 9<sup>th</sup> 1838

Sir

I regret to inform you that the Wave, enroute entered a gale off Cape Hatteras with a tremendous sea in which she laboured for thirty six hours, when it was found that her water tanks had started and but one out of four was in a sound condition, this fact being immediately under my eye, I ran in to ride out the gale, & fill my Water.

The gale has broken & I shall go to sea to night -

Respectfully &c  
I have the honor to be  
*John T. McLaughlin*  
Lieut. Comdr.

Hon. J. B. Fenwick  
Secy of War  
Washington City

Morison, Samuel Eliot. *The Maritime History of Massachusetts. 1783-1860*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921.

Napier, Rob. *Schooner Yacht Dream of 1833*. 21 September 2019. Unpublished.

New York Yacht Club. *Minutes*. General Meeting. May 5, 1855.

John Cox Stevens resigns as Commodore. Secretary notes Steven's yachting accomplishments including the success of the yacht *Wave*: "The *Wave*, without a competitor in her time;..."

New York Yacht Club. *Doomsday Book*, volume 1, models 1 to 999. Unpublished.

Parkinson, Jr., John. Edited with additional material by Robert W. Carrick. *The History of the New York Yacht Club. From its Founding Through 1973*. New York: New York Yacht Club, 1975.

Peverelly, Charles. *The Book of American Pastimes. Containing a history of the principal base ball, cricket, rowing, and yachting clubs of the United States*. New York: self-published, 1866.

Pages 13, 17.

The celebrated schooner-yacht *Wave*, belonging to Mr. Stevens, was, in her day, one of the fastest vessels afloat; she acquired great reputation in New York and other cities whenever she had an opportunity to display her admirable qualities. Her visit to Boston, and trials of speed with the pet yacht of that city, the Northern Light, are doubtless well remembered by many of our readers.

Philpott, A.J. "Yachting Exhibition in Marine Museum". *The Boston Globe*. May 12, 1926.

References the painting of *Sylph*.

Prudence. "Yachts at Newport." *The Atlas* (Boston). August 12, 1844.

Describes the August 8, 1844 fleet race around Conanicut Island in Newport won by Robert Bennet Forbes' *Belle*. *Belle* defeated four NYYC yachts including Commodore Stevens' *Gimcrack*.

Quimby, Ian M. G. *American Silver at Winterthur*. Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum/distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 1995.

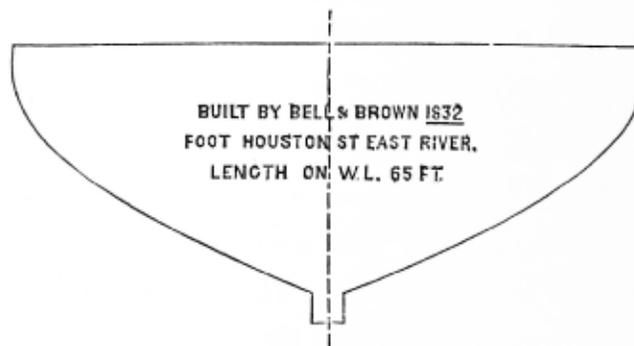
Rousmaniere, John. *The Golden Pastime: A New History of Yachting*. New York: W.W. Norton (A Nautical Quarterly Book), 1986.

Rousmaniere, John. *The New York Yacht Club. A History, 1844-2008*. New York: New York Yacht Club and Seapoint Books, 2009.

John Rousmaniere rejuvenates the story of the 1835 *Wave* vs. *Sylph* match in this book. In his telling of that story, he also places a spotlight on how John Cox Stevens and Robert Bennet Forbes maintained a link between the yachtsmen of New York and Boston in the development of organized yacht racing in the United States. He explains how Stevens and Forbes were instigators of both the 1835 match and the 1844 rendezvous of the fleets of New York and of Boston in Newport, which led to the first race of the New York Yacht Club on August 8, 1844.

Pages 19-21.

Somerset, Henry (The 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Beaufort) and Alfred E. T. Watson, editors. The Badminton Library. *Yachting, Volume II*. (Volume 23 of the Library.) Published by Longmans, Green & Co., 1894.  
Chapter VI "Yachting in America" by Lewis Herreshoff features this drawing:



'Wave,' midship section

to make room for something new and better. In 1832 Mr. Stevens built the schooner 'Wave'; she was 65 ft. water-line and proved to be fast. She visited Boston in 1835 and 1836, and beat all yachts she found there.

