

Chapter 2: 1880 to 1902: The Peripatetic Years

Part 1: The Founding of the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen

It has been unfortunately the case, for some time past, that boat races had some peculiar unpleasantness about them. This, it was thought, was occasioned by the fact that the races gave rise to so much betting that they were said to be mere gambling ventures. Or else it was owing, in part, to the character of the management, which was almost always subject for more grumbling. It is gratifying to be able to say, conscientiously, that the races to-morrow [August 4, 1880] will be as free from fault-finding on either of those grounds as if every well-disposed person were on the Committee himself. The races are to be for honour first, and the prizes afterwards. [The Toronto *Globe*, August 3, 1880, p.8]

The above quotation nicely encapsulates the reasons for the establishment of the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen on April 9, 1880. The Association's goals were to avoid the abuses of professional rowing and to make the sport as pure as possible.

An Association with such lofty goals and longevity had a modest beginning.

A notice of the founding meeting is given on page 4 of the April 5, 1880 edition of the Toronto *Globe*. It consists of one sentence—four lines—in the middle of an article entitled “Annual Meeting of the Argonaut Rowing Club”:

The question of forming a National Amateur Rowing Association for the Dominion of Canada was discussed, and delegates appointed to attend the meeting here on the 9th last. [The Toronto *Globe*, April 9, 1880, p.4]

The newspaper clipping describing the inaugural meeting is of too poor quality to reproduce, but too important to omit. Here is a transcribed version:

SPORTS AND AMUSEMENTS

AQUATIC

[There is a brief note about the referee's decision on a venue for the Hanlan-Courtney-Riley race.]

PROVINCIAL [sic] ROWING ASSOCIATION

A meeting of delegates for the purpose of organizing a Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen was held at the Rossin House last night. The following representatives were present: - Messrs. Geo. F. Galt and C.T. Jefferis, of the Argonaut Rowing Club, Toronto; J. Henderson and H. Crewe, of the Toronto Rowing Club; Harold Lambe and R.A. Lucas, of the Leander Rowing Club, Hamilton; T. Davidson and H.J. Duggan, of the Nautilus Rowing Club, Hamilton; W. Dillon and E. Sanderson, of the Bayside Rowing Club, Toronto; G.F.R. Harris, of the Beaver

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Rowing Club, Windsor; A.J. Hughes and D. Heath of the Lachine Boating Club, Montreal; W.B. Wells, of the Chatham Rowing Club; E.B. Edwards and G.C. Rogers, of the Peterboro Rowing Club; G.R. Latimer, of the Forest City Rowing Club, London.

A constitution and by-laws were framed and adopted.

The following gentlemen were elected officers for the ensuing year: - Mr. Henry O'Brien, President; Mr. Harold Lambe, 1st Vice-President; Mr. J. Henderson, 2nd Vice-President; Mr. Charles T. Jefferis, Secretary; Mr. H. Crewe, Treasurer. The Executive Committee are Messrs. Heath, Davidson, Wells, Dillon, Hughes, Edwards, Latimer, Duggan, Lucas, Galt, Rogers, and O'Hara.

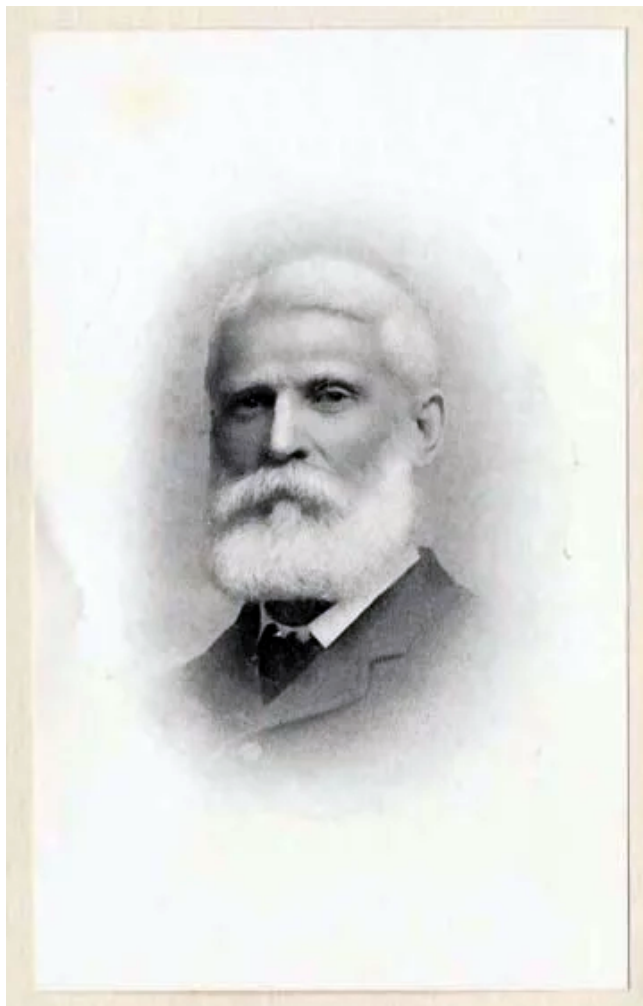
It was decided to hold the first annual regatta on Toronto Bay on Saturday, 31st July.

