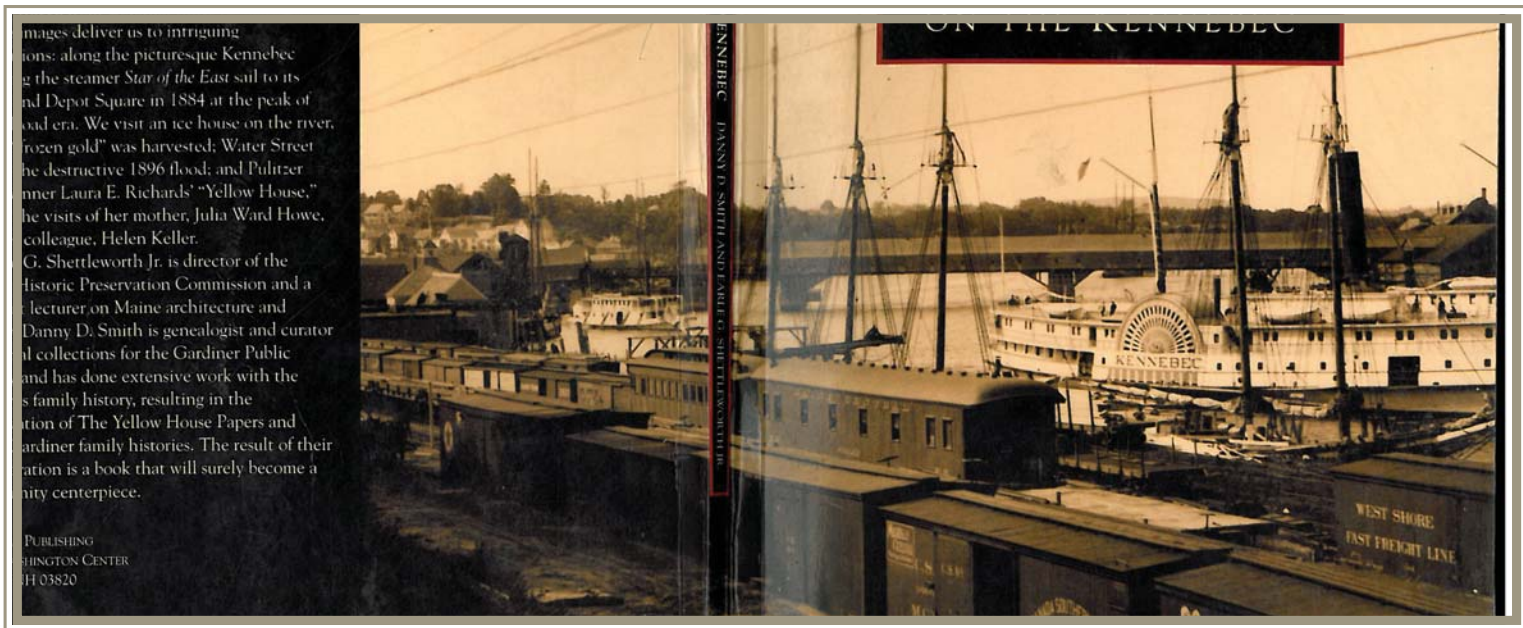


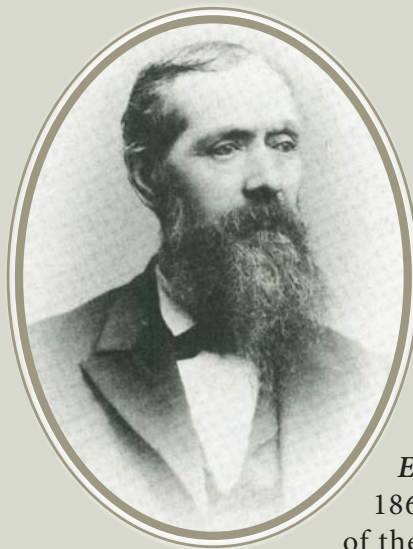
# River Transportation



This 1890s view of the riverfront shows the busy interface between sailing and steamships on the Kennebec and MCRR freight cars. The covered bridge across the river is in the background.

