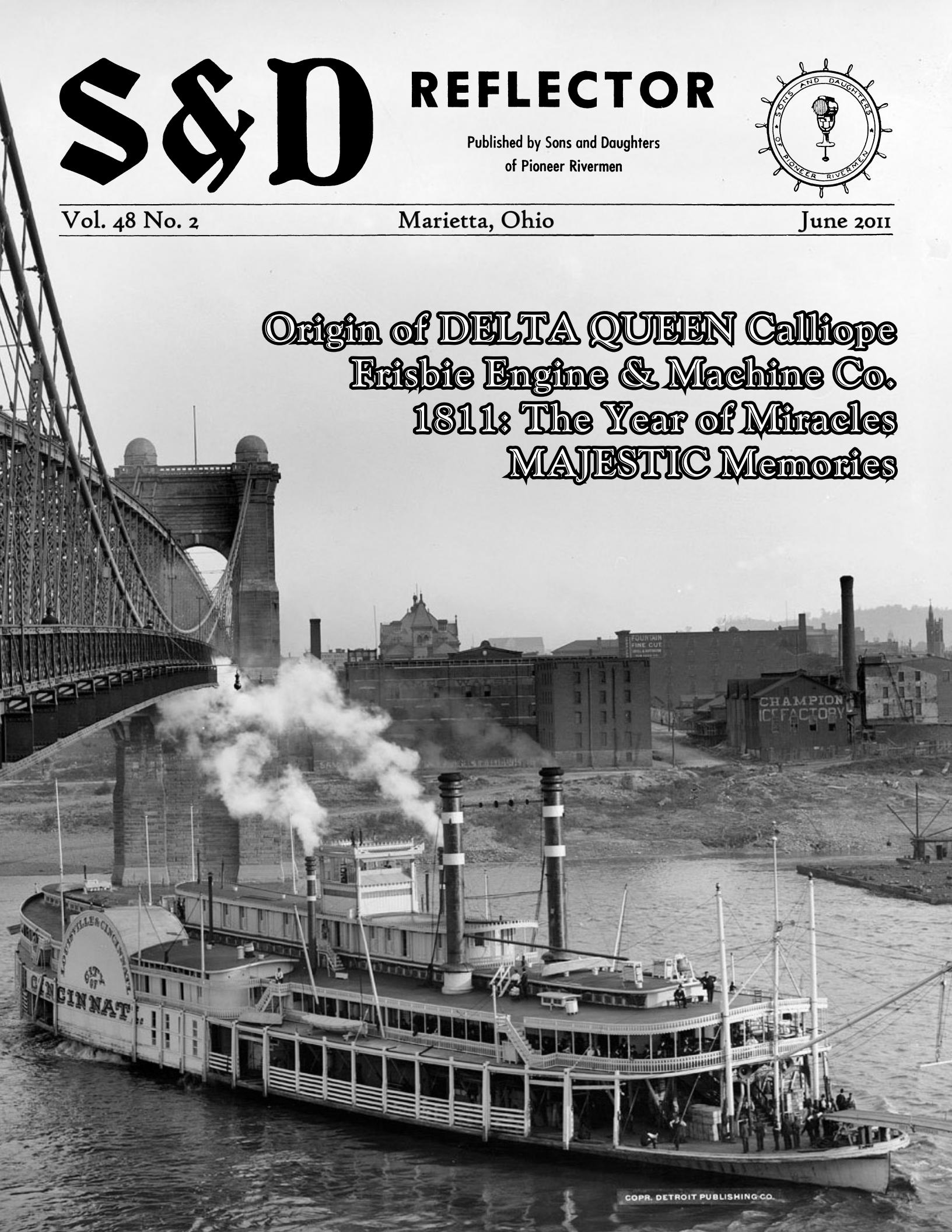
S&D REFLECTOR

Published by Sons and Daughters
of Pioneer Rivermen

Vol. 48 No. 2 | Marietta, Ohio | June 2011

Origin of DELTA QUEEN Calliope
Frisbie Engine & Machine Co.
1811: The Year of Miracles
MAJESTIC Memories



Front Cover

Looking south from the Ohio pier of the Roebling Suspension Bridge at Cincinnati, we see the L&C packet CITY OF CINCINNATI with Covington, KY in the background. S&D sleuths Dale Flick and Tom Schiffer provide commentary for this magnificent shot snapped for the Detroit Publishing Company in 1906. The L&C Line had their main wharfboat/ offices on the Public Landing here with a second wharf just below the bridge in the event high water prevented access to the regular landing. This method was used for several years going back to the old U. S. Mail Line to avoid breaking back the stacks. Now that she's backed away from the lower wharf and straightened around, the pilot has rung Full Ahead on both wheels. The shadow of the pier suggests late afternoon and those on board are in for an overnight to Louisville, 130 miles downriver. Landmarks visible here just above the COC's stacks are James Walsh & Co. Distillery. Rising above it is the the Covington Post Office housing the Custom House, replaced about 1940. The foot of Scott Street is just above her starboard jackstaff, with Uriah Shinkle's coal flats moored at river's edge. Uriah was most likely kin of Amos Shinkle, chief proprietor of the Suspension Bridge. Appearing to the right of the smokestack of the Champion Ice Co. is the steeple of Trinity Episcopal Church. Tom remembers growing up on the hill behind that steeple, two miles from the river, yet still within earshot of Homer Denney on the ISLAND QUEEN. *Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Reflections from Our Readers

Capt. Bill Bowell writes: "It's nice to see the REFLECTOR again. Vol. 48, No. 1 is excellent. We had a great time in St. Louis with the Passenger Vessel Association's meeting. Thanks for your compliment on my award. I turned 90 in the middle of February! It was a long time ago that I parachuted into Normandy, France on June 6, 1944, at 2 o'clock in the morning."

Capt. Bill was honored at the February meeting of NAPVO in St. Louis as a founder of that passenger vessel organization. Among those in attendance were program speaker Capt. Doc Hawley, who related the story of excursion steamboating. In addition to being honored by his colleagues in the passenger vessel association, Capt. Bowell was also named a Knight of the Legion of Honor by the French government on Veteran's Day last fall. As a 23-year old paratrooper in the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Sgt. Bowell was part of the landmark Normandy invasion on D-Day. It is with great sadness that we share with you the news of Capt. Bill's passing on April 19th.

Jonathan Tschiggfrie writes: "The only known web reference to Naker, KY is from a 1999 General Highway Map of Butler County by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Dept. of Highways. Naker is unrecognized anywhere else and appears to have been lost to the internet, save for this one reference. Naker is (was?) located on Lock 5 Road (County Road 1161) in the Reedyville quadrangle of Butler County. It is located on the Green River, just downstream from the defunct Lock 5, across from Glenmore, KY.

Jonathan's comments are in response to our request for help in pinpointing Naker, KY, where the towboat BETSARA , pictured on page 39 of our March issue, was built in 1934. Lock 4 has been the head of commercial navigation on the Green since 1965, while L&D 5 at Naker was deactivated in August 1951.

Marissa Austin, Director of External Relations for the Rivers Institute of Hanover College, writes: "I read the March issue and it is wonderful. We appreciate your support. As for the book of essays, we are told October first. And we are truly hoping it works that way because we want to have it available for passengers on the BELLEs during the October event. I will keep you posted!"

Mention was made in our last issue of the forthcoming publication of a collection of ten

steamboat essays by river authors familiar to the readers of this magazine. The Rivers Institute has planned a year chock full of events to commemorate the Bicentennial, many of which were reported in these pages. Accompanying those festivities is Ohio River Museum's first Waterways Festival on August 6-7 in Marietta. And as the anniversary celebration continues to gather a full head of steam, we are pleased to report some new "Bicentennial doin's" at Howard Steamboat Museum on page 9.

Ken Zurski writes: "I'm currently doing research on the steamer COLUMBIA wreck in Pekin, IL in 1918. I've been told that Fred Way wrote an article on the wreck in the December 1978 issue of the REFLECTOR. I would be interested in purchasing a copy if it is available. Thanks."

Shortly thereafter, Ken received a package containing a copy of that story, along with some relevant citations from Capt. Way's *Packet Directory*, Ed Mueller's *Upper Mississippi Rafting Steamboats*, and Walter Blair's *ARaft Pilot's Log*. Tucked into the envelope was an invitation to visit our S&D website. Apparently Ken appreciated the invite and sent back a speedy reply: "I'll check out your organization. It sounds very interesting." Thanks to our newly redesigned webpage, potential members can discover the treasures that membership in S&D offers. We trust that our faithful readers are also spreading the word and extending that same invitation whenever the opportunity arises.

Hans Gehrig of Switzerland writes: "For many years I am a very big fan of the legendary Western Rivers Steamboats and I want to build a model approximately 48 inches long of a Mississippi sternwheel packet. Is it maybe possible to get a few old issues of the journal S&D REFLECTOR with articles about model-building of sternwheel boats? And maybe you can send some other information or links for such a fascinating project?"

Hans was put in immediate contact with some notable S&D experts: Alan Bates, John Fryant, and also Franz Neumeier in Munich, whose CAPE GIRARDEAU model recently arrived at its new home at Howard Steamboat Museum.

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Thinking about submitting to the REFLECTOR?
Please follow these guidelines:

Articles

» *500 words or less*
» *.rtf or .doc format (no PDFs)*

Features

» *750 words or more*
» *.rtf or .doc format (no PDFs)*

Images

» *at least 300 dpi*
» *.jpg, .tif, .png, or .bmp format*
» *minimal compression*

Send to the Editor as an e-mail attachment

"Lighting Up the Past, Present, and Future of the Mississippi River System"

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America's Riverboat Historical Society

Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen

PO Box 352
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The *only* requirement for membership in S&D is an interest in river history!

S&D REFLECTOR

Published by Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen

Vol. 48, No. 2 Marietta, Ohio June 2011
ISSN 1087-9803 Post Office Permit #73, Marietta, OH

The name of this publication comes from the *Fleetwood Reflector* published in 1869 aboard the packet FLEETWOOD. This quarterly was originated by Capt. Frederick Way, Jr. in 1964.

Correspondence is invited and serious papers on river related history from our readers are always welcomed. Please check with the Editor before sending any material on a "loan" basis.

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Reflector Back Issues and Indices

Copies of the current or of the immediate prior year are available at $5 each, postpaid for members, $8 for non-members. Issues for most years through 1972 are available at $3 each or $10 for a complete year (4 issues).

Indices for five year increments of the quarterly, 1964 through 2003, are available for $5 per volume.

Orders should be sent to PO Box 352, Marietta, OH, 45750 for these items.

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There are two classes of membership - full and family. Full membership includes the quarterly *S&D Reflector*, admission to the Ohio River Museum and towboat W. P. SNYDER, JR. at Marietta, and voting rights at the Annual Meeting. Family members enjoy all privileges except the *Reflector*.

Dues

Full Member - $30 each
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Remit to:
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Getting Posted Up

Forces of Nature and the Inland Rivers

Your June issue features the inaugural voyage of the steamboat NEW ORLEANS on the Ohio and Mississippi in 1811-12. In Leland Johnson's recreation of that first steam-powered journey, the forces of nature play a significant role as the story unfolds. Those pioneer navigators and travelers had to contend with wind, rain and earthquake, and endure an extended delay because of low water. Two hundred years later, those who work and travel the river face many of the same uncertainties and challenges from those basic elements of nature, as we are reminded by this spring's near record floods.

Our featured program speaker for the 72nd annual meeting in Marietta this September 16-17 is Capt. Bob Reynolds, S&D Board of Governors member and career riverman for the past forty years. Bob will speak about "Seasons on the River." In recent years, many S&D members and countless river fans have enjoyed Bob's "Reflections Online" at our S&D website. In fact, it was his vivid and perceptive postings about the vagaries of nature with which towboat pilots and crew have to deal in wintertime that prompted S&D president Jeff Spear to invite Bob to be our presenter in September. In this Bicentennial Year, it seems especially fitting to have a contemporary river pilot share his experiences of seasons on the river and the beauty and hardships they bring.

Accompanying the story of that first steamboat trip on the inland rivers is a companion piece in this issue by Tom Schiffer. The advent of steam navigation gave rapid rise to the growth of boatbuilding and enginebuilding at several major river cities, and Tom tells the story of one of those more notable firms, Cincinnati's Frisbie Engine and Machine Company.

In addition to the packet, towing, rafting, excursion boat, ferryboat and short-haul freight trades which developed in the years after 1811, one of the more colorful river enterprises was that of showboating. Pat Carr shares her personal reminiscences of a summer aboard the last operating old-timey showboat, the venerable MAJESTIC, during its summer season traveling the upper Ohio.

Rounding out this issue is a tale from one other trade which came into its own in the remaining years of steamboating, that of the tourist boat. In later years, Eagle Packet Company and Greene Line Steamers defined that tradition, and Jonathan Tschiggfrie relates one chapter in the long and storied history of perhaps the most well-known tourist boat of all time, the DELTA QUEEN, as he digs into the early history of her steam calliope.

Along with reporting news of other happenings on the river in observance of this year's Bicentennial of Western Rivers Steamboating, this June issue joins in the festivities as we share stories of people, places, enterprises and boats that are part of the tradition we commemorate. 2011 is an exciting and eventful year for S&D members and for all who love the river and its boats. We're pleased that you have chosen to make the REFLECTOR part of your celebration.

S&D Regional Chapters

Ohio - Kanawha Rivers Chapter
Jim Bupp, President

Middle Ohio River Chapter
Frank X. Prudent, President

Mississippi River Chapter
Capt. Tom Dunn, President

Adjunct Organizations

Ohio River Museum, Marietta, OH
601 Front St • (740) 373-3750

Inland Rivers Library, Cincinnati, OH
800 Vine St • (513) 369-6957

Blennerhassett Museum, Parkersburg, WV
137 Juliana St • (304) 420-4800

Weblinks available at www.s-and-d.org

Meet Our Contributors

Leland Johnson (*Year of Miracles, p. 10*) was born in Joppa, IL, Mile 951 on the Ohio near the Grand Chain of Rocks, where he helped his grandfather maintain the navigation light at the head of Grand Chain. He recalls that the Coast Guard paid his grandfather $10 a month for this work, and they would stop there at the landing every month or so to leave a barrel of lamp oil. Leland also worked with his uncles dragging the Ohio for mussel shells to make buttons. When not working, summers meant time for swimming with his brothers and watching steamboats from the blufftops through his grandfather's telescope, which he still has.

After working for the Rock Island Railroad, Leland earned degrees in history from Murray State, St. Louis University, and Vanderbilt University. He is author of thirty-four histories, mostly concerning rivers and their management by the Army Engineers. In the late 70s, Dr. Johnson worked on the construction of the Tenn-Tom Waterway and then transferred to Army Engineers headquarters in Washington in the early 80s. He was introduced to S&D and to Capt. Fred Way by Jerry Sutphin when he was writing the history of the Huntington District for the Corps, and recalls pleasant evenings at dinner with Capt. Way and Lady Grace at their favorite Sewickley restaurant.

Returning to Tennessee in 1996, Leland collaborated with Chuck Parrish in writing histories of Kentucky River and the Falls of the Ohio, along with other river articles, including those which have appeared in the REFLECTOR. The next chapter of his "Falls Heroes: Louisville's Life Savers" will appear in an upcoming issue of our magazine. Since retiring last summer, Leland continues to enjoy working on his farm in Westmoreland, TN between the Green and Cumberland River watersheds.

Pat Carr (*MAJESTIC Memories, p. 36*), grew up in Cleveland, OH, playing trumpet beginning in fourth grade. Her older sister attended Hiram College and spent a summer on the MAJESTIC. When her family visited the showboat several times, Pat loved everything she saw -- the MAJESTIC and ATTABOY, calliope, river, and all the other riverboats. After Pat's summer aboard the showboat playing trumpet, she transferred to Michigan State to get her degree in instrumental music. That was followed by a lifelong career as Junior High Band Director in Michigan and Georgia. Pat is now retired and lives in Macon, GA.

Because her first name is Charlene, during her college years her friends knew her as Chuckie Carr. Returning home at the end of the summer with two showboat posters, her mother had them professionally preserved and framed, proudly displaying them in their home for many years. Because of that, the posters survived and are now enjoyed by visitors to Howard Steamboat Museum and Point Pleasant River Museum.

Pat kept up with the location of the MAJESTIC over the years and was able to visit the boat several times. She used what she had learned that summer throughout her career on stage with her band, while singing in a quartet, and entertaining at local banquets. Until recent years, she could say that she had spent her life onstage since she was 18.

After "graduating" from her years in teaching, Pat was able to return to her interest in river history -- riding the DELTA QUEEN, visiting river and steamboat museums, joining S&D, and being able to enjoy a show on the MAJESTIC each year. Although she had sadly written "Goodbye Forever" on the last page of her showboat scrapbook, somehow that boat is still part of her life.

Grateful to have spent her brief summer on the MAJESTIC, Pat looks back on how that experience changed the course of her life and continues to be a blessing.

Jonathan Tschiggfrie (*On the Origin of Calliopes, p. 14*), born and raised in Dubuque, IA, harbors a lifelong fascination with steamboats and the river. The son of the REFLECTOR's editor, Jonathan's interest in steam calliopes came at an early age,

his father's happy tootling being one of his earliest musical memories. He is a recent graduate of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN with a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education and is a licensed music teacher in the state. In addition, St. Thomas awarded Jonathan research grants for two consecutive summers of groundbreaking fieldwork into the American steam calliope tradition. The culmination of that work is, according to him, regrettably still forthcoming in print, although excerpts from his research appear for the first time in this issue of the REFLECTOR.

Jonathan currently resides in Richfield, MN, where he is seeking work as a high school choir teacher while continuing his calliope research. He is an avid composer, writing mostly choral and liturgical music. Along with his remarkably patient and tolerant fiancee Caitlin, Jonathan is active in the choir at the parish of St. Cecilia in St. Paul and enjoys both the summertime bounty of the St. Paul Farmers' Market as well as the fantastic scenery of Minnesotan winters on the Upper Mississippi.

Tom Schiffer (*Frisbie Engine and Machine Company, p. 20*) lives on Gunpowder Road in Boone County, KY. He is retired from an active life as land surveyor, draftsman (civil and mechanical), technical writer for jet engine development, project engineer, environmental manager, and plant services manager. The latter required a steam engineer's license for boilers and engines in Ohio, which Tom still holds.

