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Mario Gavazzi


The restaurant "Wilhelm Tell" moored at the same place as the first 'Tell', January 2018.

Photo: Mario Gavazzi

In 1908 the Vierwaldstättersee welcomed the new two-deck paddle steamer "Wilhelm Tell". It joined the very similar "ps Schiller", which had arrived in 1906 – both products of Sulzer, Winterthur. In 1970 the withdrawal of "ps Wilhelm Tell" initialised the popular movement to save the historic steamboats operating on Luzern's lake. Two years later, the association 'Dampferfreunde Vierwaldstättersee' (www.dampfschiff.ch) was founded, whilst in that year "Wilhelm Tell" was inaugurated as a floating-restaurant at the Luzernerhof pier. Private owners, the Family Räber, have since then successfully operated this beautiful restaurant with great success. Also the "Wilhelm Tell" acts as a good 'marketing tool' for the five SGV steamers (www.lakelucerne.ch) its withdrawal helped to save.

I found this very old picture, that shows an earlier paddle steamer named "Wilhelm Tell", in an antique-market. Before today's 'Tell' was inaugurated, another, smaller one-deck steamer had been sailing on the Vierwaldstättersee since 1864. In 1908, with the advent of the new ship, its name was changed to the "Reuss", and 100-years-ago in 1918 this

vessel was scrapped because of the bad condition of the engine and boilers. It is a special coincidence that the spot where this historic photograph was taken is the same location where its namesake-floating restaurant is now moored, Pier 9 at Luzernerhof. The restaurant is open all-year except during closure in February.

As we see the name "Wilhelm Tell" is full of history and stories! 

The first "ps Wilhelm Tell" (undated).

Photo from collection of Mario Gavazzi