State Street Trust Company. *Some Merchants and Sea Captains of Old Boston. Being a collection of sketches of notable men and mercantile houses prominent during the early half of the nineteenth century in the commerce and shipping of Boston.* Boston: State Street Trust Company, 1918. Pages 5-8.

This is the only evidence that I have uncovered to date that describes the first known yacht race in the United States: a match race between *Dream* and *Sylph* in 1834 or 1835 in Boston Harbor. The media did not report this race; Cushing's diaries does not cover the entirety of 1834 and he does not mention of the race; Forbes' diaries do not cover 1834 or 1835.

When Colonel Perkins<sup>142</sup> returned to America he purchased a house at Nahant which was owned at one time by General Charles J. Paine, the famous yachtsman. Perkins was always fond of the water and was an excellent hand in steering a small boat. Captain Dumaresq<sup>143</sup> came back from Baltimore and described a very beautiful schooner which Perkins bought, and made a match with her against the "Sylph," which was to be sailed by John Perkins Cushing and Capt. R. B. Forbes. The race was to a buoy off the outer light in Boston Harbour, it being agreed that the first boat around should drive a boat-hook into the buoy and the next boat should take it out. The Perkins-Dumaresq yacht, which was called the "Dream," rounded the buoy first, and the Colonel drove his boat-hook into it and succeeded in first reaching home. The boat-hook never was brought back, and for years afterwards, when Colonel Perkins met Captain Forbes on Temple Place or on the Common he used to yell: "Ben, ahoy! Where is my boat-hook?"

Stephens, William P. *Traditions and Memories of American Yachting. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition.* Brooklin, Maine: WoodenBoat Publications, 1989.  
*Wave*: Pages 5, 22, 45, 109, 192, 338.  
*Sylph*: Pages 192, 337.

Stephens, William P. *Traditions and Memories of American Yachting. Complete Edition.* Camden, Maine: International Marine Publishing Co, 1981.

Stevens, Jr., Colonel Edwin A. Letter to Theodore C. Zerega, Chair of the New York Yacht Club Model Committee. January 30, 1905. Manuscript. Archives and Special Collections of the Samuel C. Williams Library, Stevens Institute of Technology.

On May 24, 2023, I researched the Stevens Family archives at the Stevens

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<sup>142</sup> Colonel Thomas "Short-Arm Tom" Handasyd Perkins, Jr. (1796-1850). Perkins earned his nickname because his left arm was three inches shorter than his right arm but that defect didn't prevent him from being a tough fighter. He was the eldest son of Colonel Thomas Handasyd Perkins (1764-1854) the famous Boston merchant, smuggler, and philanthropist. Lifelong friend of *Sylph*'s owner, John Perkins Cushing who was head of J. & T.H. Perkins.

<sup>143</sup> Colonel Perkins married into the Dumaresq family. The sketch about Perkins in the State Street pamphlet doesn't identify Captain Dumaresq's first name or specific relation to Perkins.

Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey. Leah Loscutoff, the head of the Institute's Archives & Special Collections, laid before me manuscripts and secondary source material related to the family's yachting activities.

This letter and the "List and Description of Models" (see next source) describe the models of the Stevens Family. Many of these models were donated by Colonel Stevens to the NYYC in 1905.

These manuscripts are important discoveries because they contain information about the vessels owned by the Stevens Family not found elsewhere—including a couple of fascinating facts about *Wave* (that she was designed using multiple pond-yacht models and that she had water ballast tanks). The documents also reflect Colonel Stevens' high regard for *Wave*.

Here is an excerpt of the letter:

2            WAVE.

This model is well authenticated, having been used to determine the comparative speed against other sailing models. The "Wave" had a considerable reputation for speed. She was eventually sold to the U.S. Government and used by them as a revenue cutter. Nos. 9 to 13 inclusive, are experimental models of "Wave". As far as I know, no test of the lines has been made to determine whether any of them are accurate. The only record of form that I know of is furnished by model #2.

Stevens, Jr., Colonel Edwin A. "List and Description of Models." Six-page manuscript. Archives and Special Collections of the Samuel C. Williams Library, Stevens Institute of Technology.