He has spent his decade plus of retirement as a technical and historical writer for several publications and the Boone County Public Library. In 2001, he wrote a book, *Peters & King*. Published in 2002, it is the history of the King Powder Company and Peters Cartridge Company, located near the present-day Kings Island Amusement Park near Cincinnati. He has also acquired two steam powered launches and happily maintains and campaigns them on the Ohio River and tribs with his first mate, Miss Carol, and many river friends. Both launches can be called MISSIE in that one is named MISS DEMEANOR (20 feet long); the other MISS BLUE (22 feet long). MISS D is propane-fired; MISS B is wood-fired.

Tom also answers to the name Cap'n Walnut, a take-off on the name Cap'n Allnut that Humphrey Bogart adopted for the movie "African Queen." His interest in steamboats dates from about 1939 when he first rode the ISLAND QUEEN, while his interest in the DELTA QUEEN dates from before he first set foot aboard in late 1954. Tom built his first working steam engine model in 1951, and only with reluctance has he turned his back on any steam locomotive, steam tractor or other steam-powered equipment within sight or sound. He served on the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE task force in 2005 under Bruce Babcock, Keith Baylor, Kenny Howe, Chief Engineer Jim McCoy and others to give her an "EKG". That investigation identified valve problems which led to repairs resulting in more speed and economy.

In addition to his river and steam interests, Tom has had a life-long involvement in the shooting sports: from 33-foot air gun competition to 1000-yard muzzle loading long range shooting with antique and modern firearms. He made some of these himself in his machine-shop basement whose shop gets frequent use in maintaining his steamers. His wife, Carol, who joins in his steamboat interests (and edits his copy), competes with muzzle loading pistol. Learning of S&D from Mike (Shantyboat) Fletcher in the mid-eighties, Tom corresponded with Fred Way and has been a member for over a quarter century. Tom and Carol have two grown boys.

The Adventures of an Ohio River Reisefuhrer

by Alan Bates

During September 2010 my telephone suddenly began to run red-hot: the thing could not seem to stop ringing. It seems that a German television company would be on the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE's Louisville to Madison (and return) trip that October to record an American steamboat in action. This was big news indeed.

Apparently the BELLE's management found out somehow that I own a copy of *Langenscheidt's Taschenwörterbuch (Deutsch to Englisch)* and thus might be of help in explaining things to their crew. This was a mistake: I admit to speaking pidgin-German and can read it to a stringently limited degree. To say that an eighty-seven-year old mind and a three-years-old German vocabulary are incompatible is no exaggeration. However, Geraldine of the production company spoke flawless and lucid English, so all was well.

Along with the boat's management and crew I looked forward to this experience with pleasant anticipation. Hoferichter & Jacobs Fernsehenproduktionsgesellschaft sent a pioneer to Louisville to learn the lay of the land. She arrived on October 4th (or is it Oktober?) to make arrangements, discover local points of interest and determine photogenic sites to film the boat passing by. I was to do the driving. After a scheduling meeting Geraldine Pranger and I went exploring the land between Indiana Highway 62 and the river to find the shooting sites. There were four of them – Owen Post Office, Bethlehem, Saluda Landing, and an overlook at Hanover College. (A word of advice to those contemplating such a trip: DON'T!) The territory is served by one-lane roads with steep grades, sharp curves and even a few precipices. Here I observe that Geraldine has nerves of steel for she did not cry out in terror even once. We found Owen, Bethlehem and Hanover and maybe Saluda. Maybe not. Geraldine hopped out at each site and made pictures and notes for later guidance.

Kerstin Holl and Georg Stocker aboard BELLE OF LOUISVILLE.

Goertz Walter, German production team sound man.

A few days later the rest of the Gesellschaft's crew arrived. A lady named Kerstin Holl was the leader. She was assisted by Georg Stocker, cameraman, and by Goertz Walter, soundman. Kerstin introduced them by last name and assured me that I'd never be able to pronounce their Christian names. I promptly renamed them Bert and Gert to their hilarious delight. No corner or crevice of the BELLE escaped their attention and the BELLE's crew's explanations were understood, for all four of them spoke beautiful English.

In Louisville they gathered local color by visiting and filming the Hilerich & Bradsby baseball bat factory, a cooperage that makes charred-oak barrels, the rock ledges at the Falls, and who knows what else while they awaited the trip to Madison. This was big business, involving a helicopter, GPS locators – the works. Geraldine rode the helicopter and filmed the boat as it passed the Madison power plant, gracefully dodging high-tension river crossings and swooping between the lofty hills. The rest of the crew interviewed engineers, pilots and passengers to a fare-thee-well.

They were not aboard on the return trip. Instead Fraulein Pranger retraced the roads of southern Indiana. Sure enough, they were at the landings in the gaps of the forest to film the boat with whistle salutes and much waving of arms and hands.

Hoferichter & Jacobs Television Production Company is not a broadcasting firm. They make documentary films for rental to broadcasting

Geraldine Pranger, production manager and "advance man."

channels. The BELLE trip was part of a series of documentaries of steamboats in many lands. Kerstin, Georg, Goertz and Geraldine will not appear, more's the pity, so here are their pictures for your delectation.

All photos courtesy of Alan Bates

Howard Steamboat Museum Offers Programs

Howard Steamboat Museum in Jeffersonville has recently announced details for two programs in conjunction with this year's Bicentennial observance.

On Saturday, July 16, the seventh presentation in their River Ramblings series will feature Chuck Parrish, retired historian for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Louisville District. Chuck will speak on "Mr. Roosevelt's Riverboat Remembered: Two Hundred Years of Steamboating." In conjunction with his talk, visitors to HSM will have opportunity to view Indiana Historical Society's traveling exhibit on steamboating. The festivities begin at 3:00 p.m. in the Carriage House on Museum grounds. Admission is $5, and back by popular demand following the presentation is the "Riverboat Rummage Sale." All proceeds from the program and sale will benefit the Museum operating fund.

A second gathering sponsored by the Howard Museum will take place on September 23-25. This three-day Steamboat Bicentennial Celebration will begin with a Friday evening reception at the Howard Mansion. On Saturday, various speakers will share topics of interest throughout the day, capped off by an evening dinner cruise aboard the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE. Sunday's activities are highlighted by a guided walking tour of the Louisville riverfront. Further details are available from Yvonne Knight or Keith Norrington at (812) 283-3728, or at the Museum website: www.steamboatmuseum.org

And this just in: "By the River's Edge," an exhibition also celebrating the Bicentennial, has been scheduled for July 1-31 at the Vernia Building, corner of Elm and Pearl in downtown New Albany. On display will be artifacts from the famed ROBT. E. LEE, built at New Albany in 1866, along with exhibits from other steamboats. Opening reception for the exhibit is July 1, from 6-8 p.m.

Want more? Visit us on the web at
www.s-and-d.org
for our exclusive Reflections Online.

Year of Miracles

by Leland Johnson

Why mark the bicentennial of 1811? Remembered as the "annus mirabilis" or year of miracles, it was a wondrous year indeed. Among its natural wonders, 1811 saw skies over America streaked by a great twin-tailed comet, one that would not be seen again for two thousand years. At the same time in 1811, America was shaken by its greatest earthquake of record, epicentered at New Madrid on the Mississippi River with shocks felt as far away as the Atlantic coast. That same fateful year saw animals acting strangely – mass migrations of thousands of squirrels swimming across the Ohio River heading south. Americans observing the comet overhead, watching swarms of squirrels swim rivers, or feeling sharp earthquake shocks may have feared their world was doomed.

Human events were equally portentous. Native Americans led by the great warrior Tecumseh organized a confederacy to oppose the advancing settlers; and in 1811 General William Henry Harrison's army marched to suppress tribes in Indiana at Tippecanoe, a battle often considered the first of the War of 1812 with the British. Slaves in the deep South united in their greatest revolt in United States history, marching on New Orleans before troops dispersed them. Amidst this turmoil the NEW ORLEANS sailed from Pittsburgh down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the first steamboat to make such a voyage triumphantly.

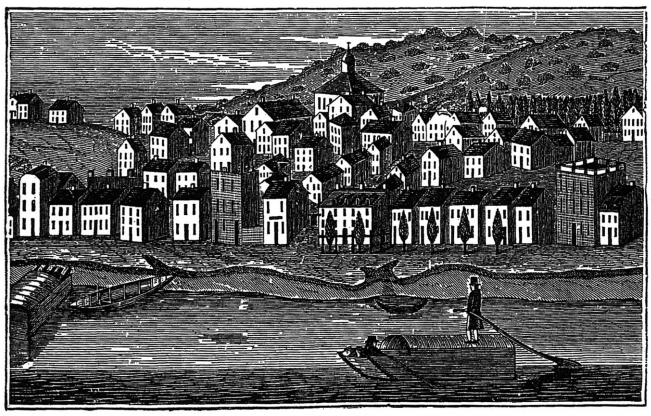
Robert Fulton had designed the first commercially successful steamboat in America in 1807 on the Hudson River, and in hope of expanding his steamboat business to the inland rivers he joined with partners Robert Livingston and Nicholas Roosevelt to build a steamboat at Pittsburgh at the headwaters of the Ohio River. To plan this business Roosevelt scouted the Ohio and Mississippi in 1809, opening coal mines to fuel steam engines, then went to Pittsburgh to build the steamboat. Finishing the vessel in October 1811, he embarked, bound for the city for which the boat was named: NEW ORLEANS. Aboard were his pregnant wife Lydia (pictured below in a later photo with their grandson) and their little daughter Rosetta as passengers, a pilot, an engineer, six crewmen, two maids, and one pet dog. Built like a ship, the NEW ORLEANS sported sailing masts, portholes, bowsprit and was painted sky blue. When cruising downriver at ten miles an hour, her engine roared and banged so that riverside communities became alarmed, fearing the great comet overhead had fallen into the river, or that perhaps the British and warring tribes were coming to attack. As the NEW ORLEANS sailed south, the great comet was at its brightest in October 1811, and on November 7 General Harrison and the American legion confronted Tecumseh's confederation at Tippecanoe.

To allay alarms on the Upper Ohio, Roosevelt stopped at several ports for public inspections of the first steamboat they had seen. When he reached Louisville at the end of October, he and his wife celebrated the shipboard birth of their first son Henry, and rested, awaiting high water to permit passage at the Falls of the Ohio. While tarrying for the rise, Roosevelt ran excursions upriver as far as Cincinnati, demonstrating his boat's power to stem river currents and building markets for this novel transportation mode.

When the river rose in December, Roosevelt hired a pilot to steer the steamboat down whitewater rapids at the Falls of the Ohio, passing over jagged rocks with inches to spare, and then steamed down the Lower Ohio, where thousands

1911 NEW ORLEANS replica at Marietta riverfront, adjacent present-day site of Hotel Lafayette. Photo from Jeff Spear Collection.

of migrating squirrels were strangely on the move. Near the present-day site of Tell City, IN, Roosevelt stopped to load his boat with coal from a mine he had purchased earlier, thereby launching a commercial coal industry along the lower river. He paused again at Henderson, KY, hoping to meet his friend John James Audubon who had opened a store there. Passing the mouth of the Tennessee River at the future site of Paducah, the NEW ORLEANS entered Indian territory – the Chickasaw tribe then possessed western Kentucky and Tennessee – and when the steamboat landed to collect firewood its crew met tribesmen who labled the boat "fire canoe." Indeed warriors tested their paddling skills in a race with the steamboat, although Roosevelt took the race as a possible threat until the steam engine showed greater endurance than human power.



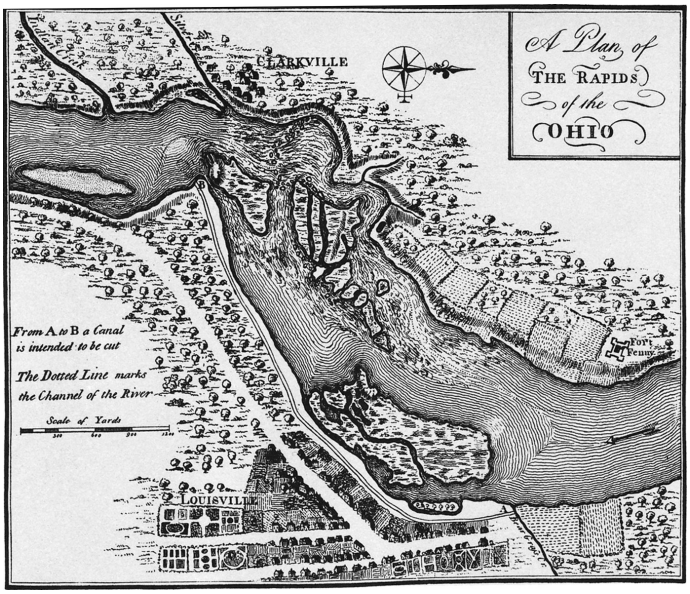
Cincinnati in 1810.

Leaving the warriors behind, the steamboat reached the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi at the modern-day site of Cairo. By then the earthquakes of 1811, greatest in United States' history, had begun, shaking the boat and frightening its passengers. Thousands of times stronger than tremors felt in recent times along the New Madrid fault, the quakes destroyed villages, tumbled bluffs into the river, and so changed its course that the pilot could not find the channel. Roosevelt found the villages of New Madrid and Little Prairie, MO destroyed by the quakes, their settlers taking refuge in rude lean-to shelters. At one time the crew tied their steamboat to an island but during the night awoke to discover that the island sank, forcing them to cut the lines to continue their voyage. Fortunately the boat passed out of the quake region before the earthquakes reversed the flow of the river, spilling over its banks to form today's Reelfoot Lake in western Tennessee.

When the steamboat reached Natchez at Christmas, the Roosevelts celebrated not only the holiday, but a shipboard romance. The boat's engineer had become so captivated by one of Mrs. Roosevelt's maids that he married her and they celebrated their honeymoon in New Orleans when the vessel arrived there in early January 1812, welcomed by Louisiana's governor. When the Roosevelts returned to New York, steam engineer Nicholas Baker became captain of the steamboat as it transported passengers and freight between New Orleans and Natchez. This trade proved so profitable that the Fulton and Livingston company built more steamboats at Pittsburgh and put them into service along the inland rivers. Soon other investors built steamboats competing with the Fulton boats; and Pittsburgh became a steamboat construction and steam engine manufacturing center, followed later by Cincinnati, Louisville, Evansville, and other Ohio and inland river ports.

The steamboat NEW ORLEANS was the first mechanically powered vessel on the inland waterways, a major achievement ranking with our modern space shuttles; and it was the pioneer for thousands of steamboats that followed her down the ways. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, steamboats plied inland rivers from Olean, NY on the Allegheny River at the east, along the Mississippi south to New Orleans and north to St. Paul, and west to Fort Benton, MT on the muddy Missouri. Steamboats revolutionized commercial transportation, gradually replacing unpowered boats and sailing ships. Soon, steam engines powered locomotives on railroads that

eventually spider-webbed the United States. The builders of steamboat engines also marketed them for manufacturing power, gradually replacing waterpower mills and permitting the location of factories anywhere investors preferred. This launched the nineteenth century industrial revolution in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys and throughout America. The constant need of steam engines for fuel, moreover, stimulated development of our coal mining industry.



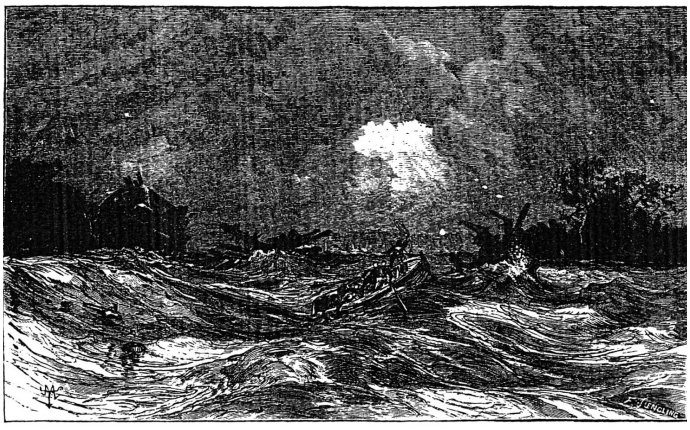
Steamboats brought sugar, cotton, and oysters north; Yankee pork, notions and guns south; and knitted together a national economy and cuisine. Steamboats brought former slaves, along with banjos, blues and jazz, north to Memphis, Nashville, Owensboro and St. Louis, and carried south the music from the pens of Stephen Collins Foster and Will S. Hays. Cadences of steamboat roustabouts found eager applications in gospel and popular music. Steamboat culture permeated states bordering the inland rivers and percolated west to the Pacific.

In the twentieth century the advent of internal combustion engines and electric motors gradually ended the use of steam engines for motive and manufacturing power. Diesel towboats replaced steamboats for commercial transport, launching the modern barge industry that delivers much of our coal and bulk commodities along the inland rivers. Yet steam engines remained vital to our technological culture because our appliances and lighting, our computers and search engines, still garner most of their electric power from coal or nuclear plants heating steam boilers and spraying high pressure steam to spin turbines instead of paddlewheels.

Yes, the "annus mirabilis" of 1811 was indeed a year of wonders, altering our society irrevocably. The pioneer voyage of the NEW ORLEANS launched transportation, industrial and cultural

Map of New Madrid, MO settlement ca. 1811

revolutions along America's great inland rivers flowing to the sea. This is a reason the Rivers Institute of Hanover College is working with the Steamboat Bicentennial Committee and leaders of many communities along the inland waterways to commemorate the epic voyage of the NEW ORLEANS and other miracles of 1811.



Woodcut of New Madrid earthquake.

