

F Albert

The story goes that it was Frank Albert who brought L. Herbert Beecroft to the notice of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron in 1908 as a result of Beecroft performing at a function of the Motor Boat Club. It is ironical, therefore, that 15 years would pass before Beecroft painted Frank Albert. If Mr. Albert was not considered important enough in 1908, by 1923, he had established his reputation soundly at the Club.

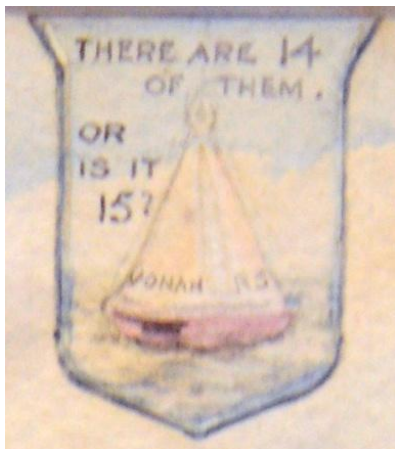
It is evident from Herbert Beecroft's painting that Frank Albert was a considerable influence in the introduction of "One Design" racing to Sydney Harbour, in the form of the 21foot Restricted Class. Up until then, the Club racing was confined to large vessels rated under a British system at first and then subsequently by a committee. If my handicapping experience is anything to go by, this must have been dreadful and a source of much frustration to the competitors. I know that when I have been on the receiving end of a particularly aggressive diatribe from a competitor, as a last resort I have been known to say "Sir, I can offer no other solution than you sell your vessel and buy a one design boat to race."

Beecroft has painted Mr. Albert on his Restricted Class "Boomerang", sail number C3, in his full Squadron Uniform. From the masthead flies code flag W. The stern of another Restricted Class is to the right and the bow of another to the left.

The location of the painting, with the Heads in the background, seems to be around the western Channel, off Obelisk. A variety of yachts are in the distance, all of which were owned by Mr. Albert. The launch is "Revonah", and has two pennants flying – Code Flag W and the Squadron burgee. The

yacht with sail no 6 is

"Rawhiti," the blue yacht in the centre of the painting with sail number 4 is "Morna" and the red motor boat is most likely a tender vessel.



At the top right hand, the shield has on it "There are 14 of them or is it 15?" I assume he is referring to the number of Restricted Class yachts launched at the time. In the middle of the shield appears to be a buoy with the writing "VONAH RS." "Sydney Sails" provided the explanation to that: "Racing for Squadron trophies in the 1922-3 season established M. F. Albert's Rawhiti as cock o' the harbour, with victories in the Gascoigne and Fairfax Cup races, and also in the inaugural race for the Revonah Cup, a trophy for annual competition which had been presented by M. F. Albert himself."

Here is a picture of **Revonah**, courtesy of the Sydney Heritage Fleet.



One of the highlights of Opening Day in the last 20 years has been the appearance of “Boomerang” under the guidance of Mick York from the Maritime Museum. Here is a description of her within a year of her launch.

Wednesday, 29th November, 1905 - Referee

MR. F. ALBERT'S BOOMERANG.

The motor-yacht Boomerang, which is owned by Mr. Frank Albert, Rear Commodore of the Motor-boat Club of New South Wales, was designed and built by Mr. R. J. Wain. She is undoubtedly one of the prettiest motor launches in Sydney Harbor, and excites admiration on all sides. About 45ft. long, with a beam of 9ft., schooner-rigged, and painted black, the little craft was one of the distinguishing features of the procession of 'Opening Day,' when she led one of the columns, after the Commodore's Cyrene. Boomerang is replete with all the latest appointments, including cooking galley, lavatory, folding-table, ice chest, glass lockers, china cabinet — in fact, she is quite a miniature deep-sea liner, even down to the two boats which swing, each on a pair of davits, on either side. Everything a marine pleasure yacht could have, either for local wants or for cruising is included in her equipment. Her motor is in keeping with the rest of the equipment - a double-cylinder 20 h.p. Union engine being installed— and considering that she is built for comfort and not for racing, her speed of eight knots is very satisfactory. She has now been in commission for over nine months, and during the whole of that time has never given the owner the slightest trouble, which speaks well both for the engine and the boat. The Boomerang has two masts, which are, fitted with auxiliary sail power, so that in case anything should happen to the engine, either inside or outside the Heads, she could reach home under canvas.

