

**BOSTON and MAINE RAILROAD**  
*Employees' Magazine*

Volume 18 <sup>14</sup> BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD JULY 1946  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ARCHIVES

Number 7





## A Railroad Man Started the Harvard-Yale Regatta

By JAMES ALDREDGE

IT WILL probably come as a surprise to many sports enthusiasts today to learn that a New England railroad superintendent was responsible for the start of the Harvard-Yale boat races.

His name was James H. Elkins and he was in charge of the Boston, Concord and Montreal Railroad, one of the lines that was eventually absorbed into the Boston and Maine system.

On a June day in 1852, Mr. Elkins was walking through a train when he spied his young friend, James M. Whiton, then a junior at Yale. The older man immediately sat down beside the boy and started to talk.

The train was traveling between Weirs and Laconia in New Hampshire. At the point where the Winnepesaukee River emerges from the Lake and widens into an expanse of smooth water, the railroad skirts the shore for some miles.

Looking out of the car window, young Whiton happened to remark that this stretch of water would make a fine course for a regatta, which could be viewed from an observation train for the whole distance. The railroad man immediately pricked up his ears.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Whiton," he exclaimed, "if you can get up a regatta on the Lake between Yale and Harvard, I will pay all the bills!"

It was an amazing offer to the Yale junior, and he accepted it on the spot. It wasn't every day that an important business man gave college chaps the chance of a free excursion and a gay lark in the bargain.

Mr. Elkins knew what he was about. His road had only recently been built, and as it was a competing line for summer travel, the boat race would give it wide publicity. He promised young Whiton that the event would be widely advertised, and special excursion trains would be run.

The Yale men promptly sent a challenge to Harvard, but their acceptance did not come at once. Yale could not row till after its commencement, which fell on July 29th in those days, while that of Harvard came two weeks earlier. However, a Harvard junior, Joseph M. Brown, who was Whiton's close friend, worked hard and talked so much in favor of taking up the challenge that finally it was accepted.

The two crews joined each other on the night of July 30 at Concord, N. H. There were 41 college men in all, including substitutes, and the next day they went on to Weirs Landing where their boats, which had been shipped on ahead, were awaiting them.

These boats were nothing like modern racing shells, for they were built to meet rough water in Boston Harbor and Long Island Sound. A final conference restricted the regatta to an eight-oared match.

The special training which college crews follow nowadays was something unknown in that period. Practically the only preliminary practice was carried out on the day before the race. So far as special diet was concerned, there was some abstinence from pastry, but that was all.

The day of the race, Aug. 3, dawned bright and clear — a perfect summer's day. The excursion trains which Mr. Elkins had arranged brought quite a crowd of sightseers, and among the distinguished visitors was General Franklin Pierce of Concord, the Democratic candidate for President, who would be elected to the nation's highest office later that November.

A special board of five judges had been appointed, Colonel N. B. Baker of Concord, N. H.; Julius Catlin of Hartford, N. A. M. Dudley of New York; S. H. Quincy of Rumney, N. H., and A. H. Bellows of Concord.

The regatta proper took place about the

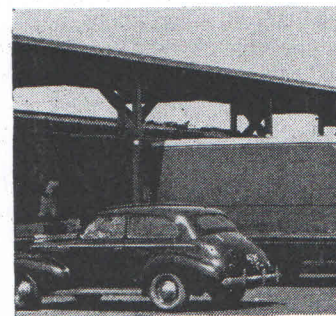
same time it does nowadays — The boats were taken down the lake for a distance of two miles. They had to row a breeze in reaching the finish line in Boston Harbor.

Excitement was keyed to a high pitch when the crowd got a good view of the Harvard rowers in the "Oneida" with blue shirts trimmed with blue, while the crew of the "Shawmut" had red shirts trimmed with red, and the "Undine" wore white shirts faced with blue.

It was a victory for Harvard. The "Shawmut" led the "Undine" by four lengths, the "Undine" trailing by eight. Four was the time. The winners might have been dented if it had not been for a water-soaked board, loosened from the "Undine" in Center Harbor, drifted unobscured and submerged oar of an "Oneida" could not lift it at the end of the race. Most men would have caught it, but "Sid" Willard, the big, braided oar, stiffly held his oar flat in the water and carried clear.

