

S & D

REFLECTOR

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of Pioneer Rivermen



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September 2014



BELLE OF LOUISVILLE

Front Cover

Steamer BELLE OF LOUISVILLE crew pictured on August 2, 2014. On roof left to right: Capt. Kevin Mullen, Mate Don Crisp, Capt. Joe Kenney, Capt. Mike Fitzgerald, Capt. Mark Doty, Mate Ron Lawrence. On texas deck left to right: Tom Coursen, Raphael Maxson, Nick Adornato, Christine Nash, Kadie Engstrom, Dan Lewis, Michele Chapman. On hurricane deck left to right: Hannah Lannan, Linda Hampton, Penny Jordan, Christina Moakler, Eric Doty, Corey Bowlin, Sean Hamilton, Earlene Bisig Zimlich, Dabney Clore, Tim Connor. *Photo courtesy of James Guest.*

Greeting from Capt. Mark Doty

As a youngster following my birth here in Louisville in 1962, I had always heard about the steamboat that the city bought the year I was born. That vessel was just a mere 48 years old at the time and had already led two different lives. And now, WOW! It is 52 years later, and more than half her life and all of mine will connect up on October 18, 2014 when the vessel will be turning one hundred years old. Of course, you know I'm talking about the steamer BELLE OF LOUISVILLE.

Just out of high school, I came down to the wharf with a buddy of mine to look for summer work. Even though I never rode the boat growing up, I landed a job as a deckhand. Thirty-three years later and busier than ever, I'm still here – not as a deckhand, but as the boat's captain. At the conclusion of one of the busiest years since I've been here, we are going to wind down our season with a bang!

As Master of the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE – which is an honor in itself – it is also my special honor to extend an invitation on behalf of the Waterfront Development Corporation and the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE to all steamboat enthusiasts from around the world to come join us as the BELLE reaches a milestone no other vessel of her type has ever reached.

The **Centennial Festival of Riverboats** (aka **The BELLE's Big Birthday Bash**) will be taking place here at the Louisville city front October 14-19, 2014. Five vessels will participate. Joining the BELLE and SPIRIT OF JEFFERSON will be the BELLE OF CINCINNATI, RIVER QUEEN, and SPIRIT OF PEORIA. Each boat will run five cruises per day. There are a wide variety of cruises available: Bourbon tastings, lock trips, lunch and dinner cruises, boat parades, races, and fireworks cruises. Landside activities with plenty to eat and drink will also be available throughout the venue.

Speaking for the entire crew and staff, we look forward to welcoming each of you during this historic event!

Captain Mark A. Doty
Master, Steamer BELLE OF LOUISVILLE



Reflections from Our Readers

Tom McNamara writes: “While comparing the fine S&D rear cover of the June issue with the original, I noticed that the back cover of the original is also river related and at least four pages inside have river stories. Next I went to my Cincinnati Street Railway duplicates and sure enough, there was an October 1929 dupe. I have enclosed it for your files, as more info on hand never hurts. I am amazed at the amount of river material that appears in the magazines from say 1928 to 1940. There must have been a river fan among the trolley folks.”

‡ Indeed, there must have been, as there still are to the present day as evidenced by Tom's generosity in sharing these treasures with the REFLECTOR. In fact, Tom's cousin is another rail and street railway fan who has a strong river connection - S&D's own Capt. Jim Blum. And while we're at it, former S&D Board of Governors member John White, a welcome contributor to these pages, is an equally devoted river and rail enthusiast. Jack very kindly sent us a note providing some further information about the sights and landmarks pictured on that old newsletter cover photo. We share his commentary on page 102. **Continued on page 102**

A Letter from our Board of Governors

It is special to note that 2014 marks not only the 50th anniversary of the S&D REFLECTOR but also the 75th anniversary of Sons & Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen (S&D). As we approach the anniversary celebrations during our annual September gathering at the Lafayette Hotel in Marietta, a moment must be taken to detail a few major improvements and a general revamping of S&D.

For the better part of two years the Board of Governors has sought to improve and maximize S&D's potential. While no changes are taken lightly, it was important that changes be made in order for S&D to sustain itself for many years to come. Reviewing its strengths and weaknesses helped the board better understand the organization and begin charting a course for a better future. Changes sought included increasing memberships, hiring a webmaster to oversee the website, and offering online membership registration and renewals using PayPal®. Additionally, the board has often tried addressing an obvious weakness that many in the organization have discussed at one point or another – the name of the organization and how many are misled by its meaning. While important to note that the name of the organization WILL NOT be changing, it is exciting to note that the way S&D promotes itself will be.

Since 1939 the Sons & Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen have strived to promote and preserve river history. In 1964 Captain Frederick Way, Jr. furthered that mission by publishing the first issue of S&D REFLECTOR. In our plans for revamping, it was agreed that the REFLECTOR has been the flagship vessel of S&D for the past fifty years, carrying much history, lore, tradition, and river news within its pages. Because of the great success of the REFLECTOR, it was determined that the magazine should be the vehicle by which this organization promotes itself. Far too many times individuals have passed on the opportunity to become a “member” of S&D because they believed ancestry was a requirement, much like it is in the Daughters of the American Revolution. Although this could not be further from the truth, past experiences have shown that our name is misleading. We believe there is a simple solution – to promote ourselves as a magazine subscription

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with all the benefits of a membership organization.

Today, we are pleased to welcome you to view our new website www.riverhistory.org, the S&D REFLECTOR's homepage! Subscribers of the REFLECTOR will continue to enjoy all the benefits of being a member of S&D including:

- Online subscription registration and renewal using PayPal®
- Free admission to the Ohio River Museum and W.P. SNYDER, JR. towboat
- Voting rights at the Annual Sons & Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen Fall Meeting
- Invitations to special events

As we look forward to the future, we cannot forget your continued support and dedication. Without it we would not be here to continue the legacy started 75 years ago by our founders. We hope you will continue with us along this river and share in our journey for many years to come. 

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



S&D REFLECTOR

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of Pioneer Rivermen

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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.

David Tschiggfrie, Editor
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REFLECTOR BACK ISSUES AND INDICES

Copies of the current or prior years are available at \$8 each, postpaid for subscribers, and \$10 for all others.

Indices for five year increments of the quarterly, 1964 through 2003, are available for \$5 per volume. The 2004-08 index is available in CD format only for \$11 postpaid.

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

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There are two classes of subscription- full and family. Full subscription 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 subscriptions enjoy all privileges except the REFLECTOR.

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Getting Posted Up

An Amazing Centennial Celebration

It's probably a fairly safe bet that any observers gathered on the banks of the Allegheny at Pittsburgh that Sunday, October 18, 1914, had no inkling of the significance of what they were about to watch. After all, it was just another launching of another steamboat, an event replicated hundreds of times at the James Rees and Sons boatyard. The new boat, although handsome in her own simple way and stoutly built, was designed for hard and unglamorous work in the ferry, day packet and excursion trades. She was built to be a work boat, and as a result lacked the stunning elegance, size, ornamentation, and pedigree of many of her finer contemporaries in those waning decades of steamboating. And throughout her career she would often take a back seat, forgotten or relegated to the lower echelons among the classic Western Rivers steamboats which still plied the rivers.

Over more than three decades, the steamer IDLEWILD would endure hardships, economic downturns, multiple changes in ownership, and pursue a wide variety of trades with far-reaching itineraries and schedules, yet survive into the middle of the twentieth century. As the AVALON, she performed an amazing feat that no other excursion steamboat has achieved before or since: she went *everywhere* that there was enough water to float her!

It was indeed a stroke of amazing good fortune when Louisville eventually acquired the boat, and carefully and lovingly transformed her over the years into the masterpiece she is today, the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE. And so we celebrate her centennial, against almost unbelievable odds. And well we should, as she is about to reach a milestone that no other steamboat has ever achieved: one hundred years of active service on the inland rivers.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the story of this amazing vessel, and invite you to join her countless fans in celebrating a true landmark during her 100th anniversary October 14-19 at the Centennial Festival of Riverboats in Louisville. 📍

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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



Meet Our Contributors

Kadie Engstrom (*Origins of the Western Rivers Steamboat*, p. 8 and *Back Home as the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE*, p. 74) is a longtime educator and steamboat historian for the BELLE. Giving up the prospect of a promising career with the Girl Scouts, Kadie jumped at the invitation to become a concessionaire on the boat in August 1972 at the behest of Capt. Charles Brasher. She has served as Education Coordinator for the boat since 1992, and has created a variety of resources about the river and steamboat history, as well as related events. After more than forty years, including many seasons spent aboard as purser, she still enjoys sharing her enthusiasm and love for the boat and the river with the BELLE's passengers. Kadie's influence also extends to countless others through her interaction with school groups and organizations who invite her to share her knowledge and passion for steamboating. She has authored books, community presentations, exhibits, narrations, classroom programs, and professional development workshops for teachers. A person of many talents, Kadie has also been a ranch hand, grade school teacher, Girl Scout camp counselor and Scouting official, and has even sung professionally. Needless to say, we are very pleased that Kadie has contributed her expertise to this special edition of the REFLECTOR.

Capt. Clarke Hawley (*River Veterans Crewed the AVALON*, p. 83) is indisputably the river's foremost historian and veteran of excursion boating and steamboating in general. For those few who do not know the good captain already, Doc has served on nearly all of the excursion and tourist steamboats in this country since he joined the AVALON's crew in 1951. A native of Charleston, WV, he has resided in New Orleans since the NATCHEZ went into service in 1975, when he accepted the appointment as her first master. Capt. Hawley had the unique opportunity to serve as master of the BELLE twice in his long river career: first during her AVALON years in the early sixties, and once again in 1970-74 when she was the BELLE. Doc is a frequent contributor to the REFLECTOR, and we welcome his

fascinating look back at the years he spent on the last tramping steamboat in this country.

Capt. Don Sanders (*The AVALON: A Reflection from the Summer of 1959*, p. 86) is a native of Covington, KY whose river career began during two summer seasons on the AVALON as deckhand and protege of Capt. Ernest Wagner and Doc Hawley. Several years later, Don served as watchman, mate and master of the DELTA QUEEN, a stint in the U. S. Air Force, and eventually returned to the river as master of the new casino boat GRAND VICTORIA II at Rising Sun, IN. In June 2012, Don bought the handsome sternwheel houseboat CLYDE., patterned after the Dubuque-built rafter of the same name, and navigated her from Alma, WI on the Upper Mississippi to her new home at Aurora, IN and later the Tennessee River. Don has a masterful flair for writing, as you will readily discover after reading his recollections of those first years on the AVALON.

John "Corky" Bickel (*The Best Job I Ever Had*, p. 95), like Don Sanders, was introduced to steamboating as a teenaged crew member of the AVALON in 1960. Having met the officers and crew of the boat during a previous summer when he and his father fished some of the AVALON's deck chairs out of the river, Corky headed south to New Orleans on the boat as cabin boy that summer, confirming a lifelong love for the river and its boats. Decades later, Corky's father John and his mother Ruth founded the National Rivers Hall of Fame at Dubuque, among whose inductees are many river people familiar to our readers. Upon his father's passing, Corky assumed national leadership of the Hall of Fame. In between stints as a Cedar Rapids attorney and member of the Iowa Development and Tourism Commission, Corky and wife Med can usually be found at their river home in McGregor, IA or cruising the backwaters up at Harper's Ferry in their Chris Craft cruiser, the WIDGIN.

Capt. Mike Fitzgerald (*The BELLE's Restoration, - An Ongoing Process*, p. 82) started as a deck hand on the BELLE in 1974 and worked his way through the ranks to captain in 1978, becoming the boat's youngest Master of the Fleet at age 25 when Capt. Charlie Larkin retired. Capt. Fitzgerald was Executive Director and Master on the BELLE until

2001 when he went to work for a nearby gambling boat, but continued as carpenter and relief pilot. Under Mike's careful and skillful supervision, the painstaking restoration of the boat by her crew was initiated and brought to a successful completion. In 2009, he returned full time as carpenter and pilot, positions in which he serves today. Mike and his wife Diane have raised three children, with the youngest now in college. He wonders how they got so old while he stayed the same. However, Mike also enjoys being a grandfather, a role he was meant to play.

Capt. Mark Doty (p. 2) the BELLE's present Master, began his career on the boat as deckhand in 1981, becoming captain in 1996. Along with duties on the BELLE, he assumed leadership on the SPIRIT OF JEFFERSON after she was purchased by the Jefferson County government in late 1995, serving there until 2006. The next season he became Master of the Fleet and serves in that role today. Mark and his wife Jeannine have raised a son who currently works in the BELLE's food and beverage department, so the apple hasn't fallen too far from the tree. Mark enjoys taking his boat out for an afternoon of lake fishing whenever he gets the chance, so he's never too far away from water, even when he's relaxing.

Daniel McCay (p. 102) first shared his impressive collection of scrapbooks with your editor at Howard Museum in August 2010, and that set the stage for the article in this issue. Daniel's grandfather and great grandfather, Horace Speck Jr. and Horace Speck Sr., were pilots for Hougland Towing Company. His great grandfather began steamboating on the Barren River at Bowling Green in 1916, as reported in the September 2012 REFLECTOR. Attributing his love for the BELLE to reading Alan Bates' book when he was eight years old, Daniel began collecting newspaper stories, photos and other memorabilia about the boat. From a single scrapbook of eight pages, that collection has grown into a library of thirty-one volumes, and is still growing!

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S&D's 75th Anniversary Meeting and Gala September 12-13


Join your friends and fellow members for a memorable weekend celebration of S&D's 75th anniversary. Highlights of the weekend include:

- **Friday, Sept. 12, 8:00-10:00 p.m.** Meet and Greet at Ohio River Museum. W.P. SNYDER, JR. will be open for inspection after her extensive renovations. Museum will feature the new Thornton Barrette photo exhibit, donated by Al Miller in memory of Capt. Lindsey Miller, longtime master-pilot in the towing industry. Barrette was a noted photographer of steamboats and river scenes. Light refreshments will be served.

- **Saturday, Sept. 13, 9:00 a.m.** Annual business meeting in ballroom of Lafayette Hotel, with information about the Board's recommendation for revisions in marketing and recruitment of potential new S&D members.

- **11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.** Scenic motorcoach tour to Clarrington, OH for luncheon atop hill behind town at Taylor Abbott's grandparent's home overlooking Ohio River. We are guests of Ohio Valley River Museum at 1:00 for a tour of their recently opened facility. On our return trip at 2:00, we stop at Hannibal Locks and Dam to view their exhibits. Tour and luncheon is \$35/person. Reservations deadline is August 15. Mail payment to S&D, P.O. Box 352, Marietta, OH 45750

- **6:00 p.m.** Dinner in the banquet room of Lafayette Hotel with choice of entree: prime rib, \$27; salmon, \$28; and lemon chicken, \$22. Make your dinner reservation at 800-331-9336 or 740-373-5522. Our guest speaker for the after dinner program is Mr. Bill Dow, owner of Lake George Steamboat Company and New Orleans Steamboat Company. Mr. Dow is no stranger to S&D, as he and his father Capt. Wilbur Dow have appeared frequently in the pages of the REFLECTOR.

This is but a partial listing of our 75th Annual Meeting highlights. There are some additional surprises planned for this gala weekend as well. Come celebrate this special anniversary with us. 

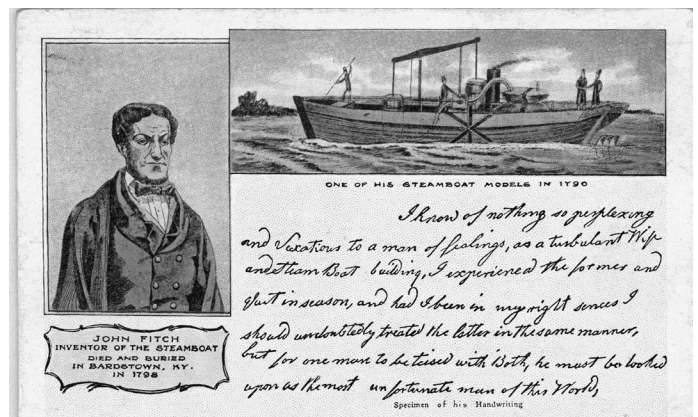
Setting the Stage: Origins of the Western Rivers Steamboat

by Kadie Engstrom

The story of the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE has its origins with the invention of the steamboat in 1787. Because of the work of inventors following the Revolutionary War, and the support of people with influence, the steamboat began as a new technology at a time when our fledgling nation was desperate for expansion. Nearly all the American population was located on the east coast, farmland was becoming scarce, resources were being stretched, and both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were looking for ways to move people away from the original colonies and into the “wilds” of the country. They believed the fastest method of transportation would be by waterways, and the idea of steam-powered vessels fit the bill.

Both Washington and Jefferson were friends of James Rumsey, one of the inventors of the time working on a design for a “steam-boat,” and so their strongest personal support went his way. However, John Fitch had entered the invention business at the same time, and they both gave him their verbal support as well. As it turned out, Fitch launched his boat PERSEVERANCE in August 1787, while Rumsey’s was delayed until December of that year. In essence, Fitch’s was the boat that worked, using a set of paddles (much like giant canoe paddles) on each side of the vessel, moving in and out of the water by way of a steam gear and chain mechanism powered by a single boiler. He invited members of the Constitutional Convention to the launching, and while many people stayed on land expecting the boat to fail or blow up, others braved all odds and courageously rode the pioneer voyage. It was actually the beginning of a technology that continued to improve until the middle of the 19th century. Fitch’s first boat ran with exterior paddles, but his second one, PERSEVERANCE II, built just one year later, was propelled by a paddlewheel. From that point, the paddlewheel became the accepted form of propulsion on into the 20th century until it was finally replaced with the screw propeller.

In 1791, John Fitch received the first patent for his steamboat design, issued by Thomas Jefferson, who had been put in charge of the new U.S. Patent Office. Because of a lengthy squabble over who launched first, Jefferson also issued patents to Rumsey and another inventor, John Stevens, for their designs; but Jefferson later declared John Fitch the inventor of the steamboat in America. In the first half of the 1790s, Fitch built two other steamboats, and even ran scheduled trade and passenger routes between New Jersey and Pennsylvania. But he was not able to achieve the riches he had envisioned. Despondent and nearly penniless, he retreated to property he owned near Bardstown, KY, and died by his own hand in July 1798. In a journal he had kept, Fitch prophesied that someday, someone would get credit for his invention while he would be lost in history. He was right. Though their paths had crossed years earlier, Fitch did not live to see Robert Fulton achieve the fame.



This postcard drawing of John Fitch contains a note in his hand which reveals the turmoil of the man who would be lost to history as the first inventor of the steamboat. He observed: "I know of nothing so perplexing and vexatious to a man of feelings, as a turbulent wife and steamboat building. I experienced the former and quit in season, and had I been in my right senses I should undoubtedly treated the latter in the same manner. But for one man to be tied to both, he must be looked upon as the most unfortunate man of this world." Although Fitch did not achieve the recognition due him in his lifetime, later historians recognized his achievement.

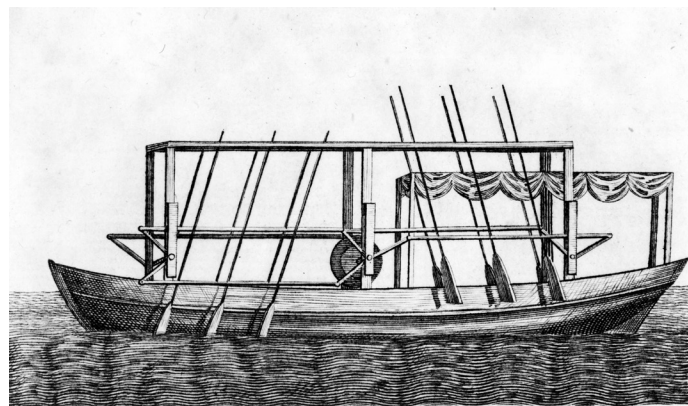
Even though history recorded (in a biography written by a newspaper reporter) that Robert Fulton invented the steamboat and it was named CLERMONT, neither of those is true. John Fitch led the way by twenty years, and Fulton used Fitch's designs and the designs of other inventors to build his first vessel, the NORTH RIVER STEAMBOAT. He launched it on the Hudson River (then called the North River) in 1807, and in just a few years, the era of steamboat technology took hold.

Fulton and his partners, Robert Livingston, Ambassador to France, and Nicholas Roosevelt, the great-great uncle of Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States, launched the first steamboat on the Ohio River, the NEW ORLEANS, in October 1811. They battled low water, clogged rivers, superstition, cynicism, the Great Comet of 2011, and the New Madrid Earthquake – any and all of which could have stopped the voyage. She made it to New Orleans in January 1812, and proved that steamboat travel was going to be the wave of the future. From there, westward expansion really began. In less than a decade, boat yards had sprouted up along the Ohio and Mississippi River systems, and for the next 100 years, steamboats were vastly important to America's history and commerce. Without question, they were the force behind the economic development of the country. Most were packet boats, carrying freight and passengers on every navigable waterway from coast to coast and border to border. However, by the end of the 1920s, river transportation had begun a major shift to a towboat economy, and with tows, railroads, and the new trucking industry, the packet boats saw a swift and natural decline. When the IDLEWILD was built in 1914, she was still a part of the steamboat era, and still vitally important to freight and passenger transportation at the time.

She is today the matron of the inland rivers, the oldest operating Mississippi River-style steamboat in the world. That's quite a statement, considering the average boat of the steamboat era lasted five years or less. Some, of course, lasted much longer, but many of those had wooden hulls that were replaced along the way or were eventually replaced by steel hulls, the rapidly-expanding technology of the early 20th century.

The BELLE OF LOUISVILLE, gracing the wharf at Louisville, KY, is the first river steamboat in all of American history to have operated continuously for 100 years. It's a feat that will very likely never be equaled, and she will be the one – and only one – still operating and built during the steamboat era to have the distinction of celebrating a centennial in this country. What an incredible achievement, and a testament to the luck and care she's had over a century of time.

Her early decades as the IDLEWILD, then her later life as the AVALON were preparation for what became her ultimate destiny: serving as Louisville's permanent excursion vessel. By the 1920s, the packets boats were, for the most part, beyond their usefulness. While the packets celebrated decades of shipping dominance and often impressive incomes during the 19th century, they were simply overtaken by bigger and more powerful towboats on the river, and by trucks and railroads on land by the time the third decade of the 20th century rolled around. Any packets built for freight work had either shifted to the excursion trade or gone out of business, and the AVALON was the last traveling excursion steamer of them all to finally hang up her gangplank. By the early 1960s, even the steam excursion boat was considered obsolete, a phase that had passed. As her last owners were aware, steam vessels are expensive to operate and maintain. So it was no surprise to the industry that diesel-powered riverboats would be the new wave of the future. However, all of this was still far removed and in the distant future when the idea was envisioned for building the steamboat whose centennial we are celebrating in 2014. 🕒



Plan of N. Fitch's Steam Boat.

Fitch's first steamboat PERSEVERANCE.

