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## THE "MOSQUITO FLEET"



CANOEING is a sport so little known that most people have an incorrect idea of what a modern sailing canoe is. The canoe of the red

man was either hollowed from the trunk of a tree, or made of skins stretched tightly over a wooden frame; usually very long and narrow, and requiring great skill in handling. The paddle was the means of propulsion. They were light, swift, and very convenient in inland waters. The modern sailing canoe inherits the lightness and speed of its ancestors, but modern mechanical skill has greatly improved its construction, and the sail has taken the place of the paddle. As defined by the rules of the American Canoe Association, the canoe is limited in size; sixteen feet in length by about thirty inches in width being



Photo by W. C. Gibbs  
"VICTORY!"—W. W. BLOW'S MYSTIC.

the largest allowed. It must be sharp at both ends, have no keel nor station-

ary ballast, and conform to such other regulations as will keep canoes a class by themselves. The modern sailing canoe has many advantages over other small sailing craft. It has great speed; for its size it is the fastest sailing boat afloat, and often beats boats much

In California, canoeing was given its first impulse by the formation of the Oakland Canoe Club, in January, 1886, with W. W. Blow as Commodore, and A. D. Harrison, Vice-Commodore. There were fourteen charter members, and a fleet of ten boats. At first a majority of



Photo by W. C. Gibbs

W. G. MORROW'S CANOE WHISPER.

larger than itself. Cheapness is an important item. After the first cost, the canoe does not draw heavily upon one's purse. Beside these features are lightness and facility of handling, that enable the canoeist easily to reach home with the aid of his paddle, should the wind fail him.

the fleet represented the work of amateur builders, but gradually the old style of boats and old methods of rigging were displaced by the very latest examples of the Eastern builder's art. The club house was located on the estuary of San Antonio, a branch of San Francisco Bay, adjacent to the broad-gauge bridge

connecting Oakland and Alameda. Nature has here provided four miles of smooth water, with the open waters of San Francisco Bay within easy reach to invite the more daring. A large tidal canal now in course of construction by the government will connect the estuary with San Leandro Bay, four miles to the southeast. This, when completed

incapable of being lowered. In most cases the old boats were entirely replaced, but in some instances the old boat was improved and re-arranged in conformity with the new ideas,—notably so in the case of the *Mystic*, owned by Commodore Blow. Originally rigged with stationary keel, small leg of mutton sails and no centerboard, she has been



Photo by P. S. Carlton  
W. LEICHTER'S AMALIA.

according to the slow process of government jobs, will enlarge the area of protected waters, and open up some fairly good ground for short cruises.

The first boats of the fleet could not compare with the boats of today in either speed or beauty. The small leg of mutton sails and old style folding centerboards have gradually given way to the large plate centerboard, and standing rigs which are made fast to the mast and

improved, until now she holds her own remarkably well with the very newest boats.

Undoubtedly the most pleasant part of canoeing is cruising, and the most interesting tales of canoe life are brought out when recollections of some cruise are revived. The first cruise of the Oakland Canoe Club was to Clear Lake in the summer of 1887. Clear Lake is situated in Lake County, about one hun-

dred and thirty miles north of San Francisco. To reach it the canoes, consisting of a fleet of ten boats, had to be shipped by train ninety-five miles to Cloverdale. From this point wagons were hired, and the boats stowed in them as comfortably as possible for the rough mountain journey of thirty-five miles. The trip was a long and tedious one in the hot sun, but the enjoyable cruising on the Lake amply repaid the canoeists for their trouble. Clear Lake is a beautiful place for a cruise, twenty to thirty miles in length, ten to fifteen miles wide, surrounded by the typical Coast Range mountains of California, with beautiful forests and game in plenty. Sandy beaches affording ideal camping ground are broken but in few places by rocks, and a line of tules forty or fifty feet from the shores grows all around the Lake. They grow thickly together in a belt ten or fifteen feet wide. Many a tale could these tules tell of disabled or frightened mariners. At times a considerable breeze would mar the otherwise placid lone surface, and at these times those who desired to seek shelter found it by running their boats through the tules to the narrow strip of smooth water between the tules and the shore.

