



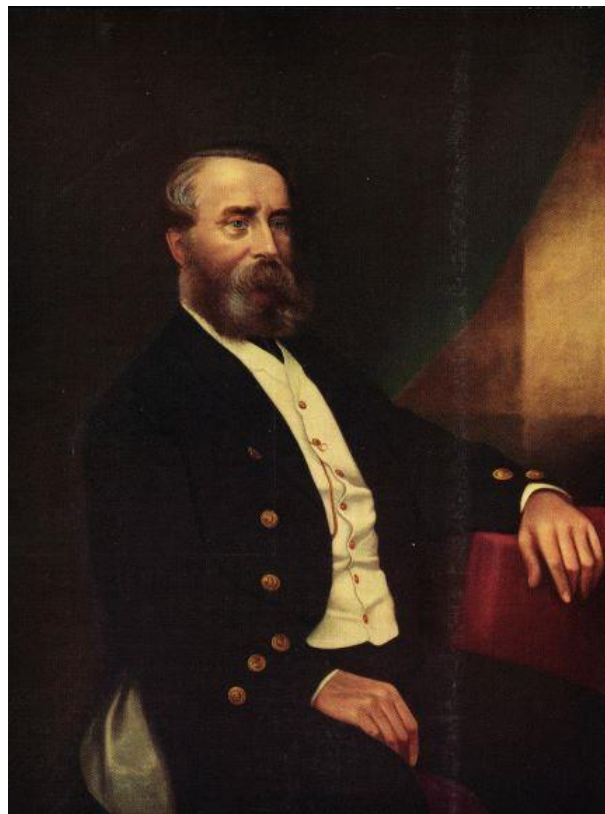
ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

Art Treasures of the Squadron

The Hon. William Walker
Oil on Canvas 123 x 89cm
By Eugene Montague Scott
Hangs in the Neutral Bay Verandah

This is the story of 19 gentlemen laying down the solid foundation of a fine sailing club in the 19th century and an artist with a colourful career.

The portrait of the Honourable William Walker, first Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, hangs in the Neutral Bay Verandah. It was painted by Eugene Montague Scott (1895 to 1909) painter, cartoonist and illustrator.



The Hon. William Walker, M.L.C.
First Commodore, Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron 1862-1867

William Benjamin Walker (1820-1889) was a prominent Sydney merchant and yacht owner. On 8 July, 1862, he invited 18 other sailing enthusiasts to his office at the Exchange corner in Bridge Street to form a yacht club.



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They subscribed their names to the Foundation document which is still displayed in our Club near the Main Bar. The original word 'Royal' was scored out as the club was not accorded Royal patronage by the Prince of Wales until nearly a year later. It then became known as the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron in accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary for the Colonies, His Grace the Duke of Newcastle.



Foundation Document 1862

At the time, there was intense rivalry between the then colonies of New South Wales and Victoria, and Members were advised that calling the Club the 'Royal Australian Yacht Squadron' would cause more antagonism. Thus, the Club was called the 'Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron'.

The first formal meeting of the Club saw William Walker elected the first Commodore, with James Milson as Vice Commodore. Walker was followed as Commodore by James Milson and Henry Carey Dangar from among the inaugural Members (who, incidentally, paid a membership fee of three guineas with an entrance fee of two guineas.)

By 1862, yachting was already a popular recreation for Sydney's successful merchants, lawyers, bankers, shipowners and medical practitioners. The catalyst for the formation of a successful yacht club came with the arrival in Port Jackson from England of Walker's beautiful schooner *Chance*, an iron-hulled vessel of 71 tons, registered with the Royal Thames Yacht Club that had been formed in 1775.

