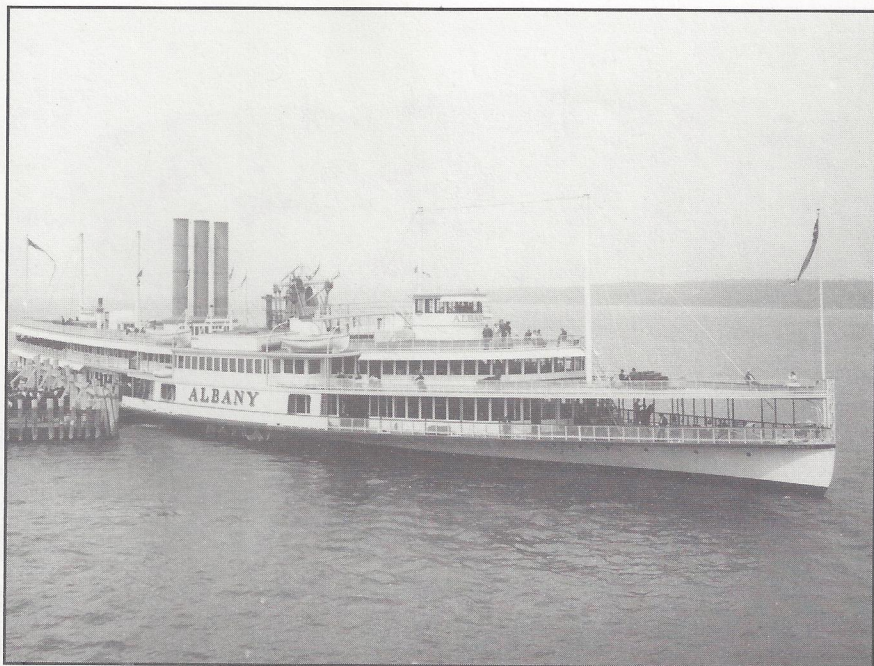




PILOT LOG 2003



The "Albany" tied up at Newburgh Landing.

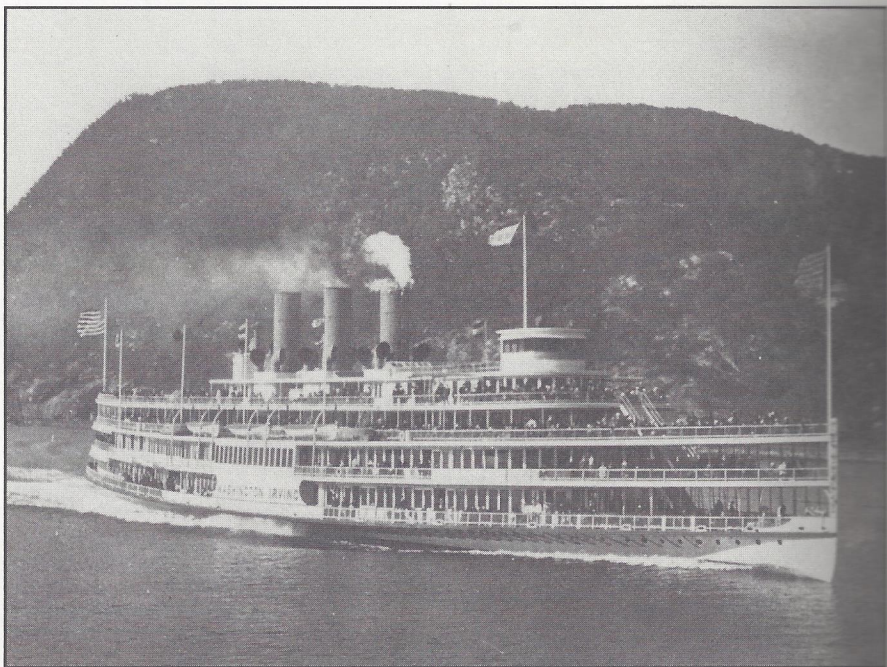
The Hudson River Day Line

During the last half of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century, there were operators of steamboats on virtually every navigable body of water. In the United States, the best known of them all was the Hudson River Day Line.

The success of the Hudson River Day Line was the result of a number of factors. It was probably the best managed, was the most adaptable to economic changes, had an extremely large potential passenger source in the metro New York area, traversed an incredibly scenic waterway, carried the most passengers, operated superbly maintained and equipped vessels, ran its steamers solely during day-light and as a result was seen by the most people, and lasted the longest.

