

Chapter 2

Rowing and Harness Racing

Rowing

Who are these chaps?
What on earth are they doing in Paris?
They have come to row.
Oh, God help me.

Was there ever a crew like Saint John's own Paris crew? Some say they were the greatest four-oared crew that ever sat in a shell. Whether you believe they were or not depends on what reports of them you read. Regardless, they certainly were a unique foursome. In a sport known for its well-schooled, highly-polished, upper class gentlemen, the Paris crew were a marked contrast. They were rough, ill-bred, tobacco-chewing fishermen.

They did one thing, and they did it well: Row. They were Saint John's first World Champions. They were the end product, the cream of the crop of over sixty years of aquatic development in Saint John. They were the stars in the golden age of rowing - an age that produced a number of champion crews.

In the fall of 1856, for example, one of our local crews, one of the greatest of the era, was down in Boston for a race. The Neptune crew, as it was called, was made up of John and Dennis Morris, Ned Walsh, and John Lambert. They defeated a New York crew over a six mile course on the Charles River. The Saint John crew returned home with \$2,000 in prize money and an undisclosed amount in side bets. In those days, \$2,000 was a lot of money: equal, in fact, to about \$60,000 on today's market. There was big money to be made in the rowing game. Just about every man who worked on the waterfront participated in these rowing races. The local harbour races were for \$10 to \$15 "an oar." They were held between rowing crews representing the different sections of the city. At that time, there was a strong rivalry between the Sand Cove, Carleton, Indiantown, and the Straight Shore men. The local crews raced off to determine what section of the city could boast of having the fastest crew. Then the winning crew usually sent a challenge to the best clubs in Boston, New York, and Halifax for a race. It was in these races that the big money was made.

During the late 1850's, the Neptune crew that rowed out of the Union Boat Club was the fastest local crew. Their chief rival was a crew from Carleton. This crew was composed of James and George Stackhouse, William Dunham, and George Belyea. These two rival crews met in clashes that were often exciting and long remembered by the local residents.

In 1857, the Neptune crew raced the Wide Awake, a crew from Halifax. The race took place on August 12 for 300 pounds a side. The Neptunes defeated their arch city rivals by two boat lengths. However, the Morris-Lambert crew failed to make any money off

the race. It had been the Saint John crew's second visit to Halifax that summer. A little over two weeks previous to their August 12th clash, the two crews had met in Halifax. The race was held in rough water, and the Saint John men had stopped rowing in protest of the conditions. The race was awarded to the Halifax crew, and with it went the Saint John men's money.

In the year 1859, Ned Walsh was replaced by Daniel Morris. The Neptune now sported three brothers in the crew. They competed in the Grand Regatta held on September 10, 1859. This regatta was one of the biggest aquatic events of that era. It was held on the Kennebecasis Bay. Most people gathered around Appleby's wharf to watch the excitement. The wharf was located at the bottom of present day Appleby Drive in East Riverside. Beginning at 8 o'clock, train load after train load of people arrived from Saint John and Hampton. By the end of the day, an estimated 13,000 spectators had graced the shores of the Kennebecasis. The river, which derives its name from the Indian word meaning "little snake," was a beehive of activity. There were sailboats, skiffs, wherries, gigs, canoes, punts, and tubs all cluttered on the water. Along the shore and upon the hills, thousands of people gathered with their dinners packed in baskets to eat and watch the activity. "It was the Picnic of the season. Imagine all the previous 'turn-outs' among the Sunday School folks uniting for a general burst, and you will have a faint idea of Saturday's event," reported Monday's edition of *The Morning News*.

Ten races were scheduled for the grand event. Since the races held were typical of a nineteenth century regatta, a look at one makes for some interesting reading:

THE RACES

The first race was of four-oared gigs, for a prize of \$200, distance five miles, four boats were entered, viz: the *Retriever*, *Adriane*, *Eclipse*, and *Neptune*. From the moment starting, the *Neptune* gradually gained on her competitors, and she easily won the race, coming in a long distance ahead. Soon after starting, two of the boats fouled, and, we understand, a protest was entered against the race on this account. The names of the winning oarsmen will be recognized, they having become celebrated throughout the Lower Provinces. They are: John Morris, Dennis Morris, Daniel Morris, and John Lambert. The winning boat made the distance in about 33 minutes. When rounding the stake boat, the *Retriever*, Indiantown, turned quickly, and in doing so, filled with water, which prevented her from continuing the race. Were it not for this, her friends say the contest would have been very sharp between her and the *Neptune*.

The second race had the same description of boats, pulled by boys under twenty-one years of age, distance the same, for a purse of \$80. Eight boats entered: *Retriever*, *White Wave*, *Albert*, *Eclipse*, *Quickstep*, *Lucy Dashwood*, *Experiment* and *Three Lambs*. The Indiantown boat, *Retriever*, won the race, but the contest was very sharp. The names of the successful crew are: Geo. Reynolds, James Logan, Samuel Dunham, and John Curry. The time made by the winning boat was thirty-six minutes and thirty seconds. The Reed's Point boat, *Three Lambs*, came in second.

The third race was two-oared boats for a purse of \$40, distance two miles, and

the four boats entered were: *Adriane*, *Sovereign*, *Aurora*, and a boat from Carleton, not named in the programme. The *Aurora* won the race - the Carleton boat being second. The winning boat was the one that, in the former race, took the prize as the *Retriever*.

For the Wherry race, distance one mile, prize \$30, three boats entered: *Gypsy*, *Lutestring*, and *Friendship*. The *Lutestring*, from Indiantown, won the race.

The next race was open boats (third class), and four boats entered: *Alice*, *Micmac*, *Ripple*, and *Callyally*, for a prize of \$40. F.P. Robinson's *Callyally* won easily.

For the Wood-boat race, there were four entries: *Conductor*, *Ariel*, *Alma*, and *Samuel*. The prize was \$80, distance ten miles. The *Conductor* came in the victor.

The race of the first-class sailing boats was considered the race among those most interested in aquatic sport. Seven boats entered: *Petrel*, *Sylvie*, *Nell*, *Ada*, *Ciree*, *Flirt*, and *Lady Stewart*. The prize was a handsomely executed Silver Cup and the distance was ten miles. The boats started beautifully and kept pretty well together for some distance while running before the wind, but Stackhouse's *Sylvie* gradually shot ahead and was the first to round the stake boat. While beating down against the wind, she left her competitors a good distance behind. She managed to increase her lead considerably after passing the lower stake boat and running up to the winning post. She came in some distance ahead. The *Petrel*, owned by Mr. Simonds, came in second, and the *Flirt*, by Mr. J. Harrison, third. The appearance presented by these boats, looking from Appleby's, when passing the upper stake boat was very fine.

The gig and punt race created a great deal of merriment. The time allowed to catch the punt, pulled by Dick Patchell, was fifteen minutes, but at the end of that time the gig was no nearer doing so than when she commenced. The gyrations of the little craft, as she spun round her comparatively huge competitor, were very amusing.

For the canoe race there were four entries, and it was a very warmly contested affair, the winning canoe coming in only the length of herself ahead.

The Tub race did not come off as there was but one entry, but the appearance of the Tub, her crew consisting of one man, his boots serving as a rudder, his head at the bow, and hands as paddles, created much merriment. . .¹

The year 1859 was also the first season that a member of the Paris crew appeared on the aquatic scene. Samuel Hutton joined up with the Brittain crew during this year. The crew was composed of Samuel and William Brittain, William Perkins, and Samuel Hutton. They rowed out of the Carleton boat club during the summer and won a number of local races.

1. *The Morning News*, September 12, 1859.

Samuel Hutton was born in Coleraine, Ireland, in the year 1847. He came to Saint John at the age of three, the Huttons being a part of the great Irish exodus that occurred during the potato famine of the 40's and 50's. Hutton, who would eventually occupy the number two seat in the Paris crew, took to the fishing trade at an early age. He "was a well-proportioned man, with prominent cheek bones and a pleasing countenance." He stood five feet, nine inches and, in rowing condition, weighed one hundred and fifty-seven pounds.²

The following year, 1860, with Hutton in the Brittain crew, the team rowed against Robert and Gilbert Cox, Elijah Ross, and Wesley Baker in a four-oared event on the harbour course. The race was won by the Hutton crew after "something happened to Robert Cox." This race marked the emergence of the second member of the Paris crew - Elijah Ross.

Ross worked as a lighthouse keeper. He would come to occupy three seat in the Paris boat. He was born in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia, and came to Saint John at an early age. A popular man about the town, he later became one of the city's premier rowing and sailboat builders. Ross was five feet, eleven inches tall and, when in top condition, weighed 158 pounds.

In the year 1862, Elijah Ross and Samuel Hutton joined forces and commissioned Chris Coyle of Sand Cove to build them a four-oared racing shell. The lapstreak boat was called the *James A. Harding*, after the popular Saint John sheriff. This boat was first raced by the two Brittain brothers, Samuel Hutton, and Robert McLaren against an Indiantown crew. Elijah Ross did not row that race because his father had work for him to do. Unfortunately, the race was won by the Indiantown men. Over the next few years, it would be this Indiantown-Carleton rivalry that would produce the Paris crew. For in order for the Carleton men to defeat their rivals, they would have to juggle their oarsmen around until the right combination was found.

For the 1864 rowing season, Robert Fulton replaced William Brittain aboard the *James A. Harding*. Fulton, who would stroke the Paris crew, was, as the saying goes, "tough as nails." He was the man who set the pace in the boat. A fighter all the way, he never failed to set a torrid pace. Fulton's physical stature helped make him a good oarsman. He was six feet, one inch tall and 165 pounds. However, as it turned out, his first race with his mates was not quite to his liking. In the late summer of that year, the *Harding* clashed with the Indiantown men, who were boated in the *Thetis*. The race was a scheduled feature at the Masonic picnic. It was won by the *Thetis*, with the *Harding* coming in second and a Sand Point crew with George Price aboard placing third.

Three weeks later, Fulton, Ross, Brittain, and McLaren once again met the *Thetis* in a race held in conjunction with Father Dunphy's picnic on the Bay shore. Once again, the Indiantown men won, but it was a much harder fought battle. Later on in the fall of 1864, the two crews squared off in a six mile tussle on the Kennebecasis River. It was a grand struggle for aquatic supremacy that saw both crews push to the limit. At the end, it was the Indiantown men ahead by a scant three seconds. The race stirred up a great deal of interest among the North and West sections of the city. People were not afraid to back their opinions, and a large amount of money was laid on the outcome.

For the Carleton men, the frustration of losing to their rivals was beginning to wear

2. *The Daily Evening News* (Saint John), August 23, 1871.

