

BACKGROUNDER

Coronet: History and Milestones

Many of *Coronet's* contemporaries have since vanished. They were sunk, grounded, or simply ruined by the ravages of time. Remnants, models, and photographs of these vessels may still exist, yet *Coronet* has miraculously stayed afloat. She exists today as a symbol of a gilded age, an exuberant time in American history when a grand yacht was a symbol of great fortune and success that joined its owner's coterie of elegant domains: the townhouse on Fifth Avenue, the summer cottage in Newport. Built in 1885 for American industrialist Rufus T. Bush, *Coronet* had the luxe of a fine home—but one that was meant to travel to faraway shores. During her first five years, *Coronet* earned fame as a trans-Atlantic race winner and circumnavigated the globe as one of the first U.S.-registered yachts to round Cape Horn. A series of owners have used *Coronet* for different ends: for pleasure cruising, racing, scientific exploration, and even as a global voyager for a missionary cause. The storied schooner yacht is now being restored on the IYRS campus.

1885: *Coronet* is launched on August 17 from the boatyard of C. & R. Poillon in Brooklyn (New York). Built for Rufus T. Bush, the president of the Bush & Denslow Manufacturing Company who previously owned the 106-foot steamer *Falcon*, she is built to cruise the world's oceans in comfort and style. The interior includes appointments such as mahogany-paneled staterooms, a grand marble-treaded staircase, stained glass doors, a main saloon that featured etched mirrors and gilded moldings, a cloisonné chandelier, a tiled heating stove, and a piano. In the summer of 1886, she sails from New York to Cowes (England) and back.

1887: Rufus Bush decides to test his new schooner by challenging all comers to a race across the Atlantic for a prize of \$10,000. Bush's challenge is taken up by Caldwell Colt, son of the inventor of the Colt revolver and a fellow New York Yacht Club member (his schooner *Dauntless* had competed unsuccessfully in the 1870 race). On March 13, the two vessels sail from New York and head for Queenstown, Ireland. On *Coronet's* first day at sea, she logs 246.5 miles (her best daily run during the race is 291 miles). On March 28, the front-page headline of *The New York Times* heralds the news: "*Coronet* is Over the Line, And Easily Winner of the Great Race." Her time across the Atlantic is 14 days, 19 hours, 3 minutes, and 14 seconds. *Dauntless*—the older boat, by nearly twenty years, was smaller, lighter, and carried less sail area—had a daily run of over 320 miles. With Colt onboard (Bush waited out the race in his New York townhouse), *Dauntless* finished some 30 hours behind *Coronet*. Satisfied with his new yacht's performance, Bush decides to list the victorious *Coronet* for sale in England for £30,000, roughly the equivalent of double her building cost. Bush, however, keeps *Coronet* until 1890, the year of his early tragic death at age 50. In 1888–1889, *Coronet* sails her first circumnavigation. One of the first U.S.-registered yachts to round Cape Horn, she sails on to ports at Honolulu, Yokohama, Hong Kong, Ceylon, Bombay, Aden, and Malta, returning home to New York in April 1889.

1890–1905: From 1890 to 1905, *Coronet* passes through the hands of six individual owners, including: Arthur E. Bateman (New York, N.Y./April 1890–October 1891), John D. Wing (New York, N.Y./October 1891–October 1893), Arthur Curtiss James (New York, N.Y./October 1893–October 1898), Fred S. Pearson (New York, N.Y./October 1898–May 1899), John I. Waterbury (New York, N.Y./May 1899–May 1901), and Louis Bossert (Brooklyn, N.Y./June 1901–April 1905). Although *Coronet's* ownership changed several times, Captain Christopher Crosby (who had captained Bush's steam yacht *Falcon*) stayed with

Coronet until 1899. After the globe-trotting track *Coronet* followed under Bush's ownership, the vessel once again returns to ambitious voyaging under the ownership of Arthur Curtiss James. These excursions include passages to the West Indies, Nova Scotia (where she hosts the inventor Alexander Graham Bell in the summer of 1894), and another return trip across the Pacific. From 1895–1897, *Coronet* sails over 45,000 miles in the service of science. James placed the yacht at the disposal of a joint Japanese-American scientific expedition to view the total eclipse of the sun on August 9, 1896. *Coronet* sails around Cape Horn from New York–San Francisco with the requisite heavy scientific equipment onboard. The members of the expedition, who had crossed the continent by train, meet the vessel on the West Coast and then sail for Hawaii and on to Yokohama, Japan. Astronomer David Peck Todd chose the remote fishing village of Esashi, some 1,100 miles north of Yokohama, as the best site to view the eclipse. Unfortunately, the day of the eclipse is cloudy and no photographs of scientific value are produced. Mabel Loomis Todd, the astronomer's wife, authors an account of the expedition, *Corona and Coronet*, and the book is published in 1899. *Coronet's* logs under James's ownership were also published as a collection entitled *Coronet Memories* (published by F. Tennyson Neely in 1899).

1905–1995: *Coronet* is purchased in 1905 by The Kingdom, a non-denominational religious organization headquartered at Shiloh (near Durham, Maine). Founded by Frank W. Sanford, The Kingdom uses the vessel for its global missionary work. *Coronet* makes two voyages from the United States to Palestine in 1905 and 1906 and begins her second circumnavigation in 1907. Stops in Egypt, the Caribbean, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, Tahiti, Australia, and western Africa are only a handful of the anchorage locales logged during *Coronet's* early years sailing for The Kingdom. The vessel remained under The Kingdom's ownership for ninety years.

1995–2005: IYRS acquires *Coronet* in 1995 with plans to restore the vessel. Early stages of the restoration are completed during this period, including: collecting historical records and photographs to document the yacht's voyaging record and the condition she was in at the time of launching; archiving and dismantling the yacht's interior, much of which was deemed original; sourcing materials needed for the restoration; hauling the yacht and building a temporary workshop on the campus. Once the vessel is securely berthed and protected from the elements, IYRS puts a hold on the restoration so the school can focus on the strategic priorities of growing the school and restoring the 1831 mill building on the campus for much needed additional space.

2006: In 2006, *Coronet* is conveyed to Coronet Restoration Partners, an organization whose principals have substantial experience in classic yacht restoration and who share the same values and high standards for historic restoration as IYRS. San Francisco-based Jeffery Rutherford of Rutherford Boat Works working with Robert McNeil, an accomplished sailor and classic boat restorer, are the lead principals of Coronet Restoration Partners. The group will undertake the completion of the restoration of *Coronet* on the school's campus. On the work crew will be several positions available to IYRS graduates—making *Coronet* an important post-grad learning opportunity for students. Said IYRS Co-Founder John Mecray: "We established a policy early-on that if IYRS had a vessel it could not restore, we had the obligation to get that vessel into the right hands. This project will be a learning opportunity for students, it will be a showcase attraction for Newport, and once restored, *Coronet* will demonstrate to the public the great importance of preserving our maritime past. We have found the 'right hands,' indeed."

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