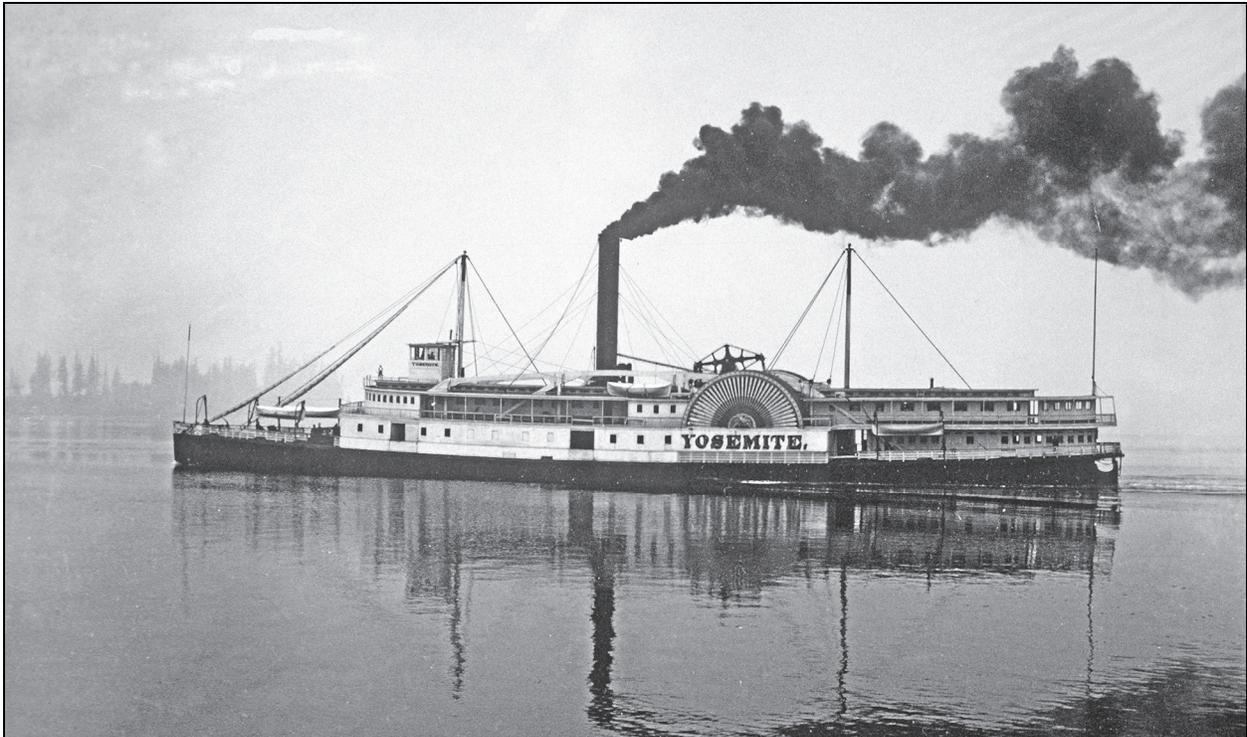


**Stories from the Archives —**  
**A Brief History of the 'S.S. Yosemite' on Indian Arm**

Researched and written by Ralph Drew, Belcarra, BC, July 2017.

The side-wheel steamer 'S.S. Yosemite' was built in 1862 at San Francisco, California, and owned by 'Central Pacific Railroad'. The wood vessel was 282 feet long and 35 feet wide, and was constructed for the Sacramento River trade. In 1865, her boilers exploded killing 55 persons. As a consequence, she was reboilered with steel boilers that same year. <sup>(1)</sup> Railroad competition in California forced her to be laid-up at Oakland from 1879 to 1883. <sup>(2)</sup>



*City of Vancouver Archives (CVA 2011-010.1711).*

**Side-wheel steamer 'S.S. Yosemite' in Vancouver Harbour, 1897.**

In 1883, Captain John Irving of New Westminster, Commodore of the 'Canadian Pacific Navigation Company', bought 'Yosemite' from the 'Central Pacific Railroad' and brought her up to Vancouver to be one of the first vessels of the line. She was put in service between Victoria and New Westminster. <sup>(2)</sup>

'Yosemite' proved to be a good purchase for Captain Irving. Despite her reputation arising from the 1865 boiler explosion, 'Yosemite' ran in Canadian waters for many years without significant trouble. In 1883, she set a speed record of four hours and 20 minutes for the 72-nautical mile (133 km) run from Vancouver to Victoria, which stood until 1901, when the transpacific liner 'Moana' made the run in four hours and one minute.

In 1890–1896, she was owned by 'Canadian Pacific Navigation Company' of Victoria, B.C. <sup>(1)</sup> In those times, ships were subject to health quarantines, in particular for smallpox. Officials were sometimes too quick to declare a smallpox quarantine, which

happened twice in July 1892 to 'Yosemite'. Twice she was barred at Vancouver from landing passengers coming from Victoria, and each time she simply landed them further up Burrard Inlet. Court action was necessary to persuade the Vancouver officials to allow 'Yosemite' to land in their city. <sup>(2)</sup>

In 1901, the 'Canadian Pacific Railway' purchased all of the steamship operations and vessels of the 'Canadian Pacific Navigation Company', including the sidewheeler 'Yosemite', which with other older steamers of the line was placed in reserve to fill in for newer ships taken out for service, and to cover times of high traffic such as in the summer months. By that time, the 'Yosemite' was almost 40 years old.

In August of 1901, the 'Yosemite' participated in the tourist excursion trade, steaming up the North Arm (Indian Arm) to Granite Falls: <sup>(3)(4)(5)</sup>

"Upon special request, the steamer 'Yosemite' will run another daylight excursion up the North Arm, leaving C.P.R. wharf Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00 p.m. Everybody says that the scenery up the North Arm cannot be beat. Fare, 50 cents. Children, 25 cents." <sup>(4)</sup>

In 1906, she was owned by Captain Thomas Grant of Puget Sound, WA. In 1907, she was sold to US real estate promoter C.D. Hillman, and in 1909, she was wrecked under suspicious circumstances near Bremerton, WA. <sup>(1)(2)(6)</sup>

## **References:**

- (1) Nauticapedia Online Vessel Database:  
<http://www.nauticapedia.ca/dbase/Query/Shiplist4.php?&name=Yosemite&id=20399&Page=1&input=Yosemite>
- (2) Wikivisually Online Encyclopedia:  
[http://wikivisually.com/wiki/Yosemite\\_%28sidewheeler%29](http://wikivisually.com/wiki/Yosemite_%28sidewheeler%29)
- (3) "SS Yosemite – Granite Falls & North Arm", Vancouver Daily World, Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1901, page 1.
- (4) "SS Yosemite – Granite Falls & North Arm", Vancouver Daily World, Thursday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1901, page 8.
- (5) "SS Yosemite – Granite Falls & North Arm", Vancouver Daily World, Saturday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1901, page 1.
- (6) "SS Yosemite Wreck Being Investigated In Seattle", Vancouver Daily World, Friday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1909, page 12.