

Steamboats Were Vital in Early America

When the steamboat *Shinnecock* built by the Montauk Steamboat Company left Pier 13 on the East River on almost any morning in the 1890s, office workers hurrying to their jobs on Wall Street stopped and stared in wonder at the “smoke and clatter and pounding paddles.” Her coal-fired steam engines generated 2,500 horsepower to turn giant, side paddle-wheels that would propel her up to 17 mph and power her through treacherous Hell Gate into Long Island Sound.

Three decks topped by a giant black funnel accommodated 84 staterooms in her 250-foot length. After a stop at Greenport, the *Shinnecock* would arrive at Sag Harbor at 4 o'clock that afternoon and disembark hundreds of passengers onto Long wharf. From there they walked to the American Hotel and country inns, or took stages to Bridgehampton and East Hampton. The next morning the *Shinnecock* boarded new passengers and returned to Manhattan. Full fare was two dollars.