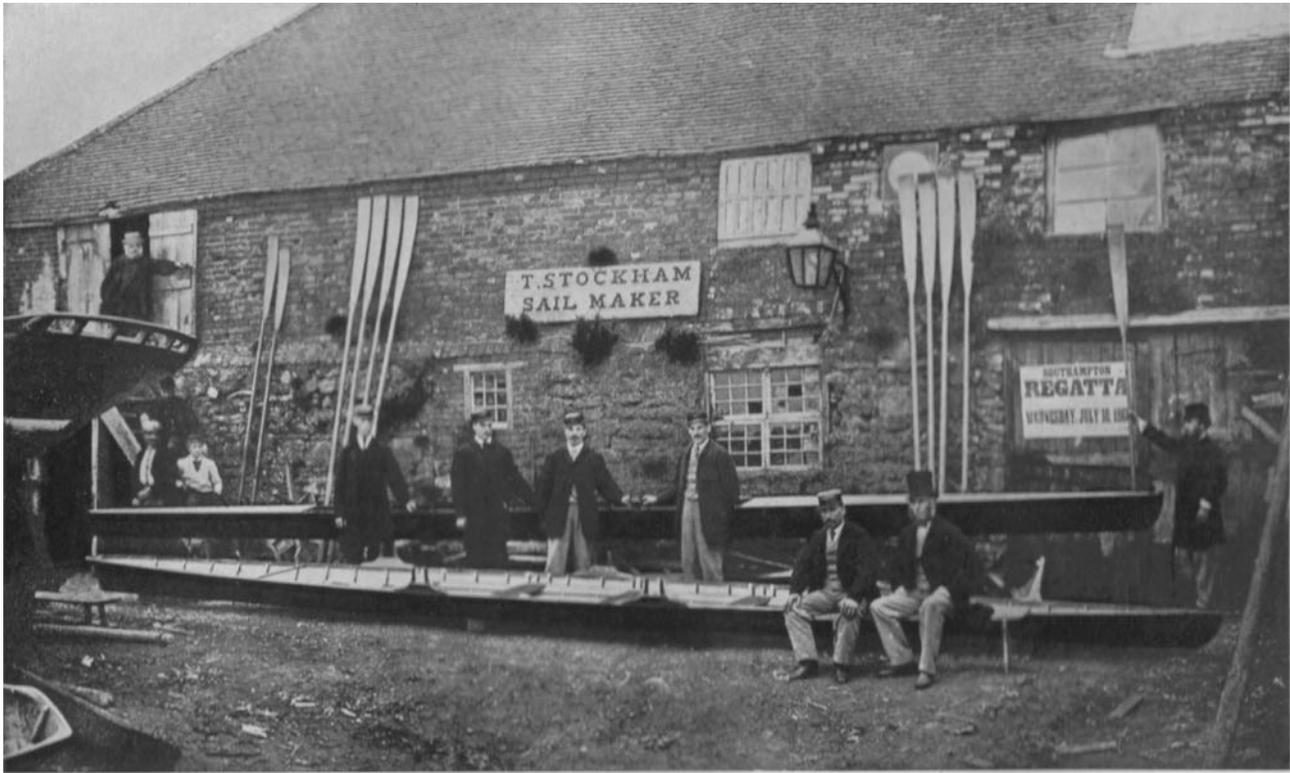
thin on their psyches. However, they were comforted in the fact that on each successive clash, they were closing the gap. The big break for the Carleton men came in the year 1865 in a six mile race held over the same Kennebecasis course with double the stakes of the previous year. The west side men finally conquered their arch rivals and, in doing so, scored a measure of revenge.

On July 4, 1866, three Saint John boats went down to Boston for the Independence Day regatta on the Charles River. The four-oared event had seven boats entered: three from Saint John, two from Boston, and one from both New York and Worcester. There was \$200 in prize money "up for grabs." The course was one and a half miles up around a buoy and return. When the starting gun went off, the *Thetis*, *Young Neptune*, and *George C Wiggins*, all of Saint John, shot into the lead followed by the American boats. As the race progressed, it turned out to be a clash between the three Saint John boats and a Boston crew. The *Thetis* and *Neptune* crews of Saint John then made a spurt with *Thetis* in the lead. The battle was now for third place and it turned out to be a real dogfight. At the finish, it was the *Thetis*, first; the *Young Neptune*, second; and the Boston crew nosing out the *George C. Wiggins* for third. It was a splendid race for the Port City contingent. The winning boat, *Thetis*, was boated by: Edward Crawley, Edward McCauley, George Price, and George Nice. The winning contingent wore white caps and white shirts. They crossed the line in a time of twenty minutes and thirty-nine seconds, a little over twenty seconds faster than their nearest rival.

Later that year, 1866, George Price joined Hutton, Ross, and Fulton aboard the *James A. Harding*. Price, who would occupy the bow of the Paris crew, was five years older than his crew members. His leadership in the bow position added much needed maturity and experience to the boat. He was also a loner with a fierce determination to win. On more than one occasion, his sharp, curt, barking orders to up the stroke rate would irk his crew members, but Price was good at what he did. He provided the needed fire to spur the crew on to victory. A fisherman by trade, Price stood five feet, ten inches and tipped the scales at 154 pounds.

The crew first raced together during Father Dunphy's picnic at Bay shore during the summer of 1866. They defeated the *Thetis*, *Young Neptune* and a Logan crew in a hotly contested race. Later, in the fall of that year, they clashed with, and defeated, *the MD Austin* to up their record to two victories in as many tries. There was little question among the local boating fraternity that this new crew boating in the *James A. Harding* was good. They were yet another in a long line of great crews that had been put together by the Carleton Boat Club. However, as it was later proved, this crew was more than good. Yes, indeed, they would become special to Saint Johners. It was a case of being in the right place at the right time under the right circumstances that transformed these local fishermen into sporting superstars.

In 1867, a four-oared racing crew left Saint John bound for Paris. The crew, Robert Fulton, Elijah Ross, Samuel Hutton, and George Price, was accompanied by their manager, Sheriff James A. Harding. With them they had two boats, eight oars, and all their luggage. After a five week training camp in Southampton, England, the crew slipped into Paris a fortnight before the big regatta. And big it was! The grand, international regatta was part of the World's Exposition.



The World-Famed Paris Crew of Saint John, New Brunswick. This photograph was taken at their training quarters in Southampton, England. The members of the crew are standing in front of their boat (L-R): Robert Fulton, Elijah Ross, Samuel Hutton, and George Price. The man in the foreground with the stove-pipe hat is their business manager, Sheriff James A. Harding. (Source: Joan Flood)

Just to get the men to Paris was a feat in itself. It was the result of a massive community effort. The Saint John citizens raised \$4000 along with \$2000 donated by the New Brunswick government. The contingent from Saint John was to be the provincial representative at the World's Exposition. As a New Brunswick reporter noted: "Although to the great International Exposition we have sent no elaborate works of art, no specimen of ingenious handicraft, no sample of the products of mine or field, we have nevertheless sent to Paris such an 'exhibit' of our energy, our hardihood and pluck as shall render up famous among all the famed at that grand international tournament."³ The hardy New Brunswickers had come to give the rest of the world a lesson at the oar.

"Ridiculous!", thought the English coaches of London Rowing Club and Oxford University. The English reporters scoffed at these new Canadians. They had no stretchers, no buttons on their oars, and no coxswain to steer. Their boats were wide and much too heavy. Worst of all, they did not follow the principles of the English technique, a long smooth stroke acquired by "putting your back into it." Rather, they pulled almost entirely with their arms, using a quick, short stroke. To top this all off, they did not dress properly, as noted by a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*: "Among the strange looking people whom this regatta has brought together, not the least strange were a certain crew of four sturdy New Brunswickers. . . With their flesh-coloured jerseys, dark cloth trousers,

3. S.F. Wise and D. Fisher, *Canada's Sporting Heroes* (Don Mills, General Publishing Company, Inc., 1970).

leather braces, and bright pink caps, they were in striking contrast to their neat competitors.”⁴

However, little of this seemed to matter to the New Brunswickers. If anything, it made them more determined to go about their business. The first of two races they entered was for amateur in-rigged fours. There were six boats registered for the event. The course went from the start buoy, down the Seine River, around the lower buoy, and return.

At the sound of the gun, the Saint Johners took the lead and held it all the way down to the buoy. Their closest competitor was a crew from Paris, the Geslings, a boat length and a quarter in the rear. On the way home, a determined effort by the French crew was quashed by a short, quick burst by our local lads. As they passed the grandstand, “the stroke coolly waved his hat to the shouting crowd, rowing on with one hand, and after turning the starting point again, came back, winning easily.” The surprised crowd erupted and gave the New Brunswickers “a perfect storm of well merited applause.”

The second and last race of the regatta was for outriggered fours. The Saint Johners brought out their second boat for this race. “Their boat is a curious old-fashioned outrigger,” noted an English correspondent, “... It is so wonderfully made and so curiously put together.”⁵ Not only that, the New Brunswicker’s boat weighed 200 pounds compared to the other crews’ boats that weighed 60 pounds less. Regardless, the New Brunswickers calmly lined up at the start line. It was to be a straight dash from the starting place to the Bridge of Surennes. Six boats started: Paris, London, New Brunswick, Boulogne, Hamburg, and Oxford University. The New Brunswick crew took off at a rapid 46 to 47 strokes a minute and jumped into the lead. From then on, to the delight of the crowd, the boys pulled to the finish, “talking and laughing in the easiest manner possible.” How grand it was! Two races - two victories. It was a day that would “be long remembered among rowing men,” noted the correspondent, “and should make either English oarsmen or English boatbuilders reconsider the first principles of their arts.” From that day on, the four men became known as the famous “Paris crew.”

Back home, the news of their victories spread like wild fire. On the streets, friends grabbed, shook, and hugged each other. In fact, all over Canada, the news of the young country’s first victory in international competition was seen as a good omen for future endeavours. Saint Johners were “some-proud” of their home town men. So it was fitting to have a grand celebration on the return of the conquering heroes.

On August 6, 1867, the American steamer, *New York*, nosed into the harbour with the famous local oarsmen on board. Thunderous fourteen gun salutes were fired from Carleton, Reed’s Point, and Ballast Wharf. The steamer docked at Reed’s Point with some six to seven thousand people jamming the dock to catch a glimpse of the returning oarsmen. At five o’clock, to the cheers of the crowd, they strode down the gang plank attired in their rowing garb. Holding their oars aloft, they paraded through the city streets. The Fifteenth Regiment’s bands struck up “Hail to the Chief Who in Triumph Advanced.” A reception was held at the Victoria Hotel in their honour, and the Mayor gave the men the Freedom of the City along with \$500 in cash. It was a grand celebration.

News of the Saint John crew’s victories at the International Regatta in Paris spread throughout the aquatic world. It was not long before eager opponents wished to get a crack

4. *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), August 2, 1867.

5. *The Globe and Mail*, August 2, 1867

at the famed Paris crew. The first serious challenge came from south of the border. The Ward crew from New York issued a challenge to race any four-oared crew in the world. This “bold stroke” created considerable excitement in rowing circles. The challenge was immediately answered by the Paris crew and negotiations for a race were begun. After two successive visits to New York, Sheriff Harding, representing the Paris crew, hammered out an agreement with the Ward brothers. The race was scheduled for October 21, 1868, at Springfield, Massachusetts, over a six mile course for a side stake of \$1500 and the championship of the world. The hype for the big race was begun.

