

Captain Uriah Bonzer Scott

Captain Uriah B. Scott was born in Lawrence County, Ohio, near Ironton, in 1827 and spent his youth on the Ohio River where he developed a passionate interest in steamboating. He began his steamboating career in 1859 on the Ohio River where he worked on and built a considerable number of steamers.



Uriah B. Scott
1827 – 1913

He built the sidewheel steamer LILY, following her with the VICTOR NO. 1, a sternwheeler, one hundred and ten feet long, VICTOR NO. 2, one hundred and thirty-five feet long, and VICTOR NO. 3, also one hundred thirty-five feet long. He then bought the steamer UNDINE from the Government, remodeled her, and named her VICTOR NO. 4. She was two-hundred feet long by thirty-two foot beam. He subsequently owned the steamers R.H. BARNHAM and CHARLES BOWEN, and constructed the BEN GAYLORD, which he ran from Portsmouth to Parkersville. After the VICTOR NO. 4, he

launched the steamer LIGHTWOOD, a one hundred and forty foot boat, which drew but eight inches of water. She ran on the lower Mississippi and Red rivers. Returning to Cincinnati in 1871, he built the steamer CHESAPEAKE, a very fast side-wheeler, which he ran for two years and then sold, afterward completing the steamer FASHION, with which he carried the mail until the fall of 1873, when he decided that the opportunity and challenge of the developing Pacific Northwest was too much to ignore, and he sold his boat and mail business and went to Oregon.

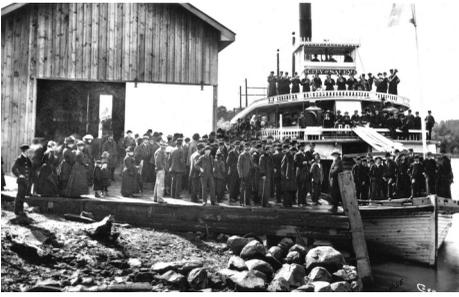
Captain Scott was a practical steamboatman, but was not overburdened with wealth. When he arrived in Oregon, he endeavored to secure employment on some of the steamers of the People's Transportation Company and the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. The managers of these companies were skeptical of his abilities and would not employ him. Undismayed by this lack of appreciation, Scott, together with a couple of Portland businessmen; L.B. Seeley and Samuel Brown, acquired engines and machinery from an old dredge, and proceeded to build the OHIO, the first light-draft steamer in the Northwest. The steamer was one-hundred forty feet long, twenty-five feet beam, and three feet six inches hold. She made her initial trip December 12, 1874, going up the river light as far as Eugene City. At Eugene she loaded seventy tons of wheat and returned to Port-

land, where, upon his arrival, the man who had great difficulty in securing enough money to build his new steamer, found that he could now command unlimited capital with which he could build any kind of steamboat he desired. The OHIO was a great success and made money from the start, as no other boat on the river could come within forty miles of the upper Willamette points which she could easily reach.

Captain Scott was a frugal man and worked economically, and many features of construction gave the OHIO an odd appearance. Her hull was broad, almost flat on the bottom; much like a barge. On it he built a plain, squarish-looking deck house that resembled a shed. Even though he had an engine, he had no pitmans for the sternwheel. For these he used lengths of hollow gas pipe. He lacked money to buy heavy iron castings for the web of the wheel, so instead he framed it with wood. As the OHIO slowly took form, Captains Scott's critics, amidst their laughter, predicted failure. They would soon eat their words.



Steamer Chesapeake. Built at Ironton, OH in 1871. Construction supervised by Capt. U.B. Scott. Operated by Parkersburg & Ohio Transportation Co



The City of Salem was built in 1875 for the U.B. Scott Steamboat Co. and operated on the Willamette River until 1895.

When the OHIO was launched, as Captain Scott knocked out the blocks, and the boat slid sideways into the river, his skeptics grudgingly admitted that she at least floated. With a good head of steam in her boiler, Captain Scott hauled back on the throttle, the engines took hold, the gas pipe pitmans picked up the load, and the wooden wheel turned. After the lines were cast off, the OHIO nosed into the current and headed up the river to Oregon City. She made her way through the locks and kept going, past Yamhill, Salem and Albany. She had no trouble at Corvallis or even Harrisburg where the river shoaled, and at last came to Eugene, without scraping her keel once, and no wonder; she drew only eight inches of water. When Captain U.B. Scott came back to Portland, those who had jeered were waiting with checks in hand, ready to help finance his next venture. It seemed as though being wrong wasn't nearly as important as making money.

