

RACING SCHOONERS AND AMERICA'S CUP DREAMS.



In 1851 this schooner sailed from New York to partake in yacht racing at Cowes. She was aptly named the “America”. She was not made to feel particularly welcome in the Solent, partly because she was syndicate owned, unheard of in Britain where racing yachts were owned by one person, preferably Royal, titled or definitely a “gentleman”, and partly because Americans were viewed with some suspicion at the time, and not considered as gentlemen. Subsequently the “America” was barred from entering most of the races. She was, however allowed to race around the Island for the 100 guinea Queen’s Cup which she won, beating the entire fleet of the cream of British racing yachts into the bargain. Yacht racing

rules were of a more casual nature in those days, and subsequently a tad ambiguous, so that the win did not go without a few comments about sportsmanship and a certain ill-feeling which set the tone for all subsequent races for this cup.



America's Cup trophy

Here is the cup she won, a rather brash, but valuable silver trophy by Garrards of London. This the syndicate took back to the New York Yacht Club, renamed it the “America’s Cup”, and by deed of gift offered it for international competition. Then nothing happened for the next nineteen years, partly due to civil war in the USA, and partly due to international indifference.

Meanwhile in had burst upon the late 1860s. Lloyd Ashbury, Ashbury, a self-built up from a shop the largest manufacturing

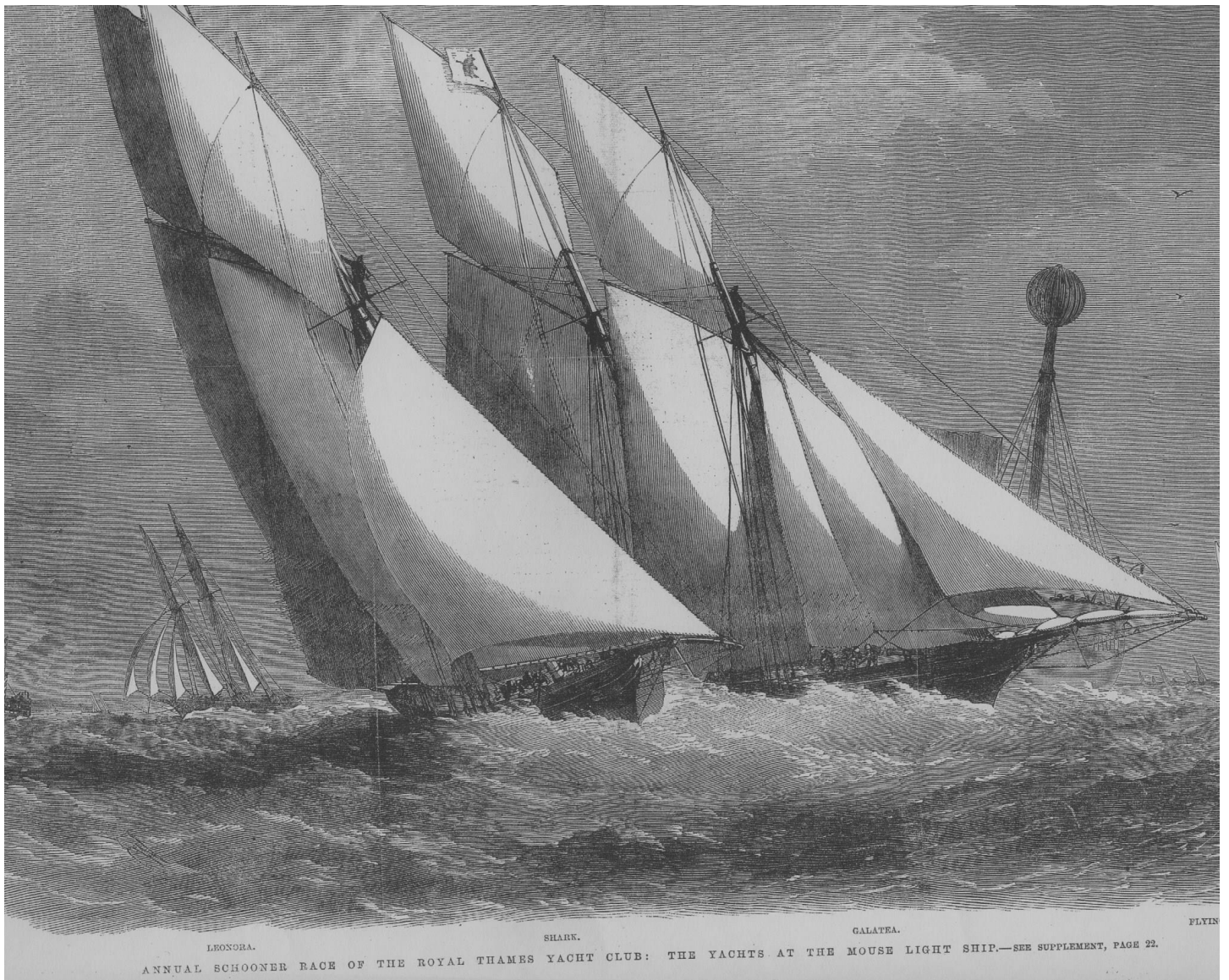


producing rolling stock, iron bridges, turn-tables and other railway equipment in his factory at Openshaw in Manchester employing

England a new face the yachting scene in This was James the son of John made man who had two man wheelwright railway

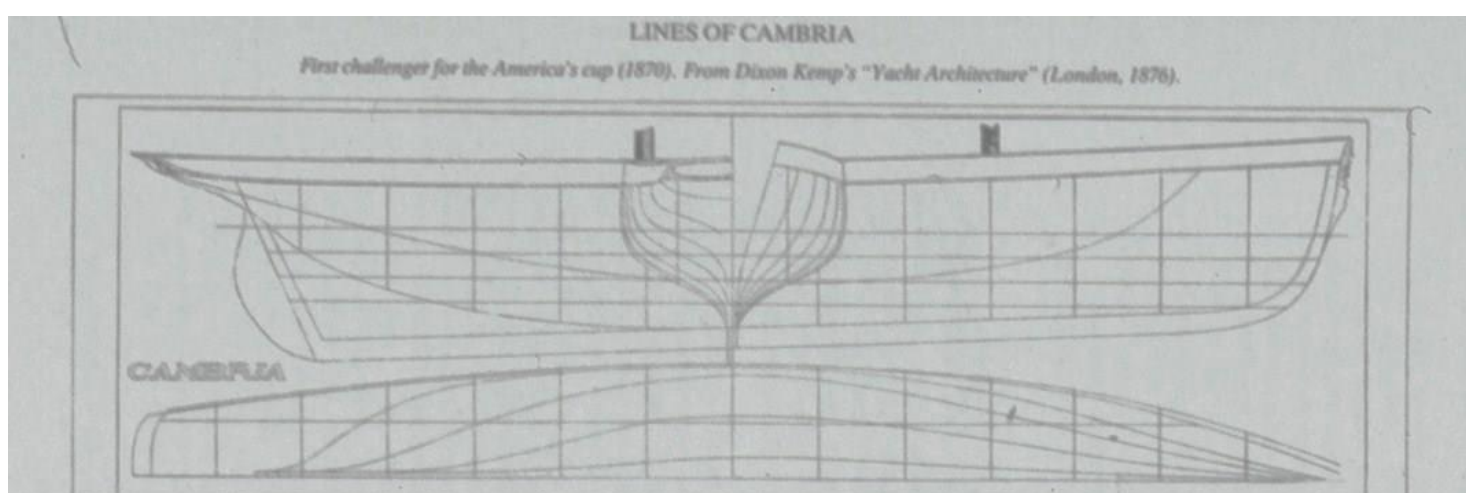
business in the UK,

over two thousand men. On his death James Ashbury inherited the business, a seat on the board of every railway company in the UK and £300,000 in cash. He himself was a highly successful railway engineer having built railways in Russia, Spain, Egypt, South America and Mexico. He was fabulously wealthy, but, alas, not a fit man.



His doctor recommended an outdoor pursuit. As yachting seemed to be what the great, good and wealthy did, Ashbury bought himself a

racing schooner, the “Leonora”. In the 1860s the ultimate racing yacht was the schooner, and Ashbury quickly embraced racing, completely bitten by the bug. But the “Leonora” was an old boat and by now no longer competitive. Here she lags behind the “Shark” and the “Galetea” in the Royal Thames YC annual schooner match in the Thames Estuary. This was not good enough for Ashbury; he wanted to win!



So for the 1869 season he had Ratsey design and build a new schooner, the “Cambria”. 108ft LOA, 12ft draft, and 228tons displacement with a sail area of 8,602sq.ft.



She was also very beautiful. At the same time Ashbury joined the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, amongst others. May we take a guess at

the membership interview?

Membership Panel; “Mr. Ashbury, what yachting experience do you have?”

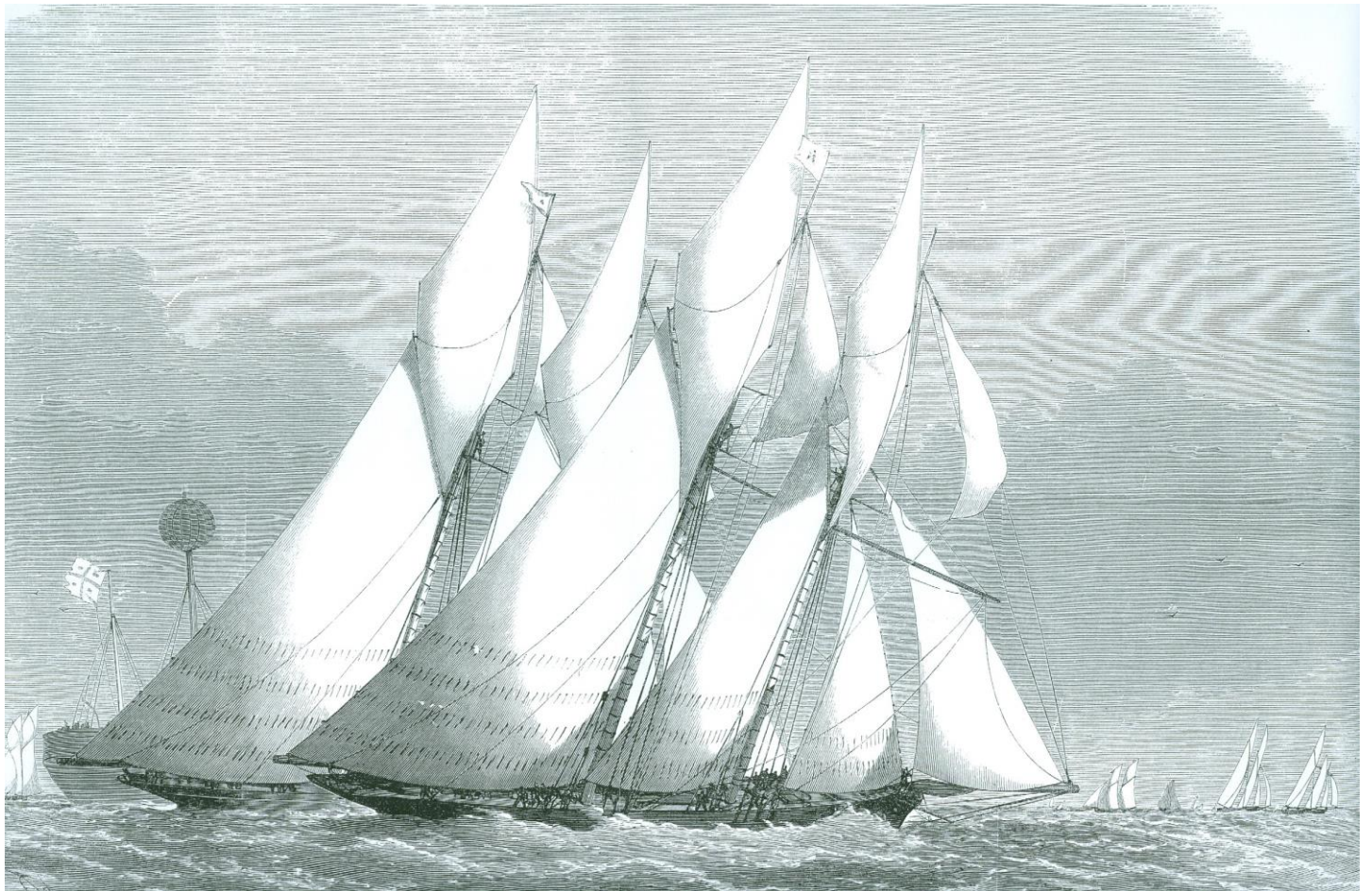
Ashbury; “Not a lot.”