The Ward brothers came from a legendary New York rowing family. In total, there were nine brothers, all of whom were famous oarsmen during the mid 1800’s. Hank, Charles, Gilbert, and Josh were the four Ward brothers boated to race the Paris crew. They had “developed their tough physique and their skill in the management of an oar while acting as boatmen on the Hudson River.”⁶ The well-known Cornwall, New York, natives had a long list of rowing accomplishments. They had defeated the “crack” local crews, then the Biglins, and, later, the Harvard amateur squad to lay claim to and to reign as American champions. As recently as the fall of 1867, the Wards had defeated a hand-picked crew from Saint John. However, at the time the Saint John lads had warned the New Yorkers that there was a better crew in Saint John. Their victories came in the single, pair, four, six, and eight-oared boats. So decisive and many were the Ward’s victories, that at the time, they “were looked upon, throughout the wide domain of the American republic, as almost invincible.”⁷

While, on the other hand, the Paris crew “were comparatively unknown, and their best time was a secret.”⁸ The Americans had heard of their great victories across the ocean, but, apart from that, they knew little else about them. Worse still, when the Saint John crew arrived to train for the race at Springfield, they set up their training camp on the upper stretch of the river. This made it impossible for many of the spectators to get a good look at them. They did this to keep the odds in the betting pools in their favour for the race. The Paris crew and the Saint John backers felt they could “whip” the Ward brothers.

The great international boat race attracted a tremendous amount of interest. The Ward supporters from Springfield, Boston, New York, Chicago, and the far west backed their crew heavily. Cocky Saint Johners annoyed the American betting men by taking all the betting action and asking for more. They were confident in the Paris crew and showed it as “the St. John men poured forth their thousands, neither giving, nor any longer asking odds, but being only too anxious to have all their money covered ere their certainty as to the result of the race should be made only more certain by the race itself.”⁹ In the safe of the Massasoit House in Springfield, it was said that well over \$ 100,000 was deposited the night before the race. A special correspondent for *The Daily News* described the race on the following day:

At ten seconds of thirteen minutes to three (Springfield time) the Wards, in their boat, came alongside of the flag-boat - the St. John men being previously there - and while yet the Wards were under headway the words - “Are you ready? - Go!”

6. *The Daily News* (Saint John), October 22, 1868.

7. *The Daily News*, October 22, 1868.

8. *The Daily News*, October 22, 1868.

9. *The Daily News*, October 22, 1868.

were heard, which, coming unexpectedly to our men, the Wards got a slight start, keeping it for about ten seconds - rowing thirty-eight strokes to the minute - when our men - managing forty-two strokes - closed on them, and for a quarter of a mile it was a beautiful and exciting race. Our boat pushed out ahead, and Fulton, (our stern oarsman), coming abreast with "Josh" Ward; (their bow-oarsman), gave him a parting salutation - "Good-Bye, Josh", and the race then - saving possible accidents - was virtually at an end. Our boat - after this desperate struggle of the Wards - sprang away from them, and at a bend in the river (1 1/2 miles down) our men had made three clear lengths between the boats and were leaving their opponents with great rapidity. At the stake-boat (three miles down) they had greatly increased the distance, and had so little to contend against that they actually came to a stop to indulge in a little friendly chaffing with their backer, Charles E. Potter, Esq.. From that up, our men came along, cool and undisturbed, and making their usual magnificent rowing; the Wards completely doubled up, laboring along, a very long distance behind. At the coming out, our men - to show what they could do - put themselves fairly down to work, and their boat quivered and trembled from end to end, crossing the line (according to the time taken by the writer) at 25 minutes and 32 seconds after three, amid the deafening cheers of thousands present, the Band with peculiar fitness and good taste and with the same spirit as was displayed on all sides, adding to the applause by the graceful act of striking up - "God save the Queen!"¹⁰

It was a great race for our local oarsmen, who could now claim to be the champions of both sides of the Atlantic. The Saint John men returned home with pockets stuffed with money they had won from their American friends. Among the returning Saint John men was a man by the name of Byron de Wolfe. Mr. de Wolfe was an avid sportsman and also a local poet. He penned the following poem entitled "Defeat of the Ward Brothers":

Who will dare, as rival oarsmen,
to against us bravely row?
Where are four men who will meet us?
Tell us, for we'd like to know.
Where's the boat's crew that can lead us,
And can greater fame command?
For we are champion oarsmen
of this great republic land.

Well the Wards the world might challenge,
for their triumphs were not few,
With their oars and boats they had often beaten
a brave contending crew;
And their countrymen who knew them oft
went from place to place,
Saying there are no four oarsmen
who can beat them in a race.

But far off, in New Brunswick's province,
four brave fishermen did dwell;
They had toiled since they were children
in the land they loved so well;
They had often met with dangers
when the peaceful winds had gone,
And the Storm King shoot their fishboats
on the turbulent St. John.

Up they rose, brave hearted fellows,
and to the Ward brother cried:
"We will meet you on the waters
since you have the world defied."
We are but New Brunswick oarsmen,
but you'll recollect we've been
Matched against some crews of Europe
and we've met you on the Seine.

10. *The Daily News*, October 22, 1868.

“Well you’ve spoken, Bluenose oarsmen,”
 said the famous brothers four,
“On the Seine you did your duty,
 we’ll forget it never more.
But America’s not Europe,
 and the Wards you did not try,
Of the world we are champion oarsmen
 and New Brunswick we defy.”

Soon they met upon the river,
 the Connecticut, and they
Had their boats and oars all ready
 on a cold October day,
While five thousand people
 stood the river margin on.
Some betting on the sons of Cornwall
 or the oarsmen of St. John.

Stephen King and Charles E. Potter,
 judges for New Brunswick’s crew,
Were there with good Sheriff Harding,
 its head backer, tried and true;
He had been with the crew to Paris,
 saw them win upon the Seine,
And he knew the men who were with him
 did to beat the brothers mean.

Now the rival crews are ready;
 “Go.” they make a splendid start.
And the Wards are bravely leading,
 each one bound to do his part.
And their friends do proudly cheer,
 say they are their country’s pride;
But, hark! In a few minutes after,
 cheers come from the other side.

See in sight one boat returning,
 “Which one is it?” is the shout:
‘Tis decided in a moment,
 and no longer there’s a doubt:
Not the boat of the Ward brothers
 now the crowd is gazing on.
For shirts and caps soon tell of triumph
 for the oarsmen of St. John.

Victory for dear New Brunswick,
 soon the joyous shout we hear:
‘Tis, indeed, melodious music
 borne to each provincial ear.
And many a man says,
 while thinking his extensive losses on,
“Never more will I bet my money
 ‘gainst the oarsmen of St. John.”

Oarsmen brave, a hearty welcome
 greet you in your native land.
More than thanks the people give you
 gold have they for every hand;
Every hand that did its duty
 and now see our flag unfurled,
While we greet New Brunswick oarsmen
 as the Champions of the world.

Old St. John does not forget you,
 but she makes your hearts beat glad;
She knows how to treat her oarsmen
 when they to her triumphs add,
“Springfield,” it’s upon her banner,
 side by side, with “Paris” view
For you are champion oarsmen
 of the Old World and the New.¹¹

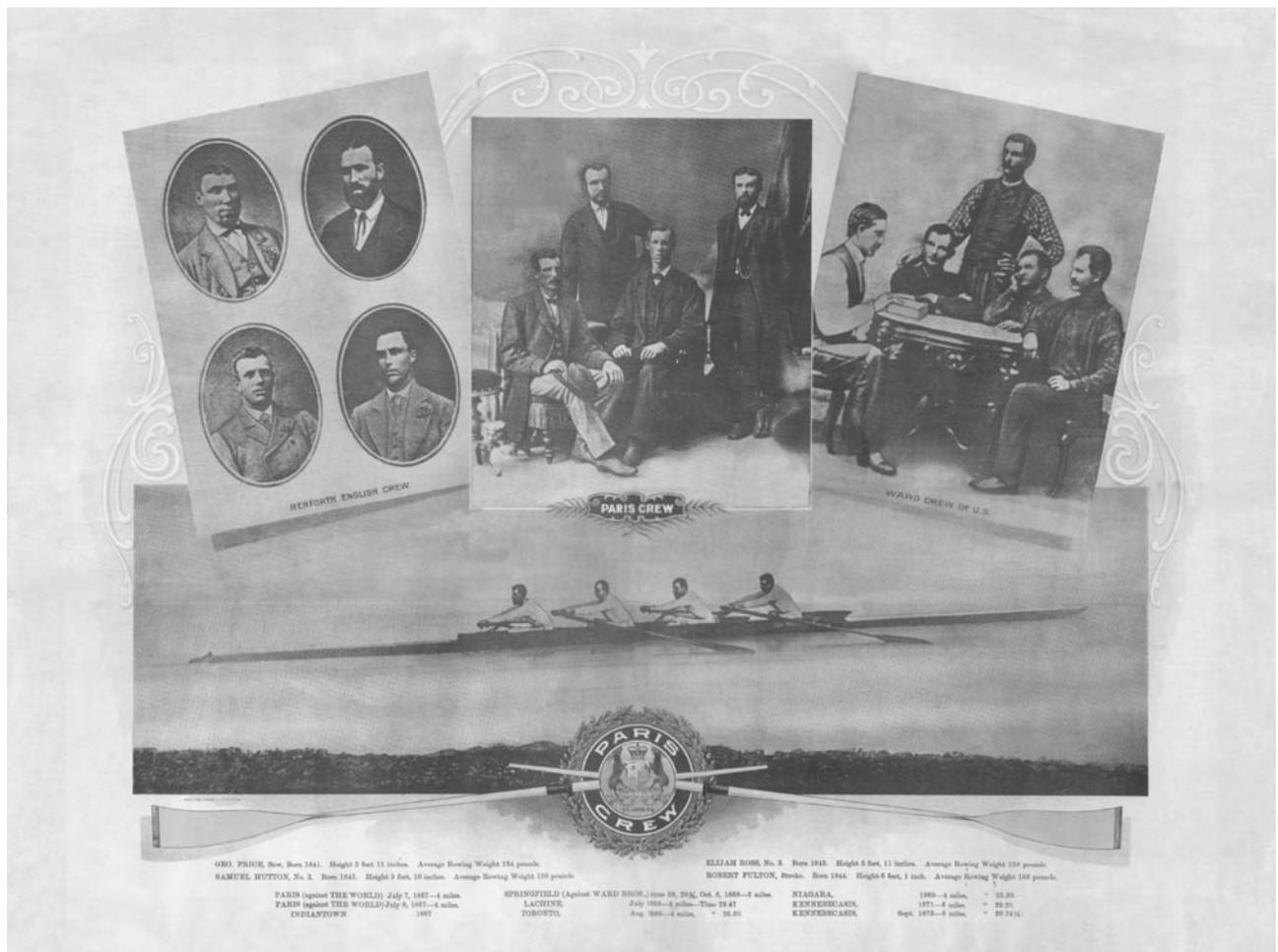
The summer of 1869 was an exciting season for the Paris crew. The Saint John men were celebrities, and it was time to go on tour. They travelled to Lachine, Toronto, and Niagara to defend their title against all competitors. They accomplished this feat with ease. Hordes of spectators gathered on the banks to catch a glimpse of the remarkable fishermen from down east. Their style, bladework, and speed was admired by all. The host cities wined, dined, and royally treated the world champions. The Paris crew relaxed and enjoyed the good life that went with their unprecedented success. However, the good life was not to last long. . .