The following are images of the pages that reference *Wave*.

30

LIST and DESCRIPTION of MODELS.

1. Yacht "Wave" with five experimental models of same.

The yacht Wave can be said to have been the first yacht built in America capable of navigating the bays and Atlantic Ocean. Built by John C., Rob't L. and Edwin A. Stevens in the year 1832 at Bell & Brown's shipyard, foot of Houston Street, East River. Five experimental models were made from which one was selected. She was a centre-board vessel and was furnished with tanks that could be quickly emptied from one into the other on going about. (Probably with doubtful efficiency) She was the parent vessel of the New York Yacht Club first organized in America. After being used five or six years, she was sold to the U.S. Government and used for years on the southern coast. Frequent references were made in the papers at that date to the high opinion the naval officers had of her. The full model decked and with the position of the masts shown and rigged, was tried on the Delaware River in competition with a model on the same scale, namely, that of the "Onkahye", the latter being built shortly afterwards. The Wave was 72 ft. long, 21 ft. beam and 9 ft. deep.

2. First double ended screw ferry-boat.

3. Ferryboat "Pioneer". Built in 1823. On her trial trip she had a race with Fulton's two fastest steam boats on the North River, the Firefly and the Car of Neptune.

She was more than twice as fast as either of them.

4. Yacht "Onkahye" Length 96 ft. Breadth 22 ft. depth 13 1/2 ft. Modelled and arranged by the three

oulded base 22'. Commenced in the year 1824; finished by brother, John C., Rob't L., and Edwin A. Stevens. Tested and tried April 1825, and taken to the Delaware River on the Delaware River by Mr. E. A. Stevens for several days to run between Philadelphia and Trenton. On the establishment of a daily line between the two cities of Philadelphia and New York, leaving each city at 8 A.M. and going about quickly. The vessel was built by the elder Mr. Capes at Williamsburgh, L.I., about 1839 or 1840. She

The time taken from Philadelphia to Trenton by the "Wave" was particularly good in a seaway. On one occasion "Trenton" was about 4 hours, then by stages between Trenton and New Brunswick on the Maritime River, a distance of about 25 miles in 3 1/2 hours, and the distance between New York and New Brunswick was made by the "Wave" perceptibly dragging her anchor. She made a cruise in the year 1842 to the West India Islands and proved a capital sea boat. Subsequently she was sold to the U.S. Government and proved as great a favorite as her predecessor the "Wave" had been. I think that that model was succeeding day, stopping at Trenton when going west and at Trenton when going east, remaining over night at Trenton. The building of the "Wave" marked the departure from the plans of the original steamboat, built by Fulton and others, as she embodied the essential improvements afterwards followed on the Hudson River, and snapped off her masts on different occasions. She was always schooner rigged.

5. "Burlington" 1827.

6. "New Philadelphia". Built in Philadelphia in the year 1826 at Grice's ship yard. The first day boat that ever ran between New York and Albany.

7. "Trenton" with false bow.

8. "Yacht Maria". Moulded depth of original model 8', a piece after added making depth 10'. Breadth of

Stevens, John Cox. Half-Hull Model of *Wave*. Scale: ½" = 1'. New York Yacht Club Collection. No. 487. Presented to the NYCC in circa-1905 by Colonel Edwin A. Stevens, Jr., a son of Edwin Augustus Stevens, the fourth Commodore of the NYCC.

This model was originally a fully-rigged "pond yacht" model built in circa-1832 by the Stevens brothers (John Cox, Robert Livingston, and Edwin Augustus) for use in experiments to design the schooner yacht *Wave* (launched in 1832). The brothers selected this model from a group of six models.<sup>144</sup>

In 1905, the Model Committee sawed the model's hull in half; it kept one half to mount and display in the Club's Model Room, and it returned the other half to Colonel Stevens.

Data on the Model Committee card catalog entry:

*Designer:* John C. Stevens  
*Builder:* Bell & Brown<sup>145</sup> (sic), New York  
*Launched:* 1832  
*Type:* Schooner

*Dimensions:*  
LOA 72' 3"  
WL 65'  
Beam 22'  
Draft 8'

*Catalog Entry Notes:*

Had quite a reputation for speed. Was sold to the U.S. Govt. 1838 for \$8000. And used a "Revenue Cutter" Model similar to No. 486<sup>146</sup>, and received same treatment<sup>147</sup> by the Committee 1905.