Panel; “Oh.”

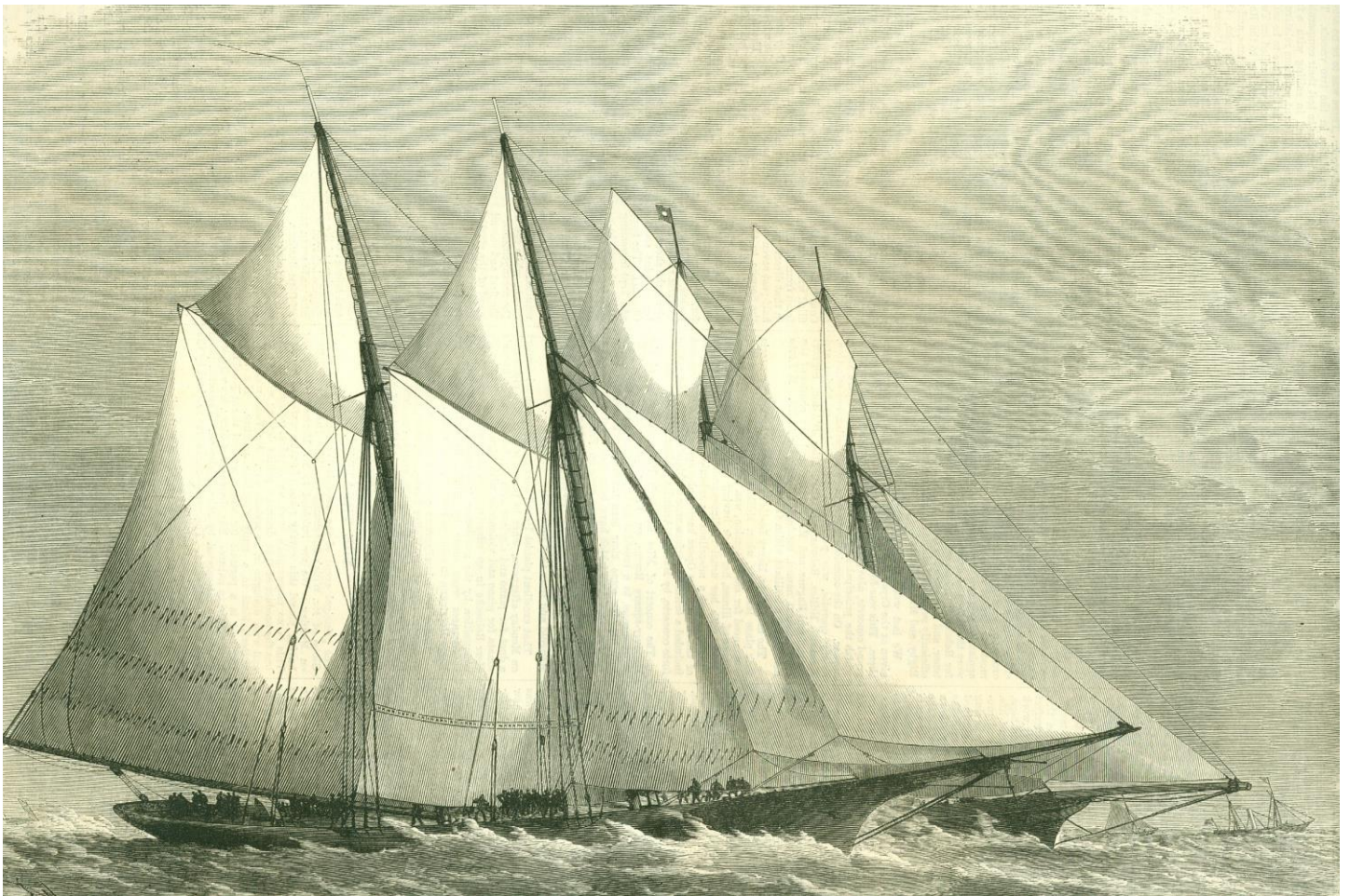
Ashbury; “ I do have a new 228 tonner being built and I am extremely wealthy.”

Panel; “You’re in!” Oh, and you’ll be Commodore before the end of the year.”

And so he was.



Not only was the “Cambria” beautiful, she was very fast. She started winning races right from the beginning of the 1869 season including the prestigious Royal Thames Annual Schooner Match.



And better than that; the Americans were back. This time the New York Yacht Club had sent their crack schooner the “Sappho” to race at Cowes. More specifically they were expecting to win the Round the Island Race to show that the “America’s” victory eighteen years earlier had been no fluke. At the start of the race the “Cambria” got

the weather gauge of the “Sappho” and steadily drew away.

She finished ahead of all competing and even of the other words, trounced the Americans.



the race the other British yachts further ahead Americans in “Sappho”. In Ashbury, had

With a yacht, which was clearly much faster than the American equivalent, Ashbury rightly considered that this would be the right moment to challenge for the “America’s Cup”. So, he issued a challenge to the New York Yacht Club suggesting that a suitable format for the “America’s Cup” races should be a series of races here in the UK followed by a trans-Atlantic match before another race series off New York. This, of course, was not considered at all suitable by the NYYC who somewhat abruptly informed Ashbury that to gain the “Cup” he would be



America's Cup trophy

required to sail the “Cambria” across the Atlantic to New York where they would arrange a single race for him against their entire fleet of schooners. “The “America” had won the cup in England under those conditions in 1851,” they said, “so he would be offered the same odds in 1869.”



Ashbury was furious. The odds were clearly stacked against him in such arrangements, particularly as many of the American schooners were centre-board boats more suited to the shallows off New York Harbour. Just short of telling the NYYC what it could do with the “Cup”, he instead took the “Cambria” off on an extended cruise in the Mediterranean to Egypt where the just completed Suez Canal was due to be opened. Due no doubt to his prowess as the designer and builder of the Egyptian railway system, Ashbury was invited to attend the opening ceremonies.



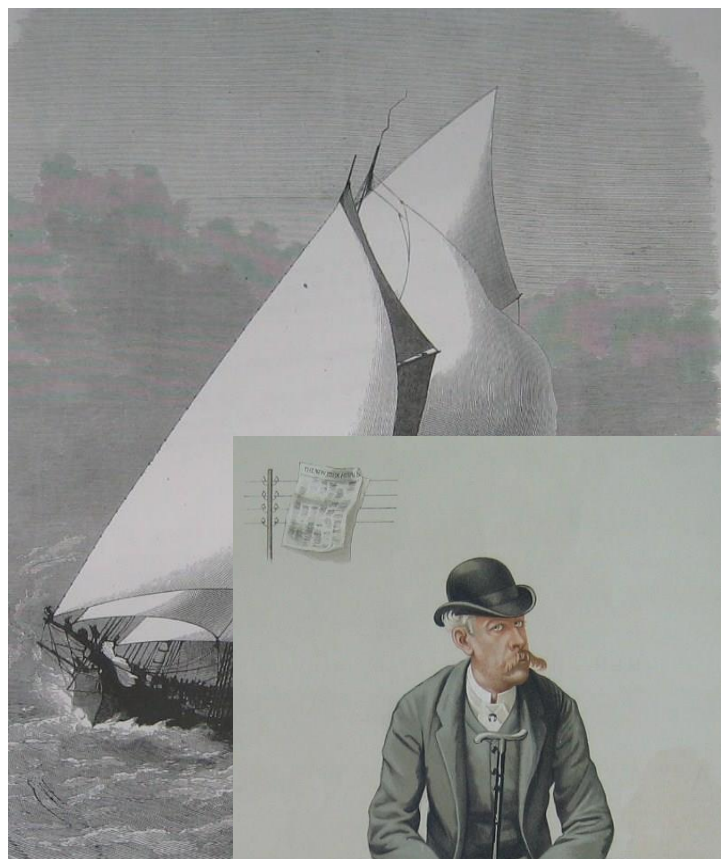
There he joined the flotilla of celebrating ships and the “Cambria” became the first yacht to pass through the Suez Canal albeit under steam tug tow.



THE INTERNATIONAL YACHT-RACE: THE CAMBRIA WEATHERING THE SAPHO OFF BONCHURCH.

The 1870 season saw the return of the “Sappho” to England from

the USA after a substantial refit and alterations.



The work had clearly paid off as she was considerably faster than in 1869, and had the measure of the “Cambria” in all the season’s races.

York
York
playboy-



of great
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this race, there was a dinner at Cowes to celebrate the arrival of the three American Yachts in this race. After dinner, somewhat the worse for drink, Gordon Bennett openly challenged the Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria’s second son, to a sailing match around the Island. To everyone’s surprise the Duke accepted. The following morning, Bennett, now sober, realised that he would be unable to

Also, over from America was James Gordon Bennett Junior, Vice Commodore of the New York Yacht Club, owner of the New York Herald, and international sportsman with a somewhat wild reputation. He was a yachtsman of renown, having won the first Atlantic yacht race ever in 1866 on the schooner the “Fleetwing”.

race as he had to be back in New York straight away. By way of apology to the Duke he offered to give him the “Fleetwing” as a gift. Now, it had always been a rule of polite society in Europe that no commoner should give gifts to Royalty. Not only was Gordon Bennett a commoner, but an American one at that, so this was a huge “faux pas”; truly a “Gordon Bennett” moment.



Any way, back to 1870, and Gordon Bennett was over here with his latest yacht the “Dauntless”, another large racing schooner with a good racing record. During the season at Cowes, he became a great friend to James Ashbury, campaigning the “Cambria”.

Ashbury, despite “Sappho” was still challenge for the much so that he accept the New York had shunned the year upon his friendship he got the New York their timing challenge as it was the season for a and the first ever was issued by Ashbury through the Royal Thames Yacht Club.