Before (and after) the advent of road and rail, the Kennebec River served as the region's transportation artery. It connected Gardiner to the east coast and the sea routes of the world. It also served smaller vessels headed to upriver communities.


After 1754, as Gardiner became the economic center of the region, the river's importance as a means of transportation expanded. With numerous wharves, deep tidal water, access to timber, and, later, ice, ocean-going ships visited frequently. Shipbuilding became an important industry up and down the river. The schooner *Hesperus*, made famous in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *Wreck of the Hesperus*, was built in Pittston in 1825. For many years Gardiner area yards produced schooners, barks, brigs, clippers, and the first steamers on the river. It was reported that in May of 1884, 892 vessels passed in and out of the Kennebec.



Steamboat captain Jason Collins (1817-1907), born to a long line of seafaring kin, piloted vessels for almost the entire steamboat era. He started his career as a pilot on the *Eastern Queen*, the *State of Maine*, and the *Union*. Later, he acquired fame as the captain of the new steamer *Star of the East* (on the Boston route from 1866 to 1889) and then as captain of the *Kennebec*.

The *Star of the East* (below) is shown docked at the Boston Steamship Wharf on Gardiner's Water Street, opposite Vine Street, in this circa 1875 photograph. Constructed in New York City in 1866, this coastal steamer provided passenger and freight service between Boston and Gardiner for many years. Not only was Collins the ship's first captain, but he was also part owner. In fact, he became a major investor in Kennebec River vessels, along with Peter G. Bradstreet and others. After it was rebuilt in 1890-91, the *Star of the East* continued to sail under the new name *Sagadahoc*.

**For Kennebec River,**



The Splendid Sea-going Steamer  
**STAR OF THE EAST,**  
CAPT. JASON COLLINS,

Will leave the End of Union Wharf, Boston,  
EVERY TUESDAY & FRIDAY,  
AT 6 O'CLOCK, P. M.,  
Connecting at Gardiner with the Steamer Clarion, Capt. McLaughlin, for Hallowell and Augusta. Also, connecting with all stages running East and West from the River.

**RETURNING,**  
Leave Augusta at 12 M.; Hallowell at 1.45 P. M.; Gardiner at 3; Richmond at 4; Bath at 6;  
**EVERY MONDAY AND THURSDAY.**

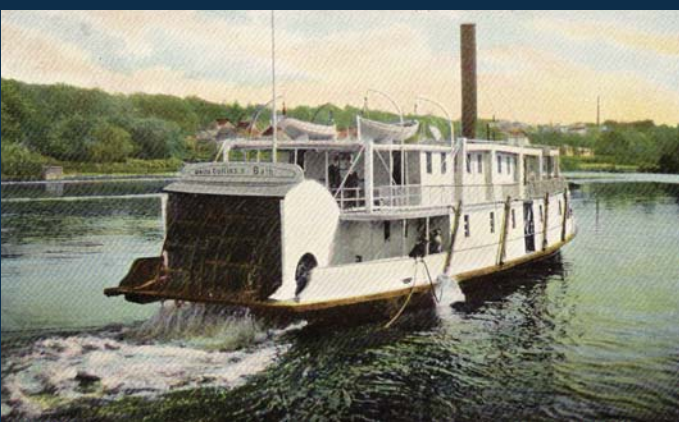
**FREIGHT TAKEN AT VERY LOW RATES.**

AGENTS.

H. H. HYDE, Boston.	BLANCHARD & REED, Gardiner.
J. E. BROWN, Bath.	H. FULLER & SON, Hallowell.
J. T. ROBINSON, Richmond.	W. J. TUCK, Augusta.