For further reading about the NEW ORLEANS' voyage of 1811, readers are invited to go online to our ***www.s-and-d.org*** *website and read the obituary column for Lydia Roosevelt appearing in an 1878 Cincinnati newspaper, as well as Tom Schiffer's account "Steamboat 1811."*

In the Good Old Summertime

July and August on the river was prime time for swimming, either at roped off bathing beaches along the shores in larger river towns or wherever spots were convenient and accessible at scores of smaller villages and landings. Here we find the Streckfus excursion steamer SIDNEY landed on the Illinois or Wisconsin shore sometime between 1916 and 1920. Close inspection reveals four boys gathered on the fantail, with one daring lad poised for the plunge from the sternwheel. Down along the engineroom guard, another of the gang is climbing aboard, while his companion waits in the water below for his turn. There are at least nineteen other youngsters and two grown-ups gathered for the occasion. Seated on the guards are three of the engineroom or deck crew, with a couple other crewmen watching nearby. Passengers too are spectators, while two white-jacketed deck stewards gaze overboard from the boiler deck with obvious interest in the goings-on. The wooden flat in the foreground is not being used as a diving platform since water at its far end is only waist deep. Positioned up along the hurricane roof are old-style folding wooden deck chairs and long slatted benches, while on the roof the Nichol steam calliope is silent, awaiting the pre-departure concert time. Conspicuously missing is any traditional shading around the lettering of the boat's name on the engineroom bulkhead. And for some reason, it appears that the flag on the verge is at half mast. In today's litigious age, we marvel at the innocence that would allow these swimmers to climb all over the fantail and dive from her sternwheel. Attorneys representing a modern-day boat company, OSHA, the Department of Social Services and U. S. Coast Guard, not to mention Homeland Security, would all recoil in horror at the scene depicted here. *Photo from Larry Friedman Collection.*

On the Origin of Calliopes: the DELTA QUEEN

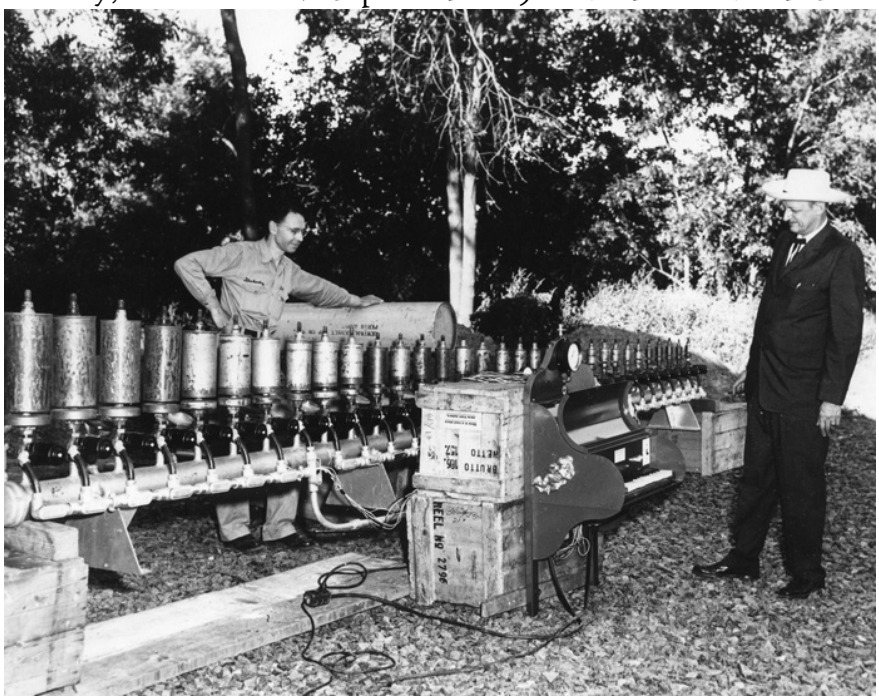
by Jonathan Tschiggfrie

There are probably as many differing opinions regarding the origin of the DELTA QUEEN calliope as there are people who have played it. Like any steamboat-related research, the issue lies in separating fact from fiction in the stories and limited documentation available. Steamboat historians sometimes tread a delicate line, wishing to preserve and accurately represent river culture but at the same time inviting the scorn of people who remember the "facts" differently. Travis C. Vasconcelos has done a wonderful job relating the history of the famous DELTA QUEEN steam calliope from its building by the Thomas J. Nichol firm to the present-day modifications. You can read Travis' coverage at: http://www.steamboats.org/whistle-calliope/ecaliope.html

Without written records, there is no way to know for sure the origin and direct lineage of the instrument, although what happened to it after 1958 is relatively certain. The facts as we know them are that Dick Simonton and E. J. Quinby purchased the calliope whistles, sans manifold and valves, from Ellsworth "Slim" Somers of Waterbury, CT in 1958, and installed it late in 1959 for use starting in the boat's 1960 season. Quinby was responsible for "electrifying" the keyboard, replacing the steam valve on each whistle with a Magnatrol brand solenoid valve and the brass keyboard with an electronic Hammond organ style manual. This allowed the console to be placed somewhere other than directly adjacent to the whistles, and also made for easier operation of the instrument, since the calliopist no longer had to overcome the steam pressure of the valves mechanically.

Quinby also added the "Aurora effect," and other modifications have been made over the years, as outlined in Travis' article. However, the real mystery surrounding this particular instrument involves when it was built and how it got to Mr. Somers to be sold for use on the DELTA QUEEN. The style of the whistles indicates without a doubt that the Thomas J. Nichol Company of Cincinnati built the original calliope, in whatever form it may have taken. Beyond that, there are no markings or stamps indicating much beyond whistle numbers: no year of construction, no manufacturer's plate, no symbol of any kind. This was typical for Nichol instruments, especially later models. The early history of this calliope is largely speculation, although both Tom Parkinson and Fred Dahlinger, having worked with the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, WI have made some headway as to the supposed illustrious career of this instrument.

Much of the early lore surrounding this steam calliope has to do with "Crazy Ray" Choisser, sometimes spelled Choissier but always signed without the extra *i* by Crazy Ray himself. Tom Parkinson's files indicate that Choisser's career started in 1898 on a Memphis excursion boat, which may have been either the BELLE OF THE BENDS or PATTONA, on both of which Crazy Ray claimed to have played calliope. The problem here is that the BELLE OF THE BENDS was not converted into an excursion boat until 1918 when she was renamed LIBERTY, and never ran to Memphis; likewise, the PATTONA didn't operate out of Memphis until 1906 when she was named



E. J. Quinby inspects the new manifold and electronics. Man on left unknown.
Photo courtesy PLCHC Inland Rivers Library.

LOUISIANA. Parkinson suggests Choisser's first calliope gig was in 1900 aboard Capt. W. P. McNair's NEW ERA FLOATING THEATRE, although Choisser asserted that his first job was on the first boat at Cincinnati's Coney Island, the GUIDING STAR, sometime between 1890 and 1893. Whatever the truth, Choisser believes that the BELLE OF THE BENDS calliope is the one that eventually made its way to the WATER QUEEN showboat, the supposed source of the instrument on the DELTA QUEEN.

But even if the DELTA QUEEN calliope turns out to be that of the showboat WATER QUEEN, the question remains, where did that calliope come from? Did it come from the BELLE OF THE BENDS? Maybe, if the calliope was moved to the WATER QUEEN sometime between 1901, when the showboat was built, and 1919, when the BELLE OF THE BENDS (now renamed LIBERTY) was dismantled. Was it built by Nichol specifically for the showboat? Possibly, since the Nichol Company's advertisements of the time mention steam calliopes' suitability for showboats. The WATER QUEEN was built under the name PRICE'S NEW WATER QUEEN, running until its sinking in 1936. Over time, it may have had other names; Parkinson's research suggests that the WATER QUEEN was originally built as the NEW FLOATING THEATORIUM in 1889 and that the calliope dates to that time, although this is almost certainly not true. Unlike the THEATORIUM, the WATER QUEEN had an octagonal pilothouse, the former eventually became one of the many iterations of FRENCH'S NEW SENSATION. Another source says the calliope was built in the late 1800s, but most evidence points to its construction sometime in the 1910s or 1920s.

Photographs show that the WATER QUEEN calliope was, at various times, both aboard its towboat and the showboat itself. In the 37 years the showboat ran, only two towboats were known to have pushed it, although there may have been others. The steam packet-turned-towboat ARGAND was the first and served quite a long stint up until 1927, with a 1902 photo revealing the two with the calliope aboard the showboat and a later one showing it aboard the ARGAND. In a spring 1936 photo showing the WATER QUEEN sunk in the Kanawha River, the little chain-driven tow IDA MAE has the calliope aboard.

The story goes, according to Crazy Ray, that the WATER QUEEN was salvaged sometime in the two years following its sinking. This story has much support, beyond the number of times this exact narrative appears in multiple newspaper and magazine articles. The same photo that shows the IDA MAE suggests no real salvage operation had to be undertaken, since the calliope was aboard the towboat and not the sunken showboat. Although

WATER QUEEN sunk in 1936 with calliope on IDA MAE.
Photo from Tulane University Special Collections.

many sources identify Choisser himself as the one who salvaged the WATER QUEEN calliope, he denied this, claiming in a 1938 edition of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* that he found the calliope in 1938 while looking through the warehouse of John M. Raike, a junk dealer from Gallipolis, OH. This is as good a story as any. The Raike family of the Point Pleasant area included Benjamin D. Raike, who owned several steam towboats that he swapped with the Bryant family for their showboats. Although no documentation has been found linking John and Benjamin, the connection is not that far-fetched.

Most accounts following Choisser's acquisition of this calliope are similar. He restored the calliope in Pinckneyville, IL near his hometown of Benton. Relatively little had to be done to get it back in working order apart from mounting it on a truck with a boiler, seen in a 1938 photograph with Crazy Ray himself. He toured with the calliope as a traveling show for some time, turning down a $600 offer from a Hollywood production company to purchase the instrument. Eventually, Choisser

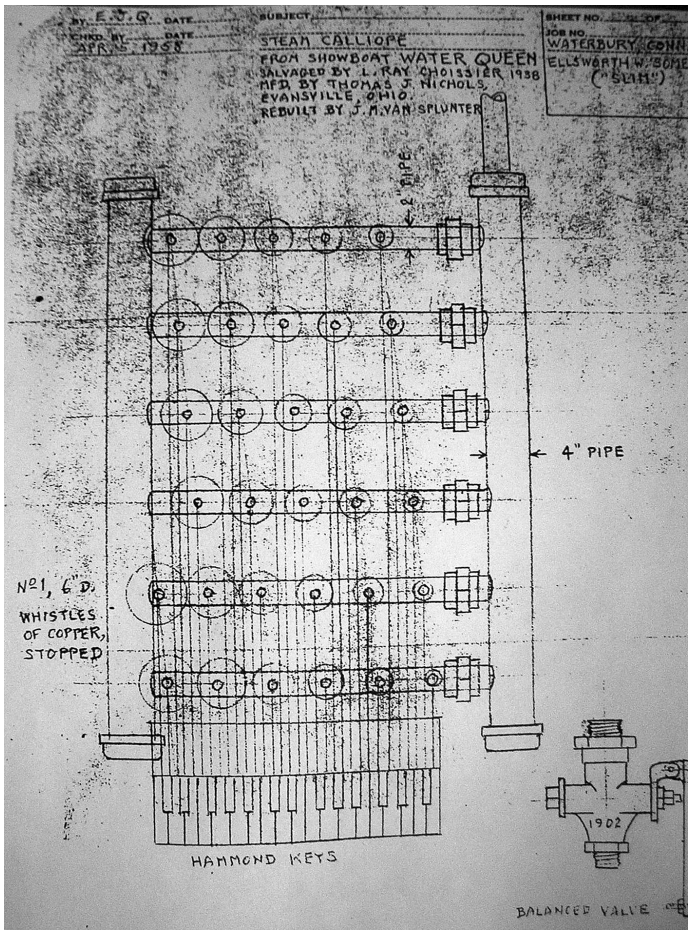
played it with the Robbins Bros. Circus and then sold it in 1947 to the Floyd King Bros. Circus. In May of that year, Choisser died at the age of 55, although this age claim couldn't be accurate given his early start in show business in the 1890s.

The King Bros. Circus toured the country with Choisser's WATER QUEEN steam calliope until it was damaged in a truck accident in Plattsburg, NY in 1948, only one short year after purchasing it. Here, the story becomes hazy once again. Floyd King, owner of the circus, says that the instrument was damaged beyond repair and abandoned somewhere in Pennsylvania. Others associated with King Bros. say that it was only slightly damaged in the accident, lending credence to the next part of the story.

In July 1947, King Bros. Circus made a stop in Waterbury, CT where Crazy Ray himself had passed through with the calliope only nine years earlier. This New England town known as the "Brass City" was the home of Ellsworth "Slim" Somers, who was working as advance agent for the Biller Bros. Circus in 1949. During this time, Biller Bros. is said to have acquired the whistles and valves from the damaged calliope, according to a 1960 issue of *White Tops* magazine. With no time to assemble it before the show opened in 1950, the instrument that Somers had heard at least twice before was shipped to his home in Waterbury.

Sometime between 1954 and 1957, Somers took the remaining calliope parts to John M. Van Splunter in Grand Rapids, MI, who was in his last years of repairing calliopes under the Nichol name. According to Van Splunter himself, he fashioned a new manifold, not in the traditional U-shape, but in the multi-barred H-shape that Quinby would illustrate in his letter to Simonton in April 1958. In addition, Van Splunter built a new Hammond organ-style keyboard for the calliope. Unfortunately, the stock Nichol valves that were used, which were presumably the originals dating back to the twenties at the latest, had become difficult to press, especially in conjunction with the new keyboard. This rendered the calliope all but unplayable.

When Quinby was looking for a steam calliope for the DELTA QUEEN in the late fifties, he made



Quinby's drawing of John M. Van Splunter's H-shaped manifold design. This was particularly favored in circus wagons, where space for the calliope hardware was limited. *Photo from the Parkinson Library, Circus World Museum.*

contact with Somers who offered him the whistles alone. Thus, the whistles on the DELTA QUEEN calliope are the only original Nichol parts still in use on that particular instrument. Somers would later use the manifold to build another calliope, similar to the method utilized by Harry Shell in building the Gentry Twin at the Circus Hall of Fame in Peru, IN.

The astute reader will notice no mention so far regarding the discrepancy between the number of whistles on the WATER QUEEN calliope (28) and that presently on the DELTA QUEEN (32). In fact, photographic evidence suggests that the WATER QUEEN's original calliope may have had only 21 whistles, but this could be either mislabeled or the showboat may have carried a different instrument at some point. The most popular photo of the supposed "salvaged" WATER QUEEN calliope, that on the truck with Crazy Ray, does not show the entire instrument but only the side with the low, or

bass, notes. Nichol calliope whistles, being mounted on a horse-shoe manifold, have no particular left or right side, but for research purposes, a line can be drawn down the middle to facilitate identification of instruments. Those with 32 notes typically had 13 bass notes on one side and 19 treble notes on the other. Those with 28 notes usually had 12 bass notes and 16 treble notes. The famous WATER QUEEN calliope photo clearly shows 12 notes, confirming the opinion that it had a total of 28 whistles.

This would tend to undermine the story of the WATER QUEEN calliope making it all the way to the DELTA QUEEN. However, as stated in Travis' article, close inspection in 2008 by Dave Morecraft and son Zach revealed that four of the whistles were made by Van Splunter and not Nichol. Actually, this practice was quite common. Van Splunter never really made new whistles, but only reused those from other calliopes to extend the range of Nichol instruments that came to his shop for repair or upgrade. These whistles don't follow the scaling of the smaller instruments, and so they appear slightly out-of-place with the other 28 notes. This, along with the new manifold fashioned by Van Splunter, probably accounts for Capt. J. W. Menke's refusal to acknowledge that the calliope Quinby had just acquired was the one from the WATER QUEEN.

The remaining issue is dating the calliope's initial creation. If the instrument really was built in the late 1800s or before about 1914, the tops of the stem bolts ought to have either pointed or globe-shaped tops. The instrument aboard the DELTA QUEEN has rounded tops on each whistle, perhaps another nail in the coffin of this story. However, it has been said that Van Splunter re-machined all the valves on the calliope when it was brought to his shop by Somers, and this may have included, for one reason or another, rounding off the tops of the whistle stems.

All of this is to say that we still aren't certain where the DELTA QUEEN's calliope really came from. Without a doubt, it is an original Nichol instrument refurbished by Van Splunter and modernized by Quinby. Without a doubt, we will never know its full story and new, fantastical versions will continue to be told. But above all, and without a doubt, the DELTA QUEEN steam calliope has been her musical voice for fifty years, and to this day it continues to call people to the riverfront with its sweet, steamy tones.

A set of Nichol/Van Splunter whistles on Quinby's straight-shot manifold: the design for the DELTA QUEEN calliope in this 1961 snapshot. Harmon Mize at the Shepard Labs keyboard. *Photo courtesy Mike McDonald, Leavenworth, KS.*

Sources:

◊ Way, Capt. Frederick, Jr. Way's Packet Directory, 1848-1994. Revised edition, 1994.

◊ Way, Capt. Frederick, Jr. Way's Steam Towboat Directory. 1990.

◊ Files from the personal collection of Keith Norrington.

◊ Author's interview with Capt. Clarke "Doc" Hawley, 2008.

◊ Photographs from the Donald T. Wright Collection, Tulane University.

◊ Photographs from the Capt. William Bowell River Library, National Rivers Hall of Fame.

◊ Bryant, Billy. Children of Ol' Man River. 1988.

◊ Files from the Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum.

◊ Letter from John M. Van Splunter to Harry Shell, January 1, 1954.

◊ Letter from Ernest Wilde, March 20, 1961.

◊ *White Tops* magazine, 1959-1960.

◊ Article from *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, November 27, 1938.

◊ Vasconcelos, Travis C. The Delta Queen Calliope. Available [www.steamboats.org/whistle-calliope/ecaliope.html].

◊ Various interviews and collected documents from the author's personal collection.

Western Rivers Steamboat Enginebuilding

Steamboating's introduction on the Western Rivers in 1811 brought with it rapid growth of boatbuilding and enginebuilding. A significant evolution in design of the boats used on these rivers soon followed, and the unique Western Rivers steamboat engine was also perfected in the first decades and employed well into the next century. Tom Schiffer's history of one of the notable enginebuilding firms on the Ohio River, Frisbie Engine and Machine Company of Cincinnati, follows. To place that story in perspective, we share excerpts from perhaps the best comprehensive volume ever written about the inland rivers steamboat, Louis Hunters' Steamboats on the Western Rivers. *Our thanks to Dover Publications for their permission to quote from Dr. Hunter's book.*

At the time of the CLERMONT's first voyage (1807) there were only a few steam engines in operation in the United States, and these were cumbersome, imperfect machines. Thirty years later steamboat engines comprised nearly three-fifths the steam power employed in the entire country and possessed an average power rating three and one-half times that of steam engines used in industry or on railroads. The building of engines and machinery for a rapidly expanding steamboat tonnage gave rise to foundries, boiler works, and machine shops, stimulated the development of metal-working techniques and of machine building generally, and accelerated the transition from an age of wood to an age of iron.

Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Louisville, the three leading centers of steamboat construction in the West, accounted for more than four-fifths the tonnage of all steamboats built on the Western Rivers to 1880. Pittsburgh was the oldest and most important of these centers, turning out 32 percent of the total tonnage in the West. Cincinnati came next in order with 26 percent, followed closely by Louisville with 23 percent of the total.