America's Cup trophy

losing out to the enthusiastic to America's Cup". So reluctantly decided to Yacht Club's terms he before. Presuming with Gordon Bennett Yacht Club to waive restriction for the technically too late in challenge to be valid, challenge for the Cup



He decided to sail for the States in early July. The “Sappho” had already left for home by then, but the “Dauntless” was yet to sail. It seemed an ideal opportunity for a race across the Atlantic; James Ashbury's “Cambria” against Gordon Bennett's “Dauntless. So, a match was arranged from off Kinsale Head in Ireland to the Sandy

Hook light vessel off New York Harbour. A friendly wager was also arranged; the winner to receive a silver trophy to the value of two hundred and fifty pounds. Today this would be a piece to the value of about twenty-five thousand pounds, so it was a brave move by Ashbury as the “Dauntless” was considered to be the faster yacht. And so, on July 4th the two schooners started from Old Head, Kinsale amidst a large spectator fleet.



The “Cambria” held the weather gauge after the start, and as soon as the yachts were clear of the Irish mainland, she tacked and sailed North to take a northern route across the ocean. Onboard the “Dauntless” the after-guard broke the cardinal rule of match racing. Instead of covering the “Cambria” when she tacked away, the

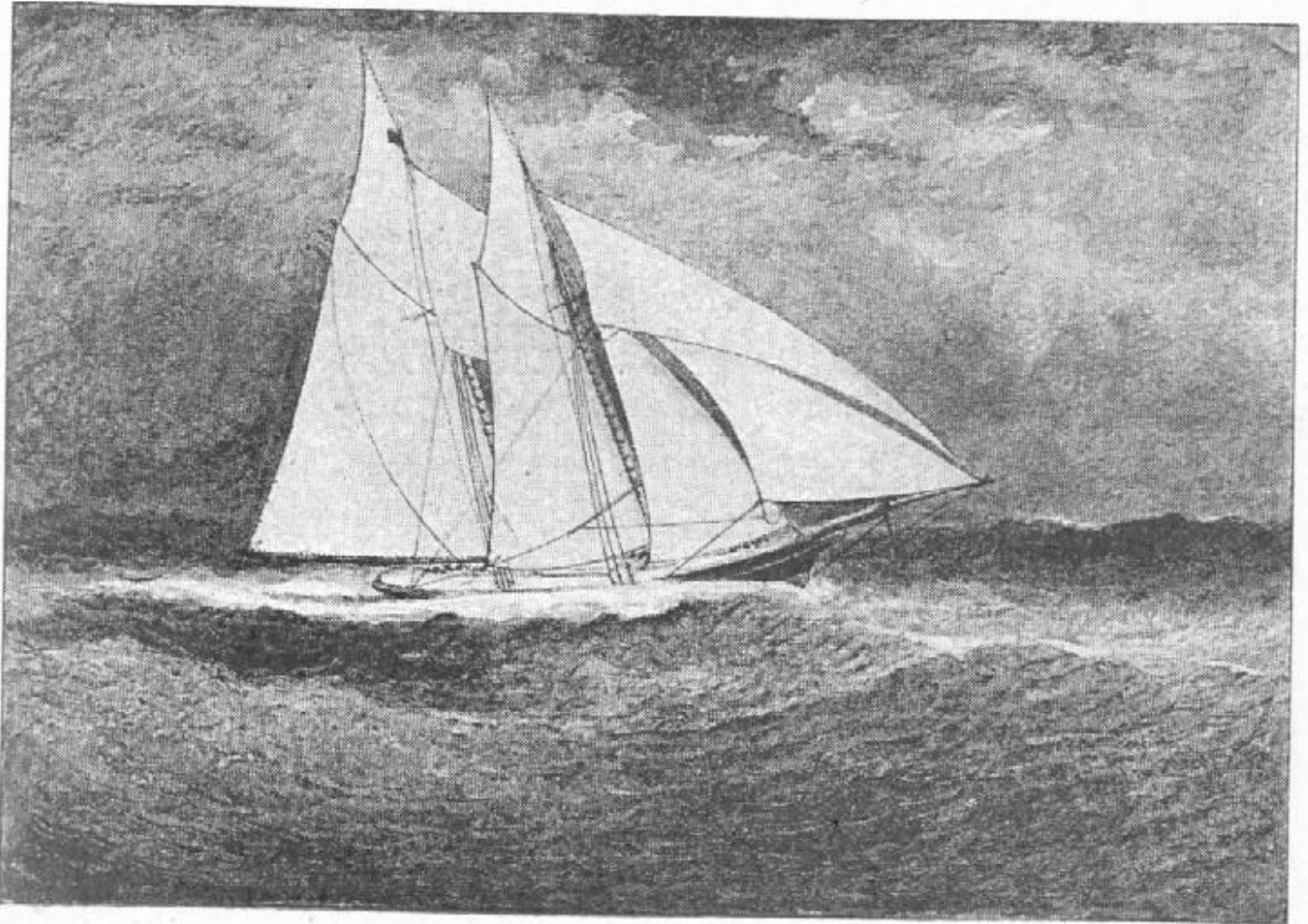
“Dauntless” held her course to sail a direct route across to New York. Contact was lost, and neither boat saw the other for the next twenty-three days.



In mid Atlantic the “Cambria” met storm force winds and rode and struggled against huge seas, but was able to sail on without serious damage to gear, sails or crew.



Thus, life onboard these racing schooners in mid-ocean was tough for owners and crew alike. Ashbury did his stint on deck with his matelot clad crew. Although rather more nattily dressed, he shared the dangers and frequent soakings.



The “Dauntless” also hit rough weather conditions. Less fortunate than the “Cambria” she lost two men overboard. There were, of course, no life-jackets or harnesses, crew members having to hold on tight and pray for deliverance. If swept overboard in storm condition, there was absolutely no chance of recovery, although the “Dauntless” did try.



Ashbury's course necessitated sailing south down the Labrador coast once mainland was sighted. This area was (and is) notorious for fog banks and lack of wind which was probably why Gordon

Bennett had opted for the direct route across and make his landfall directly off New York. However, Ashbury's luck held, and he had a good run down to the Sandy Hook light vessel, finishing ahead and winning the match against all the odds and a faster rival. The gap between the yachts after twenty-three days of rough sailing was a mere ninety minutes. If the paintings Ashbury commissioned to celebrate this victory are to be believed, the "Dauntless" was just in sight as the "Cambria" crossed the line.

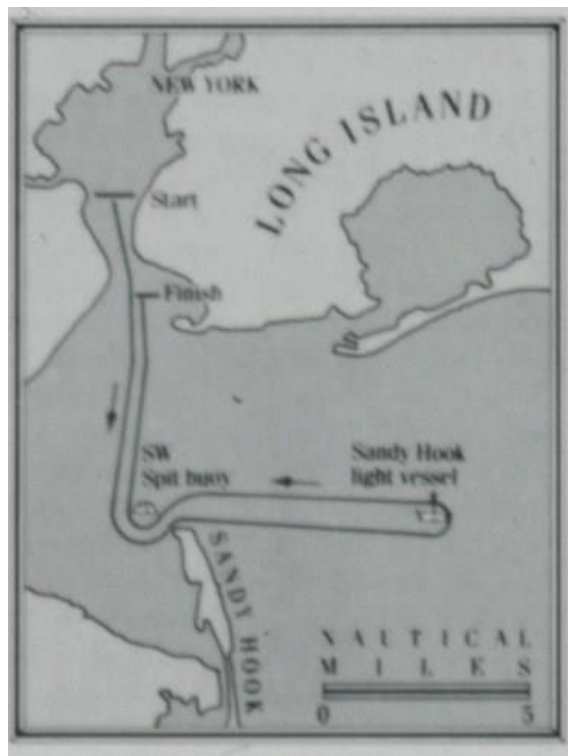
James Gordon Bennett honoured the wager, and presented Ashbury with a ludicrously large silver trophy which, after being offered to the Royal Harwich Yacht Club as a trophy for further international yacht racing, has since mysteriously disappeared despite its size (nearly six feet tall).





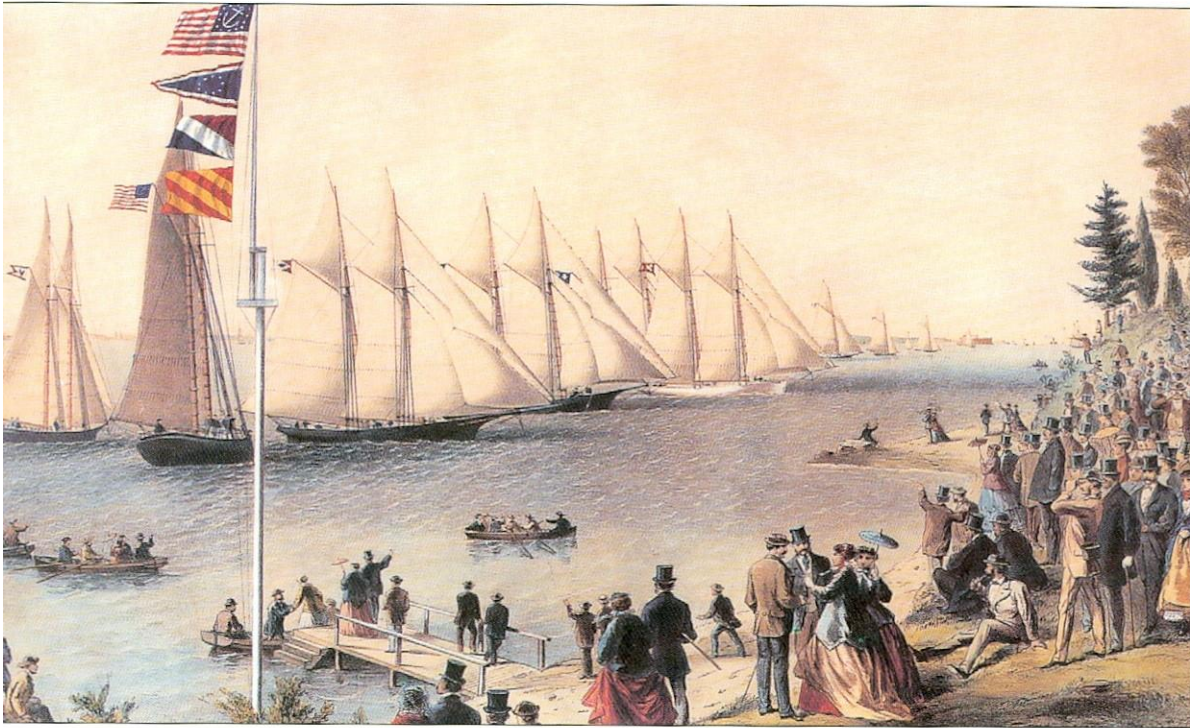
Ashbury was inordinately proud of the achievement, presenting the “Cambria” RHYC racing pennant to the Royal Harwich, and later having Charles Gregory, a celebrated marine artist of the time, record the race in the three oil paintings which you have just seen. These he gave to the Royal Harwich Yacht Club with duplicate originals going to other clubs with which he was involved.

The American public, including their press (the New York Herald in particular), had taken an enormously keen interest in the match, and were all delighted by James Ashbury's triumph. The "Cambria's" performance promised an exciting race for the America's Cup.



For the Atlantic Race was merely a sideshow to the main event of the season; the first defence of the America's Cup. The course for the race was set to start in New York Harbour, then through the Narrows at the harbour mouth and out the SW Spit Buoy at the tip of Sandy Hook, and on to the sandy Hook light vessel, which the schooners would round before racing back to a finishing line before the Narrows at the harbour entrance. Ashbury's assertion

that the course clearly favoured schooners with lifting keels because they would not be restricted to the narrow channel through the Narrows was ignored.