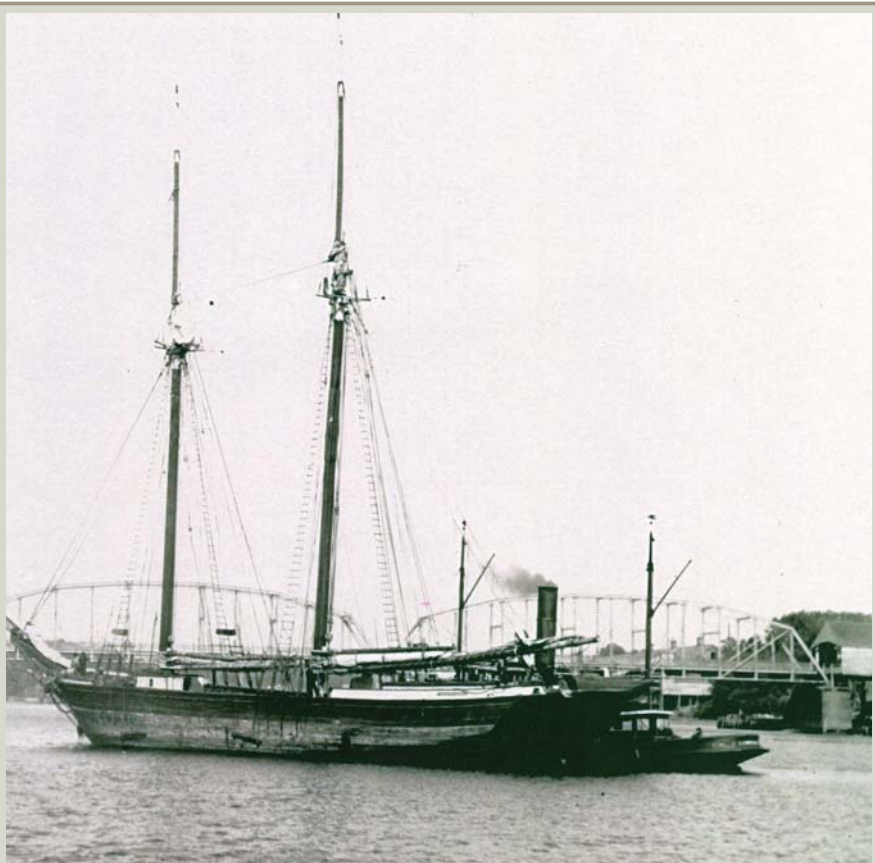
*Star of the East* docked at the Boston Steamship Wharf on Water Street (c.1875)



The *Della Collins* (left), named for Captain Jason Collin's daughter, is the most famous of the Kennebec River vessels of the steamboat era. Built in Boston in 1879, this stern wheeler served as a transfer boat, taking passengers and freight from the Boston steamers that docked at Gardiner upriver to Hallowell and Augusta. Its low draft and paddle wheel enabled it to negotiate the shallower upstream waters.