After the business was completed a vote of thanks was tendered to Mr. John Henderson, who officiated as Chairman.

The meeting was enthusiastic in the extreme, and the Association promises to be a grand success.

The meeting was kept up until nearly one o'clock this morning.

[The *Toronto Globe*, April 10, 1880, p.6]



Henry O'Brien, the first President of the CAAO was also the first President of the Argonaut R.C.. He had been an oarsman and regatta official for many years before 1880.

Argonaut Rowing Club archives.

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A hand-coloured print of the Rossin House, 1870. Archive of Ontario digital image number I0006713.jpg.
[http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/IMAGES_FACT/FACTSIMAG/IMAGEFILE+I0006713?](http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll/144/IMAGES_FACT/FACTSIMAG/IMAGEFILE+I0006713?SESSIONSEARCH)
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The Rossin House, the site of the founding meeting of the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen, was a first-class, luxury hotel located at the corner of York and King Sts., three blocks north of the Argonaut R.C..

The article above does not say who drew up the constitution and by-laws. We are told years later in a brief history of the CAAO published in the St. Catharines *Daily Standard*: "A constitution modelled after the National Association (United States) was framed by Messrs. Boswell, Littlejohn and the late Ald. Morphy, and it holds today." [The *Daily Standard*, August 2, 1907, p.2]

Although the original plan called for the first annual regatta to be held on Saturday, July 31, it was subsequently rescheduled for Wednesday, August 4.

Founding Clubs of the C.A.A.O.

Argonaut Rowing Club
Bayside Rowing Club
Beaver Rowing Club
Chatham Rowing Club
Forest City Rowing Club
Lachine Boating Club
Leander Rowing Club
Nautilus Rowing Club
Peterboro Rowing Club
Toronto Rowing Club

Since the Association was promoting amateur rowing, how did it define an amateur? The earliest document I was able to find which contains a definition comes from seven years after the founding of the Association. Quoted in *The Ottawa Evening Journal* on May 9, 1887 on page 4, it is identical to the definition given below from *The Constitution and By-Laws of the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen as in Force August 8th, 1890*. However, there must have been abuses, because the definition below contains an amendment which was proposed in 1887. The original definition ended with a period after “paddle” in the fifth last line. Here is what the Ottawa R.C. was proposing:

. . . at the next annual business meeting of the association the Ottawa club will move an amendment to the . . . rule, making the phraseology more explicit, denying the right of competition to any person who has no visible means of support, or who is known to abandon his ordinary vocation for the purpose of training for a race, or suspected of rowing for profit or prospective reward. [The *Ottawa Evening Journal*, May 9, 1887, p.4]

The amendment was passed by the CAAO on July 21, 1887.

Article III gives the definition with the 1887 amendment beginning at “who rows”:

Constitution

ARTICLE I.

This Association shall be called THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF AMATEUR OARSMEN.

ARTICLE II.

The object of this Association shall be the advancement and improvement of rowing among Amateurs.

ARTICLE III.