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<sup>144</sup> Stevens, Jr., Colonel Edwin A. "List and Description of Models." Six-page manuscript. Archives and Special Collections of the Samuel C. Williams Library, Stevens Institute of Technology.

<sup>145</sup> Brown & Bell.

<sup>146</sup> No. 486 is the model of John C. Stevens' *Trouble*.

<sup>147</sup> Refers to the fact that the Model Committee sawed the full model in half.

Stevens, John Cox. "Sports at Sea." Includes Stevens' letter to the Editor of the *New York Herald*. *New York Herald*. October 25, 1843.

This is evidence that John C. Stevens was willing to race for a silver cup *and* that he would bring the cup with him to a match. In 1843, he offered to race his yacht *Gimcrack* against the pilot boat *Washington* in New York harbor, for pleasure only or for a silver cup, valued at \$100. It seems that Stevens viewed a silver trophy as a convenient combination of a valuable "cash-equivalent" asset and as a commemorative device.

Here is an excerpt of his letter:

The race to be for the pleasure of the thing only, or for a silver cup valued at a hundred dollars.

Your obedient servant,  
JOHN C. STEVENS

P. S.—Should there be on the day a gale of wind and a sea too heavy for a boat of the Gimcrack's size to live in, I have nought to do but present the cup and wish the pilots joy of their good luck and better judgment.

This suggests that Stevens may have brought the *Wave* Cup—as a prize for a race—with him on his 1835 trip to New England aboard *Wave*.

Stevens, John Cox. *Will. Dated February 14, 1857. Codicils. Dated May 5, 1857, et al.* Wills and Probate Records. Vol. 120. Office of the Surrogate of the County of New York. Here is an excerpt of Stevens' will:

I give and bequeath to my said brother Edwin A. Stevens all my interest or share in the silver and plate heretofore in use and belonging to the Yacht Maria including all cups or pieces of silver won in any regatta, excepting however the piece of silver with the inscription "Wave" upon it which piece I give and bequeath to my nephew Cambridge Livingston.

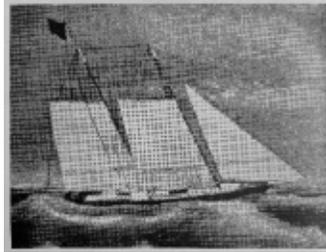
Stiles, T. J. *The First Tycoon. The epic life of Cornelius Vanderbilt*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Swan, William U. "Yachting 100 Years Ago." *The Boston Globe*. June 19, 1935.

This article describes the founding of the Boston Boat Club (1834) and the Dream Club (1835-1837) by Robert Bennet Forbes. Swan has a different interpretation—now debunked—of the races between *Wave* and *Sylph*:

While rounding Cape Cod on Aug 3, 1835, in the schooner *Sylph*, which Commodore Forbes had designed for John P. Cushing and which he commanded, the schooner *Wave* of New York, owned by John C. Stevens, was encountered on Nantucket Shoals and at the suggestion of Commodore Forbes there was a brief and perhaps indecisive brush, followed by two more the next day in Vineyard Sound, also inspired by the Boston yachtsman.

Swan, William U. "The Centennial Race." *Yachting*. September 1935.  
Pages 62, 106.  
The article features a picture of *Wave*. Source/Artist unknown as  
the image is uncredited.



Taylor, William H. "Cruising Race to Commemorate American Yachting Centenary:  
Boat Show Hear of Plans for Match this Summer; New 12-Meter to be Built."  
*New York Herald Tribune*. January 25, 1935.

Thompson, Winfield, W. P. Stephens and William U. Swan. *The Yacht America.  
Together with material from contemporary records*. Boston: Charles E.  
Lauriat, Co., The Colonial Press C. H. Simonds Co., Boston, 1925. Limited  
edition of 375 copies.

Thompson, Winfield M. "Historic American Yachts Some Early Boston Vessels, Sylph  
and Dream." *The Rudder*, Vol XV, No 6, June 1904.  
The noted yachting historian describes the stories of the two historic yachts  
and introduces the match between *Wave* and *Sylph* in 1835 as the "earliest  
recorded trial of speed between American yachts." He relied on Robert  
Bennet Forbes' *A Discursive Sketch of Yachting...*(1888) as well as  
contemporary newspaper articles such as *The Gazette* (New Bedford)—  
which incorrectly inferred or stated that the first race was on August 3  
instead of July 30.

