

Slipper's Soliloquies

Early days on the Skagit



By Fred Slipper

In a recent edition of our paper we had a letter from a reader telling about the old time ferries on the Skagit, and the letter mentioned the "Black Prince," a river boat

I have received an interesting letter from J. Lee Lindamood, 911 Chinook Drive, Burlington, telling more about the Black Prince.

Mr. Lindamood's letter is as follows:

Dear Sir:

I saw your inquiry in your paper of February 25th about the Black Prince. This was a flat bottom paddle wheel steamer that towed booms of logs out of the Skagit River to salt water mills in Bellingham, Anacortes, Everett, or Seattle. It came up river as far as Lyman to pick up log tows. The railroad and highway bridges would swing open by hand power (capstan) or gas engine to let the boat through. The boat would whistle four blasts and the bridge tender would hurry to open the bridge. He would put up a gate at each end of the opening and take the gate down when he closed the bridge. There was the Northern Pacific bridge and the highway bridge to Clear Lake. There was the Great Northern and Pacific Highway bridge at North Mount Vernon. Then the Conway bridge to Fir Island.

There were two paddle wheel log towboats that I knew about. One was the Black Prince. The other was the T.C. Reed, another flat bottom paddle wheeler was the Harvester. It hauled freight and people to Seattle. It had 3 stops at Mount Vernon. One south was at Federal condensery for dairy freight. One at the cannery, one at the city dock at the old Mission Theater. Then it passed through the West Mount Vernon bridge and docked at the Carnation condensery. A Captain MacDonald as the owner and skipper. When he died his daughter took over the business until it was not profitable and paddle wheel freight stopped.

The Preston is a paddle wheel boat run by the U.S. Government to take old logs, stumps and other obstacles out of the water ways. It is stationed in Seattle.

I remember the old water sluice way that used to bring logs and shingle bolts to Minkler Lake and the mill there. I was just a kid and used to wonder where the logs and bolts went to when they hit the water. They would come up some distance away. I also remember old man Batey and his cider mill on the Skagit river south of Sedro-Woolley. One of the Burmaster girls married his son. She was called Minnie and was an aunt of Rosie Willard Hansen. I remember Paul Rhodius who ran the greenhouse in Sedro. He became postmaster when Roosevelt was elected. He sold to Harry Moritz who ran the greenhouse for years. I was also a greenhouse man for Hans Hansen.

I must stop here but I remember your name and several more people from Sedro.

J. Lee Lindamood

Thanks for your interesting letter, Mr. Lindamood. I hope to hear from other readers with interesting stories of the old days on the Skagit and other historic happenings in the Skagit Valley.