It shall consist of Clubs which adopt the definition of an Amateur, viz., to be "one who has not entered into an open competition; or for either a stake, public or admission money, or entrance fee; or competed with or against a professional for any prize since January 1st, 1876; who has never taught, pursued or assisted in the pursuit of athletic exercises as a means of livelihood*; whose membership of any rowing or other athletic Club was not brought about, or does not continue, because of any mutual agreement or understanding, expressed or implied, whereby his becoming or continuing a member of such Club would be of any pecuniary benefit to him whatever, direct or indirect, who has never been

*NOTE.—This clause is intended especially to prevent any so-called Amateur Oarsmen being surreptitiously compensated for rowing, as for instance, by being furnished lucrative employment in sinecure positions.

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employed in any occupation involving any use of the oar or paddle, who rows for pleasure or recreation only, and during his leisure hours, and who does not abandon or neglect his usual business or occupation for the purpose of training for more than two weeks during a rowing season.

[Internet
Archive: [https://
archive.org/
stream/
cihm_00422#page/3/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/cihm_00422#page/3/mode/2up)]

It is clear that some of the founders of the Association were lawyers.

A modern rower who reads this definition will be shocked to realize that he/she would not have been considered an amateur in the 19th century.

There was another amendment to this definition, obviously meant to curb two abuses. The period at the end of the 1890 definition was changed to a comma and the definition continues: “and who has never pawned or sold any medal or trophy won by him in any aquatic or athletic contest, and who has never entered in any such contest under a name other than his own.” The definition with the additional wording first appears in the 1906 regatta programme. The 1905 programme contains the 1890 definition minus the words “since January 1st, 1876” and the footnote from “livelihood”.

The revised definition appears in the regatta programmes well into the 20th century. It last appears in the 1948 Henley programme. However, it is contained in the 1966 edition of *Regatta Rules and Record Book and the Constitution of the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen*. By 1966, it was patently obsolete.

Two months go by before there is more news about the regatta in the *Toronto Globe*.

The June 9, 1880 edition of the *Toronto Globe* contains a brief note, under the heading “THE COMING REGATTA” announcing the change of date for the First Regatta from July 31, as originally announced, to August 4.

Once the Association had been formed and a date for the First Regatta had been decided upon, preparations began.

A meeting of the Regatta Committee on Saturday, June 12 confirmed the change of date. [The *Toronto Globe*, June 14, 1880, p.8] No reason is given for the change, but a 19th century reader didn’t need the reason to be stated. Saturdays were busy days for commerce, while all businesses were closed on Wednesday afternoons. The Association would get a bigger crowd on a Wednesday afternoon than on a Saturday. The article reporting the Regatta Committee meeting mentions some of the work being done to attract competitors. One enticement was the total value of the prizes: \$1,500.

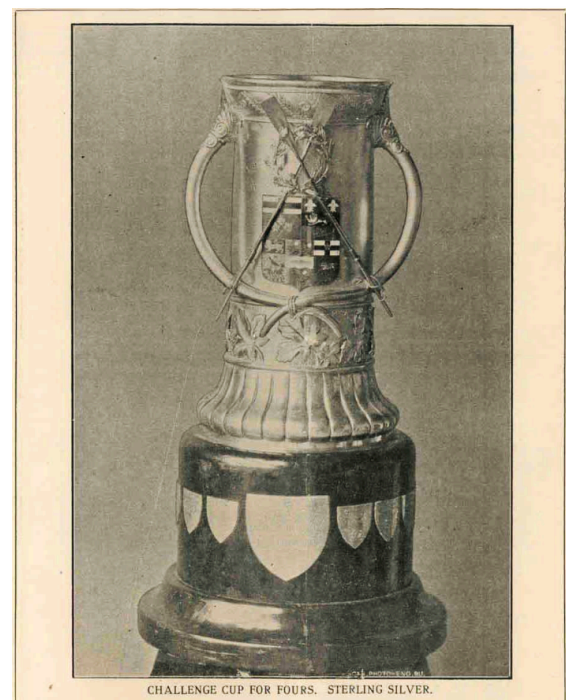
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Specifically mentioned were the \$600 Challenge Cup for Fours, and the \$250 Challenge Cup for Singles. The Committee was also sending out circulars to all amateur rowing clubs in Canada and the United States, inviting them to send competitors. The article also suggests that the Hillsdale crew from Hillsdale, Michigan, winners of the Senior Four at the 1879 U.S. National Championships were interested in competing in Toronto. This may have been meant as a lure to attract spectators and crews. Although the Hillsdale crew did submit an entry, they did not appear at the Regatta.