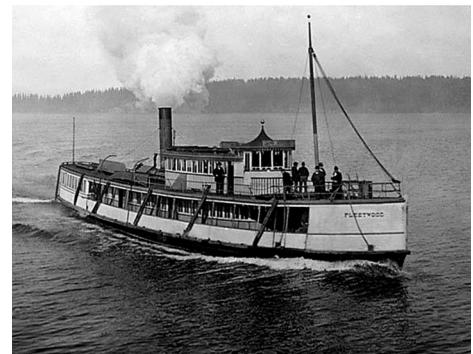
Traveling on the OHIO was always an adventure. Because she was somewhat jerry-built she tended, every now and then, to come apart at the seams. Every so often, as she headed toward a wharf, and the pilot would call to back the en-

gines, the engineer would respond, but the gas-pipe pitmans, revolting at the strain, would bend, leaving the engine and wheel locked dead-center. Whenever that happened, the OHIO would grandly plow into the dock with a crash of splintered piling. Because of this distressing tendency, most cautious wharf-boatmen went ashore when they saw her coming. She exhibited distressing habits on the river, too. When the OHIO really got digging into the river on an upstream run, the wooden strips that held the paddle buckets in place frequently worked loose. Then the entire wheel would slowly fall apart and start drifting back toward the open sea. This peculiar characteristic of the OHIO's propulsion system developed rather large muscles on the mate, who was continually forced to launch the skiff and row after the sternwheel. It also developed in Captain Scott a vocabulary which, for versatility, originality, and ability to work indefinitely without repeating itself, was outstanding in a profession and an age which boasted some of the finest off-hand cussers the world has ever known. These annoying experiences also developed Captain Scott's driving ambition to own the most perfect inland steamers that could be built.

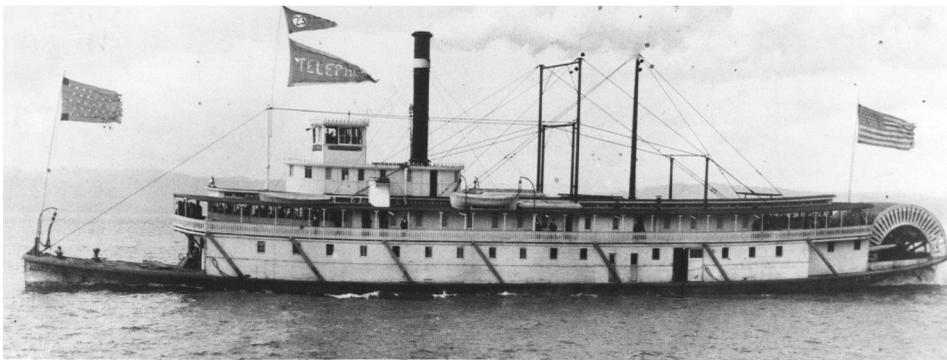
The odd-looking craft cleared ten thousand dollars during the first three months of service for Captain Scott and his partners and in 1875 the U.B. Scott Steamboat Company was incorporated by Scott, Seeley, Brown, M.S. Burrell and Z.J. Hatch. The new company built the steamer CITY OF SALEM (151' x 33' x 4.6'), a larger, faster and finer boat that the OHIO, yet possessing the

same light-draft advantages. The new boat was just as successful as the OHIO, and could carry a much larger cargo on the same draft as the older boat. In July, 1878, larger poppet-valve engines were placed in the CITY OF SALEM and the discarded 14" x 48" slide-valve set replaced the dredging gear on the OHIO. The CITY OF SALEM was commanded by Capt. E.W. Spencer, J.W. Newkirk, purser, and Perry Scott, engineer.

When the railroad came, practically ending the steamboat business in the valley, Captain Scott then built the propeller FLEETWOOD for the Cascade route. The FLEETWOOD made her trial trip on May 28, 1881 and the speedy little propeller made life miserable for the competing OR & N. She was much faster than any of the boats run by the transportation giant and she was becoming a real problem for them; always carrying capacity crowds. A rate war followed, with fares dropping to 50 cents between Portland and the Dalles. In connection with the FLEETWOOD, Captain Spencer was operating the steamer GOLD DUST on the middle river between the Cascades and The Dalles, and



The propeller steamer Fleetwood was built in 1881 by Capt. Scott and ran between Portland and the Dalles and later Portland to Astoria on the Columbia River.