A Boat for All Seasons: The Versatile IDLEWILD

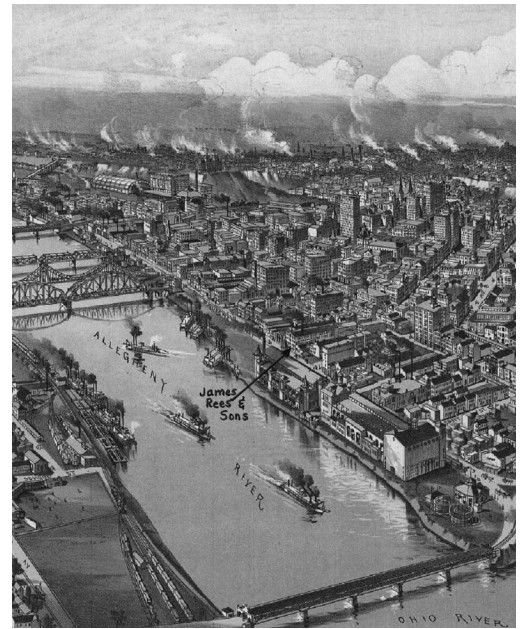
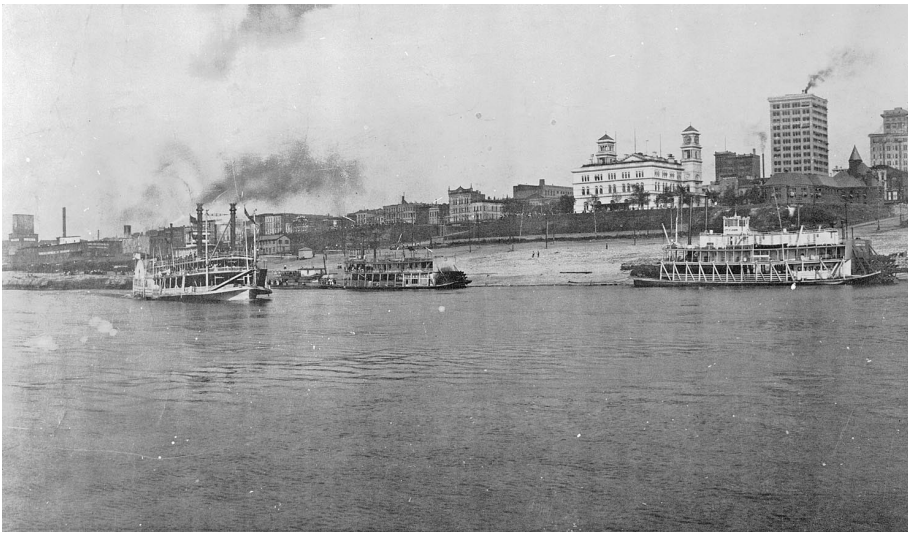
Like any good story, there is always a beginning, and this story has its start at Memphis in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Appropriately, that tale was best told by a master story-teller, Louisville's own C. W. Stoll in an article for the Rotary Club of that city. "A railroad bridge was built in Memphis in 1892, the first one to cross the Mississippi below St. Louis. It was designed with vehicular roadways on either side of the rails. The trains started crossing upon completion, but somehow the state governments of Tennessee and Arkansas, the local governments of Memphis and West Memphis, and the banks could not get together on who and how the approaches to the roadways would be constructed, and who would pay for what. And so these approaches sat unused for many years, with traffic of wagons, cars, trucks and foot passengers passing from Arkansas to Memphis on ferry boats. Meanwhile, Memphis was growing, the Arkansas environs across the river were developing, and the existing ferry was getting older and too small for the trade."

That ferry was the CHARLES H. ORGAN, built at Dubuque by the Iowa Iron Works in 1897. Her longtime master was Capt. John C. Wyckoff, who had begun his river career aboard the JOSIE HARRY in 1878 as clerk in the Memphis-White River trade. He was the grandson of William Lawrence, the original surveyor of Memphis. Capt. Wyckoff's son, John Benton Wyckoff, would begin his work on the river as clerk aboard the ORGAN during her third season at Memphis in 1900, and go on to earn pilot and master's license. Capt. John B. Wyckoff would eventually become the steamboat inspector there, and served as Captain of the Port of Memphis while a Coast Guard commander in World War II until his retirement in 1952. But returning to C. W.'s commentary: "West Memphis Ferry Company decided to build a bigger boat for the ferry trade with the assumption that sooner or later her reason for existence would be non-existence. And so they wanted a boat staunch enough to handle the ferry trade, but designed that she could

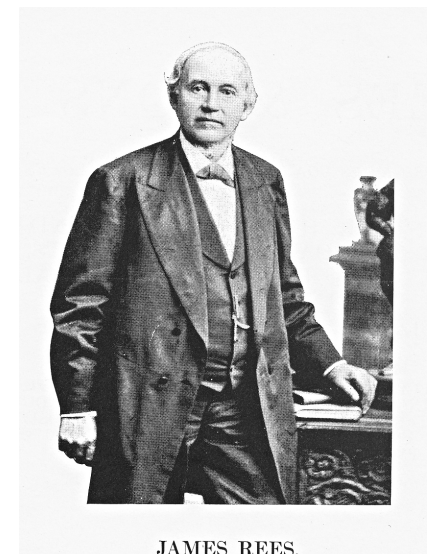
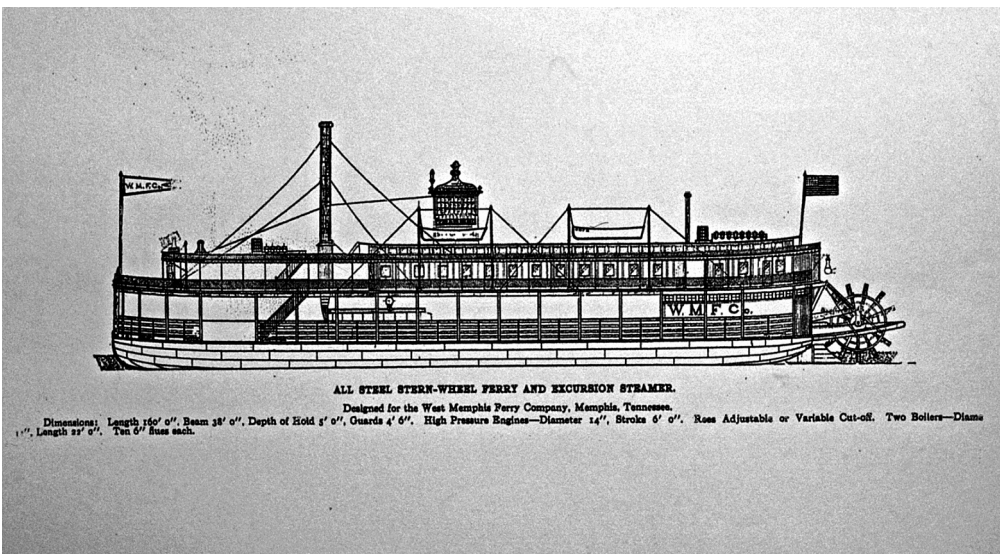
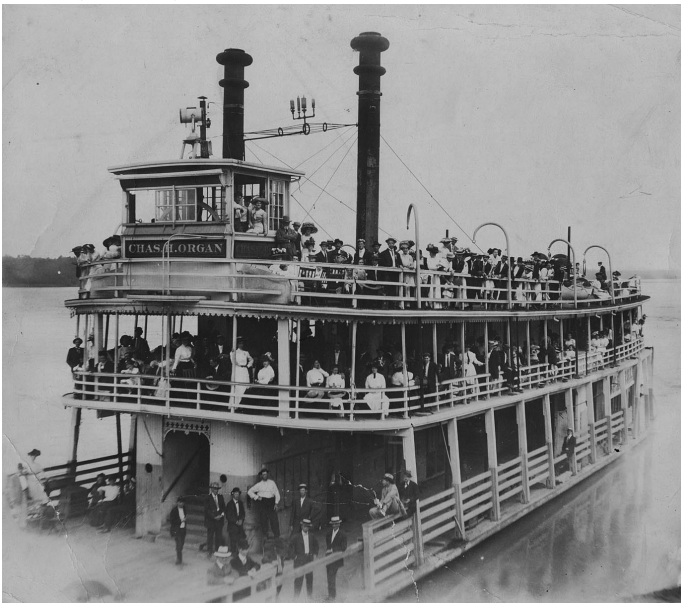
serve also as a freight packet, with her second deck fitted out with a dance floor to serve as an excursion boat. Aside from crew accommodations, she would not have staterooms for passengers." So in the fall of 1913, noted marine architect Thomas Rees Tarn drew up preliminary plans for the new boat, to be built at the yards of James Rees and Sons Co. at Pittsburgh. Tarn's father, John, a longtime employee of the boatyard, chose his son's middle name to honor his Pittsburgh employer. *The Waterways Journal* reported in a January 1914 issue that the ferry company had signed a contract with the Rees firm and that the boat was to be delivered on August 1 of that year.

James Rees and Sons boatyard, machine works, boiler shop, and foundry were located on the banks of the Allegheny River, not far from the Point at the foot of what was then called Hay Street, later known as 4th Street. After several earlier business ventures, Rees had established the Duquesne Machine Works at the foot of Liberty Avenue and the Monongahela Wharf in 1851, but was forced to move when the Pennsylvania Railroad took over the land by the Wharf. So in 1854 he reestablished his boatbuilding firm at this new location, where it remained for the rest of its existence.

The James Rees and Sons Co. firm who built the boat had been created in 1895 by the merger of three of Capt. Rees' companies. At this location they could easily launch new boats and haul others out to effect repairs. The foundry was 48 by 125 feet, with a mold loft and steam powered cranes for handling castings, and large ovens fired by natural gas. A 218 by 125-foot machine shop, a 40 by 100-foot smith shop, and a 20 by 40-foot brass foundry accompanied two complete boiler yards, drafting rooms, offices, pattern shop, storage loft for patterns, and a print shop. The company had built the steamer FRANCISCO MONTOYA, the first all-steel steamboat for rivers in South America. This was followed by the first all-steel sternwheeler to ply the rivers of America, the CHATTAHOOCHEE.



Above: Memphis city front ca. 1906-08 with (L to R) LOUISIANA, CHARLES H. ORGAN, and CITY OF ST. JOSEPH. Right: Allegheny Riverfront at Pittsburgh with James Rees & Sons boatyard. Below left: CHARLES H. ORGAN Below right: James Rees & Sons Co. boiler shop, foundry, machine works. Bottom left: Thomas Rees Tarn's original drawing for ferryboat for West Memphis Ferry Co. Bottom right: James Rees (1821-1889). Memphis harbor and ORGAN photos courtesy of Murphy Library, UW-La Crosse; Rees plant and James Rees photos from James Rees & Sons Co. Illustrated Catalog, 1913.



JAMES REES,

ALL STEEL STERN-WHEEL FERRY AND EXCURSION STEAMER.

Designed for the West Memphis Ferry Company, Memphis, Tennessee.

Dimensions: Length 150' 0", Beam 38' 0", Depth of Hold 5' 0", Guards 4' 0", High Pressure Engines—Diameter 14", Stroke 6' 0", Ruse Adjustable or Variable Cut-off. Two Boilers—Diam 11", Length 22' 0", Ten 6" Ruse each.

In all, James Rees and Sons built more than 500 vessels for North, South, and Central America, Russia, Mongolia, and Africa. The company was the first to build “knockdown” steamers, building the complete vessel in a boat shed, taking it apart, and packing up all the individual parts and shipping them by rail and freighter to their destination to be reassembled in much the same fashion as Denny Brothers in Scotland later did with the hulls of the DELTA QUEEN and DELTA KING.

James Rees was born on Christmas Day 1821 in Wales. Six years later his family emigrated to St. Clairsville, Ohio, near Wheeling. They later moved to Pittsburgh, where James went to work in a machine shop, with an apprenticeship in the foundry and engine building works. In 1848 he started his own business, culminating in the firm known worldwide a few decades later. From 1852 until the end of the Civil War, he operated a line of small steamers as freight and passenger packets on the Allegheny River. But during this time, he also returned to the fabrication of riverboats, including gunboats and transports for the Federal government. Capt. Rees and his wife Mary had nine children, including five sons: James Jr., Thomas, William, David, and Charles. With the exception of Charles, all the sons carried on the family business after James Rees died in September 1889.

Late in November 1913, the new ferry was given the name IDLEWILD, and construction proceeded throughout the next year, although her August 1914 completion date would be extended. The name IDLEWILD was first given to an earlier sidewheel packet which 45 years before had run in the Cairo-Paducah-Evansville trade and shortly after saw service for the Evansville, Cairo and Memphis Steam Packet Co. It is most probable that the new ferryboat was named in honor of this earlier vessel which was described as “a beautiful clipper of faultless proportions, proud and jaunty appearance, and as speedy as she was handsome.” It was this IDLEWILD which ferried the pilots out to the ROB’T. E. LEE at Island 1 below Cairo during her epic race with the NATCHEZ in 1870.

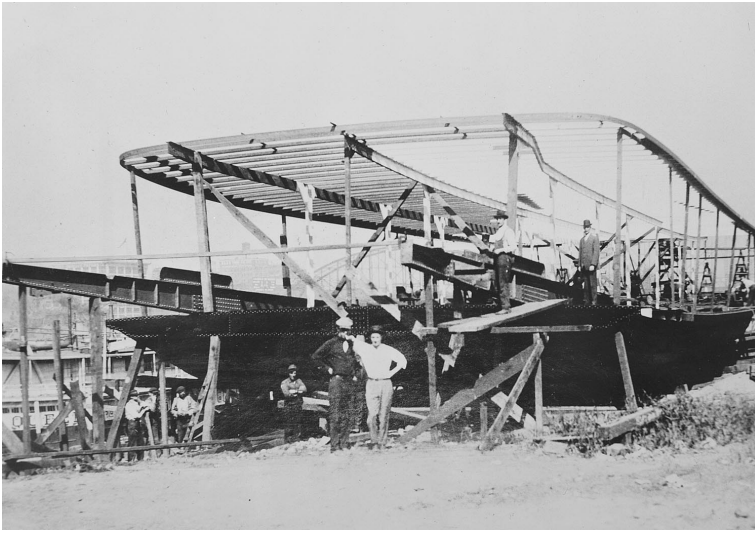
The new boat was launched on Sunday, October 18, 1914, while finishing work continued throughout the fall. But when she was finally ready for her

delivery trip in late December or early January, her departure from Pittsburgh was delayed by ice and low water. An interesting note is raised by a photo taken during her completion which shows two unidentified steamers landed outboard of the IDLEWILD. The question might be raised whether either of these boats provided the engines for the new ferry, since her engines definitely predate the boat’s construction. However, it is almost certain that her engines had been placed before her launch, so this is unlikely. And an exhaustive search of *Way’s Packet and Towboat Directories* by Capt. Doc Hawley for a boat built pre-1914 with the same size engines did not produce any results.

The January 7, 1915 *Memphis Commercial Appeal* reported that engineer C. F. Halstead of the Ferry Company’s CHARLES H. ORGAN had left for Pittsburgh to join the new boat on her delivery trip. Capt. John B. Conway, a chief officer of the Rees firm, would accompany the IDLEWILD as far as Louisville, where she would be turned over to Capt. James Rees. Also mentioned was the fact that “some inside work yet remains to be completed. This will be done here. At present the boat is only equipped as required by law to make the trip. She carries now the required 1,000 life preservers. The lifeboats will be shipped from the factory in Illinois to Memphis where they will be placed aboard.”

The IDLEWILD finally steamed away from the builder’s boatyard on January 9, 1915, and shortly after a 13-year old Fred Way watched her paddle under the bridge at Sewickley. She ran the Falls of the Ohio at Louisville, and arrived at Memphis on Sunday, January 17th. The *Memphis Commercial Appeal* reported the festivities the next day under the headline, “1,000 See Arrival of New Packet Boat.”

“Fully 1,000 persons lined the riverbank yesterday to welcome the new excursion steamer IDLEWILD when the handsome boat came into harbor along with the CHARLES H. ORGAN at 3:30 yesterday afternoon. The whistling boats in the harbor announced the approach of the IDLEWILD. The CHARLES H. ORGAN left Memphis at 1:30 p.m. loaded with guests, and met the new boat at Island 40. When the ORGAN reached the island, she found the IDLEWILD waiting for her.



Stern view of construction of IDLEWILD's hull and main deck on banks of Allegheny, spring 1914. All-steel construction was used from the hull to the top of the main deck. Internal and external bracing for hull and sternwheel was carried up no higher than main deck level.



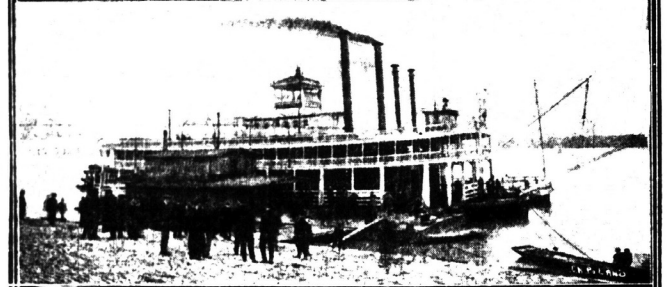
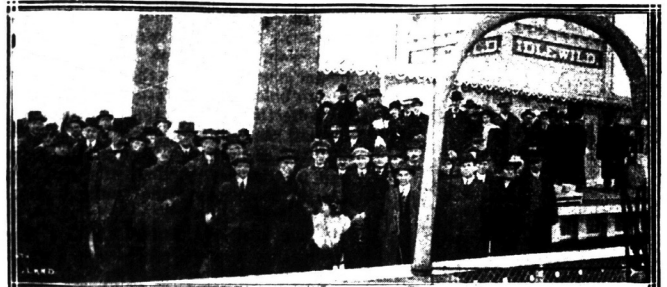
IDLEWILD waiting in January 1915 to begin delivery trip.

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL, MEMPHIS, MONDAY

New Excursion Boat Idlewild Landing at Memphis: Guests on Board Posing For the Photographer



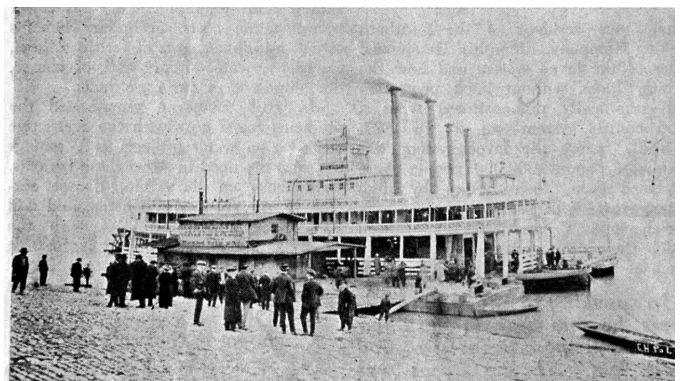
IDLEWILD in late October or November 1914. The bow of two steamers landed alongside are clearly visible in this view. The sixty-four dollar question is whether either of these two unidentified boats provided engines for the new ferryboat. It's intriguing, but doubtful.



The new ferry's arrival is reported in the January 18th Memphis Commercial Appeal. Courtesy of Ted Guillaum.



The steamer is completed except for outfitting in this view taken in late December or early January 1915. Her departure was delayed by ice, visible in the foreground. Two workmen appear on a barge or flat off her port bow, while a ladder is still propped alongside her mast.



IDLEWILD and ORGAN pose together at West Memphis Packet Company landing barge on arrival day, Sunday, January 17. Photo from The Waterways Journal. All other IDLEWILD photos on this page from editor's collection.

"The new boat was inspected by a large crowd on arrival and will be open for inspection all day today. Competent guides will be on board to show the visitors around.

"The IDLEWILD was built by James Rees and Sons Co. of Pittsburgh for the West Memphis Packet Co., and will be used as a ferryboat between Memphis and Mound City and between Memphis and Wyanoke, and also as an excursion steamer.

"The makers of the craft declare that she is the fastest river steamboat in the United States. The construction is all steel. The boat contains 21 watertight compartments in the hull. More than 300,000 rivets were used in the steel construction.

"The lower deck is of steel, covered with a two-inch coating of concrete and asphalt, and in this respect is an innovation in boatbuilding, being the first steamboat ever built with an asphalt floor.

"The length is 160 feet with a width of 36 feet and a 5 foot depth in the hold. The carrying capacity is 1,600 passengers. The motive power is supplied by 3 steel boilers, 44 inches in diameter, 24 feet long, each containing five 8-inch and two 10-inch flues. The engines are 16 inches in diameter, with 6 ½ foot stroke.

"The boat has a maple floor for dancing, 33 by 96 feet, covering the cabin floor, and specially constructed restrooms for women and children. The boat has a steam steering apparatus. The craft is built with a view to comfort and safety and is as near fireproof, stormproof, and proof against sinking as it is possible to build a steamboat.

"The IDLEWILD is owned exclusively by Memphis people, who have shown their enterprise and progressiveness in building a steamer which, when completed with furniture and fixtures installed, will represent the expenditure of more than \$85,000. It will be the finest excursion boat on western waters.

"The contract for the IDLEWILD was made in January 1914, and it required one year to build and deliver her to the owners.

"The IDLEWILD came to Memphis under command of Capt. James H. Rees, of the steamer KATE ADAMS, who is also a member of the boatbuilding firm of James Rees and Sons Co., of Pittsburgh. Howard Conner was pilot, and engineer C. F. Halstead was in charge of the engine room.