The following year a serious challenge came from England. The English oarsmen, still smarting from the loss in Paris, were determined to avenge their defeat. The challenge

11. *Saint John Globe*, August 29, 1870.

came from Newcastle on Tyne, an industrial city in the northern part of that country. Four of the finest oarsmen England could muster formed a crew. The Tyne crew consisted of J. Taylor, T. Winship, J. Martin, and James Renforth. The Paris crew accepted the challenge and, after some initial bickering; the articles of the race were signed. The race was to be held at Lachine, Quebec over a six mile course for a stake of \$2500 a side.

On September 15, 1870, the sleepy little town of Lachine was swamped by thousands of people who had come to see “the foremost rank of aquatic encounters the world has ever seen.”¹² Railway cars, carriages, and pedestrians jammed the banks of the Lake St. Louis. On the water, more than twenty steamers and hundreds of small craft lined the route. Along the shore, many betting booths were set up. The bookies were offering odds at two to one on the “men in pink.” These odds were almost unheard of due to the fact that any number of accidents could happen in a boat race. Regardless, the betting was wild. The Saint John men had come with tens of thousands of dollars to back their boys, and they did just that. As a *Toronto Globe* correspondent noted: “Men from St. John betted as if



The Paris Crew became famous pin-up boys. Here they appear in a lithograph produced by the Maritime Lithograph Company of Saint John. (Source: Joan Flood)

12. *The Globe and Mail*, September 6, 1870.

they were coining money on a certainty, and the satisfaction on their faces exhibited as they parted with their dollars to the stake-holder was ominous of a screw loose somewhere. They were far and away the most spirited backers; and the money, as it were, had to be wrung from the country people who stood to their colours.”¹³ The betting, in general, was “an indication of sympathy with the respective fellow countrymen of the crews than the backing of any deliberate opinions.” However, some of the “dispassionate” Americans were betting heavily on the Tyne crew, a sign that perhaps the “bookies might be wrong.”

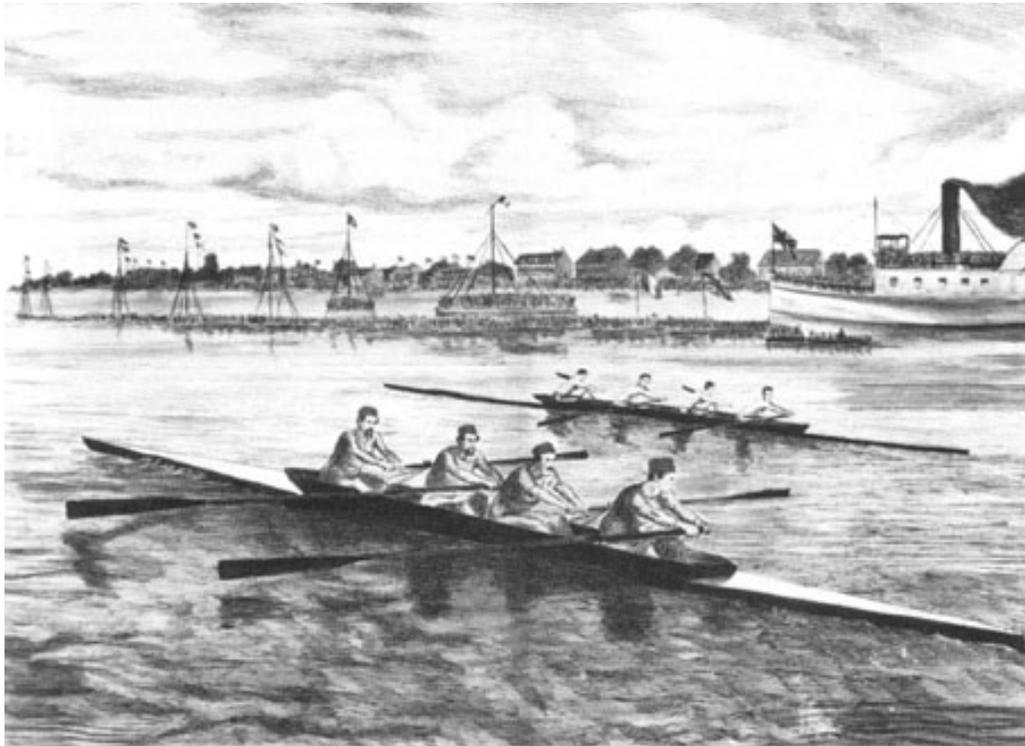
The crowds waited impatiently for the race to begin. The weather was not good - southwest winds and rainy squalls. During the day several postponements were made. The Paris crew did not want to race unless the lake was smooth. However, the crowd was becoming impatient and restless. At a little before 5 o'clock Saint John backers ordered their crew out on the water. This was a move they would later regret. The water was rough when the Tyne and Paris crews lined up for the start. On the word “go”, they were off. The Paris crew, in the *James A. Harding*, took an early lead. However, it wasn't long before the Tyne crew went ahead. Their boat, *Dunston-In-Tyne*, was rigged with washboards that prevented water from coming in. The English crew employed a long smooth stroke and began to widen their lead. The New Brunswick fans claimed “Fulton was husbanding his strength,” but it soon became apparent that the English crew was gaining an insurmountable lead. On a number of occasions “Fulton and his men spurted, but without lessening the gap between the boats.” The Paris crew's short, choppy strokes were not effective in the rough water. The shallow gunnelled *James A. Harding* had taken on water. This extra weight resulted in the crew having to work harder to keep the boat moving. The extra work took its toll and the crew began to tire. The Tyne crew's huge lead was “sweetness long drawn out” to the backers of the crew. Led by the redoubtable Renforth, the English crew crossed the line over a hundred yards ahead of their opponents. The Paris crew dejectedly struggled across the line with their boat half full of water. They had suffered their first defeat.

Back in Saint John, the defeat of the Paris crew left a dreaded calm in the city. The locals couldn't believe their “invincible” oarsmen could be beaten. The crowds that had gathered on Prince William Street in front of the Electric Telegraph office “were struck numb with amazement when the result was announced.” It was a financial disaster for the city. The chance to make the “big buck” had backfired. “Saint John is dead,” groaned a citizen. “The race will take quite \$100,000 out of this place. Many have lost their all. Everyone here, except Sons of Temperance, seemed to get intoxicated.”¹⁴ It was a bitter pill for the local crew and the Saint John men to swallow.

However, when the particulars of the race reached Saint John, a rematch was demanded immediately. J.S. Knowles, a local reporter, noted that the race “was won by the Tyne crew in a boat rigged for rough water. The Paris crew's boat was rigged low, so when she struck the ‘white caps,’ the water came in the boat and when they reached the winning post, their shell was half filled. The writer was on the press boat and had a good chance to see the cause of the defeat. Sheriff Harding, who followed them around the course in Molson's steam launch, told us that if the water had been smooth the Paris crew would

13. *The Globe and Mail*, September 6, 1870.

14. S.F. Wise and D. Fisher.



The four-oared boat race between the Tyne and Paris crews, held September 15, 1870 at Lachine, Quebec.
(Source: Provincial Archives of New Brunswick)

have won easily.”¹⁵ The Saint John men promptly sent a challenge to the Tyne crew. They offered a guarantee of \$4000 to have the race rowed over again on flat water. However, the Tyne crew refused the challenge stating they were content to rest on their recently won laurels.

The Paris crew was upset over the way they had been defeated and were thus timid about returning to their home town. “What will they say in Saint John?” queried Fulton, after the repercussions of the loss set in. The locals, touched by the Paris crew’s blues, decided “to get up a demonstration that would show the confidence reposed in them, and afforded them a light view of what their reception would have been, had they returned undoubted champions of the world.”¹⁶

When the crew arrived home of the 20th of September, they received a grand reception. The city was decked out in pink. Streamers, flags, hay strings, banners, bunting, and pennants hung from the buildings, flag poles, and just about every other conceivable location. People, and even the harness of horses, were adorned with the colour of the Paris crew. The wharf at Reed’s Point was jammed with people as the crew filed off the steamer. They were heartily cheered by the thousands of fans that had gathered to welcome the men home. The “beaten” crew were paraded through the streets up “to the Court House, where they left their carriage and, taking up a position on the steps of the building, were each presented with a purse of \$100 in gold.” The crew was overcome with emotion at the generosity of the people in the city.

15. *Saint John Globe*, December 13, 1911.

16. *The Daily Evening News*, August 23, 1871.

As they surveyed the scene, they couldn't help but feel the resurgence of pride that had once made them great champions. They had lost at Lachine, yet there wasn't a word spoken of it. Instead, the many banners about the buildings proclaimed their past accomplishments: "Paris," "Springfield," "We remember your victories," "Welcome to our noble oarsmen" were the words of but a few of them. However, there was one banner, a special one off by itself. It hung up high stretched between two buildings. Detached and alone, it flapped in the breeze. By chance, all four of the Paris crew looked up at once. Their eyes squinted and their eyebrows rolled over and furrowed as they read the message on the banner. It read: "Beaten, but not vanquished." With that in mind, the Paris crew prepared for the future. . .

The Great Boat Race

No other nineteenth century sporting spectacle so affected Saint John as did the Great Race of 1871. It was an epic struggle, a re-match of the world's two rowing titans, the era's two great demi-gods of the sport: Saint John's Paris crew and England's Tyne crew. There was a winner and a loser. A time of great joy and even greater grief. The site on the Kennebecasis River had everything - people, money, stars, pomp, and ceremony. Even more importantly, it had the elements of pride mixed with tragedy: a fierce pride that immortalized one man and forever made famous the race itself.

The Great Boat Race of 1871 was a grudge match between the Paris crew, attempting to reverse their defeat in Lachine in 1870, and the Tyne crew, their conquerors. There was a time when many thought that it would never come about. The members of the Paris crew were getting older, and the training was not getting any easier. Fulton, after the race with the Ward brothers, told a reporter: "I've been into it four years, and have had about enough." The other crew members were also tiring from the strenuous rowing camps. The men had been training three times a day. On the other hand, the men had pride. They did not want to retire on a defeated note. They felt that "their honor and the manifest wish of the people demanded that another race should be arranged with the Tyne crew." The message on the banner kept coming back to them: "Beaten, but not vanquished." The Paris crew decided to give it another shot.

During the late fall of 1870, Fulton sent a challenge, as well as the Articles of Agreement, to his counterpart, James Renforth. The Paris crew wanted to meet the same Tyne crew, once again in Canada, but this time on the Kennebecasis River. Renforth responded that the crew of Martin, Taylor, Winship, and himself were no longer together, but that he would bring three other oarsmen with him. The appropriate articles were altered to include the new members of the Tyne crew. They were then signed and sent back to Fulton. The Paris crew, although somewhat disappointed that they couldn't race the same crew, nevertheless were satisfied. The race was scheduled for August 23, 1871 on the Kennebecasis River. The distance of the race was "to be six (6) miles, (three up river from Torryburn Cove, and back again) for the sum of Five Hundred Pounds Sterling a side, and the Cham-

pionship.”¹⁷

Both crews then set about to get ready for the race. The Paris crew ordered two new boats from the famous builder C.B. Elliot of Greenpoint, New York. The first was the *Queen Victoria*, which was “41 feet long, 18 1/2 inches wide amidships, 8 inches deep” and weighed about 100 pounds. The second boat was the *St. John*, and she was “42 feet, 4 inches long, 19 inches wide amidships” and weighed about 105 pounds. When the spring came, the Paris crew set about to get into rowing shape. They spent their days putting in long miles on the water. By mid-summer, they were in tip-top condition.