To the victors, a pair of black

## Growing E



KEEPING pace with the newest transportation, the Boston and Maine has constructed an additional 100 feet in Boston to accommodate the operation of a new merchandising platform, so-called "pool cars." The new platform augments a form constructed earlier to accommodate cars.

Our expanded facilities are to serve the merchants in the Boston area and



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same time it does nowadays — about 4 p.m. The boats were taken down the lake in tow of a horse-boat to an estimated distance of two miles. They had to row against a light breeze in reaching the finish line at Center Harbor.

Excitement was keyed to a high pitch, and the crowd got a good view of the race. The Harvard rowers in the "Oneida" wore white shirts trimmed with blue, while the Yale crew of the "Shawmut" had white shirts trimmed with red, and the "Undine" crew wore white shirts faced with blue.

It was a victory for Harvard. The "Oneida" led the "Shawmut" by four lengths, with the "Undine" trailing by eight. Fourteen minutes was the time. The winners might have bettered this if it had not been for a mishap. A water-soaked board, loosened from a dock at Center Harbor, drifted unobserved over the submerged oar of an "Oneida" rower, so he could not lift it at the end of the stroke. Most men would have caught a bad "crab," but "Sid" Willard, the big, brawny oarsman, stiffly held his oar flat in the water until it was carried clear.

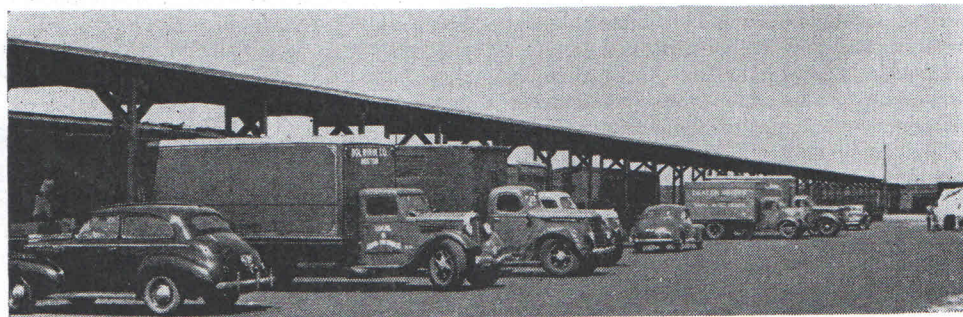
To the victors, a pair of black-walnut sculls,

silver-mounted, were awarded at a special ceremony after the race. The presentation was made with an appropriate little speech by the gentleman who would be living in the White House within a year's time — General Pierce.

The railroad failed to reap any big profit from the racing, but it must be said for Superintendent Elkins that he more than lived up to his part of the bargain. The college men were taken over the Lake and railroad to Plymouth, where a day was passed in outings to various points of interest. Furnished with return passes, the boys headed home on the following Saturday — all well pleased with the good time they had been shown.

Not even Mr. Elkins could have dreamed what would be the result of this eight-days junket put on by his railroad. He little knew that he had started a sports event that was to become a college classic. Subsequent regattas have been in better form, have drawn bigger crowds and have cost a great deal more money, but it is doubtful if any provided more spontaneous fun and enthusiasm than the pioneer event, which was inaugurated by this big-hearted railroad official.

## Growing Business Finds Us Prepared



Our new pool car platform in yard 7, Boston

KEEPING pace with the newest trends in transportation, the Boston and Maine Railroad has constructed an additional 10-car platform in Boston to accommodate the rapid expansion of a new merchandising and shipping operation, so-called "pool car shipments." The new platform augments a six-car platform constructed earlier to handle "pool cars."

Our expanded facilities are to better serve merchants in the Boston area who pool their

purchases, usually in perishable goods, in order to obtain shipments in carload quantities. The cars arrive in the name of one consignee and are then distributed by trucks to a score or more stores and dealers.

This type of business is steadily increasing throughout the country and the construction of spacious unloading platforms especially to accommodate such business in Boston met with prompt and enthusiastic response among local merchants.