

## PLEASURE BOATS ON THE ASSABET RIVER

by Ralph L. Sheridan

May 23, 1906 a license was granted to two enterprising Maynard men, Mr. Peter Wilcox and Mr. Fred Chandler, who put a  $3\frac{1}{2}$  h.p. steam launch named "Queen" on the Assabet River for the purpose of taking parties from Maynard to Whitman's crossing (near Boon's Pond) and return. The new launch was as good as money could buy, would carry at least twenty passengers, and would travel over the river at a rapid clip. A boat-house and landing wharf was built at the river in the rear of the Concord, Maynard and Hudson Street Railway car barn on Great Road. A landing wharf was also built at Whitman's crossing for those who desired to get off for Boon's Pond, which was a quarter-of-a-mile walk away, and where the passengers could board the launch "Princess" for a ride around the entire Boon's Pond or to any of the several landing places. At first regular trips were made on Sundays and Saturday afternoons. (Note:-No daylight saving time in those days and the working day ended at 6 P.M. or later.). Later one trip per day each way was made on weekdays. The cost of the ride up the river was twenty-five cents. The trip seemed to fill a popular want and was enjoyed by many. Among the scenic attractions along the trip was the "ole' swimming hole" or "Dutchies", where most of the boys and young men of the town learned to swim; Bent's icehouse, a short distance from the "Dutchies", where the advanced swimmers could use the icerun and the "stump" nearby for diving and to enjoy the waves from the passing launches; Russell's bridge, where all on board the boat had to duck their head as they passed underneath; Comeau's ice-house, just beyond the bridge; "Nanny Goat Rock", which stood out of the water as a beacon before the bend in the river at Crow Island.

In September 1906, the company purchased a new steam launch, the "Gertrude", to be operated with the "Queen" on the river. It was twenty



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feet long and would accommodate thirty-five passengers. It was built in the barn of Mr. George Whitney and was named the "Gertrude" in honor of Mr. Chandler's daughter. This new addition was found necessary because of the demand for accommodations on the river trip. With the addition of another boat trips were made every hour on Sundays from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. On weekdays a boat left Maynard for Boon's Pond at 2 p.m. and return trip to Maynard left at 3 p.m.

In May 1910, the firm name changed to Chandler and Howard by the purchase of one-third interest in the business by Mr. Allan Howard. Mr. Wilcox still retained his interest in the business, but the other two members operated the launches. A third boat "Teddy" was put in service in 1910.

September 10, 1910 the "Queen" was sold to Lake Boon parties. In April 1912 the firm decided to sell out and offered a good proposition to anybody.

On June 12, 1914 they sold the "Gertrude" to the Union Carbide Company of Canada. It was used on Lake Boon for a short time and then shipped to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

July 12, 1916, Mr. C. C. Murray of Maynard obtained a license to operate motor boats on the Assabet River. He operated a very short time.

All who took this delightful trip up the river and back still hold it as one of their most cherished memories.

Dates and factual information obtained from copies of the "Maynard News" through the courtesy of the "Assabet Valley Beacon".  
Photograph with courtesy of Mr. Arthur L. Wilcox, son of Mr. Peter Wilcox, one of the original owners of the boat company.