The Tyne crew arrived in Halifax on July 26, 1871. They had with them their new race boat, two practice boats, a single scull, oars, and all their luggage. After an evening’s entertainment at the Victoria Hotel, in Saint John, the Tyne crew travelled out to the Clairmont House and set up their training camp. The House was located just before Renforth at the top of present day Clairmont Street. It burned down in the early 1900’s. The Paris crew had set up their training headquarters at the Johnson House. This House was located near present day Appleby Drive. Both crews quietly began training morning and night for the upcoming race.

The Great Boat Race attracted interest throughout the continent. Newspaper reporters from cities all over North America converged on the Port City to cover the spectacle. Their reports flashed the hype of the big race to millions of readers across the land. The interest generated by the race caused thousands of people to flock into the city. Steamers from Boston and New York, filled with excursionists, arrived to discharge their loads. People walked, took the train, came by horse, and used any other means of transportation that they could commandeer to get to Saint John. It was great for the economy - the hotels were overflowing and restaurants were filled. In fact, lodging became a problem. Two weeks before the big race, a *Toronto Globe* correspondent wrote: “The hotels are all crowded, and it begins to be a question for serious consideration how the large numbers of strangers expected at the time of the boat race are to be lodged. The Common Council appointed a committee to consider the question.”¹⁸ As the excitement for the big race began to build, more and more people came into the city.

The whole atmosphere of the city began to change. It was like a carnival, a bash, a week-long celebration. Everybody poured into the city to have a good time, drink rum, and watch Saint John host one of the great sporting spectacles of the decade. The city became the focus of the world’s sporting enthusiasts at a time when rowing was enjoying unprecedented popularity. People would flock to the many rivers and lakes around the globe to watch the rowing races. In 1871, the oar was King. Sports like football, rugby, and soccer had scarcely gotten off the drawing board. Boxing was still in the dark ages. James A. Naismith hadn’t conceptualized, let alone played, the game of basketball. The great American pastime of baseball was still in the developmental stages. There was no World Series, no Grey Cup, and there were no big world title fights. The game of lacrosse was extremely popular in Canada, but played little elsewhere. It was rowing that was the international sport, and when the big races were held, the world turned out to watch.

The great sporting men of the day gathered on the streets, bars, and hotels in

17. *The Daily Evening News*, August 23, 1871.

18. *The Globe and Mail*, August 11, 1871.

Saint John to talk of the relative merits of both crews. The Paris crew's record was, by now, well known throughout the aquatic world. On the other hand, the Tyne crew's record was not. The four English oarsmen had just recently joined forces in the same boat. However, the exploits of each of the oarsmen were legendary. A local *Daily News* reporter noted "...that probably no other four men picked from the best oarsmen in England could show so many and brilliant exploits as those who have crossed the ocean to measure their skill and science against our own gallant fellows."¹⁹

They talked about Henry Kelly, the three man in the Tyne crew. Kelly had been a star in the aquatic world for over twenty years. The London native was a former champion sculler of England. He had rowed with the great George Sadler, the self-styled champion of the world. Together they had captured countless victories in the double scull. He was a great competitor and a superb leader. The sporting men felt that his experience would be very important in guiding the Tyne crew in the race. However, the man they all loved to talk about was James Renforth.

Renforth was one of the toughest of the tough in a sport that prides itself in producing rugged men. Born on Rapids Banks, Gateshead, Renforth was the son of a ferryman who worked on the nearby Tyne River. He first appeared on the athletic scene as a swimmer. In that sport, he won a number of important races. His rowing debut came in the year 1866, "when he became practiced with the oars while ferrying men from the shore to the piers of the old Tyne bridge, which were being taken down."²⁰ Renforth immediately fell in love with rowing and took the sport up seriously. After a long day at the forge, where Renforth worked as an iron worker, he would come home, grab his sculls, and spend many pleasurable hours rowing around in his single. It wasn't long before he began to enter the local races. In a sport known for big men, Renforth stood only five feet, seven and a half inches high, and weighed 157 pounds. However, he found that his dogged determination and "never-say-die" attitude served him well against bigger men.

After winning a couple of small races, Renforth made his presence felt when he defeated Robert and James Boyd. He won fifty pounds sterling per race and the championship of Northern England. He tried, on a number of occasions, to engage a match with John Bright, but not he, nor any other Northerners, would race him. Then Renforth looked South, and it was there that he found and brought back glory to his native city on the Tyne.

From almost the beginning of the sport itself, there has been a long standing rowing rivalry between the Northerners and the Southerners in England. The Southerners first clashed with the rowers "of the Tyne when Bob Coombs took his crew North and vanquished the Claspers." Later, Robert Chambers became the first man to wrest the aquatic championship from the South "and for some time the Tynesiders were at the height of their glory."²¹ Eventually, Chambers fell from glory after suffering a number of defeats, and the Southerners once again were at the top of the heap, but their days were numbered when the muscular Renforth appeared on the scene.

In the year 1868, Renforth was signed with Henry Kelly in a race for the championship of England. The match came off in November of that year on the Putney to Mortlake course on the Thames. Renforth defeated Kelly by two boat lengths over the four mile,

19. *The Daily Evening News*, August 23, 1871.

20. *The New York Times*, August 24, 1871.

21. *The New York Times*, August 24, 1871.

three furlong course. From that day on, Renforth became known to the world as sort of a “river god.” Renforth rarely met with defeat when he raced in fours, doubles, and the single. The latest example of his winning efforts was at Lachine, Quebec, the previous summer. Renforth was the key to the Tyne crew’s chances of winning. As the sporting men discussed how they would place their bets, they noted that Renforth never looked better.

The betting was slow at first. Many of the locals were hesitant to bet, for the memory of the previous year was fresh in their minds. A number of Englishmen offered odds at 2 to 1 on their crew, odds that livened up the betting. However, for the most part, people were cautious with their money. At times, the betting was affected by a few rumours that were circulated around. One of them claimed that the Tyne crew had sold the race, but it was quickly squashed, for those who “knew the crews and those nearly interested were assured that they were not the men to act in any such manner.” Both crews were confident of winning and were prepared to do their utmost to see that they did. With everything in order, Saint John began to buzz with excitement on the eve of the great encounter.

When the clock struck twelve midnight on August 22, 1871, wild dancing and singing could still be heard and would be heard long into the night. Many never bothered to go to bed at all that night. As early as three o’clock in the morning, a sea of humanity began to travel the six miles to the little riverside community on the Kennebecasis. Horses, carts, slovens, barouches, steam boats, sail boats, and people on foot wended their way to the site. The first train from the old European-North American Railway company left the city at 4 a.m. The string of flat cars were jammed with fifty men to a car all eager to watch the grand event. The trains ran and continued to run through most of the early morning. Many people, knowing that the early morning rush would be a state of confusion, had camped overnight in the surrounding fields. Thousands and thousands continued to pour onto the shores along the river in the early morning darkness. By race time, an immense crowd was lining the banks of the river. The *Daily Telegraph* claimed there were 15,000 gathered, while other papers quoted 20,000, and some even as high as 25,000. It was hard to tell, for the river shore was swarming with old men, women, boys, and little children from the



The “Great Boat Race” between the Paris and Tyne crews, held on the Kennebecasis River, August 23, 1871. (Source: New Brunswick Museum)

present-day village of Renforth straight down to Rothesay.

On the morning of the big race both the Tyne and Paris crews were up by half past four. Both crews went for a brisk walk in the vicinity of their respective quarters before sitting down to breakfast. After breakfast, the oarsmen at both camps chatted with their friends until six o'clock. After that time, preparations for the upcoming clash began as the oarsmen dressed and loosened up.

At a little past seven o'clock, the Paris crew, boated in the *St. John*, emerged on the water. They were wearing their pink shirts and caps. A few minutes later, the Tyne crew, in the *Queen Victoria*, paddled out to the starting line. The Englishmen sported white "guernseys" and caps that did not match. Both crews paddled over to the official's boat and awaited the coin toss for lanes. The Paris crew won the toss and chose the outside lane of the course. With that decided, the crews prepared for the start. The Englishmen took off their "guernseys" and caps while the Paris crew removed only their caps.

"Now, give us the word," barked Fulton, "and sooner the better," for the Saint John men were anxious to get on with it.²² A great envelope of silence fell over the scene as the Honourable Thomas R. Jones lined the men up for the start.

"Back your boat a little, Fulton," spoke Mr. Jones and the Paris crew responded to the order.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" barked Mr. Jones.

"Ready," shot back both Renforth and Fulton. The men in both crews sat with muscles flexed, steely looks on their faces and. . .

"GO!" came the order piercing through the air. They were off at exactly 7:34 a.m. Both crews blasted off from the start at a terrific clip. Fulton banged his oar in and out of the water at forty-four strokes a minute while Renforth struck a forty-two. Their boats leaped and surged through the water as each crew wildly raced for the lead. Neck and neck they raced for the first two hundred yards with neither having the slightest lead. It was a magnificent sight, one that "has seldom, if ever, been witnessed in aquatic life." The pace was fierce and it soon became apparent that the two crews could not last long stroking at that rate. Renforth was the first to settle down when he dropped the rate to thirty-nine. However, Fulton outpaced him by two and maintained a fast forty-one. Inch by inch the *St. John* began to creep away from the *Queen Victoria*. The crowds on the banks yelled and screamed as their hometown boys increased their lead. At the quarter mile mark the Paris crew had half a length lead and was gaining. On and on the Paris crew pressed so that by the half mile mark there was "open water" showing between the two boats. Price was steering "straight as an arrow" for the Saint John men while Percy was "taking a rather sweeping course."

The Tyne crew, fearing they were losing contact with their opponents, put on a couple of bursts.

"Now, Jim for a dozen!" was the order from Kelly in an effort to close the gap. Renforth responded by increasing the rate and the English crew gained on their opponents. After the twelve strokes were finished the Paris crew responded with their own burst and made up the lost ground. As the crews approached the three quarter of a mile mark, Kelly called for another "dozen." Suddenly, as Kelly later recalled to a *Telegraph* reporter, Renforth cried out in a rasping voice: "Harry, Harry!" The noble Renforth dropped his oar,

22. *The Willet Scrapbooks*, Volume 88, p.74.

threw up an arm, and fell back into his teammates outstretched arms. The *Queen Victoria* slowly came to a halt and the Paris crew pulled away.

“Fraud!” “Sham!” “Sold out!” came screaming out from the crowds on the shore. The crowds were livid with rage thinking that the English crew had been bought by the gamblers. Further down the riverbank cries of joy and thunderous applause “reigned supreme,” as it became apparent that the Paris crew were on their way to what appeared to be a certain victory. On and on the Paris crew went. They flashed through the mile in a startling four minutes and hit the turning buoy in eighteen. Still not knowing what had actually happened to Renforth, they crossed the line in a time of 39 minutes, 20 and 3/4 seconds.