*U.S.S. Fish Hawk at Randolph, Maine*

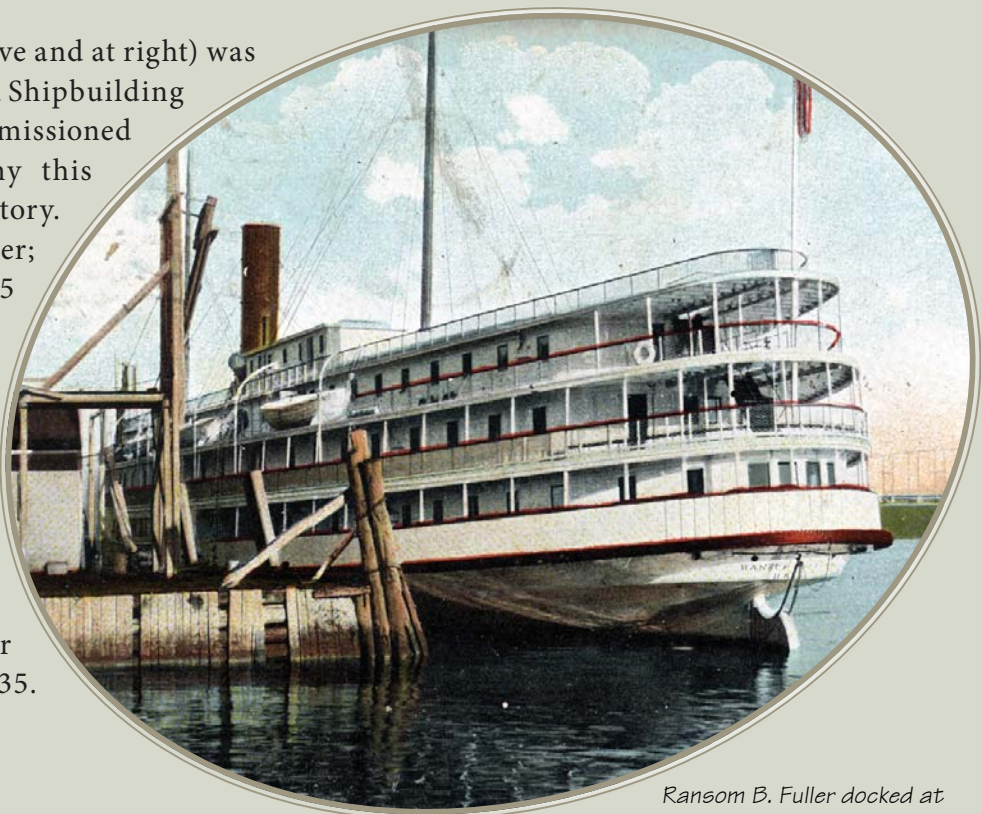


Steam, steam and sail, and sailing vessels such as those shown here were frequent visitors to Gardiner's busy riverfront wharves and commercial businesses.

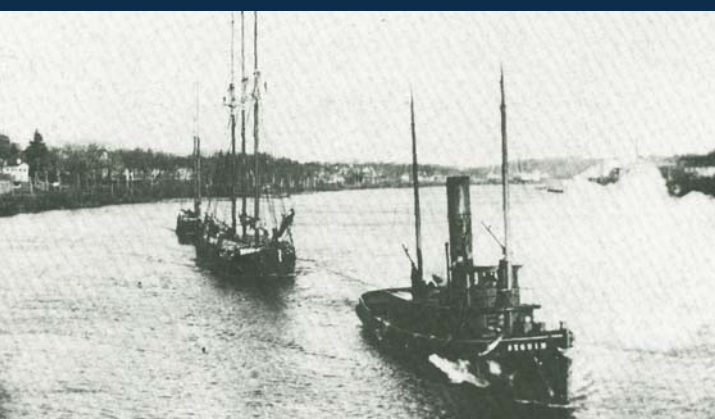


*Steamer Ransom B. Fuller leaving Gardiner, Me.*

The *Ransom B. Fuller* (shown above and at right) was built in 1902 by the New England Shipbuilding Company in Bath, Maine. Commissioned by the Kennebec Steamboat Company this wooden steamer had an interesting history. As a passenger ship, she served Gardiner; then, in 1910, she was lengthened 45 feet for the Boston-Portland service an unusual thing for a wooden side-wheel steamer. The *Ransom B. Fuller* survived a grounding in 1912 and in November 1917 was acquired by the Navy on charter from the Eastern Steamship Company of New York City. She served as a barracks ship at New London until being returned to her owner in April 1918. She was broken up in 1935.



*Ransom B. Fuller docked at Gardiner's steamship wharf*



A fixture for decades on the Kennebec River, the tugboat Seguin was photographed by E.W. Cunningham on December 8, 1897, as she approached the swing section of the steel bridge from the north with two schooners in tow. Built in 1884 at the Morse Shipyard in Bath, the Seguin was the ninth tug of the Knickerbocker Steam Towage Company fleet. With numerous vessels negotiating the Kennebec River's channel and tidal waters, many required the assistance of tugs like the Seguin.