The concentration in the Upper Ohio Valley of the greater part of the steamboat industry was due primarily to early development of iron- and metal-working industries in this region, which in turn was the result of abundant supplies of crude iron and high-quality fuel that were close at hand or readily obtainable from outlying areas. Timber played a minor role in the location of the boatbuilding industry because of its wide distribution in the eastern half of the Mississippi valley.

But ready access to timber and crude iron were not enough. The engines, boilers, and accessory machinery could be produced only by forges, foundries, rolling mills, and machine shops equipped with heavy machinery and operated by men with the necessary skills in craftsmanship. Steamboat building in the West was consequently focused in the industrial cities where steamboat machinery and equipment were manufactured.

The story of the evolution of steamboat machinery resolves itself in large part into such seemingly small matters as machining a shaft to hundredths instead of sixteenths of an inch, or devising a cylinder packing which would increase the effective pressure a few pounds, or altering the design of a boiler so that cleaning could be accomplished in three hours instead of six and would be necessary only every other instead of every trip. Matters such as these do not often get into the historical record, yet they are the stuff of which mechanical progress is made.

An examination of the engine of a boat built at Pittsburgh in 1837 shows the simplicity, compactness, and rugged character which attained a well-deserved fame on the Western Rivers. The engine is little more than a cylinder with closely integrated valve mechanism and crosshead guides, plus connecting and valve-gear rods running to the paddlewheel shaft.

For three-score years this engine was used without essential modification on the overwhelming majority of Western steamboats, and down into the twentieth century it continued to be held in wide favor, although other types of engines were by this time coming into use. As late as 1909 a builder of steamboats at Pittsburgh [James Rees and Sons] described this engine as still having wide acceptance on the best class of river boats. While there were modifications of details, particularly in the design of

valves and valve gear, these were made without any essential changes in the construction or operation of the engine.

Once the type of western steamboat engine was established its development was largely a matter of improvements in detail and of growth in size and power. Added power was obtained principally by using larger cylinders and by increasing the number of engines and the size and number of boilers. Steam pressures, high to begin with, showed no startling increases. Cylinders grew steadily in size during the first twenty-five years of steamboating. An average increase of length of stroke from four to eight feet during this period, only partly offset by the use of the cutoff, brought a further increase of power.

The type of valve which became standard on Western steamboat engines was the simple poppet valve. This valve received its motion from a cam gear that operated upon the valve lever through lifters. There were four of these poppet valves, one exhaust and one steam [intake] at each end of the cylinder on its top side.

Down to the end of the nineteenth century, the cam-actuated, lever valve gear continued in almost universal use for all but the smallest class of Western steamboats, undergoing modification only in minor details. The advantages of using high pressure steam expansively, that is, of working the engine at full pressure only during part of the stroke and depending upon the expansive power of the steam to carry the stroke to completion, had early been recognized. With the cam lever valve gear in use, it was only necessary to alter the shape of the cam in order to close the steam valve at any desired point in the stroke. The rise of a head wind or the ascent of a minor rapids often forced the engineer to shift from expansive to full-stroke action when all that was needed was a small extension of the point of cutoff. The most satisfactory solution of this problem was to be found eventually in the adjustable or variable cutoff. In the fifties at least two devices were invented by means of which the engineer could quickly alter the point of cutoff to meet the need of the moment. The variable cutoff, however, was slow to find favor, and its widespread adoption was delayed until the closing years of the century. One reason for this was doubtless the successful expedient devised by some engineer of obtaining additional power by the simple method of inserting a small stick of wood between the wipers [curved lifters] and the valve levers.

The advantages of the poppet valve lay in its simplicity of construction and adjustment and its relative ease of operation. As compared with the familiar slide valve, it was less affected by sediment in feed water and, of particular importance in engines subject to frequent stopping and starting, it was far more easily worked by hand, as required at such times. Even so, with high steam pressures, such hand manipulation of the valve levers was very arduous on large engines before the double [or balanced] poppet valve was introduced about 1850. In the improved poppet valve, the pressure on one side of the valve face was largely balanced by a similar pressure on the opposite side.

The builders of steamboat engines worked largely by a process of "cut and try." Such practices as appeared to give satisfactory results were embodied in rules of thumb, many of which were handed down from one generation to the next. For example, [Thomas Rees]Tarn has recorded a list of thumb rules composed at the close of the nineteenth century, most of which were stated in terms of D, the diameter of the engine cylinder. Within twenty-five years of the appearance of the first western steamboat the type of engine and boiler was well established.

A listing of some of these rule-of-thumb ratios recorded by Tarn appears in Alan Bates' **Western Rivers Steamboat Cyclopædium.** *We print several of them below to illustrate this body of practical knowledge.*

D represents the diameter of engine cylinders
S represents the stroke of engines

Shaft diameter: D/2 + 1
Wheel diameter: 3S ±
Flange diameter: 3D
Towboat pitman length: 4½ to 5S
Packet pitman length: 3¾ S
Number of wheel buckets: 2½ S ±
Depth and width of pitman: D + 1

Frisbie Engine and Machine Company

by Thomas D. Schiffer

This is the story of Frisbie Engine and Machine Company of Cincinnati, OH. It is based upon interviews in December 2003 with Mr. Reed Coen, current company president. The interviews were conducted by the author. Other information was gleaned from various sources cited in the text and at the end of the article.

Reed Coen says that Frisbie Engine and Machine Co. was founded by H. F. Frisbie, a Scotsman, at the corner of Walnut and Water Streets in Cincinnati, OH in 1858. The only place that I found his first name, Hamlin, spelled out was in his patent papers. I have not found any Cincinnati City Directories showing Frisbie before their listing of him as an "engineer, at No.2 Public Landing, residence, Covington." Covington is in Kentucky, directly across the river from Cincinnati. In 1883-84 H. F. Frisbie was listed as a "Machinist at 47 Water Street, residence, Covington." When the 1884-85 *Cincinnati Directory* came out, they listed "Frisbie, H. F. Machinery Mfg, 47 Water, residence, Covington." A Covington City Directory of this date shows him living at 333 Garrard St.; in 1886-87 at 63 East Front.

A listing in *The City of Cincinnati and its Resources*, published in 1891 says:

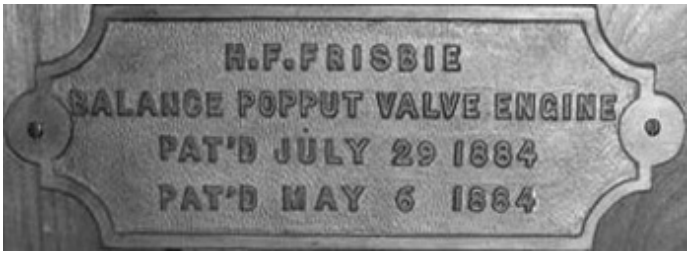
"Frisbie Engine and Machine Company, at Nos. 43 and 45 Water Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, near the Suspension Bridge, is extensively engaged in the manufacture of steamboat and stationary engines of the latest improvements. The business was established by Mr. H. F. Frisbie, who has a successful experience of thirty years' duration as an engine manufacturer. The growing volume of his trade led to the transfer of his plant and goodwill to an incorporated company as above and of which he is president. Mr. Frisbie is the inventor of the Balance Poppet valve, also the inventor of a steam side pipe and its connections, operating an engine with little or no friction, causing the most powerful engines now in use, through which his company has been given an immense advantage over its competitors, especially in the way of steamboat and stationary engines. Among other improvements he adds his patent poppet valve to other engines of similar make and by their economy of fuel and quickness of action have made this class of Cincinnati work a favorite wherever it is known. The Frisbie engines are used on some of the largest and best boats on the Western rivers, also in large factories. Their works are in a flourishing condition and their business is constantly increasing."

This information goes a long way toward explaining the difference between Coen's date for the origin of the company and the Cincinnati City Directory listings. The latter do not show any Frisbie, or Frisbie Engine and Machine Company in Cincinnati before the 1880s. Where Frisbie manufactured engines, etc. before the 1880s, is unknown.

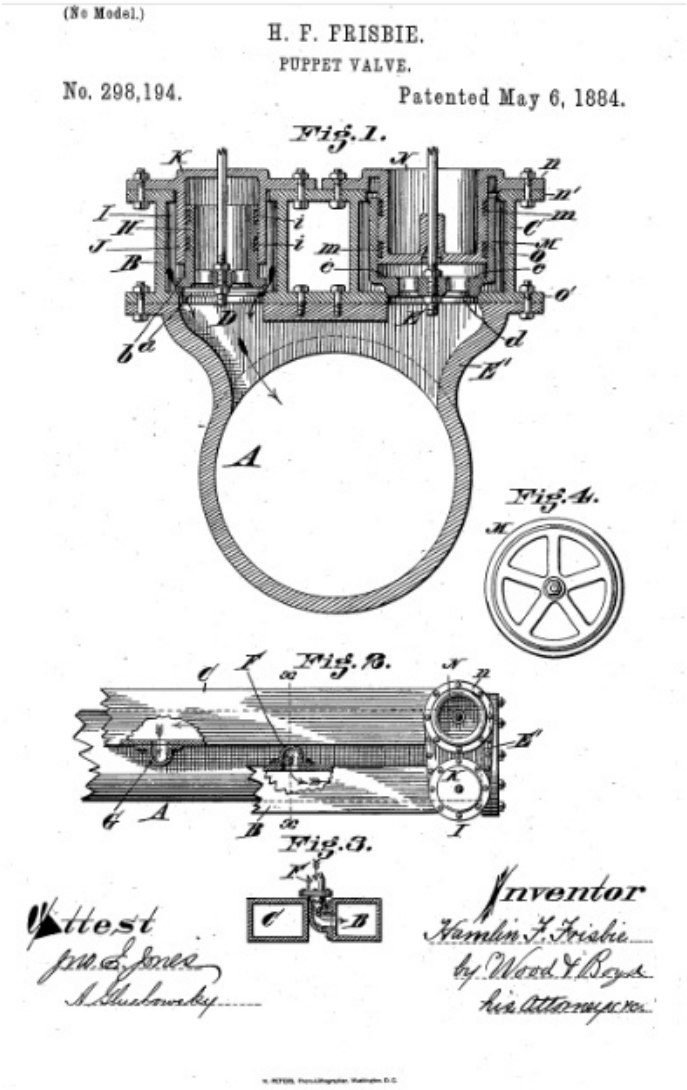
Frisbie Engine and Machine was a company that made stationary steam engines, steamboat engines,

and did repair work on such engines. Per Reed Coen, the original building was located on, or adjacent to the west end of the public landing. This is close to the Cincinnati approach to the Suspension Bridge. The building had been built some years before as a hotel to service the steamboat trade and served in that capacity for some time. Reed says that his father always made the lease payment on the Frisbie building to "the railroad." When this ownership first took place is not known. *The Waterways Journal* notes in late 1894 that the Pennsylvania RR proposed to lease the top of the public landing from the city of Cincinnati for $600 per annum and this may be the railroad involved. However, the B&O, the L&N and the CNO&TP were also active in this area, considered "the bottoms" of Cincinnati. Frisbie also maintained a storage facility at Second and Broadway.

On December 18, 1883, Hamlin F. Frisbie applied for a patent on a "balanced puppet [sic] valve" associated with steamboat engines. In the patent application, Frisbie represented himself as being "...a citizen of the United States, residing at Cincinnati..." Patent #298,194 was issued on May 6, 1884. The patent featured the principle of differential areas to cause his unique design of poppet valves to self seal, and be quick of action. Both features are important to economy of steam consumption and power. In my view of the patent, that amounts to getting more steam into and out of the engine and doing it faster.



On February 7, 1884, Frisbie applied for letters patent on an "improved valve gear for puppet [emphasis mine] valve engines." This gear, like others before it, provided a means of altering the cut off of the engine in order to use more of the expansive power of the steam, another economy in steam consumption, when used. A lot of steamboat engineers did not use early cut off, and still don't. This valve gear patent was issued on July 29, 1884 as patent #302,835.


(No Model.)

H. F. FRISBIE.

PUPPET VALVE.

No. 298,194. Patented May 6, 1884.

Fig. 1.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Attest

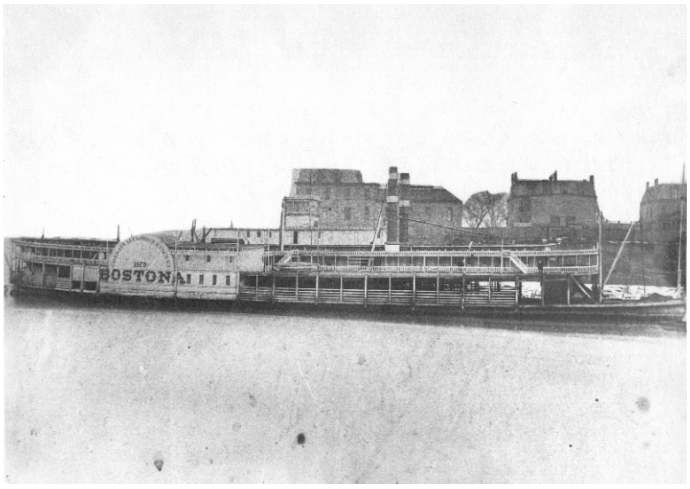
Inventor

Hamlin F. Frisbie

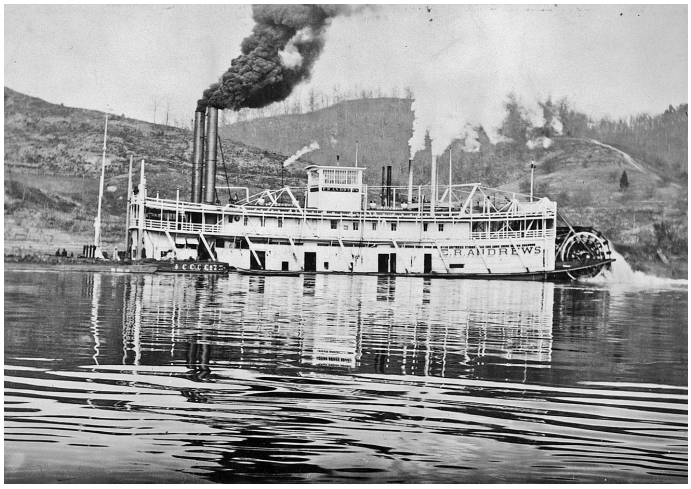
by Wood & Boyd

his Attorneys

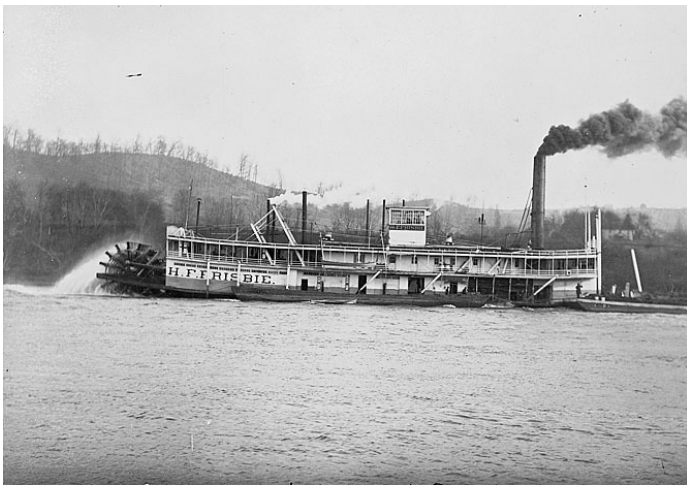
In both patents, H. F. Frisbie used the word "puppet" as a name for his valve. The bronze builder's plaque shown at left is currently displayed on Frisbie's office wall and uses the word "popput" instead of "puppet" as the name for Frisbie's valve. According to Reed Coen this builder's plaque is "off one of the Greene Line boats...don't know which one." It is unknown whether Frisbie and/or his attorney did not know how to spell poppet, or if he wanted a distinctive name for his unique form of poppet valve. I suspect the latter was the case. With the balanced design, the valve could be nudged into actuation, not unlike a puppet on a string. The odd spelling on the cast bronze plaque can, perhaps, be charged to a pattern maker who got his instructions mixed up. Reed Coen says that the Corps of Engineers always specified Frisbie engines on boats constructed for them due to the balanced poppet valves that they featured.



BOSTONA (0693) built 1879 at Cincinnati for Cincinnati, Portsmouth, Big Sandy & Pomeroy Packet Co. 302.5x43.5x6.7 engines 25's with 8-foot stroke having Frisbie valve gear. Dismantled 1899, machinery going to INDIANA.



E. R. ANDREWS (T0659) built 1894 by Howard for Campbell's Creek Coal Co. Composite hull (oak bottom with steel sides) 165x32.5x5.2 Engines 20's with 8-foot stroke. Renamed OSCAR F. BARRETT in 1912. Abandoned in 1933.

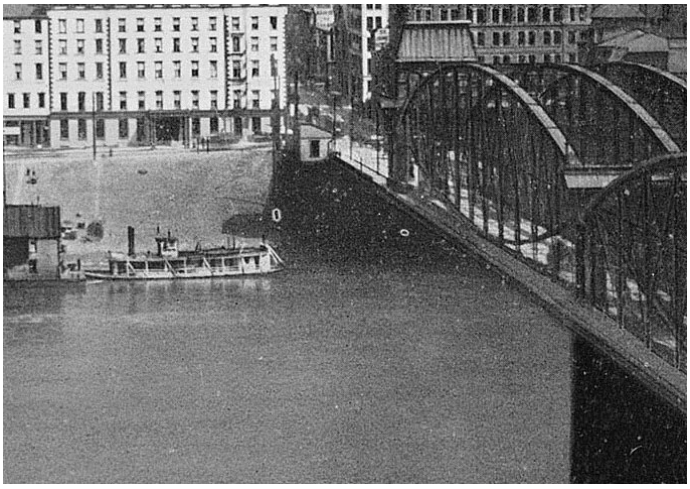


H. F. FRISBIE (T1010) built 1885 at Cincinnati for Huntington & St. Louis Towboat Co. 169.4x32.2x5.8 Engines 20's with 8-foot stroke. Dismantled 1903, machinery going to SARAH EDENBORN, later RENOWN, BOL wharfboat.

CITY OF LOUISVILLE (1095) built 1894 by Howard for L&C Packet Co. 301x42.7x7 with Frisbie engines 30's with 10-foot stroke. Ran Louisville to Cincinnati on April 18, 1894 in 9 hours 42 minutes, her time never beaten. Made record downstream run on April 5, 1896 in 5 hours 58 minutes. Lost in ice with CITY OF CINCINNATI on January 30, 1918.

