

River Boat History Recalled; Many Old Timers Are Coming

The old Mississippi river will have nothing on the Skagit river Saturday afternoon, when river boats will converge on this city and bring an array of old and new river captains, mates and engineers, the like of which Mount Vernon has never witnessed.

Scores of invitations have been sent out by the chamber of commerce committee, and acceptances are now pouring in from these river men, who will attend Saturday's festivities.

Ald river men relate how river boats of 50 years ago brought passengers and freight from Seattle

stopped at Avon, Sedro-Woolley, Hamilton and Lyman, and ran up with passengers as far as Sauk. The only means of entrance in those days was by boat on the river, as there were no roads, and railroads were unheard of.

Capt. Pinkerton Veteran

It is believed that Captain Victor Pinkerton, who resides here, and is captain of the Skagit Chief, is the oldest living river captain still operating on the river. He first arrived on the old stern wheeler Mame 44 years ago as a deckhand, and all he could see

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River History

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of Mount Vernon was a few buildings along the river bank, almost hidden by tall cedar trees. However, the captain states that boats ran up the river with passengers over 50 years ago; the first paddle wheelers being the Zephyr and the Josephine, commanded by Capt. Dan Benson.

Then passenger traffic increased to such an extent that four and five passenger boats were running up the Skagit at the same time. The old Skagit Chief and Henry Bailey, operated by Captains Henry Bailey and George Hill, operated on the river, and Capt. H. H. MacDonald, who first started the present Skagit River Navigation Co. line of boats, which has operated continuously since, purchased the old Henry Bailey, changed her name to the City of Champagne, then rebuilt her and named her the Skagit Queen.

It is related this old stern-wheeler was one of the best known boats on the river, since she had three names during her life. Capt. MacDonald then built and operated the Clan MacDonald, and built and operated many river boats up to the time of his death a few years ago, when his son, Capt. Harry MacDonald, and daughters carried on.

Old Boats Remembered

Other boats operating on the river will be remembered as the T. C. Reed, owned and operated by Capt. Chas. Elwell and Pinkerton over 30 years ago, and the Lilly, Glide, Monroe.

Old river men relate that the only side wheeler which came up the river on regular trips was the old Alki. Thousands of passengers used these boats as the only means of transportation to and from this city, and many are the stories told of the trips taken during floods and storms, as well as when a boat load of passengers was held up for hours, stuck on the tide flats. Also old timers recall the excursions from Mount Vernon on river boats to Whidby Island, carrying hundreds of excursionists on these weekly trips, with band and baseball teams, and accordion orchestras.

Old Timers Coming

Old river men are beginning to lift the veil of years, as they prepare for Saturday's festivities on the river, when they honor one of their old timers, 70-year-old Capt. F. A. Siegel, who has been on the river for 43 years, pulling out dangerous snags, and straightening the channel, as well as dredging out shallow bars. These old river men are beginning to dust off their best yarns to swap with each other, and the old "salts" will be primed to tell all on each other when they gather around the banquet board that evening. These captains, mates, engineers, and all will come from miles around, and this little city will be their seaport for that day.

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From Whidby island will come Captains Hill Barrington and his brother, Harry Barrington, and Capt. John Gilkup, old river men, who have been on rivers from Puget Sound to Nome, Alaska. From Stanwood will come Captains Henry Whalen, Martin Tjerne, and Chief Engineer Charlie Carpenter, who are still active and operate the E. G. English. Word comes that Captains Joe Perkins, Bob Jamison and Chas. Carlson, as well as Ira Getchel, will be here from Everett. Jamison was on the old Alki, a side-wheeler on this river, a half century ago, while Carlson ran the Irene and Black Prince, and Getchell was on the T. C. Reed over 30 years ago.

Seattle will send Col. H. J. Wild, in charge of dredging operations of the rivers of the Sound, as well as his staff, Capt. E. A. Swift of the old Mable, Capt. Johnnie Murray of the old Lilly, and Albert Smiley of the old Forrester, as well as Capts. Ed Lovejoy and Frank Godfried.

Names Are Listed

Past and present river men from this vicinity, who will enjoy the afternoon and evening, will include Captains V. Pinkerton, Harry MacDonald and Frank Diflely, all now operating the boats