Title. *Longworth's American almanac, New-York register and city directory*.  
New York: Thomas Longworth.  
Editions: 1834/35 (pub. 1834); 1835/36 (pub. 1835), *et al.*  
This is the source of information for most of the locations shown on the  
"Annotated Map of New York City in 1835."

Title. *Report from the Secretary of the Treasury, communicating a report of the  
Superintendent of the Coast Survey, showing the progress of the work under  
his charge during the year ending November 1845*. 29<sup>th</sup> Congress. 1<sup>st</sup> Session.  
Page 10. This is the first mention of *Wave* in a Coast Survey report.

Title. *Report of the Superintendent of the Coast Survey, showing the progress of the survey during the year 1858*. Washington: William A. Harris, Printer, 1859. Pages 46, 80, and 132. This is the last mention of *Wave* in a Coast Survey report.

Turnbull, Archibald Douglas. *John Stevens. An American Record*. New York: The Century Co., 1928. Pages 510-511.

Ujifusa, Steven B. Paul Elias, Editor. *Creative Capital. The first two centuries of J.M. Forbes & Company*. Boston: Tradewinds History LLC and J.M. Forbes & Co. LLP, 2024 (launched in April 2025). "Privately published just for our clan, clients, and friends."  
John Murray Forbes (1813-1898) was a brother of the yachtsman Robert Bennet Forbes (1804-1889), who is featured in this history.

United States Navy. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (DANFS)*. Online edition at the Naval History and Heritage Command. Entry: "Wave I (Sch)."

Venable, Charles L. Tom Jenkins, lead photographer. Biographical entries by C. Albert Soeffing. *Silver in America. 1840-1940. A Century of Splendor*. Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995. Pages 13-14, 319.

Voorsanger, Catherine Hoover, and John K. Howat, editors. *Art and the Empire City New York, 1825-1861*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.

Voyageur. "Letters from the East. Boston, August 19, 1844." *Saturday Courier* (Philadelphia). August 24, 1844.  
This is one of the most detailed accounts of the activities between the NYCC and the Bostonian yachtsmen in August 1844 in Newport. Among other things, it describes the cruise around Prudence Island on August 7 and the regatta around Conanicut Island on August 8.

Warren, David B., Katherine S. Howe, and Michael K. Brown. *Marks of Achievement. Four centuries of American presentation silver*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987.

Whipple, A. B. C. and the editors of Time-Life Books. *The Racing Yachts. The Seafarers*. Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1980.

# Questions and Conjectures

## **1.) Was the *Wave Cup* a commissioned piece?**

I speculate that the Cup was probably a custom-made trophy because of its unusual design and because it isn't a clearly defined object like a punch bowl, water jug, teapot, or tankard.

## **2.) If the Cup was a commissioned piece, who commissioned it?**

Circumstantial evidence suggests that John Cox Stevens is the likely person: one, it was made in New York City (as opposed to Boston); two, Stevens offered a silver cup as a prize for a yacht race in 1843.<sup>148</sup>

## **3.) Based on the maker's mark, the *Wave Cup* was made by William Gale between 1833 and 1836. But did he make it *before* or *after* *Wave's* victory over *Sylph* on July 30, 1835?**

## **4.) When were the inscriptions in the cartouches engraved?**

## **5.) Why was the Cup engraved with the year "1836" when referring to the race between Stevens's *Wave* and Cushing's *Sylph*?**

This is likely an error for the following reasons: one, there is no record of a race between the two boats in 1836; two, there is no evidence that John P. Cushing had bought back his yacht after he had sold it to his cousin Robert Bennet Forbes in August 1835; and, three, Cushing makes no mention of any yacht races in 1836 in his diary.

## **6.) Stevens bequeathed all his yachting trophies to his brother Edwin A. Stevens, except for the *Wave Cup*, which he gave to his nephew, Cambridge Livingston. Why did he do this?**

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<sup>148</sup> Stevens, John Cox. "Sports at Sea." Includes Stevens' letter to the Editor of the *New York Herald*. *New York Herald*. October 25, 1843.

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