The features of a cruise consist of sailing during the day, after which comes a jolly time about the camp fire, or else a little trip to startle the natives of some country burg. Feather beds are at a discount when the canoe is handy. Drawn up on the beach, with a canoe tent stretched between the two masts and made fast to the outside of the boat, the canoe makes the very finest sleeping apartment. A cruising canoe contains sufficient room for necessary camp equipment with a dry storage compartment for more perishable provisions.

Three weeks were enjoyably spent by the canoeists on Clear Lake, entertainments and a regatta being provided by the people of Lakeport and Soda Bay.

The country people looked upon the little boats with open-eyed wonder, astonished that canoeists would come all the way from San Francisco just for a sail. Some of the boats on arriving home were considerably the worse for wear, from the mountain ride and exposure to the hot sun of Lake County.

This year the club received a pressing invitation to come again to the Lake, but probably until a railroad is constructed direct to its shores, and the rough trip in wagons thus done away with, the canoeists will have to be content with a less attractive place.

The next important cruise took place on the Sacramento River, and was enjoyed by Commodore Blow of the Canoe Club, A. H. Blow, and Geo. A. Warder, celebrated in Eastern canoeing circles as the Jabberwock, of Springfield, Ohio. They used light draft canoes specially constructed for the trip. The boats were shipped by rail to Red Bluff, a point on the river one hundred and twenty miles above Sacramento, from which place the cruise commenced down stream. The Sacramento River furnishes the best cruising ground in California, if taken at the right time of the year, in April and May, after the heavy rains, and before the malaria-producing heat and the savage, merciless mosquito begin their ravages. The mosquitoes of the Sacramento have a well-earned reputation, and like all other productions of the great State of California, they are far ahead of any rivals. Backing is always abundant to match them against any other variety in the world, the Jersey preferred. And woe to the poor canoeist who does not use tobacco, for the smoke of this weed from a good old T. D. pipe is the only thing that will keep the mosquito at a distance.

The banks of the river are lined in most places with fine oak trees and sandy beaches, affording the very choicest camping ground; the current is regular, with no bad rapids. Farm houses are

Photo by A. H. Blow

THE SACRAMENTO RIVER CRUISE.—The Canoes Nip and Tuck.



plentiful, and afford abundant means for the poor marksman or unsuccessful angler to replenish his larder. The cruise extended from Red Bluff to Colusa, a distance of seventy miles, and lasted a little over a week.

A cruise of a different nature from either of the two already mentioned was one undertaken, and by dint of great labor and trouble successfully carried out, by Geo. A. Warder and Hervy Darneal. The Eel River takes a northerly course from its source in Mendocino County, and empties into the Pacific Ocean near Eureka. Launching a canoe near the headwaters of this stream, the brave voyageurs began what they thought would be an easy passage down stream, through a beautiful, picturesque country. The country was all there, also the beauty and picturesqueness, but the river in places far too numerous was a raging torrent. The poor canoe was dashed against many a rock, portages were frequent, capsizes of daily occurrence, an expensive camera was lost, ammunition all wet, and provisions spoiled. Here are four days from the log of the cruise by Warder:—

June 20th. Ran the Devil's Elbow. Not bad at all. Beautiful scenery. Sanhedrim mountain, 6,000 feet high, on our right. River runs down hill all the time. Lots of bad places. Had to portage only one. "Snark" sprang a leak. Copper tacked it. Bad rapids; kept us bailing and jumping out often. Both of us wet to the waist. At 5 P. M. reached Watson's. 20 or 30 miles. Watson says we can't make the trip (of course). We came through cañons today and dropped some 400 feet.

June 21st. Launched about 9 A. M. Capsized on first rapids. Lost the camera, a rubber blanket, and hunting coat. In the afternoon came to an awful rough place, falls of some 6 or 8 ft. in height; walked down two miles, very broken high mountain, box cañon. This is the roughest country I ever tackled. It is as bad as the French Broad, North Carolina, which is practically impassable.

Snark leaking badly. We worked two or three hours patching her up; will probably have to abandon her, as she cannot stand the racking.