The New York Yacht Club starting procedure for the race would seem a little strange to us nowadays. The competing yachts were anchored along the start line, their position usually being chosen by lot, and weighed anchor to sail off at the starting signal. Ashbury was given the courtesy of being able to choose the “Cambria’s” position on the line, so he chose to be the windward yacht but one, thus sportingly not taking the ultimate “pole” position. Unfortunately, in the time between this choice and the starting signal the wind veered through one hundred and eighty degrees so that he actually started the race with eighteen boats to windward of the “Cambria”.

That was the first obstacle the “Cambria” faced as the schooners raced off towards the Narrows where the lifting keel yachts were able to skirt across the shallower water as they beat



through this narrow passage and pull out an immediate lead.

The second was the huge flotilla of spectator boats which had poured into the harbour to watch the event with many so keen to gain a “front row seat” that they hampered many of the contestants including the “Cambria”.





The third piece of bad luck came in the form of the “Tarolinta”.



As the “Cambria” approached the mark at the SW Spit Buoy on starboard tack, the “Tarolinta”, on port tack, failed to tack away or to bear away under her stern and struck the “Cambria” amidships, carrying away her foremast port shroud and foretopmast backstay. Apart from the collision losing her places, it also meant that as she rounded the light vessel mark she lost her foretopmast.



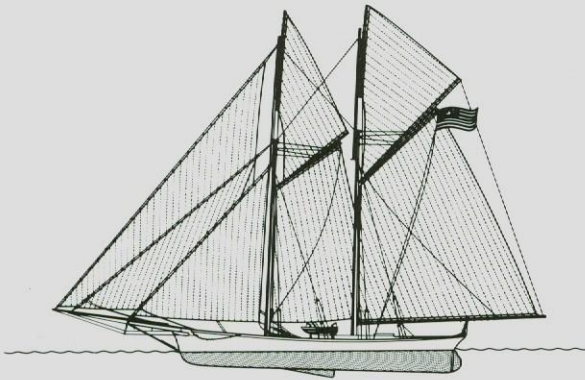
Meanwhile the “Magic” one of the smallest schooners in the fleet had used her lifting keel to advantage whilst tacking through the Narrows, and had rounded the Sandy Hook light vessel ahead of the entire fleet.

63. The *America's Cup* race of 1870. Won by the schooner *Magic*, in the foreground. The British challenger *Cambria* is on the left of the picture astern of the other competing American yachts.



She held this lead back to the SW Spit buoy and to the line to become the first successful defender of the America's Cup.

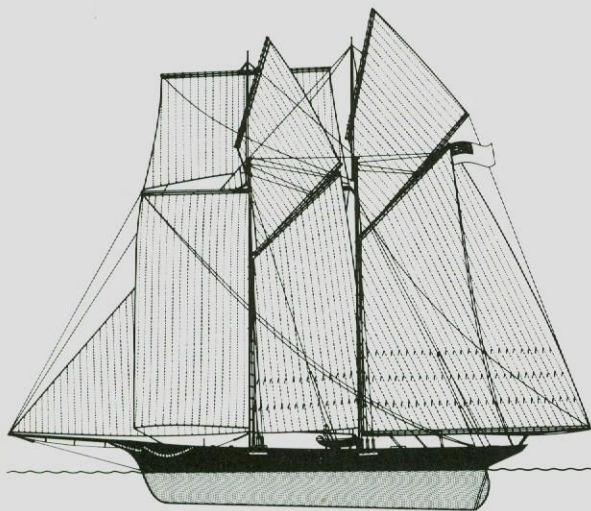
1870
MAGIC defeats
CAMBRIA



Magic
New York
Yacht Club

LOA: 84ft
LWL: 79ft
beam: 20ft 9in
draft: 6ft 3in
draft with board: 17ft
displacement: 112.2 tons
sail area: 1680sq ft
(lowers only)

Owner:
Franklin Osgood
Designer:
R. F. Loper
Builder:
T. Byerly & Son
Skipper:
Andrew Comstock



Cambria
Royal
Thames

LOA: 108ft
LWL: 98ft
beam: 21ft
draft: 12ft
displacement: 228 tons
sail area: 8602sq ft

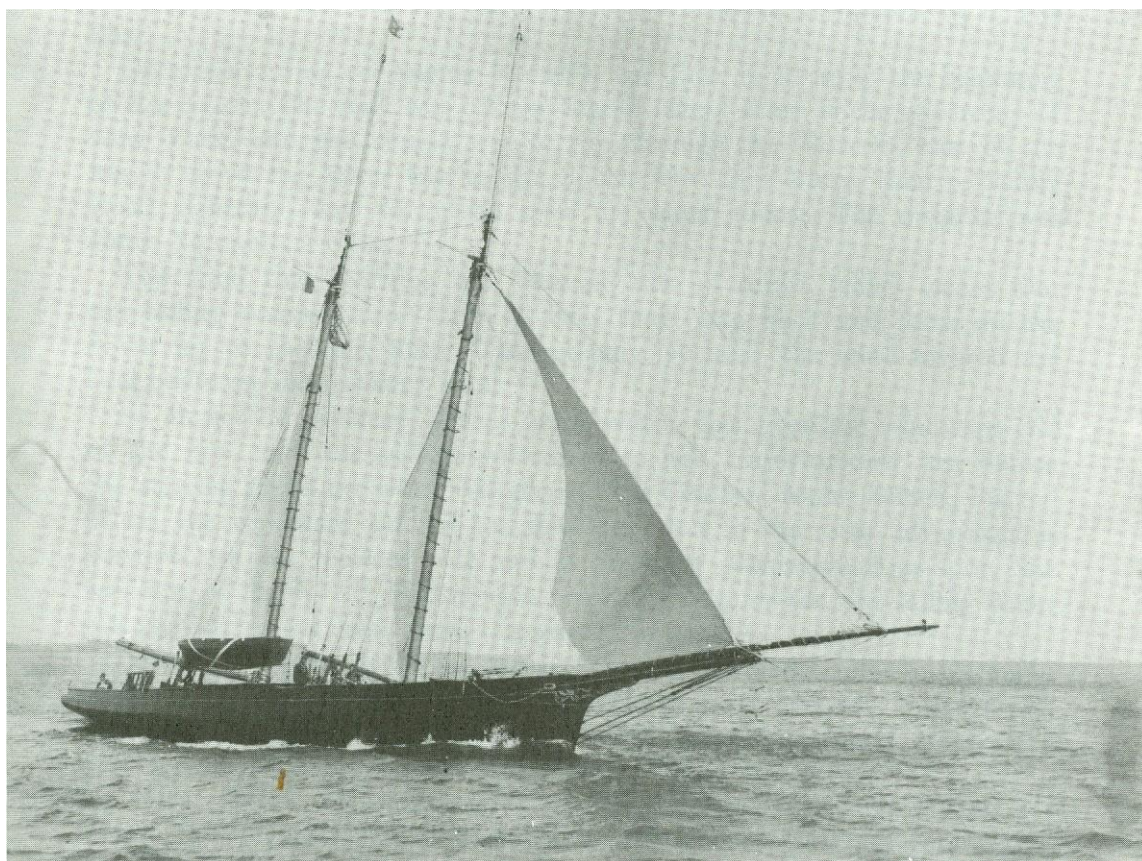
Owner:
James Ashbury
Designer:
Michael Ratsey
Builder:
Michael Ratsey
Skipper:
J. Tannock

The “Cambria” managed to make up a few places despite her mishaps to finish in eighth place, just over halfway up the field of twenty yachts. After the race, Ashbury voiced no complaints about the spectator fleet, nor about the use of lifting keel yachts, nor did he protest the “Tarolinta” for the obvious port and starboard foul.



His sportsmanship was

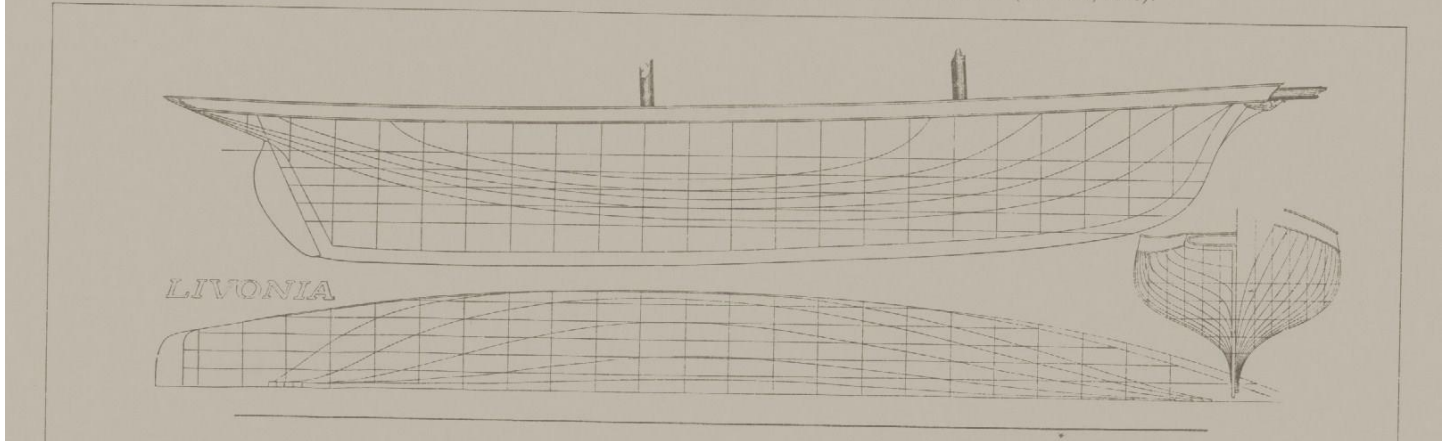
recognised and welcomed by the Americans who invited him to stay on to complete the season's racing with the New York Yacht Club. He was everyone's best buddy, including President Ulysses S. Grant who visited him on board the "Cambria" for breakfast.



These old racing schooners had a long life, sometimes used as cruising yachts after their competitive edge had been blunted, and occasionally as commercial vessels. The "Magic" survived into the photographic era of the 1880s and later, so we can see what she looked like in real life, not far distant from her earlier depiction in paintings and etchings.