"The West Memphis Packet Company also owns the ferryboats CHARLES H. ORGAN and

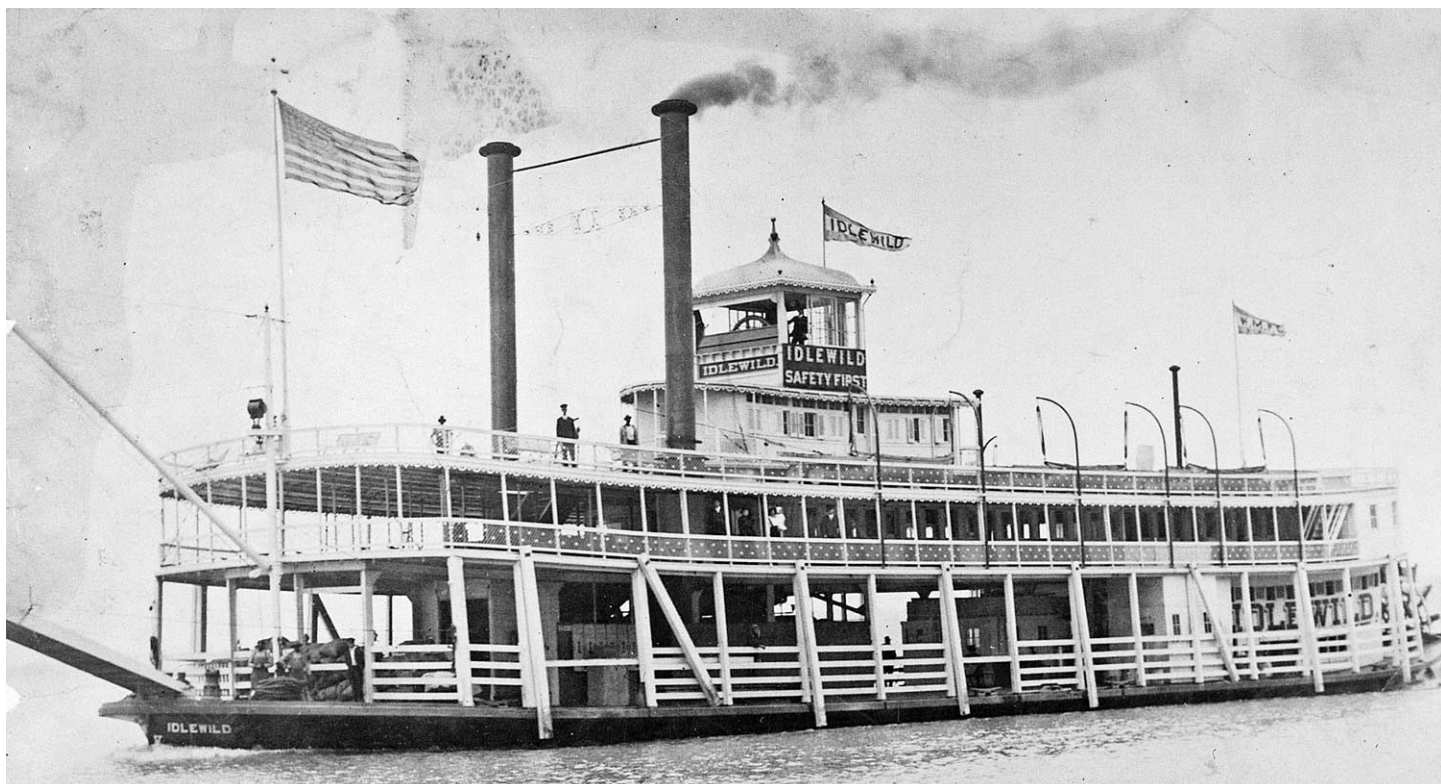
the HUSTLER, and will operate all three boats.

"The officers of the West Memphis Packet Company are Charles W. Hunter, president; Henry Hotter, vice president and secretary; John C. Wyckoff, treasurer and general manager; and William Randolph, general manager. These, with William H. Gates and John Lang, constitute the board of directors.

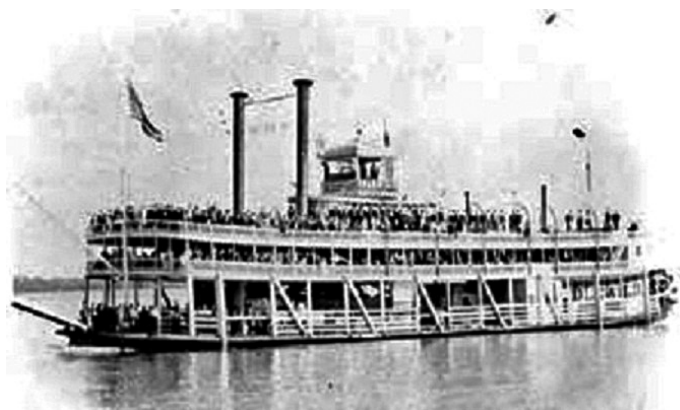
"The new boat will enter actively into service about March 15, and in the meantime she will be handsomely furnished for the excursion trade.

"The crew of the boat will be comprised of Capt. John C. Wyckoff, master; Joseph Mogwin and H. R. Fry, pilots; C. F. Halstead and James Perry, engineers; Scott Brewer, F. Irwin Sills and James F. Brannen, clerks; and Thomas Nash, carpenter."

The ferry and excursion trade at Memphis in 1915 was a very busy and competitive one. West Memphis Packet Co. brought the G. W. ROBERTSON from Paducah in early 1914 to run excursions with the CHARLES H. ORGAN until the IDLEWILD was completed. One of the first boats in regular excursion trade at Memphis was the sidewheel PATTONA, formerly the U. S. Lighthouse tender JOSEPH HENRY. Curiously, the remains of the old steamer were uncovered in March 1967 after the river bank at Mud Island caved in. Another competitor in the excursion business was the big sternwheel MAJESTIC, converted for that trade in 1915 by Capt. Peters Lee and D. Walter Wisherd. Although she would eventually tramp from New Orleans all the way to the Upper Mississippi over the next six years, Lee Line replaced her with their JOHN LEE. That boat was originally a short line packet, but was soon converted into an excursion boat and renamed PRINCESS. An article in the June 5, 1915 *Waterways Journal* reported: "The MAJESTIC, formerly the REES LEE, which was transformed from a packet to an excursion boat, is the finest thing afloat. Her entire cabin has been divested of staterooms and is one huge, grand dancing room. She now has four decks. She is one of the most beautifully electric-lighted excursion boats we ever saw. The Lee Line are to be complimented on their taste in transforming. She is getting the most of the business. The IDLEWILD, another new steel-hull excursion boat in Memphis, built by Rees of Pittsburgh, is one of the most up-to-date, built with the "safety first" idea, is steel all over



Formal portrait taken in 1915 before the retractable awning was installed. Both IDLEWILD photos from editor's collection.



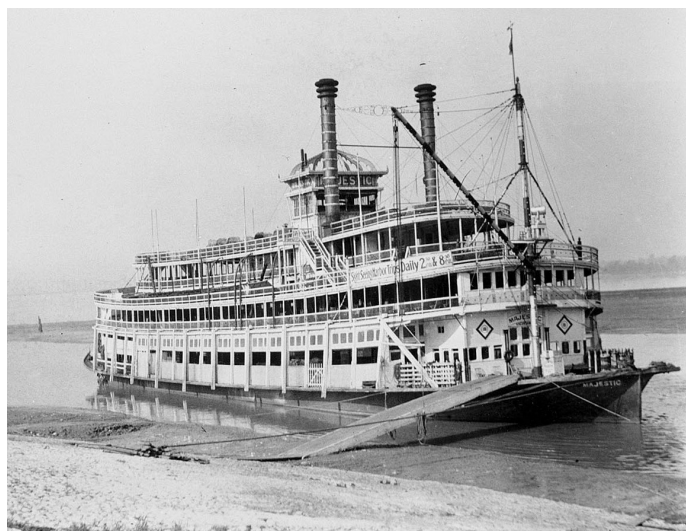
The boat was popular in the excursion trade as evidenced by this view. According to the newspaper, she could carry 1600.



One of the casualties in Memphis' Excursion War was Capt. L. E. Patton's PATTONA. Murphy Library, UW-LaCrosse



G. W. ROBERTSON began the excursion service at Memphis, but ran "slim" afternoon trips. Murphy Library photo.



Lee Line's elegant MAJESTIC, rebuilt from REES LEE, gave the IDLEWILD a run for her money. Murphy Library photo.

except her dancing floor and railing. Her lower deck is concrete. She is also well lighted with electricity. Capt. J. C. Wyckoff is her master. The IDLEWILD is doing fairly well. The G. W. ROBERTSON, which practically built the excursion business in Memphis, does a good night business, but her afternoon trips are rather slim. Capt. L. E. Patton says he will keep the PATTONA laid up until the war is over – the excursion war – but somebody will have to drop out.”

The opening of the 1915 excursion season was reported by the local paper on April 11. “With music, flowers and potted plants, the 1915 river excursion season will be opened this afternoon in a blaze of glory, providing the weather is favorable, when the steamers IDLEWILD and G. W. ROBERTSON make their opening trips of the year. Both boats will make two trips today, at 2:30 o’clock in the afternoon and 8 o’clock this evening. On each of the boats extensive arrangements have been made to see that the excursion loving public has the pleasure of indulging in the best boating that has ever been seen on the Mississippi at Memphis. The IDLEWILD was brought over from Mound City yesterday afternoon, where it has been tied up since it was brought down from Pittsburgh. Capt. J. C. Wyckoff, master, has announced that in replacing the familiar CHAS. H. ORGAN with the new boat, every effort has been made to place at the service of the excursion public the best possible equipment for their enjoyment. No games of chance will be allowed on the IDLEWILD and nothing but soft drinks will be dispensed and no beer or liquors will be permitted on board the boat.”

Over the next eight years, the IDLEWILD also operated as a ferry and day packet, carrying passengers and freight, farm produce, livestock, and making excursions between her regular ferry runs from Memphis upriver to Mound City, AR, and downstream to Wyanoke. A large retractable canvas awning to shield passengers and excursionists from the hot Memphis sun was installed on a framework at the forward end of the texas deck soon after she began service. That awning would remain on the boat until 1948.

In a photo made on the skylight roof behind the texas cabin when the IDLEWILD was brand

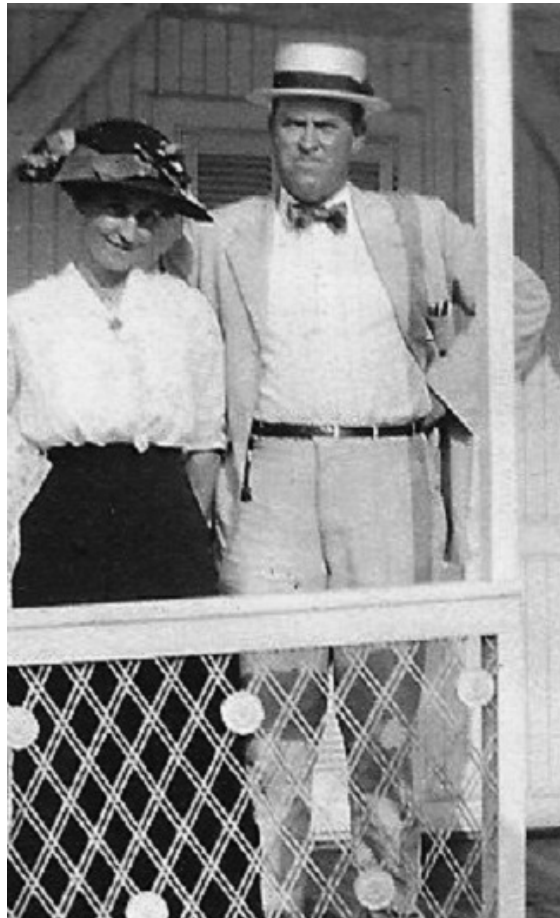
new in June 1915, Memphis insurance man Samuel Sells appears with his two nieces. Some close up details of the boat’s exterior are plainly visible in this early picture, including one of the boat’s scape pipes immediately to their left on the hurricane roof, partially obstructing the view of the port smokestack. Nearer the bow some deck chairs are visible. At this time, there was no railing on the edge of the skylight roof. It would not appear for another two or three years until after the texas cabin was lengthened.

A second photo pictures the Sells family, Sam and his wife Alice, his sister-in-law and the two nieces after they had stepped down to the hurricane roof level. Some interesting details are also noticeable in this view. In the lower left foreground is the railing around the single after stairwell leading down to the boiler deck. The skylight transoms have been opened outward on their bottom hinges, and on the starboard side of the boat, a lady passenger sits on the roof at the rear of the texas cabin. The texas roof has the same wooden jigsaw trim as that around the upper edges of her boiler deck and pilothouse. But perhaps the most interesting detail is that the door at the back of the pilothouse has not yet been installed. A small ladder leads down to the roof from the lower sill of the sliding pilothouse rear windows. That door was probably installed sometime in the next year at the same time her pilothouse breastboard was replaced with sliding windows.

In February 1916, *The Waterways Journal* reported that Capt. Wyckoff was busy getting the boat ready for the start of her second year, which he expected to be a big one. The ferryboat CHARLES H. ORGAN was doing a lot of relief work at Memphis due to high water there. Another early view taken in 1917 shows the stern of the IDLEWILD while landed above the excursion steamer DE SOTO. Her texas cabin has already been extended by this time, although the texas roof does not yet terminate at the far end of her skylight roof. She carried a Safety First sign on her pilothouse for many years, as if to underscore the fact that not only was she a strong, well-built boat, economical to run, not too large or too small, but she was also being operated in a careful, prudent manner – attributes which contributed to her survival when other fancier,



Top: IDLEWILD in ferry service at Wyanoke, AR. Note the awning has been installed. **Below:** Framework for awning has been put in place, ca. 1915-16. **Bottom:** Stern of IDLEWILD visible above excursion steamer DE SOTO in 1917. Her texas has already been extended, but her texas roof does not yet terminate at the end of the skylight roof. Top two photos from Murphy Library. Bottom photo courtesy of Keith Norrington. **Three views to the right** show the Sells family of Memphis on their Saturday excursion, June 5, 1915. Close-up details of the back side of the texas and pilothouse show clearly. Photos courtesy of David French and Maureen White.



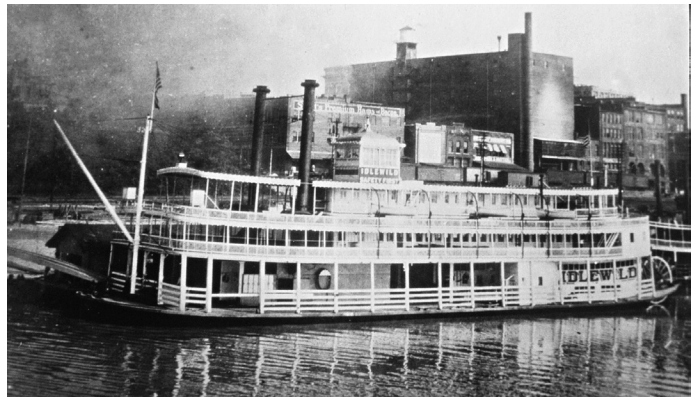
larger, and more well-known steamers disappeared from the river one-by-one.

In addition to her regular ferry runs upriver and downriver to Wyanoke and Mound City, she also made trips over to the horse racing track in Hopefield Point, AR. All day round trip fare was 75 cents, while the shorter 25-mile round trip was 50 cents. Competition in the excursion trade with Lee Line's PRINCESS was evident in a picture where the IDLEWILD's advertised 50-cent fare was undercut 15 cents by her competitor.

The enclosed boiler deck dance floor was bordered by large windows in bulkheads extending down from the skylight transoms overhead, with a fancy pressed tin ceiling extending the full length of the cabin. From all appearances, the steamer featured a 4 or 5-piece orchestra and was equipped with plenty of electric fans to keep dancers cool in this pre-Roaring Twenties era. From early on, the boat's texas roof had been extended the full length of the skylight roof, and deck outline lights were added in her Memphis years to highlight the sheer and camber of the steamer's boiler and texas decks, enhancing her visual impression at night.

Within a few years the boat's main deck bull rails had been replaced with removable sections of picket fence, and her fully-roofed texas now sported wire mesh railing and cast iron rosettes to match those on the boiler deck. In several pictures her boom has been unshipped, perhaps a glimpse of a change that had to be made in the trade for which she was originally built. With the recent completion of the new Harahan Bridge for motor and rail traffic, and with improvement in construction of all-weather roads, auto and truck transport now captured most of the boat's former business.

Beginning in the early twenties, these changes brought the end of her ferry and day packet trade around Memphis. She now began making long distance runs, her longest being the 211 miles down to Greenville. She also made regular trips all the way upriver to Higgerson Landing, MO near Hickman, with shorter runs to Ashport, TN and Marston, MO. In both 1922 and 23, she filled in for the big sidewheel packet KATE ADAMS on the 153-mile run between Memphis and Rosedale, MS.



Top: IDLEWILD after her texas roof has been carried all the way to the after end of the skylights. The Safety First signs on her pilothouse remained until the tiller lines were re-routed through the front sides of the pilothouse. **Center:** Sign on WMPCo. wharfboat advertises all-day round trip for 75¢ and 25 mile trip for 50¢. **Bottom:** Lee Line's PRINCESS on far right has undercut IDLEWILD's 25-mile round trip fare by 15¢. Top photo from editor's collection; center and bottom photos from Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisconsin - LaCrosse.



The steamer's 33 by 96-foot maple dance floor was enclosed by side bulkheads with windows and skylight transoms. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisconsin - LaCrosse



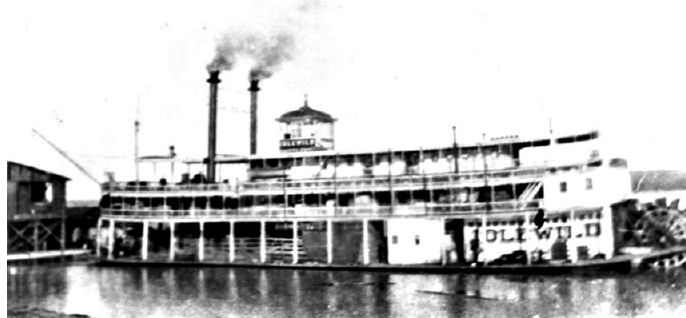
This side view clearly shows how the front end of texas cabin and skylight roof ended aft of her stack jackets. The forward stairwell from boiler deck also ended at hurricane roof level.



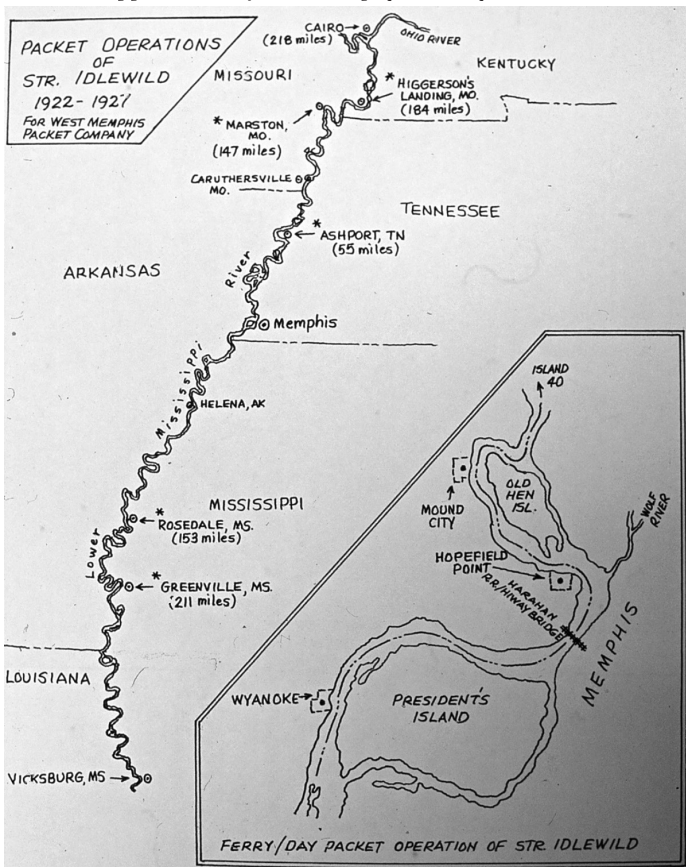
Landed below KATE ADAMS wharfboat. She filled in for the big packet in 1922-23 down to Rosedale, MS. Murphy photo.



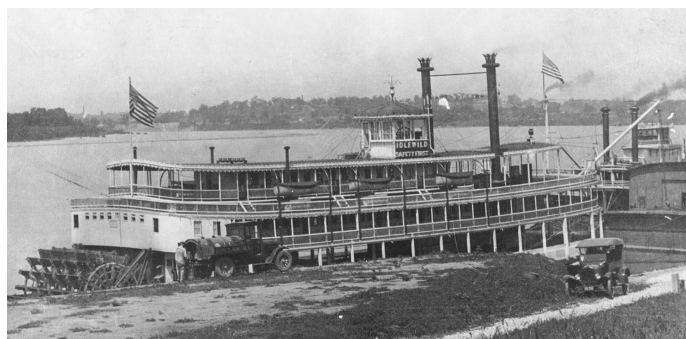
Above: IDLEWILD and PRINCESS. Notice her boom has been unshipped. Photo from Murphy Library, UW - LaCrosse



Above: IDLEWILD in her long haul packet service after 1921. Photo from Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Below: The boat at Paducah during the 1927 Flood. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisc. - La Crosse



To left: Map showing routes in ferry and day packet trade at Memphis, and the long haul freight service in following years.



At Evansville for an excursion, by the looks of things, sometime after 1918, perhaps when chartered at Cairo. Why she is landed downstream is unknown. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library.

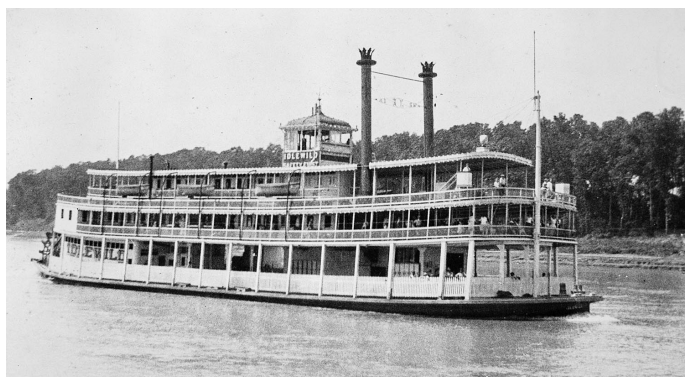
Several photos of the boat in the Memphis harbor document the activity that went on there in the mid to late twenties. One view shows the government dredge H. S. TABER with the IDLEWILD coaling up, and Lee Line's HARRY LEE lying at the company wharfboat. Another harbor view was snapped in October of 1926, with the Cincinnati Coney Island excursion boat ISLAND QUEEN, the IDLEWILD and HARRY LEE. The ISLAND QUEEN was experimenting with fall tramping trips on the lower Ohio and Mississippi after her regular Coney Island season closed on Labor Day. Nearly a decade later things came to a head when Streckfus Steamers' new PRESIDENT paced the Cincinnati boat all the way downstream to New Orleans, challenging each other at every landing, and resulting in a disastrous season for both boats. The final upshot by mutual consent was that Coney Island Co. would avoid Streckfus excursion territory, and vice versa.

On November 7, 1925 the IDLEWILD found work further upriver when she was chartered for a time to the Tri-State Ferry Co. at Cairo, IL for use as a ferryboat between Cairo and Bird's Point, MO. It is worth considering that she may have ventured on up the Ohio as far as Evansville to run excursions there as well, as the boat is pictured at the Evansville city front even prior to this time. However, her ferry service at Cairo must have been short-term and finding regular work became increasingly difficult at Memphis, for a month later *The Waterways Journal* advertised that the boat was for sale for \$50,000. The April 10, 1926 issue carried a story by publisher Donald T. Wright which said: "Ben Oppenheim, commercial agent in Memphis for the Clyde Steamship Company, will send two representatives of his company to inspect the excursion steamer IDLEWILD, advertised for sale recently. If satisfied, they will advise the purchase of the vessel to replace the sidewheel CITY OF JACKSONVILLE in the St. John's River between Jacksonville and Sanford, FL. If not sold, the IDLEWILD will shortly open the local excursion season."

Apparently there were no immediate buyers, for later that April, Capt. Wyckoff had the boat repainted in white with dark green trim for her new season. But it is quite interesting to speculate that



Above: Memphis harbor scene in mid-twenties. L to R are U.S. Engineer dredge H.S. TABER, IDLEWILD coaling up, and HARRY LEE at Lee Line wharfboat. Courtesy Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. **Below:** View in October 1926 with ISLAND QUEEN, IDLEWILD and HARRY LEE. Murphy Library photo.



