

HOW IT BEGAN

By Richard Sorokin

Hidden in the dim mists of antiquity are the beginnings of man's life afloat. Before the refinements of language or clothing or implements, man undoubtedly used the fallen log as his means of water travel, later hollowing it with fire or lashing several together into a raft for the transportation of goods or the spoils of the hunt. One day, he noticed that as he stood upon his log the wind seemed to carry him along. Eagerly he hung an animal skin from a sapling, stuck it into his "boat" and was rewarded by moving even faster with less effort. Thus sailing was discovered. He found that just as the paddle which he had fashioned pushed him through the water, so would it steer his crude vessel. Later he hinged it to the stem and called it a rudder, just as he at last set and rigged his mast permanently and dispensed with his paddle and oars. Thus it all could have begun.

Sails made it possible to reach further and carry more than ever before. All early sails were square rigged. The sails were rigged perpendicular to the hull. For hundreds of years the square rigger ruled the waves. The Vikings, Greeks, Romans and all Mediterranean civilizations used the square rigger. Nelson's great battles were all with square rigged vessels. The great Spanish Armada and the English fleet were square rigged. Even up to our own revolutionary war the square rigger still ruled the waves.

But gradually science mingled with practical seamanship, the trial and error method was slowly abandoned and the wind regarded as a force to be cunningly used. High top-sided and superstructure which had offered so much windage were reduced; the fore and aft sails became more prominent for use in going *against the wind*. Fine entrance lines, long smooth runs and improved hulls modeling succeeded full bellied tubby hulls. Speed, safety and carrying ability played important roles in determining type as sea commerce of vast proportions began to grow.

Naturally, there were some trades that required a combination of both types, sailing partly along the shore and partly with the trade's winds. Combinations of the fore-and-aft and square-rigged were evolved and have given us the types of brig, bark topsail schooner, barkentine and square-rigged "trade wind sail" of modern yachts.

But the cry was always for more speed. In 1819 the Savannah, a steam ship first crossed the ocean and the days of the sailing ship was over. Steam gradually took the place of sail. First as an auxiliary power and later when it became more reliable and faster as the sole motive power of shipping. The screw propeller replaced the paddle wheels. Hull design changed to accommodate the new propulsion system. Steam carried the big ships through World War Two. All big ships used steam. Later the diesel engine and atomic engines came into use. Diesel engines are smaller, require less man power.

Sail has disappeared from the world of commerce in most areas. Yet, there are many more sailing vessels afloat today than ever in history. Thousands of yachts dot the coastal and inland waters of our country today. There's nothing like getting out on the water, turn off the motor, and it's you, your skill, the wind and your boat.