June 22d. Let Snark down first of all by ropes and carried bags. Lost our big coil, seventy-five feet of rope; had to cut tent ropes off; heavy quick

water from three to five miles, enormous rocks, swift rapids, big mountains; both wet; canoe leaking like a sieve from continual pounding on the rocks; ran some frightful rapids, waves came clear over our bows, and flooded canoe two or three times. Had lunch at 1 P. M., dog and jelly and boned turkey. Not through cañon yet. Will this gorge never end? Saw no house today, and no man. Caught seven trout for supper, small ones, none are over seven or eight inches long, in the river. One bad mishap—we were lowering Snark down a fall and she went at a terrific rate, and yanked Darneal off the rocks into the swirl, as the rope got fast round his hand. He went in over his head, but fortunately grabbed a rock and was not swept over. A coyote stole most of our bacon last night. All the upper river has been virgin forests of hard wood, then pine, then redwood, then mixed, etc.; seems to change constantly. Don't wonder no one ever ran the Eel, he would need a cast iron or aluminum canoe. We will keep patching the Snark and going down, till we are forced to abandon her.

June 23d. Supposed we were to get into more open country, but the river is as rough as ever if not rougher. Ran some frightful rough rapids, and had to land twice and patch up canoe. Once we stove in her side. Cut sail cloth off our tent, and melted our tallow candles and saturated cloth. All our tacks are used up. Snark leaking like a sieve. We bail and wade, and rope over the worst places. Tonight we ran on till nearly dark looking for a camp-site, till we struck a waterfall right in a deep box cañon. It looks as if the cruise was ended here. Have seen no such stream as Indian Creek yet. Maps are not correct, for they show river to be pretty straight, whereas it is quite tortuous. We will go into the forest tomorrow for pine pitch, to patch canoe with. The country is absolutely alive with deer. We counted fourteen today and then quit keeping track of them, for we saw them in twos and threes. One of them on the right bank lay quietly on a rock, and watched us pass not more than sixty yards away. We could have killed eight or ten and not left the canoe. Never saw such a country for game. It is a virgin wilderness, and in all probability no man has ever set foot here before. Trout jumping everywhere, but small. Now and then a big fish breaks water, but we have not caught any over seven or eight inches long. Saw several indications of coal today. We saw a great many hooded mergansers (ducks) with young broods every day. Darneal calls them flappers, and we drive them for miles down the river.

And so on for a week, until finally Eureka, the terminus of the cruise, was reached.

This cruising is but one side of the subject. The comparatively quiet waters



Photo by Philip S. Carlton

THE MOSQUITO FLEET ESCORTING THE CORINTHIAN YACHT CLUB FROM OAKLAND HARBOR.



V.P.S.

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of the estuary of San Antonio furnish the main stamping ground for the canoe. Here every Sunday and holiday the beautiful little boats may be seen gliding over the waves, often freighted with fair passengers.

The more the racing canoe is developed, however, in California as in the East, the less suited the boat becomes

division of canoes into two classes, racers and cruisers. A type of the racing canoe is the Gnat, owned by Geo. A. Warder. She was built in the East after a model by the owner, and combines all the latest inventions in the canoe builder's art. With a length of sixteen feet and width of thirty inches, the boat has a long, narrow appearance,



Photo by W. C. Gibbs

A. H. BLOW'S GYPSY.

for taking out a passenger. The casing for the large plate centerboard occupies the larger part of the floor of the boat, the canoe is almost entirely decked over, while standing sails, made fast to the mast and incapable of being lowered, complete the outfit. Speed is certainly obtained, but not comfort. The willingness of many to dispense with comfort for the sake of speed has resulted in the

and in order to keep such a craft right side up the sliding deck is used, which places the weight of the skipper far out on one side of the boat. The deck is almost entirely covered, and often when a capsizes takes place the canoe can be righted and continue her trip with the addition of but a very little water inside. The drawing of this boat illustrates an attempt to improve the speed by the use



Photo by A. H. Blow

GEORGE A. WARDER'S GNAT.

of three sails. It was unsuccessful, however, one sail taking the wind out of the others.