IDLEWILD possibly during her charter ferry work at Cairo in late 1925. By this time, her packet days had all but ended, as evidenced by the replacement of her sturdy main deck bull rails with a fancier picket fence railing. From editor's collection.



Shown during ferry work at Cairo or carrying an excursion crowd in mid-to-late twenties. Murphy Library photo.

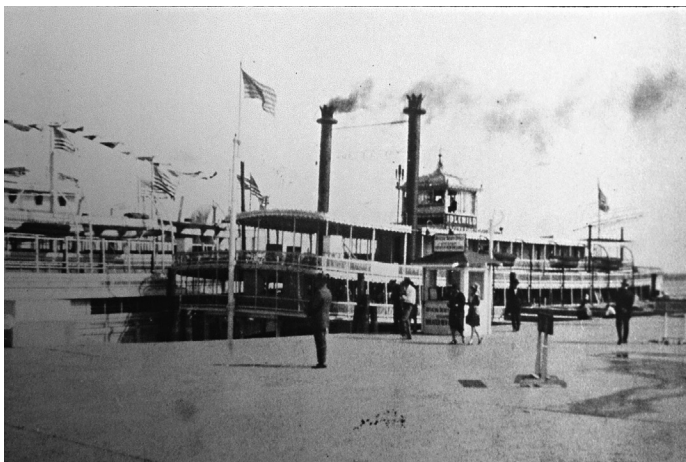
she might have ended up on the St. John's River in Florida.

Nevertheless, she hung on for nearly another year and a half, but the devastating record Flood of 1927 that spring not only destroyed cropland and homes and lives, but ravaged what little freight business remained for the IDLEWILD. Finally the inevitable reality described by C. W. Stoll caught up with her: sooner or later the reason for her existence at Memphis had become non-existent.

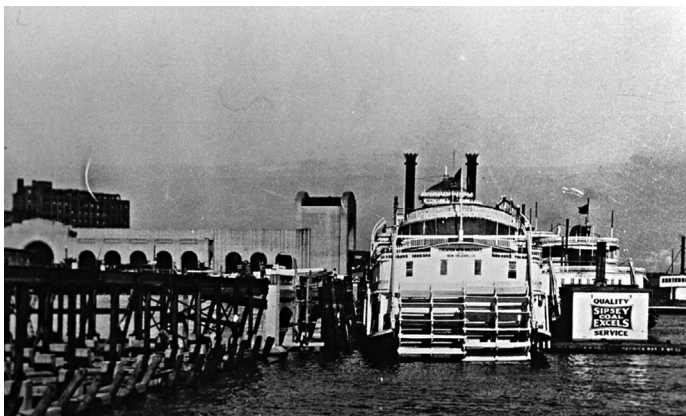
After nearly thirteen years in that city, the IDLEWILD would change home ports. She was sold in late August 1927 to Caesar Maestri of New Orleans for \$35,000, and on Sept. 17 she opened the winter excursion season at Eads Plaza, foot of Canal Street in the heart of New Orleans. But her ownership by Maestri lasted all of three months, for she was sold again in November to the Greater New Orleans Amusement Co. for \$50,000. Eight months prior to acquiring the IDLEWILD, the Greater New Orleans Amusement Co. had also purchased the former packet VIRGINIA, and they rebuilt her at Paducah and renamed her GREATER NEW ORLEANS. Her landing was right above the Streckfus Steamer CAPITOL near the foot of Canal Street. It may be that the IDLEWILD had just filled in for the bigger boat until she was ready for excursion service.

At any rate, competing against Streckfus's larger and more elegant excursion steamer CAPITOL was no match for the IDLEWILD, and her stay at the Crescent City ended five short months later. As it turned out, that was a stroke of good luck. For by 1930, Streckfus had acquired the GREATER NEW ORLEANS, quickly removed her from service and dismantled her to regain an exclusive hold on the excursion market for the CAPITOL. Had the IDLEWILD remained in the Crescent City longer, perhaps she too would have been bought out by Streckfus and laid up permanently or worse. Fortunately, she escaped the fate which befell the GREATER NEW ORLEANS.

That stroke of luck took place in February 1928, when the IDLEWILD was sold to her fourth owner, the New St. Louis and Calhoun Packet Corp. of Hardin, IL, for \$20,000. That small freight packet



IDLEWILD landed at Eads Plaza, foot of Canal Street in New Orleans with stern of the Streckfus excursion steamer CAPITOL showing on left. Her boom has once again been unshipped as the stage was maneuvered from the wharf level. All three photos courtesy of Capt. Clarke Hawley.



Greater New Orleans Amusement Co.'s GREATER NEW ORLEANS, formerly VIRGINIA, landed above the CAPITOL. Caesar Maestri sold the IDLEWILD three months after acquiring her to this company, who dared to challenge Streckfus Steamers. IDLEWILD lasted but two more months, the GREATER NEW ORLEANS three years. Not until Wilbur Dow's New Orleans Steamboat Co. in 1975 would any excursion boat offer a cruising alternative.



IDLEWILD landed inboard of the CAPITOL. The plucky but plain little steamer was no match for her elegant competitor.

line already operated the BELLE OF CALHOUN between Hardin on the Illinois River and St. Louis, hauling baskets and barrels of apples from the orchards in Calhoun County, a narrow peninsula-like strip of land between the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, downriver to St. Louis for further shipment. Calhoun County had no railroads within its borders, and very few improved roadways, so nearly all freight had to be shipped out by boat.

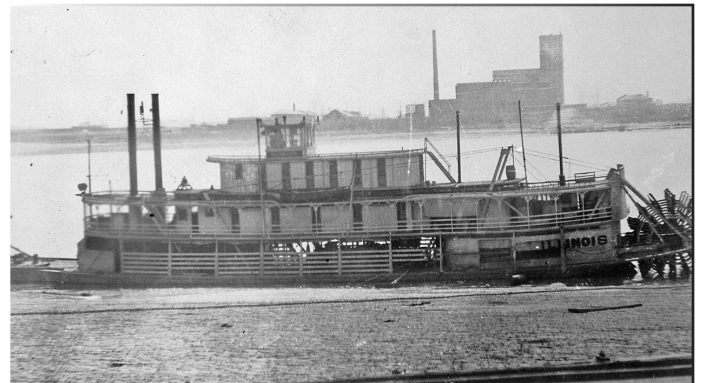
The company had also acquired the sternwheel ILLINOIS around 1925 after her somewhat illicit career with the Illinois State Fish Commission as a floating house of ill repute, and her new owners ran her both as a packet and towboat on the Illinois and Mississippi. A third steamer owned by the packet company to assist in the trade was the small sternwheeler HOMER C. WRIGHT. However, the WRIGHT sank at St. Louis in August 1927, and they were in need of another boat to take up the slack. As fate would have it, the IDLEWILD was soon advertised for sale in New Orleans at the beginning of 1928.

So in early March, Capt. James M. Phillips arrived in New Orleans to take the boat to St. Louis. She underwent major renovations at the levee upon her arrival north. By late spring, the IDLEWILD was rapidly nearing the end of reconstruction to fit her for work on the Upper Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois Rivers. Structural supports were added to the boiler and texas decks and the bulkheads of her cabin which had enclosed the dance floor were removed. Her roof bell, which had been positioned at the forward end of the boiler deck at Memphis, was moved up to the roof. With the packet company's two other vessels already serving the St. Louis area, the company proposed to operate their new steamer out of Kansas City on the Missouri River for excursions and for contract towing. The boat's new owners were Henry C. Meyer, John Meyer, Alvina Blumberg, and Capt. Jim Phillips. She would run under their management for the next twenty years.

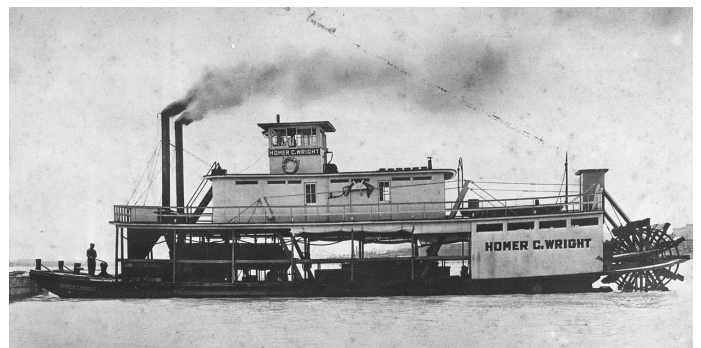
In May 1928, Capt. Phillips took the boat to Kansas City, where she arrived in early June and was placed under the command of Capt. Harry Rogers. She ran excursions out of Kansas City that summer and tramped to Jefferson City, MO in early September. Near the end of the month she returned



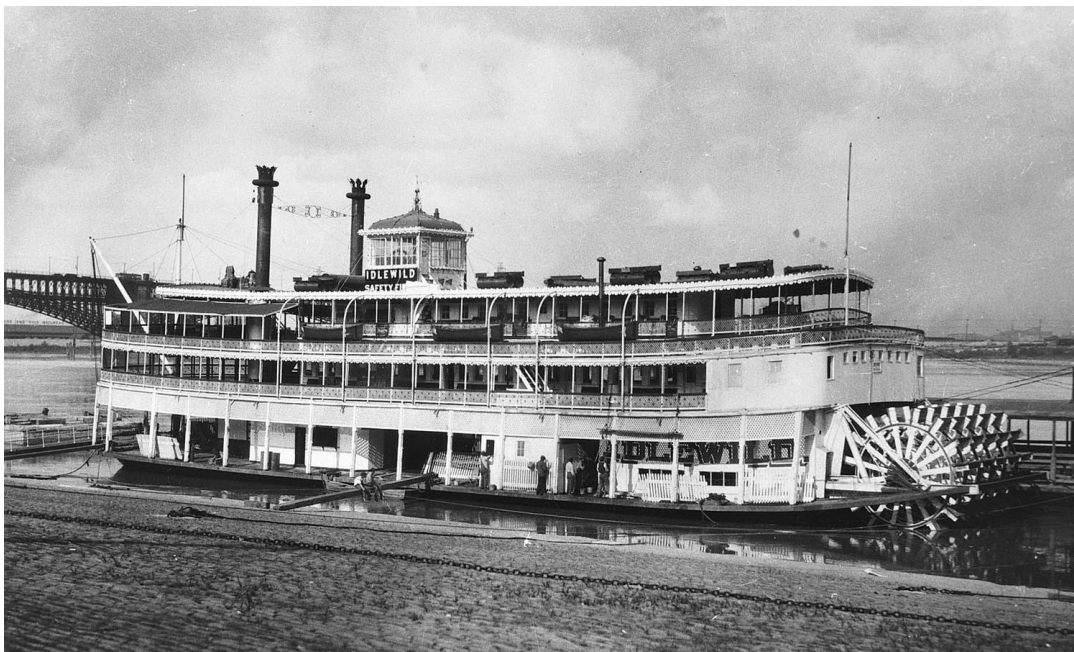
St. Louis levee with BELLE OF CALHOUN landed below Eads Bridge. She was the main packet for New St. Louis and Calhoun Packet Corp. which engaged in the apple hauling trade out of Calhoun County on the Illinois River around Hardin. Landed below the BELLE is St. Louis & Tennessee River Packet Co.'s ALABAMA. From editor's collection.



Packet ILLINOIS of the New St. Louis & Calhoun Packet Corp. Originally named REINDEER when built at Dubuque for Dubuque-Clinton trade. Rebuilt in 1901 for Illinois State Fish Commission, and operated a checkered career for state politicians and their female friends. Sold to NSL&CPCorp in 1925 as packet and towboat. Burned under suspicious circumstances in Sept. 1930. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library



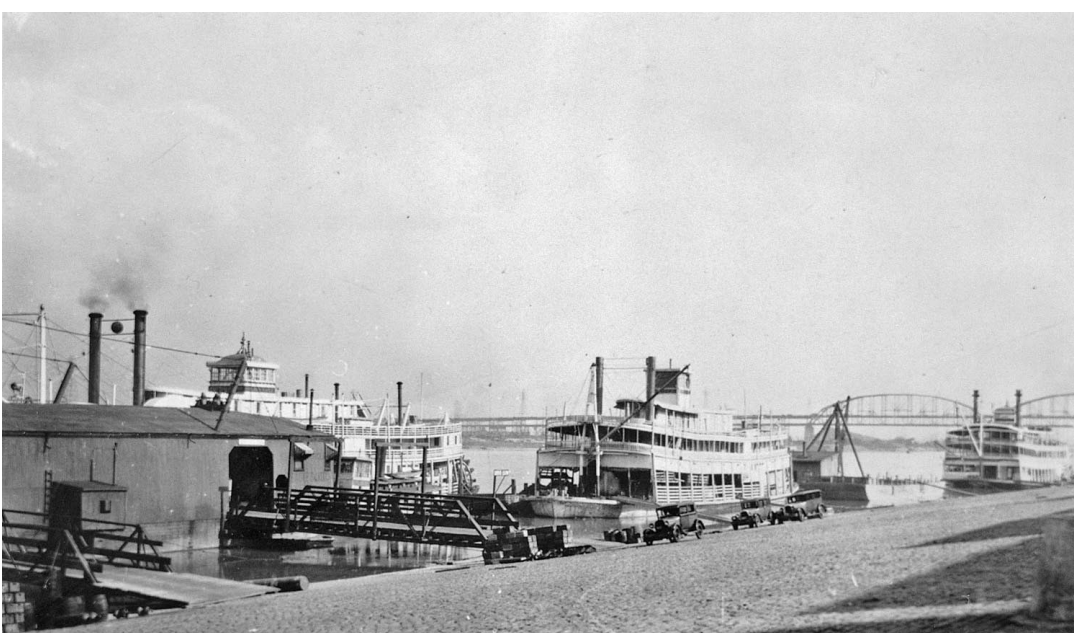
Towboat HOMER C. WRIGHT of New St. Louis & Calhoun Packet. Sank in summer 1927, shortly before IDLEWILD was purchased. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library, UW-LaCrosse



Top: IDLEWILD shortly after her arrival at St. Louis from New Orleans in early spring 1928. The white sternwheel was a carryover from her brief excursion days in New Orleans, and lasted till the early 30s. She carries no calliope on her roof at this time, and the lifeboats are still at hurricane roof level along with her scape pipes. Her roof is cluttered with the old style tank type life floats. Her roof bell has been relocated to the forward end of the roof from its original place on the hurricane roof.



Middle: Another view taken at the same time as the one above. Bulkheads with windows still enclose her dance floor on boiler deck. The forward end of skylight roof terminates slightly ahead of the stack casings. In another major rebuild three years later, the skylight roof would be extended as far forward as the stairwell leading up from the boiler deck. It originally ended at hurricane roof level, and additional stairs were added and new hand railings spliced into the old ones.



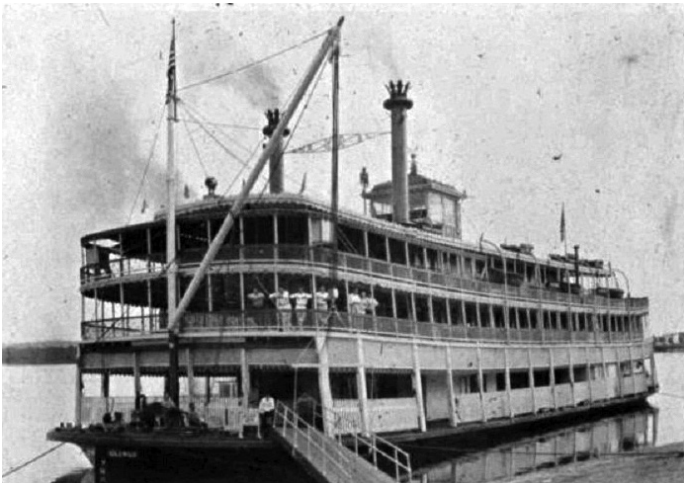
Bottom: St. Louis levee in the late twenties. Pictured L to R are GOLDEN EAGLE of Eagle Packet Co., originally the 1904 Howard-built cotton packet WM. GARIG; PIASA, also of Eagle Packet Co., built 1899 as MARY S. BLEES and renamed in 1917 when sold to Capt. Leyhe; and the new kid on the block, New St. Louis & Calhoun Packet Corp.'s IDLEWILD. With her main deck guard rails removed, the boat has probably just unloaded a freight of Calhoun Co. apples. Photos from editor's collection.



One of Dick Lemen's photos of IDLEWILD in winter layup at Alton Slough. This was her winter home during all her years for the New St. Louis and Calhoun Packet Corp. Photo from Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.



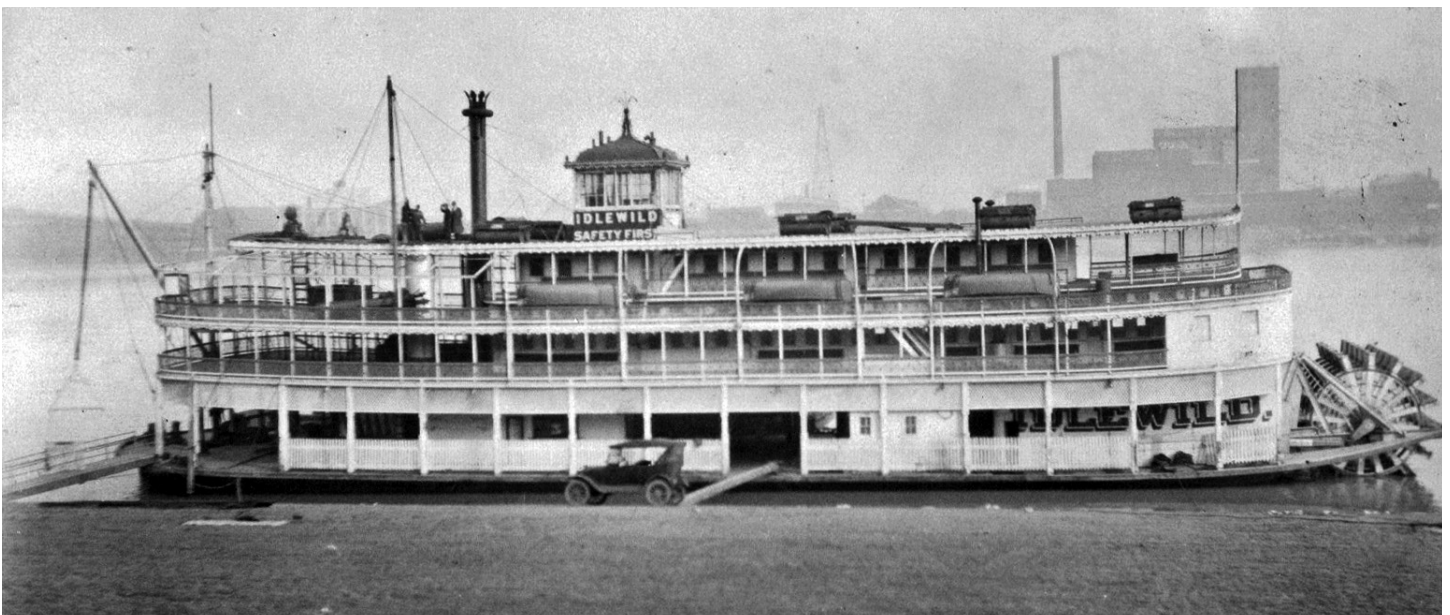
Rare photo of the boat taken during her World War II service for the government showing the tow knees that were riveted to her bow. They had also been fitted earlier when she towed on the Missouri in the late twenties. Murphy Library photo.



IDLEWILD at Peoria, IL during her early years on the Illinois River. She is pictured here on a savings and loan charter, probably in 1930. Photo courtesy of Keith Norrington.



Another dramatic photo of the boat at St. Louis with her tow of construction equipment for building Lock and Dam 22 at Saverton, MO in February 1934. Murphy Library photo.



IDLEWILD in spring 1931 undergoing major renovations for passenger service at Louisville's Rose Island. Her port smokestack is about to be raised in this view. Her original boiler deck cabin bulkheads around the dance floor were removed, skylight and texas deck steel supports were added, lifeboats moved to texas deck level and her scape pipes were removed. Murphy Library photo.

to St. Louis following a good inaugural season on the Missouri River, and landed back at the St. Louis levee below the GOLDEN EAGLE and PIASA. After making some excursions downriver at Memphis, she returned in late November to Alton Slough, where she would spend each winter lay-up for the next two decades. St. Louis photographer Dick Lemen captured the IDLEWILD in several photos at Alton Slough, bedded down for the winter. In her subsequent years on the Missouri River, Capt. Harvey Coomer served as the boat's Master, while his brother Joe was Mate. Twenty years later, Joe would return to the boat again as Mate when she ran as the AVALON.

Capt. Jim Phillips was master on the BELLE OF CALHOUN, and with the larger IDLEWILD now a part of the packet fleet, the company sold the ILLINOIS outright to him and his brother John in 1929. The BELLE OF CALHOUN, meanwhile, which had sunk once before, repeated that misfortune in October of that same year. She was raised and repaired however, but lasted only another season. During her winter layup a year later, she burned and was a total loss. As if to add insult to injury, the Phillips' brothers also lost their towboat ILLINOIS in a midstream fire at Alton in September 1930, under what some say were suspicious circumstances. Within three years, the IDLEWILD was the sole remaining steamboat of the New St. Louis and Calhoun Packet Corp.

In spring 1931, Capt. Phillips became her new master, and supervised additional renovations to the boat. One photo shows a new port smokestack about to be raised, most likely fabricated by the famed Nooter Corporation of that city. Thirty-seven years later, this same company would manufacture the three new Western Rivers style boilers that presently power the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE. It's not unlikely that the person in that photo standing on the roof supervising the job is Capt. Phillips himself.

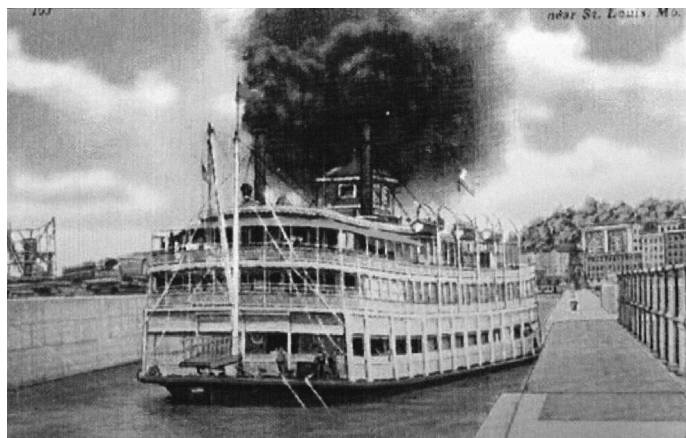
Between the boat's apple runs on the Illinois River and when she was not tramping on the Missouri River out of Kansas City, she also traveled above Hardin to Beardstown, Havana and Peoria. Sometime in her first years on the Illinois River she was pictured at Peoria, possibly on a charter for

the Security Savings and Loan Association's 50th anniversary in the fall of 1930.