In the meantime, Chambers and Percy had quickly rowed their boat to the shore. The fallen Renforth was quickly taken out of the boat and carried to a waiting carriage. The carriage struggled through the crowd and made its way to the crew’s headquarters at Clairmont House. Renforth was carried from the vehicle and into the hotel where he was placed on a bed. The crew crowded around his bedside while their ailing comrade briefly spoke of his loved ones back in England. He was very ill, and many feared that he would not live. A couple of doctors were rushed to the scene. They did their best to stabilize his condition but fears of the worst were justified: James Renforth died at 8:48 a.m.

“Who will tell the tale in England?” asked Byron de Wolfe as he scratched his famous rendition of the Great Boat Race:

Five and twenty thousand people
Gazed upon the River bright,
Steamboats, woodboats, race boats, sail boats,
All form part of one grand sight.
Mortals rushing onward, upward,
Eager all the race to view.
Pink, the color for New Brunswick,
For the English boat, the “Blue.”

Then it was that noble Renforth,
Over all the world renowned,
Gathered all his strength to pass them,
While he heard the cheers resound
From the shore and from the people,
And he knew well what was said:
In the stern boat is James Renforth
And the Paris crew’s ahead.

Are you ready? shouted loudly
Thomas Jones, the referee,
Sir, we are, eight oarsmen answered
Almost instantaneously.
Eager all were for the contest,
O, how eager none could know,
But the Tyne boat first took water
When the Referee said, Go!

But the Paris men continued,
Hearing louder cheers from shore;
On they went without their rivals
Till at last their work was o’er.
But they little knew, brave fellows,
How the noble Renforth fell,
A sad victim of ambition
At the work he loved so well.

See, Tyne leads our struggling oarsmen.
Look! they’re leading them no more
Ross and Fulton, Price and Hutton,
Never better did before.
Eager, earnest and ambitious,
Pass the English, before they fly,
And soon fifty feet they lead them,
Pleasing each New Brunswick eye.

Who will tell the tale in England
To his little child and wife,
How across the broad Atlantic
Their protector lost his life?
Lost his life while bravely striving
For his country and his crew.
Who will tell the tale in England,
Tell me, tell me, tell me, who?

O, whoever tells the story
Let them to his widow say,
Dying he spoke of a dear one
In a land so far away,
And one word he spoke quite loudly
As he parted with his life
Was not one about the boat race,
Was the simple word of "Wife."

Fame he won, and boldly won it,
But he will seek it never more;
All his challenges and races.
All his victories are o'er.

All his wild and vain ambitions
Have forever from him fled,
Rivals never more need fear him,
For he's numbered among the dead.

There are few men who sigh not,
There are few eyes that are dry,
And the flags for Tyne and Paris
All are waving at half-mast high.
In the streets and in the cities,
Alleys, houses, dwellings, stores,
Men are telling of the oarsman
Who never more will need his oars.²³

The Great Boat Race marked the end of an era. After this race, the Paris crew went into semi-retirement. However, the race itself was never forgotten. The Village of Renforth commemorates James Renforth's effort to this day. The Paris crew appeared occasionally over the next few years, but the age of the great four-oared boat races had past. In its place came the golden age of sculling.

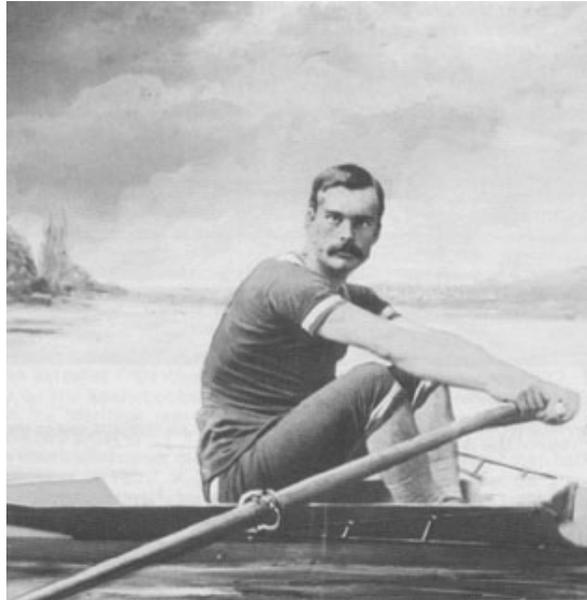
The single scull races became the most popular event at the regattas. The rowing fans found it easier to relate to the one man in his boat. In this way, an individual's personality, style, and flair were not lost as in a crew boat. Even more exciting were the match races. They were like prize fights: two men - challenger and champion. The race was simple to follow. There was only one winner, the man who got across the line first, but the golden age of sculling was based upon much more than just boat races. It was an age of gambling, drinking, and hype. For days preceding a great scull race, little else was talked of except the strengths and weaknesses of the two competitors. It was a time when over a hundred thousand people would flock to rowing centers all over the eastern seaboard to watch the single scull regattas. They would drink, party, and dance the nights away while awaiting the day of the race. The betting was always wild at these affairs, as the spectators were never shy to back their opinion with a "sock full of money."

Saint John's contribution to the golden age of sculling was a man by the name of Wallace Ross. Hailed as the "Renforth of New Brunswick," Ross was probably the greatest sculler that ever came out of Saint John. He was a big, strapping fellow who stood a couple inches over six feet and weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds. Wallace was born in Memramcook, New Brunswick, on February 20, 1857. He came to Saint John as a young teenager to look for employment. He found it working for Mr. Brickley, a boatman along the waterfront. It was also here that Wallace Ross started his sculling career. Brickley could see a budding talent in the fifteen year old, for Ross was tall and very strong for his age. Every day after work, the veteran boatsman would send his protege down to the waterfront for a spin around the harbour. Ross would scull to the beacon and back over and over again in an effort to develop his skill with the oars. Given these daily workouts, Ross developed from a novice sculler into an expert rapidly.

The first race that young Ross engaged in was against John Harding. In early July of 1872, Ross defeated Harding over the harbour course. This was a surprise, for Harding was an

23. *Saint John Globe*, August 25, 1922.

adept local oarsman. Shortly thereafter, a local sculler by the name of Nicholson challenged the young upstart. It was the practice of the day for the local men to issue a challenge through the newspaper. Ross accepted the challenge and the race was arranged. Nicholson proved to be a little tougher than Harding, but once again Ross got across the line victorious. Feeling proud of himself, Ross decided next he would go to the Coronation Regatta, held in August of 1873, to scout the competition. The regatta was being held in honour of the Governor General and the Countess Dufferin.



Wallace Ross—World Sculling Champion, 1881. (Source: New Brunswick Museum)

The Single scull race in this regatta pitted four fine scullers against one another: James Belyea, father of Hilton Belyea, J.F. Doyle, Alex Brayley, and Robert Fulton, stroke of the Paris crew. The latter two men were the two fastest scullers in the city. After jockeying for the top position for the whole race, Fulton narrowly edged out Brayley to claim the victory. For Fulton, it was one of a number of victories in a brief, but successful, sculling career.

After the great boat race in 1871, Fulton had left the four and plied his talents in the single. This was a significant shift in rowing technique for him. In the four-oared boat, he had one oar to pull on. This was referred to as “sweep” rowing. In the single, referred to as sculling, Fulton had two shorter oars to pull with. He had to balance his precarious craft with these oars. Apparently, Fulton made the switch from sweep to sculling easily. He had a great deal of success racing men about the harbour. In fact, he won all the matches he participated in. One of his few setbacks came on July 13, 1872, at Digby, Nova Scotia. He was narrowly defeated there by George Brown, the legendary fisherman from the land of the *Bluenose*.

After defeating Brayley in the Coronation Regatta, Fulton next raced in a grand regatta held on September 15, 1873, on the Kennebecasis River. An estimated 15,000 people jammed the shores of the river to watch the aquatic event. Two classes of single races were held during the regatta. The first class single was between Robert Fulton and a New

Yorker by the name of John Biglin, the American champion. This was to be the finest race rowed by Fulton in a single, especially since before the single scull race could be run, the four-oared event went first. Fulton and the Paris crew entered and won a hotly contested race that was held over six miles. The Longshore crew of Portland, Maine, pressed the Paris crew hard and never gave up. "Give her ten" was the frequent call of bowman Price. On hearing this command, Fulton would increase the rate. Though the victory was a sweet one, it was a tired Fulton who entered the single scull race against a fresh Biglin. In fact, many of the aquatic men suggested Fulton skip the race, but he would have nothing of it.

Tired he might have been, but Fulton blasted off the start and grabbed an early lead. The two men battled the whole length of the course with scarcely a boat length separating them. The last two hundred yards of the race were a "terrific struggle," with both men giving it their all. However, Fulton managed to hold off the last ditch effort by the American and crossed the line a winner. A tired and jubilant Robert Fulton gladly accepted his prize money.



Robert Fulton (foreground) takes last victorious stroke over John Biglin in a grand regatta held on the Kennebecasis River, September 15, 1873. (Source: New Brunswick Museum)

The second singles race was for the championship of New Brunswick. This race was contested between Wallace Ross and Alex Brayley, two budding local sculling stars who had watched the likes of Fulton and Biglin long enough. In the first of a number of matches between the two, Brayley emerged the winner. At the age of sixteen, the inexperienced Ross was still paying his dues.

During the early 1870's, the golden age of sculling was beginning to take shape. A number of major sculling matches were being held in hotbeds along the New England coast in the cities of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. In Toronto, the "Boy in Blue," Ned Hanlan, was being groomed into a future superstar. Across the ocean, in England, Joe Sadler was busy defending his world professional crown against his English counterparts. In Halifax, George Brown eagerly awaited a shot at Sadler's Crown, and in Saint John, Alex Brayley and Wallace Ross were preparing to play their part in the golden era.

During the 1874 and 1875 seasons, the St. John harbour sculling scene was dominated by Alex Brayley. The young man was a superb athlete. He stood five feet, ten inches tall and weighed 160 pounds. He had a number of sculling victories to his credit. His most notable victory came in the year 1875, when he defeated John Brown for the championship

of Halifax harbour. In 1876, Brayley and the Paris crew travelled to Philadelphia for a grand international regatta marking the American Centennial. Rowers from England, the United States, and Canada competed at the regatta. The races were held over a three mile course on the Schuylkill river. Preliminary heats were held that eliminated all but two boats. The remaining two met in the final.

The Paris crew, which had not been actively training for a couple of years, entered the professional four-oared race. They were “rusty” and it showed. In the preliminary heats, they were defeated by a Halifax crew, a bitter pill for the champions of old to swallow. But to his grave, Elijah Ross swore that Robert Fulton had been sick and had raced with a temperature. Nevertheless, it was to be the Paris crew’s last and sadly anti-climactic race.

The single scull race at Philadelphia, on the other hand, was an exciting affair. Alex Brayley defeated an English sculler in the “preliminaries” to advance to the final. The man he met in the final was a curly-haired, 21 year old from Toronto, named Ned Hanlan who would later become a demi-god in the sport. Hanlan was an unheralded upstart when he arrived in Philadelphia. Born in Toronto, July 12, 1855, Ned grew up on Toronto Island, and as a youth spent many happy hours out on the bay rowing his home-made shell. During the years 1873 to 1876, Hanlan entered and won many local races that eventually established him as the best sculler in Ontario. Outside of Ontario, few knew of the young man.

