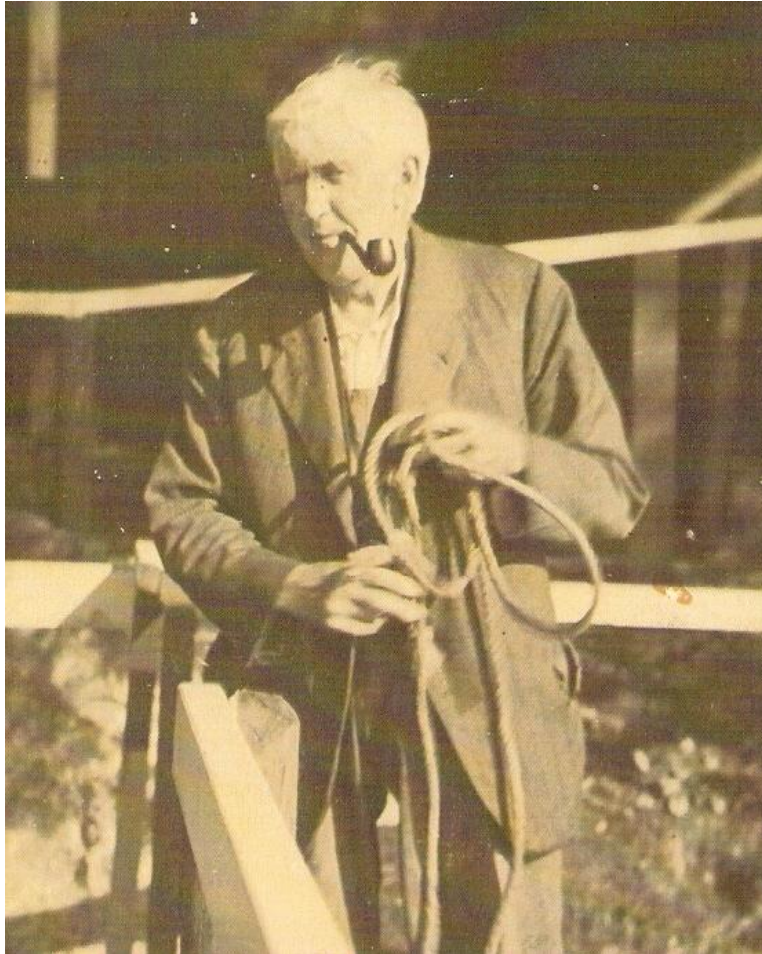


# Lake Dunmore's Steamboat Operator

By William J. Powers, Jr. 2008

From around 1900 to the 1930s, Oscar F. Schroeder operated a steamboat on Lake Dunmore. This is his story.



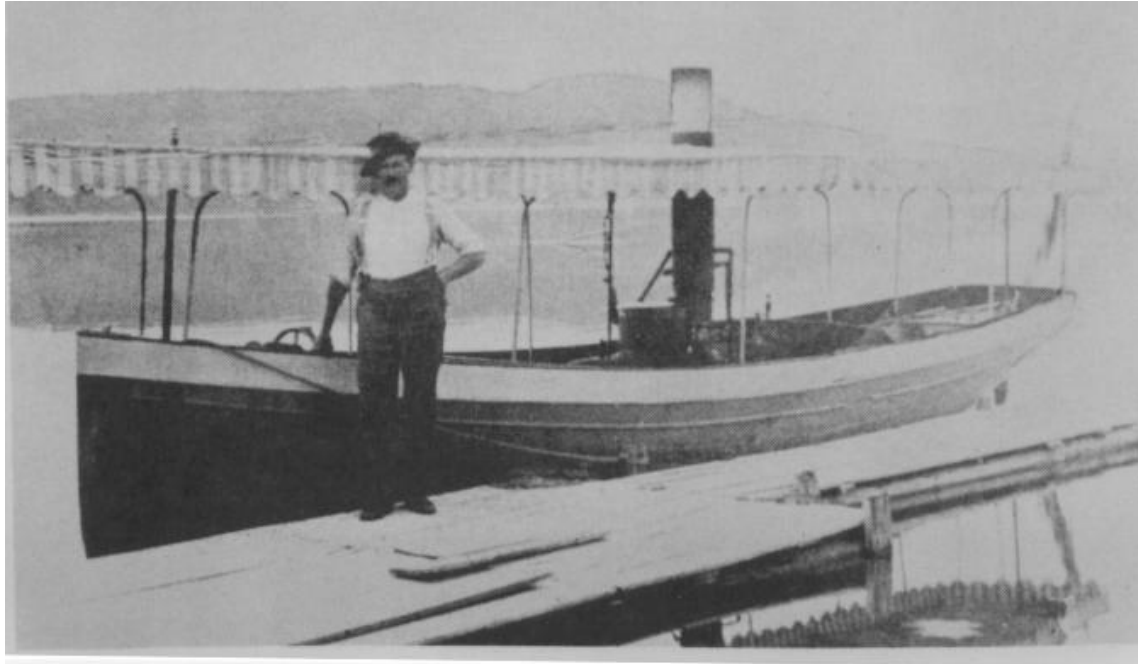
**Oscar F. Schroeder**

Oscar Frederick Schroeder, son of Henry Schroeder and Elizabeth Weber, was born in Celle, Hanau, Germany on February 14, 1865. He immigrated to the United States in 1882 and settled in Vermont where he became a naturalized citizen on 20 Aug 1896. In 1900, he was living in a rented house in Salisbury, VT where he was a sawmill hand working in the Newton & Thompson Sawmill.