To operate the steamer as a towboat when she had snagged some towing contracts on the Missouri, she needed to be fitted with tow knees, similar to those she carried in World War II. A rare view of the boat at the St. Louis levee shows this alteration to her bow made for her government towing work during the War. However, those tow knees had undoubtedly been fitted earlier in her career as well. At the start of her 1929 season, she pushed contractor's equipment up the Missouri, and in mid-March she was towing barges for Kansas City Bridge to Dover, MO, under the command of Capt. William Mills. In February 1934, the steamer was towing again. This time she headed to Saverton on the Upper Mississippi, where she delivered a fleet of dredging equipment for use in the construction of Lock and Dam 22, but not before she got stopped by ice down at Louisiana, MO.

In subsequent years, she continued her regular apple-hauling trips north of St. Louis on the Illinois River from Hardin, locking through the newly completed Alton Lock around 1935 as pictured on a popular post card view. An aerial view at Alton also shows the steamer with the recently completed Lock and Dam in the distance, and the new Clark Bridge immediately downstream. That span had just been completed within months of the IDLEWILD's arrival at St. Louis in the spring of 1928.

It is certainly probable that it was during her early years in St. Louis when the IDLEWILD acquired an authentic Nichol steam calliope, for in



Post card showing IDLEWILD locking through newly completed Lock 26 at Alton around 1935. Editor's collection.

1931 she was chartered by Louisville's Rose Island Co. for the summer excursion season to replace the steamer AMERICA, which had been lost by fire. Homer Denney, long-time Cincinnati calliapist and tuner for the Thomas J. Nichol Company, recalled that the instrument on the IDLEWILD was the second-last one manufactured by Nichol in the Queen City, which would place its date of manufacture around 1930.

With the IDLEWILD chartered at Louisville for the summer of 1931, she ventured up the Ohio to the Falls City, the first time she had been there since her delivery trip in 1915. This would become territory very familiar to the boat over the next decade, and during her service on the Ohio, she had opportunity to make excursions at other cities, including ones at Madison, IN. At Madison, local photographer Alene Stottlebower snapped a big excursion crowd on the boat as the steamy music from her new Nichol calliophe echoed from the Kentucky hills at Dark Hollow across the river.

In the 1932 and 33 excursion seasons, the boat returned to the Missouri River at Kansas City again, where she tramped to St. Charles, Washington, Hermann, Jefferson City, and all the way upriver to St. Joseph. The famed Eddie Johnson Orchestra played for three years on the boat, while her crew consisted of Capt. Phillips and Capt. Selby Crader, Missouri River pilot Greeley Heckmann, and engineers Alvah Smith and Carl Crader. But her charter work at Louisville served to offer a future glimpse of the boat's eventual home decades later.

As the 1934 season began, the IDLEWILD once again operated on the Ohio as Louisville's excursion boat from April through September, her regular summer trade through 1940. In addition to ferrying visitors to Rose Island upriver from Louisville until the 1937 Flood closed the park for good, she also carried passengers between the city front and Fontaine Ferry Park below town, at the end of Market Street on Louisville's West End, just downstream from the site of the present-day Sherman Minton Bridge. Her pilot that year was Capt. Roy McBride, Joe Coomer was her Mate, and Alva Day was Chief. Her crew consisted of a master, mate, pilot, three deckhands, three watchmen, a chief engineer, striker, fireman, purser,



IDLEWILD at her Alton, IL landing some time after Lock & Dam 26 was completed in mid-30s. The new Clark Highway Bridge in distance opened months before IDLEWILD arrived at St. Louis. Both photos this page courtesy Murphy Library.



IDLEWILD at her usual NSL&CP Corp. landing above the St. Louis Municipal (Free) Bridge, ca. 1930-31. In background is sidewheel harbor boat CITY OF ST. LOUIS, originally ERASTUS WELLS. Streckfus' new flagship PRESIDENT would be built just below her in 1933-34.

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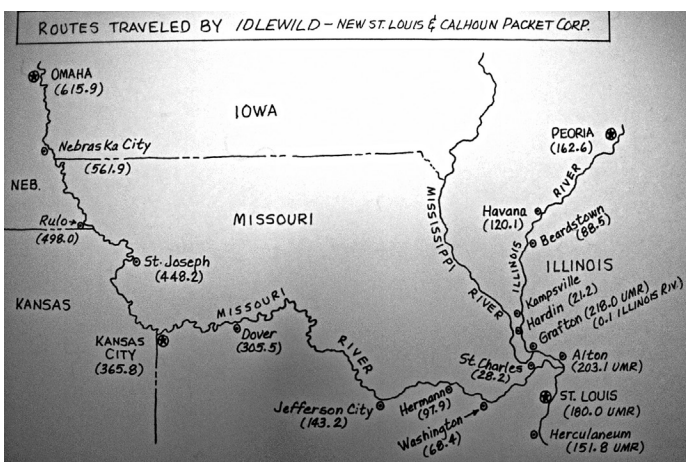
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YET INVENTED for Circuses, Shows, Excursion Steamers, Floating Theatres, Specialties of all kinds. We have sold them to advertise even Soap and Extracts. THOS. J. NICHOL & CO., S. E. Cor. Pearl and Ludlow Sts., Cincinnati, O.

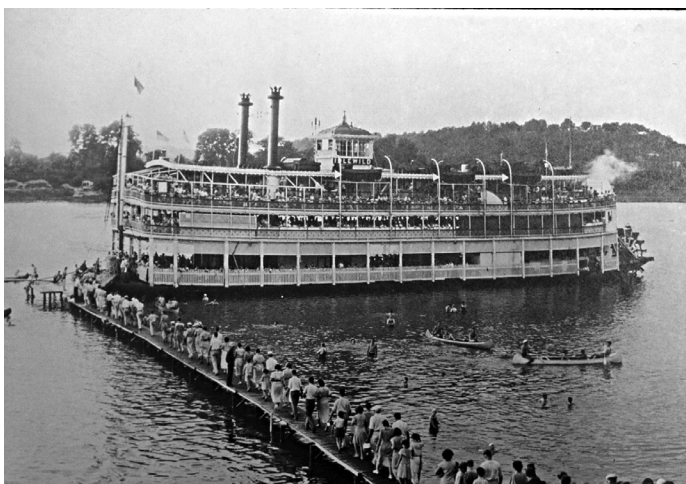
Ad for Thos. J. Nichol & Co. calliophe builder. The instrument on the IDLEWILD was most likely the second last one built by the firm at Cincinnati before they moved to Grand Rapids, MI. In a 1906 company ad, a 32-note model (same as the one on IDLEWILD) sold for \$550. Nichol also manufactured twenty and twenty-four note models. The 32-note was the most common on excursion and showboats. From editor's collection.



Perhaps one of the most well known and best composed photographs of the boat on the Ohio River is this 1931 view by Madison's Alene Stottlebower. She is landed there for an excursion during her first season on the Ohio as Louisville's ferry boat to Rose Island Amusement Park above town and Fontaine Ferry Park below town. Capt. Doc Hawley suggests that this is the same location as the cover photo of the June REFLECTOR showing the SUNSHINE. From editor's collection.



Map depicting routes regularly traveled by the IDLEWILD on Missouri and Illinois Rivers 1928-1947 for New St. Louis & Calhoun Packet Corp. She did not get above St. Joseph on the Missouri, but did reach Omaha as the AVALON.



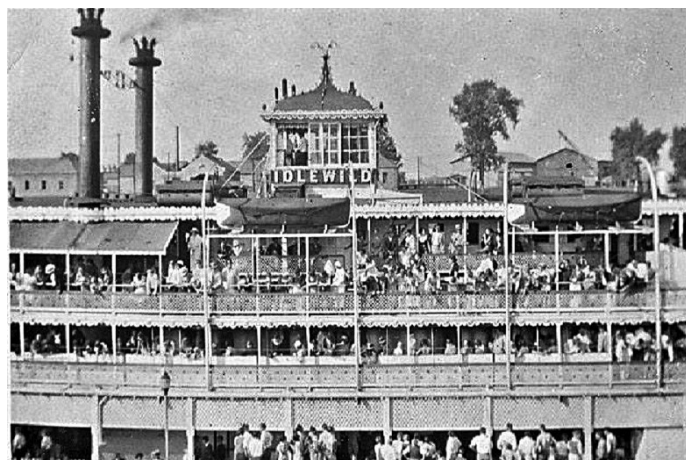
Boarding passengers at Fontaine Ferry on June 8, 1934 during low water. The boat is landed downstream here. Steam at stern is from the boat's steam steering gear. Editor's collection.

and three concessionaires. By the mid-thirties, crowds of picnickers, swimmers, skaters, dancers, and amusement park aficionados rode each summer.

When her summer season at Louisville was over, she also ran excursions on the Illinois River at Hardin, Kampsville, and Beardstown. In 1937, Henry Meyer purchased the steel stage formerly used on Coney Island Co.'s ISLAND MAID to replace the IDLEWILD's old wooden one. It served the boat to the end of her AVALON years.



IDLEWILD entering Louisville-Portland Canal en route to Fontaine Ferry at end of Market St. Murphy Library photo.



Good close-up view amidships. Courtesy of Keith Norrington.



At Louisville. She was a tolerably fast boat, but not quite as fast as a nearby sign would suggest! From editor's collection..

Not only did the steamer pay visits to Ohio River towns at Louisville, Madison and Evansville, but the photo below shows her just downstream from the Central Bridge at Cincinnati landed alongside the car ferry HENRY WATTERSON and just above Greene Line's KIWANIS in either August or September of 1935. The IDLEWILD and KIWANIS had run together in the same ferry trade at Cairo ten years earlier. Wharfage fees of 50 cents collected from the IDLEWILD at Sycamore Street in Cincinnati on August 22 and September 17, 1935 are recorded in the wharf register, along with



IDLEWILD at Cincinnati with HENRY WATTERSON and KIWANIS, 1935. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.

278		
Sycamore St Wharf		
1935		
	Crut Carried Ford	613 49
Aug 31	Wages	105 00
Aug 11	Stn Washington	10 00
" 22	Stn Idlewild	50 00
		718 49
Aug 31	Balance Due Greene Line Stn	703 49
Sept 28	Wages	84 00
Sept 13	Steamer Washington	50 00
		787 49
Sept 28	Balance Due Greene Line Stn	732 49
Oct 26	Wages	84 00
Sept 17	Stn Idlewild	50 00
		866 49
Oct 26	Balance Due Greene Line Stn	861 49
Nov 30	Wages	105 00
		966 49
Mar 30	Balance Due Greene Line Stn	966 49
Dec 28	Wages	84 00
Dec 28	Check to E.H. Bennett	1050 00
		1050 49
1935		
Jan 25	Wages	84 00
" 25	Tabor	51 45
Feb 29	Wages	105 00
" 29	Tabor	191 20
" 29	Sundry Expense	413 6
Mar 7	Wages	14 00
" 7	Tabor	49 90
July 20	Check to E.H. Bennett	536 00
		521 41

Sycamore Street Wharf register courtesy of Mickey Frye.

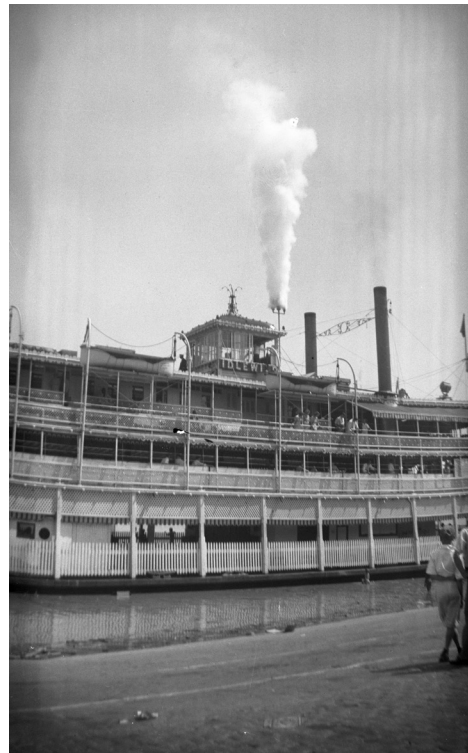
those of Streckfus Steamers' WASHINGTON on September 13. Also of note on that register were payments to Elmer H. Bennett, Greene Line Steamers paymaster and father of S&D's Virginia Bennett. Virginia would also serve with Greene Line as their paymaster after her father's passing.

During eight summer seasons, the IDLEWILD became a riverfront fixture at Louisville. A series of photos from Capt. C. W. Stoll document her popularity there, as shown below and on the next two pages.

A Peek at C. W. Stoll's Photo Album



The steamboat at her familiar landing, foot of Fourth Street. She would return to this location as her permanent home twenty-five years later.



In this photo, C.W. catches the boat blowing her whistle 15 minutes before departure. All of the photos from C. W.'s collection shown here were made available to the REFLECTOR through the generosity of Keith Norrington. The eight original B&W negatives supplied to your editor were hand processed specially by Jim Shaffer in Dubuque.



A lazy summer afternoon provides opportunity for a young passenger to relax in a cushioned settee on the main deck by the foot of the forward stairs.



With coal smoke pouring from her stacks, the IDLEWILD passes the Louisville Lifesaving Station before making her landing at the city front.



These passengers on the forward end of the hurricane roof watch intently as the boat enters Lock 41 (the future McAlpine Lock) prior to being raised to the upper pool, on what was probably the IDLEWILD's return from a trip to Fontaine Ferry on Louisville's West End.



In this rather interesting shot, the calliope player is firing up the steam pianna prior to departure. Seasoned eyes might suspect that, based on the performer's stance at the keyboard, the performer is none other than C. W. Stoll himself. The calliope keyboard faced forward on the IDLEWILD, while it faced aft on the AVALON. Although there is the possibility for some speculation about the identity of the person in the picture above, there is no question about who the dapper, young steersman is in the photo to the right.





This view of the front of the pilothouse shows the water tank on the roof with an old-fashioned tank type life float to the left. The pilothouse lights on the dome and on the Christmas tree display atop the dome clearly show in this view.



Standing on the roof behind the pilothouse are Capt. Jim Phillips, the IDLEWILD's Master on far left, and most likely her mate (who may have been Joe Coomer), her purser and local agent at Louisville, Frank Buening, and her pilot.

In the spring and summer of 1941, the boat was back tramping on the Missouri River from Kansas City, and by the close of her excursion season in August, Henry Meyer announced that the summer's business was the largest the boat had ever had there,

with more than 150 organizations chartering trips. But a major change soon loomed on the horizon, for on December 8th the United States entered World War II, and river excursions took a back seat for a nation preoccupied with other life-and-death matters. Fuel became a precious commodity. Streckfus Steamers withdrew the PRESIDENT from her tramping operations, and the ADMIRAL sat out the 1945 season, but the two big boats, along with Cincinnati's ISLAND QUEEN, were still able to provide some excursion service during the War years despite shortages of fuel and licensed personnel.

Meanwhile at St. Louis, the IDLEWILD had been drafted into government service, and continued to operate throughout those years. In one telling photograph, she is landed below Eagle Packet Co.'s GOLDEN EAGLE during that tourist boat's two-year layup when she was unable to secure replacement boilers because of the high demand for material during the War. Supplies of steel and other necessary materials were given to military vessels which had a higher priority. Early in 1942 after the U.S. first entered the war, German U-boats began sinking American tankers off the Atlantic coast, and the government quickly drafted all available vessels to assist in transporting oil for the war effort. In that year, tow knees were once again riveted to the IDLEWILD's bluff, rounded bow, allowing her to face up to the oil tows she began delivering to Nashville on the Cumberland River. While the boat was chartered to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers she also towed oil on the Mississippi as far south as Baton Rouge.

As the need for relaxation and entertainment became apparent in those war years, especially for the men and women in the armed forces, the IDLEWILD did double duty as an excursion boat as well, often providing evening shows and dancing. She entertained servicemen as a floating USO nightclub for those stationed at military bases along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers during these years. Several night views show her lighted from bow to stern, crowned by the spray of bulbs atop the pilothouse "Christmas tree." Those images convey a nostalgic, romantic atmosphere with music and dancing aboard the steamer, a big morale booster in those war-weary times.



The War Years. Above, St. Louis levee with IDLEWILD, laid up GOLDEN EAGLE, and WENONAH with GOLDENROD showboat. Below: The government drafted IDLEWILD to tow oil barges during the War. Photos courtesy of Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisconsin - LaCrosse.



Towboat turned floating USO Showboat. IDLEWILD also entertained servicemen and women, as shown here. Photo above from Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.



Above: Soldiers about to board IDLEWILD for USO show. Below: The steamer on Mound City, IL Marine Ways for her 1943 USCG inspection. Both photos courtesy Keith Norrington



The boat's wide and varied service as a packet, ferryboat, towboat, excursion boat and floating USO show, traveling thousands of miles on the inland rivers, finally took their toll when she had to receive a new paddlewheel shaft from Frisbie Engine and Machine Co. of Cincinnati in January 1945. Nearly 30 years later, Frisbie would build three old-timey steam calliopes, one of which was placed on the new steamer NATCHEZ in New Orleans.

In May of 1945, the steamer was making one of her regular trips between Alton and St. Louis and was above Dam 26, when a strong wind caught her and pinned her against the gates on the upper side of the dam. All efforts to free her failed until Federal Barge Line's towboat TOM SAWYER pulled her off and towed her back to her landing at Alton.



Above: IDLEWILD trapped against Dam 26 at Alton, IL in May 1945. **Below:** FBL towboat TOM SAWYER tows steamer back to her landing at Alton after freeing her from roller gates on dam. Bob Graul photos courtesy of Tim Graul.



After the War, the IDLEWILD returned to her full time excursion trade, and in the summer of 1945 she was back at Louisville. That fall, *The Waterways Journal* reported that she arrived at Paducah to be outfitted for burning oil after 30 years as a coal burner. However the conversion was not made at that time, probably because of the large expense involved. Early in February 1946, the steamer was still towing oil barges between St. Louis and Baton Rouge. However, one month later marked the end of her towing duty, for in March the New St. Louis and Calhoun Packet Corp. made application to the Interstate Commerce Commission to extend her excursion trade route to include the upper Ohio between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh.

As that 1946 excursion season began, the boat returned to the Ohio and Cumberland Rivers. On Saturday, June 22, the "Grand Ole Opry" radio program was transmitted live from her decks at Nashville. That weekend the Opry hosted scores of newspaper and magazine writers from all over the United States on a promotional tour, highlighted by the Saturday evening cruise on the IDLEWILD. The regular Grand Ole Opry radio program over station WSM was beamed by shortwave from the

Form B.W.C. 5
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INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, a Corporation, on the 1st day of March, 1946, filed with the Interstate Commerce Commission, Bureau of Water carriers, an application for Revised Certificate to cover change of operations as a Common Carrier in the transportation of passengers in interstate or foreign commerce; that the operation set forth in such application is to be over the route or routes described as follows:

Irregular routes on Ohio River from Pittsburgh, Pa., to Cincinnati, Ohio.

This notice is served on all known water-line competitors in the same trade route or routes as follows:

Name	Address
Coney Island, Inc.,	Cincinnati, Ohio
Eagle Packet Co.,	St. Louis, Mo.
Greene Line Steamers, Inc.,	Cincinnati, Ohio
Streckfus Steamers, Inc.,	St. Louis, Mo.

NEW ST. LOUIS AND CALHOUN PACKET CORPORATION
(Name of Applicant)

Hardin, Illinois.
(Address)

Copies of answers and protests concerning such application should be filed with the Interstate Commerce Commission, and served upon all parties named above, and on the applicant, in accordance with the rules of procedure prescribed by the Interstate Commerce Commission relating to such proceedings.

ICC petition to extend excursion routes. Editor's collection.



IDLEWILD at Nashville prior to departure on Grand Ole Opry radio program broadcast from on board. Photo courtesy of Brenda Colladay, Grand Ole Opry Archives.

boat to a receiver on shore where it was relayed to WSM for broadcast live on more than 130 NBC radio stations across the country. Performing on the boat's dance floor stage were regulars Minnie Pearl and Red Foley. The half hour portion of the program sponsored by Prince Albert Tobacco lasted



Magazine and newspaper editors and writers, along with other invited guests fill dance floor for the night performance of Grand Ole Opry. The audience was entertained by regulars Minnie Pearl, Red Foley, and Pee Wee King, along with the Oak Ridge Quartet (fore-runner of the Oak Ridge Boys). Comedy was provided by the Duke of Paducah. This view looking forward shows the original pressed tin ceiling. Courtesy of Brenda Colladay, Grand Old Opry Archives.



Passengers disembarking after Grand Ole Opry radio broadcast and show. Photo courtesy of Brenda Colladay, Grand Ole Opry Archives.

from 9:30 to 10:00 p.m. Other performers included Pee Wee King and the Oak Ridge Quartet. Comedy was provided by the Duke of Paducah. In addition to the Opry program, radio listeners also heard sounds of the IDLEWILD's sternwheel, roof bell, and calliope. A photo taken that night gives a rare

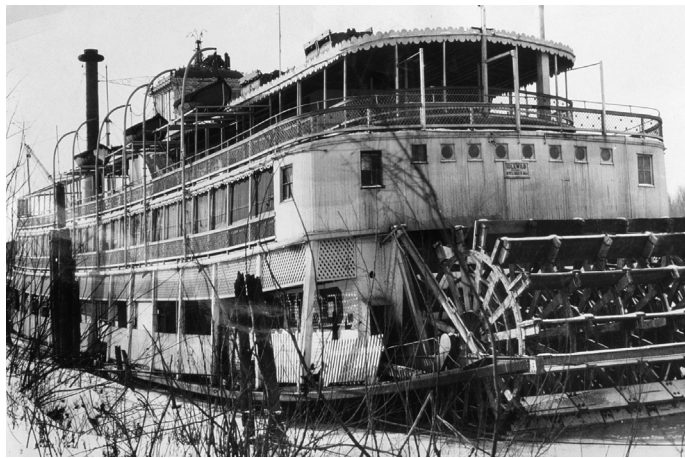
photographic glimpse of her dance floor deck with its pressed tin ceiling extending down over the curved cove molding and panels which covered her old skylights and transom windows. Passengers disembarked shortly before midnight, and the next day the *Nashville Banner* reported that the crowd on board was "the largest group of magazine and newspaper syndicate writers and editors ever attracted to this city for a single event." Sadly, there are no existing audio recordings of that Grand Ole Opry broadcast in the Opry's archives. After her Cumberland River excursions, the boat headed up the Ohio. In late August, the IDLEWILD visited Pittsburgh for the first time since she had been built there, and offered that city's first river excursions since the start of the War.

With the end of the 1946 season, Capt. Jim Phillips was about to bring his long river career to a close, and the IDLEWILD changed hands once again. An article in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* said, "With her iron hull, the huge steam-driven sternwheeler should last forever. 'One thing I know,' says Capt. Phillips, 'she'll outlast me.'"

