

The Star and Crescent Boat Company is San Diego Harbor's "other ferry operator." Its ferries, less glamorous and less publicized than those which ply between San Diego and Coronado, are also important to the Harbor's economy and they, too, like the larger ferries, have a romantic past and an active present. Unlike the Coronado ferries, the vessels on Star and Crescent's North Island run may have a future that extends beyond the opening of the Coronado bridge.

Star and Crescent today operates not only the ferryboats on the San Diego-North Island run but also the excursion boats on the one and two-hour harbor tours and the tugboats, barges and other equipment used in general harbor service. S. & C. also has an interest in a water taxi operation, and an associate company is the San Diego Marine Construction Company active in shipbuilding and ship repair. S. & C. also has real estate interests. In years past the S. & C. folk through the Star & Crescent Oil Company handled the distribution of Tidewater Oil products in the San Diego area. At one time almost all the petroleum shipped into the area was transported via S. & C. barges and tankers. The company has also served the fishing fleet doing salvage work, rescue work and whatever else was needed. S. & C. owned at least one tuna clipper and has also provided services for the sports' fishing enthusiasts. The Star & Crescent Boat Company represents in fact the end result of a series of mergers and consolidations of numerous ferry and harbor services. Predecessor companies date back to 1892.

And it was in 1892 when ten acres of prime land on Point Loma were purchased by Captain Rufus M. Creswell. One year later the Captain purchased an iron boat, "Hercules," and with it he offered passenger service between San Diego and Ballast Point. A second vessel, the steam launch "Point Loma," was acquired in 1898 and was soon chartered to the United States Government to transport supplies and personnel to Fort Rosecrans, then under construction.

Captain Creswell's fleet soon included the "Golden West," "Fortuna," (registered as a ferry), "Point Loma," "Dolphin," "Comet," "Biz," "Bee," and "Owl." One was used in the Coronado Islands run; the others in local freight and passenger service. Creswell's San Diego dock was the foot of H Street (Market St.). For seven years Creswell was captain of the U. S. Government boat, "General De Russy." (Another government boat, according to Jerry MacMullen, was an artillery steamer, "Lt. George Harris"). Oakley Hall was active in the company. Land transportation to Point Loma was difficult in those days so the ferries hauled picnickers and pleasure seekers as well as workers and soldiers.

One historian states that the Point Loma Ferry Co. was incorporated in 1895 with Captain Oakley J. Hall as skipper. Another writer records the first ferry company as being the Roseville, San Diego & National City Ferry Company, one which transported San Diegans in 1888 to Roseville for connections with the Roseville and Ocean Beach Railway which opened on April 17, 1888. Mayor William (Billy) H. Carlson and Albert S. Higgins ran a steam train through Wabaska Canyon to Cliff House on the Ocean Beach bluffs. Visitors picked beach strawberries and gathered mussels. The train, powered by a diminutive steam "dummy-type" locomotive, operated for a relatively brief period.

MacMullen says a propeller driven steamer, "Roseville," was built in 1888 for the Point Loma Land & Town Company. It ran from San Diego to Roseville and then on to Ballast Point, where construction was underway on a new lighthouse and on Fort Rosecrans. This two deck ferry had a piano aboard at one time. A 1916 schedule suggests that San Diego revelers could go by ferry to the Roseville Pier and Ballroom for an evening of dancing. Operation of the P.L. ferry ceased about 1918.

The North Island ferry service was reported to be an outgrowth of the Point Loma service. Sometime after 1900 these ferries or launches began transporting workers and visitors to Curtiss Aviation, Rockwell Field and later the Naval Air Station. The Point Loma Ferry Company became the Star Boat Company in 1908 when Captain Hall purchased the name and properties, including the Boat House at the foot of H Street from Captain Elmer E. Lutz. Service was expanded to include harbor excursions and trips to the Coronado Islands. Ralph J. Chandler entered the boat