

# *The International Propeller Club of the United States, Port of Tampa, Inc.*

*Chartered May 1929 – Port #5*

## HISTORY

One of the first Propeller Clubs founded, the Port of Tampa chapter was chartered May 25, 1929, as Port No. 5 by transportation industry leader Alex Findlay. 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. Speakers at Propeller Club meetings in 1938 encouraged the Chamber of Commerce, which handled trade development, to concentrate on trade with Central and South America and to diversify the Port's cargo mix.

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.

The Florida legislature established the Hillsborough County Port Authority (now the Tampa Port Authority) in 1945 with a mission to develop the Port, create jobs and continue the momentum established as a result of World War II.

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. Sam Gaillard of Lykes Bros. Steamship Co., who had served as President of the club for 1946-47, was named national Vice President in 1948. In 1950, Tampa attorney Hugh McArthur was also appointed to the post of national Vice President after having served as local President for 1947-48.

With the drop in wartime shipping activity, however, membership declined, and eventually the club became inactive. In 1954, Port and Chamber of Commerce leaders William O. Savage, K.I. McKay, Robert Kuhn and Tampa Marine Company President William H. Reynolds worked to reactivate the organization. Reynolds, who was Chairman of the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce Port Development Committee, was named President of the club and he and a club delegation participated in the 28th National Propeller Club Convention held in Miami. That same year, the Hookers Point shipyard facility was deeded to the Hillsborough County Port Authority.

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 9,000,000 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, club President W.O. Savage presented seven Propeller Club members with awards honoring their 25 years of service to the club. Bill Savage served as Secretary of the club from 1972-1982 and became one of the dominant leaders of the organization, generating enthusiastic support for the club from Port and community leaders until his untimely death in 1982. He served on the National Executive Committee and was national President-elect in 1982. Members Gilbert Turner and Dennis Fusilier joined Bill in starting one of the most popular events of the club, 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 R. Savage, son of Bill Savage, is now chairman of the event, which remains one of the club's most popular.

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. Events such as an annual Safety Conference were held as a service to the Port and community to keep members involved in the organization. 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. Besides attendance at the international conventions, the club became active in other national programs, including the Southeast Regional Convention, and the annual "Salute to Congress."

The first issue of the monthly newsletter "Port-O-Call" was published to generate interest and enthusiasm for the Convention and continues to keep club members informed on activities and Port news. This publication is now a quarterly newsletters and available on our website [www.propellerclubtampa.com](http://www.propellerclubtampa.com).

Convention chairman and club treasurer Gilbert Turner, also a member of the National Executive Committee, was named National Member of the Year in 1984.

By 1985, Tampa's club was the largest in the U.S., winning the national "Port of the Year" Award in recognition of its growth and activities. It was also named Port of the Year for the Southeastern Region in 1985 and hosted the 1986 and 1990 regional Conventions.

In 1986, the club elected the first woman President in the Southeastern Region, Jean Rustin, who was only the second in the U.S. The club also opened an administrative office in space donated by the Tampa Port Authority to handle its activities. Board member Dennis Fusilier was named 1986 National Member of the Year and was elected to the National Executive Committee.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Tampa's club continued to support Port projects, providing an industry voice and source of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers when needed.

Past president Dennis Fusilier received a service award from the National Propeller club in 1995 for his assistance on the Maritime Industry Salute to Congress, and Joyce Pettis was honored as the National Propeller Club Member of the Year for 1995-96.

In 1996, Tampa's club began the sponsorship of Sea Scout Venturer Post, Ship 555. Members of the club and others made generous donations of sailboats, other vessels and time and in kind services to support the Ship. The club launched its annual StoneCrabFest in 1997 and Tampa again hosted the regional convention.

In 2000, the club hosted the 74th Annual International Convention of the Propeller Club of the United States. The Convention was one of the more successful in the recent history of the International Club. Walter M. Cline, II, chaired the convention committee and served as National Vice President.

In 2001, Captain John Timmel was named International Maritime Person of the Year for his creation of the club's spectacular fall event, the aforementioned StoneCrabFest, and for his role in the founding the American Victory Mariner's Memorial and Museum Ship. The club continues to support the S.S. American Victory's mission through an annual donation. The Southeast Region again named Tampa its Port of the Year in 2000, 2003 and 2006. In 2001, past president Wade Wetherington was elected to the International Executive Committee.