LINES OF LIVONIA

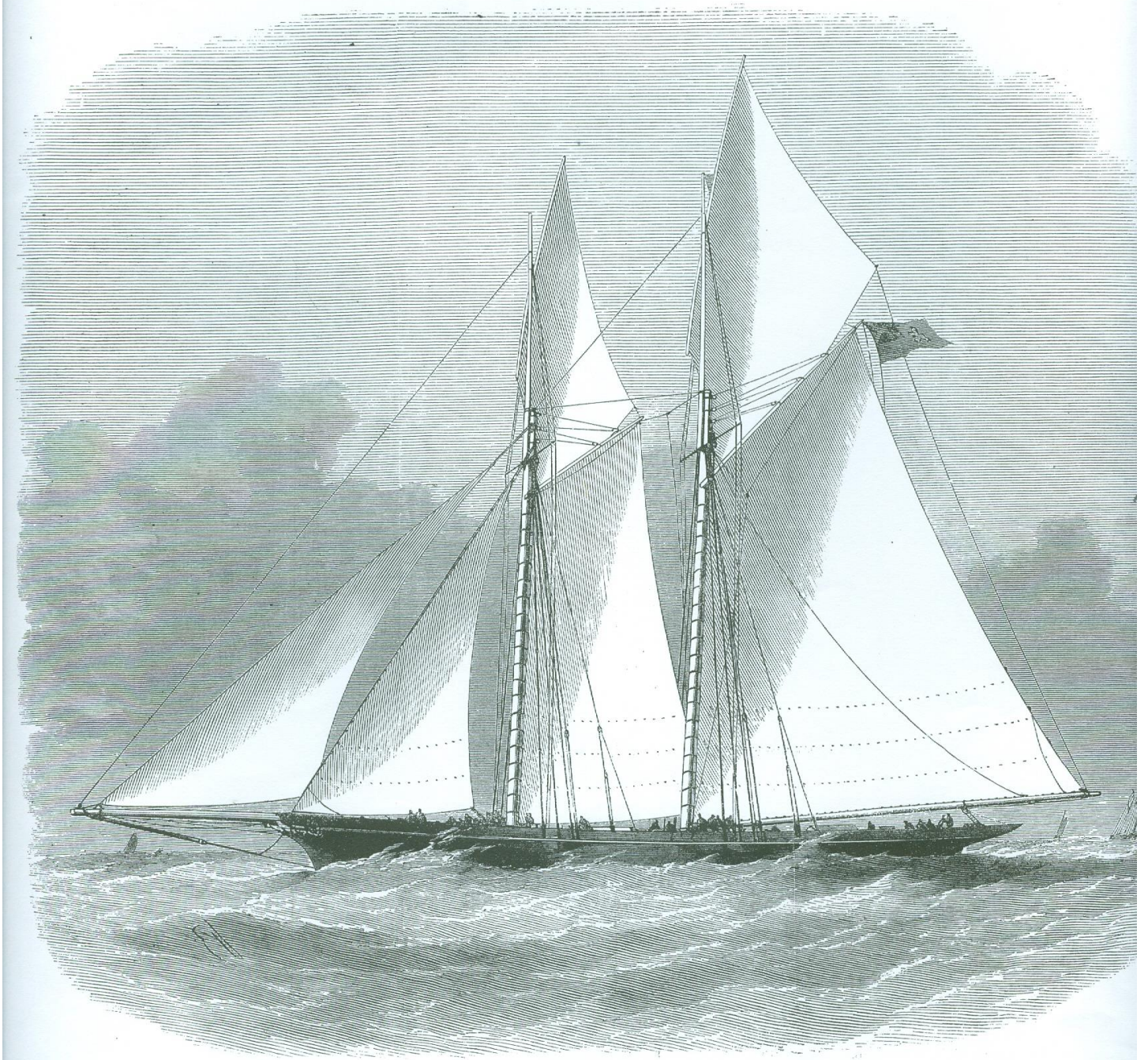
Second challenger for the America's cup. From Dixon Kemp's "Yacht Architecture" (London, 1876).



1871 saw Ashbury with a new racing schooner, designed and built again by Ratsey with winning the America's Cup as her principle goal.



Named the "Livonia" after an area in Russia where Ashbury had built railways, she was larger than the "Cambria" measuring 127 feet overall, displacing 280 tons, and setting an incredible 18,153 square feet of canvas.



THE NEW SCHOONER YACHT LIVONIA.

She was also a very attractive looking yacht and caught the eye of the press and yachting enthusiasts. Great things were expected....



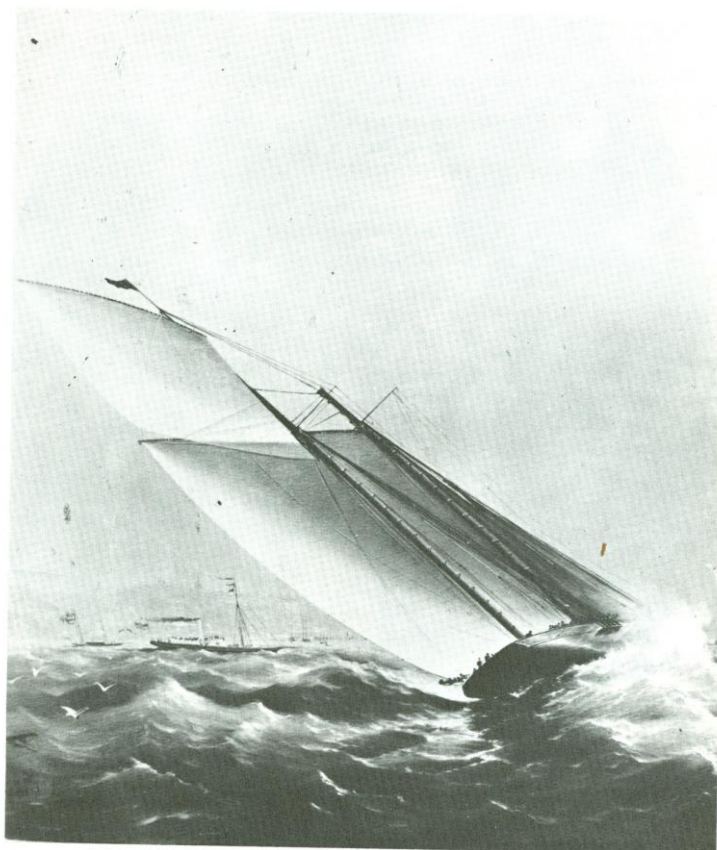
Ashbury was particularly taken by her good looks and potential performance, and commissioned Gregory to paint her off his house in Brighton which overlooked Madeira Drive and the sea.

He also painted her in the Solent (he was an Isle of Wight man) where she was expected to out-perform the cream of the British schooner fleet, particularly in the important race around



the Island for the Prince of Wales Cup as the “Cambria” had done

in 1869.



Livonia

The 1871 Prince of Wales Cup was disappointing in that it ended up with only two entrants. They were Ashbury's "Livonia" and the Prince of Wales' much older schooner the "Ailine". So, the race around the Island that year was effectively a match race with the odds heavily stacked on the newer yacht, "Livonia". It was a blustery day with gusts of up to gale strength. As the two schooners approached the

Needles it soon became apparent that the "Livonia" was hopelessly over-pressed in the gusts, taking water over her bulwarks as she heeled almost onto her beam-ends. The old "Ailine" raced through these gusts much more comfortably and developed a healthy lead as they sailed around to St. Catherine's Point. Then the Livonia caught up, and gained the lead, only to lose it in more severe gusts. As the yachts tacked up to the finish the "Ailine" just weathered the "Livonia" to win the race by a single tack after twelve and three quarters hours sailing.

Undismayed by the performance of the still had his sights set Cup. After much presumption upon his Gordon Bennett, now New York Yacht negotiate a series of the Cup, albeit American yachts for understood that his defenders would be off his challenge through the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, of which he was Commodore.



America's Cup trophy

disappointing “Livonia”, Ashbury on the America’s correspondence and friendship with Commodore of the Club, he was able to boat for boat races for against a pool of each race. He plea for no lifting keel respected. So, he sent



So the “Livonia” set sail for New York, this time alone. In mid Atlantic she encountered storm force winds and gigantic seas, far worse than suffered by the “Cambria” in the previous year. She suffered severe damage to sails and spas, arriving at New York in such poor condition that serious refitting work needed to be carried out.

Now, just before he set sail, Ashbury had dashed off a telegram to the New York Yacht Club setting out fresh conditions for the challenge. These were that he was challenging through twelve separate British yacht clubs: - The Royal Harwich, Royal Albert,

Royal
Yorkshire, Royal Victoria,
Dart
Victoria,
Royal
Western of England,
Royal
Western of Ireland,
Barrow
Western of Ireland,

Royal Mersey, New Thames,
Royal Thames and Royal London.

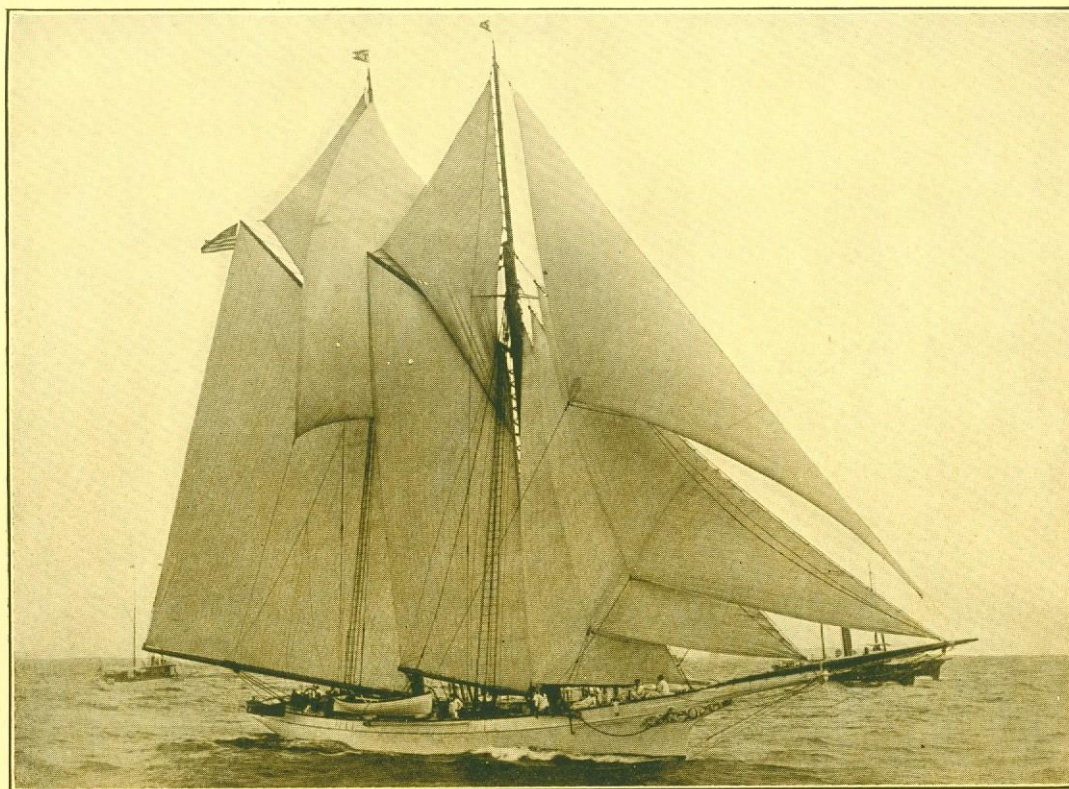
That being so the NYYC should give him twelve races (one for each club), and that the first race the “Livonia” wins should mean that the America’s Cup is won by the Club he represents in the race. If anything less than these terms is offered, the “Livonia” will not race



for the Cup and return to England.

The NYYC replied that this was utter nonsense. The challenge they had accepted was through the Royal Harwich and he was bound to race only for that club alone. The Cup would be won from the result of seven races. (i.e. the first club to win four races wins.) Either Ashbury accept these terms, racing for the RHYC alone, or go home!