“Sydney Sails” contains many references to Frank Albert.

- *At the annual meeting of the Squadron in 1920 Arthur J. Milson, after ten years' service as vice-commodore, was elected commodore. E. P. Simpson was elected vice-commodore, and A. C. Saxton rear-commodore. In that year, Michel François Albert—better known as **Frank Albert**— music publisher and importer of musical instruments, joined the Squadron. He was the owner of the 36-foot (waterline) Rawhiti,*

which had been built in New Zealand in 1905, and was reconditioned for racing after being laid up during the war. He and his son, Alexis F. Albert, with many racing victories to their credit, soon attained leading places in Sydney's yachting fraternity. M. F. Albert became also a substantial benefactor of the Squadron, with generous donations of trophies, and gifts for Clubhouse improvements.

- During the winter of 1927 *Rawhiti* was converted to Bermuda rig to the design of W. Fife and Sons of Scotland. This firm also made the new hollow mast and rigging while Ratsey and Lapthorne, the English sailmakers, completed full sets of sails to the new design. Looking a magnificent picture as she started in the first race of the season, the pride of the harbour had barely sailed a mile when she was fouled by another yacht. Caught by the forestay, the new mast was brought crashing to the deck. The beautiful array of new spars and canvas lay in ruin. No one was injured. Her owner, Frank Albert, simply observed, "That's all that matters." Undismayed, he set about securing a new mast and repairing the damage. Before the season closed, *Rawhiti* had "come as of old, a queen, untouched by time", to win in succession the *Rawson*, *Revonah* and *Fairfax* trophies.



- The *Fairfax Cup* of that year was won by *Bona*, and the *Rawson* and *Revonah Cups* by *Rawhiti*, but there was no competition for the *Gascoigne Cup*. Harold Nossiter provided a surprise by equipping *Utiekah II* for racing as a Bermuda-rigged cutter with a mast 70 feet high. She won the *Morna Cup*, and also a new trophy presented by M. F. Albert, the *Boomerang Cup*.
- The schooner *Bona* was not used for racing, but only for pleasure-cruising. Her centreboard was removed, and for many years she was to be seen on cruises in the Harbour and offshore—a beautiful sight, as she was one of the best creations of Walter Reeks as a designer in his prime. (In 1933 she was bought by Frank Albert, who renamed her *Boomerang*.)
- In the Squadron's trophy racing events during the 1929-30 season the veteran *Bona* (H. J. Fitzpatrick) again won the *Fairfax Cup*, this being the fifth time that she had won it since 1921; but her day was done, and this was her last victory in a Squadron race. The valiant old cutter had been launched nearly thirty years previously. M. F. Albert's *Rawhiti*, equally valiant and only five years younger, continued her run of successes by winning the *Gascoigne Cup*, the *Carleton Cup* (which had been in abeyance since 1914), and the *Boomerang Cup*, the last named now restricted to First Division yachts.
- To the deep regret of all sailing men in Sydney, the veteran *Rawhiti* was in 1932 withdrawn from service and laid up at Careening Cove. Her owner, Frank Albert, had decided to be content with occasional cruises in his commodious schooner *Boomerang*. Both he and his beloved *Rawhiti* were advancing in years. The pale green Logan sloop, always immaculately groomed and superbly canvassed, had graced Sydney waters for nearly three decades. With expert skippers and crews and driven as hard as a vessel could be, *Rawhiti* had figured in the trophy lists of every Club and regatta; her racing flag had streamed over every course, on the waters she knew so well. "Old hands" would treasure nostalgic memories; see, in their mind's eye, the gleam of her spars, the perfect set of her jackyarder, the great curve of her spinnaker billowing to a nor'easter, and the lovely sweep of her hull "brightening the water where her breast was bared."

- *At the annual meeting of the Squadron in August 1932 C. P. Bartholomew succeeded J. Murray as honorary treasurer. An offer was accepted from M. F. Albert of a gift of an honour board, on which the names of commodores would be inscribed. His son, A. F. Albert, presented a new trophy, the Norn Cup, for First Division yachts, which had competed at any time for the honour of representing New South Wales in Sayonara Cup contests.*
- *In 1949 M. F. (Frank) Albert, owner of the old-time champion Rawhiti, made a donation of £1,000 towards the cost of redecorating and refurnishing the southern lounge at the Clubhouse, thus providing a large combined lounge and special dining-room. This was one of many donations made by the Alberts, father and son, since they had joined the Squadron in the 1920s. Their zeal as yachtsmen, and their champion yachts, will be long remembered in the Squadron's annals. At this same time a new slipway at the boatyard was installed and additional moorings laid. There were then seventeen moorings in the offing of the Clubhouse.*



M. F. ALBERT'S RAWHITI, 1928
 L.O.A. 54 ft, L.W.L. 35 ft
 Built by Logan Bros, Auckland, in 1905
 Brought to Sydney in 1906 by A. T. Pittar

John Allcot's watercolour on display at the Club.

