

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal

Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society

Band: - (2008)

Heft: 95

Artikel: "Stadt Luzern" at seventy : Grand Steamboat Parade on Lake Lucerne

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854632>

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"STADT LUZERN" AT SEVENTY

Colin Jarman

Grand Steamboat Parade on Lake Lucerne



"Stadt Luzern".

The paddle steamer *Stadt Luzern* set out on her inaugural voyage on the 23rd June 1928. Unfortunately on that day the guests on board did not get very far. Close to Weggis the ship experienced, from a quote at the time "a minor machine malfunction necessitating its withdrawal from service". A new and more powerful engine was later fitted and it took about a year before the steamboat was finally put into service. There have been general overhauls since - carried out in the Navigation Company's own shipyard. However *Stadt Luzern* has lost none of its 1920's charm. So - forward to the 19th April 2008. This is the day on which the Lake Lucerne Navigation Company (Schiffahrtsgesellschaft des Vierwaldstättersees - SGV) commenced celebrating the birthday of the flagship of its fleet, *Stadt Luzern*. A limited reprint of a book published some years ago about the ship is now available on all SGV steamships.

PHOTOS: Colin Jarman

The SGV is the proud owner of five of these nostalgic paddle steamers. The boilers of all five were originally heated with coal but they have subsequently been converted to oil firing, all the work being carried out in SGV's own yard. The *Stadt Luzern* is the youngest of these steamers; in fact she is the youngest paddle steamer in the whole of Switzerland. She is fondly referred to as *Die Stadt* (The City). The SGV also maintains Switzerland's largest shipyard. It has a fleet of 5 nostalgic paddle steamers and 14 elegant motor ships and their shipyard and offices are situated in the centre of Luzern. The ships provide a regular and scheduled service all over the lake serving some 34 calling points. During the summer season there are departures from Luzern approximately every hour, with the ships providing access to the mountain railways that lie adjacent to the lake and to the numerous walks and attractive villages that

surround the waterside.

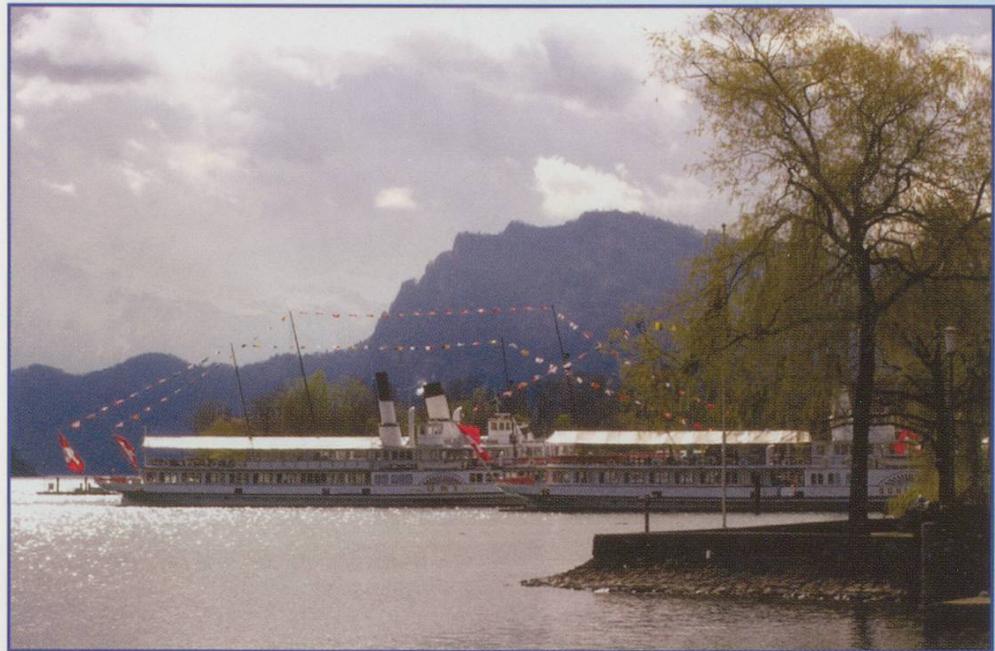
On Saturday 19th April the SGV, in association with the Friends of Steamboat Navigation, arranged a grand steamboat parade using all five paddle ships to honour *Die Stadt*'s 80th birthday. A photo boat was provided for invited photographers, along with other members of the media, to enable them to follow and witness the parade. I was fortunate in having an invitation to join with them and on my arrival I found that it was arranged for the *ms Brunnen* to be used for this duty. The weather looked as if it was going to be kind to us. The sun kept popping out from between the clouds, but no rain threatened. Crowds soon began to gather at the various piers on the lake shore to both view the spectacle and ride upon the ships.

Suddenly a ship's horn sounded. It came from the direction of the wharves, and slowly paddle steamers reversed into view. Within a short space of time all of them began to take up their positions at the piers. It was obvious that the crowds were

TOP: Paddle Steamboats preparing to leave the wharf.

MIDDLE: "Uri" heading for the loading pier.

BOTTOM: Speeches given from the top deck of "Stadt Luzern".





anxious to embark. The obligatory brass band was in position. Then came the arrival of the 'Birthday Girl'. She was suitably decorated and elegantly moved into her allocated position at Pier 3.