On October 17, 1905 at Salisbury, Oscar married Julia May Wimmitt, age 27, the daughter of Isaac Wimmitt and Lucy Freshett of Salisbury.

Oscar had a number of different occupations. In 1905, he was an engineer and the following year a guide. By 1910, he owned a small farm in Leicester, adjacent to the Salisbury town line and a ½ mile south of the Newton & Thompson mill. However, that

year he was primarily a steamboat manager. His steamboat was named *Elise*, after his sister. In 1918, he was again a part time worker in the Newton & Thompson mill.



Oscar Schroeder poses with his steamboat



Oscar boards passengers for a Lake Dunmore excursion from the Lake Dunmore House



The *Elise*

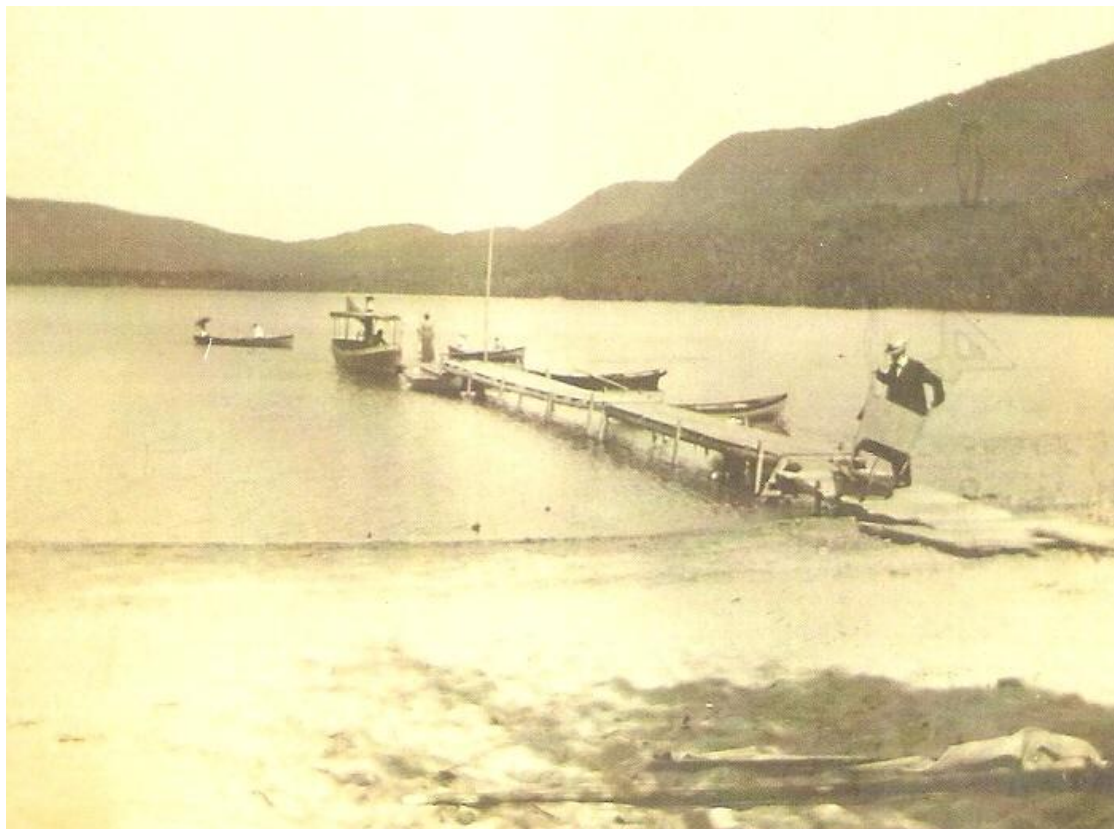


In 1920, Oscar was principally a farmer, but he was more than that to many of his neighbors. Dr. J. Seeley Estabrook of Brandon remembered Oscar in 1976:

“... Oscar Schroeder ... had a wood fired steam boat. He took people on excursions and Phil Welch of Brandon fired this when he was a boy. [Oscar] had a one family farm and did odd jobs around the lake and was also the man who had the steamboat on the lake. I first remember him tiptoeing into camp around 5:30 A.M. to build the kitchen fire and then leave to do the same elsewhere. He would return later to check and, on cold days, to build a fire in the fireplace and to do other chores. In short, he built fires, filled wood boxes, filled the ice box, filled the water tank on the roof, checked boats and docks, filled the lamps with oil (my aunt cleaned and trimmed the wicks). He did minor repairs to doors, roofs, etc., and needed cement work. In the spring and fall he opened and closed the camp. The family did the spring cleaning. He built and put in docks and took them out in the fall. He had a big horse he used in the winter to fill the icehouses and get up wood for the next year. He would police the area in the winter. No matter who bought a tool or wheelbarrow, it was considered his and he used them up and down the road. The advantages outweighed the disadvantages by far.”

He also made a sticky solution by stewing sweet fern and used it for poison ivy. 25 years later while doing postgraduate work at Harvard a famous Dermatologist, Dr. Schwartz, told us of a remedy for poison ivy, the same thing.”

Oscar died on 12 Sep 1939 in Leicester. He is buried in Middlebury.



The *Elise*, docked at what is present day Branbury Beach.