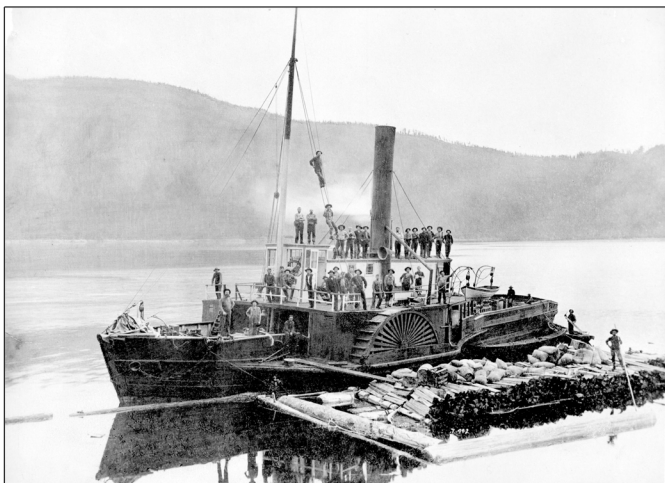


Beaver



Ship Name: Beaver

Vital Statistics:

Length: 30.7 m (100.8') Beam: 6.1 m (20') Draft: 10.1 m (8.5') Tonnage: 190 t

Hull: wood – English and African oak

Armament: 4 brass cannons

Power source: twin sidelever engines rated at 35 hp each that drove two 13' (3.9 m) diameter paddlewheels. Brigantine rigged sails.

Built: Blackwall, England, 1835

Beaver was a steamship built in England in 1835 for the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). It sailed to Fort Vancouver (Vancouver, Washington) where the engine was assembled and paddlewheels mounted. On May 16, 1836, the steam engine was fired up for the first time. The HBC operated *Beaver* for 17 years.

What was the significance of *Beaver*?

1. First steamship on the west coast of North America
2. Made remote parts of the west coast accessible for fur trading
3. Chartered by the Royal Navy for survey work of the BC coastline
4. *Beaver* was stripped of fittings and metal after she ran aground off Prospect Point
5. Wreck site of *Beaver* is currently used to train underwater archaeologists by the Underwater Archaeology Society of BC

What was the Hudson's Bay Company?

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was granted authority in 1670 by King Charles II to exploit the resources in the British Territory that

would later become Canada. It began by trading furs and is still in operation today as one of Canada's major department stores (The Bay). By the beginning of the 19th century the Company was on the west coast. All furs collected on the Pacific Coast were sent to England by ship.

Why did the Hudson's Bay Company bring a steamship to the west coast?

With the development of the first successful steamer in 1801, ships were no longer at the mercy of the winds although they were tied to an abundant, easily accessible fuel source such as coal or wood.

Steamships proved to be more maneuverable and powerful than sailing vessels. These qualities were very attractive to a trading company such as the HBC. With the wreck of two HBC sailing ships on the Pacific Coast, the Company decided to bring a steamship to BC.

Beaver's boilers were built to burn either coal or wood. On its first trip north the ship had a supply of 40 cords of wood, which took 6 men two days to cut. It burned through this supply in 12-14 hours while steaming 370 km. By the 1840's wood was rarely burned, as there was a readily accessible supply of coal from Vancouver Island. To maintain a speed of six knots

(11 km/hr) Beaver burned about one ton of coal each hour

What did Beaver do on the coast?

Beaver was a floating trading post that opened up remote parts of the British Columbian coast for fur trading. When the Oregon Treaty was signed in 1846, establishing the boundary between the United States and Great Britain's Canadian territories, Beaver's homeport was relocated to Fort Victoria (Victoria). After 17 years, the Hudson's Bay Company brought in a second, more powerful propeller steamship (Otter) and Beaver was used to transport passengers and cargo for a few years and then sat idle. It was then chartered by the Royal Navy under the command of Lt Daniel Pender and was used to chart the British Columbia coast from 1863 to 1870. It was sold to a consortium that became British Columbia Towing and Transportation Company in 1874 and towed barges, log booms and sailing vessels.

What happened to Beaver?

Beaver's last trip was on July 25, 1888 when it ran aground on Prospect Point, Stanley

Park in Burrard Inlet, Vancouver. The wreck became a popular Sunday picnic destination for many Vancouverites, often removing pieces for souvenirs. Charles McCain removed about 500 kg of bronze and copper fittings he later turned into memorabilia such as coins, key chains and jewelry. The ship's boiler and paddlewheel shafts were salvaged and the hull finally broke apart in 1892. The wreck site is currently used to train divers in underwater archaeology techniques. The Vancouver Maritime Museum has an exhibit featuring Beaver's anchor, paddlewheel shaft, and boiler.