JOHN K. SPEED (3077) built 1892 at Madison for Cincinnati, Memphis & New Orleans Packet Co. 261x42x8 with Frisbie engines 22½'s with 8-foot stroke. Burned at New Orleans May 22, 1902.

ISLAND QUEEN (2799) built 1896 by Cincinnati Marine Railway for Coney Island Co. 281.4x42.6x8.5 Engines 20's and 35's with 9-foot stroke. Burned at Cincinnati Nov. 4, 1922 with MORNING STAR, TACOMA, and CHRIS GREENE.

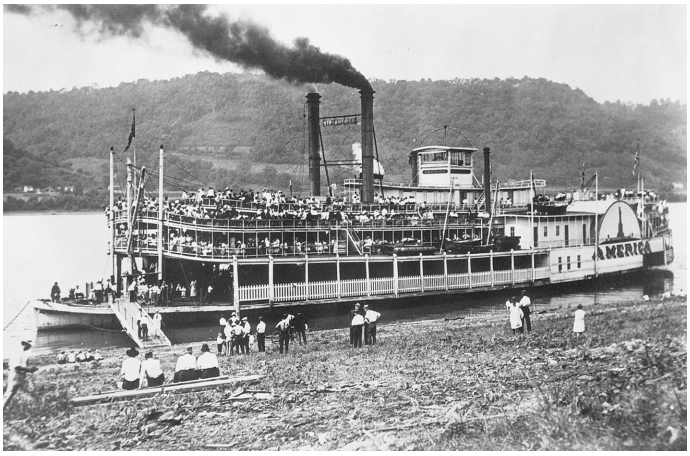


OHIO (T1947) built 1899 in Cincinnati. 83x15.6x4.6 Sold to U. S. Engineers in 1905 and renamed LOMA. Sold in 1916, renamed W. H. MUELLER; and again in 1917 and renamed HELPER. Dismantled in 1919.

TOM GREENE (5415) built 1923 by Marietta Manufacturing for Greene Line Steamers. 200x38x6 with Frisbie engines 22's, 7-foot stroke. Won two celebrated races with BETSY ANN in 1929 and 30. Sold 1950 to Commercial Barge Line.

INDIANA (2754) built 1900 by Howard for L&C Packet Co. Hull was 285x45x6 with machinery from BOSTONA. Partially burned in 1916 and subsequently rebuilt by Howard into AMERICA shown below.

WAKEROBIN (5680) built 1926 by Dravo for U. S. Lighthouse Service. 182x43x5.3 Frisbie engines 18's with 7½-foot stroke. Sold 1955 to Comet River Co., Cincinnati, for landing boat. Later acquired by Capt. Dennis Trone.



AMERICA (0241) built 1917 by Howard as packet for L&C. Remodeled into Louisville excursion boat a few years later. Original broadhorn engines from BOSTONA with Frisbie valve gear. Raced CINCINNATI in 1928, a contest still debated to the present day. Burned on September 8, 1930.

TITAN (T2443) built 1930 by Howard for Jones & Laughlin Steel with sister boat WM. LARIMER JONES. 136x34x7.3 with condensing engines 14's and 28's, 8-foot stroke. Among first boats to be steered by levers. Sold for scrap in 1953.

The March 2003 issue of S & D Reflector quotes the 1913 *Catalog of James Rees and Sons Company*. Rees was a competitor of Frisbie, but with Frisbie's death in January 1912, his patents were in the public domain and Rees was free to furnish same if he chose to do so. In the Rees catalog we find this:

"The machinery used on the boats is mostly of the high pressure type, especially on the smaller boats, as it has been found more practical, economical and simple in construction, with all types of valve motion; from the Slide Valve, Balance Slide Valve, Slide Valve with poppet cut-off, Piston Valve with poppet cut-off, Piston Valve with the slide or piston cutoff valve - on the top or side - the Piston Valve with the variable cutoff valve working within the main valve; the Rotary Valve in center or at each end of cylinder, the Lever Poppet Valve with balance piston to same, known as the Frisbee [sic] or Moore Valve is considered the most economical, durable, and simple valve motion that can be constructed on engines of the larger type. One has only to glance at the rise and fall of the levers to see if the proper valve motion is given to the engines, and with the adjustable cut-off and inside cam motion has been found practically - in comparison with all other valves and valve motions - to be the very best that can be put on steamers for river navigation" [emphasis mine].

Company tradition has it that Frisbie wanted to sell his business and go back to Scotland. He was listed in Cincinnati as late as 1907, then living at Flat 9, 2122 Auburn Ave. Subsequent to that date, it appears he sold out. Taking the cash from the sale with him, he boarded a steamer bound for Pittsburgh (from thence he was to go to New York by train and steamer back to Scotland.) He got on the steamer at Cincinnati with the money from the sale, but never got off in Pittsburgh!

The Frisbie Engine and Machine Company was listed in 1917 as being managed by John T. Shields. This is, no doubt, the same "Jack" Shields that Fred Way mentions later in this story. The 1938 listing still showed Shields as manager. At some point, the business was acquired by the Dye family, who lived in Covington.

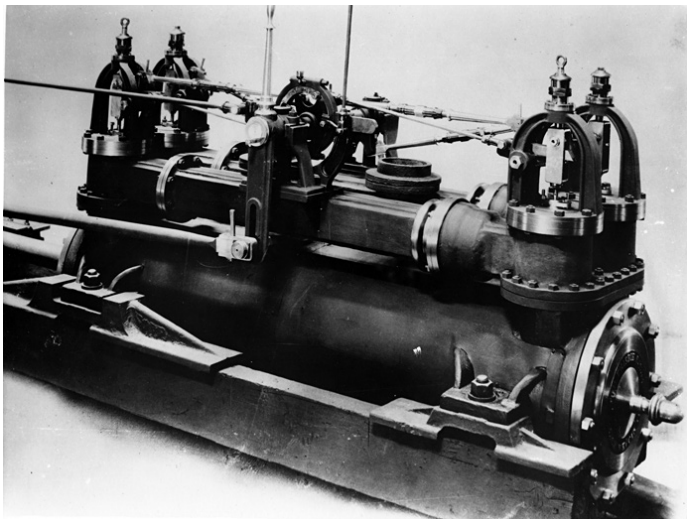
Company tradition also says that a fellow by the name of Heekin was able to obtain a large contract for canteens for soldiers from the US Government. This would likely have been for the Spanish-American War in 1898. Heekin, per the *Cincinnati City Directory*, ran a coffee business very near the Frisbie plant. However, Heekin could not get a bank loan for the necessary tooling to fulfill the contract. Likely during a neighborly chat, he mentioned this to Hamlin Frisbie, who went to the safe and loaned him the money on a handshake. Four months later the loan was repaid and Heekin Can Co. was in business...it still is.

Jess Coen, father of the current president Reed Coen, bought Frisbie Engine and Machine Company from the Dye family in 1950. The Dye family lived on Highland Avenue in Covington. Ferd Dye was an engineer with Cincinnati Gas and Electric Company. At that time the plant was still located at Walnut and Water Streets, where it had been since the 1880s. Frisbie remained a job machine shop and were consultants to the steamboat trade for repair service. By that time, the need for new steamboat engines had been over and done for some years.

In the winter of 1958-59, Jess Coen moved Frisbie Engine and Machine Company to 2635 Spring Grove Avenue where they have been located since. This is in the Camp Washington district of Cincinnati, a couple of miles from the river, but still not out of reach of the Ohio River flood of 1937 due to backwater from Mill Creek. The business had employed about ten hands at the Walnut and Water Streets location and reached as many as sixteen at the present location. The project that displaced Frisbie from Walnut and Water was the late River Front Stadium. The building and its contents were demolished to make room for that project. The building that they now occupy had been used to cut, shape and polish stone used in the construction of Union Terminal built in the 1930s. Union Terminal was located about a mile south of Frisbie's new, and current, location.

Jess Coen's background was that of railroad master mechanic for Hatfield Coal Company at their river/rail terminal in West Virginia. Their railroad, owned by Hatfield, had all of eight miles of track. Jess later was sent to Cincinnati to build silos and coal unloading facilities for their river

terminal there. The Frisbie Engine and Machine Company was located nearby and was extensively employed for machine shop work necessary to construction of this terminal. This is how Coen became acquainted with the company. Jess met his future wife in Cincinnati and she did not wish to go to West Virginia to live. So, after returning to West Virginia for two years, he left Hatfield, came to Cincinnati and bought Frisbie Engine and Machine.



Builders' photo of TOM GREENE engines, 22's with 7-foot stroke, among the last Frisbie engines produced.

Over a decade ago, when a question involving steam whistles arose, I was directed to Jess Coen by Fred Way, then editor of S & D Reflector. In a telephone conversation with Jess, after the whistle question was laid to rest, we discussed some of the jobs associated with working on steamboats. Since engines were too big and heavy to be easily removed and taken to a shop, I asked how a steamer's engine might be rebored in place. He indicated that after the heads and piston, etc. were removed, a typical boring rig with guides on both ends of the cylinder to be rebored would be installed. The rig would then be powered by a small steam engine for which there was nearly always steam available on a steamboat. The actual cutting would be done by a single point tool in the same fashion as a boring head in a boring mill at a machine shop. Since steamers were sometimes "broke down" far from "home" when heavy maintenance was needed, local machine shops nearest the location of the boat would be used. Of course they had to be shops capable of heavy work. His son Reed indicates that this procedure is still followed today.

The current Frisbie president, Reed Coen, was born in 1952, and grew up in the business. He attended University of Cincinnati Engineering College and Business School and went to work in the plant on weekends when he was 16. He has never worked anywhere else. The Frisbie Engine and Machine Company maintained an extensive machine shop business, catering to local hospitals, commercial laundries and many other enterprises in addition to their boat business. About 1989 it was decided to get out of the active machine shop business. Accordingly, the Coens saw to it that all their employees got other jobs and then sold off their machine shop equipment. Since that time they have been consultants to the steamboat trade. Necessary machining work is done out of house. None of the old original engine patterns were moved to their present location when they relocated there back in the winter of 1958-1959. As he grew up, Reed Coen worked in the Frisbie shop, and Jess handled the office chores. Later, an illness of Jess' caused Reed to be pulled into the office end of things. From that time on, they operated as partners.

During these later years under the Coens, Frisbie Engine and Machine Company did build calliopes for three boats. One is on the steamer NATCHEZ (4113) in New Orleans and another on the m/v P. A. DENNY (calliope runs on air), while the third is on the MINNE-HA-HA of Lake George Steamboat Company. In building the calliopes, Frisbie started with a U shaped manifold and mounted the whistles and solenoid valves thereon. They also mounted light bulbs behind the whistles featuring different color bulbs for the different notes. The bulbs were wired in series with the valves such that the exhaust steam from each whistle would take on an individual color. Doc Hawley is said to have told the story that a well educated guest on the NATCHEZ wanted to know how many boilers it took to produce so many different colors of steam! The calliope keyboard itself was built by Baldwin Piano Company once Frisbie identified the notes of the scale on the instrument.

Frisbie was part of the design team for the AMERICAN QUEEN engine room and steam engine propulsion. It was originally supposed that the QUEEN would not be powered by steam. However, Frisbie was told that since there was a

heavy requirement for steam to run the laundry and other purposes, they decided to go ahead with steam propulsion. Another factor in the decision was the heavy demand for steam propulsion among their customers. When their design for the AMERICAN QUEEN'S paddle wheel was submitted, it was rejected as being too heavy, so a lighter one was made up. This light wheel failed in service. It was then replaced by the original design.

Frisbie personnel have worked at various times with Mr. Dow in New Orleans on behalf of the steamer NATCHEZ to solve cylinder lubrication and vibration problems. At Jess' suggestion the company also manufactured a replacement paddlewheel shaft for the boat. After nearly five decades at Frisbie, Jess Coen passed away in 1999.

For recreational use, Reed Coen maintained a sternwheel diesel powered boat that was originally designed, constructed and then used by Dravo. Reed used it as a pleasure boat at Cincinnati for 27 years. He kept it moored at the lower end of the Hatfield docks in the west end of Cincinnati. It was then known as REED LEE. Reed carries Master pilot papers. In 2000 he sold the boat to Nelson Jones, who later sold it to Bob Harrison. The LEE has been renamed SEWICKLEY. Bob owns what is left of the CHRIS GREENE (1027) and has the CHRIS' bell on his SEWICKLEY.

Present day photo of WAKEROBIN condensing high-pressure engines, 18's with 7½-foot stroke.

Frisbie Engine and Machine made more than engines in the old days. The June 23, 1894 issue of *The Waterways Journal* said: "The Frisbie shops are finishing up the four capstans for the NEW DANA towboat. They are an improvement on anything in the way of power that has been built here. The engines are in pairs [steam powered] preventing any bumping or stopping on center which is the cause of snapping lines and other troubles."

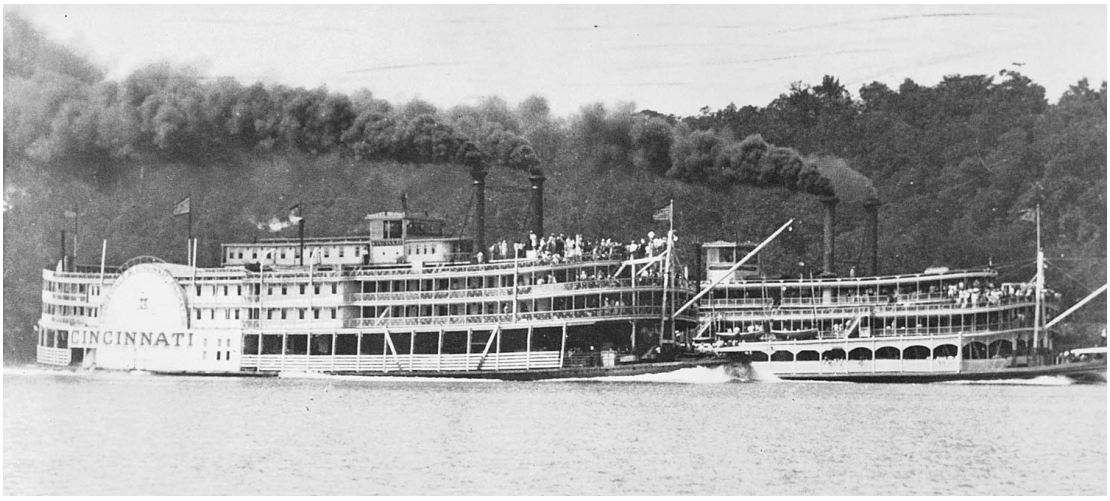
In a completely different venue, the Cincinnati Water Works used Frisbie stationary engines to pump water. In later years, as steam was largely replaced by electric motors, the Frisbie engines were maintained as standby units. This information came to Reed Coen from Water Works personnel some years ago. It is not known if these engines are still in place.

The Cincinnati Commercial Tribune was quoted in the June 17, 1899 issue of *The Waterways Journal*: "Frisbie Engine and Machine Company has been given the contract to place the machinery on Capt. Ed Marmet's new pleasure boat OHIO. The engines are 7 by 30 and were purchased from McIlvain of this city. Work is progressing nicely on the hull of the boat at Marmet's Harbor, Columbia.
"

Fred Way, Jr., in both his *Packet Boat Directory* and *Towboat Directory*, usually did not indicate the engine builder for any of the steamers he listed. As far as is known, there is no catalog of how many Frisbie engines were made and where they were placed. However in a search of Way's directories and *The Waterways Journal*, these did show up.

Way listed the OHIO (T1947), mentioned above, as a towboat, not a pleasure boat. He does not mention the engines, but lists her as being built in 1899, hull dimensions 83 x 15.6 x 4.6, and renamed LOMA (T1622) in 1905; renamed W. H. MULLER (T2570) in 1915; renamed HELPER (T1083) about 1917...and dismantled in 1920. A new HELPER built in 1920 (T1084), using some machinery from the old boat, had Barnes'engines, 9's, 15's x 4 foot stroke with Frisbie Balanced Valves. She was wrecked and rebuilt as ED. MOORE (T0682) in 1923-1924 with California Cutoff (it seems clear that these weren't the original engines); renamed SOUTHPORT (2325) in 1924; renamed CAPT. BREAUX (T0341) in 1931; and finally dismantled in 1945. Along the line, the hull grew to 106.3 x 24 x 3.6. This convoluted life history is chronicled to show the long, tenuous and convoluted life of machinery in river usage.

Towboat E.R. ANDREWS (T0659) was built in 1894 by Howard. She was renamed OSCAR F. BARRETT (T1974) in 1912 and ran until 1933. This was a good long life for a steamer. I believe that the ANDREWS is the "NEW DANA" towboat mentioned as being the recipient of four steam capstans above. She was fitted with Engines by Frisbie: 20's x 8 foot stroke. *The Waterways Journal* quoted the *Cincinnati Enquirer* concerning the ANDREWS on April 20, 1895: "The new ANDREWS, in command of the veteran Capt. Joe Burnside, now has a battery of six double-riveted steel boilers, with a working pressure of 202 psi. The big engines are working splendidly, while the steam steering, fixtures, electric lights, capstans and all the conveniences and appliances with which she is furnished are giving perfect satisfaction. The ANDREWS is owned by the Campbell Creek Coal Company, the Messrs. Dana, [emphasis mine] and is strictly a Cincinnati boat and one that the river fraternity are justly proud of. H. F. Frisbie built the magnificent machinery that is doing far above what was contracted for."



The towboats TITAN (T2443) and WM. LARIMER JONES (T2671) were also built by Howard in 1930 and fitted with Frisbie compound engines, 14's, 28's x 8 foot stroke, running until 1953.

Way lists the H. F. FRISBIE (T1010), a towboat, as being built in 1885 (the S & D Reflector says it was 1883) at Cincinnati. The type of engines is not listed by Way, but it is hard for me to believe that there were engines other than Frisbie's on a boat named for him. An account in the S & D Reflector of June 1997 tells of her ramming the Kentucky pier of the Southern Railroad Bridge at Cincinnati in December 1888. This resulted in sinking some produce boats she had in tow, causing a Mr. Rutter of one of the produce boats to die "of fright and heart disease." The sinking is an unflattering reflection upon the actions of the crew who are said to have approached the bridge with less than the allotted steam pressure while backing against the current and failing to check her speed or allow her to maneuver. Way, in the T1010 directory listing says that Frisbie, for whom the boat was named, died in 1912.

