



Steamboat C A Shultz on the Rondout

Hudson River Maritime
Museum
Pilot Log 2008

Small Steamboats - Passenger "Yachts" on the Hudson River

By *Barry Thomas*

As important to the Hudson's transportation infrastructure as the express steamers that plied from major towns and cities to New York were the local steamboats- called "yachts" - which connected many riverside villages with these major localities. They were the buses of a bygone era, from the 1870s to about 1920. The network of local routes was the lifeblood of the villages, which were isolated from the centers of commerce like Newburgh, Poughkeepsie, Rondout/Kingston, and Hudson- and too small to merit a landing by the larger steamers.

The "yachts" were small propeller steamboats carrying on average about a hundred passengers. Typically they were two-decked craft, 60 to 80 feet in length, propelled by a minuscule engine to which steam was fed by an equally small boiler.

The small steamers maintained a fixed schedule during the months when the river was free of ice. During their off hours, they might be chartered for an excursion by a local organization like a volunteer firemen's association.

Rondout was the base of operations for the vessels that operated to Glasco and Malden (near Saugerties), downriver to Poughkeepsie, and along the Rondout Creek on which one could venture as far as Eddyville by boat. The upriver towns

continued on page 39



The Edwin B. Gardner traveled between Rondout and Glasco and Rondout and

of Coeymans, Coxsackie, New Baltimore and other points were way landings on a web of routes between Hudson and Albany and on to Troy. Similar routes were maintained out of Newburgh and other downriver locations.

At Rondout, vessels like *Augustus J. Phillips*, *Charles A. Shultz*, *Charles T. Coutant*, *Edwin B. Gardner*, *Glenerie* (later *Elihu Bunker*), *Henry A. Haber*, *John McCausland*, *Kingston*, *Morris Block* and others maintained these local services, providing for the transportation needs of many residents and businesses along the creek and in the small riverside villages and hamlets.

With the construction of paved roads and the popularization of the bus and motor car for transportation in the 1920s, the era of the “yachts” on the river came to a close. One by one the yachts were dismantled or otherwise left the routes over which they had been so much a part of life along the Hudson. No longer would the daily routine on the river be punctuated by the whistles of the “yachts” as they made their frequent landings.



The Henry A. Haber traveled the Rondout Creek from Rondout stopping at Wilbur,