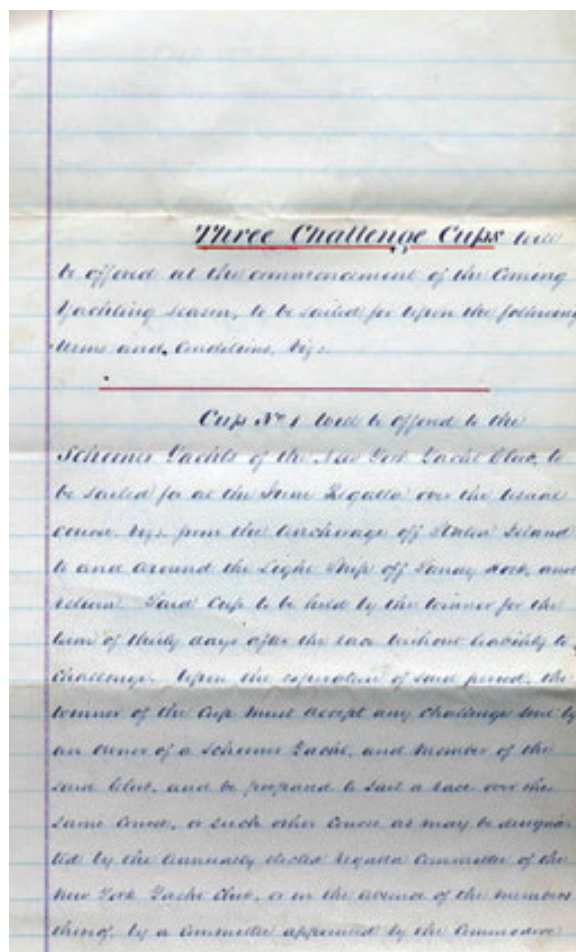


to publish. What could be better than tales of his son's mad race? He called his assistants into his office and issued the following cryptic order: "This Race. Yachts. One of 'em's me son's. Cover it. Fall in the sea for all I care but get the news. Properly. Understood?"

"Mr. Bennett did more than any other single man of his time to further the sport of yachting," a historian of the sport accurately noted in 1901, adding that "Young Jim" Bennett was always ready "to race any one, over any course, for any amount." He did his first racing on the 1857 Annual Cruise, when he was admitted to membership at the age of sixteen—the youngest member in NYYC history. A year later he competed in the club's first long-distance race, counterclockwise around Long Island. The racing between the eight entries was close, with cries for sea room as they skirted the Long Island beaches on the way out, and also cries of "protest" when the sounds of oars were heard in the night. The first boat to finish, by a healthy four hours, was Ben-



*As the evening wore on and their drinks were replenished, they talked themselves into wagering \$30,000 on each boat*

nett's *Rebecca*, but she was disqualified for cutting through Plum Gut, close off the Long Island shore, instead of carrying on to the Race, as was required in the race instructions.

All three owners in the 1866 race claimed they intended to sail, but only Jamie Bennett made the commitment. Almost everybody on board was a professional seaman, 22 per vessel. In command of Bennett's *Henrietta* was a legendary, hard-driving clipper-ship skipper named Samuel Samuels, nicknamed "the Bull of the Atlantic" and "Bully." When he took

command of the 107-foot *Henrietta* in December 1866, he referred to her as "the little plaything." The man never seemed to sleep. The desire and ability to push hard at night were much valued in that first transatlantic race.

The start in 1866 was off Sandy Hook on December 11 in a strong winter westerly, with the yachts broad-reaching under square sails before a large spectator fleet cheering them on. In swept a snowy gale, and then on the eighth day came a southwest howler with overtaking seas that flooded the yachts' decks.