The early years of the Day Line were dominated by a man by the name of Alfred VanSantvoord who earlier had been engaged in the operation of towing vessels between Albany and New York. By the 1880s, the number of passengers travelling to the northern Catskills and to the Adirondacks or the Berkshires by way of Albany had increased dramatically. VanSantvoord placed in service two new steamboats—"Albany" and "New York"—which for the next two decades were the Day Line.

By 1896, Kingston Point had been developed as a pleasure park and steamboat landing with direct connections to the Ulster and Delaware Railroad whose rails



The "Washington Irving" off Anthony's Nose.

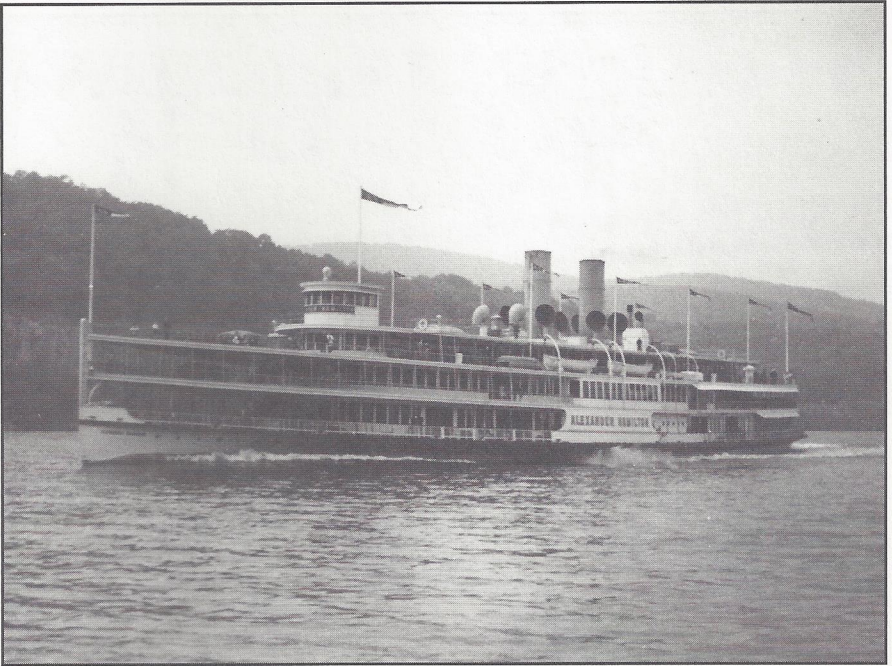
had been extended to the Point. The Day Line immediately moved across the Hudson from their former landing at Rhinecliff, and Kingston Point became their most important up-river landing.

The number of passengers carried by the Day Line continued to grow by impressive numbers. So much so that a new steamboat was built and placed in service in August 1906—a 390' steamer named "Hendrick Hudson." At that time, she was authorized by the federal government to carry 5,500 passengers, the most for any vessel anywhere.

Plans were underway to build another new steamboat as a running mate for the "Hendrick Hudson." The plans, however, were deferred as the "New York" was destroyed by fire while at a Newburgh ship yard for minor repairs, after the close of the 1908 season. A new steamer was needed in a hurry in time for the 1909 Hudson-Fulton celebration and the resulting vessel was the "Robert Fulton."

In 1913, a running mate for the "Hendrick Hudson" was launched, completed and placed in service as the "Washington Irving." The "Irving" was first class marine transportation in every respect: the greatest of all the Day Liners in size, speed, accommodations and capacity, being licensed to carry 6,000 passengers.

After the end of World War I, the automobile, which previously had pretty much been a play-thing of the rich, began to appear in great numbers. The automobile changed the travelling habits of the nation forever. The number of passengers embarking to up-river points began to decline and more and more passengers were "daytrippers", out for a day on the River.



