

**Stories from the Archives —  
A Brief History of the 'S.S. Strathcona' on Indian Arm**

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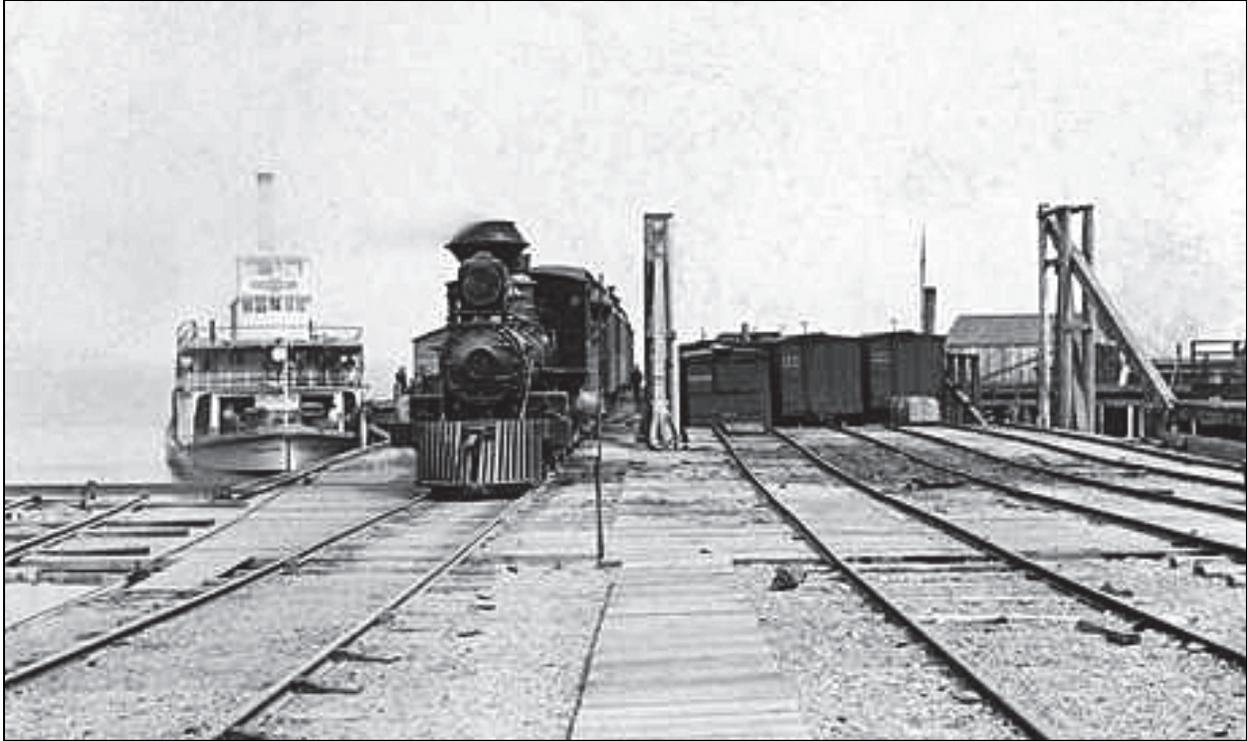
The wooden sternwheel steamer 'S.S. Strathcona' was built at Vancouver in 1898 by 'B.C. Iron Works', and was 142.4 feet long and 30.4 feet wide, with a draft of 4 feet. In 1898–1901, the vessel was owned by the 'Hudson's Bay Company' in London, UK, and served on the Stikine River under the command of Captain George Odin. <sup>(1)</sup>



*British Columbia Archives (BCA B-04567).*

**Sternwheel Steamer 'Strathcona' at Wrangle, Alaska, circa 1900 —  
the wooden freight and passenger vessel was built at Vancouver in 1898 by  
'B.C. Iron Works', and was 142.4 feet long, 30.4 feet wide, with a draft of 4 feet. <sup>(1)</sup>**

In 1902, the 'S.S. Strathcona' was owned by Charles Spratt of Victoria, and utilized to start the Sidney and Nanaimo ferry route on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1902, operated by the 'Sidney and Nanaimo Transportation Company' (S&NT). The sternwheeler had worked for three months of that year before she blew a cylinder on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1902. The ship was unable to be repaired, so she was immediately retired from S&NT and replaced. <sup>(1)</sup>