The TELEPHONE in 1894 running at high-speed on her daily run to Astoria. Her average running speed was 21 miles-per-hour and she was capable of exceeding 25 miles-per-hour when pushed. She never turned down the opportunity to race and in over 33 years of running, she was never passed by another boat.

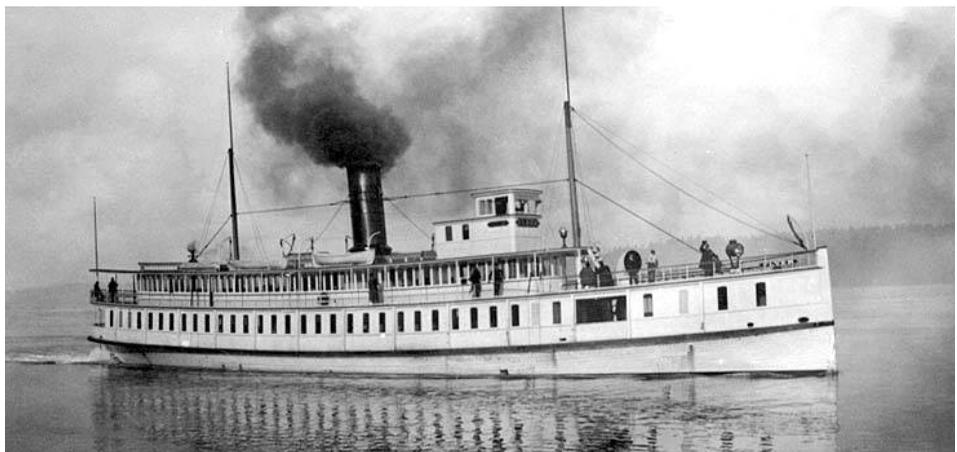
when the fight reaches its peak, Spencer sold the GOLD DUST to the OR & N, leaving the FLEETWOOD without an up-river connection. This infuriated Scott and he then took the FLEETWOOD off the Cascade route and put her on the Portland-Astoria route, where he needed no connecting boats. It didn't take the OR & N long to figure out that they had made an expensive mistake. The FLEETWOOD was built for speed and could not haul freight, but when she trimmed nearly three hours from the time between the two cities she monopolized the passenger business, and further rate cutting by the OR & N failed to dislodge her from the route. Captain Scott served as master on the FLEETWOOD at this time, with C.A. Mann, purser, and Henry Drake, mate, both stockholders in the company. The captain's brother, Perry Scott, was chief engineer.

In December of 1881, the Columbia Transportation Company was incorporated by U.B. Scott, Henry Drake and C.A. Mann. Later strengthened by the addition of the Seeley Brothers, E.W. Crichton and C.R. Donohue, built the steamer TELEPHONE in 1884.

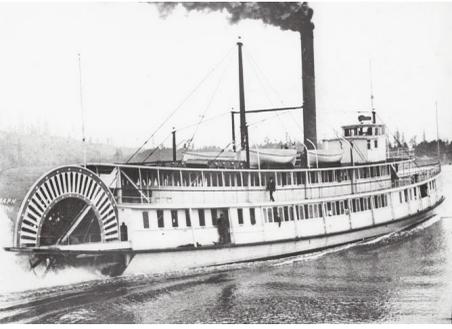
Captain Scott once again demonstrated his genius in hull construction by building the world's fastest stern-wheeler and, what many consider to be the fastest river steamer ever built. This long, lanky vessel, with her 500 horsepower engines (22" x 96") and 25 foot paddlewheel maintained an average running speed of 21 miles-per-hour and was never bested in a contest for speed during her long, successful career. The TELEPHONE was one of the best money-makers that ever operated on the lower river and, like the FLEETWOOD, enjoyed the cream of the passenger trade and could also carry a large cargo of freight. Her speed was such that during the summer season she would leave Portland every day

at 7 a.m., make numerous landing along the way to Astoria and be back in her dock in Portland between 8 and 9 p.m. the same day. On July 2, 1887, the TELEPHONE made a record for speed on the Astoria route that has never been equaled in regular service, covering the 105 mile distance between Portland and Astoria in four hours thirty-four and three quarter minutes at an average running speed of just a nick under twenty-three miles-per-hour. The record is particularly noteworthy considering the conditions under which the run was made; a good portion of the trip fighting a near gale-force headwind.