The Brayley-Hanlan final was an exciting match-up. Both men were confident they were going to win. At the start, Hanlan jumped into the front and maintained a boat-and-a-half-length lead right to the finish. No matter how hard Brayley tried, he couldn’t get past Hanlan. The Toronto sculler flashed across the line in a record time of 21 minutes, 9 seconds. Brayley was but a scant three seconds behind. Hanlan collected his prize money and returned to Toronto a hero. Brayley received \$400 for his efforts and returned to face a challenge from Wallace Ross.

Ross, at this time, was considered to be one of the best, if not the best, in Canada. The claim was backed up by Ross’s two victories over Brayley in the early part of the 1876 season. The first match was held during a harbour regatta on the 24th of May. Their second meeting was held June 15th on the Kennebecasis. It created a great deal of interest. The match was raced over a five mile course with a turn in it for a stake of \$500 a side. This was an exciting affair that Ross “handsomely” won. In August of that year, Ross challenged Hanlan to a race. However, Hanlan did not reply. So the brash and outgoing Ross claimed to be the champion of Canada.

When Brayley returned from Philadelphia, promoters thought another match between Brayley and Ross was in order. It was a cold fall day, October 19 to be exact, when the two men lined up on the Kennebecasis. A great deal of interest was manifested in the impending result. Betting pools were set up in the rowing hotbeds along the New England coast. The city of Boston took a large amount of the action. The stakes between the two scullers were laid at \$ 1000 a side. Whether it was the cold weather, high stakes, Alex Brayley, or whatever, Ross took off at a tremendous clip and rowed the course in an amazing time of 28 minutes and 30 seconds. The time was a full minute and a half under the previous record. The local aquatic men were convinced that they had the fastest man in North America, if not the world.

Wallace Ross defeated Fred Plaisted of Boston during the spring of 1877. Then, on July 25, 1877, he rowed on the Kennebecasis against Warren Smith of Halifax for \$100 a

side and the championship of the Maritime provinces. A lot of interest was generated in this race among aquatic men of the two sister cities. It was a very close race up until a short distance from the finish when the Halifax man's scull upset. Ross easily went on to victory while Smith bathed in the river.

In the late summer of 1877, Ross sent a challenge to Ned Hanlan for a race, but again the cantankerous Hanlan refused to reply. Ross again claimed that he was the fastest man in Canada and that this Hanlan fellow from Toronto was afraid to row him, but little did Ross know what Hanlan was up to. Day after day, on the Toronto Bay, Hanlan perfected his technique using a sliding seat and swivel oarlocks. Up until the mid 1870's, rowing was done with fixed seats. A variation of this was the sliding "behind" brought in by the English watermen who greased their shorts to slide on the seats. This created more leverage and was employed by the Tyne crew in their races with the Paris crew. The swivel oarlock allowed the oar to rotate freely, enabling the oarsmen to get a longer stroke. Although Hanlan was not the first to employ the new equipment, he was surely the first to master it. Hour after hour, session after session, Hanlan perfected his technique. The result was that he rowed with a long, smooth, almost effortless, stroke while his competitors churned away with a short, choppy action. When the fall of 1877 approached, little did the confident Ross know that his career was about to falter.

The long awaited Ross-Hanlan match was scheduled for October 15, 1877 on Toronto Bay. The race for the championship of Canada was contested over a five mile course. It was a race Ross would rather have forgotten. When the starter's gun was fired, Hanlan jumped into the lead and continued to build on it all the way down the course to the turn. On the way back, he built up a greater and greater lead with apparent ease. No matter how hard Ross pulled, it seemed his short, choppy strokes were no match for the Toronto man's long, smooth pulling. As a correspondent for the *Telegraph* noted: "Hanlan rowed as he liked, stopped, waved his hand, took off the cap he wore, and rowed more as if he were rowing for his own pleasure than if he were rowing for a thousand dollars a side."²⁴ Hanlan crossed the line an easy winner, much to the delight of the large partisan crowd. Ross returned to Saint John devastated. The following season, Ross once again challenged Hanlan. A race was arranged for the end of July over a five mile course on the Kennebecasis River. Ross was again defeated by the "boy in blue." However, this defeat was under somewhat different circumstances. Ross, at the mile and a quarter mark, dug one of his oars too deep, and was sent headlong into the water. After that, Hanlan leisurely rowed over the rest of the course to victory.

During the winter of 1879, Ross went to England for some extra training. Professional sculling was enjoying tremendous popularity across the Atlantic. Ross was greatly admired by the English watermen for his strength and style. He raced only once while over there. It was against a fine English sculler by the name of Emmett. The handsome manner by which he defeated Emmett showed that the admiration was not undeserved. A match against the English champion was talked of, but never took place. Ross returned to Canada to race Warren Smith of Halifax. The race was slated for that city on September 2, 1879. After Ross' successful trip to England, it was thought that Smith would be an easy opponent for the sturdy New Brunswicker. A number of the Saint John betting men, hoping to recoup some of their prior losses, bet heavily on the local man. However, it was a sad

24. *The Daily Telegraph* (Saint John), October 16, 1877.

mistake. Ross had a bad race and was defeated by the Halifax man. The losses incurred by the local betting men were substantial. It was the last straw. They no longer backed the local sculler. Later that fall, Ross raced and lost to a sculler by the name of James Riley at Norwich, Connecticut. These two straight losses made the local aquatic men wonder whether or not Ross was finished as a racer.

Ross began the 1880 racing season with yet another defeat. However, this loss was hardly fair. It occurred on the Charles River in Boston. In a stake race, the Saint Johner was matched against a black man named Frenchy Johnson. The two scullers had lined up at the start and then an argument developed between them. Ross was left unprepared when the gun went off. Johnson took off, but was called back by the referee. However, he did not heed the order and continued on.

A bewildered and furious Ross sat and watched the coloured man row up the course. The fuming New Brunswicker protested, but to no avail. The race was awarded to Johnson. However, a potential riot was brewing among the angry crowd. What kind of race was this? The referee quickly declared all bets void to settle the crowd down. Later that day, an irate Ross came across Johnson in a tavern. He engaged the black man in a fist fight. The Boston police had to be called in to break up the brawl.

In those days, professional sculling was often run by disreputable operators. The sculler, like a prize fighter, might be handled by a professional manager and backed by a syndicate. The syndicate consisted of hard-nosed businessmen. They were in the sport to make money. The big money was made on bets and admission tickets. Sections of rivers were cordoned off and portable grandstands erected for paying customers. There were days when upwards of one hundred thousand people flocked to the river banks to watch the races. "Bookies" set up booths, odds were given, and bets were taken. Sometimes the "bets" totalled well over one hundred thousand dollars. It wasn't that uncommon for a manager to get his man to "throw" a couple of races in order to get favourable odds going into a big race. Was this then the case when Wallace Ross went to Providence after his loss in Boston for one of the richest races ever held during the golden age of sculling? Historians still speculate that Ross had been set up. However, the bookies then did not suspect anything. The odds were down on Ross, thinking his recent series of losses were legitimate.

On June 17, 1880, the Hop Bitter company sponsored a grand regatta on the Seekonk River in Providence, Rhode Island. The Professional sculling race offered prize money of \$5,000 with \$3,000 going to first place, \$1,500 for second place and \$500 to third. The best oarsmen in the world gathered to contest for, at that time, one of the largest purses ever. The morning of the big day dawned with an estimated one hundred thousand people lining the riverbank. Spectators arrived by rail, street car, sail boat, barge, steamer, and every other conceivable mode of transportation. It seemed that nobody wanted to miss the regatta. Ladies and gentlemen, young and old, gathered to witness the sporting event of the season.

The sculling race started at 5:27 p.m. From the report of the starting gun, Hanlan jumped into an early lead and was followed by Boyd, Riley, Ross, Plaisted, and the rest of the pack. At the mile and a half mark, Plaisted had moved into second place. A tremendous battle ensued between Hanlan and Plaisted for the right to turn the buoy first. However, Plaisted arrived first and made his turn. Unfortunately, the effort expended by the

Boston man on the first half of the course exhausted him. He dropped off the pace on the return trip. Hanlan, Boyd, Riley, and Ross passed the three mile mark in that order. At this point, the New Brunswick champion began to pull with terrific force, sending his boat forward faster and faster. With each successive stroke, the competition drew nearer and nearer. First he went by Riley, then Boyd, and finally Hanlan succumbed to the terrific pace. Onward he went to the cheers of the crowd. Boat length after boat length of open water he put between himself and the others. At the crack of the gun, Ross was more than thirty seconds ahead of his closest-rival. He had won the big race.

Ross' victory was totally unexpected. Back in Saint John there was a "feeling of surprise and unbelief at the result," reported *The Daily Telegraph*. "Had St. John been visited by an earthquake there would not have been more Surprise felt than the announcement that Ross had won a victory, in a great field of oarsmen over three of his old rivals, before two of them he had been obliged to bow, while one had been defeated."²⁵ But Ross had won and for his victory he netted \$3,000 in prize money and a large silver cup. His manager collected a reported \$25,000 from the bookies. Once again a rowing race had proved itself as unpredictable as it was exciting.

The golden age of sculling was perhaps at its apex during the 1880 and 1881 seasons. Hanlan, although having suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Ross, still claimed to be the best in the world. A match was arranged for November of 1880 between Hanlan and Edward Trickett. Trickett also claimed to be the champion of the world. Their race was to finally decide who was the official world champion. Trickett was a gigantic Australian. Many thought this man might prove to be Hanlan's undoing. At six feet, four inches, and a shade over two hundred pounds, the Australian towered over Hanlan. At best, Hanlan was some fifty pounds lighter and a shade over six inches shorter. The tremendous disadvantage in physical stature didn't faze Hanlan a bit. A cool and calm competitor, the "boy in blue" trained methodically on the famous Oxford-Cambridge course. The race was to be held from Putney to Mortlake on Thames. Trickett arrived in England jumpy and anxious. He was not used to having the world's sporting attention focused on his rowing ability. The boat race created tremendous excitement, and many thought it would be the race of the century.

However, in the final analysis, it turned out to be almost a farce. Hanlan simply outclassed his opponent. As usual, he put on one of his classic exhibitions of showmanship. After gaining a large lead, he stopped, waved to the crowd, and sat in his boat and waited until Trickett caught up. Then he was off again, skimming across the water until he once again was way out in front. Hanlan faked a collapse, talked to the crowd, and generally put on a display of trick rowing the rest of the way up the course. He won the race by seven seconds, but if he had tried many felt the flash from Toronto could have won by a couple of minutes. The world champion returned to a hero's welcome in Toronto.

Wallace Ross, however, was right on the heels of Hanlan. The New Brunswick sculler travelled to England and was signed to race the Australian. The race was held on December the 5th for \$1000 a side. Ross handed Trickett his second straight defeat to a Canadian. For the next three years, Canada could claim the world's two best scullers in Ross and Hanlan.

On September 12, 1881, Toronto played host to a grand international regatta. The
25. *The Daily Telegraph* (Saint John), June 18, 1880.