Another type of boat is the Whisper, a good example of the cruising canoe. She is fifteen feet in length, and has a thirty-seven inch beam. By means of an open cockpit seven feet long, and a center-board folding up in the keel, plenty of room and comfort are secured. The advantages of this boat for cruising and easy sailing are apparent, while for racing purposes the first named has the call. It is impossible to reach a compromise between the two that will give us as a result a canoe adapted equally well for both cruising and racing. These two types occur not only in California canoeing but wherever the sport exists. The strong summer "zephyrs" of San Francisco and vicinity have encouraged the use of larger cruisers than in the East. The Oakland Canoe Club was obliged to limit the size of boats admitted to its

house to sixteen feet by thirty-eight inches.

Several prizes are raced for by the boats of the club. The contest for the Mayrisch badge takes place every three months, and it is the property of the winner only until the next race, when it is contested for again. In the races for this trophy all the boats are in one class and the best boat wins. Of a different kind are the races for the Holiday cup, a neat prize presented to the club by three of its members, the contest for which takes place on every holiday. The canoes are here divided into classes, following out the line of division laid down above, and an allowance is made for the more slowly-sailing cruisers.

This corresponds to handicapping, a custom devised to encourage any sport by giving a slight advantage to novices and to recognized inferiority. Applied to canoeing it encourages the slow boats to take part in races, and adds greatly to

the enthusiasm of the day. Although opposed to the idea of having the best man win, it is manifestly best for the development of the club. For the May-risch badge, the most exciting contests have been between the Dart, a 16 x 30 boat; the Gnat, already described, and the Jack, 16 x 34, owned by W. W. Blow. These boats are about evenly matched as regards speed, and the skillfulness of the skippers generally decides the race. The Jack, ably sailed by that veteran canoeist, Commodore Blow, has more races to her credit than either of the others. Of boats of the second class, the Gipsy, sailed by A. H. Blow, maintains a supremacy.

The Crescent Boat Club of Oakland was organized by some amateur sailors to whom the canoe represented too small a water area. The large cruiser Amalia is eighteen feet long and four feet wide. Built like a canoe in all respects but size, this boat gives to its owner greater comfort and safety in rough water than could be expected from a regulation canoe.

The Encinal Boat Club has its house on the Alameda shore of San Francisco Bay, and thus affords open water to some canoeists for whom the calmer waters of the estuary of San Antonio are not sufficiently "speedy."

In our Western waters a strong bond of friendship exists between the smallest yachts. The Corinthian Yacht Club of San Francisco, and the Oakland Canoe Club have had many joint meets. The cut shows the Canoe fleet on its way to welcome the Corinthians to Oakland Creek. High jinks in the evening was followed by racing the next day: a canoe race by yachtsmen was a feature

of the occasion. Accustomed to more stable craft, the big boat sailors did not finish their race without a few capsizes.

The growth and prospects of canoeing in California suffer from many disadvantages that do not exist in the East. In the immediate vicinity of San Francisco, where naturally it would have its headquarters, the facilities for the sport are somewhat limited, and the means of enjoying these facilities a little hampered by very strong summer winds. In the East, good cruising is more abundant and within easier access than in California. On the other hand, in the far West outdoor sport is possible the year round. While the Eastern canoeist is keeping warm beside his fire, telling yarns of past adventures, thinking out schemes for improving his boat, and waiting for the thaw, his nautically inclined fellow-citizen on the Pacific Coast is enjoying most delightful sailing. In the year of 1888 there were but two Sundays when the weather forbade a pleasant day's sail.

The rivers and lakes of California are far from San Francisco, and for the canoe, difficult of access. When the railroads are extended to more of the mountain lakes, and the necessity of transporting the canoes in wagons is obviated, cruises will be more frequent. In the large rivers, at points like Stockton and Sacramento, canoeing should prosper, and these are the places where new clubs and new canoe life should start. With these possibilities we do not take too much for granted in looking forward to seeing in the near future a canoe meet such as that of the American Canoe Association, in August of last year, on historic Lake George.

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