The next meeting of the Regatta Committee was held at the Argonaut clubhouse on Monday, June 28, 1880. Since they were planning for the inaugural regatta, they had some unique items on the agenda. For instance, they had to pick out designs for the new trophies, and make decisions regarding second place gold medals for the Senior Four and Single. Finances were also on the agenda, although nothing specific is mentioned in the *Globe's* account of the meeting. [The *Toronto Globe*, June 29, 1880, p.8]

Later that same week, Friday, July 2, another meeting was held, this time at the Queen's Hotel on the north side of Front St. between Bay and York Sts. where the Fairmont Royal York Hotel now stands. After looking at drawings and specifications submitted by several Canadian and American companies, it was decided to accept the design of the Toronto firm Zimmerman, McNaught and Loeb for the Senior Four-Oars Challenge Cup. By coincidence, William Kirkpatrick McNaught of that company had been Vice President of the Toronto R.C. from 1873 to 1875. The design of R.J. Harper and Co. from Montreal was chosen for the Single Sculls Challenge Cup. A sub-committee was formed to deal with the smaller cups and the medals which were to be purchased in Toronto. The last major item on the agenda was fund raising. A major canvas of the city was planned to solicit donations, or what were then called "subscriptions". [The *Toronto Globe*, July 3, 1880, p.12]

Zimmerman, McNaught and Loeb of Toronto designed and made the Challenge Cup for Fours. Its value was given as \$600 at the June 12, 1880 Regatta Committee meeting.



CHALLENGE CUP FOR FOURS. STERLING SILVER.

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R.J. Harper and Co. from Montreal designed and manufactured the Challenge Cup for Single Sculls. Although its value was given as \$250 at the June 12 meeting of the Regatta Committee, its stated value in later publications was \$300, roughly equivalent to a year's wages for a labourer in 1880.

The Regatta Committee next met on Monday, July 4 at the Walker House on the southwest corner of Front and York Sts.. All the sub-committees, including the Subscription Sub-committee, reported progress. One item on the agenda seems to have been a discussion to raise spirits. The members acknowledged that they had a disadvantage because they were putting on a new regatta, but they averred that it would be "the finest regatta of the kind ever witnessed on the Toronto Bay." [The Toronto *Globe*, July 6, 1880, p.8]

The Windsor Hotel at the corner of Church and Richmond Sts., was the site of the next meeting of the Regatta Committee on Friday, July 9. It was a "good news" meeting. The Subscription Sub-committee reported that they had collected \$300, and expressed confidence that they would reach their goal. Another positive item on the agenda was the announcement of the donation of a \$250 challenge cup. Oddly, the name of the donor, the Hop-Bitters Manufacturing Co., is not given in the *Globe's* report of the meeting [The Toronto *Globe*, July 10, 1880, p.12], although it clearly states that the cup would be put in competition for the Double Sculls race. There was more good news; the Lacrosse Club offered its facilities at 51 King St. East for the use of the Regatta Committee until the conclusion of the Regatta. Perhaps William Kirkpatrick McNaught, former Vice President of the Toronto R.C. had a hand in that offer. He was Secretary of the National Amateur Lacrosse Association from 1877 to 1880 and President from 1880 to 1883.

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The Hop Bitters Challenge Cup for Double Sculls, valued at \$250, was donated by the Hop Bitters Manufacturing Co. of Rochester, New York. The company had recently opened a branch office in Toronto at the corner of Victoria and Lombard Sts.. According to a company ad, it produced patent medicine which cured neuralgia, "female trouble," kidney, liver and urinary complaints. Asa T. Soule, the company founder, claimed the elixir would cure "all diseases of the stomach, bowels, nervousness, sleeplessness, female complaints, and drunkenness." Curing drunkenness was problematic since the potion contained a large percentage of alcohol!