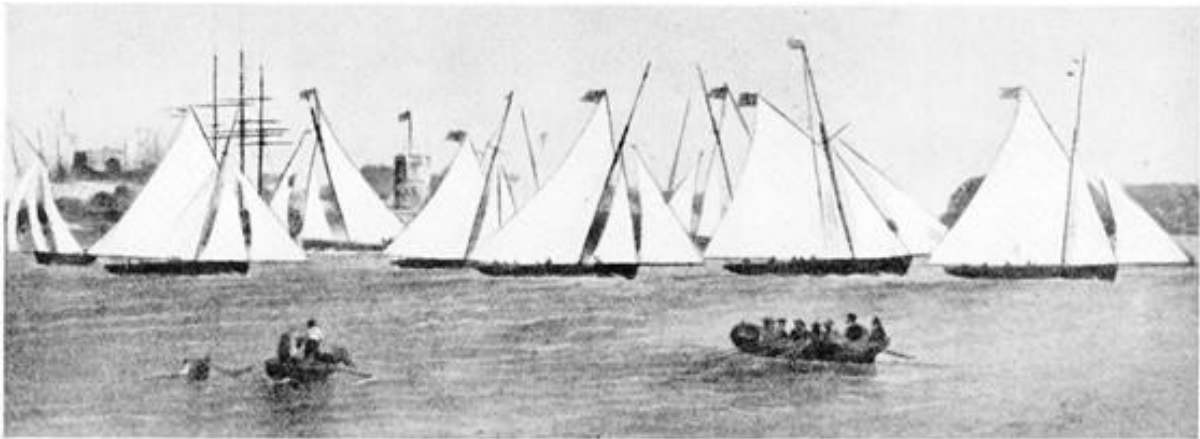
The first recorded regatta had been held in 1827, and the inaugural Anniversary Regatta (now the Australia Day regatta) was held in 1837.



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Opening manoeuvres were performed by Vice Commodore Milson's *Era* in October 1862 as Commodore Walker's boat *Chance* had carried away her jibboom in a squall earlier in the week. Taking station in order of their tonnage, the Squadron fleet sailed from Farm Cove in a breeze that was described as 'eastward of south, with heavy squalls, accompanied by rain and thick cloudy weather' to rendezvous at Manly Cove. The Members were then 'piped to lunch and fortified themselves, so as to attend to any kind of difficulty above.' Fortunately, the Commodore's yacht *Chance* was able to join them and led the Squadron home.

Abeam of Fort Denison, the Commodore shortened sail. He then raised the signal 'Salute', and each yacht in succession saluted the Commodore's flag as they passed under the stern of *Chance*, followed by 'three cheers for the Commodore and the Vice Commodore' from each crew.



THE SQUADRON LEAVING FARM COVE FOR THE OPENING
CRUISE, 1866

(From a painting by an unidentified artist)

The large portrait of William Walker is painted in oils and dates from 1867. Montague Scott was commissioned to create the work to farewell William Walker in view of his intention to leave Australia and reside permanently in Britain. It was to thank him 'particularly for the valuable services he had rendered the Squadron in assisting at its formation, and by his high-spirited example in fostering and promoting the true interests of yachting during his term of office.' (*Sydney Sails*).

The portrait marked the respect with which he was held as Commodore, his initiative in forming the Squadron and his mercantile and political life as a member of the NSW Legislative Council. *Sydney Sails* noted that 'Moreover his beautiful schooner yacht, *Chance*, with a professional crew experienced in sailing at Cowes, would serve excellently as a flagship for the Squadron.'

William Walker sits in a formal quarter profile. He is dressed in the Club uniform: 'a plain blue dress coat and white waistcoat, each with the Club buttons, and trousers blue or white according to the season; the undress uniform shall be waistcoat and trousers as before and a blue jacket with the Club buttons; in each case a black neckerchief.' (*Sydney Sails*).

Wearing the uniform expresses the Club values and loyalty which were so fundamental to him and which he had laid down in the rules with the original 18 Members in 1862.



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The light falls on Walker's forehead and the right-hand side of his face. The viewer is also drawn to his waistcoat and the hands are highlighted. Skin tones are realistic, and he gazes into the distance rather than at the viewer. There is a sense of the visionary about him. He has a full-grown beard and moustache, characteristic of the day. His cheeks are ruddy, and his hairline is receding and greying, consistent with his seniority and age.