Thursday, 27th January, 1927 - Sydney Morning Herald

MR. FRANK ALBERT.

GREAT SPORTING CAREER.

Mr. Frank Albert, to whom reference has been made as having occupied several positions as a flag officer of the Motor Yacht Club of New South Wales, and as the donor of the different Albert Cups, which have been raced for in motor boat championships, is one of the best-known followers of aquatic sport in Australia. Today he devotes most of his attention to sailing, being the owner of the great yacht Rawhiti, but he still takes a keen interest in the doings of the Royal Motor Yacht Club of New South Wales, of which he was commodore for about eight years.

Mr. Albert first became actively interested in aquatics about 27 years ago. His first motor launch was a 16ft launch of striking appearance, the Gromobol. At that time Mr. Albert states that there were no more than 12 motor boats in Sydney Harbour, and he used to take more risks with this little vessel than he would subsequently face with a magnificent motor yacht, the Revonah, which he subsequently built. This vessel was one of the most palatial in Port Jackson before the war, and was the outstanding craft at most of the demonstrations and outings promoted by the Motor Yacht Club. Mr. Albert exchanged the original Gromobol for a 25-footer of the same name. He became associated with Mr. E. E. Bayer in 1902, and was elected rear commodore of a sailing Club, which had both motor boats and sailing boats on its register. He became very enthusiastic about sport on the harbour, particularly motor boating, and built a large craft similar to one owned by the late Mr. S. Hordern, the Bronzewing, in 1904. This boat, the Boomerang, was well known on the harbour, and cost about £1,200. It had a 20-h.p. Union oil engine. In 1906 Mr. Albert assisted in the formation of the Motor Boat Club, but when he left on a visit to America sold the Boomerang to Mr. Plunkett. On his return Mr. Albert bought a 30ft launch, the Fedora, and when the Motor Boat Club came into existence, was elected rear commodore. After a couple of years' service as vice-commodore, Mr. Albert retired from taking an active interest in motor boating, and, with Mr. Sayer, devoted himself to sailing, and they purchased from Mr. Brockhoff the New Zealand built yacht Rawhiti.

With Rawhiti, Messrs. Albert and Sayer won the championship of the Prince Alfred Yacht Club for 1909-10, and the blue ribbon the following year. Subsequently they won many important trophies and titles with her including the Basin Cup in 1912. Messrs. Albert and Sayer remodeled Rawhiti, and with the assistance of one of the leading marine architects, Mr. Walter Reeks, redesigned the whole sailing plan as well as rigging. Later, Messrs. Albert and Sayer purchased from Mr. W. M. Marks his yacht, Culwulla II, which they renamed Rawhiti II, and with her they visited Melbourne, but were unsuccessful. On returning to Sydney, the plan of the sails of Rawhiti II was altered by Mr. Reeks, and she won the Northcote Cup.

Mr. Albert was elected commodore of the Motor Yacht Club of New South Wales in 1912, and devoted a great deal of attention to that body. He held the office without a break for the whole duration of the war, and did splendid work, with the assistance of the other flag officers, in many ways, notably in entertaining convalescent soldiers from the military hospitals in Sydney at outings on the harbour and at the Club house, Rose Bay. His late son, Otto, and also Alexis Albert, both took much interest in the Club, and were regular competitors in handicaps at Rose Bay in a little launch, Baby Revonah, which acted as tender to their father's fine yacht, the Revonah. Mr. Albert has always been a liberal supporter of aquatic sport, and among the trophies he presented to the Motor Boat or Motor Yacht Club were the original Albert Cup for the championship of New South Wales, won outright by Mr. A. H. Davies (Fairbanks), a trophy valued at £52/10/ for the winner of a pointscore covering the year's races, which was eventually won outright by Mr. J. Spencer Nolan, and the Albert Cup for the championship of the 151 cubic inches piston displacement class, which has been raced for twice, and each time won by Mr. J. Breckenridge's hydroplane, Miss Bree.