*British Columbia Archives (BCA C-03679).*

**Sternwheel Steamer 'Strathcona' at the 'Victoria and Sidney Railway' wharf at Sidney, circa 1905.**

In 1908, the 'S.S. Strathcona' was purchased by 'Ironside, Rannie & Campbell' and completely overhauled in Vancouver for the excursion trade since "a vessel [such] as the 'Strathcona' has long been wanted on Burrard Inlet": <sup>(2)</sup>

"The trial trip of the excursion steamer 'Strathcona' on Sunday afternoon [August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1908] was a most enjoyable event. Those on board were unanimous in the opinion that while there might be larger excursion boats, there was not a better fitted one. The arrangements are admirable in the extreme. Dancing floor, tea room, smoking room, music room, wine room and dozens of small rooms fitted with chairs and tables for all private parties combine to make an ideal excursion boat for a party of about 400." <sup>(2)</sup>

In September 1908, the 'S.S. Strathcona' began a direct steamer service between Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, departing the Johnson wharf in Vancouver harbour every Sunday and Wednesday morning for New Westminster and Chilliwack, calling at way landings, and returning every Tuesday and Friday. <sup>(3)(4)</sup> It appears that this ferry and freight service to the Fraser Valley wasn't a profitable undertaking.

In the Spring of 1909, the 'Strathcona' was again waiting to be put on the ways in North Vancouver for a further refit as an excursion boat: <sup>(5)</sup>

"If arrangements at the North Vancouver shipyards can be completed in time, the paddle-wheel steamer 'Strathcona', which has been lying at the Johnson wharf all winter, will be taken over to North Vancouver today or tomorrow to be placed on the ways and refitted as an excursion boat to ply on the Inlet run around North Arm [Indian Arm] during the summer." <sup>(5)</sup>

During the summer of 1909, the 'Strathcona' was active in the Burrard Inlet excursion business, accompanying the 'Royal Vancouver Yacht Club' in July on its midsummer club cruise to Deep Cove, <sup>(6)</sup> and advertising "Moonlight Excursions" up the North Arm (Indian Arm) with music and dancing on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. <sup>(7)(8)</sup>

Throughout the summer of 1909, the 'Strathcona' also departed twice daily from Johnson wharf in Vancouver harbour for North Arm destinations such as 'Strathcona Park' (adjacent 'Roslyn' and 'Cove Cliff') and 'Indian River Park': <sup>(9)(10)</sup>

"Special arrangements for picnic parties. Fare, 50¢ round trip. Meals *a la carte*. Camping grounds, 'Strathcona Park', provided on application. The 'Strathcona' is carrying all passengers free and return from 'Roslyn'." <sup>(9)</sup>

The reference to free passage for passengers going to 'Roslyn' (today 'Dollarton') was in regard to the sale of properties in the 'Roslyn Subdivision' being promoted by the Vancouver real estate firm 'G.A. Barrett & Co.'

Unfortunately, the summer of 1909 was the first and only "camping season" that the sternwheeler 'Strathcona' plied the waters of Indian Arm, as she was wrecked in late 1909 at Page's Landing on Gabriola Island where she was beached and stripped. <sup>(1)</sup>

## **References:**

- (1) Nauticapedia Online Vessel Database:  
[http://www.nauticapedia.ca/dbase/Query/Shiplist4.php?&name=Strathcona%20\(I\)&id=13673&Page=1&input=strathcona](http://www.nauticapedia.ca/dbase/Query/Shiplist4.php?&name=Strathcona%20(I)&id=13673&Page=1&input=strathcona)
- (2) "New Excursion Steamer Given Trial Trip", Vancouver Daily World, Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1908, page 14.
- (3) "A direct steamer service between Vancouver and Fraser Valley", Vancouver Daily World, Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1908, page 3.
- (4) "Steamer 'S.S. Strathcona' Sailing Schedule", Vancouver Daily World, Tuesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1908, page 18.
- (5) "Strathcona To Be Completely Refitted", Vancouver Daily World, Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1909, page 13.
- (6) "Royal Vancouver Yacht Club Cruise", Vancouver Daily World, Friday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1909, page 18.
- (7) "Steamer 'Strathcona' Moonlight Excursion", Vancouver Daily World, Tuesday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1909, page 24.
- (8) "Steamer 'Strathcona' Moonlight Excursion", Vancouver Daily World, Thursday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1909, page 16.
- (9) "Steamer 'Strathcona' Sailing Schedule", Vancouver Daily World, Friday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1909, page 16.
- (10) "Steamer 'Strathcona' Sailing Schedule", Vancouver Daily World, Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1909, page 20.