

ADDENDUM TO:
VIRGINIA V
Fort Union Drydock
Seattle
King County
Washington

HAER WA-168
HAER WA-168

PHOTOGRAPHS

PAPER COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ADDENDUM TO *VIRGINIA V*

HAER No. WA-168

Location: Fort Union Drydock, Seattle, King County, Washington

Rig/Type of Craft: Excursion steamer

Trade: Transportation

Official Number: 222170

Principal Dimensions: Length: 115.9'
Beam: 24.1'
Gross registered tonnage: 122
Net registered tonnage: 83
Service speed: 14 knots, although generally operated at 11 to 12 knots
(The listed dimensions are from James Delgado, "Excursion Steamer *Virginia V*," National Historic Landmark Study, Designated October 5, 1992, who obtained them from the *Merchant Vessels of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1923.)

Propulsion: Triple-expansion marine steam engine rated at 400 horsepower, single propeller

Dates of Construction: Keel laying: October 21, 1921
Launching: March 9, 1922

Original Owner: West Pass Transportation Company

Present Owner: Virginia V Foundation

Disposition: The Virginia V Foundation continues to operate the steamer.

Significance: The *Virginia V* is the last of the Pacific Coast "mosquito fleet," which refers to steamers that plied the United States' inland waterways. These small excursion steamers provided transportation in and around the Puget Sound area.

Description: As described in the National Historic Landmark nomination, the *Virginia V* is constructed of Douglas fir. It was “laid down with built-in salt pockets between her double-sawn frames to help preserve the hull. The steamer has a straight stem and a round counter stern.” There are two decks; the freight (lower) deck contains the galley, heads, and engine room, while the passenger (upper) deck consists of an enclosed seating area. The ship has been little changed from its initial construction, aside from the pilot house. After a 1934 storm, the pilot house had to be reconstructed; it was rebuilt again in 1980.¹ The steamer contains its original engine, manufactured by Heffernan Iron Works in 1898 and initially installed in the *Virginia IV*, which sank. The triple-expansion, double-acting reciprocating engine is 400 horsepower with a maximum rpm of about 200. The Babcock & Wilcox boiler was installed in 2000.²

History: M.M. “Matt” Anderson of Anderson & Company in Maplewood, Washington, built the ship for the West Pass Transportation Company, a Puget Sound-area business formed to serve the west side of Vashon Island. The steamer was launched on March 9, 1922, and fitted with machinery from the *Virginia IV* on April 2, 1922. It served as part of the “mosquito fleet,” a term that referred to the steamers that operated in the Puget Sound in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as in Oregon and the eastern United States.

The West Pass Transportation Company used the *Virginia V* to transport people, produce, and mail until 1942 when it went out of business. The *Virginia V* was seized to pay off the company’s debts and sold to O.H. “Doc” Freeman and Joe Boles of Seattle, who resold it to Jack Katz and Howell Parker just a few months later. The steamer continued to ply the Puget Sound area. In 1954, it was sold to Philip Luther of Puget Sound Excursion Lines, which subsequently operated under two different owners (Charles McMahan and James F. “Cy” Devenny). The Northwest Steamship Company, formed in 1968, raised sufficient funds to purchase the steamship from the Puget Sound Excursion Lines. The group faced financial challenges, so in 1976, the non-profit Steamer Virginia V Foundation was formed. The foundation purchased the steamer in 1980. After a major restoration that lasted from 1995 to 2001, the foundation put the steamer back into service in 2002.³

¹ Description from James P. Delgado, “Excursion Steamer, *Virginia V*,” National Historic Landmark Study, Designated October 5, 1992, available at <http://www.nps.gov/maritime/nhl/virginia.htm>, accessed February 2011.

² “*Virginia V* Specifications,” available at <http://www.virginiav.org/specifications>, accessed March 29, 2011.

³ Delgado, “Excursion Steamer *Virginia V*”; “History of the Virginia V Steamship,” available at <http://www.virginiav.org/history>, accessed March 29, 2011. An additional source of information about the steamer is M.S. Kline, *Steamboat Virginia V* (Bellevue, WA: Documentary Book Publishers, 1985).

**Project
Information:**

The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is part of the Heritage Documentation Programs, a division of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Richard O'Connor, Manager. Todd Croteau is the HAER Maritime Program Coordinator.

ADDENDUM TO:
VIRGINIA V
Historic Ships Wharf at Lake Union Park
Seattle
King County
Washington

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