Each year, celebrating National Maritime Day, the Tampa Club honors the American Merchant Marine with a wreath-laying ceremony, complete with full military honors and color guard. This is one of the events of which the club is most proud.

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 in connection with the Salute to Congress dinner to meet with Florida's congressional delegation.

In 2005, the Propeller Club proposed and sponsored, and the Governor signed into law, a provision increasing the Tampa Port Authority Board 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 members from a list recommended by a joint committee of the Port of Tampa Maritime Industries Association and the Propeller Club.

In 2006, the Tampa club hosted the Annual Conference of the Southeast Region of the Propeller Club. The Southeast Region elected Tim Shusta as Vice President and Janet L. Dougherty as Secretary.

Also in 2006, the Propeller Club partnered with the new Glazer Children's Museum of Tampa and took the leadership role in finding funding partners to sponsor the KidsPort Gallery and Exhibits with an anticipated goal of raising approximately \$500,000. A working committee was appointed for this project and co-chaired by Allen Thompson and Tad Humphreys. The following major sponsors contributed \$50,000 each: CF Industries, Gulfstream Natural Gas Systems, International Ship Repair & Marine Services, Marine Towing of Tampa, OSG Ship Management, Tampa Bay Ship, Tampa Bay Pilots Association, Tampa Port Authority and The Mosaic Company. The Tampa Propeller Club also committed to donate \$50,000 and sees the advocacy for the Glazer Children's Museum(which opened in October 2010) as a vital link in educating children regarding the Port and Maritime Community and supporting their intellectual curiosity and love of learning.

The focus of Tampa's port has begun to change as phosphate and related industries decline and other industries become more prominent. In 2007, the club's board of directors, under the leadership of club president Tad Humphreys, saw an opportunity to embrace the change and to honor all the maritime and related industries in the port. Thus, the board changed Phosphate Night to Maritime Industry Night Celebration and created unsung hero and leadership awards to honor men and women who labor in the port.

In 2007, the Southeast Regional Conference again named Tampa its Club of the Year. Then, in Athens, Greece, the International Club joined in, naming Tampa the International Port of the Year at the International Convention.

The International Club elected Wade Wetherington as International First Vice President and Tim Shusta to the Executive Committee in 2008 and designated Tampa to host the 2010 International Convention. The International Club selected Shusta as its Member of the Year and gave Wetherington a service award for his work on the Executive Committee.

The club commenced a maritime school initiative under the leadership of President Mark LaFon and committee chair Bruce Schuck. Dave Sessums now heads the initiative, which promotes establishment of maritime programs in Hillsborough County public schools. His Education Committee is working with the school system to implement such programs.

In October 2010 the Tampa chapter hosted the 84<sup>th</sup> International Propeller Club Convention. Tad Humphreys, Convention Chair and his committee held one of the best and most profitable conventions in the clubs history.

In February 2012 the Tampa club named Captain Allen L. Thompson, Jr. its Member of the Year and Mr. David McDonald its Maritime Person of the Year. In April 2012 Captain Thompson went on to receive the Southeast Region Member of the Year and is now nominated to be the International Member of the Year!

Traditional annual events each year include: Maritime Industry Night (formerly Phosphate Night); Shrimperoo; StoneCrabFest; Salute to the U.S. Coast Guard; National Maritime Day; Leadership Night (formerly Installation of Officer's); and our Annual Golf Tournament. Then, in August of 2011, we held our first Compass Awards Dinner honoring Florida State Senator Jack Latvala and Florida Representative Dana Young for their legislative efforts relating to revamping the Port Security requirements.

President Dwayne Keith redesigned our form Installation of Officers event and is now referred to as our Leadership Night. It is an evening in which we honor our leaders – past, present and future. We recognize our Past Presidents, our outgoing and incoming board members and introduce the new members who have joined our chapter in the past year. The 2011 event was held at the new Glazer Children's Museum where the reception was held in the Propeller Club – Port of Tampa's "KidsPort" exhibit area, which is where we will once again hold this year's (June 19, 2012) event.

The Port of Tampa and maritime community have experienced many changes in recent years that have impacted the club and its members. But with the continued enthusiastic support of the membership, and an energetic leadership, 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.

Revised 04/30/12