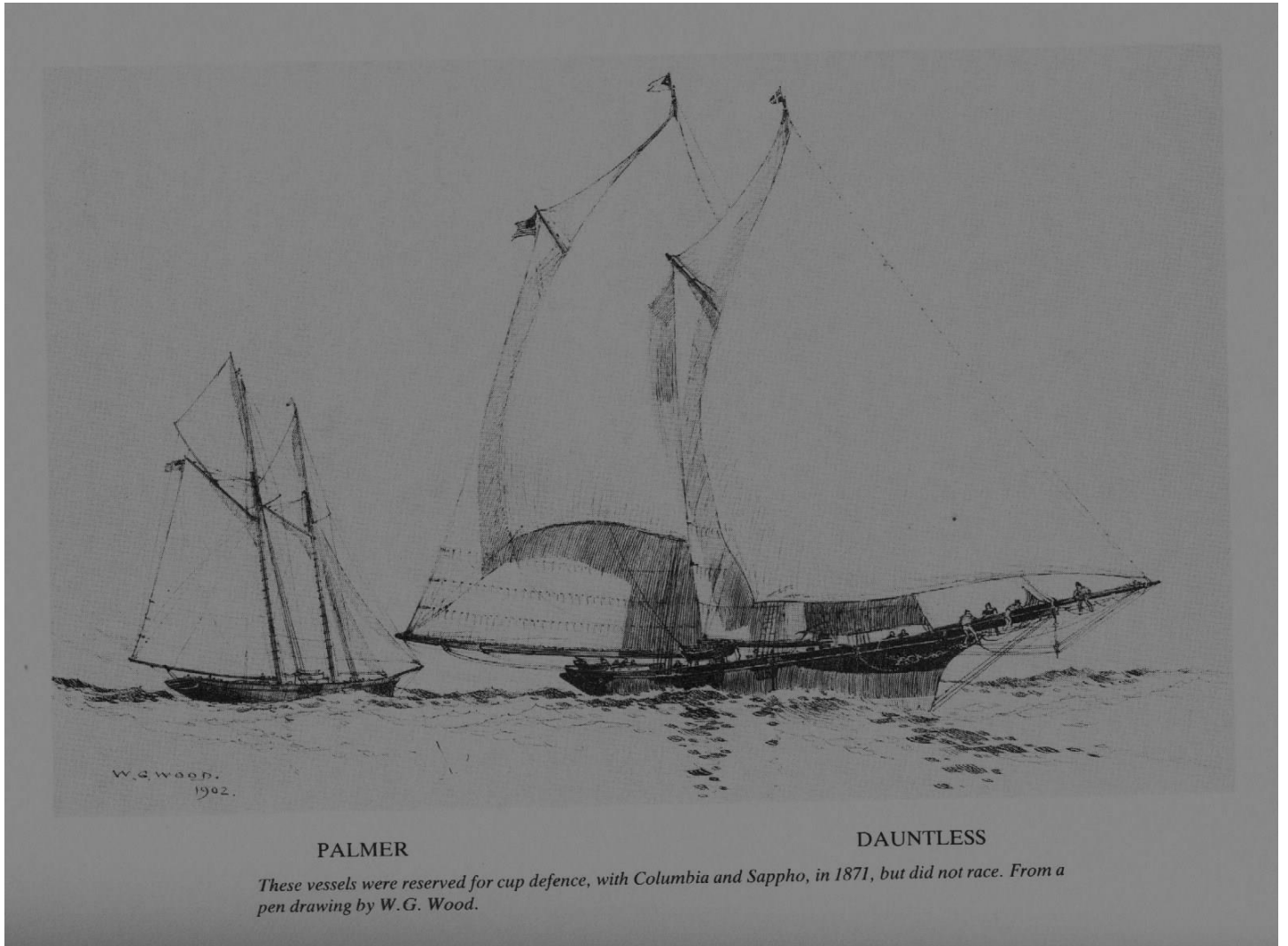
Ashbury raged on for a few days before accepting these terms, and the scene was set for an acrimonious series.



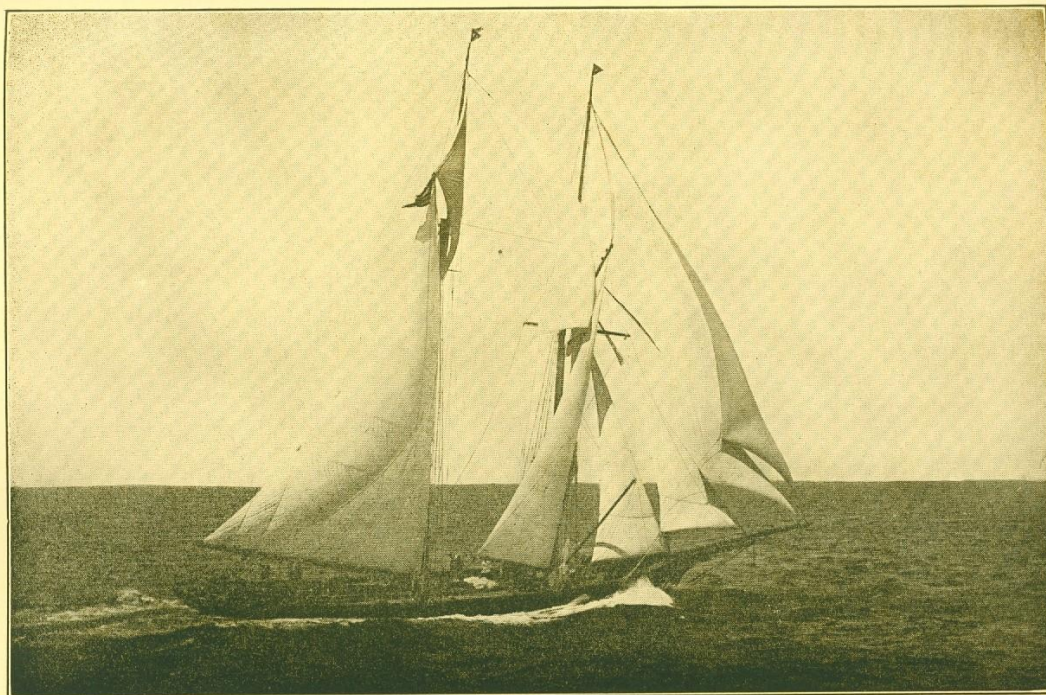
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The centerboard schooner Columbia, which beat Livonia twice in 1871, yet lost the only race for the Cup to the present time.

The Americans chose a pool of four yachts to race against the “Livonia”; two lifting keelboats, and two with fixed keels. The “Columbia” was a centre-board schooner with a good racing record.

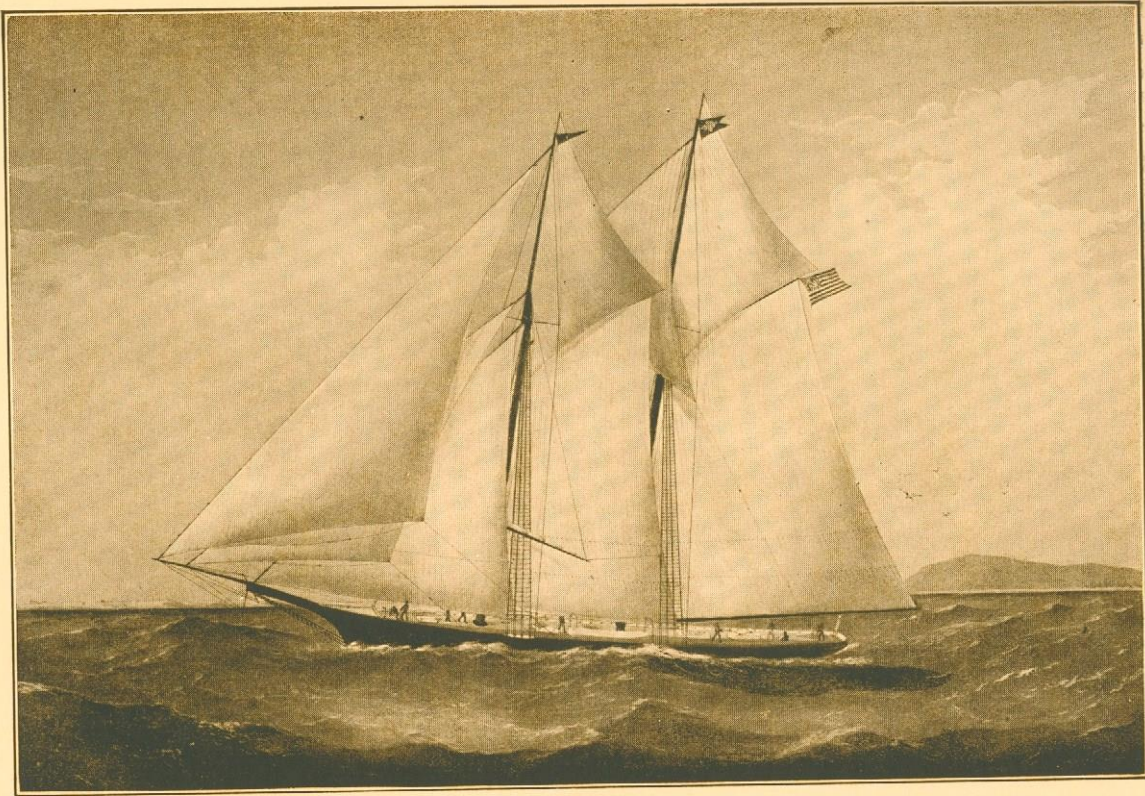


The “Palmer” was the other centre-boarder, shown here with the Dauntless, James Gordon Bennett’s fixed keel schooner already well known to Ashbury.



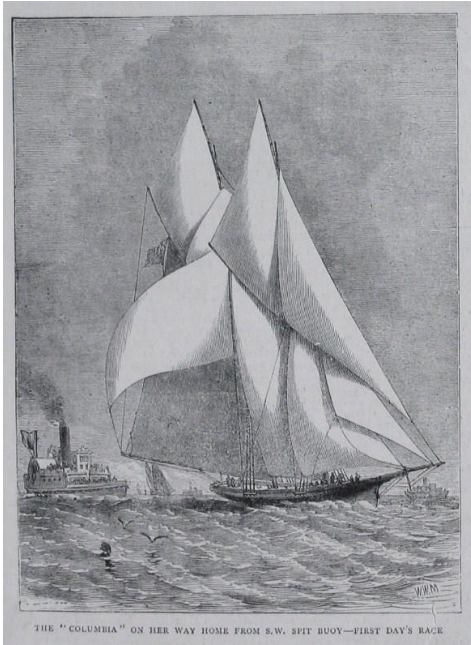
The famous Dauntless, one of the defenders of 1870 and a participant in many ocean races.

The “Dauntless” was another schooner which went on racing into the photographic era, notching up many sea miles in ocean racing events.



Sappho, Queen of the Seas. One of the defenders against Livonia in 1871.

The “Sappho” was the fourth defender chosen, and had already shown her superiority over the British schooners during her visit to England in 1870. Although she had yet to race against the “Livonia” she was expected to be faster, particularly in heavy weather.



So the scene was set for the second defence of the America's Cup. The first race was a short "club" course in light NW winds. The "Sappho" and the "Columbia" were at the start line to meet the "Livonia", and the NYYC chose the "Columbia" to race as she was their fastest light weather boat. She led from the start, gradually pulling out a lead through the Narrows and out to the Light Ship and back, twenty-five minutes ahead at

the finish to win by twenty-seven minutes on corrected time. (All America's Cup races were run on handicap until the single class "J" boats arrived on the scene in 1930.)



