



## QUICK FACT FRIDAY



### ***Ferryboat Sappho***

Before the construction of the John P. Grace Memorial Bridge in 1928, the only means of travel between Mount Pleasant and Charleston was by ferryboat. The first ferry was established by Andrew Hibben in 1770 and traveled between Charleston and a landing on the south side of Shem Creek. Andrew's son James expanded the service. He purchased Jacob Motte's Mount Pleasant Plantation in 1803 and divided the land at what was called Haddrell's Point into 35 lots which formed part of the incorporation of the Town of Mount Pleasant in 1837.

The first successful American steamboat, Robert Fulton's the *Clermont*, was introduced in New York City in 1807. Soon steam powered ferry boats were introduced into South Carolina's waterways. In 1847 the Mount Pleasant Ferry Company was created and built a ferry house and wharf on the front beach facing Charleston Harbor. Steam ferries traveling between Charleston and Mount Pleasant had names such as *The Hibben*, *the Coffee*, *the Mt. Pleasant*, *Massasoit*, and *Lawrence*, *Pocosin*, and *Commodore Perry*. Probably the most legendary of the ferries that served Mount Pleasant was the *Sappho*.

The *Sappho* was built in Brooklyn, New York in 1874. It was 142 feet long, 24 feet wide, and had a draft of 8.7 feet. It was named after an ancient Greek poet, Sappho, best known for her lyric poems about love. The *Sappho* could carry 750 passengers and traveled between Charleston and Mount Pleasant in about fifteen minutes. The cost of a ticket was 30 cents. In the summer months, the *Sappho* and its sister ferry boat, *Lawrence*, carried between 3,500 and 5,000 passengers. After arriving in Mount Pleasant, passengers would board street railways to Sullivans Island and the Isle of Palms where they attended popular dances and concerts.

The ability to reach Mount Pleasant by car over the Grace Memorial Bridge marked the demise of the Charleston - Mount Pleasant ferry service. The *Sappho* was stripped of its boilers and sidewheels and towed to the Ashley River where it was beached in the marsh at the end of Gadsden Street. Over the years of weather and tides, the *Sappho* disappeared into the pluff mud.

See also: [Historical Markers](#) (Markers #17, 48, 53) of the Our History Section of the Town website

Photo credit: Charleston Museum

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The Town of Mount Pleasant Historical Commission releases Quick Fact Fridays about the history of Mount Pleasant and about the Commission, its programs and activities. Historical facts are drawn largely from the *Our History* section of the Town's website. Follow the link below to discover what makes Mount Pleasant such a distinctive historical place! To receive Quick Fact Friday messages and other Town notifications, sign up for *Notify Me* alerts [here](#).

## Our History

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