For more details about the histories of this and all the Henley trophies which are currently presented, plus many of the retired trophies, go to the Trophies page on my web site: <http://goldmedalphotos.com/trophies.html>

Although the Regatta Committee had been offered the use of the facilities of the Lacrosse Club, its next meeting, on Monday July 12, was held at the new offices of Pellatt & Osler, Stock Brokers, at 20 King St. West. The *Globe's* coverage mentions three agenda items: the Pavilion of the Horticultural Gardens (now Allan Gardens) had been secured for the presentation of prizes on the evening of the Regatta, and arrangements had been made for a concert to be given at that event. However, the item which not only helped financially, but gave the Regatta some credibility was this: "Amongst new subscriptions announced was one of \$100 from Mr. E. Hanlan." [The *Toronto Globe*, July 13, 1880, p.8] Having Ned Hanlan's endorsement was a major achievement for the fledgling Association.

The next meeting of Regatta Committee was held on Monday, July 19 at what the *Globe* called "their headquarters on King Street." [The *Toronto Globe*, July 20, 1880, p.8] Presumably that was a reference to the offices of Pellatt & Osler. The choice of a referee was high on the agenda, and Lieutenant Colonel William D. Otter was nominated. He must have been nearby, because a sub-committee left the meeting, met with him and returned with his answer: yes, he would referee the races. Why him? Otter was a founding member of the Toronto R.C. in 1865, and founding President of the Toronto Lacrosse Club in 1867. [Dictionary of Canadian Biography: http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id_nbr=7848] Clues as to why he was the first choice of the Regatta Committee to be Referee at the First Regatta can be found in his entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian*

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Biography, but his entry in the Canadian War Museum web site is much more direct. The article begins:

Otter was the foremost Canadian professional soldier of his day, both in terms of seniority and experience. He began his military career in the militia in Toronto in 1864. In 1866, he served at the battle of Ridgeway where Fenian Irish nationalists from the United States defeated a Canadian force. [http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/boer/williamotter_e.shtml]

The rest of the article is peppered with words and phrases such as “no nonsense,” “uncompromising” and “steady.” He was obviously a man who could take charge of a rowing race.

Other items on the agenda included a report showing an additional \$129 in donations, and a letter from the Harbour Commissioners giving the Regatta Committee permission to lay out their course and keep it clear on the day of the Regatta. It also received a letter from the Great Western Railway which offered to give the Association 15 per cent of their receipts for excursion tickets to the Regatta, and to carry competitors and their boats for free. That was a huge offer. As thanks, the Regatta Committee offered seats on the Association’s boat at the Regatta to agents of the railway.

The following Friday, July 23, another meeting was held. All the items on the agenda seem to have been updates: plans were in work to lay out the course; the Subscriptions Sub-committee reported an additional \$1,500 received; Mr. Moody from the Grand Trunk Railway was appointed to arrange for excursions from the southern states; the committee preparing the official programme were given the go-ahead to have them printed; and the Yacht Club were thanked for offering to accommodate the boats of visiting oarsmen. If there were any problems, they were not mentioned in the *Globe’s* coverage. [The *Toronto Globe*, July 24, 1880, p.12]

The *Toronto Mail* of July 24 contained this advertisement:

THE FIRST
R E G A T T A
OF THE
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
OF
AMATEUR OARSMEN
WILL BE HELD AT
T O R O N T O

ON
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4.

Prizes, aggregating upwards of
TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS
in value will be given, comprising Two Magnificent
Challenge Cups, presented by the Association, and
one costly Challenge Cup, donated by the Hop
Bitters Manufacturing Company. There will also
be prizes given by “The Mail” Printing Company,
Edward Hanlan, the Champion, the “Queen’s”
Hotel, and thirteen other cups and medals by the
Association.

The races will be as follows:

Senior Four Oars,	Senior Scull Shells,
Junior Four Oars,	Junior Scull Shells,
Double Scull Shells,	Double Scull Skiffs,
Pair Oars,	Single Scull Skiffs.

Nearly every rowing club in Canada, and several
in the United States, will be represented.

This will be the greatest aquatic carnival ever
held in Canada.

A grand concert and distribution of prizes will
take place at the Horticultural Gardens in the
evening.

[The *Toronto Mail*, July 24, 1880. Transcribed from the original by Richard MacFarlane.]

The Association was trying to drum up interest in something new. It was entitled
to some hyperbole in its ad to entice spectators to attend.

