

Stories from the Archives —
A Brief History of the 'S.S. Baramba' on Indian Arm
Researched and written by Ralph Drew, Belcarra, BC, July 2017.

Originally built in 1882 at Victoria by Alex Watson and christened the 'R.P. Rithet', ⁽¹⁾ the steel passenger and freight vessel was 177 feet long and 33.6 feet wide, with a draft of 8.5 feet. From 1882 until 1892, the 'R.P. Rithet' was owned by Captain John Irving's 'Pioneer Line' of New Westminster, and from 1883 until 1896 she was absorbed into the 'Canadian Pacific Navigation Co.' ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

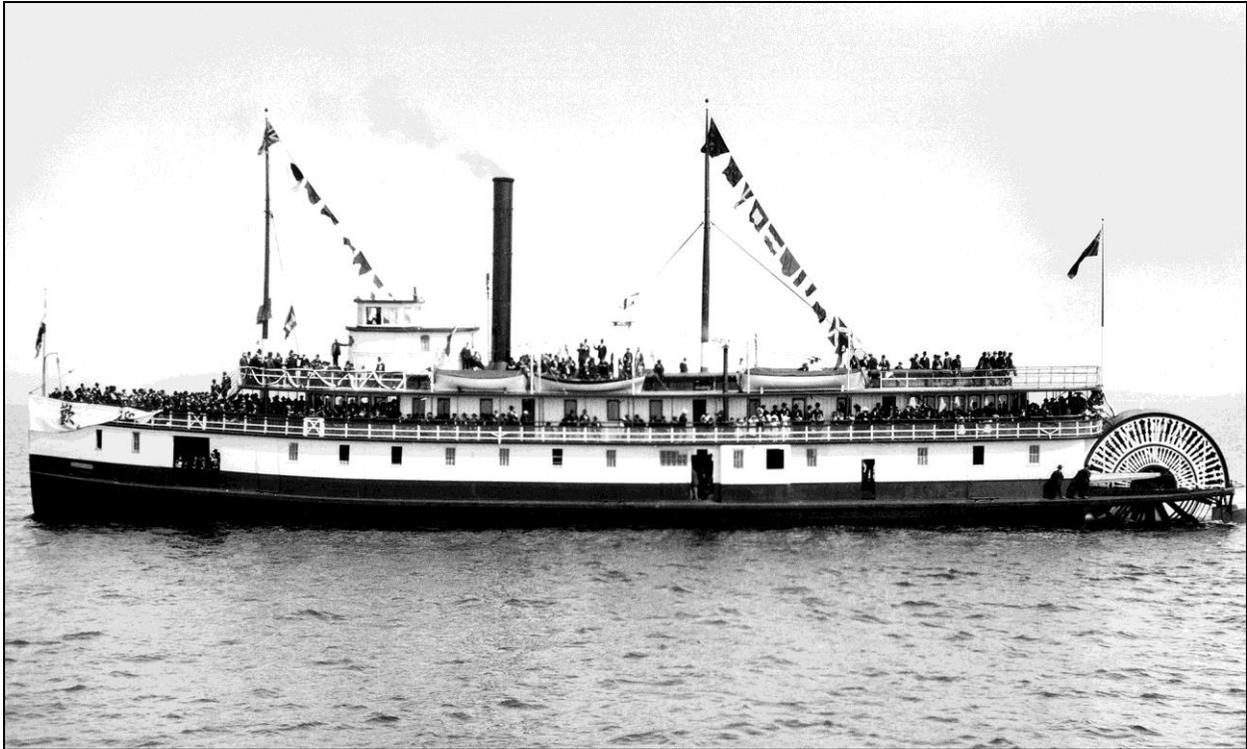


British Columbia Archives (BCA C-03819), photograph by Richard Maynard.

**Sternwheel Steamship 'R.P. Rithet' at Yale on the Fraser River, 1882 —
built in 1882 at Victoria by Alex Watson — 177 feet long and 33.6 feet wide. ⁽¹⁾**

An 1882 newspaper article described the 'Rithet' and its luxurious appointments: ⁽¹⁾

"Perfect in lines and model, she is finished and found in every respect in first-class style. The carving in the saloons is elaborate and ornate, while the upholstery, gilding and general finish are simply gorgeous. The state-rooms are spacious and convenient provided with luxurious spring beds and fittings. In short, in the perfection of her lines, the completeness of her appointments, and the elegance of her design and finish, the 'R.P. Rithet' is truly a floating palace. She is provided with the patent hydraulic steering gear and is brilliantly lighted throughout with 'electricity' having two powerful head-lights placed in huge reflectors. These lights with dazzling brilliance as the noble steamer came into our harbour on Saturday night, the New Westminster Militia band also were on board, playing a lively air. The wharves were literally crowded with people who went down to welcome Captain Irving, and congratulate him upon this, his last great triumph in marine architecture." ⁽¹⁾



Vancouver Public Library (VPL 2977), photograph by Philip Timms.

**Sternwheel Steamship 'S.S. Baramba' in Vancouver Harbour, circa 1909
— note the 1909 refit modifications to the deck level superstructure.**

In early 1901, the 'Canadian Pacific Railway' (C.P.R.) took over the 'Canadian Pacific Navigation Company' (C.P.N.) and its fleet of steamships, including the 'R.P. Rithet'. The name of the C.P.N. continued for a time, as there was not an immediate dissolution of the company's structure. ⁽²⁾

In April 1909, the C.P.R. sold the 'Rithet' to the 'Terminal Steam Navigation Company', which refitted the vessel to serve points between Vancouver and Howe Sound, and renamed the vessel 'Baramba'. ⁽³⁾ The passenger vessel served the communities around Howe Sound for a number of years.

In September 1909, and again during the summer of 1910, the sternwheeler 'Baramba' also participated in the tourist excursion trade, taking passengers up Indian Arm to Wigwam Inn and Granite Falls. ⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾

Of particular note was the completion of the 'Wigwam Inn' when Alvo von Alvensleben, the hotel's owner, chartered the 'Baramba' to take his many guests to the opening event. The hotel was expected to open on Empire Day, May 24th, 1910, but was completed nearly three weeks late. On June 10th, 1910, 600 people sailed up Indian Arm on the 'Baramba' for the grand opening ceremonies. ⁽⁸⁾

In 1917, all machinery was removed from the 'Baramba' and the vessel was converted to a barge. ⁽²⁾ In 1928, she was abandoned at Stuart Bay, Texada Island, B.C. ⁽¹⁾

References:

- (1) Nauticapedia Online Vessel Database:
<http://www.nauticapedia.ca/dbase/Query/Shiplist4.php?&name=R.P.%20Rithet&i d=12601&Page=1&input=Rithet>
- (2) Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R.P._Rithet_\(sternwheeler\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R.P._Rithet_(sternwheeler))
- (3) “ ‘Rithet’ Christened the ‘Baramba’ ”, Daily Colonist, Wednesday, April 28th, 1909.
- (4) “S.S. Baramba – Indian River Park & Granite Falls”, Vancouver Daily World, Friday, September 10th, 1909, page 20.
- (5) “S.S. Baramba – Indian River & Granite Falls”, Vancouver Daily World, Saturday, September 11th, 1909, page 20.
- (6) “S.S. Baramba – Indian River Park, Vancouver Springs”, Vancouver Daily World, Saturday, June 4th, 1910, page 18.
- (7) “S.S. Baramba – Indian River Park”, B.C. Saturday Sunset, June 18th, 1910.
- (8) Ralph Drew, 2015, “Ferries & Fjord: The History of Indian Arm”, Belcarra, B.C., page 225 (ISBN 978-0-9813113-19).