The original TELEPHONE was destroyed by fire in 1887. Soon after the fire, Capt. Scott announced that he would rebuild a new TELEPHONE. The competing OR & N sent for him and told him not to put his money in a new boat. If he did, they would run him off the river. They offered to make good his loss by the fire, hire him to rebuild the WIDE WEST (T.J. POTTER) and then give him command of her. Captain Scott he would take the job and something



Built by Capt. Scott in 1891, the FLYER ran between Seattle and Tacoma, making four round trips a day, averaging a steady eighteen miles-per-hour on a schedule so regular that it was said people could set their watches by her arrivals.



The TELEGRAPH was built at Everett, WA in 1903 and ran for Capt. Scott on the Columbia River until 1913

like \$120,000 in cash besides, which the company refused to give. In 1888 Captain Scott rebuilt the TELEPHONE, which was a little larger and nearly as fast as the original boat. She continued her successful high-speed running the Columbia, gaining and holding a large share of the river trade until the railroad was built between the two cities. During this time she maintained her reputation for speed by besting such river greyhounds as the T.J. POTTER, HASSALO, and CHAS. W SPENCER. William H. Larkins and Thomas Crang were the captains on the rebuilt craft, with C.W. Evans and Joe Hayes in the engine room. Captain Scott continued running her until 1903 when he then sold her to the Arrow Transportation Company. In 1905 she was sold and operated for the Regulator Line. In 1908 Captain Scott again became her owner. In 1909 he sold her to the Western Pacific Railroad where she ended her days as a ferry on San Francisco Bay.

Soon after the TELEPHONE entered service, Captain Scott sent the FLEETWOOD to Puget Sound and operated her on a fast schedule between Seattle and Tacoma, repeating her success on the Columbia River. With the addition of

a Puget Sound fleet, his company was reincorporated as the Columbia River and Puget Sound Navigation Company; absorbing John Leary as a partner and adding the steamer BAILEY GATZERT from the now-defunct Seattle Steam Transportation and Navigation Company. Encouraged by the success of the speedy FLEETWOOD, in 1891 Captain Scott then constructed the legendary propeller steamer FLYER.

The FLYER ran between Seattle and Tacoma, making four round trips a day, averaging a steady eighteen miles-per-hour, and, on a schedule so regular that it was said people could set their watches by her arrivals. The FLYER was also a fast boat. Her triple-expansion engines were rated at 2,000 horsepower but were never fully utilized because of her boiler limitations. She also acquired an outside hull that trapped between her old hull a few tons of water that not only made her heavier, but made her list slightly. Despite these problems, she was one of the fastest boats on the Sound, never broke down, and made a lot of money for her owners. By the end of her first sixteen years, she had carried over three million



Captain Scott operated the famous Bailey Gatzert on the lower and middle Columbia River from 1895 to 1917. She returned to Puget Sound in 1918 to operate as a car ferry until she was retired in 1922.

passengers and her total mileage was enough to have made fifty-three voyages around the world, or five trips to the moon - and her career was only half finished.

As president of his Columbia River & Puget Sound Transportation Company, Captain Scott operated the steamers TELEPHONE, BAILEY GATZERT and later the TELEGRAPH, on the Columbia, and the FLEETWOOD and FLYER on Puget Sound. While the operations of Captain Scott and his associates were less extensive than those of his major competitors, they cut an imposing figure in the area in which they operated so successfully.

Each of Captain Scott's boats, in turn, was a success, navigation-wise, speed-wise, and financially. In every venture he took up, he boldly entered into competition against a large, well-established monopolistic company, and in every instance he was able to best it and gain control of the route. So successful was he that his reputation became almost a legend and investors flocked to his support whenever he proposed a new steamboat venture. As a practical steamboatman, Captain U.B. Scott had few equals and no superiors. Not only was he skillful in actually handling a boat, but he could design, build and equip one from the engine room to the pilot house.

He and the rest of the "Ohio crowd" will long be remembered for their work during a picturesque period in the history of the Willamette Valley. He died June 23, 1913 in Portland, Oregon, at the age of 86.