



### Opening Day 1865

Recently, a package of memorabilia was passed to Archives, and Lance Chapple noticed the following poem among the sheaves of paper. The poem had clearly come from a book because at the bottom of the page was the number 42, but we know not what the book is. Lance thought the poem was of great interest, so the Archive sleuth got on the case and was able to identify that it describes Opening Day on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 1865.

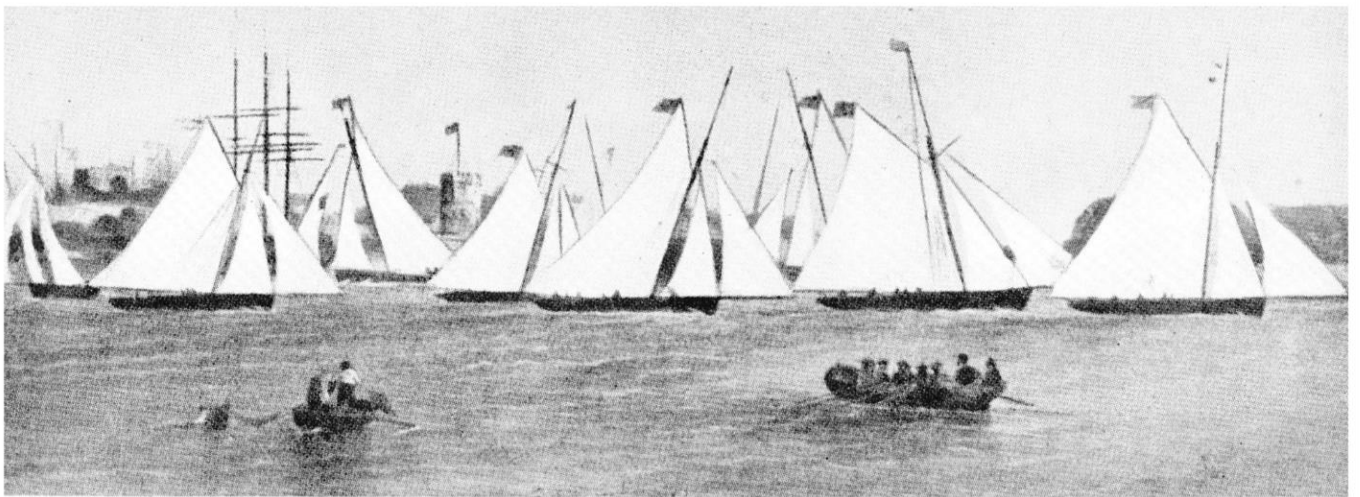
*Bright shone the sun on Double Bay,  
One afternoon of Saturday,  
Deep blue the sky and pure the air,  
Sure day was never seen more fair.  
It seemed as if Dame Nature tried  
To deck herself in all her pride  
To pay due homage as was meet,  
To Sydney's fairy pleasure fleet.  
And see how every wooded height,  
Around the bay was gay and bright  
With ladies all in silk belight  
In silk and satin sheen.  
Blonde and brunette both dark and fair,  
In ringlets some and some plain hair,  
But all so gay and debonair,  
And all in crinoline.  
And see the eyes of all are strained  
towards the bay where now hath gained  
Our fairy fleet its station true -  
The clock is on the stroke of two,  
And all await with beating heart  
The signal to be off and start.  
See, there it is, now off they go -  
Fair Enid of the Curacao,  
Why Not? and Ida, Mischief too,  
Xarifer, Vivid - all to do,  
Their utmost in the race;  
All following the brave Alerte  
Each determined to assert  
Her prowess in the chase.  
And now mid'st kidded palms applause,  
They reach the battery of Dawes,  
Break in two lines and form again,  
And thus in ordered rank remain.  
Past the dart forms of Curacao,  
Eclipse and Brush as on they go  
To Shark's fair isle - till warned at last,  
By Signal from Alerte's tall mast,  
They part - and so concludes the day  
in laughter, jest and converse gay.  
Well well more power to them say we,  
We bid them greeting three times three.*



## Tuesday, 21st November, 1865 – The Sydney Morning Herald

### ROYAL SYDNEY YACHT SQUADRON

The opening trip of the season came off on the 4th instant, and was emphatically, a great success. The weather, which, in the early part of the day had been overcast and threatening, completely changed in character as it advanced, and by noon a glorious sunshine and unclouded sky with a nice light breeze from S. E. bespoke the advent of a fine afternoon's amusement. Noon was the time appointed for the squadron to rendezvous, the trysting place Double Bay, and shortly after that hour, the arrival of the various yachts created a bustle and animation in this usually quiet and secluded spot that was truly refreshing. The Commodore's splendid importation, the famed "Alerte," lay quietly at anchor, her graceful hull and tall, tapering spars, the theme of general admiration; and as the various other yachts arrived, they took up their allotted positions in two lines on the port and starboard hand of the Commodore. Signal being made to anchor, furl sails, and dress ship, each tiny vessel was soon trimmed from deck to truck with a perfect cloud of bunting. The steamer Vesta, having on board a large number of the members and their friends, shortly after arrived in the bay. At 2 p.m. signal 63, "Get underway and fall in line," was seen flying on board Alerte, and soon all was bustle and activity - the signal being promptly obeyed - and with a light north-east breeze away sped our smart little squadron consisting of Alerte, Era, Peri, Xarifa, Vivid, Mischief, Ida, Why Not, and Enid (Curacoa). The Commodore led up the harbour, and when off Fort Denison signal 36 (Form two divisions) from on board Alerte, brought the yachts into two well-kept lines, the port division led by Peri, and starboard division by the vice-commodore in his smart yacht Era. In this order the squadron reached Dawes' Battery, presenting a really pretty sight. As they passed the Cove signal 63 was then again displayed, and each yacht readily taking her proper position, they tacked down the harbour, passing under the sterns of H. M. ships Curacoa, Eclipse, and Brisk, the squadron exchanging the usual courtesies as they passed. After clearing out of Farm Cove the yachts formed line abreast to port of the Commodore, and when off Shark Island signal 26 (Part Company), terminated the day's evolutions altogether. The result of the opening trip of 1865 was most gratifying. The various vessels were in admirable order and were not only well handled but the evolutions were performed in a highly satisfactory manner. The Vesta, after accompanying the yachts on their return as far as Clark Island, steamed ahead to Watson's Bay, and, going round the Sow and Pigs reef, returned to the squadron.



THE SQUADRON LEAVING FARM COVE FOR THE OPENING  
CRUISE, 1866

*(From a painting by an unidentified artist)*