On Saturday, July 24, entries closed and on Monday, a list of entries was
published in the *Globe*. [The *Toronto Globe*, July 26, 1880, p.8] That list is significantly
longer than the list of competitors on the day of the race as several clubs registered but
did not arrive for the Regatta. However, the length of the list clearly indicated to the
reading public that this was going to be a big regatta.

In addition to the number and geographical spread of the entries, one other
aspect of the article was sure to impress the readers; the prizes:

Senior Four-Oars: \$600 challenge cup and four gold medals for the first crew; four
cups for the second.

Senior Single Sculls: \$300 challenge cup and gold medal for the first; a cup for the
second.

Double Sculls: Hop Bitters Challenge Cup and two cups given by the CAAO.

Pair-Oars: two cups presented by the proprietors of the Queen’s Hotel.

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Junior Four-Oars: four cups presented by the CAAO.

Junior Single Sculls: a cup presented by the *Mail* Printing Company.

Single Sculls Inrigged: a cup presented by the CAAO.

Double Sculls Inrigged: two cups presented by Ned Hanlan.

Pictured is one of the cups donated by the Queen's Hotel for the Pair-Oars. Below the crest of the CAAO the inscription reads: "Queen's Hotel Cup For Pair Oars, Shell." The larger inscription reads "Regatta - Aug. 1880." It was made by Reed & Barton, a silversmith in Taunton, Massachusetts, and stands an impressive 28 cm tall.

The cup was obtained by Cynthia Findlay of Cynthia Findlay Antiques from a waterfront home in Toronto. In 2011, Richard MacFarlane, rowing historian and member of the Hanlan B.C. purchased the cup and had it re-silvered. The location of the other cup is unknown.

Note to organizations that feel obligated to rebrand every few years: the crest of the CAAO which appears on this cup from 1880 remained unchanged for 96 years, until the Association changed its name to the Canadian Amateur Rowing Association in 1976. [Photo courtesy of Richard MacFarlane]



On the Friday before the Regatta, July 30, another meeting of the Regatta Committee was held. Their excitement, which borders on giddiness, permeates the *Globe's* account. There is no shortage of superlatives in the article. For instance: "In its magnitude, in the amount of the prizes, and number and value of the trophies; in the number of races and array of contestants, it will far outstrip anything of the kind ever held in Canada. [The *Toronto Globe*, July 31, 1880, p.12] The Finance Sub-committee reported that a little more than \$2,000 was pledged, perhaps equivalent to \$200,000 in today's dollars. There were 65 entries totalling 160 oarsmen in the eight races. Mention was made of the American entries; this was to be an international regatta. The contribution of the railways came in for special acknowledgement. All had promised to offer low rates on the day of the regatta and the Grand Trunk was promising very low excursion fares. For instance, the fare from Detroit and return would be \$3.50. The police had been arranged. His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor John Beverley Robinson

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had agreed to distribute the prizes. The steam-yacht *Luella* had been engaged for the use of the Referee, Lieutenant Colonel William D. Otter. Ironically, after all the arrangements had been itemized, the *Globe* report concludes: "There are really no further important matters to be arranged; and all that is left to be desired is fine weather and a good course for the oarsmen." [The Toronto *Globe*, July 31, 1880, p.12] Unfortunately, the inaugural regatta would not be held in "fine weather."

The final meeting of the Regatta Committee was held on Monday, August 3. The weather was a topic of discussion. To forestall problems caused by winds, it was decided to lay out two courses; one near the city shore and the other near the Island. Since many of the competitors were in attendance, Referee Otter lectured them on the rules, and stressed the importance of punctuality. The number of entries was revised to 54. The *Globe's* article ends with the cryptic sentence: "The Champion, Edward Hanlan, will appear on the Bay during the afternoon of the races." [The Toronto *Globe*, August 3, 1880, p.8] Perhaps the Committee's thinking was that it needed a star to entice spectators to come to the waterfront, and there was no greater star in Canada than Ned Hanlan.

The Regatta Committee had worked long and hard to prepare for the First Regatta. The seed planted in April was about to bear its first fruits.

PLEASE NOTE: This History is a work in progress. I will post chapters as I finish them and I will make changes to chapters which are already posted as I become aware of new information, or have errors pointed out to me. This version was completed on September 7, 2022. If you find errors or omissions, use the Contact link at <http://goldmedalphotos.com/> to point them out to me. Stan Lapinski.