Moving to packet boats, we find the following listings: BOSTONA, (0693) was built at Cincinnati in 1879 with Frisbie engines, 25's x 8 foot stroke. Dismantled in 1899, her machinery went to the INDIANA (2753). The INDIANA was built by Howard in 1900 as a low water boat drawing 30" light, running instead of the CITY OF LOUISVILLE during periods of low water. The INDIANA burned at Cincinnati on May 1, 1916; rebuilt by Howard as the AMERICA in 1917. The AMERICA ran until September 1930 when she burned. Way reports that the steamer AMERICA (0241) "had engines of the broadhorn type that were modified by Jack Shields of Frisbie Engine and Machine Co." Way reminds us that this was the AMERICA that ran in the staged race at Louisville with the then fairly new steamer, CINCINNATI (1033) in 1928... "a spectacular affair in which the AMERICA showed ability to win, but was prevented by management [they owned both boats], a hotly debated topic for many years after." These engines ran from 1879 to 1930...a full half century. The modification of the engines by Jack Shields was to convert them to the patent Frisbie valve gear.

The ill-fated JOHN K. SPEED (3077) built at Madison in 1892 had 22½'s x 8 foot stroke Frisbie engines. My late friend Ellis Crawford told me fifty years ago that the SPEED once lost her paddle wheel overboard. This is confirmed by Way who

says she also... "sank three times, was afire twice, broke several [paddle wheel] shafts and once lost her paddle wheel overboard."

Now we come to the CITY OF LOUISVILLE (1095). Built by Howard in 1894 with Frisbie engines 30's x 10 foot stroke for Commodore Laidley of the Louisville and Cincinnati Packet Line. The L & C Packet Line was also known as the US Mail Line. The June 10, 1893 issue of *The Waterways Journal* reported: "H. F. Frisbie ...has secured the contract for the building of the new machinery for the new packet for the Mail Line, now under contract at Howard yards. This boat is to be one of the largest, finest and fastest boats ever built for the western waters..." The April 14 issue of *The Waterways Journal* had this to say: "The brand new steamer CITY OF LOUISVILLE is lashing the waves between Louisville and Cincinnati and when Capt. Frisbie gets his machinery to work satisfactorily look out for some breaking of records."

Jess Coen comments on the calliopes being manufactured for Wilbur Dow in June 1974.

Early on, the big steamer was put to the test. Four days later on April 18, 1894, the CITY OF LOUISVILLE ran Louisville to Cincinnati (upstream) in nine hours and forty two minutes, averaging almost 14 mph. A clipping dated April 20, 1894, reprinted in the September 1989 S&D Reflector, says:

"...according to the statements of proprietors of elevators and coal harbors, she tore up the river behind her..." [emphasis mine]. The article went on to catalog the snapping of mooring cables including an inch-and-a-half wire cable, the tripping of spars and tearing out of timbers and blocks from the heads of barges. "...the Cincinnati Gas Company, which has a fleet of 28 barges anchored at the West End Works, came near losing the entire fleet."

Of the same incident, *The Waterways Journal* reported the next week:

"The coal men are very indignant, and say that last night when the new boat came up the river on the fastest trip ever made by a Western steamer from Louisville, that the chains that held the coal barges to the bank were parted by the heavy swells of the boat and many barges came near being sunk. A lot of shanty boat people down near the mouth of Mill Creek, claim that their boats were nearly capsized by the waves of the new boat and they threaten to shoot the pilot should he persist in running at full speed past their landing."

Two years later, the CITY OF LOUISVILLE set a new downstream record of five hours and fifty-eight minutes, averaging 22½ mph. Both records still stand.

It might be of interest that the hand on the throttle of the CITY OF LOUISVILLE on these record runs, and on that of the AMERICA during the "race" noted above, was Henry. R. McClanahan. McClanahan was the grandfather of my friend Ellis Crawford. Ellis still had Henry's steam gages off the CITY OF LOUISVILLE, neatly lettered on the dial with the name "H. R. McClanahan." Ellis said that old time engineers had their own steam gauges and carried them from boat to boat, in which case they'd have been on the AMERICA during that race too.

All sorts of litigation was threatened against Laidley and his big steamer. It may be of interest that *The Waterways Journal* reported this: "Com. F. A. Laidley is well pleased with the decision of the Louisville judge in the suit for damages brought by the owners of a floating house, that had been

damaged by the passage of the big CITY OF LOUISVILLE. The judge, in deciding, stated that riparian [living on the river] owners of property naturally have some rights on the river that should be respected, but that the first importance of the river is for navigation, and owners of floating craft along the shore must take ever [sic] precaution to see that their property is seaworthy and well anchored. In these days of railroads and modern improvements, the judge declared, boats plying the rivers were compelled to use their utmost endeavor to make speed and thus keep their business."

While there is no direct reference to Frisbie engines having been actually installed in the first ISLAND QUEEN (2799), *The Waterways Journal* reported in their November 24, 1894 issue that: "Col. Lee H. Brooks, of the Coney Island Company, and Engine Builder H. F. Frisbie, last week went to Jeffersonville, and had a conference with Howard, the boat builder. The contract for the new Coney Island boat has not yet been awarded. It [the contract] lies between the Cincinnati Ways [Cincinnati Marine Railway] and Howard's at Jeffersonville. ... Col. Brooks said he expected to have a fast, fine boat, next only to the fleet 'greyhound' and that he would probably run her as an excursion boat to Louisville." We know from Way that she came off the ways at Cincinnati Marine Railway in 1896. The "fleet greyhound" mentioned in that 1894 article was, in my mind, the CITY OF LOUISVILLE. Way does not mention anything about the ISLAND QUEEN's engines in his listing. The view from here is that the Cincinnati firm of Coney Island Company, contracted the boat in Cincinnati and that she came out with Frisbie (Cincinnati) engines. Whoever made the engines, Bates & Hawley in *Moonlight at 8:30* say the original engines, 20's x 9 foot stroke, were later replaced by 35's x 9 foot stroke.

The well known Cincinnati packet TOM GREENE (5415), had Frisbie engines, 22's x 7 foot stroke. She ran from 1923 to about 1950 and 1931-1947 in the Cincinnati-Louisville trade, racing and defeating the BETSY ANN (0604) in 1929 and 1930.

The Waterways Journal in their August 12, 1899 issue also reported: "The Frisbie Engine and Machine Company of Cincinnati has just shipped to Potlatch, Idaho, a complete set of Frisbie valves for the steamer NORTHERN PACIFIC, which belongs to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company." This to a railroad company which presumably knew all about steam engines.

The number of extant Frisbie engines is small. Reed Coen reports that he has heard that there was a set owned by Dennis Trone, a set on display in the Smithsonian set up to turn over by air or by electric motor, and a set on the old steamer WAKEROBIN (5680), (aka USS NIGHTMARE) with condensing, high pressure engines 18's x 7½ foot stroke. Currently owned by BB Riverboats, she has been used as a "haunted house" in season. The WAKEROBIN has been "cold" for many years.

Frisbie Engine and Machine Company was an innovative and viable force in the steamboat trade for many years, and that tradition continues to this day. On September 30, 2006, a couple of years after this article was written, Ms. Virginia Bennett, long time worker on the Ohio River starting with her beloved CHRIS GREENE, made the following remark. "Back then it was often said that when you sat for your engineer's license, one of the questions was What is the phone number of Frisbie?" Upon which, she rattled it off: Main 4292. While the above anecdote was likely tongue-in-cheek, I believe that it does illustrate the regard in which Frisbie Engine and Machine was held on the river.

The writer wishes to thank Reed Coen of Frisbie Engine and Machine Company for his input and M'Lissa Kesterman of the Inland River Library and Rare Book Room of the Cincinnati and Hamilton County Library for assistance in finding information on Frisbie. This in addition to other employees of the library who helped locate patent and directory information. *Way's Packet Directory* and *Towboat Directory*, the S & D Reflector and *The Waterways Journal*, extensively quoted above, were instrumental in putting this together. The author welcomes and looks forward to additions and corrections to this manuscript.

Photos courtesy: pp. 20-21 Tom Schiffer; pp. 22-23 Murphy Library, UW-La Crosse, except BOSTONA, CITY OF LOUISVILLE, ISLAND QUEEN, TOM GREENE from Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County; p. 25, PLCHC; p. 26 Tom Schiffer; p. 27 PLCHC; p. 28 Editor's collection.

Madison Bridge Spans to be Replaced

A clipping from November 2010 *Roads & Bridges* magazine was forwarded to the REFLECTOR by Tom McNamara of Cincinnati. The article detailed plans to replace the superstructure of the bridge linking Madison, IN and Milton, KY, originally dedicated in December 1929 at the onset of the Great Depression. Built as a toll span, the 3,184-foot long steel-truss cantilever bridge was constructed with a roadway width of twenty feet, ample room for the vehicular traffic of the time.

However, a bridge study and routine inspection in 1995 revealed problems requiring immediate attention because of changes in automobiles and

trucks over the decades. The bridge is too narrow. A second study in 2008 was conducted after Madison had been designated a National Historic Landmark District. On the other side of the Ohio River, the city of Milton, one of the oldest communities in the commonwealth, also boasted two National Historic Districts. The bridge itself is the sole-surviving structure built by J. G. White through the National Toll Bridge Co. These facts influenced plans for any impending bridge project to minimize its impact on the historic areas adjacent to the span.

With new federal infrastructure funding available in 2009, the Indiana Department of Transportation and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet sought joint financing for the project. Plans call for replacement of the superstructure atop the existing piers, an alternative offering the quickest

solution to update the rapidly deteriorating structure. However, this will require closing the bridge for up to a year. Because of a compressed project timeline, the new bridge is slated for opening in 2012. The article concluded: "To help cope with disruption of the year-long bridge closure, the planning team reached back into history by deciding to provide a free ferry service to accommodate some of the 11,000 drivers who use the bridge each day. The ferry service can handle 40% of the vehicles that cross the bridge daily. Other vehicles are expected to use the nearest Ohio River crossings: 26 miles upstream at Markland Dam Bridge and 46 miles downstream in Louisville. "

The Madison Bridge represents a blip on the radar screen of the DELTA QUEEN's storied

history. Shortly before midnight on June 28, 1972, while downbound on a Kentucky Lake cruise, the steamer bounced off the bridge's Indiana pier and came to rest amidst a marina on the Madison shore. High water and fog that night prevented the radar buoys marking the piers from showing up, and the glancing blow resulted in a gash several feet long in the port side of the hull just below the nosing and immediately outboard of diesel fuel tanks in the fireroom. Three days were spent at Jeffboat while the repairs shown in these pictures were completed. Passengers were bussed on several hastily scheduled excursions, including one to Lexington, KY, during the brief lay-over at the shipyard. Shown on page 34 is a well-known view of the big Greene Line tourist boat paddling under that span in happier times back in 1959.

Streckfus Fleet Panorama at Davenport

Pat Welsh sends us a clipping from the September 23, 1930 *Davenport Daily Times* with details of the picture of the Streckfus fleet shown on the back cover of our March issue.

"Three excursion steamers of the Streckfus line – the J. S., ST. PAUL, and WASHINGTON – tied up at the Davenport levee this morning while a United States dredge removes the deposits of silt from the entrance to the winter harbor at Nahant [behind Credit Island.] The unusually low water plus normal accumulation of silt has combined to make the harbor untenable. Similar conditions have prevailed before and dredging must be undertaken every three or four years.

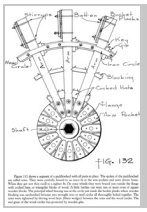
"The big packets have been making their way northward in leisurely fashion, stopping at various cities en route from the south for excursions. As soon as the harbor is sufficiently dredged they will tie up for the winter while the usual renovations will take place.

"The Mississippi is lower now than it has been in the fifty years of river experience of Capt. W. L. Hunter, pilot of the CAPITOL, who brought the J. S. to Davenport. But while the stage is unusually low, the channel is in better shape than it has ever been, due to the work of the U. S. Engineers in wing dam construction and other improvements, he said. The CAPITOL, which with the GREATER NEW ORLEANS will spend their winter in southern waters, has not been aground at any time, he said."

A paragraph in the 1929/30 Streckfus *Scenic Waterways Magazine* commented:

"When the season is finished on the Ohio, the WASHINGTON returns to Cairo and up the Mississippi to Davenport, which is the winter quarters of the Streckfus Line fleet. After the close of the St. Louis season, the steamers ST. PAUL and J.S. also winter at Davenport, where the repair yards of the company are stationed. A large crew of employees is kept busy all winter getting the boats in shape for the next season. Few people appreciate the wear and tear on steamers. Thousands of people are handled every day. The breakage of chairs and tables in itself is an enormous item for after a single trip it is not an uncommon thing to see fifteen or twenty rockers, twenty-five or thirty chairs, and five to ten tables carried to the carpenter shop for repairs. Each steamer carries its own carpenter, who not only looks after the wheels and rudders, but is also kept busy doing minor jobs around the steamer every day of the week."

Notwithstanding your editor's observation that this photo was a "rare panorama" picturing the Streckfus fleet, indications that perhaps this might not be the case soon surfaced. The March issue wasn't in readers' hands more than three weeks when perusal of an album at a local Post Card Pals meeting turned up two copies of a widely distributed post card view taken at the same time and sold at drug stores and five-and-dimes all over the Quad Cities as late as 1952. And in hand-tinted color no less, much to your editor's chagrin. What he should have written, of course, is that the gathering of the three boats at Davenport's riverfront (as opposed to their winter harbor) was highly unusual, not that the photographic record was unique. Now we are wondering if there are any "rare" photos showing the fleet in winter layup behind Credit Island all those years. We have seen nary a view of that, but will refrain from comment and refer that question to Pat Welsh, Judy Patsch, Michael Blaser, and Jerry Canavit instead.

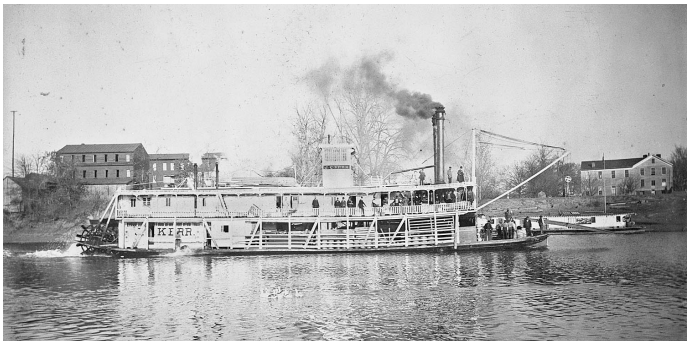


Small Stacks

Immortalizing the CHAPERON - Part One

by John Fryant

How does an old wooden steamboat become famous to the point that it will be remembered almost forever? Several ways: A famous race, such as the ROBT. E. LEE - NATCHEZ race of 1870; or disasters, such as the SULTANA explosion on the Mississippi, or the GEN. SLOCUM fire in New York; or longevity of operation, such as the IDLEWILD/AVALON/BELLE OF LOUISVILLE, or the Hudson River's MARY POWELL. But there's another way, and that's to be reproduced as a model kit. That's what has happened to a typical little Ohio-Green River sternwheel packet. Part one of this tale will tell the history of the full-size boat while part two will tell how the model kit came to be.



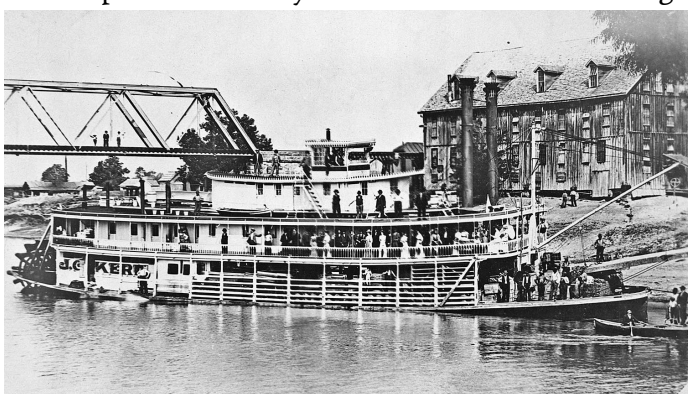
The J. C. KERR as originally built. Note the sag in her stern, eliminated when she was rebuilt and a Texas cabin added.

Our subject is the J. C. KERR, a quite ordinary little packet boat built in 1884 at Chambersburg, OH. You won't find that spot on today's map, but it was in the same general area as the Gallipolis Dam. Her hull dimensions were 121' x 27.8' x 4', not too much larger than today's JULIA BELLE SWAIN. I've always wondered who her namesake was, but the identity of J.C. Kerr has so far eluded me.

She was built without a texas as she looks in photo 1. She operated on the Upper Ohio until sold in 1892 to Capt. R.H. Williams, who joined her in the Evansville and Bowling Green Packet Co. operating out of Evansville, IN. I don't know at what point her texas was added, but it was well before her first name change. The broadside view of her sans texas shows a definite sag in the sheer curve towards the stern. Perhaps when she was altered the hull was also rebuilt. The photos of her after the addition show a very nice sheer curve to the hull and an exaggerated sheer curve on the texas roof.

Sometime during 1904 she was overhauled and re-named CHAPERON. Prior to that she had been entered in the short trade between Bowling Green and Mammoth Cave, KY, which was a very popular run with tourists. She did a prosperous business, landing them within a stone's throw of the cave. She would meet the through boats at Woodbury, transfer passengers and then head upriver to the cave. At that time, boats could not turn around there, as the river was too narrow. She would have to back down from the cave six miles to a wide spot in the stream called the "turn hole" before she could turn around. In 1906, lock number 6 was completed, providing more navigable water up to the cave and she was then able to turn there.

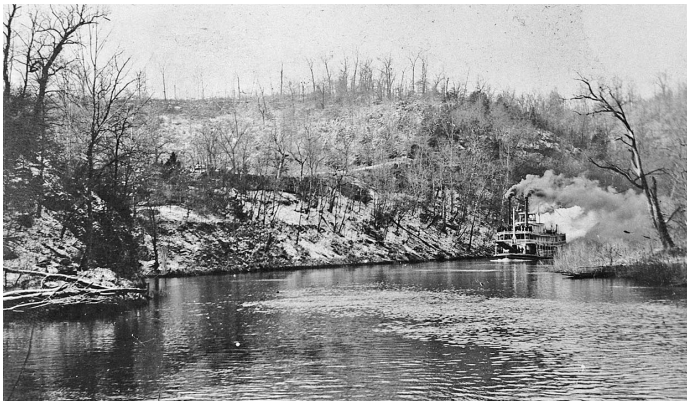
The CHAPERON was the first boat to officially go through the new lock on the day it was dedicated. On this first trip through, a number of dignitaries were on board including a reporter from the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and George Dabbs, a professional photographer from Morgantown, WV. On the return trip Dabbs was put off at a point on the "turn hole", where he set up his camera while the boat backed away upstream. Then she made a "photo run" with the 'scape pipes opened up and fresh coal in the furnaces. This during the winter months made for a spectacular photo, which has been reproduced many times. I first saw the image



The KERR at Livermore, KY on the Barren River, "loaded to the guards" with freight and passengers. Even though the main deck is "draggin' the water," the nice sheer curve can be seen plainly, as well as the exaggerated curve of the Texas roof line.

