

## A brief history of Transpac

# The Journey to Paradise

Yacht racing was an active sport in Hawaii by the turn of the century, yet a race between Hawaii and the West Coast was in the talking stages only. California yachtsmen knew the sail from the Coast to Hawaii was relatively comfortable and fast, with the warm tradewinds at their backs for most of the journey, a downhill run. Their major concern was for the safety of their vessels and crews on the long trek from Hawaii back to the Coast.

In 1905, members of the Hawaii Yacht Club were ready to see such a race become a reality. And so meetings were held between T.W. Hobron, then the HYC commodore, Clarence W. Macfarlane, owner of the yacht La Paloma, and H.H. Sinclair, a well-known California yachtsmen and member of the South Coast Yacht Club.

Final arrangements were completed for a race to Hawaii to start from Meggs Wharf in San Francisco on May 5, 1906. There were 31 tentative entrants. And to prove to skeptical California sailors that the journey to California from Hawaii was indeed no cause for apprehension, Macfarlane agreed to race his 47-foot La Paloma to San Francisco, competing against the three-masted lumber schooner S.C. Allen.

La Paloma made the trip, won the race . . . but faced the first of several adversities by unwittingly arriving in San Francisco just days after the famous earthquake and fires that had all but destroyed the city. The disaster precluded any possibility of a race. The

despondent yachtsman was ready to take the first steamer back home to Hawaii, leaving La Paloma in the care of friends, when a cable arrived from H.H. Sinclair's Lurline and Charles L. Tutt's Anemone. Macfarlane wired his acceptance.

On the sail down to Los Angeles, however, La Paloma experienced some adverse weather that resulted in her hull developing a serious leak. With but two days remaining before the start of the race, Macfarlane had La Paloma drydocked and the leak repaired. The shipwright said without additional time he was unable to repair the leak adequately, and although he was willing to complete a patch job, he wouldn't guarantee his work if La Paloma encountered further adverse weather en route to Hawaii.

Undaunted, Macfarlane and his crew—with the exception of the cook—agreed to give the race a try. And thus, history was made when at noon, June 11, 1906 (Hawaii's King Kamehameha Day), the three yachts headed seaward from San Pedro to launch the world's longest ocean sailing race, the 2,225 nautical mile trek to Hawaii, later to be named the Transpacific Yacht Race.

Despite the recurrence of the bad leak which drained crew energy and played havoc with the ship's stores, and despite a navigational problem which pulled La Paloma off course, Clarence Macfarlane, the "Father of Transpac," crossed the Diamond Head finish line . . . not the winner, but victorious nevertheless.