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PERHAPS IT occurred to some of the more poetically minded citizens that the streets of Honolulu looked as if a rainbow had been torn and scattered about. Color fluttered everywhere—from ribbons tied to the whips of every carriage and wagon, from the spokes of their wheels, wound with bunting. It flew from the rigging of every ship along the waterfront where tall masts and spars made a pattern against the sky. Not a shop but displayed the hues of its favored boat club; not a person in all the excited crowds hurrying to the waterfront but felt the day was, perhaps, the most exciting of the whole year.

Everybody used to turn out to see the boat races on Regatta day. Shops and businesses were closed because nobody would work, and anyway, it was a holiday—during the seventies and eighties because it was the King's birthday, and from the nineties to the present by act of the Territorial legislature. As such a holiday, it appears to be unique in the world, for nowhere else is there an official state holiday in honor of the sport of rowing. Easy interest and enthusiasm justified this. No football match at present begins to generate the widespread excitement and partisanship of an oldtime Regatta day in Honolulu. The whole town, from the King down to the smallest boy cheered the crews. It was a gay, exciting occasion which older kamaeians remember with nostalgia and a group of young islanders hope to see restored in the near future.

Football is the thing that has dimmed the importance of Regatta day in recent years. Up to 1930 the holiday was kept with oldtime color and excitement. But about that year football suddenly expanded, until today there

are some thirty teams—including the barefoot and sandlot circuits—playing in Honolulu each autumn. They gather up practically every boy and young man who might otherwise come out for rowing.

There is still, nevertheless, a deep-seated interest in water sports. For one thing, traditions as old as Regatta day do not die easily. Moreover, there has always been a deep love among islanders for water sports. It is not by chance that most of the young people who are gathering each afternoon this spring to practice on the Ala Wai canal show Hawaiian ancestry in their features. Love of the water is inherent in them. But love of the water is widespread among others, too, and there have always been people of all backgrounds taking part in Regatta day, as there will be again.

Conditions for success in this sport are natural to Hawaii. Competitions in paddling and surfing took place as far back as we know. They were two of the main events in the great annual sports carnival of old Hawaii, called the makahiki. It seems significant, that of all the old makahiki sports, only paddling and surfing have survived to the present. The last great makahiki took place in 1819, a year before the missionaries arrived. But the island people continued to enjoy this water sports just the same.

Foreign style boat racing doubtless came first to Hawaii with the whalers in the next decades. Much of the success in whaling depended on the skill with which the small whaleboat was handled when it left the ship to go after a sighted whale. There was the long pull to catch up with the creature and then expert maneuvering so that the harpooner could throw home

his dart. Immense skill was required to handle the boat during the critical struggle with the monster, who could wreck it with a flip of his tail. During "the winter when the whaling vessels clustered in Honolulu by the hundreds, there must have been many informal races between crews. One of the main features of Regatta day for many years was the five-oared whaleboat race.

It seems probable that the resident Americans in Hawaii set the pattern for the formal regatta. We read, for instance, of a regatta being part of the Fourth of July celebration of the American community here in 1728. The Commercial Pacific Advertiser carried a full account of the event, which took place after the Americans had listened to patriotic speeches in the morning. There happened to be two American naval vessels in port at the time. Said The Advertiser next day: "The men of war were gaily dressed and their boats were kept busy carrying ladies and children to the ships to witness the sport."

The events of that 1872 regatta seem to be fairly typical of the programs for many years to follow. They included a sailing race between three yachts; a race between "shore boats," with two oars and a coxswain; a race between whaleboats with five oars and a steersman, and a two-oared race for "gentlemen amateurs." The latter was won by young Sanford B. Dole and Alfred Castle. Over twenty years later Sanford Dole was elected president of the provisional Hawaiian Republic and Alfred Castle became one of the leading financiers and businessmen of the islands. In fact, the annals of Regatta day are sprinkled with important names, so widespread has been its interest in these sports.

Other races in the 1872 Fourth of July regatta were contests between outrigger canoes each with five paddlers, and a race between cutters belonging to the two American naval

vessels. There cutters carried fourteen oars and a race between them was always spectacular. A race for boats with keels—and a race for tubs without keels—which was the comedy event of the occasion—was climaxed by a race between "gigs" of six oars.

These six-oared races were the main events of the day and have remained so to the present. On the mainland the usual racing shell used by colleges and boat clubs has eight oars. But in Hawaiian racing, "barges," using the old six oars, are still the standard boat.

Commenting the next day on this early regatta, The Advertiser said, "The regatta drew a large assemblage of people together, aquatic sports being always popular with the islanders." This indicates that regattas were not infrequent and perhaps makes clear why King Kalakaua—who was elected to the throne two years afterward—favored a regatta as the best way to celebrate his birthday. In 1875, the year after he became King, the first of the birthday regattas was held, on November 16. They were annual events for 16 years, until his death in 1891.

King Kalakaua was a man who enjoyed life and had a wide variety of interests. Water sports were one of his hobbies and evidently most Hawaiian royalty felt as he did about them. Queen Kapiolani, for instance, acquired a boat and entered a crew in the races against the King. In at least one notable regatta, held in 1879 at Pearl Harbor rather than in Honolulu, royalty took a personal part in the races. The Princess Kekaulike acted as coxswain of a crew of eight, which defeated a crew of which the coxswain and Princess Poomekioelani. And the Princess Liliuokalani (sister of the King and his successor on the throne) steered a boat in another race against a boat in which the King himself was coxswain.

The King built two boathouses near the end of Punchbowl St., on water-