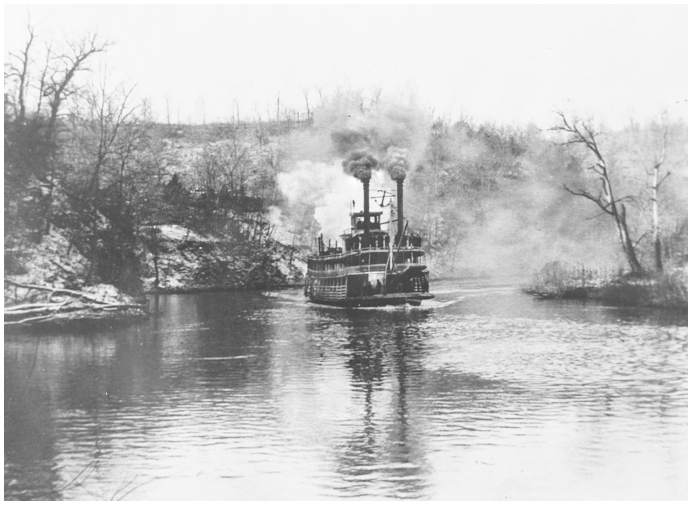
in Fred Way's photo book *Mississippi Sternwheelers* published in 1947 by Kalmbach Publishing. Ah, but Mr. Dabbs took more than one shot. As you can see, he took one a few minutes before she arrived at his location. I'll give credit to the late Ralph Dupae for finding this shot, as it is now in the collection of the Murphy Library. Did George Dabbs take more than these two photos? Probably not, or Ralph would have found them all.

The CHAPERON continued with the Evansville and Bowling Green Packet Co. until 1917. The tourist trade to Mammoth Cave had played out somewhat, as there was by then a narrow gauge rail line that ran to the cave. So the little CHAPERON was cleaned up, given a new paint job and put up for sale. Soon after, she was purchased by Capt. Gid. Montjoy, of Vicksburg, MS. (That first name might have been an abbreviation for Gideon – I'm not sure.) He changed her name to CHOCTAW and entered her in trades up the Yazoo and tributaries. The new name was no doubt in honor of a previous CHOCTAW under his ownership which had burned in 1916. This was a smaller, very plain looking packet with a scow bow. My search for photos of the CHAPERON under the CHOCTAW name has so far proved futile. Several photos of the previous CHOCTAW turned up, but there are no similarities between the two. Somewhere there must be a photo of the CHOCTAW-ex CHAPERON which hopefully will turn up. She burned at Melrose Landing on the Tallahatchie River on March 8, 1922, after a thirty eight year existence. Not bad for an old wooden steamboat.



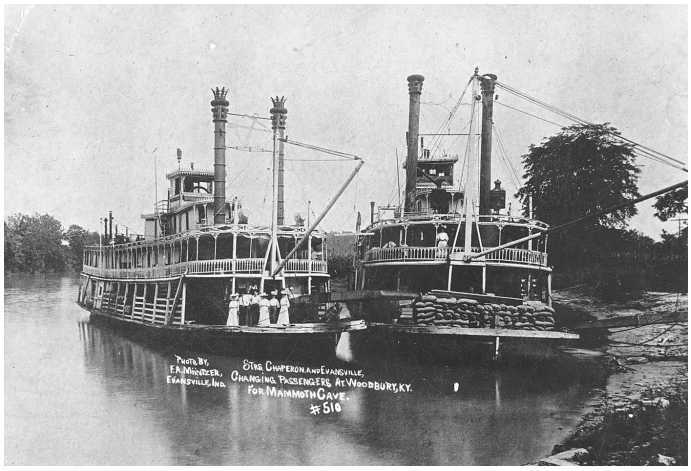
The first of two scenic views captured by George Dabbs on a wintry day at the "turn hole."

In the late Agnes S. Harrelson's book *Steamboats on the Green*, one of her engineers, Courtney Ellis, gave her a fitting epitaph: "In the summer of 1928 I saw the hull of the old CHAPERON, the head of which was protruding out of the water. I identified her by the "tonnage 95" carved into the forward hatches and also the name CHAPERON showing through the last coat of paint. She had two boilers, thirty eight inches by twenty two feet, allowing 190 pounds of steam pressure. Her engines were slide valve, poppet cutoff, ten inch cylinders with a four foot stroke. A lot of memories crossed my mind as I stood there looking at the last remains of the fine old Green River packet."



Dabbs' second photo taken a few minutes later.

Sooo — how did this typical old packet boat become reincarnated in the form of a steamboat model kit? The word "typical" is a clue and it's an interesting tale, (at least I think so) which will be told in the September issue. Stay tuned.



Some lady passengers have transferred from the EVANSVILLE to the CHAPERON for the trip to Mammoth Cave. Those long skirts probably didn't stay clean very long on those dirty, sooty decks.

All photos courtesy Murphy Library, UW-La Crosse.

m/v O. NELSON JONES Christened in Port Amherst

April 29th saw a crowd of several hundred rivermen, boaters and friends gathered at Port Amherst, southeast of Charleston, WV, to celebrate the christening of the m/v O. NELSON JONES for Amherst Madison. The towboat, formerly PENNSYLVANIA when acquired by Madison Coal and Supply in 2004, was renamed in honor of Capt. Nelson Jones who passed away last July 25th at age 52. Nelson's wife Robyn, accompanied by his sisters Jennifer Jones and Laura Pray, broke the ceremonial bottle of champagne above the boat's bell as shown in this photo.

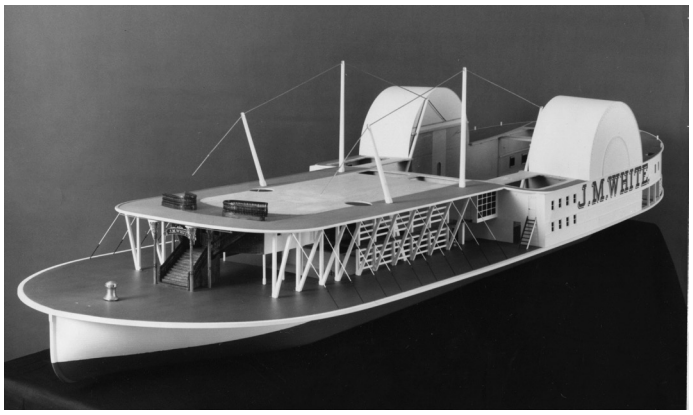
Photo by Lawrence Pierce, courtesy Charleston Gazette

The 5,600-hp. vessel was originally built in 1964 by St. Louis Ship as the L. FIORE when owned by Midland Enterprises of Cincinnati. She is now part of the thirty-boat Amherst Madison fleet. In speaking to those gathered, Nelson's brother C.Tandy Jones observed, "Nelson had an encyclopedic memory of the people and equipment working on the river. He started out by practicing with cars. Luckily for us, his interest in cars later transferred to boats." Charles Jones commented, "Nelson made many, many friends and did a great job for the company. The christening of this boat is significant, but we're trying to have a celebration more than a memorial service here today." We suspect that Nelson would have heartily agreed and joined in the festivities celebrating the boats and river he loved.

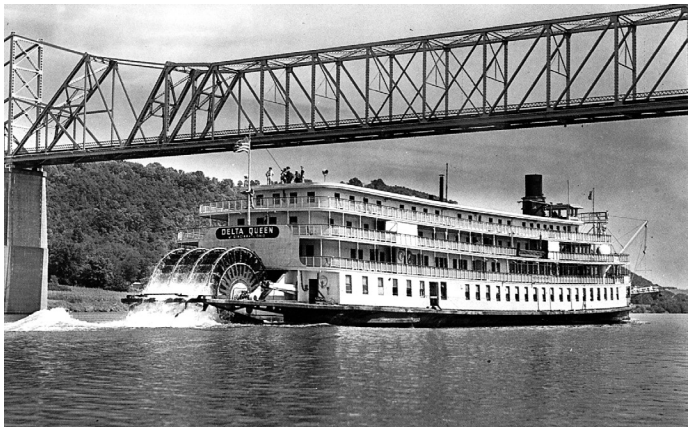
Visit us online at
www.s-and-d.org
for more current events and up-to-date news

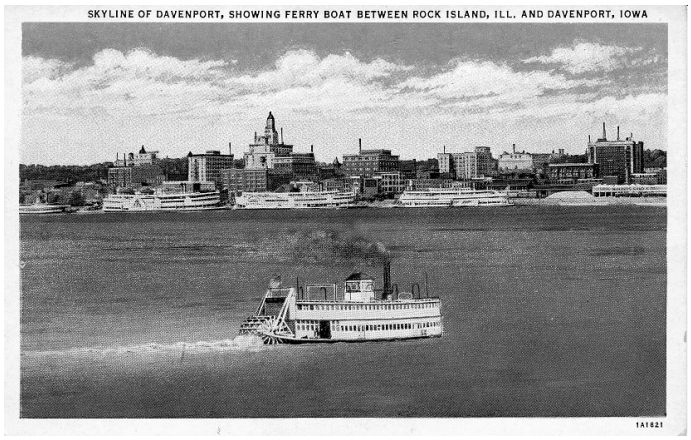
This 'n That: Random Notes from This Issue

Shown below ia photo of the J. M. WHITE model which failed to appear at the bottom left on page 48 of John Fryant's column in March. We apologize for the error.



Also pictured here are photos to amplify articles in this issue: DELTA QUEEN steaming under old Madison Bridge as reported on page 30, and the ubiquitous post card view of Streckfus fleet at Davenport in 1930 detailed on page 31. Photos of Helen Prater (obituary page 42) in the pilothouse with her father may be viewed at our website.





Doctor Pump Disaster on Steamer BIG HORN, 1869

by John G. Gibbs

Dale Flick sends this article with the observation: To read the adventures of steamboat engineer John G. Gibbs recalls "those in peril on the deep." This first hand account varies but slightly from other recorded sources. Gibbs had great facility with the written word, and avoided negative terms in reference to roustabouts who comprised the crew. Apart from that, I know nothing about Gibbs, let alone ever seeing a photo. He was no doubt a Lower Mississippi/Southern rivers engineer. His stories are pretty gripping and graphic, but that's how it was in those days. Those guys went from one mechanical problem to another – all in a day's work.

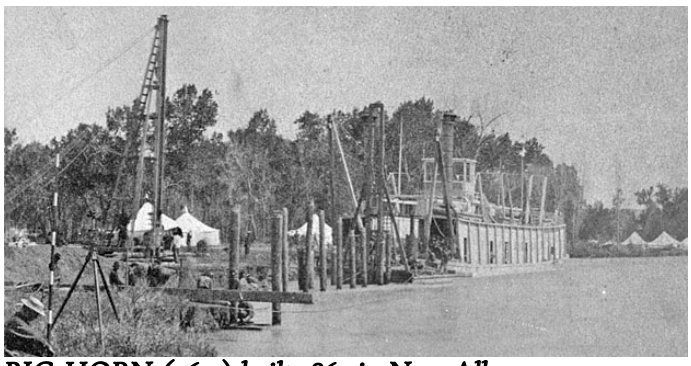
Let me tell you of a trip that was attempted on the BIG HORN in 1869. The boat had been laid up at Algiers, LA about a month previous to the trip, but was in good shape for anything appearing in passenger or freight service. Several cattle shippers contracted with the owners of the BIG HORN to go to Hogs Point, below the mouth of Red River [Mile 297 on Lower Mississippi], and bring a load of cattle to New Orleans. At that time Hogs Point was a big shipping point for Texas stock of all kinds, but how it came to be named Hogs Point I never learned, as I never saw but a 'wee bit of a pig' on any of the times I was landed there and they all had horns.

A crew was shipped up and all made ready to leave the next day, Friday. I was filling the most important job, I thought, on the boat. I was chief pantryman. The same engineers who had been on the BIG HORN took her out, and both were competent men and thoroughly familiar with her machinery. We left Algiers about 10:00 a.m. and all went well till that afternoon about 3:00 when the engineer on watch yelled up through the speaking tube to the pilot to land the boat and have his partner called, which was done in short order.

The fires in the furnaces were banked and the head of steam held so that it would be ready when the trouble was rectified. The 'doctor,' as the boiler feed pump on a steamboat is called, failed to work, so the engineers went to work on it. They tried every known art of the trade to get it to operate, but failed. They pulled it all to pieces and examined everything carefully before shipping it up, but it was all in vain. There was one more thing to do, and that was to take the heater heads off and see if anything was out of shape there. Nothing was found there so they started to couple things up. They sent a Negro fireman into the heaters to hold the head of the bolts while they were tightened from the outside.

The job of closing them up was nearly finished when steam got a little too high. The engineer went to the throttle and started to blow through the hold, or lower the pressure, forgetting about the fireman in the heater, until the poor devil yelled out in pain. He was hauled out and died shortly after. The engineer was so affected by his mistake that he cried like a baby. It's not to be wondered at, the mistake he made. The whole engineroom crew had been working on the job from about 3:00 p.m. until the next morning at 10:00 a.m., and yet the doctor pump could not be made to work.

They decided to go back to New Orleans to go on the docks. They rigged up the deck pump and put some of the roustabouts to working it by hand to feed the boilers. It was slow work, but we got back. On the dock we found that there was no strainer on the side of the hull over the suction pipe. They took the pipe out and discovered it was plugged solidly with a big snake that had gotten near the pipe opening and the suction had pulled him in. After getting the bones of the snake out and laid in a row, old heads concluded he was about six feet long. So ended my first trip leaving port on a Friday, and I daresay if any of the crew who was on her that trip are still alive, they will attribute all that trouble to leaving port on a Friday.



BIG HORN (0617) built 1865 in New Albany, 154x33.5x4.5. Engines 16's-4 foot stroke. Ran on Missouri River until fall of 1869 , then on Red and Lower Mississippi. Sank and lost at Bayou Bartholomew, LA April 10, 1873.

Photo courtesy Murphy Library, UW - La Crosse

MAJESTIC Memories

by Pat Carr

A Nostalgic Thrill You'll Never Forget was the slogan on all the posters for the Showboat MAJESTIC in 1958, as the last traveling showboat went from town to town on the Ohio River. I had the great privilege of spending that summer working on the boat and being part of the shows that entertained so many in the river towns. I was 18 years old and had just finished my freshman year at Hiram College, a small college in northern Ohio. My friends now just don't understand why I wanted to work for nearly four months on a boat that didn't have running water and only had electricity during the show each night. And for this, my dad had to pay my tuition and room and board!

Hiram College leased the showboat for ten years for their drama department and offered a course called Operating Theater Aboard the Showboat Majestic. 1958 was the last year Hiram leased the boat, so I have much to be grateful for. As a freshman, I was only accepted for this summer adventure because they needed a trumpet player. For me it was a life-changing experience which sent me on to a larger college to major in instrumental music, preparing me for a 32 year career as a public school band director.

Life on Board

My personal memories of life on a traveling showboat began in 1958 when I boarded the boat in Point Pleasant, WV on June 7. We did one night stands up the Ohio River to Pittsburgh, stayed there 7 weeks, and did more one nighters down to Sistersville, WV, ending Sept 29. We did a show every night except the seven Sundays in Pittsburgh, where we couldn't play because of "Blue Laws."

We began the summer with twelve women students and eleven men. Hiram divided the summer into three 5-week "class terms," so a few students left and others came onboard during the summer. Most students stayed onboard the whole time, as I did, or at least until Hiram started classes in early September. We had two Directors, both Hiram professors, who divided their time on the boat, one leaving for a few weeks when the other would come onboard. We had an Assistant Director from Hiram who was onboard the whole summer. We also had two housemothers, each for half the summer.

The women lived in two adjoining rooms across the front of the top deck of the MAJESTIC. The men lived in rooms on the side and the back of the showboat. Cap Reynolds' crew was his son Tommy, plus a teenage boy. They lived on the ATTABOY, as did the cook, since the kitchen was out there. Although for many years the cook was an older woman called Aunt Pearl, our cook that year was a Hiram student.

In our large room, we had several bunkbeds. I had an orange crate to hold my things. We each had a bucket to bring water from tanks on the ATTABOY for washing our face and for brushing our teeth over the rail -- trying not to spit toothpaste on the lower deck! Our room opened onto the front deck. Our other door opened to the hall which led to the balcony, and to the stairs to the lower deck.

The women's restroom was at the bottom of the stairs, in the hall leading to the auditorium entrance. The men's restroom opened onto the deck on the port side. There were water tanks on the roof which usually would flush the toilet, but in each restroom was a bucket on a rope. We learned how to dip the bucket in the river and flush the toilets manually!

We had one stall shower backstage, which operated by gravity from the tanks on the roof -- just a trickle of cold water, no spray. One of the great things was when someone's parents came to visit and had a hotel room. Then several of us could go and enjoy a warm shower!

To wash my hair, I would put on my bathing suit, take my bucket and a friend and go out on the ATTABOY near the water tanks. Then my friend

would pour a bucket of water over my head while I leaned over the rail, to wash and then to rinse. [In a story told by Doc Hawley, the showgirls on the boat from earlier years collected the condensate from the calliope overboard exhaust in a bucket to wash and rinse their hair. – Ed.]

In those days, everything went into the river. So when we finished eating in the dining room on the ATTABOY, we scraped any food left on our plates into the river. Those on KP each day had to haul water from the tanks and heat it on the stove to wash the dishes.

Every afternoon, large blocks of ice were delivered. There was a true "icebox" in the kitchen to keep food cold. When the ice arrived, soft drinks had to be iced for the show -- and how nice that was when we could then enjoy a cold soft drink, too. The other use of ice is much more interesting. There were openings on each side of the boat where a block of ice was placed. Then during the show, when our generator was running and we had electricity, there were two large fans that blew over the blocks of ice into the auditorium -- our unique "air-conditioning"!

