



# STEAM GAGE

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## Northwest Steam Society

[www.northweststeamsociety.org](http://www.northweststeamsociety.org)



*Far Above: Master as she appears today.*

*Left: Northwest Steam Society members Sterling McKinnon, Mike and Cinda Bowman look forward as Master passes under the Burrard Bridge. Photo by Richard Sturgill.*

*Above: Master ( R ) and her sister Sea Swell.*

## Aboard the Mighty Steam Tug S.S. Master

*By Wolfgang Schlager*

After a break of three years, 20 members of our Northwest Steam Society had the opportunity once again to take a ride aboard this vintage wooden steam tug. The **S.S. Master** was moored over the summer at Granville Island, Public Market Docks, in Vancouver, B.C. Tourists and locals had a chance to step aboard this veteran steam tug and learn about her operation and history. Tugboats have always played an important role in British Columbia's economic history.

Granville Island in the old days was an industrial manufacturing area. There, at the shipyard of Arthur Moscrop, the S.S. Master and two sisters were built in 1922. Master was one of the last tugboats still powered by a steam engine. Her triple-expansion steam engine with an output of 330 hp was built in Scotland in 1916 during WWI for the British Navy. When the war ended, these engines, which were never installed, became war surplus and were

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available at low cost. Today Granville Island is a hotspot for Vancouver tourism, with great shopping, dining and entertainment experiences. The “island” (actually a peninsula) is named after Granville Leveson-Gower, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Granville. The entire city of Vancouver was once called Granville, until it was renamed in 1886 in honor of Captain George Vancouver.

For the second Vancouver Tugboat Festival, held over the weekend of September 19 and 20, several additional old and new tugboats set course to Granville Island. Among them, a huge and very impressive gray Canadian Navy tug. The festival wraps up with the tugs departing from the docks on Sunday at 1:00 pm and parading along False Creek and English Bay.



*Crew and passengers enjoying the view steaming eastward on False Creek, as a water taxi passes. Photo by Richard Sturgill.*

For Sunday, the weatherman had wet and windy conditions in his forecast. And, it was actually raining quite heavily when we, Fred and Cathy Thompson, my wife Angelika and myself, were heading north on I-5 towards the border. After crossing into Canada, it rained less and less, and finally stopped altogether. Finding parking on Granville Island is never easy and it took a while to find a spot. Despite it being late September,



*Richard Sturgill and Merideth Goodman in the bow. Photo by Sterling MacKinnon.*



*Master steams past the picturesque Point Atkinson in choppy seas. Photo by Richard Sturgill.*

many tourists were still in town. We were lucky to find a table at an eatery inside the Public Market.

While eating our sandwiches and talking we lost a bit the feeling

for the time. Finally realizing the time, we had to hurry to get on board as Master's steam whistle signaled her imminent departure. Cathy Thompson, a bit behind us, almost missed the boat, as the ladder had been removed already and only the bow was still leaning against the dock. But strong arms of helpful deckhands virtually hoisted her on board in the last moment. Master has an all-volunteer crew. Back when she was still a working tug, the seven-man crew consisted of a master, a chief mate, two deckhands, an engineer and two firemen.

Master turned around and steamed into the False Creek inlet, almost to the very end, before turning around once again. Folks ashore and on boats waved and gestured that they wanted to hear the mighty steam whistle. When passing the Public Market's docks, outward bound for English Bay, a huge crowd was cheering and waving. Master responded with long blasts of the whistle. Some light rain showers and some wind greeted us out in English Bay. Several large bulk

*Top of the Royal Navy engine in Master. She generated about 330 hp at 90 RPM. Photo by Sterling MacKinnon.*



carriers were at anchor and were waiting to load a cargo of lumber, grain or sulfur. Capt. Russ Copeland, the master of the tug took a course toward Point Atkinson Lighthouse. The wind picked up and the sea got a bit choppy. Master started to pitch and roll somewhat, and took an occasional wave, that made the main deck awash. All movements of the tug, however, were slow and smooth. This indicates that the tugs stability is sufficient and that she is a good and seaworthy boat. All of a sudden, the wind changed its direction, as a weather front had passed overhead. Visibility became poor, and we could make out the

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(Aboard the **Mighty Master** — Continued from page 4)"

lighthouse only when we came close. The tug turned around and headed back to False Creek with following wind and sea at a speed of close to seven knots.

Most NWSS members were interested to watch the smoothly running steam engine and they took turns to visit the engine room. When entering False Creek again, it became somewhat difficult to turn Master around. Another tugboat provided assistance, and after a most interesting three-hour excursion, we were safely moored at the Public Market docks. Participants told me later that especially this time on board it was the "real thing," compared to steaming in sunny weather with only a light breeze of wind.

As a member of the S.S. Master Society, a week later I had another chance for a ride aboard Master. This time the tug would steam to her winter moorings at the Britannia Shipyard in Steveston, on the Fraser River. Unfortunately, I could not make it, as anytime I can hitch a ride on the mighty Master, is a good day.

## Captain Russ Copeland of the S.S. Master Passes

*By Wolfgang Schlager "*

Imagine our sorrow to learn of the sudden and unexpected death of Captain Russ Copeland, the captain of the **S.S. Master**, at age 76. Over the years, he became a good friend of mine. A memorial was held in Vancouver, B.C. on December 5, which I was proud to be able to attend.



Russ Copeland and Chief Engineer Doug Shaw, who died in September of this year, were the heart and soul of the S.S. Master Society, so it will be most difficult to find somebody to fill their shoes - and impossible to replace them.