

Captain Joe Weeks 1877-1969

*In all that time, I never saw that Ogopogo -
Joe Weeks*



Captain Joe Weeks long career in steamship service on Lake Okanagan made him a familiar figure to most residents. He was well respected for his skill as a captain and well liked for his personal qualities as a civic-minded man active in his community.

Joe Weeks joined the crew of the SS Aberdeen as a deckhand in 1897 at the age of 20. He was paid \$30.00 a month with room and board. By 1900, Weeks had earned a mate's certificate followed by his master's certificate in 1904 when he became captain of the S.S. York. He became captain of the Aberdeen in 1907 and in 1922 was appointed captain of the SS Sicamous, where he stayed until 1937. Weeks spent the balance of his working life in charge of the tug SS Naramata, until he retired in 1942.

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"The people of the Okanagan district have always been very good to me and I have always tried to serve them to the best of my ability"

Joe Weeks

Joe Week's career is a story of hard work, perseverance and service to the district. To captain a ship the size and complexity of the *Sicamous* on Okanagan Lake was challenging. High winds could make ship handling extremely difficult. The *Sicamous* was once grounded on the beach in Penticton by strong winds and driven into the Naramata wharf on another occasion. Winds could be so strong that spray would drench the pilot-house, 46 feet above the water.

Travelling on the *Sicamous* was an enjoyable experience. Guests ate from

china and glassware marked with the CPR monogram. Fresh fruit, vegetables and dairy products came from local farms and the ships crew provided excellent service.

By the mid-1930's, roads had improved and buses, automobiles and trucks were replacing steamship service. In 1935 mail and passenger service was discontinued. The *Sicamous* was retired in 1937 and beached at the south end of the lake, where she remains today. Weeks summed up the end of steamer service on the lake with the following words: *"The feeling of timelessness and tranquillity when sailing on the old sternwheelers has become a long ago memory..."*

Joe Weeks' ashes were scattered off Squally Point on Lake Okanagan after his death in 1969. **E**

Dennis Oomen
Manager, Penticton Museum & Archives

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