



*The S.S. City of Medicine Hat in the spring of 1907.  
(Alberta Provincial Archives)*

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## S. S. CITY OF MEDICINE HAT INFORMATION SHEET AND CHRONOLOGY

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The S.S. City of Medicine Hat, a steam-powered sternwheeler, was built in 1906 – 1907 and was designed by its Captain, Horatio Hamilton Ross. The ship cost \$28,000 to build and was 130 feet (39.6 meters) in length. A sternwheeler is vessel that is driven by a single paddle at the rear.

The ship was quite ornate and Ross is said to have spared no expense in its design and construction.

Ross was a Scottish Nobleman who came to Canada in the late 1800's who established a steam-shipping empire in Western Canada.

Ross decided to sail friends and family on the Medicine Hat from Medicine Hat, AB to Winnipeg MB.

The Medicine Hat arrived in Saskatoon the morning of June 7, 1908.

Due to spring run-off the South Saskatchewan River was quite high and navigation through the City would be quite difficult.

Before the Medicine Hat reached in Grand Truck Railway (GTR) Bridge, Ross let off most of the passengers so that they could spend some time in Saskatoon. Only the crew remained on the ship.

The smokestack was lowered so that the Medicine Hat passed under the GTR Bridge.



*Photograph of Horatio Hamilton Ross. He was one of the colourful characters in navigation history. He was founder of The Ross Navigation Company of The Pas and owner of many riverboats in the early days of the town's history. He died February 11, 1925 at the age of 53 years and 10 months.*

<http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/index-eng.jsp>



*Photo Source : LH - 723  
Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library*

### The Wreck

As the ship continued its voyage through Saskatoon, the ship's sternwheel and rudder got entangled in a telegraph wire that was strung across the River. The wires were concealed due to the high water level of the River due to spring run-off. Ross lost control of the ship.

In order to stop the ship, one of the crew jumped from the ship and swam to the shore with a rope and tied it to a tree. This caused the ship to drift towards the southernmost pier of the Traffic Bridge. The ship hit the pier it tipped and came to rest.

Ross and those on board scrambled onto the Traffic Bridge for safety. The engineer jumped overboard and swam to shore. There were no casualties.

There were many witnesses as residents had come to view the Medicine Hat make its passage through Saskatoon. At the time of the crash, a small herd of cattle was being driven across the bridge from the east to west to the stockyards.

The ship was pried off the bridge and cut into pieces because City Engineers were concerned that it may compromise the structural integrity of the pier.

The ship's boiler was recovered and installed at the Saskatoon Pure Dairy located at Ave B N and 26<sup>th</sup> St W. The boiler was used for several years and then remained in the building until it was demolished in 1967. The boiler was moved to the Western Development Museum in Moose Jaw, where it remains.

### Development of the Riverbank

River and accumulated on and around the wreck and a sandbar developed, which buried the Medicine Hat

The land in the area was filled 1960. In 1965, City Council decided to develop the south river bank areas between what is now the Senator Sid Buckwold Bridge to the Broadway Bridge. Rotary Park was completed in October 1965.



*South Riverbank Construction, 1960  
Photo Source : LH – 2004  
Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library*



*South Riverbank Construction, 1961  
Photo Source : LH – 2005  
Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library*



—SP Photo by Richard Marjan  
Firefighters John Fehr (left) and Brent Lucyshyn with the anchor they found this summer

Saskatoon Star Phoenix, September 15, 2006

## The Anchor

In August 2006, during a routine training exercise, Fire and Protective Services divers recovered a rusted kedge anchor.

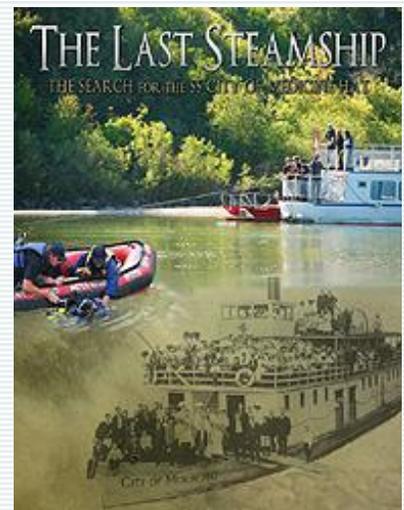
Analysis done by a local consulting firm concluded that the anchor belonged to the Medicine Hat based on historical, photographic, artefactual and location evidence.

The discovery of the anchor led to a five day underwater search. This search was filmed and was the topic for a documentary film.



Anchor on display at River Landing  
Source: [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

*The discovery of the anchor led to a five day underwater search. This search was filmed and was the topic for a documentary film titled **The Last Steamship: The Search for the SS City of Medicine Hat**. The film premiered at the Broadway Theatre on September 3, 2010.*



## The Traffic Bridge

The Traffic Bridge was closed on August 24, 2010 due to public safety.

In 2011, City Council decided to demolish the southernmost span of the bridge, in order that traffic on Saskatchewan Crescent could resume and the Meewasin Trail could be re-opened.

Pier testing was necessary for preparation of the design-build request for proposals for the Traffic Bridge to gather enough information to allow proponents to properly design the new bridge. This commenced in summer 2012 and four holes measuring one metre in diameter were drilled at each corner of pier one to accommodate the apparatus used for the testing.

Archeologists from Stantec were on site during the test. Once drilling began it was apparent that there was a wooden structure buried in the riverbank. Small pieces of wood, metal objects and other articles were recovered

Approximately 1,000 artifacts were recovered and Stantec staff had concluded that the artifacts are most likely from the S.S. City Medicine Hat.



*Photo Source : QC 4593 -1  
Aerial view of Riverbank, 1968  
Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library*

## Artifacts Recovered



*Boot*



*Plank recovered from wreck*



*Brass item, patent 1900*



*Wood pieces recovered from wreck*

*This document has been compiled from a number of sources including:*

- *Delainey, William P. 2007 The South Saskatchewan River and the Development of Early Saskatoon 1881 – 1908 A Historical Narrative*
- *Photographs from the Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library*
- *Wikipedia.com*
- *Internet Movie Database ([www.IMDB.com](http://www.IMDB.com))*
- *Amundson, L. 2008. Conservation of a Large Kedge Anchor Discovered in the South Saskatchewan River, Saskatoon, Canada. Unpublished Manuscript on file with City of Saskatoon.*
- *Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) [www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/index-eng.jsp](http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/index-eng.jsp)*