In the second race, a sea race to be of 20 miles, Ashbury was given ground for complaint that led to further unpleasantness. For a start, the course as laid out was only fifteen miles. The “Livonia” had a great start on the outward leg from the Sandy Hook light vessel which was a fast reach. At the leeward mark, her skipper passed it to starboard as was the accepted convention of the time. This meant that he had to gibe around the mark, an extremely difficult manouvre with eighteen thousand square feet of canvas set. Unknown to him was the fact that immediately before the race, “Columbia’s skipper had asked the race committee on what side he should pass. He was told that he could pass on either side. This information was not

relayed to the “Livonia”. So whilst the “Livonia” was gibing which led to an inevitable move to leeward, the “Columbia” nipped up from behind to windward, tacking round the mark to port. Not only was this a far quicker manouvre, but it put her ahead and way to windward of her rival. The “Livonia”, once settled down after her tedious gibe quickly made up on the “Columbia” but not sufficiently to win the race. Had the course been the intended distance, she probably would have won. Ashbury protested on the grounds that the “Columbia” had passed the mark on the wrong (or unaccepted) side. Despite the American Press and public siding with Ashbury, the NYYC refused to accept the protest.

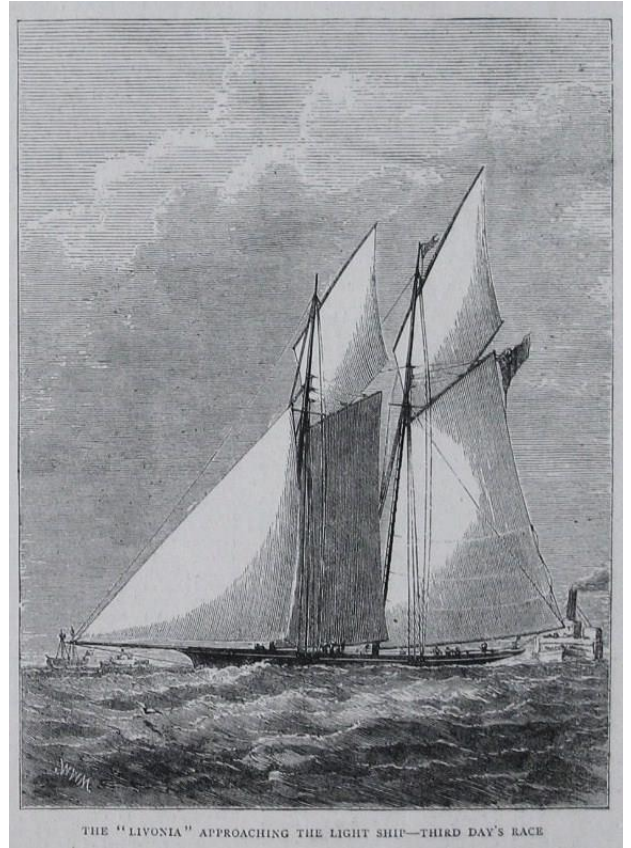


I include this picture, which depicts a racing schooner of this period, because it shows how exciting these schooners were when off the wind in a good blow. Imagine gibing that lot when it totalled over 18,000 sq.ft.

Too often, gibing led to damage to gear and spars, or even a dismasting, and it is a credit to “Livonia’s” crew that they rounded the mark unscathed. Obviously it was a time consuming manouvre compared to tacking. So no wonder Asbury protested. The NYYC now made a fatal mistake. By refusing to accept the protest and hold a hearing, they failed to bring the matter to a

conclusion one way or another. Thus, whilst they were scoring the matches as two-nil to themselves, Ashbury was making it one-all.

Race three was an outright win for the “Livonia” at last. The NYYC intended to pit either the “Palmer” or the “Sappho” against the “Livonia” but the “Palmer” was not ready with damaged sails and the “Sappho” was temporarily in dock, so they chose the “Dauntless”. However, she suffered damage to her shrouds whilst being towed to the start so it had to be the “Columbia” again. With a tired crew she was no match for the “Livonia” this time which romped ahead from the start. After the “Columbia” lost part of her steering gear, it was an easy win for Ashbury.



The scores were now:-

Race Committee score; NYYC 2 – RHYC 1.

James Ashbury score ; NYYC 1 – RHYC 2.



THE AMERICA'S CUP RACE OF 1871

Edward Moran (1829-1901)
(oil on canvas, 56 x 94cm, circa 1882)
Vallejo Maritime Gallery.

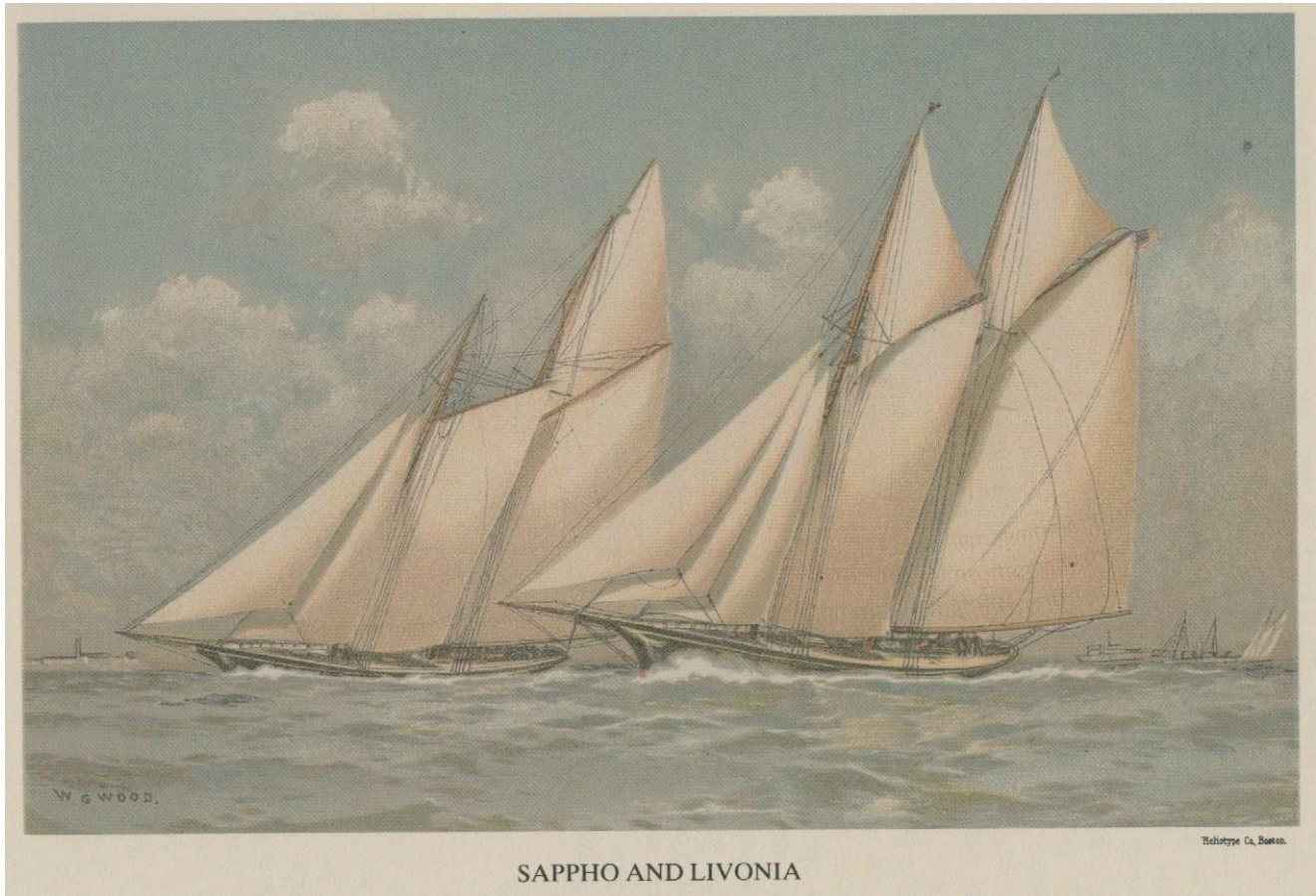
Having failed with *Cambria* to win the first challenge for the America's Cup, James Ashbury tried again in 1871, this time with the schooner yacht *Livonia*, designed by Michael Ratsey. Moran's powerful composition captures the drama and excitement of the occasion. *Livonia* is trying to overtake the 134ft New York Yacht Club defender *Sappho*, designed by C & R Poillon, and skippered by Sam Greenwood. The second America's Cup again ultimately ended in disappointment for Britain.

The "Sappho" was ready for race number four which was held at sea in rough weather conditions. So strong was the wind that the "Sappho" lost her dinghy overboard in a gust which swamped her cockpit. She gained the lead from the start steadily putting miles between herself and the "Livonia" to win easily.

The scores were now:-

Race Committee score; NYYC 3 – RHYC 1.

James Ashbury score ; NYYC 2 – RHYC 2.



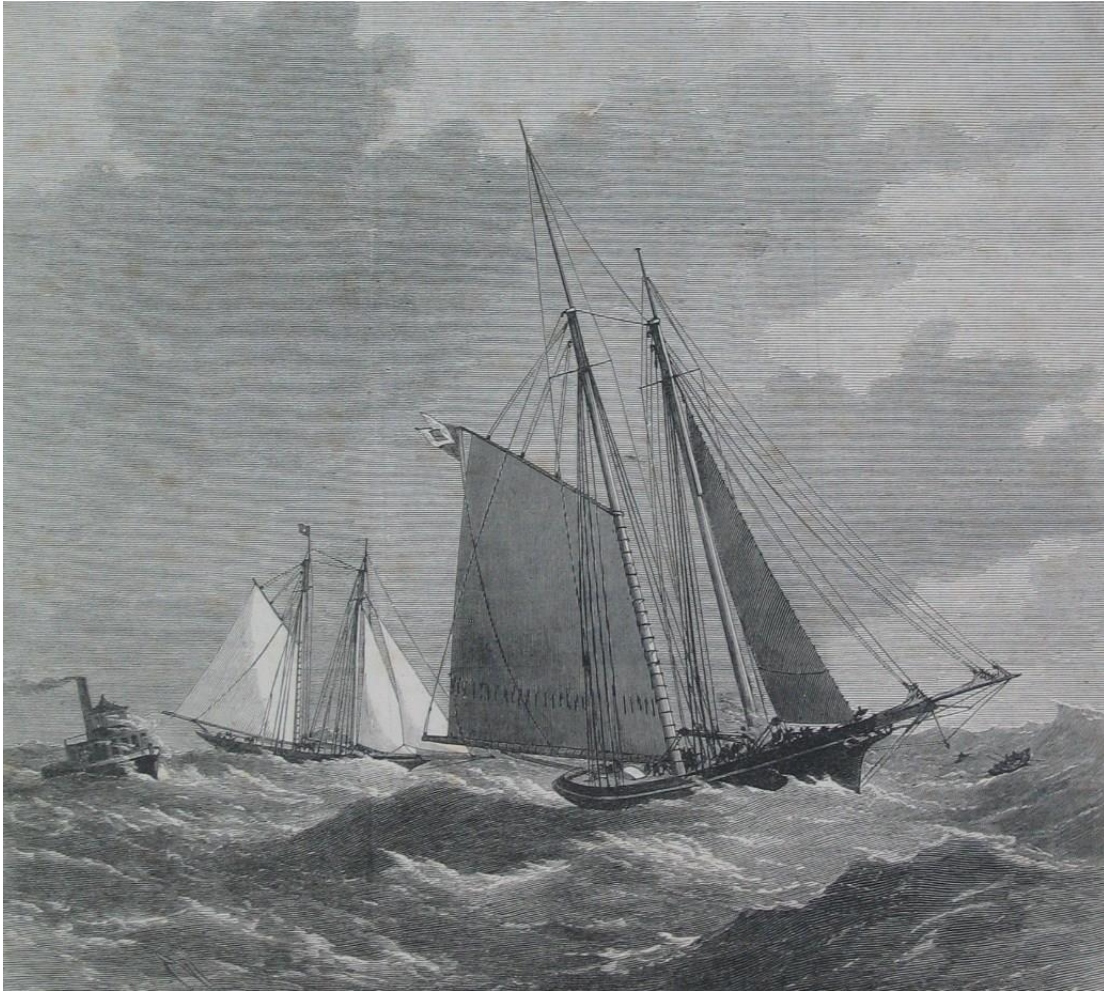
The fifth race was held over the NYYC “club course. Once again the “Sappho” was the American choice to defend. “Livonia’s” skipper was anticipating strong winds, so started with his fore topmast housed. The “Livonia” had the better start, and gained an early lead which she held until the eleventh mark when the “Sappho”, with both topsails set, stormed through “Livonia’s” lee. Unable to set her fore topsail the “Livonia” was unable to catch up leaving the “Sappho” to win what turned out to be the last official race for the Cup.