Wallace Ross, like members of the Paris Crew, became a popular sporting figure. (Source: New Brunswick Museum)

race attracted all the great scullers of the era. It was a star-studded field that included the likes of Teemer, Hosmer, Courtney, Trickett, Hanlan, Ross, Ten Eyck, Gaudaur, and a number of other fast ones. The betting favourites were Ross and Hanlan, although rumours began to circulate that Hanlan was going to withdraw. The Toronto man had been inactive during the summer and was out of condition. The rumours proved true, and Hanlan withdrew from the contest. Thus, Ross became the favourite in the race and Courtney, the American champion, was ranked second.

The race proved to be one of the finest performances of the Saint Johner's career. He got off to a fast start and jumped into the lead. From then on to the end of the race, Ross held off the determined challenges of his opponents and crossed the finish line the winner. After nine years of struggles, disappointments, victories, and losses, Wallace Ross had finally reached the pinnacle of his career. In Toronto that day in 1881, he was crowned world champion in the single scull.

Hanlan, in turn, had been stripped of his title in his native city, a bitter pill for the "boy in blue" to swallow. He immediately challenged Ross to a race in November. He figured it would be enough time for him to get back into shape. The challenge was accepted, but the arrangements could not be agreed upon by both sides so the race was called off. The following season, a match race between the two was arranged for July 3, on the Red River in Winnipeg. The town was hopping with excitement over the upcoming match. Unfortunately, at the last moment, Hanlan pulled out of the contest. Ross returned to Saint John

and opened up the local newspaper to find a challenge issued by Hanlan. The Toronto sculler claimed he would row any five men, two miles straight for 1,000 to 2,000 dollars a side. Ross was livid with rage. The following day, an *Evening News* reporter ran into the “champ” on Prince William Street. The outspoken Ross was never at a loss for words:

“Hanlan is afraid to meet me, and if I should take up that challenge you would see how soon he would have a bilious attack or something else.”

“Then you think that Hanlan is afraid to meet you?” queried the reporter.

“Of course he is. He had dodged me four times hand running, and now that the Winnipeg match is off, he has got nothing to propose, although he was the man that failed to come to time then. If he is anxious to meet me, why doesn’t he make an offer to have that race somehow, sometime, somewhere. Not much he don’t, but if ever he does come out again, I shall meet him certain and find out who’s who, and what’s what.”²⁶

Hanlan did come out again, and, as it turned out, Ross probably wished he had kept his mouth shut.

The long awaited Hanlan-Ross match took place July 18, 1883, in Ogdensburg, New York. It was here that Hanlan made Ross eat his words. At the start, the Toronto man grabbed the lead and went on to totally humiliate Ross over the four mile course. The result was a big surprise to all the aquatic men. The opinion generally held among the experts going into the race was that Hanlan would probably win by a boat length or two. Unfortunately, the Toronto man won by over a minute. It was not a case of Ross going slow, however, because Hanlan broke the previous record for four miles by over fifty seconds. No, it was a case of Ross being beaten by a better man.

Ned Hanlan, thus, became again the undisputed world champion and Wallace Ross was ranked second in the world. However, down under in Australia, came a challenge to Hanlan from a ferryman named William Beach. The Australian was much bigger physically than Hanlan and in superb condition. Hanlan agreed to race Beach for the world title on the Paramatta River in Australia. Here, before thousands of cheering “Aussies”, Beach defeated the “boy in blue.”

Immediately thereafter, Wallace Ross challenged William Beach for the world title. Beach accepted and the two scullers raced each other on September 25, 1886. The race was held on the Thames River in London, England. It was a classic race between the new champion and a fading star. Beach decisively defeated Ross to retain his world title.

After this defeat, Ross continued to race but the victories became more and more infrequent. With each loss, the competitive fire faded a little dimmer until alas the time came to retire from serious sculling after the 1887 season.

26. *The Evening News* (Saint John), July 13, 1882.

Epilogue

The sport of rowing started a long decline in popularity in Saint John after the Paris crew was defeated in 1876. Wallace Ross' flashes of brilliance occasionally rekindled the oldtime boating fever but the sport was on the wane. During the latter part of the nineteenth century there were a number of crews and single scullers who continued to race sporadically. In the late 1870's, the "famous Logan crew, so called, composed of Absolarn Logan, Miah Logan, and two Carleton men, Damery and Jim Lord," captured many races in Saint John, Halifax, and Boston. After they disbanded there were two or three good crews during the 1880's. The Belyeas, Ross-Plaisted and yet another Logan crew raced in the local events held in conjunction with the picnics and regattas. It was during one of these races that John O'Neill, a world-class racing shell designer, recalled the following:

At a picnic held up river at Westfield about 1883, the attraction being a boat race, I built a four-oared boat for the race. The shed was short, being only 34 feet. The boat had to be short also. So it was finished up at 33 feet. For real racing purposes, that shell was six or seven feet too short. But they were a crew of amateurs who needed that boat as they wished to row at that picnic. There was two foundrymen and two longshoremen in the crew. They sure were huskies. When the boat was completed and the boys had about four weeks practice, they sure were going some sliding on their sliding seats. With one good spin every evening of about five miles after a day's work and rowing four good oars built by "Bobby" Dalton, of Indiantown, at a cost of \$4 an oar - spruce being cheap at the time. Anyhow, they went up river to meet the Logan four - not the Logans, Absolarn and Miah of rowing fame, but four younger ones of 18 or 20 years, rowing a boat built by Nehirnah Logan, their grand-uncle. The boat sat low in the water, her deck lines showing about five inches out, her deck ends covered with oil cotton. She had short outriggers. The longshoremen's boat was open and rowed on the gunwale and showed about 10 inches out of the water. She was named the *Wallace Ross*. When the referee sent them off on their three mile journey, the *Wallace Ross* went right to the front and the longshoremen simply outdistanced the younger crew of Logans and came in, I would say, about 15 lengths ahead. They finished on the outside of the judge's boat, however.

Being green at the game, they did not know enough to finish where they had started - on the inside between the judge's boat and the shore. They rested on their oars outside and Elijah Ross, who was referee, didn't seem in a hurry to make them wise. Well, here is what I consider the funny part of the finish of this race.

Ross was a cool man and a fair referee. I thought he would rather see the younger crew win. He stood there about ten seconds before he spoke. The Logans then were coming close to the finish. At last he said, "Boys, if you stay out there, you lose the race. To win, you must come inside." Instantly the *Wallace Ross* was backed a length or better and quickly rowed in on an angle past the stern of the judge's boat, but too late to avoid the collision as the Logans were coming to the finish line. The nose of the Logan boat crashed through the thin

shell of the *Wallace Ross* and locked there about six feet from her bow. I said Elijah was a cool one, for he never spoke as the boat struck, but I knew by his smile that he enjoyed that finish. For here was his decision: "Men of the *Wallace Ross*, that is just how far you won - from the hole in your boat to her bow." I would judge about six feet. Then he was rowed ashore. I always laugh when I think of that funny decision... ²⁷

Such scrub races are comic compared to the glorious international races of the Paris crew.

Although Saint John no longer had world-class rowers, there were still many fast scullers during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Dick Nagle, Harry Vail, and Hugh McCormick were the fastest local men. Of particular interest was Harry Vail. The son of Elias Vail, Harry was born in Gagetown, New Brunswick. He came from a well-known rowing family. The Vails were in charge of rowing the mail up the St. John River to Grand Lake.

In the 1870's and 1880's, before rail and road links were firmly established between Saint John and Gagetown, the river served as the main highway between the two places. In the late fall, after the steamers stopped running up the St. John River, the Vails would row to Saint John, fill their boats with cargo and make the return trip home. It was with pride the family could boast that not once was a sail used in these trips.

Harry Vail was a popular local sculler during the 1880's. He established a good reputation around the New England States as a first class oarsman. Upon his retirement from racing, Harry was offered a coaching position at Harvard University. He coached there for a number of years and then moved on to the University of Wisconsin. His long and successful coaching stay with this midwest university made him one of the most respected rowing mentors of his day.

In a similar way, the following rowing heroes found careers after retiring from racing:

Robert Fulton was appointed to a government job as a boatman and tide waiter in the St. John Harbour. He worked in this position for over twenty years. As the stroke of the Paris crew grew older, he took up the more relaxing sport of sailing and died on February 22, 1906.

Elijah Ross continued throughout the nineteenth century to play a prominent role in the aquatic life of the city. He was Saint John's finest boat builder during that era. During the 1880's and 1890's, he boated a number of successful four-oared racing crews. In later life Ross turned his affection the sport of sailing. He built two yachts, the *Maple Leaf* and the *British Queen*, which "for a time walked away from all competitors."²⁸ As the century turned, the respected third man of the Paris crew gradually faded out of the aquatic scene and died on November 25, 1920.

Samuel Hutton was given a job as a boatman for the Department of Customs in Saint John. The redoubtable two man in the Paris crew also took up the sport of sailing in later life. Hutton was first member of the famous four to die. His tragic death occurred August 21, 1894 in a sailing race for the Corporation Cup. The course ran from Reed's Point out

27. *The Willet Scrapbooks*, Volume 86, p.263.

28. *Saint John Globe*, December 13, 1911.

into the Bay of Fundy around Mahogany Island and return. Five boats started the race but only four survived. The *Primrose*, skippered by Hutton, sank just off Mahogany Island. There was a crew of twelve aboard, and only four survived. A *Sun* reporter aboard the tug, *Lillie*, described the scene:

A number of sail boats and a steam launch were close at hand watching the maneuvers of the yachts in the absence of wind. But the storm could be seen approaching and the wonder of everyone on the *Lillie* was that the boats did not prepare for it. First there was a heavy squall, then came rain and later on a heavy hail storm. It was a gale, and no boat carrying the sail that the yachts had set was safe in it. They were about a mile off Mahogany Island at the time. The squall struck the *Maple Leaf* (Elijah Ross' boat) first, carrying away her topmast.

The crew ran up and were taking in the light sails but they did not have time to accomplish this work. Away went the top mast and this was all that saved her from a fate similar to that which the *Primrose* suffered. The *Gracie M.* got it next but she escaped without any injury. The *Primrose* was the third boat that the squall struck and she went down. The *Sunsol* had her mainsail split, her topmast carried away and her centre board broke. But for the destruction of her topmast there is no telling what might have occurred to her. The *Clytie* was as fortunate as the *Gracie M.* . . .²⁹

Samuel Hutton died the way he had lived: a brave, self-reliant man who never flinched at his post. As one of his friends respectfully noted: Could he have wished to end it worthier? Would we who know him, wish it different?

George Price sailed as a Canadian Customs House Officer on the Saint John to Boston boats owned by the old International Steamship Company. After Price retired from the rowing scene, little was heard from the bowman of the Paris crew. He died in the year 1909.

Wallace Ross settled in London, England, and made a world-wide reputation in his exhibition of swordmanship. His strength and marvellous skill in handling all sorts of weapons, from the aristocratic rapier to the more business-like claymore, noted the *Army and Navy Gazette*, "drew rounds of genuine applause." Wallace Ross "died in London, England, after a short illness, in Charing Cross Hospital, and was buried at Fulham,"³⁰ on November 26, 1895.

All of these Saint John rowing men lived full lives, and their accomplishments should not be forgotten. However, by the turn of the century, the sport of rowing in Saint John no longer produced such heroes or got such world-reknown.

29. *The Daily Sun*, August 22, 1894.

30. *Saint John Globe*, December 13, 1911.