Cap Reynolds moved the boat in the early morning hours and I would often wake up to the calliope as we pulled into the next town. We had work assignments which rotated each day. Three would be working in the kitchen helping the cook or washing the dishes. Others would be cleaning the toilets or sweeping the auditorium or mopping the deck.

We had an Advance Man, also a Hiram student, who did publicity for us in towns we would soon be playing. He put up posters and told the newspapers, etc. We had a red station wagon, called the "Blivet," for that purpose or for any other necessary driving. Someone would drive it to the next town when the boat moved.

During the day, we often had rehearsals, whether of the band or the melodrama or vaudeville acts. We had to be prepared to add new things to the show or change to a new melodrama. In addition to playing in the band, I was in one melodrama and played a trumpet solo for a few weeks in the Vaudeville. We could also walk into town. When we played Marietta, I found the River Museum, bought some books, and developed an interest in river history as I read the books and sat on deck watching the river and the boats.

The Show

Our show included a Melodrama, an Old-time, Good-time, Prize Candy Sale, and several acts of Vaudeville. The calliope was located on the roof of the ATTABOY. Before the show, there were two calliope concerts, and sometimes the band played on the roof of the MAJESTIC in between those concerts. The band also played in the tiny pit before the show and for the candy sale. We played Dixieland style arrangements. The band was the last act of the Vaudeville and closed the show playing "When the Saints Go Marching In," with a big drum solo.

The Candy Sale was great fun. It started with a spiel that was very funny. Prizes were given to people who had a piece of paper in their box. We didn't give away many of those teddy bears on the prize rack, but we gave away a lot of the smaller prizes and some very funny gag prizes. The audience loved it!

One of the things I enjoyed was watching some of the more experienced students work with the audience. They were very good at taking a quiet, unsmiling crowd, and turning them into a very active and laughing audience. They could get an audience "in the palm of their hand."

The melodramas were played for laughs and we encouraged the audience to hiss, boo, cheer, or even make some comments. When Hiram friends would visit, they often had some funny comments to make and the actors had to be ready to come up with some equally funny answers.

Since we were all a bunch of college students, doing the same play for several nights, we did a lot of things to break up other members of the cast! We never knew what was going to happen. In one melodrama, a man is sleeping on a bench and a little girl puts a piece of bread on his hand and says, "A

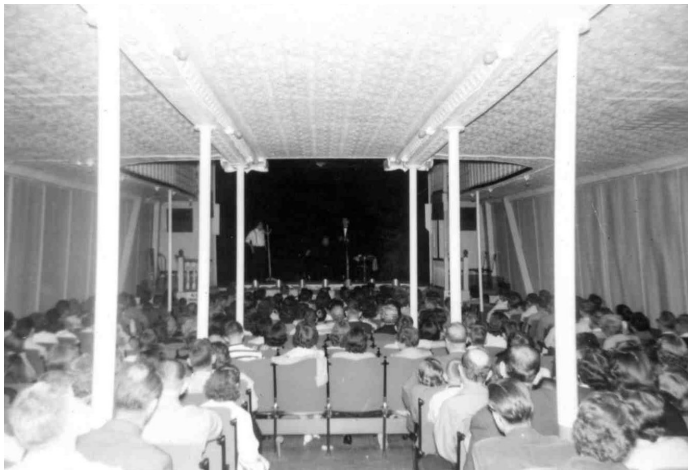
One of two advertising posters preserved by Pat Carr, now on display at Howard Steamboat Museum..

Brushing your teeth the showboat way without a sink. And please don't spit on the deck below!

Loading boat supplies at the start of summer season, June 7, 1958 at Point Pleasant, WV.

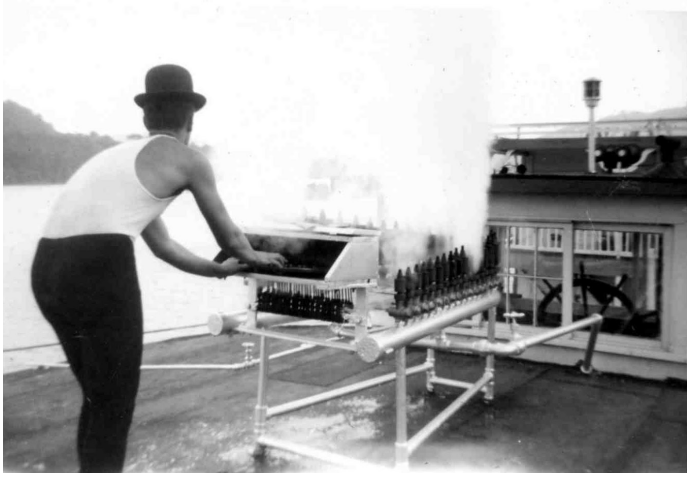
View of auditorium from balcony showing melodrama in progress, tiny orchestra pit and box seats on each side of stage..

Pit band performing on the roof of MAJESTIC between calliope concerts and prior to evening melodrama.



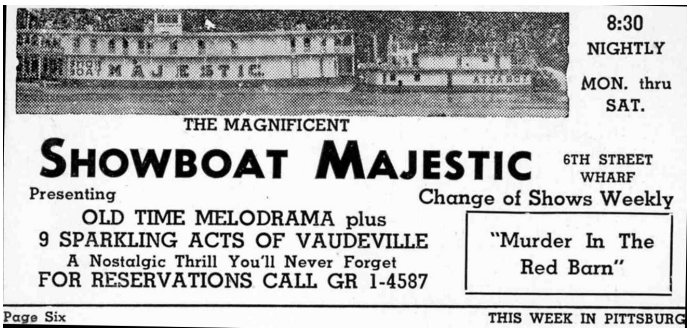
A full house for "Murder in the Red Barn" at Marietta, OH, June 21, 1958

Villain ties heroine to buzz saw as hero arrives to save her in nick of time during performance of "Murder in the Red Barn."



Unknown showboat performer mans steam calliope keyboard on roof of ATTABOY for one of two nightly concerts. Cotton wads for the ears were standard equipment for calliope player.

Hamming it up for the audience. Our author is the distinguished actress in the middle.



Ad in a Pittsburgh paper for summer 1958 season.

Showboat underway between engagements piloted by Cap Reynolds. In foreground are potable water tanks supplying the showboat.

MAJESTIC and ATTABOY on arrival at Pittsburgh.

At Sixth Street Wharf in Pittsburgh on the Allegheny River.

Last view of the showboat leaving Sistersville, WV at the end of her summer season, September 29, 1958.

Capt. Fred Way lands the LADY GRACE alongside the MAJESTIC during his visit with Capt. Tom Reynolds on September 15, 1958.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MAY 8, 1960.

A Town Sadly Bids Farewell to Showboat

West Virginians End 40 Years as Home Port for Theatre

By RICHARD J. H. JOHNSTON
Special to The New York Times.

POINT PLEASANT, W. Va., May 5—The familiar sound of the calliope of the showboat Majestic was heard here for the last time yesterday.

In a cloud of steam it played "Auld Lang Syne" as this Ohio River town's population of 350 stood on the river bank and bade the venerable floating theatre farewell.

The showboat has been taken over by Indiana University for use by its Little Theatre, and while it will continue to ply the Ohio, it is not expected to call again at Point Pleasant.

For nearly forty years the 120-foot craft was as much a part of the village as the one-room post office or the general store.

"It just breaks my heart to see it leave," said Mrs. Mannie Lee Snodgrass, a 75-year-old native of Point Pleasant. "Our town will never be the same. Oh, how wonderful it was to see it come home in the fall after visiting all those far-away places."

"I'm sure going to miss it, too," said a neighbor of Mrs. Snodgrass.

"Why, I could look out my kitchen window and tell how the river was when the Majestic was home. When the river got to rising she'd ride 'way up there and you knew there was trouble coming. When the river fell she'd go plumb down out of sight and you'd know the shoals was sticking up everywhere."

The words came hardest, however, for Mrs. Thomas Reynolds. She is the widow of Captain Tom, the man who built the Majestic and steered it to a hundred towns on the Ohio and the aKnawha Rivers.

"Captain Tom fell overboard and drowned one night two years ago upriver just a little bit after we sold the Majestic to the university," Mrs. Reynolds said.

"When he first built the Majestic he used to hire stock companies and they would play all the towns in the summer. When the leaves fell he would bring it back here and tie up to those trees on the bank."

Two of Mrs. Reynolds' sons, Carl and Roy, are riverboat captains now. Another son, oJhn, will become a captain this summer.

About thirteen years ago, Mrs. Reynolds recalled, colleges began to hire the boat for summer theatre productions.

There will be a celebration at Madison , Ind., the new home port of the Majestic on the Ohio River, on June 9. Mrs. Reynolds and her sons will be the guests of honor. When the university formally takes over the boat there.

"I hope they treat it kindly," Mrs. Reynolds said. "I just know they will."

Associated Press

GETTING A NEW HOME: The Majestic is going to Indiana University, at Madison

Showboat leaves her home at Point Pleasant, WV for the last time on May 4, 1960.

Poster advertising last performance in the summer of 1958. This show was cancelled and the boat left Sistersville to return to Point Pleasant. This date also marked the end of Hiram College years on the boat, only months before Capt. Reynolds sold the MAJESTIC and ATTABOY to Indiana University. The poster now makes its home at the Point Pleasant River Museum.

All photos courtesy Pat Carr.

piece of bread for the poor stranger." This went on every night. Then one night the piece of bread was spread with peanut butter. When the man got up to do his next speech, the bread was stuck to the back of his hand!

We did have a summer that was certainly a nostalgic thrill we could never forget!

Showboating in America

According to the *Ohio River Handbook*, showboats first appeared on the Ohio River by the third decade of the nineteenth century, and were among the first rivercraft to use towboats regularly. The initial appearance of performances on the river occurred in 1817 aboard a keelboat fitted out for audiences by Noah M. Ludlow on the Cumberland River. William Chapman's FLOATING THEATER of 1831 is probably the first vessel actually termed a showboat. In the years that followed, showboat operators included Spaulding & Rogers, Dan Rice, Al Cooper, Capt. Ellsworth Eisenbarth, Capt. J. W. Menke, and Capt. Billy Bryant. In 1877 Capt. A. B. French and his wife Callie launched the NEW SENSATION at Cincinnati, followed soon after by Capt. E. A. Price's WONDERLAND. These two rivermen in large part were responsible for the growth of river showboating and dominated it for several decades.

Capt. Thomas J. Reynolds built the Showboat MAJESTIC and its towboat ATTABOY in 1923 when there were still a few other showboats operating on the rivers. Eight years later, *Who's Who on the Ohio River* listed eighteen showboats still actively engaged in the business. But immediately prior to the start of World War II, this number dwindled to include only BRYANT'S SHOWBOAT, DIXIE QUEEN, COTTON BLOSSOM, HOLLYWOOD, GOLENROD and the MAJESTIC. The story of the early years of the MAJESTIC is best found in the book *Cargo of Memories* by the captain's daughter, Catherine Reynolds King.

During World War II, Capt. Reynolds tied up the MAJESTIC. He thought this might be the end of its usefulness because other forms of entertainment were reaching the small river towns. But after the war, two college professors, one from Kent State University and one from Hiram, found the boat and recognized the possibilities it had for their drama students. In 1948, students from both schools were working on the boat under the Kent State University drama department. Hiram began its lease of the boat the following year.

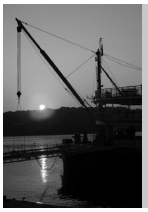
In 1959 Capt. Reynolds sold the MAJESTIC and the ATTABOY to Indiana University, and in December of that year he died. Indiana University continued to keep the MAJESTIC traveling from 1960 until the hull was not safe for travel in 1965. They then operated the showboat in Jeffersonville, IN, before selling the boats to the city of Cincinnati in 1967. Students at University of Cincinnati had the opportunity to do shows on the MAJESTIC for the next 20 years.

The MAJESTIC, now without the ATTABOY, is enjoying her third life as a theater operated by Cincinnati Landmark Productions, presenting a season of plays every summer, docked on the Cincinnati waterfront.

Another book about the MAJESTIC and the Reynolds family was published in 2010. It was written by the captain's granddaughter, Sandra Reynolds Clark, and is titled *A Majestic Legacy, A Pictorial History of the Showboat Majestic.*

In Upcoming Issues:

Sinking of FBL Towboat NATCHEZ at the Greenville Bridge
Upper Mississippi Steamboat Titan: Commodore William F. Davidson
Will the Real Steamboat NEW ORLEANS Please Steam Forward?
Sidewheels vs. Sternwheels: Which Is Faster?
Chapter Four of Falls Heroes, Louisville's Lifesavers
Raising of Steamer MIDLAND at Davis Island



Final Crossings

Helen Hughes Prater

Photo courtesy Tom Schiffer.

Helen Hughes Prater crossed the shining river to glory on March 13, 2011, at Littleton, CO. Born on September 3, 1912, at Catlettsburg, KY to Capt. Jesse Paul Hughes and Susan Martelia Vaughan Hughes (widely known as "Aunt Telia") she reveled in being part of a close knit river family, living and riding on steamboats. The beautiful Ohio was her playground and literally hundreds of river people became her extended family.

Helen was happiest aboard a steamboat or at the keyboard of a piano. Her brilliant musical talent emerged early and she received formal music lessons, her mother and sister both having served as organists of the Methodist Episcopal Church. At age 13 Helen was pianist for the band aboard the TOM GREENE and later played in an all girls orchestra in Washington, D.C.

After marriage, Helen became a homemaker and Air Force wife, rearing three children while traveling all over the world. In their retirement years Helen and her husband traveled across the United States and Canada in an Airstream trailer. Following Mr. Prater's passing, the river's call beckoned and Helen returned to her river roots.

Throughout her 98 years, Helen touched countless lives with her warmth, wisdom and wit. Her upbeat spirit and boundless enthusiasm were an inspiration and blessing to all who were privileged to know her. Whatever adversity came her way, she remained positive, kept smiling and refused to be vanquished, always retaining her sparkle.

A lifelong member of S&D, the annual meeting was a highlight of her year, greeting her "river family" and talking steamboats. It became tradition for Helen to preside at the grand piano in the hotel lobby following the Saturday evening banquet. Music filled the room into the late hours, as an appreciative crowd listened, sang along and danced. Helen was undoubtedly S&D's eldest member and certainly the last with such a colorful background and direct connection to the final days of the packets.

In recent years "Miss Helen" made frequent trips aboard her beloved DELTA QUEEN, on which Capt. Jesse had been chief pilot, as well as the MISSISSIPPI QUEEN and AMERICAN QUEEN. Through Helen's influence and generosity, most all of her family experienced the wonder of steamboating.

I am proud and honored that Helen always called me one of her boys. From the first time we met, she was among those wonderful river people who were 'happy to give' and who enriched my life with her kindness, friendship and love. To say that she will be greatly missed is an understatement and her passing leaves an empty space in many hearts.

Helen was preceded in death by her parents, husband USAF Colonel Burnice E. Prater (1988), son Robert H. Prater (2001) and sister Lillian Hughes (1938) who was popular hostess on the Str. GORDON C. GREENE. She is survived by son Richard H. Prater (Nancy) and daughter Lillian Prater Smith (Forrest), eight grandchildren, fourteen great-grandchildren and a multitude of friends along the river.

A memorial service will be held in conjunction with the Prater family reunion in September. Helen's ashes will be interred next to those of her husband in the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery at Louisville. Date and time will be announced.

Until we meet again, a long, echoing whistle salute and a steam calliope rendition of "Goodbye

Little Girl Goodbye" in tribute to Helen Hughes Prater, truly a grand and revered lady of the river!

Our sincere thanks to Keith Norrington for his loving tribute to Miss Helen.

Capt. William D. Bowell, Sr.

Capt. William D. Bowell, Sr. 90, of St. Paul, MN, passed away on April 19 in Minneapolis. The son of Ralph and Leone Bowell, Bill was born February 14, 1921. He grew up along the Mississippi, selling popcorn from his father's vendor truck on Harriet Island in St. Paul. He carried that enterprising energy with him to Macalaster College after serving in the Army in World War II as a paratrooper in both the D-Day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge, earning the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

Capt. Bill recalled that his summertime excursions on the Streckfus steamer CAPITOL from Lambert Landing "probably set the hook in my soul for the river." His boating career began in 1951 when he operated a 16-passenger boat, learning to steer and getting his pilot license. By 1969 he built the hydraulic-powered sternwheeler JONATHAN PADELFORD, named for his tenth great-grandfather on his mother's side. This would be the first of eleven boats he operated under the Padelford Packet Boat Co. His flagship ran from Harriet Island to Fort Snelling and return, and generated renewed interest in the Twin Cities' riverfront.

Once asked if he considered himself a "river tycoon," he answered: "I'm just someone who can overcome obstacles, be creative, and take advantage of opportunities." In his later years, Capt. Bowell was a founder of the National Rivers Hall of Fame, and a generous benefactor of the Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium at Dubuque. The Capt. William Bowell Library at the Museum contains over 2,000 volumes from his personal library and his many historic artifacts. In addition, he provided an endowment to firmly establish the library as a river research facility long into the future.

Capt. Bowell is survived by wife Lillian; daughters Shelley Bowell Kosmo and Elizabeth Bowell Myers; son William D. Bowell Jr.; eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held April 25th in Stillwater, MN with burial on April 26th at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis.

Back Cover

This view of the ISLAND QUEEN passing the Cincinnati city front is probably a companion photo to the one on our front cover, most likely taken in 1906. Tom Schiffer estimates the river is maybe ten feet above pool at 22 or 23 feet in these pre-Markland days. He mentions that the pipe for the pool gauge is on the Cinci pier walkway of the Suspension Bridge directly behind the texas deck of the IQ. The lifeboat boom on the after end of the boat points to the former location of Emery Industries, relocated after the 1884 flood chased them out to Mill Creek valley. The L&C landing for high water was directly behind the boat. Tom comments that in the likely event her engines were made by Frisbie, they would have originated in their shop on the upriver side of the bridge pier next to the approach walkway, this right above the IQ's wheelhouses. The domes atop the bridge towers appeared in about 1896 when a second set of cables were added to accommodate street cars and heavier traffic. They were constructed of brick, plastered over and painted silver. There was a skylight at the top of each dome for illumination. Those domes were replaced years ago in an attempt to restore the bridge's original appearance. Mount Adams appears in the distance on far right, with either the QUEEN CITY or another Frank Ellison-designed steamer landed at the foot of Broadway.
Photo courtesy of The Library of Congress


ISLAND QUEEN