

Bailey Gatzert

By Kathy Tucker

Built when racing was popular among passenger steamboats, the stately *Bailey Gatzert* was a contender. It was one of the most famous Columbia River excursion boats and was commemorated with a song and a stamp. Seattle's John Holland shipyard built the 177.3-foot-long, 560-ton sternwheeler in 1890 with wide decks and fine, large rooms. It was named for Seattle's first Jewish mayor, who served 1875-1876. The Seattle Steam Navigation & Transportation Company ran the *Bailey Gatzert* in the Puget Sound, where it sometimes raced the *T.J. Potter*. In 1891, the SSN&TC merged with Captain U.B. Scott's Columbia Transportation Company, and Scott moved the *Bailey Gatzert* to the Columbia River in 1892. In 1904, The Dalles, Portland & Astoria Navigation Company (the "Regulator Line") bought the *Bailey Gatzert*. During the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, it made twice-daily runs from Portland to Cascade Locks and was honored with a song, "The *Bailey Gatzert* March." Steamboat racing was common on the Columbia River, and the *Bailey Gatzert* was fast—making it from The Dalles to Portland in a little over five hours. While passengers and shore viewers reportedly enjoyed the competition, common (but unverified) legend has it that the *Bailey Gatzert* was called the "Daily Bastard" by those hit by its large wakes. In 1907, owners rebuilt the boat with a larger hull (878 tons and 194.3 feet long) and engines. It also acquired a five-chimed whistle from the steamer *Telephone*. The Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railroad bought the Regulator Line, including the *Bailey Gatzert*, in 1915, but declining passenger sales resulted in the sale, in 1918, to the Puget Sound Navigation Company. The company moved the steamer back to the Puget Sound and added a car elevator, transforming the *Bailey Gatzert* into a car ferry. In 1926, the company retired the steamer and removed its machinery. What remained became a floating machine shop on Seattle's Lake Union. The *Bailey Gatzert's* whistle, name board, and pilot wheel are on permanent display at the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center Museum in Stevenson, Washington. In 1996, the U.S. Postal Service issued a *Bailey Gatzert* stamp.

Sources

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