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Capt. Charles "Charlie" Barr



1864 - January 25, 1911

Birthplace: Gourock, Scotland. Naturalized U.S. Citizen.

***“You hired me to win this race and that is what I intend to do.”***

It's reported that Capt. Charlie Barr used to shoot the mooring after a day's racing in both *Columbia*, the 137-footer in which he won the America's Cup in 1899 and 1901, and the massive *Reliance* (201 feet tip to tip), in which he won again in 1903. Does it get any more consummately confident than that, bringing a huge sloop head to wind five or six boat lengths away – nearly a quarter of a mile with *Reliance* – calling upon the 64-man crew to lower the sails as the boat coasted for minutes toward its little buoy? What a way to celebrate a Cup victory, what a way to steal all the thunder and give an

opposing skipper something to get stuck in his craw.

And Barr did nothing but celebrate. He won three Cups, never losing a race.

Barr knew the wind, the boat, and the tactics. He piled on sail, took calculated risks, and managed nervous crews with fearless leadership. His record set an all-time standard, as did his mastery of the myriad details it takes to win America's Cups, including intimidation. There were no apparent cracks in the tough Scotsman's armor.

In 1905, Barr was hired as skipper of the 227-foot, 300 ton schooner *Atlantic* for the trans-Atlantic race proposed by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II. Half way across, a gale hit the fleet. The big, powerful schooner drove through seas. Water ran ankle deep in the fancy staterooms below deck. Guests hung on for dear life.

*Atlantic*

's owner, Wilson Marshall, berated Barr, demanded he heave-to. Lashed to the wheel, Barr told Marshall, "You hired me to win..." After Marshall went below, Barr called for more sail.

*Atlantic* won the race, setting a record that lasted nearly a hundred years.

- Roger Vaughan

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## **Links of Interest:**

[Feature Article: "Captain Charlie Barr, Premier of Yachting Skippers" from June 4, 1905 New York Times](#)

[New York Times Article Announcing Charlie Barr's Death, Jan. 25, 1911](#)

[Home Video - "Atlantic - The Legend of Captain Charlie Barr"](#)

[Herreshoff Marine Museum's America's Cup Hall of Fame - Charlie Barr Page](#)

[Wikipedia Page on Charlie Barr](#)

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