

ARUNDELL

It has been quite a while since we last featured a passenger steamer in these pages, so we thought it would be appropriate for us to do one this time around. This particular ship is one that deserves attention for a number of reasons. One of those is that more often than not, her name was (and is to this day) misspelled. She also saw service on Lake Ontario and the Upper St. Lawrence River, on Lake Erie and the Detroit River, and also on Lakes Huron and Michigan, and she finished up her days on salt water. As well, there is a very interesting connection between this steamer and the passenger ship KEEWATIN which is featured in our May Dinner Meeting programme - one that very few people know but which we will explain in due course.

On March 16, 1878, the "Buffalo Commercial Advertiser" reported: "Work is progressing very favorably on the iron pleasure steamer being built by Mr. David Bell, of this city, and the boat will be entirely finished before the opening of navigation". On June 7, 1878, the "Buffalo Morning Express" noted that "Mr. David Bell's new iron steamer made a short trial trip up the lake yesterday afternoon, steaming fully 16 miles an hour".

On June 13, the "Buffalo Morning Express" reported that "The elegant and new iron steamer ARUNDELL... is announced as now ready for excursion engagements on Niagara River, the lakes, or the River St. Lawrence. Full information may be obtained at Bell's Engine Works or from Capt. Byers, on board the steamer." Elsewhere, the same edition of the paper noted: "The first trip of Mr. David Bell's beautiful new iron steamer, the ARUNDELL, down the river, will be on Saturday, for the occasion of the excursion of Plymouth M.E. Sunday School. The boat will leave the foot of Main St. at 9:00 a.m."

On June 14, the same paper stated: "The excursion on Saturday on the new, fast iron steamer ARUNDELL, built by Mr. David Bell, bids fair to be a very enjoyable one. The boat will leave the foot of Main St. at 9:00 a.m. and go up the lake, if the weather permits, as far as Windmill Pt. If the weather is not favorable, it will go around Grand Island landing the party at Niagara View. The boat is fitted exclusively for excursions and has every convenience, including perfect shelter from sun and rain, besides cabins and dining room. The ARUNDELL being, it is claimed, the fastest boat in the harbor, cannot fail to be popular during the summer." The Buffalo papers reported several other notable excursions that ARUNDELL ran from Buffalo during the summers of 1878 and 1879.

So what can we tell you about this steamer named ARUNDELL? Unfortunately, not too much information is available about the steamer's original configuration, as shipping registers of the period gave only the most basic details, and nothing at all about engines and boilers or even the identity of the registered owners. The earliest List of Merchant Vessels of the United States (the U.S. government shipping register) we have seen that was produced subsequent to the construction of ARUNDELL was dated 1882, and it showed that ARUNDELL (U.S. 105784) was of 306.12 Gross Tons, had 220 Nominal Horsepower, and was enrolled at Buffalo, New York. (In fact, her first enrollment had been taken out at Buffalo on June 14, 1878.)

The 1884 issue yielded additional information, namely that ARUNDELL had been built in 1878 at Buffalo, was then registered at Bay City, Michigan, and had tonnage of 306.12 Gross and 199.18 Net, and N.H.P. of 220. The 1885 issue of what we familiarly refer to as "M.V.U.S." was the first to give the actual dimensions of vessels listed, and it showed ARUNDELL to be 136.6 feet in length (measured between perpendiculars), 23.4 feet in width of hull, and 11.0 feet in depth, with the same tonnage as shown in the 1884 issue. This information, however, only appeared seven years after the construction of ARUNDELL, so although we may assume that there had been no major changes in the intervening period, we cannot say for sure.

About ARUNDELL's original propelling machinery, we have only minimal information. In the "Buffalo Enquirer" of January 7, 1892, an interview with David Bell, builder and original owner of ARUNDELL, yielded the information that when he rebuilt the United States Revenue Marine 212-ton, wood-hulled steamer ALBERT GALLATIN, which Bell had built at Buffalo in 1871, he took out her original engine and "several years later" put it into ARUNDELL, while he sold the GALLATIN's boiler to the City of Buffalo, which put it to use in the water works engine house. Being a revenue cutter, the GALLATIN had, no doubt, been fitted with an engine powerful enough to enable her to chase contraband runners, which would account for why ARUNDELL was credited with being the fastest steamer operating out of Buffalo.

From Donald Canney's U.S. Coast Guard & Revenue Cutters 1790-1935 (Annapolis, Naval Inst. Press, 1995) we learn that ALBERT GALLATIN's original machinery was "Horizontal, direct act-