

The International Propeller Club of the United States Port of Tampa, Inc. *Chartered May 1929 – Port #5*

History

The Propeller Club was conceived in New York in the latter part of 1922 when a small group of the marine industry gathered frequently to discuss mutual problems concerning American shipping. This original group slowly expanded and on January 24, 1923, formally organized themselves as the "Propeller Club of New York," the keel of the Propeller Club of the United States which was to be founded four years later. Today, with over 6000 members, there is a Propeller Club in practically every city of consequence in the continental United States, on the seacoasts, the Great Lakes and the inland waterways. Overseas there are Propeller Clubs in Puerto Rico, Panama, Europe, Guam, Japan, the Mid-East and the Philippines.

The name "Propeller" was chosen as being symbolic of the driving force.

Port of Tampa chapter was chartered May 25, 1929, as Port No. 5. At the time, the Port of Tampa was handling an average of 3.2 million tons of domestic and foreign commerce annually. Phosphate and petroleum were among the most important cargoes, which also included lumber, iron and steel, scrap metal and fruits. During World War II, the Port of Tampa was one of the largest U.S. shipbuilding and repair facilities to prepare war vessels for use by American and the U.S. Merchant Marine during the war effort. Nearly ten thousand employees worked at Tampa shipyards.

By 1948, the club had grown to 175 members and supported the City of Tampa's efforts to develop the Hookers Point Terminal, an industrial park, including shipbuilding facilities that had been important to the war effort. With the drop in wartime shipping activity, however, membership declined,

and eventually the club became inactive. In 1954, local community leaders Bill Savage, K.I. McKay, Robert Kuhn and William H. Reynolds were successful in reactivating the organization.

During 1955, construction began on the Port of Tampa's 34-foot harbor deepening project to accommodate larger ships for the transportation of phosphate, the Port's most important cargo. Port tonnage had increased to 9 million tons a year. The following year, the club decided to honor the phosphate industry for its impact on the Port, and the first annual "Phosphate Night" was held at the Elks Lodge in downtown Tampa.

In 1957, then club President Bill Savage and members Gilbert Turner and Dennis Fusilier started what has become one of the club's signature events, the annual Shrimperoo. Initially held in the backyard of the Savage residence, the event grew so large that it is now held at one of the Port's cruise terminals. Arthur Savage, son of Bill Savage, is now chairman of the event, which remains one of the club's most popular and certainly longstanding event.

Through the 1960's and 1970's, the Port of Tampa experienced major growth and the club continued to grow and attract Port and civic leaders to its membership. In 1970, federal authorization was received to deepen the Port's channels to 43 feet and annual tonnage had grown to 32.3 million. During the 1980s, the club experienced major growth and was the largest Club in the U.S. by 1985.

The club launched its annual StoneCrabFest in 1997, another of the club's signature events. In 2001, Captain John Timmel was named International Maritime Person of the Year for his creation

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of StoneCrabFest and for his role in the founding of the American Victory Ship and Museum, which the club continues to support. Captain Timmel remains the chair for StoneCrabFest and the event, as well as his seafood chowder, remain a fixture for club members and their guests.

In 2005, the Propeller Club, jointly with the Port of Tampa Maritime Industries Association, proposed and sponsored, and the Governor signed into law, an amendment to the Tampa Port Authority Enabling Act increasing the number of Port Authority Commissioners from five to seven persons, with the two newest members to be chosen as representatives of the maritime industry. The law provides that the Governor choose the new Commissioners from a list of nominees provided by a nominating committee composed of members of the Propeller Club Port of Tampa and the Port of Tampa Maritime Industries Association.

In 2007, to adapt to the changing focus of port industries, the board changed Phosphate Night to Maritime Industry Night and created Unsung Hero and Leadership awards to honor men and women who labor in maritime-related jobs. In 2012 the Tampa Propeller Club Installation of Officers event was renamed Leadership Night where we recognize past presidents, outgoing and incoming board members and introduce the new members who have joined the Tampa chapter in the past year.

In 2009, recognizing the aging workforce in maritime-related fields, the club commenced a maritime school initiative. The club's Education Committee successfully established maritime programs at Jefferson and Blake High Schools in the Hillsborough County public school system. The Tampa Bay Maritime Scholarship Foundation was created to

manage the scholarship program which provides scholarships to students who are involved in the maritime programs at Jefferson and Blake. The program at Jefferson High School has continued to grow as the designated maritime magnet school for Hillsborough County while the program at Blake High School ended in 2019.

Throughout the years, the Tampa Club has been active at the regional and international levels and hosted the International Convention in 2000 and 2010 and the Southeast Region Conferences many times throughout the years and most recently in 2017 and 2019. Members have taken leadership roles in the International Propeller Club and also the Southeast Region and the Tampa Club has been named International Port of the Year and several times the Southeast Region's Port of the Year. The Tampa club has become more involved in community affairs and issues relating to the maritime industry in the last few years. Members of the club have appeared frequently before the Hillsborough County Commission and the Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation on maritime issues. Members have testified before a congressional committee sitting locally on port security issues. Club members have traveled to Tallahassee regarding proposed legislation. Club representatives travel annually to Washington to attend the International Propeller Club's Salute to Congress dinner and to meet with Florida's congressional delegation.

With the continued enthusiastic support of the membership, the International Propeller Club of the United States, Port of Tampa, Inc., will continue to grow and prosper alongside the community and Port it serves.

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