In April 1947, J. Herod Gorsage, a union organizer in Peoria, IL, became the IDLEWILD's fifth owner for the sum of \$40,000. He announced her new excursion season would begin on May 26, with Capt. Ben Winters, formerly with Diamond Jo Line and with Streckfus Steamers, as master; and Capt. Harry Woodruff as pilot. Gorsage's alleged connections with mob bosses from the Chicago and St. Louis areas, meeting conveniently halfway in Peoria, cast a shadow on the boat's reputation on the Illinois River. But it was true that those passengers who sought drink and slot machine gambling could find what they wanted aboard the boat.

However, as the IDLEWILD tramped the Upper Mississippi in late summer and early fall, the revival of steamboat excursions was met by enthusiastic crowds. For most of the towns on the steamer's regular Illinois River schedule and her Upper Mississippi River tramping itinerary, these were the first river excursions since World War II. The old Streckfus tramp excursion boats were gone now: the J. S., WASHINGTON, SENATOR, and CAPITOL were only memories, while the PRESIDENT found a permanent home in New Orleans harbor, the new steamer ADMIRAL becoming the flagship of the Streckfus Line at St. Louis. And so as the IDLEWILD traveled the Upper Mississippi, newspapers along the way carried announcements of the new visitor's arrival that summer.

The front page of the August 8, 1947 Dubuque *Telegraph Herald* reported: "When the IDLEWILD, last of the sternwheel steamers to ply the Mississippi in the excursion trade, visited Dubuque harbor Friday night more than 2,000 persons appeared for the ride. However, as the steamer carries only 1,460 passengers, approximately 700 were turned back at the gangplank. First excursion boat to run out of Dubuque since before the War, the IDLEWILD is commanded by Capt. Ben Winters, 84, a veteran of 70 years on the river, who showed his guests a big time Friday night. Capt. Ben, as he is usually called, commanded the first towboat ever to tie up at the Dubuque terminal and is well known to river men, having competed in many races and played parts in many other river adventures." Two of the passengers on that Moonlite dance trip were a couple who had just met and were going dancing on one of



IDLEWILD in winter layup at Alton Slough. Her last layup there under Capt. Jim Phillips for New St. Louis & Calhoun Packet Corp. was in 1946. She was sold to J. Herod Gorsage the following spring, and spent one more layup there under his ownership. Editor's collection



Cruising the Upper Mississippi in summer/fall 1947. During Gorsage's ownership the IDLEWILD acquired a reputation for unpaid coal bills and supplies that followed her into her second season as AVALON. Murphy Library photo.

**LAST MOONLIGHT
EXCURSION** of the **STEAMER
IDLEWILD**

THIS SEASON

Thurs. & Fri., Sept. 11 & 12, 8:30 P. M.

DUBUQUE, IOWA

Dance to the Music of
THE 'SKYLINERS'

Modernized and Redecorated—All-Steel Hull
A Full Line of Refreshments
ADULTS \$1.25 Tax Included—CHILDREN 50c

Ad for final trips of the boat in her inaugural 1947 season in Dubuque Telegraph Herald. From editor's collection.

EXCURSION BOAT DUE IN DOBUQUE

**Sternwheel Steamer To Be
Here on Friday**

It will be steamboat 'round the bend for the first time since before the war when the sternwheel excursion boat, "Idlewild," makes its first visit to Dubuque Friday. The "Idlewild," - grossing 260 tons, is making its first trip to the upper Mississippi, under the direction of its new owner, Herod Gorsage, of Peoria, Ill., who purchased the steamer early this year from the New St. Louis & Calhoun County Packet corporation.

The boat has a capacity of 1,460 passengers, and has been operating all along the Mississippi, working its way northward. It is presently just above Keokuk, and is scheduled for stops at a number of river ports, including Muscatine, Davenport and Clinton, on its way to Dubuque.

A moonlight excursion is scheduled for the steamer's stop here, and the boat will leave at 8:30 Friday night.

Under an ICC permit, the "Idlewild" may operate one-day excursions along the river at points from Grafton, Ill., at the south of the Illinois river, to LaCrosse, Wis., to and including Oct 31, and may operate out of Winona, Minn., to and including Aug. 31.

IDLEWILD's first season on Upper Mississippi was announced in Dubuque papers on August 3rd.



At Savanna, IL on August 7. Editor's collection.



At Dubuque, IA on August 8. The Moonlite was enjoyed by more than 1400 dancers, including your editor's future in-laws. Photo from editor's collection.



At La Crosse, WI on August 9. Photo from Murphy Library.

their first dates. They were your editor's future in-laws, Lee Graham and Carl Bisanz, and the boat trip just happened to fall on Carl's twentieth birthday.

A few days later the boat was running excursions in La Crosse, en route to trips at Winona. Record crowds had already turned out at river towns all along her route from Rock Island to Dubuque, and La Crosse was no exception. As already mentioned, there were slot machines aboard in violation of the state laws where the boat operated. Although they were kept covered while the IDLEWILD's gangplank was down, they were uncovered as soon as she backed out into the river. So in the early hours of the morning at the La Crosse landing, the local sheriff led a gambling raid on the boat.

There is an apocryphal story told by Capt. Art Quinn of Davenport, her pilot at the time, that the IDLEWILD's captain, the aging Ben Winters, was awakened in the middle of the night and threatened with arrest. According to this story, he suffered a fatal heart attack as a result and when he was carried back to his room by crewmen, the dying Capt. Winters requested that the boat's name be changed to AVALON in honor of the sternwheeler on which he had begun his river career many years before. As dramatic as this story is, a somewhat different version was reported in *The Waterways Journal* some months later. That story said, "A dying wish of Capt. Ben J. Winters, who died in the U. S. Marine Hospital in Kirkwood, MO on February 1, 1948, has been granted. In January of this year he lay ill to the point of death when Herod Gorsage of Peoria, the IDLEWILD's owner, drove 190 miles over icy roads to St. Louis to see him, accompanied by Mrs. Gorsage. Capt. Winters was almost beyond talking, but he whispered what was virtually a dying request - that the IDLEWILD's name be changed to AVALON in honor of the first boat Capt. Winters worked on. Friday afternoon of last week Mr. Gorsage visited the office of *The Waterways Journal* to announce that the request had already been granted by the government and that stencils for relettering the name all over the boat had already been cut."

While the IDLEWILD completed her Upper Mississippi excursions, two other steamboats were also in the news, both of them over on the Ohio



Capt. Ben Winters in pilothouse at La Crosse. The boat would be raided that night for carrying illegal slot machines. Photo from Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.

at Pittsburgh. On September 9, the big Coney Island sidewheeler ISLAND QUEEN exploded and burned while lying at her Monongahela wharf between trips, claiming 19 lives, and severely burning her mate, Ernest Wagner. And downriver at Dravo marine ways on Neville Island, the DELTA QUEEN had just arrived from California, and was undergoing a major renovation as the new tourist steamer for Cincinnati's Greene Line.

The IDLEWILD played a two-night stand at Dubuque on her southbound return trip in September, and wrapped up her inaugural season that fall with near sell-out trips on the Upper Mississippi as she returned home to Peoria and Alton Slough for the winter lay up.

When the 1948 excursion season opened, the boat had already been renamed AVALON in February, partly to honor Capt. Winter's request, but also for

a practical reason. The name change made it harder to identify the boat as the unpaid creditor for coal bills and other expenses incurred in her first season under Gorsage's management. During this season, the boat was granted an ICC permit to operate excursions on the Illinois River below Ottawa; the Mississippi between Hickman, KY, and Hastings, MN; the entire Ohio River; the Cumberland below Hunters Point, TN; the Tennessee below Chickamauga Lake; and the Missouri below St. Joseph. Her Master for the start of the season as she left St. Louis was Capt. Jim Butler, former pilot of the ISLAND QUEEN. Capt. Harry Woodruff and Stewart Williams were pilots to Cairo, where Capt. Wess Doss joined the boat to take her up the Ohio. Joe Kennan was Chief with Scott Bruce second engineer. George Young was Mate, and William Foley, formerly on the Streckfus Steamers excursion boats, was at the keyboard of the calliope.

On the Ohio, Capt. Butler became one of her pilots, while Capt. Edgar Mabrey, former captain of the Streckfus's WASHINGTON and SAINT PAUL, took over as her new master. He incorporated some "Streckfus ideas" on the boat, according to Ohio River historian J. Mack Gamble. They included painting the boat's name on the bow inside the signature red semicircle, as well as other touches that made the boat look "the best I had ever seen her," according to Gamble. The AVALON still had the old wooden gingerbread jigsaw trim around her boiler deck, texas roof, and pilothouse roof. All but the texas roof gingerbread would be removed in the major renovations which began the following year. Almost 35 years later, a replica of that same pilothouse jigsaw trim would be reinstalled. The retractable awning around the forward end of the hurricane roof was also removed, giving it a much more open, airy look. Streckfus' stylized drawing of the PRESIDENT which was used for promoting her Upper Mississippi tramping trips of the early 40s, served as a model for new classic, advertising posters featuring the AVALON's new logo, which was used throughout her 14-year career.

With the boat having acquired a somewhat questionable reputation under Gorsage's ownership, she managed to regain some degree of respectability by offering charter trips for groups like the children in Dubuque orphanages. In late September, the



Newly renamed steamer AVALON at Marietta, OH in the early months of her 1948 season. This is the last year the boat retained her pilothouse dome. Photo from Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.



Left: William Foley, AVALON's first calliope player. He had served earlier aboard Streckfus excursion boats. Right: Capt. Edgar Mabrey, the AVALON's first master. He had captained the Streckfus Line's WASHINGTON and SAINT PAUL on the Ohio River in the thirties. Many of the crew on the AVALON were recruited from the ranks of Streckfus Steamers and Cincinnati's Coney Island Co. Both photos from Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisconsin - La Crosse.

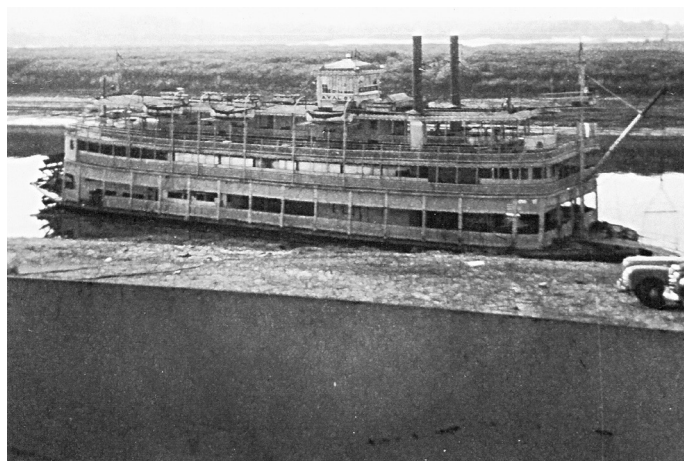


AVALON at Charleston, WV in spring 1948. Photo from Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.

AVALON was granted temporary permission from the ICC to extend her operations on the lower Mississippi between Hickman, KY and Angola, LA. She returned in the fall to her original home port of Memphis to make her first excursions there since the early 1930s. Residents were not impressed with the boat's new red pilothouse dome, nor did they like her stubby smokestacks which lacked the elegant puddin's and feathers of her earlier years. But nonetheless, they were still happy to see the old boat again, and ride her once more. Being careful not to infringe upon Streckfus' territorial monopoly on river excursions in New Orleans harbor, the AVALON finished her 1948 season with two Moonlites at Baton Rouge in late November, after which she was taken through Plaquemine Lock and Bayou Plaquemine for winter layup. 🕒



The AVALON managed to restore some of her good name which had been lost under Gorsage's management through newspaper articles like this one. From editor's collection.



The steamer's first excursions at her original home port in Memphis were welcomed by residents. Editor's collection.

Portrait of a Tramp: The Excursion Steamer AVALON

A major change lay ahead for the veteran sternwheeler, because of the loss of the steamer ISLAND QUEEN of Cincinnati's Coney Island Company in 1947. The park's promotions manager, Ernst A. Meyer, was convinced that there was still a place for a tramping excursion boat on the inland rivers. There certainly were no competitors for that kind of steamboat any longer. But his vision turned out to be far greater than what anyone had previously dared to imagine. Enlisting the financial support of Harry Anderson, owner of the Enquirer Printing Company; of Louis H. Bolce from a local paint and varnish company; and of several other Cincinnati businessmen and private individuals, Steamer Avalon, Inc. was chartered in the spring of 1949. 433 shares of Class A and 510 shares of Class B stock were issued, for a combined capitalization of \$44,320. The steamer was valued at \$60,000. Offices were in the Duttonhofer Building, 229 East 6th Street, Cincinnati 2, Ohio. Meyer was a shrewd businessman in that two of his associates in Steamer Avalon, Inc. were a commercial printer, from whom he could get tickets, advertising copy and posters at reduced rates; and a paint store owner who could supply large quantities of paint and varnish for the boat at discounted prices! And Meyer's business was promotion: he knew how to sell things like river excursions.

And so on April 5, 1949, the steamboat had changed hands for the sixth time when she was enrolled at Cincinnati by Steamer Avalon, Inc., and was about to embark on the most ambitious and strenuous chapter in her long history on the inland rivers of America.

Mention has already been made of Cincinnati's excursion steamer ISLAND QUEEN, and for good reason. The future of the AVALON would in large part depend upon the business skill and vision of some of that company's officials, along with their officers' steamboating expertise in running an excursion boat in the years after 1947. With the explosion and fire that destroyed the ISLAND

QUEEN at the foot of Wood Street in Pittsburgh, the Coney Island Company soon decided that they would get out of the steamboat business for good. But to make the AVALON a profitable and going concern, Ernie Meyer needed an experienced crew. And one of those key crewmen was her mate, Ernest Wagner.

Ernie Wagner had first seen the ISLAND QUEEN as a young farm boy from Tennessee riding a boxcar and looking for work in 1927. Within a day, he had landed a job aboard her sister boat, and by 1935 had worked his way up as mate on the big sidewheeler. After spending five weeks in a Pittsburgh hospital recovering from the severe burns he suffered in the fire, he decided to look for other work. Following his release from the hospital, he was managing a tourist court for his brother in Dayton, KY. In the months that followed, Ernie Meyer pleaded with Wagner to come work on the AVALON as her mate, but was turned down each time he asked.

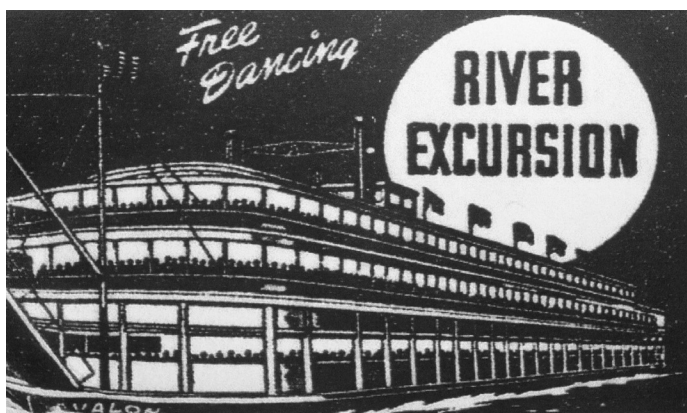
The officers and crew of the Steamer AVALON in 1949 are shown in the chart on the following page. Many of these crew had been recruited by Meyer from the ISLAND QUEEN. In fact, it was that boat's crew who made it possible for the AVALON to operate again. Noticeable on the list by his presence is Ernest Wagner, who finally gave in to Ernie Meyer's pleading to join the crew. Rose Meyer was Ernie Meyer's wife, and she was put in charge of all the finances on board the boat as steward and purser. The steamer's purser in the previous season had been Ernest Quigley, another ISLAND QUEEN veteran.

The first excursion for Steamer Avalon, Inc. in 1949 was at Plaquemine, LA, on April 20. She then worked her way up the Mississippi to the Ohio, and by spring was at her new home port of Cincinnati, tramping her way to Pittsburgh. In a group photo standing on the pilothouse steps at Pittsburgh we see her Mate Ernie Wagner, Chief



First excursion for the new company at Plaquemine, LA on April 20, 1949. She had been in winter lay-up here. Photo from editor's collection.

Above and below: New classic advertising logo for Steamer Avalon, Inc. Images from editor's collection.



Steamer Avalon, Inc.'s president Ernst A. (Ernie) Meyer. As the former traffic manager and promotions agent for Coney Island Co., he had the vision of reviving the old-time tramp excursion business and set about recruiting many of the crew from the steamer ISLAND QUEEN in the process. Photo from the editor's collection.

Officers and Crew of Steamer Avalon

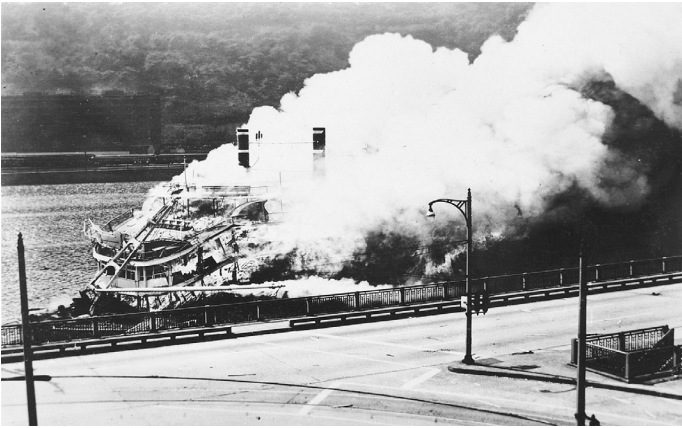
1949 Season		1961 Season	
Capt. Edgar F. Mabrey	Master	Capt. Ernest E. Wagner	
Ernest E. Wagner	Mate	Capt. Clarke C. Hawley	
Joe Kennen	Ch. Engineer	Urbie Williams	
Scott Bruce	1 st Asst. Eng.	Paul Iglehart	
Capt. V. L. Daugh	Pilot	Capt. Sylvester A. Doss	
Capt. B. Klinepetters <i>(Lower Mississippi River)</i>	Pilot	Capt. Leon Ash <i>(Ohio River)</i>	
Mrs. Rose Meyer	Purser	Everett P. Hall	
Mrs. Rose Meyer	Steward	Emil G. Werner	
Carl Hall	Cook	Archie Rigdon	
Ollie Taylor	Fireman	Charles "Bubba" Chinn	
O. G. "Pop" Trosby	Fireman	Ed Smith	



L to R on stairs: Mate Ernie Wagner, Chief Fred Barrow, Master Charles N. Hall, and Ernie Meyer to right of Hall. Photo from editor's collection.



Above: ISLAND QUEEN departing Cincinnati for Coney Island Amusement Park. **Below:** Tragic end of the big sidewheeler at Pittsburgh, September 1947. Photos courtesy of Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.



Engineer Fred Barrow, and her Master, Capt. C. N. Hall. Standing to the right of Capt. Hall was owner Ernie Meyer. Her first full season under Meyer's management lasted 176 days. Late in June she ran over a submerged obstacle at East Liverpool, OH, and took on water in one of her compartments. She went to Dravo where she was pulled out of the water and a 6-foot long steel plate replaced in her hull. Within days she was back in service, and continued her upper Ohio excursion season.

That Ernie Meyer still had lingering memories of the crowds handled by the big ISLAND QUEEN is evident in a story which appeared in the June 18, 1949 issue of the *Winona Republican Herald*. The headline read: "Plan New Excursion Boat. The Steamer Avalon, Incorporated, which operates the excursion steamer AVALON in these waters in the month of August, has plans for a new excursion boat. The new boat is to be 320 feet long and 65 feet wide, diesel-powered and air conditioned, having a ballroom space of 10,000 square feet, an unobstructed mezzanine and terraced fourth and fifth decks with strolling promenades. Her carrying capacity is to be



Winter layup 1949-50 at Cincinnati ice piers. In the spring she would move up to Greene Line wharfboat. Editor's collection.



DELTA QUEEN, GORDON C. GREENE and AVALON at Greene Line Wharfboat, spring 1950. Photo courtesy of Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.



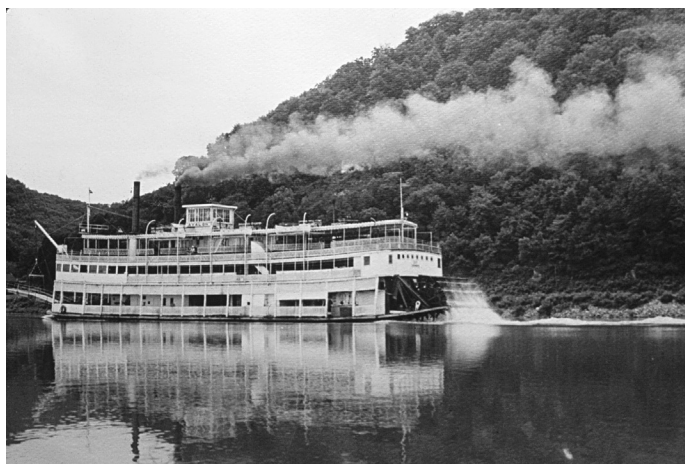
Newly "beautified" steamer AVALON at Rock Island, IL. Notice the forepart of her hull is white with a red semicircle outlining her name, ala Streckfus style. Editor's collection.

5,500 passengers. This craft, however, is still in the planning stages. Let's hope that it will materialize and that the unique vessel will also operate in these waters." This proposed boat had four times

the passenger capacity of the AVALON and was fully twice as long and twice as wide with a dance floor that could have measured 40 by 250 feet. She had roughly the same dimensions and layout as the ISLAND QUEEN, except for the air conditioning and diesel propulsion. Interestingly, the article provides no clue as to whether the boat would be paddlewheel-driven, although the technology of that day most likely would have required screw wheels. No drawings for this vessel are known to exist, and no further discussion about her appeared in any newspaper.

At season's end in 1949, the boat was laid up for the winter at the ice piers below the Newport and Cincinnati Bridge on October 13. In March 1950 she moved to the Greene Line wharfboat, where she would spend each of her remaining winter lay-ups during her AVALON years. That spring she was one of three sternwheelers at the Foot of Main Street along with the new Greene Line flagship DELTA QUEEN and her veteran sister GORDON C. GREENE. Little did anyone suspect that in four short years much of the GORDON's machinery and many of her furnishings would find a new home on the AVALON.

