

Paddle Wheel Steamboats on the Kennebec and Beyond: A slide PowerPoint program on the history of Paddle Wheel Steamboats along the Maine coast with particular emphasis on the Kennebec River.

The start of the session will show the earliest steam powered craft in New England and the important part played by the inventors and early operators in Maine, much of it along the Kennebec. Other subjects will be where the paddle wheel boats were built and why they continued to be built and used after the propeller driven vessels had become very efficient.

There are plenty of pictures of the side wheelers plying Maine waters as I explain how these boats offered access for commerce as well as tourists. I encourage questions and discussion toward the end of the evening.

A little about me: I grew up in central New Hampshire with an interest in boats ever since I can remember. Maybe this is because my grandparents had a cottage on the beach at Cape Neddick but I have never outgrown my love of boats, ships, and the New England coast. When ever I had to do a report in school it always had something to do with water.

After getting a degree in civil engineering I came to live in Gardiner in 1966 because my work was to travel the state and sell machinery to road building contractors as well as loggers, paper mills and municipalities. The reason I picked Gardiner is because I could make a short trip down route 27 to Wiscasset and launch my boat. My boats got bigger and the time spent on the water became longer and I met more people with my involvement with teaching boating safety courses.

I got pulled away from Maine to work in Vermont for two years; it wasn't the Maine coast so I had to use Lake Champlain to fill in. Upon returning to Maine I settled in Cumberland, living three miles from the water for the last thirty seven years. I've navigated the whole Maine coast in both power and sail boats, in sunshine and in fog, and in heavy wind and flat calm.

Over the last twenty five years the computer has been my friend, connecting me with boating when I'm not on the water. I've been able to gather photos, add books to my library, and in the last ten years put together power point programs on subjects that interest me. This brings me in contact with folks that share my interest in history and in general living the dream of "the way life should be."

I've done presentations on how a steam locomotive works, the life of the inventor Charles Kettering, all of the tug boats that have worked in Maine waters, the history of roads in Maine and New England, transportation and public works projects in Maine as well as the beautiful boats built here in Maine and the naval architects who designed them; so much to talk about and so little time. About a year ago I started working on my steamboat program, first making a data base

on all the steam passenger boats that had regular routes in Maine. The list is then reviewed by checking the registration number for each boat to find out where and when it was built, the type of propulsion, and the exact dimensions. This has to be done because boats can have many owners over their life span but only one official "documentation" number. I used about a dozen books to learn the stories on the various companies, read various articles, and then go to searching the web to satisfy my technical appetite about the walking beam engines that turned the paddle wheels on most of the vessels. Finally there's the search to get the best photographs that show the design differences and the boats doing what they did best, carrying people from place to place. Most of the images have to be reworked in the computer before being installed into the slide program.

All the time I'm thinking about what the next program will be. Some of this depends on what I can find for research material and weighing in on what I think will interest others and what interests me. – George Barrett