The colours in the background highlight the tone of his face, with dark tones behind his head, a yellow shaft of light on his right, a green seat and a red bench supporting his left arm. This may be a reference to his political connections - red and green being the colours used to decorate the upper and lower NSW parliamentary houses.

The portrait exudes respect and gratitude for their Commodore and is in the traditional Classical style.

Eugene Montague Scott (1835-1909), also known as 'Montagu Scott', was a London born artist, son of William Scott, artist, and his wife Sarah, née Myers. He was a photographer and cartoonist who emigrated to Australia in 1855. He married Amy Johnson on July 20, 1859. He trained in photography in Melbourne in the 1860s and was introduced to photographic colouring by Dr T.A. Hill. He trained in painting under Richard Ansdell. Scott moved to Sydney in 1866 and initially worked in photography. Around 1867, he took over photographic studios in George Street, naming them 'Sydney and Melbourne Photographic Gallery'. Additionally, he was cartoonist for the *Sydney Punch* from 1866 to 1886.

Scott was appointed official photographer for the visit of HRH Prince Alfred the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868. He sold his photographs to the public. He was also commissioned by Sir Henry Parkes to paint a full-size portrait of the Duke of Edinburgh - for this he charged 250 guineas.



Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, 1868



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Scott also produced other large oil portraits of Richard Driver, M.L.A. in 1874, Sydney merchant S. Hoffnung, Archbishop Polding, John Deery of the Tatterstalls Club and S.H. Hyam M.L.C. In the 1870s his large wood engravings and lithographs of rugged outdoor scenes, formal functions and public personalities regularly enlivened the *Illustrated Sydney News*. Many fine lithographs were issued as supplements, including a portrait of Sir Henry Parkes and Captain Cook.

At the 1870 Intercolonial Exhibition in Sydney, his 7ft by 3ft 6in (2.1m by 1.1m) oil, 'A Day's Picnic on Clark Island' was criticised by the *Sydney Morning Herald* for its 'grotesque little figures resembling gaudily bedecked marionettes', but when given to the Mitchell Library in 1930, it was praised for its faithful depiction of the fashions of the period.



A Day's Picnic on Clark Island, Sydney Harbour

In 1870 Scott went bankrupt and was forced to sell his photographic equipment to meet his creditors demands. In 1878 he appeared on stage in Sydney doing 'lightning' caricatures of politicians such as Sir Hercules Robinson and Sir Henry Parkes.

In 1889, he moved to Brisbane and married a widow, Mary Ellen Price, née Megan on 5 December. While in Brisbane, he worked for Queensland 'Worker' cartoons with a lively, optimistic and combative tone. The 'Worker' saw Scott as 'the personification of kindness' but photography eventually replaced his work. He was paid 15 shillings a cartoon but he lived 'from hand to mouth'. During his last years, he painted portraits and racehorses, selling work to Sydney sporting papers. By 1908, he was again bankrupt. He died on 15 May 1909, aged 74, at Randwick, NSW of cystitis. Scott was buried in the Anglican section of Waverley cemetery, survived by his wife, two daughters and a son from his first marriage.

Montague Scott's portrait of The Hon. William Walker M.L.C. is a fitting tribute to the founding father of the Squadron who laid down the principles and values of a fine sailing club which has continued to flourish for over 150 years.



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The esteem in which William Walker was held in by his Club Members and generosity in commissioning the portrait is demonstrative of the goodwill that develops in the sport of sailing.

Robyn Coleman
Exhibiting Member Royal Art Society

Thanks and acknowledgements:

Our RSYs Honorary Archivist Peter Bradford recently located papers in the RSYs archive which provided invaluable information about the artist, Montagu Scott.

Photo credits:

The Hon. William Walker M.L.C. First Commodore, Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, 1862-1867, Squadron Archives

Foundation Document 1862, Squadron Archives

The Squadron Leaving Farm Cove for the Opening Cruise, 1866, *Sydney Sails* (From a painting by an unidentified artist in possession of the RSYs).

Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, 1868, Squadron Archives.

A Day's Picnic on Clark Island, Sydney Harbour by Montague Scott, Mitchell Library.