In order to maximize the boat's cruising season and territory, work progressed over the next five years on enclosing her main deck and boiler deck. First to be replaced was the original wire mesh railing with its cast iron rosettes on her boiler deck. New white masonite siding enclosed the front 30 feet of that deck. Within a few years, the lattice and picket-fence style railings on her main deck guards gave way to steel bulkheads with sliding windows. The wire railing removed from the forward end of the boiler deck was placed around a new, extended skylight roof. Originally it had ended midway between the stacks and the bow, with a large set of stairs leading down to the hurricane deck. The wide open area on the forward part of the deck had been shielded from the sun and the weather by the retractable awning, but after its removal a year earlier, an extended skylight roof enclosed by railing took its place. A large horizontal water tank serving the concession stand on the deck below was installed in the space under the new skylight roof, while the stairs leading from the boiler deck were extended up further. The boat's advertising copy for



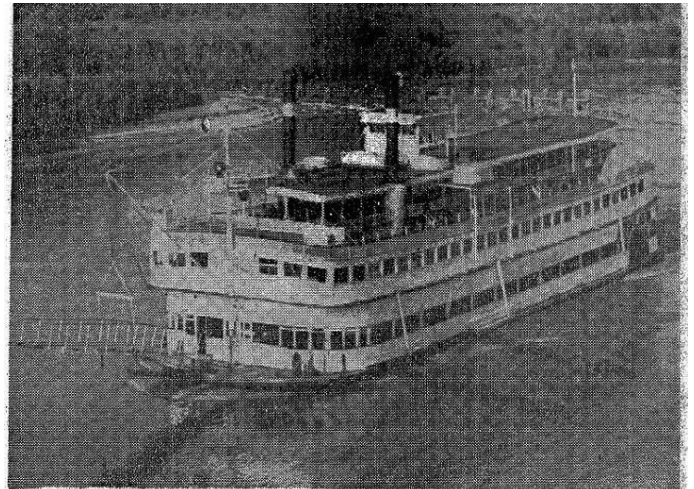
AVALON passing bluffs at Effigy Mounds National Park near Marquette and McGregor, IA. From editor's collection.

both 1949 and 50 carried the phrase "Enjoy a river excursion on the beautified Steamer AVALON."

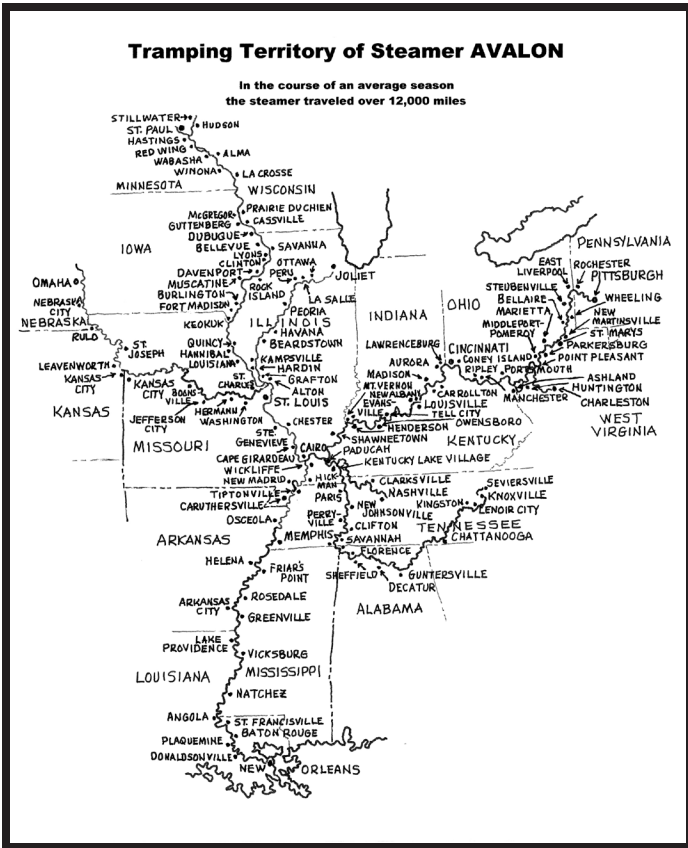
Her pilothouse dome was also removed that year to allow passage under low bridges on the Cumberland, Tennessee and Illinois Rivers, and her whistle pipe and flagpole were hinged as well. The AVALON had an old coal-fired cookstove in her raised cookhouse on the starboard side of the main deck, just forward of the engine room. It had a chimney which was re-routed about midships on the starboard side of the texas deck. This stovepipe caught fire in 1951 and scorched some of the region under the texas skylights.

Another part of Ernie Meyer's plan for the boat could be summed up by the jingle: "The AVALON goes where the water flows." She initially traveled on 7 rivers in 14 states, according to her advertising. But by the time her career was over, the boat was tramping on 9 rivers in 17 states, visiting 132 cities and towns in the course of her 7 month excursion season. No other excursion steamboat before or since has traveled as extensively as the AVALON. No other steam whistle has been heard in as many river cities in America. She steamed over 4,795 different miles of navigable rivers in her yearly travels: the Mississippi from St. Paul to New Orleans; the Ohio from Pittsburgh to Cairo; the Illinois River to Joliet; the Cumberland River to Carthage, TN.; the Tennessee River to Knoxville; the French Broad River to Sevierville, TN; the Kanawha River to Montgomery, WV, at the head of navigation; the St. Croix River to Stillwater, MN; and the Missouri River to Kansas City in 1958, her base of operations

as the IDLEWILD thirty summers before. The following year she made it all the way to Omaha, NE, the farthest point up the Missouri River she ever reached, and a trip not soon forgotten by her harried crew for the sheer excitement and danger at every turn. It was undoubtedly her most far-flung adventure, and in that season she visited cities on the wild and treacherous Missouri River to which she had never dared venture in her IDLEWILD years.



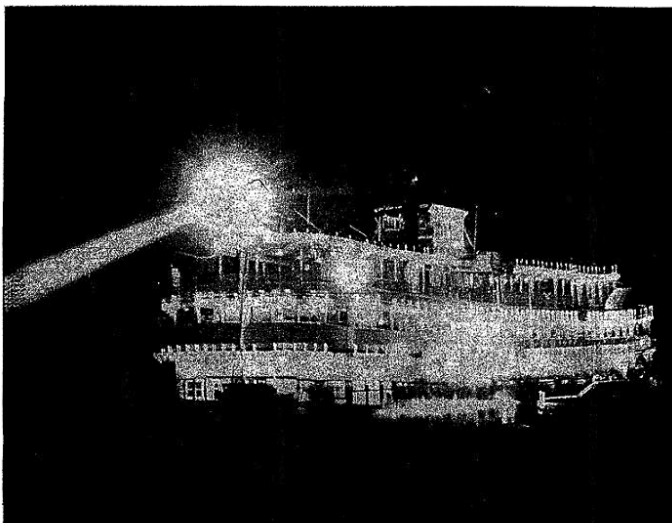
THE RIVER EXCURSION STEAMER AVALON docked here at 8 o'clock last night at the Corps of Engineers wharf at the foot of Grand avenue. It was boarded by 1,200 government employees who made a 3-hour cruise sponsored by the Kansas City U. S. Corps of Engineers council. The 1,370-passenger stern-wheeler will be here through Sunday night and will return October 3 for three more days. Here it is shown near the Liberty bridge where U. S. 71 bypass crosses the river.



Bottom left: 1959 excursions from Omaha, the farthest point on the Missouri the boat ever reached. **Above:** 1958 excursions from Kansas City, revisiting her old stomping grounds. Both articles from editor's collection.

The biggest change for the AVALON came at the end of her 1953 season. The retired Greene Line tourist steamer GORDON C. GREENE was at Owensboro, KY, undergoing conversion into a restaurant and night club. Ernie Meyer purchased her four boilers and their burners, along with some other machinery, water filters, and fixtures and by March of 1954, Houston Marks of the Owensboro Welding Company, a private contractor there, had placed three of the GORDON's boilers on the AVALON, and she was finally converted from coal to oil after 39 years of service. A new main deck was laid from the forecabin back to the boilers, and the two forward compartments in her hull, each 34 feet long by 11 feet wide, would be used to store 30,000 gallons of fuel. With that conversion completed, new rooms for the deck crew, engine room crew, firemen, cabin stewards, and musicians were added outboard of the boilers, and her long Texas cabin was shortened to near its original size, with a small concession stand added on its after end. The final alterations came when her main deck was enclosed with steel bulkheads, and her entire boiler deck enclosed with masonite siding. Now the AVALON became an all-weather boat: steam-heated or air-cooled by river breezes as the climate required. She left Owensboro to open her 1954 season at Nashville. However, her new steel bulkheads on the main deck had not yet been primed and painted, and so the

Excursion Boat Avalon Arrives at Municipal Dock



Crowds lined the riverbank, the moon was bright, and a mighty steamboat came toward the bend. It was a home-coming to the Avalon, guided toward the Municipal Dock Friday night to begin five days of excursion trips. The four-deck stern-wheeler, a gem on the river, has been in western waters since 1915. —Wald Wood Photo.



AVALON receiving boilers from GORDON C. GREENE at Owensboro in the winter and spring of 1953-54. Photo from editor's collection.

exterior of the main deck of the boat was a rusty red. Capt. Wagner recalled her first trips that season.

“I never will forget when we left Owensboro with all that new equipment and everything on, going to Nashville. We got to Nashville, TN and I had the metal, that new metal that looked like it had been on fire, I got it all painted. We got to Nashville and Ernie Meyer had that Vanderbilt College over there, they had it chartered, they chartered the boat. And that’s the first time I ever saw it set up with all nice, white linen tablecloths on all the tables on the dance floor. And all them kids come on that night with evening gowns on and tuxedos. They had a photographer on there that had been on the Idy-wile. Well, me and Ernie Meyer was standing there by the purser’s office, talking to somebody. But, everything looked so beautiful. Like I said, everything was just so clean – the first two or three trips we’d had that year. And this photographer come up to me and he said, ‘Cap, we used to get an old boat over here, a dirty, filthy thing. It was the old Idy-wile.’ He said, ‘Whatever become of that thing?’ I looked around at Meyer and I said, ‘Hey Ernie, whatever become of that old Idy-wile, anyway? You remember that old Idy-wile?’ Well, you know he was nervous. He started pulling his collar. ‘I – I think it sunk over there on the Missouri River somewhere!’ I never will forget the way old Meyer started pulling his shirt collar when that guy asked him if he knew whatever become of the old Idy-wile. He didn’t realize he was on it, ‘cause, you know, the AVALON, like I said, I never saw it look so sharp.”

In the spring of the following year, sponsons were added to her hull at Marietta Manufacturing in Point Pleasant, increasing her beam from 36 to 41 feet, giving her greater stability and hull capacity at the expense of ruining her original hull lines. The outriggers on the underside of the boat’s guards were also enclosed. Her hull, which had been subdivided into 21 watertight compartments, now contained 35, two of which served as fuel bunkers. After all the changes were made, the steamer’s passenger capacity was lowered from 1,460 in her IDLEWILD days to 1,370. With a full crew of 45, the boat could carry a total of 1,415 people.



On drydock at Marietta Manufacturing Co. in Point Pleasant, WV, spring 1955 for addition of sponsons to her hull. Both photos from editor's collection.



The boat had always carried a dance floor from the beginning, guaranteeing that she could find work in the excursion trade when the packet business played out, which it eventually did. That old maple dance floor was replaced with a new one after her IDLEWILD days at Louisville, and the bulkheads surrounding it had been removed in the

renovations made after she was brought to St. Louis in 1928, providing a more spacious ballroom deck. In the old IDLEWILD days, that floor had been advertised as 140 feet long by 40 feet wide. Since that was the length and width of her entire boiler deck, the advertising stretched things just a bit and the new souvenir postcard view of the AVALON's dance floor was just as misleading: it was obviously spliced to give the impression of a ballroom the size of the Waldorf-Astoria's. In the first three years of the steamer's operation under her new name, she employed orchestras from local musician's unions at the river cities where she tramped. During her Dubuque excursions, for example, passengers danced to the music of "The Skyliners", Karl Barber and His Orchestra, Duke Hampton and 10-Piece Orchestra, Jimmie "Pop" Teasley and His Orchestra, and Johnny Ellington and His 10-Piece Orchestra direct from St. Louis. Most of these bands had vocal groups which sang with them. But beginning in 1951, the AVALON carried her own house band, the Rhythm Masters. This 8-piece orchestra was led by Hilliard Witherspoon, and was advertised as coming straight from Bourbon Street in New Orleans, or direct from St. Louis or from Memphis, depending on which newspaper press release you read.

With the removal of the original ballroom side bulkheads when the boat was in St. Louis in 1931, additional support for the ceiling and texas above was needed. Steel I-beams were added which extended from the texas deck to the hull and cambered T-bars were placed under the skylight roof to provide the needed strength to support the texas. This added support became crucial when her after-cabin was shortened to its original length, adding even more passenger deck space on the skylight roof directly overhead. The tiller lines from her pilothouse, along with her whistle pipe and plumbing were all rerouted through those I-beams before they were enclosed.

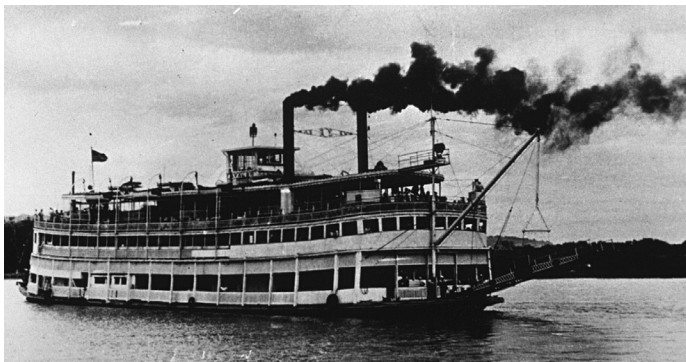
Back in 1949 during the boat's coal-burning days, McGregor, IA photographer Margery Goergen had snapped a photo as the steamer backed out on an afternoon trip from that Upper Mississippi River town. Using that negative, Steamer Avalon, Inc. produced a souvenir postcard of the boat through liberal retouching and the use of an airbrush.



IDLEWILD dance floor and AVALON "marine ballroom" pictured above and below. All photos from editor's collection.



Her main and boiler decks were “updated” from that earlier view to show the new siding which would later enclose those decks. Her texas deck and pilothouse, however, were left untouched. This card was sold at the souvenir stand on the boat from 1950 to 1961. Post cards were big sellers on excursion boats, since passengers at the end of excursions who still had unspent “scrip” – which of course could not be redeemed for cash once it was purchased – looked for something cheap to use it up. Post cards provided an attractive and inexpensive option, and they made free advertising for the boat to boot! Interestingly enough, the retouched AVALON post card from 1950 matches amazingly well with actual views of the steamer taken in 1954 after all of her major alterations. Although she looked very boxed in compared to the open, airy look of her IDLEWILD days, the AVALON still appeared very neat and trim and clean after this facelift. Noticeably lacking was the boat’s name on the bulkhead outboard of the engineroom. It would appear for the first time in her 1955 season in large block letters. However, the outline of the name IDLEWILD was clearly visible on the engineroom bulkheads as built-up layers of paint could still be detected there, forming each letter, and it remained so through many of her years as the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE.



Before and after: Margery Goergen photo becomes postcard.



In the early years of the AVALON’s operation, Ernie Meyer employed the services of booking agents to line up charters and excursions, much as the IDLEWILD had done in previous years with agent Frank Buening at Louisville. One agent working for Steamer Avalon, Inc. was E. J. Floyd of Des Moines, Iowa. In 1964 Mr. Floyd was still busy making bookings in the entertainment business: he hired a young 17-year old Dubuque high school student to perform in Davenport at a Christmastime program for veterans. Only years later did that student discover that this agent had formerly been employed in booking his favorite steamboat!

However, Meyer soon made a very wise move by employing an energetic and extremely capable “advance man” for the company – Miss Betty Blake. Betty had been selling advertising for radio station WLW in Cincinnati, and the two met one day on lunch break at Izzy Kadetz’s deli, a downtown Cincinnati landmark. Shortly after that meeting, and with Meyer’s careful tutoring, Betty began an active and successful career up and down the inland rivers of America to promote and sell excursions on the AVALON. She was a master of marketing and advertising, as the company’s promotional pieces show, and she soon found herself booking charters and arranging sponsors for the boat’s trips while working out of the Cincinnati office. But during the excursion season, she also went on the road, traveling from city to city seeking bookings for the boat, and she became well known in scores of river towns as a result.

In addition to tickets for the boat’s excursions, which were usually discounted when purchased in advance from sponsoring organizations,



On Upper Mississippi in 1954 after major facelift, re-boiling, and conversion to oil: neat and trim. From editor’s collection.



Miss Betty Blake, the AVALON's "advance man."

EXCURSION STEAMER "AVALON"
SPACIOUS GLASS-ENCLOSED MARINE BALLROOM DECK
MODERN WOOD PANELING PLACID

**Dance and Romance
On the River**

- * Enjoy gay get-togethers in the spacious glass-enclosed "Marine Ballroom Deck"
- * Free dancing to the tempo and rhythm of the Rhythm Masters 8-piece orchestra
- * Nothing like cruising on the river — Spring and Summer's rarest pleasure treat!
- * Orchestra plays on all trips including Daylight Cruises and Night "Moonlite" trips

**More than 600 Organizations, Large and Small,
Booked Excursions on the "AVALON" Last Year**

MANY ARE REPEAT SPONSORS YEAR AFTER YEAR. THEIR BOAT RIDES ARE ANNUAL EVENTS

THE ITINERARY FOR THE STEAMER "AVALON" INCLUDES MORE THAN 100 TOWNS IN 14 DIFFERENT STATES. Covering the Ohio River from Cairo, Ill., to Pittsburgh, Pa.—Mississippi River from Baton Rouge, La., all the way to St. Paul, Minn.—Illinois River as far as Joliet, Ill.—Cumberland River to Nashville, Tenn.—Tennessee River from Paducah, Ky., all the way to Knoxville, Tenn.—Kanawha River to Charleston, W. Va., and the St. Croix River to Hudson, Wis., and Stillwater, Minn.

DAYS and DATES are LIMITED for EACH TOWN!
Therefore arrange for your booking NOW before it is too late!

For Private Charters, Company Picnics or further information write or phone
STEAMER AVALON, INC., Duttonhote Bldg., 229 E. Sixth St., Cincinnati 2, Ohio. Phone DUbar 1-6010

MOONLITE CRUISES
Lv. 9:00 P.M.; Rtr. 11:30 P.M.; Dancing 8:00 till Midnight

AFTERNOON CRUISES
Leaves 2:30 P.M.; Returns 5:30 P.M.

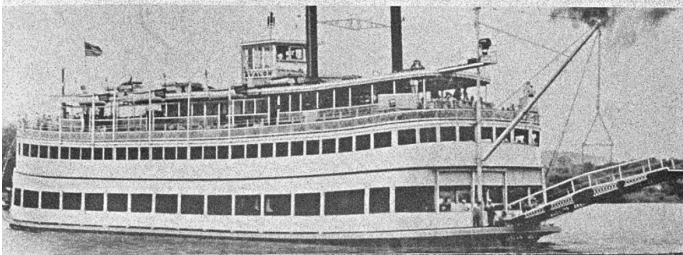
Your Spacious Decks
Two Decks Glass-Enclosed
HEATED: For Spring & Fall Operations
AIR COOLED: For Summer Operations

NOTE: The Steamer Avalon will be Definitely the ONLY EXCURSION VESSEL operating in your locality this Season.

RELAX IN COMFORTABLE STEAMER CHAIRS

A typical night scene of the "Avalon" ready to load. More than 1,000 lights add to her beauty as she glides with ease over the waters on her MOONLITE CRUISES.

1/2 AVALON ONLY LARGE EXCURSION STEAMER TRAMPING THE RIVERS



**HERE IS THE IDEAL WAY
to Make Money for Your Treasury**

For Clubs, Lodges, Churches, Societies, Fraternities, Sororities, Business and Civic Associations, Groups and Other Organizations

Compare the Advantages!
OVER ANY OTHER SPRING OR SUMMER ACTIVITY

STEAMER AVALON	OR	ELSEWHERE
<i>Free</i>	ORCHESTRA	<i>You Pay</i>
<i>Free</i>	BALLROOM	<i>You Pay</i>
<i>Definitely Free</i>	COMFORT	<i>Maybe</i>
<i>Free</i>	PUBLICITY	<i>You Pay</i>
<i>3 Sheltered Decks</i>	WEATHER	<i>If it Rains, You're Out</i>
<i>Just Sell Tickets</i>	WORK	<i>Before-During-After</i>
<i>Sure Thing</i>	NET RESULTS	<i>Uncertain</i>
You get the above . . . save time and work . . . take no chance of losing . . . you are sure of a	On the Steamer Avalon	Above adds up to much work, expense and the chance of loss . . . or, at best, a small profit.
PROFIT!	Elsewhere	

★
BOAT RIDE!
FUN GALORE!
AND STILL
YOU CAN
MAKE AS
MUCH AS

40¢

CLEAR
PROFIT
PER TICKET

★

For Commission or Discount Plan . . . SEE INSIDE

complimentary or "press" passes were also issued by Meyer for the officials of sponsoring groups, and for those businesses which placed advertising posters for upcoming excursions in their store windows. Getting local sponsorship for excursions, and involving the organization in selling the advance tickets, usually provided a much higher ridership than public trips which were only advertised in the newspaper and on handbills and posters.

PRESS PASS--Season 1958

EXCURSION STEAMER **AVALON** FOUR DECKS STEEL HULL

THIS TICKET ISSUED IN RETURN FOR PUBLICITY COURTESY

Ernst Meyer

ISSUED BY

GOOD THIS DATE ONLY

EXCHANGE AT BOX OFFICE
ADMIT ONE

FORM P. P.—18M—12-1-57

STEAMER AVALON, INC.

MOONLIGHT RIVER EXCURSION

TUESDAY (Night), JULY 18, 1961
SPONSORED BY FIGHTING BACK CHAPTER No. 6
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

EXCURSION STEAMER **AVALON** FOUR DECKS STEEL HULL

RHYTHM MASTERS AND THEIR ORCHESTRA

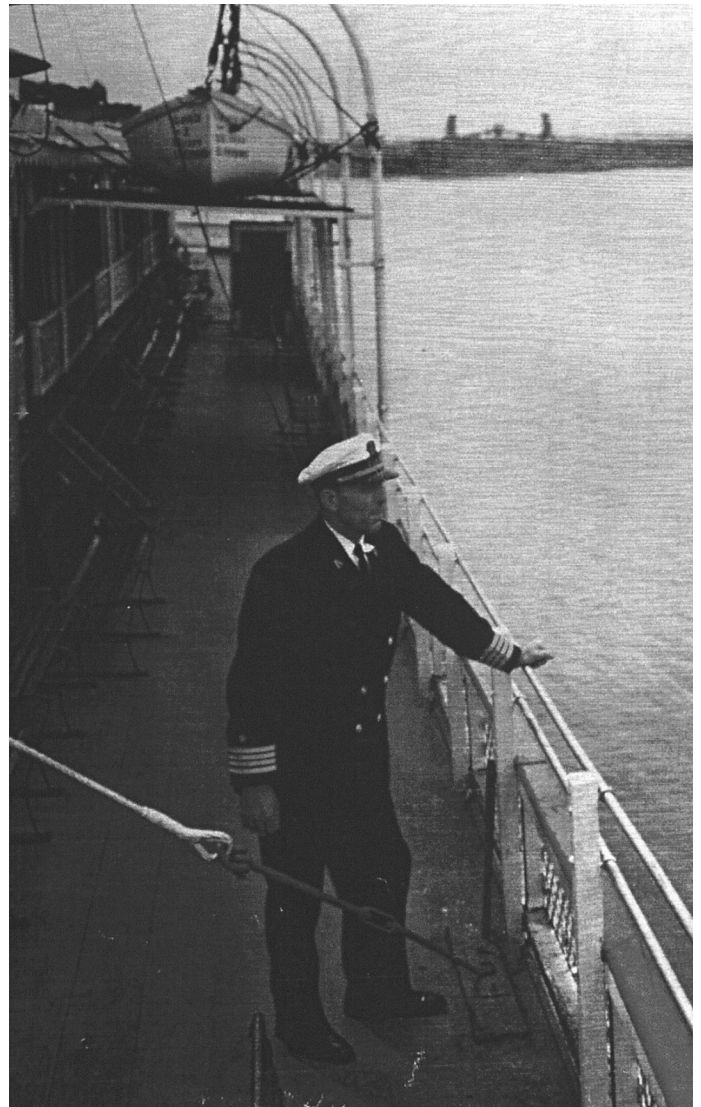
ADVANCE TICKETS \$1.50 FARE AT BOAT \$1.75
Federal Transportation Tax Included

Steamer Leaves DUBUQUE River Landing 9:00 P.M. (Over)

Above and top right: Promotional pieces for selling charters and sponsored rides on the AVALON. The boat made their money on souvenirs and refreshments. From editor's collection.