Speeches were made from the top deck on the starboard side of *Stadt Luzern*, and when these were concluded embarkation of ticket holders soon began. At exactly noon the ship's horns sounded and as these sounds began to fade away so we became aware of the Hof Church bells tolling, from the direction of the City. Suddenly I noticed that *Uri* was beginning to move astern and within a short space of time *Unterwalden*, *Gallia* and *Schiller* were also moving away from the piers loaded with their passengers. Together the paddle steamers moved astern to the far side of the lake, opposite the piers. Then, with a titanic blast of its horn, *Stadt Luzern* moved out towards them. The flagship took

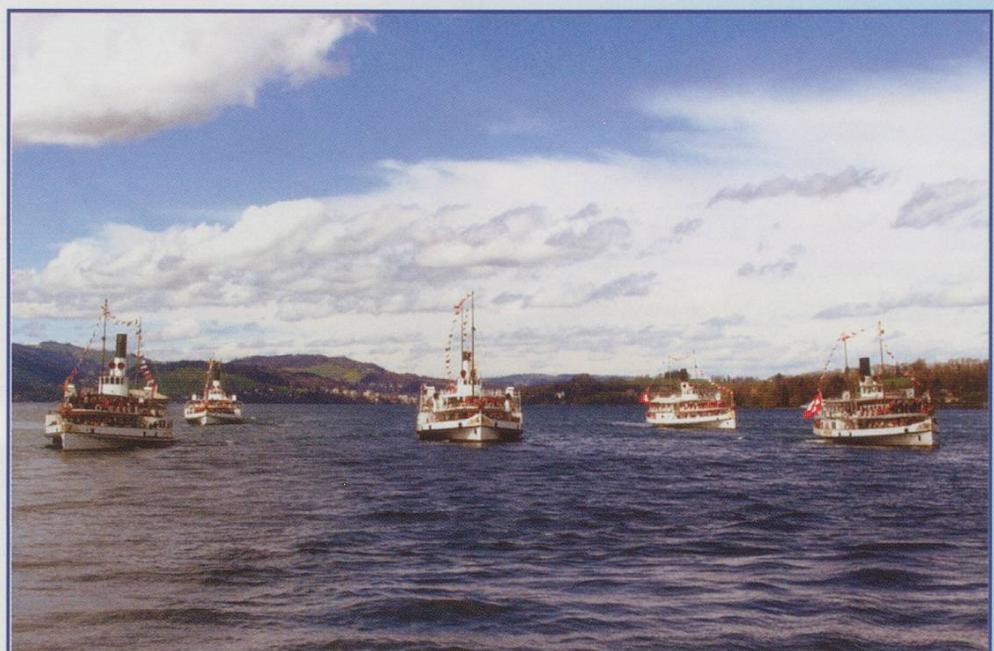
TOP: "Stadt Luzern" has collected her passengers and is awaiting the signal for the Parade to begin.

MIDDLE: "Stadt Luzern" displays a distinct list to port as she turns and pulls away.

BOTTOM: The Escort.

up a position that enabled it to cruise past the bows of its fellow steamships. Suddenly, without warning, there came a cacophony of noise as steam horns sounded out in salute. It seemed that each steamship was trying, in turn, to make the most noise. It was some sort of gargantuan horn concerto!!

Stadt Luzern then moved further into the lake and in turn the other steamships followed. Various formations took place, some of which seemed tricky for the limited manoeuvrability of paddle steamers. At times *Stadt Luzern* led and at other times she was escorted. Eventually the parade of ships arrived at a point near Vitznau where there were further formations including one known as "The Star". We were also treated to a display of paragliders, who eventually descended into the lake and were taken aboard *Ruess* - the oldest boat on the lake.



TOP: "Stadt Luzern" heads towards the High Alps.

MIDDLE: One of the numerous formations.

BOTTOM: "Stadt Luzern".



A helicopter was also criss-crossing the sky taking photographs whilst all the while our photo boat was manoeuvred into different positions. During all this an excellent lunch was provided on *Brunnen* by Tavolago (subsidiary of SGV) with photographers dashing away at times out onto the upper rear deck in order to capture a new event or formation. A discord of 'clicking' from shutters and motor drives must have been heard in the town of Brunnen!!

To everyone's regret we eventually had to start heading back to Luzern with *Stadt Luzern* being escorted home by her peers. On arrival a final horn concerto was given to *Die Stadt* and the day came to an end with a dinner on board the ship. As the event ended many eyes were also on *Unterwalden* - for she is due to be taken out of service at the end of the present season to undergo a two and half year rebuild. The SGV also has a new boat being built

TOP: "Gallia" turns and lines up for a passing manoeuvre.

MIDDLE: "Schiller".

BOTTOM: "Unterwalden" making a sharp turn.

and it will be on the lines of a catamaran.

This spectacular steamboat parade was only the start of the anniversary year. There will be various events until the anniversary year comes to an end on 19th October 2008.



TOP: "Uri".



MIDDLE: "Unterwalden" beginning to head for home.

BELOW: Moving into line.



ABOVE: Heading for Home.

RIGHT: A final tribute picture of "Stadt Luzern" - with Mount Pilatus in the background.