The following article was published in "[The Australian Dictionary of Biography](#)", Volume 7, (MUP), 1979.

Michel François (Frank) Albert (1874-1962), music publisher, was born on 26th March, 1874, at Kharkov, Russia, son of JACQUES ALBERT, horologist, and his first wife Sophia (d.1890), née Greenberg. Jacques had

been born on 1st January, 1850, at Fribourg, Switzerland, son of Otto Albert, optician, and his wife Rose, née Lachome. After serving his apprenticeship to a clockmaker in Switzerland, he moved round Europe as a journeyman horologist. In Kharkov from the early 1870s, he later went to Moscow. He arrived in Sydney via Rockhampton, Queensland, with his wife and two children on 10th December, 1884.

Jacques Albert set up business as a watch - and clock - mender at Newtown, where the sound of his violin attracted music-lovers to his shop. In 1890 he decided to import violins, moved to premises in King Street, and adopted the boomerang as the firm's trade mark. He also published handbooks on health, diet, cookery and conundrums. On 26th June, 1901, at the Baptist Tabernacle he married a widow Annie Maria Hare (d.1903), née Hay, and that year was naturalized. Albert died of a perforated gastric ulcer on 9th July, 1914, in the Bellita off Mackay, Queensland and was buried in Waverley cemetery, Sydney. He was survived by a son and daughter of his first marriage and by his third wife Mary Eliza Blanche (d.1950), née Allan, whom he had married on 10th February, 1904, and by their son (Professor) Adrien Albert.

Frank, as he was widely known, was educated at Newtown Public, Fort Street and Sydney boys' high schools. In 1894 he joined his father in partnership under the style of J. Albert & Son and in 1896 became sole proprietor of what had become a music selling and publishing business. On 25th March at St Andrew's Cathedral he married Minnie Eliza Buttell. He expanded the firm and concluded licensing arrangements with overseas publishers for Australia and New Zealand. In the late 1890s he had taught music and about 1917 set up the Albert College of Music in Boomerang House, King Street. In 1919 he visited Europe and the United States of America. He was naturalized in 1920.

In 1929 Albert became a director of the Australian Broadcasting Co. Ltd, formed by J. Albert & Son with Union Theatres Ltd and Fullers' Theatres Ltd, which successfully tendered to the Commonwealth government to provide radio programmes and ran the National Broadcasting Service. When their contract expired in 1932, the government set up its own authority, the Australian Broadcasting Commission. In 1933 Albert's Australian Broadcasting Co. acquired the licence for the commercial station 2UW in Sydney and, later, stations in Queensland at Brisbane, Toowoomba, Maryborough and Rockhampton. Albert was a founding director of the Australasian Performing Rights Association and of Waddington's Theatres Ltd, which ran a chain of Sydney suburban cinemas. When J. Albert & Son gave up retailing in 1933 to concentrate solely on music publishing, he formed Albert Investments Pty Ltd which acquired many urban and rural properties.

Albert was a motoring and yachting enthusiast. He was an early member of the Royal Automobile Club of Australia and in 1905 a founder and rear commodore of the Motor Boat Club (Royal Motor Yacht Club) of which he was commodore in 1912-20. In 1909 he bought the New Zealand yacht Rawhiti and that season won the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club championship. He was elected to the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron in 1920 and won many races in the next decade with Rawhiti; he was also a life-member of the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria. Founding secretary in 1927-35 and president in 1936-37 of the Geographical Society of New South Wales, he became a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London.

Albert was an active Freemason, a director of the Rachel Forster Hospital for Women and Children and a councillor of the Civic Reform Association of Sydney Ltd. In 1940-62 he was a member of the executive committee of the Australian Red Cross Society and from 1943 sat on its divisional finance committee. He gave generously to St Paul's College (University of Sydney), the Royal Australian Naval College and other causes, and endowed St Edmund's Church, Pagewood, in memory of his elder son. Over the years he had donated many small sums to the university and in 1944 gave £10,000 towards establishing a chair of music, which was not filled until 1948.

Survived by his second son (Sir) Alexis, Albert died on 19th January, 1962, at his home, Boomerang, Elizabeth Bay, where he had lived since 1902; he was cremated with Anglican rites and his ashes were buried in the family vault at Waverley cemetery.