

**Part X Appendix B**  
**PORTER (TB-6) Acceptance; ASN Theodore Roosevelt In Charge**  
**Chronology May- June 1897**

- Mid-May -Roosevelt rides PORTER across the Long Island Sound. He tells reporters, “I am delighted with the PORTER. I will write a letter to Secretary Long about my trip in her. She is a splendid boat. There has been complaint that she is too high out of the water at the bow and too low in the stern. You remember that famous racehorse that was criticized for lack of style. But style was not the main thing, and the horse always got there. That is the case with PORTER. The ‘get there’ quality is the thing that counts in torpedo boats as well as in racehorses.”<sup>i</sup>
- May- June 1897 - True to his word, Roosevelt writes Secretary John Long about his mid-May trip in PORTER. It is published June 12, 1897.<sup>ii</sup>

Sir:

“On reaching Bridgeport I found that the trial of the NASHVILLE had been deferred on account of the weather. and instead of returning by train I thought I would take the opportunity for a run on the torpedo boat PORTER. Of course, they had no knowledge that she would be needed, but in eight minutes from the time word was given she was under way. We crossed the Sound to Oyster Bay in fifty minutes, going at an average speed of 25 knots. It was like riding a high-mottled horse. In spite of the great speed the action was wonderfully smooth. Even over the stern there was very little jarring or vibration—so little as to be practically a negligible quantity. When at high speed her bow lifted slightly from the water, as she seemed to travel best in this trim. There was no bow wave, and when we got out of shoal water hardly any stern wave. Altogether I was delighted with her.”

“While sitting on the bow I looked at the mark where she struck the dock the other day.<sup>iii</sup> Of course, with these torpedo boats their frailty is part of the very essence of their being. The qualities which it is essential they should possess are conditioned upon their structure being of the lightest possible type; and it is out of the question to hope that organisms so delicate will not necessarily suffer now and then from unavoidable mishaps. In this particular instance, however, there was practically no damage whatever. Boats so delicate which to be handled effectively, must be handled with great daring, necessarily run great risks, and their commanders must, of course, realize that a prerequisite to successfully handling them is the willingness to run such risks. That they will observe proper precautions is, of course required, but it is more important that our officers should handle these boats with dash and daring than that the boats should be kept unscratched. There must be developed in the men who handle them that mixture of skill and daring which can only be attained if the boats are habitually used under circumstances which imply the risk of an accident. The business of a naval officer is one which, above all others, needs daring and decision, and if he must err on either side the nation can best afford to have him err on the side of too much daring rather than too much caution.”

Very respectfully,  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT  
Assistant Secretary

- June 1, 1897- Roosevelt visits Capt. Nat in Bristol. They follow up the visit with an exchange of letters. <sup>iv</sup>
- June ?, 1897- Capt. Nat draft letter to ASN Roosevelt <sup>v</sup>
  - “I will be pleased to go... to the Secretary anytime you desire, if you think my presence will be of any avail.”
  - “I sincerely hope something can be done to end this very unpleasant state of affairs relating to the inspection of this torpedo boat (refers to the forthcoming trial of DUPONT) and that we may be allowed to proceed with the construction according to our specifications and designs unhampered (by) those who have shown themselves antagonistic for no other cause I know of than jealousy.”
  - “I am quite sure that if called in to give their opinion of our capability and integrity in doing the work committed with these boats there are many men among the yachtsmen who will speak for us. And among them Mr. E. D. Morgan, Mr. Eldridge T. Gerry, Ex-Secretary Whitney, Mr. C. Oliver Iselin, Mr. Latham Fish.”
- June 7, 1897- ASN Theodore Roosevelt letter to Capt. Nat, <sup>vi</sup>
  - “I have had quite a talk with the Secretary. I think it would be a very good thing if you could see him yourself. I have asked him to summon Lieut. Wood (commanding officer PORTER); and I am going to see if he will not be willing to have an interview with Alty Morgan or Eldredge T. Gerry. I wish you would write me and state if you would be willing to come on.” (Have found no record that Capt. Nat visited the Secretary.)
- June 10, 1897- ASN Theodore Roosevelt letter to Capt. Nat,
  - “I have had a long talk with the Secretary. I am not at liberty to tell you all that passed. I think you understand... my attitude in the matter...The secretary has a plan... by which thinks further trouble can be averted...” (Have not found a “plan”, but as things worked out the accelerated conduct of the successful two-day final acceptance trials of PORTER and the return to “regular order” treating HMCo as other contractors with on-site Bureau inspectors quieted the criticisms.)
  - “I have made a strong plea that you be given your first payment immediately.” (Either progress payments to HMCo were being withheld or this refers to some or all of the \$22,000 HMCo was seeking.)
- June 11-12, 1897- Final Acceptance Trial <sup>vii</sup>
  - An extended two-day trial.
  - First day 232 miles in 12-3/4 hours round-trip NYC to Montauk (up the Long Island Sound, returning by sea route) on various boiler combinations. Return trip feed water flange leak caused loss of all fresh water; considered to be a design issue. Completed run on one boiler using sea water. Steering gear generally satisfactory- some vibration of the steering rack.

- Whatever the flange design issue it was fixed overnight, and the trials continued the next day.
- Second day torpedo tube and gun fire tests. Maneuvering tests including tactical diameter, full ahead to full astern stopped in 2/3 ship length. No bad effects from seawater in boiler the day before.
- Board recommended acceptance and offered the opinion that a 12-hour trial is to severe for torpedo boats. (We forget that torpedo boats were meant to spend much of their service stored on land, or moored, weather protected, desiccant materials spread throughout the interior, with reduced manning awaiting mobilization. Operation at sea, battle ready, was an all-hands evolution that could be sustained for a limited time.)
- June 19, 1897<sup>viii</sup> - Roosevelt sends congratulatory letter to CDR Converse on PORTER's excellent trials record.
  - "'The Department avails itself of this opportunity to congratulate the constructors and you, as the general inspector, and your assistant upon the production of so good and staunch a vessel as the PORTER, which, as shown by the reports of the boards upon her preliminary and final trials, was constructed and completed with a skill and attention to details that make this highly creditable to the Navy."

---

<sup>i</sup> Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt referring to the criticisms that have been made on the torpedo boat PORTER. *Army and Navy Journal and Gazette*, Vol. 34. May 22, 1897. P. 709

<sup>ii</sup> "The Torpedo Boat PORTER", *Army and Navy Journal and Gazette*, Vol. 34. June 12, 1897. P. 764.

<sup>iii</sup> Slight damage to stem costing \$175 for HMCo to repair following collision with dock at New York Navy Yard. "The Torpedo Boat PORTER" *Army and Navy Journal and Gazette*, Vol. 34. May 15, 1897. Pg. 688.

<sup>iv</sup> "NGH Diary June 1, 1897" *Halsey C. Herreshoff Collection*, Herreshoff Marine Museum.

<sup>v</sup> NGH- ASN Theodore Roosevelt Letters *Halsey C. Herreshoff Collection*, Herreshoff Marine Museum.

<sup>vi</sup> ASN Theodore Roosevelt letters donated to the Herreshoff Marine Museum by Mr. Robert C. Johnson.

<sup>vii</sup> "The Torpedo Boat PORTER", *Army and Navy Journal and Gazette*, Vol. 34. June 26, 1897. Pg. 804

<sup>viii</sup> Idem