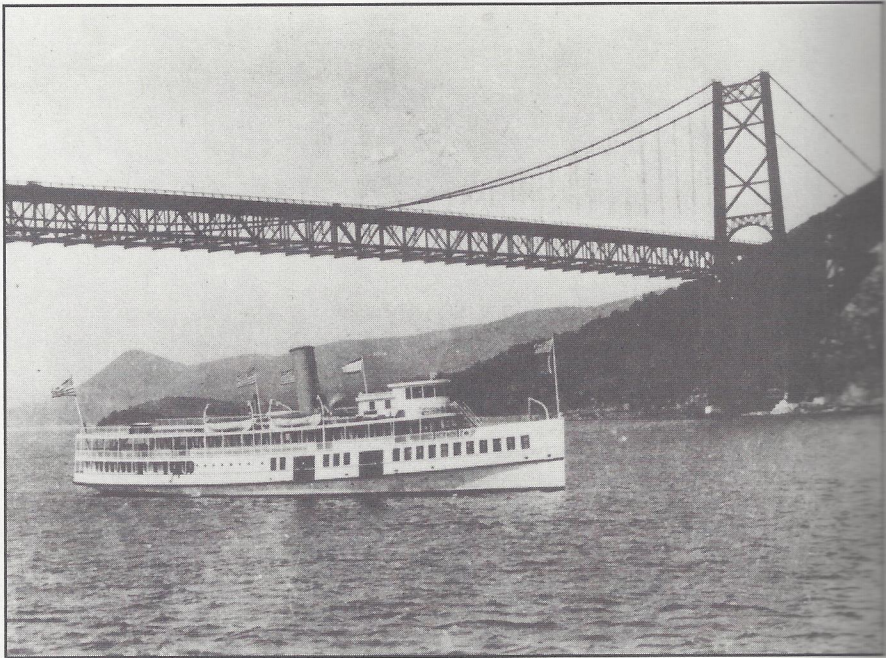
The "Alexander Hamilton," the last side wheeler built for service on the Hudson.

The Day Line management, seeing the change in their passenger mix, acquired a steamer that had been built as a pre World War I night boat for service on Long Island Sound. She was converted to a day steamer in 1921 for the growing number of "day trippers." She was named the "DeWitt Clinton."

To further accommodate the potential revenue to be generated by the "excursionists", the Day Line decided to build a pleasure park of its own. To do so, it acquired 320 acres of land south of Peekskill, and in 1923 developed a first class park, named Indian Point, and promoted it heavily with better service than that, for example, to Bear Mountain.

The early 1920's were prosperous years for the Day Line. In 1924, the company had a new steamer built and named it the "Alexander Hamilton", which turned out to be the last side-wheel steamboat to be built for Hudson River service. The Company was also actively promoting charter trips, whereby a company, a group of churches or other organizations would charter a whole boat for a trip upriver, preferably to Indian Point. To accommodate smaller groups, in 1925 the Day Line acquired a small steamer from Maine and renamed it "Chauncey M. Depew." The year 1925 was also the Day Line's peak year of operation with a total of nearly 2,000,000 passengers being carried on its then fleet of seven steamboats.

The 1926 season was started with a great deal of publicity and high expectations. It soon turned into a disaster, for on June 1, 1926 the "Queen of the Fleet", the "Washington Irving", on leaving its pier in lower Manhattan on a routine trip to Albany, was in a collision with a tugboat and she sank to the third deck off a pier at



The "Chauncey M. Depue," smallest of the Day Line boats.

Jersey City. It was the end of this great steamboat after a relatively short career of only 13 seasons. The following year, 1927, the Company brought out a new vessel, the "Peter Stuyvesant", which turned out to be the last steamboat to be built for use on the Hudson.

The onset of the Great Depression of the 1930's created a period of substantial difficulty for the Company. The number of passengers carried in 1930 dropped by over 200,000 from the figure of a year before. In 1933, the Line was forced into receivership and the "DeWitt Clinton" was laid up, reducing the active fleet to five.

Because of gasoline rationing, automobile usage was severely limited, causing passengers to return to Day Line steamers in record numbers. However, as soon as the War was over and the gasoline rationing ended, the ominous decline in the number of passengers carried resumed.

During the immediate post World War II years, the Day Line operated almost as in the pre-War years. On the morning of September 13, 1948, the "Robert Fulton" left Albany on a routine last day of the season down river trip, making all of the usual landings. Shortly thereafter the Hudson River Day Line announced it was ceasing all operations. Ironically, a man named Robert Fulton started New York to Albany steamboat service and a boat bearing the name "Robert Fulton" ended it. It was the end of an era.

A successor company did acquire three of the old Day Line vessels and operate them mostly on the southern end of the River. At first, there were three, then two, and finally one—the "Alexander Hamilton" which made the last landing on Labor Day 1971.

Roger Mabie