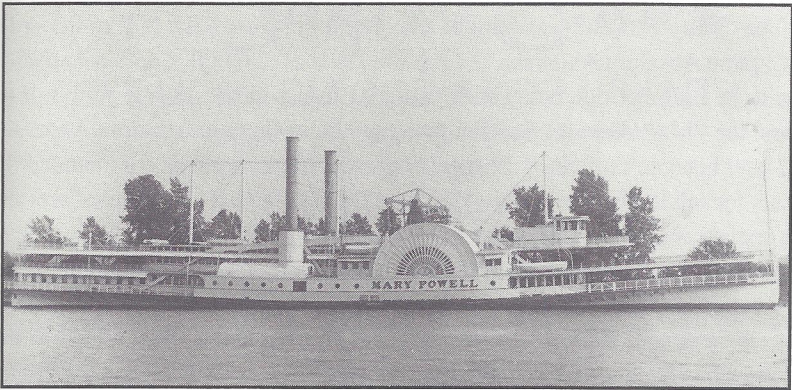


HUDSON RIVER MARITIME MUSEUM  
**PILOT'S LOG 2000**



# THE “MARY POWELL”

Roger Mabie



The steamboat “Mary Powell”, built in 1861, sailed on the waters of the Hudson River over a period of 55 years. She was one of the fastest steamboats of her time, was pleasing in appearance, and reliable. She became known as the “Queen of the Hudson.”

By the middle of the 19th century, commerce on the Hudson River was particularly vigorous. The Hudson River - Erie Canal corridor was one of the principal gateways to the west. The Delaware and Hudson Canal, opened in 1828, brought coal destined for use in the northeast from Pennsylvania to the Hudson River at Kingston. The railroads were just beginning to appear on the scene, all of which made the steamboat the principal method for the movement of people and freight.

By the 1860s, the section of Kingston bordering the Rondout Creek had become the leading port between Albany and New York. Between 1861 and 1863, three large steamboats were built to take advantage of the booming economy and home ported at the village of Rondout (in 1872 becoming part of the city of Kingston). Two of the steamboats were night boats for the carrying of freight and overnight passengers. The third was the “Mary Powell,” designed as a day steamer solely for the carrying of passengers.

For virtually her entire career, her schedule was to leave Kingston early in the morning and make landings at Poughkeepsie, Milton, Newburgh and Cornwall, arriving at her pier in lower Manhattan in the late morning. On her return she would leave New York at 3:30 p.m. and arrive back at Kingston in the early evening. Over the years, other landings were made or discontinued as traffic warranted, as did minor time changes in her schedule. The period of operation normally was from mid-May to late September or early October.

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The "Mary Powell" was built at a shipyard in Jersey City, N.J. to the order of Captain Absalom Anderson at a reported cost of \$80,000. Captain Anderson was to be both her operator and captain. As it turned out, over a period of 40 years, the "Mary Powell" had but two captains – Captain Absalom Anderson and later his son, Captain A. Eltinge Anderson. Other captains commanded the vessel for relatively short periods of time. During her last two years of service, her captain was Arthur Warrington of Kingston.

Initially, Captain Anderson apparently was somewhat disappointed in his new vessel's speed. After the close of her first full season in 1862, the "Mary Powell" was sent back to the shipyard, cut in two, and 21 feet added to her length. The added length achieved the desired result, and thereafter the "Mary Powell" was known as one of the fastest boats on the Hudson. Her reputation for speed was such that during the latter part of the 19th century, a number of newly built yachts were brought to the Hudson and run along with the "Mary Powell" to test the desired speed of the yacht.

The "Mary Powell" was always superbly maintained and had almost a yacht-like appearance. Known as a "family boat," Captain Anderson saw to it that all passengers conducted themselves properly. If they did not, it was said they ran the risk of being put ashore at the next landing.

After the close of the 1902 season, the "Mary Powell" was acquired by the Hudson River Day Line, the largest operator of day steamboats on the river. Although the Day Line continued to operate her, as before, on the Kingston to New York and return run, a number of relatively minor physical changes were made to the steamboat, including new boilers and an enlargement of the second deck forward.

In 1913, the Day Line placed in operation a new steamboat, the "Washington Irving," the largest day boat to be built for service on the Hudson. Her appearance caused a realignment in service of their other vessels, including the "Mary Powell." During the seasons of 1914 to 1917, the "Mary Powell" would start and end the seasons on her old Kingston to New York run. However, during the peak of the seasons, she would be used for charter trips, an excursion type operation from New York to Bear Mountain, and occasionally special trips to Albany. Finally, on September 5, 1917, she sailed on her old route. It was to be her last trip with passengers. She was subsequently layed up at her old "winter dock" on Rondout Creek and in January 1920 was sold for scrapping.