



## James Gordon Bennett

### Notable – Accomplishments/Contributions

James Gordon Bennett, Jr was educated primarily in France. He served briefly in the U.S. Civil War as a naval officer before taking over the *Herald* from his father in 1866. Bennett raised the paper's profile on the world stage when he provided financial backing for the 1869 expedition by Henry Morton Stanley into Africa to find David Livingstone in exchange for the *Herald* having the exclusive account of Stanley's progress.

Like many of his social class, Bennett indulged in the "good life": yachts, opulent private railroad cars, and lavish mansions. He was the youngest Commodore ever of the New York Yacht Club. In 1861, Bennett volunteered his newly-built schooner yacht, *Henrietta*, for the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service during the Civil War. He was commissioned "third lieutenant" (viz., brevet second lieutenant) of the U.S. Marine Revenue schooner *Henrietta* beginning in June 1861. She patrolled Long Island until February 1862 when she was sent to Port Royal, South Carolina. On March 3, 1862, Bennett, commanding *Henrietta*, was part of the fleet which captured Fernandina, Florida. Bennett and the *Henrietta* returned to civilian life in New York in May 1862.

In 1866, he won the first trans-oceanic yacht race, between three American yachts – the *Vesta*, the *Fleetwing* and the *Henrietta* -- which started off of Sandy Hook, New Jersey, on 11 December 1866 amid high westerly winds and raced to The Needles, the furthest westerly point on the Isle of Wight. Bennett's *Henrietta* won with a time of 13 days, 21 hours, 55 minutes.

### Achievements, honors and awards

Gordon Bennett, Jr. introduced polo to the U.S. and established trophies for races in a number of sports, including yachting, automobiles, airplanes, and balloons. To encourage the technical development in the field of aviation, James Gordon Bennett originally opened this competition, founded in 1906, to all flying machines. It is now a gas balloon only event. The Gordon Bennett gas balloon race is the only one of the events Bennett founded that survives today as a major international event. In the first competition 16 hot air balloons took off from Paris. 200,000 viewers were present for this special occasion.

The Gordon Bennett Cup (or Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett) is the oldest and most prestigious event in aviation. It's without a doubt the ultimate challenge and its difficulty puts both pilots and crews to a very demanding test. The aim of the competition is quite simple: "to fly the furthest distance from the launch site." The history of the Gordon Bennett reflects the adventure, the courage and sportsmanship of the crew, who have been known to put their own lives in jeopardy. The contest ran from 1906 to 1938, interrupted by World War I and in 1931. It was suspended in 1939 when the host, Poland, was invaded at the start of World War II. The competition was not officially reinstated by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) until 1983.