The Race Committee was scoring the series as NYYC 4 –RHYC 1, so the NYYC was able to say to Ashbury, “We’ve won by scoring four wins out of seven races and retain the America’s Cup. You can go home now.”

Ashbury’s response was to say, “No you haven’t won. I score the series as NYYC 3 – RHYC 2. So I shall have my yacht at the start line for race 6. Should there be no defending yacht I shall sail the course and claim a win by default.”

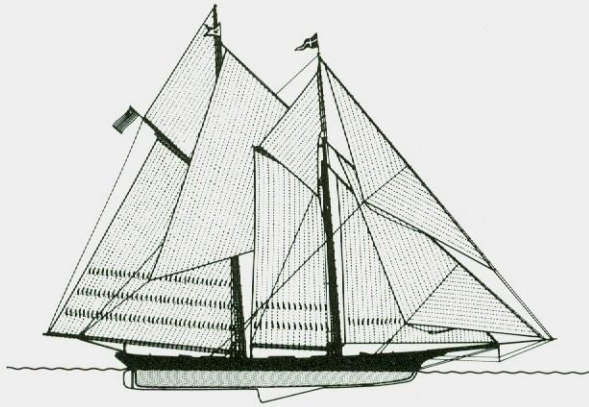


America's Cup trophy

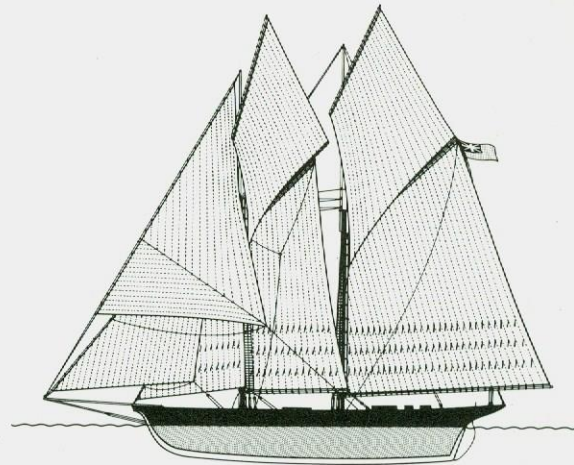


So Ashbury did present the “Livonia” for a sixth race. No official NYYC schooner was there to race. To save Ashbury the embarrassment of sailing the course alone his old friend Gordon Bennett rather sportingly agreed to sail with him in the “Dauntless”. Despite losing a man overboard and recovering him, the “Dauntless” finished the course ahead of the “Livonia”. However, as she was not an official defendant Ashbury now scored the series as; NYYC 3 – RHYC 3.

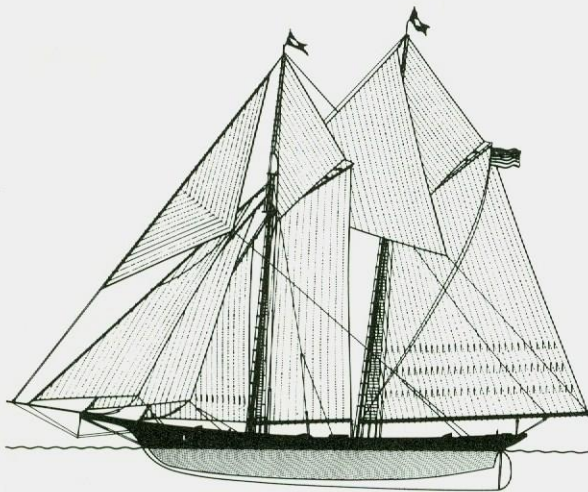
1871
COLUMBIA and SAPPHO
defeat LIVONIA



<i>Columbia</i> New York Yacht Club	LOA: 107ft 10in LWL: 96ft 5in beam: 25ft 6in draft: 5ft 11in draft with board: 22ft displacement: 220 tons sail area: not known	<i>Owner:</i> Franklin Osgood <i>Designer:</i> J. B. van Deusen <i>Builder:</i> J. B. van Deusen <i>Skipper:</i> Nelson Comstock
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<i>Livonia</i> Royal Harwich	LOA: 127ft LWL: 106ft 6in beam: 23ft 7in draft: 12ft 6in displacement: 280 tons sail area: 18,153sq ft	<i>Owner:</i> James Ashbury <i>Designer:</i> Michael Ratsey <i>Builder:</i> Michael Ratsey <i>Skipper:</i> J. R. Woods
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<i>Sappho</i> New York Yacht Club	LOA: 135ft LWL: 119ft 4in beam: 27ft 4in draft: 12ft 8in displacement: 310 tons sail area: 9060sq ft	<i>Owner:</i> Col. W. P. Douglas <i>Designer:</i> C. & R. Poillon <i>Builder:</i> C. & R. Poillon <i>Skipper:</i> Sam Greenwood
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cessions being granted by the New York Yacht Club.

No money was spared on *Livonia* and she was constructed of oak and teak to combine all that was best in English and American design. But so confident were the Americans in their choice from existing yachts that no new vessels were put on the stocks. However, in his correspondence with the New York Yacht Club before setting out Ashbury had insisted upon his right to appear as the representative of no less than twelve yacht clubs, with the opportunity to sail twelve races on twelve different days. If he managed to win any one of these races the club he was representing on that day was to be awarded the Cup! The Club held a meeting to consider Ashbury's proposals but although they decided that he could represent only the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, they also conceded that he should not be put against the whole of their fleet, as in 1870!

The *Livonia* sailed for America before the final details had been arranged and Ashbury continued to argue his case in New York until it was settled that he was to sail the best of seven races against any one of four defenders.

So he turned up for race 7. There was, of course, no defending yacht

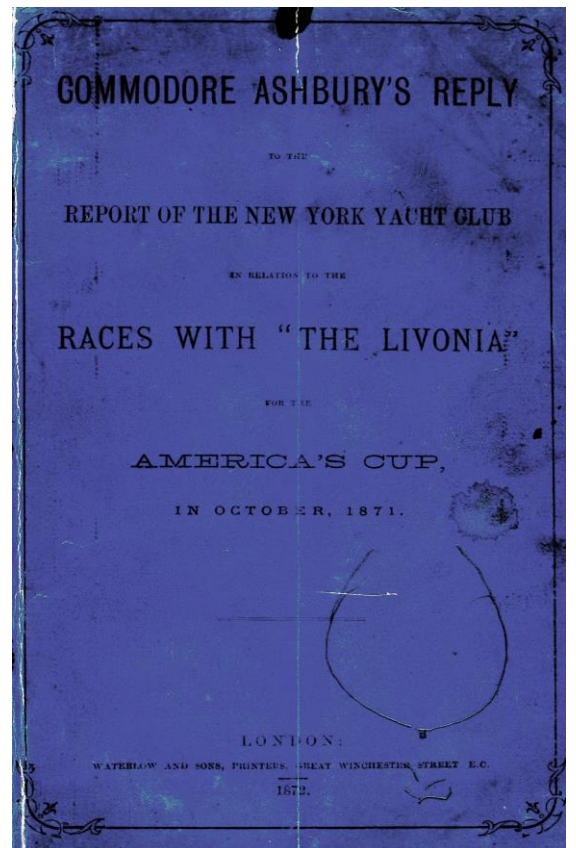
to be seen, and even Gordon Bennett had lost patience with Ashbury. No officials were present, and no marks had been laid for the course. However Ashbury sailed the race number seven course at the appointed time, finished and claimed a win by default

.He now told the NYYC that he had won the series of seven races by the score of NYYC 3 – RHYC 4, and consequently claimed the Cup.

This was regarded by the NYYC as complete nonsense and a barrage of highly toxic letters passed between Ashbury and themselves. Amongst other insults, Ashbury accused them of sharp practice and unsportsmanlike behaviour. He also asserted that should he ever return to challenge for the Cup he would bring his lawyer with him. (So what's new!) Ashbury returned home an angry and disappointed man. From being everyone's best buddy in 1870 he was now America's public enemy number one.

Thus ended the second challenge for the “America’s Cup; recorded as a win for the New York Yacht Club, their defending schooners “Columbia and “Sappho” winning two races each, and the challenging RHYC schooner “Livonia” winning one race.

Worse acrimony was to follow. In the year after his return to England Ashbury published his entire correspondence with the New York Yacht Club in a pamphlet called “Ashbury’s Reply”. The tone of some of the correspondence was extreme. In one letter Ashbury accused the NYYC of being unable to run a yacht race on the same high moral plane as in England. The NYYC was so outraged that they left his final letter to them in the foyer of their club-rooms unopened for thirty odd years.





Ashbury's enthusiasm for yachting was seriously scarred by the America's Cup experiences. His leisurely life of lolling about in the stern sheets with the spoils of victory were over. He resigned as Commodore of the Royal Harwich in 1872 after a debacle over his plans for international racing for his Atlantic Trophy. He remained as an honorary member whilst he sought fame in politics and foreign travel.

He was either likely just plain with, for despite Brighton and diplomatic mission political career noticed, and his and sojourn in him even less in the States. He with his vast dissipated.



jinxed or more difficult to get on being an MP for heading a to China his passed almost unpolitical meddling New Zealand made popular there than died a broken man fortune completely



America's Cup trophy

However his contribution to yachting and the America's Cup in particular was immense. His obstinate refusal to accept anything less than boat for boat racing in America's Cup challenges no doubt saved it from being boycotted by international yachtsmen in general. The Americans eventually recognized this, and he was finally forgiven. In 1997 he was inaugurated into the America's Cup Hall of Fame. Thus he is remembered on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.