While Ernie Meyer and Betty Blake took care of business from the office, Capt. Ernest Wagner took care of the day to day business of operating a 40-year old steamboat with a crew of 45, managing to get her to her stops on schedule most of the time, running two or sometimes three trips a day, cleaning up the boat, loading necessary supplies and fuel, and moving on to the next town to start the whole thing over again. Ernie Wagner had been steamboating since 1927 for the Coney Island Co., and came up through the ranks as a “Creamy Whip” vendor, coal passer, deckhand, watchman, and mate. After the ISLAND QUEEN burned in September 1947, he left the river for a year. However, Ernie Meyer persisted in asking Wagner to return to steamboating and finally convinced him to take the mate’s job on the AVALON. Capt. Edgar Mabrey, the boat’s first master, was replaced in September 1949. J. Mack Gamble suspected that he had spent too much money making improvements to the steamboat, and so was let go. Ernie Wagner suspected that he didn’t get along well with Meyer’s wife, Rose, who was the boat’s purser. Replacing Mabrey was Capt. Charles Napoleon Hall, former master of the ISLAND QUEEN. This was unwelcome news for Wagner, who had never gotten along with Hall. But this was to be only temporary, since by the spring of 1950 Ernest Wagner had earned his Master’s license. Beginning with the 1950 season, Capt. Hall and Capt. Wagner alternated as masters of the boat, with Wagner eventually assuming full time responsibilities as the boat’s captain. He would serve as the AVALON’s master for her remaining twelve years. And as master of the only tramping excursion boat in America, Wagner joined an elite corps of Greene Line and Streckfus Steamers officers as the last of the old time roof captains.

Now the AVALON needed a new mate, and veteran riverman Stewart Williams took over that job until he accidentally drowned off the head of the boat in 1955. But beginning in 1951 and over the next five years, Capt. Wagner was fortunate to find a young man eager to become his student, a quick study at learning the vanishing art of excursion steamboating from an acknowledged master of the trade. That youngster was Clarke Hawley, a high school student from Charleston, WV, who came aboard the boat on June 1, 1951, to inquire why her calliope was silent. That was the start of their



Capt. Ernest Wagner. Photos from editor's collection.



nineteen-year association on passenger steamboats. Capt. Wagner tells the story better than anyone else.

“We was at Charleston, WV, at an afternoon school ride out of there. My watchman come to me and said, “Cap, I’ve got a boy downstairs says he can play that calliope.’ Well, this was in the spring of the year. We just went from Cincinnati and got as far as Charleston on our way to Pittsburgh. I said, ‘Yeah, that’s what they all say.’ Anyways, I never had the steam turned on it yet, had all the drain plugs out of it. The watchman turned around and went back downstairs. Well, I don’t know, fifteen or twenty minutes I took a notion to go downstairs and see how everything was going. When I went down at the foot of the stairway, there stood Raymond Carter, nickname Happy Jack, from Paducah, KY. He said, “Cap, here’s the boy that says he can play that calliope,’ and just walked away. I walked over and I said, ‘What makes you think you can play that calliope, young man?’ He said, ‘Well, I play an organ in a theater and I got an organ at home.’ I said, ‘Did you ever play a calliope before?’ He said, ‘No, but I’ve seen them and watched people play them.’ I knew that anybody that could play an organ usually had a little luck on a playing a calliope. So I said, ‘Alright, c’mon. Let’s go up there and I’ll get the steam turned on it and we’ll see what you can do.’ So I went up there and went in the pilothouse and called the engineroom and told them to send a striker up with a couple of Stillson wrenches and we’d go back there and put them plugs back in. Called the engineer back up and told him to turn the steam on it. He turned the steam on and I went back there and mashed all the keys and got all the water out and everything, and told him, “There it is. Now let’s see what you can play.’ Well, I wouldn’t have believed it. He started playing that thing, and it was just like he’d been playing it all his life. I couldn’t believe it, I really couldn’t believe it. He was about fifteen, still in high school. Course, later on he went on to college. Anyway, after he got through playing and everything, and the boat was getting ready to get back into Charleston, I said, ‘What are you doing now?’ He said, ‘I’m still in school.’ I said, “What’re you gonna do when school’s out?’ He said, ‘I got a job in the newspaper office in the photo room.’ I said, ‘Well, I was just gonna offer you a job on here during your vacation playing that calliope if you



Clarke "Doc" Hawley, popcorn popper, calliapist, First Mate and relief Captain. Photos from editor's collection.

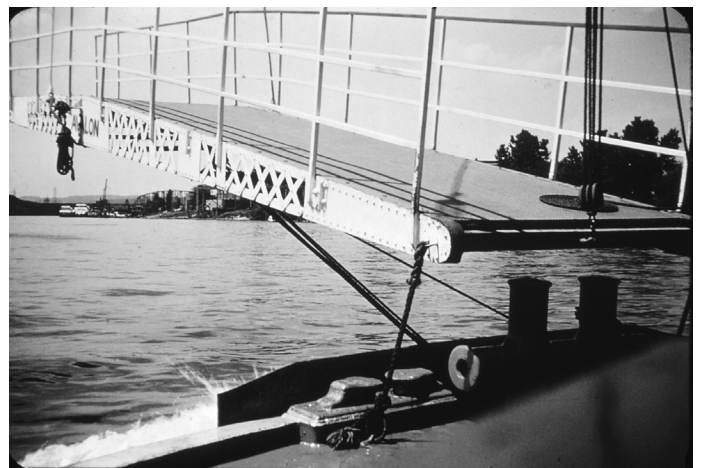


wanted it.’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I’d love that. But I done promised these people at the newspaper office that I would work there this summer.’ In the meantime, he’d been up working in a haberdashery shop. Anyway, that evening before we started loading the passengers for the Moonlite ride, why, Clarke – Doc – was out there on the levee and he hollered and wanted to know if he could come in and talk to me. We weren’t letting nobody on yet, so I looked down and realized who it was. And he said, ‘My mom and

dad's with me. Can they come in?' I said, 'Yeah, bring 'em on in.' So the watchman at the end of the gangway let them come on in. He introduced me to them. They told me, 'Well, he's just been having a fit ever since he come home about you offering him a job playing that calliope.' They said, 'They really don't need him up there at the newspaper office. They're really doing him a favor having something for him to do during the summer. But we're a little bit leery about letting him go away on a steamboat like this - afraid he'd get in trouble.' I said, 'Well, I can understand the situation because river people, you know, have a pretty rough life and some of them have pretty bad names, river rats and all that stuff. I understand kindly how you feel.' Course I wasn't married, didn't have Ernie Lee, didn't have no kids. But I said, 'I sure did like the way he played that calliope this afternoon. I really would be glad to have had him on here to play the calliope during his school vacation. And if it would help any, I will tell you this much. If you wanted to let him go and he starts bumming with the wrong people or starts getting himself in trouble, I'll ship him home, same as I would my own boy.' They said, 'Well, he wants to go so bad, under those conditions we're going to let him go. We'll let him meet you at Pittsburgh like you told him.' Whatever date he got out of school, we was going to be in Pittsburgh. At that time we was at Charleston about seven or eight days, stayed there that long. So in the meantime, over the next couple days the newspaper found out about it, and they come down and they got Doc - course, the only berth I had was the bunk over me in the captain's room - they come down, knew he was going to go away on a steamboat. Young boy, you know, gonna go away from Charleston, WV on a steamboat and play the calliope. They get him in my bed, he's laying in my bed with his feet right up in the middle of my bed with his shoes on, and take his picture. You know, I mean, it's in the *Charleston Gazette*. But that's the way he got started steamboating. Well, sure enough, he met me at Pittsburgh and stayed with me the rest of the summer. But right away I found out I didn't have to worry about Doc getting in trouble. He didn't bum with the wrong people. He sat out on the head of the boat and listened to them tell them tales. They wanted to go up town and go to the saloon, Doc would stay on the boat. So I found out they wasn't gonna entice him into any trouble."

Doc also spent each of the next five summer seasons on the boat, and after Stewart William's drowning, he tutored Louie Rudd so that he could take an oral exam to get his Mate's license and assume those duties. In that process, Doc was also able to take the Mate's exam on his 21st birthday, and he received his license in August 1956, rejoining the boat a few days later on the Upper Mississippi at Rock Island. He would serve as calliope player, Mate, and relief Master during his remaining years aboard. With improvements to the steamer completed for extending her tramping season, sales and advertising in capable hands, and experienced, dedicated officers and crew aboard the boat, the AVALON tramped the inland rivers in the mid-fifties as the last traveling excursion steamboat in America. Things were looking good.

As the steamer ran excursions out of dozens of river towns in mid-America, she alone carried on that century-old tradition. Her appearance at countless river landings brought back memories of earlier trips made by scores of steamboats, both large and small. To get something of a feel for the arduous and adventurous life of a tramp steamer, we will walk her decks again during that part of her excursion season in the lazy summer months when she tramped the Upper Mississippi. And we start this journey on the main deck bow, just forward of the ticket booth and entrance. The steel landing stage was swung over to either side and lowered for passenger boarding, and was pulled back to the center to swing from the falls of the boom when underway. That boom was originally wooden and octagonal in shape from its tip to about its midpoint. It was lighted by small light bulbs at night, and was



Steel landing stage came from ISLAND MAID back in 1937.

painted black on its outer end so as not to reflect the light from the boat's searchlight. Shortly after the beginning of her 1957 season while en route to Knoxville on March 27, the boom hit a low bridge on the Tennessee River at Ft. Loudoun, snapped in two, and the stage dropped into the river. That incident was later recalled by Capt. Wagner.

"About the worst disaster I had on the AVALON was going up the Tennessee River right at that Fort Loudoun, TN there. I'm sure that the pilot got his lights mixed up on the two bridges they had there. They had a railroad bridge and a highway bridge, and the railroad bridge had a low superstructure on the left descending side. And right above it on the highway bridge, the green light was directly in line with that low superstructure. Now, I don't remember just exactly how the green light was on the railroad bridge, but I'm sure that Capt. Johnny Dobbs, who was the pilot on watch, got mixed up in his lights and he was heading for that green light on the highway bridge, which threw him right straight under that low superstructure on the railroad bridge. 'Bout three o'clock in the morning

when he hit that bridge, well, I was in bed. I had Capt. Hall's grandson – that old Capt. Hall used to be the captain on the ISLAND QUEEN – his grandson was in the pilothouse with Johnny Dobbs because, you know, I thought he wanted to be a riverman, but wound up he didn't. But anyway, he was up there with him and he said, 'I don't know just exactly what happened.' I said, 'Were you asleep?' 'No,' he said, 'I was sitting there in a chair, I looked up and there was that low superstructure. By that time Cap had done stopped her and was backing, but he was too close. He went on in and hit the bridge anyway.' He broke the mast off, my gangplank went in the river, searchlight fell down on the lower deck, and both smokestacks was laying back on a 45° angle. That's when she stopped. It didn't knock 'em off, but they were on about a 45° angle. Well, I got up and I thought, 'Ohhh, whoa, what happened now?' It didn't throw me out of bed. Like I said, he done had her pretty well stopped, but she went on in there and knocked the mast off and bent the smokestacks back. It sure woke me up in a hurry, I promise you that. Well, I thought what am I gonna do now about my gangplank? My



At Knoxville, TN after collision with bridge span at Fort Loudoun on Tennessee River, March 27, 1957. From editor's collection.

cable that went from the stage hoist steam engine down in the hold, the cable was still hooked on to it. But it had no blocks or anything to pick it up with. I couldn't pick it up cause the boom pole was in the river. Only thing I knew to do was I took some five-gallon paint thinner cans and a couple old wooden life floats, and I lashed them to this cable, then cut the cable and throwed it overboard. I had about five or six buoys on it. I thought, well, if a boat or something comes along and tears one of 'em up, maybe by the time somebody comes by there'll still be one of them buoys on it. Sure enough, we got a little sand and gravel outfit to come over the next day. He had a derrick boat and they got ahold of that cable and they picked it up and tried to get it to the bank, but their derrick boat wasn't big enough. They got it pretty well to the bank. They had it in about fifteen foot of water when we come back down the river and picked it up. Anyway, when we got to Knoxville, John Thomas was another one of my pilots. He lived in Knoxville, and he worked for a rigging outfit there some time ago. He got them to come down and they put me on a new mast, a new boom pole, put my rigging all back on to pick my stage up when I got back to Fort Loudoun. We stayed in Knoxville six days, I believe it was. Had six day and night trips there. And I'll never forget the *Knoxville Journal* had a picture of us, the boat, with the smokestacks laying back at a 45° angle. It said, 'Wrecked but Ready.' That was the headline. But I never missed a trip. We built us a little portable gangway down the bank and made a little landing at the right level for the boat, and the people come down and we had a little portable gangway over to that stairway we made. And that's how we loaded the people on and off the boat. Never missed a trip. And I never will forget them headlines said 'Wrecked but Ready.' ”

The capstan, bits, and cavels are part of the deck fittings used to land the boat and make her lines fast. This is the area where the Mate and deckhands held sway at the beginning and end of each trip. In her final seasons, the AVALON's deck crew included Leroy Battoe, "Shorty" Robinson, Donnie Allender, and Don Sanders, along with watchman Harold Donelson. The AVALON had the bluff, rounded bow characteristic of ferryboats, and not until Alan Bates designed renovations in 1968 for the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE would the

head of the boat acquire a longer, roomier, and more streamlined look. His design also took the boxy sponsons and faired them into her hull.

In a night time view, the photographer caught captain and mate out on the head of boat before



Mate with deck crew above, and below with watchman Harold Donelson. Bottom picture shows departure from Cincinnati.



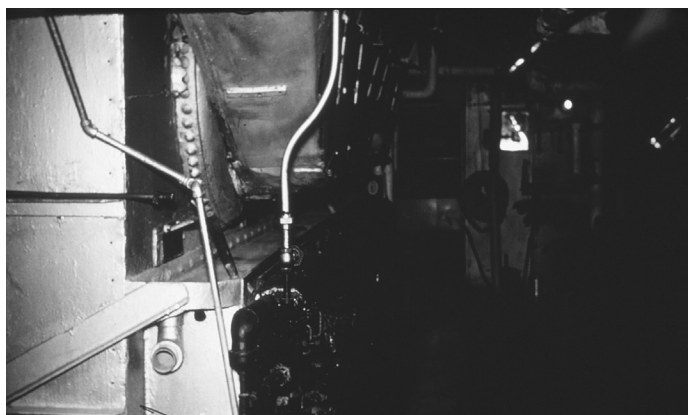
the Moonlite departed. The shorter pipe at center enclosed the wire cable of the stage falls which led down into a bow compartment below deck. That cable was wound around the drum of the Dake Engine Co. stage hoist engine. After decades of use, the engine required frequent repair, and on a few occasions had to be removed from the hold for rebuilding. Immediately opposite the ticket booth was the main stairway leading up to the boiler deck, location of the concession stands and dance floor. Painted on the bulkhead to the right of the stairwell was a large map titled "Territory Covered by the Steamer AVALON", showing all the cities and rivers visited by the boat.

Walking back along the main deck guards, we soon come to the open doorway of the fire box where the fireman tended the furnaces and boilers. Here were the three boilers and oil-fired burners from the GORDON C. GREENE, the second set of replacements for her original battery of Western Rivers' boilers. The original Rees' boilers had been replaced by a trio taken from the towboat CITY OF HELENA after that boat burned at Cairo in 1937. They might have been placed aboard either at St. Louis or Cairo, or more likely at the Mound City shipyard just five miles upstream from Cairo. The GORDON's boilers took their place 17 years later, having been built new by the Acme Boiler Works of Gallipolis in 1941. Once placed on the boat in late 1953, they remained in service for another 13 years. They were allowed 200 psi, and according to records in the boat's logbook, burned an average of 1,525 gallons or nearly 28 barrels of number 6 oil a day. The AVALON's firemen were Ed Smith and Charles "Bubba" Chinn, both of whom went over to the DELTA QUEEN in 1962 when Steamer Avalon, Inc. ceased operations.

Looking at photos like the one at the top of the opposite page, it's hard to believe that the boat was cleaner and more environmentally friendly as an oil-fired boat than in her coal-fired days. But handling the fuel oil was definitely much easier work and cleaner than coal. Access to good fuel was not always convenient. A good grade of coal was hard to find on the lower Mississippi, and the



Captain and Mate on head of boat before Moonlite departs.

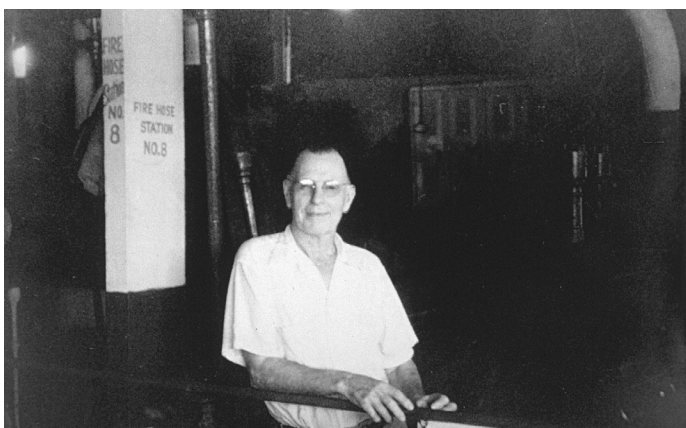


AVALON boilers and burners from GORDON C. GREENE



heavy, black “Bunker C” oil was not available at all river towns. When the boat was lucky, she could refuel from a dock like Boswell’s below Cincinnati or Stoll Oil Company in Louisville. However, at many other river cities the oil had to be trucked in by tanker, and kept hot enough so that it would flow through the hose from the tanker to the boat’s fuel bunkers. Molo Oil Company in Dubuque was a fuel supplier for the AVALON on the Upper Mississippi, where the oil was trucked down to the landing. Some towns like St. Paul frowned upon parking a tanker on a busy highway adjacent to the boat landing while fueling operations proceeded.

The steamer had several chief engineers and assistants during her AVALON years, including Courtney Ellis, pictured below. Chief Ellis had been second engineer on the Streckfus sidewheeler QUINCY in the late teens, and later served on the IDLEWILD. Other engineers on the boat were Joe Kennen, Fred Barrow, Scott Bruce, Jerry Critchfield, Ray Gill, Cecil Faudree, Clarence McKinley, Fred Shearer, John and Jasper Sidell, Kenton Taylor, Floyd “Skyjack” Turner, and Urbie Williams.



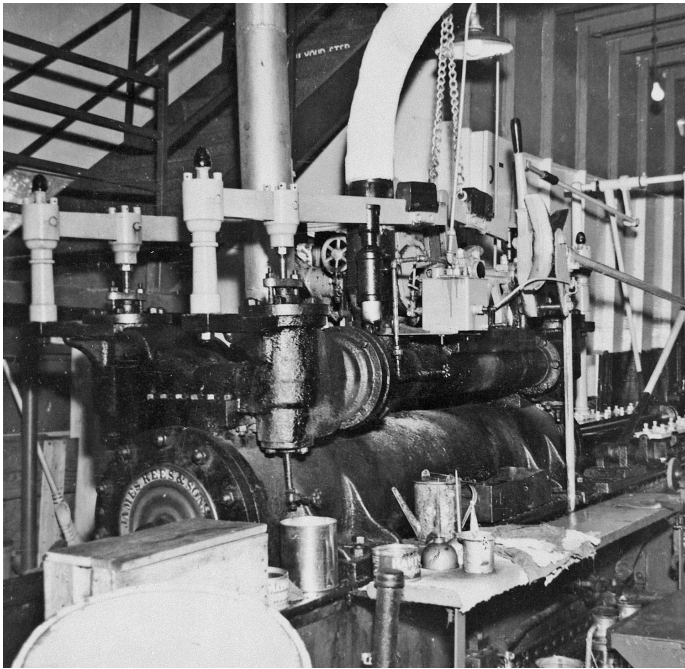
Chief engineer Courtney Ellis. Photo from Murphy Library.

At the after end of the engineroom against the stern bulkhead were the tool rooms and the boat’s paint locker. Just forward and between the engines was the boat’s steam DC generator for supplying all electric power aboard, whose whine was the constant backdrop to the chuffing of the engines and the clank of the valve gear. Any engineer worth his salt had his own supply of pipe and pipe fittings available for making “improvements” in his engineroom, tweaking the piping layout to his own liking.

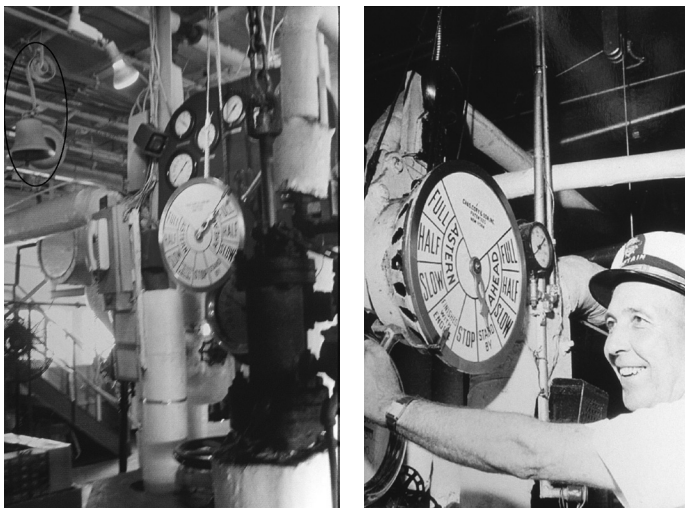


Tool room, paint locker, steam dynamo at rear of engineroom.

The heart and soul of the AVALON were her vintage 19th century steam engines. No one knows where they came from prior to being placed on the IDLEWILD in 1914, but this much is certain. They were built by James Rees and Sons at Pittsburgh, and because the name Pittsburgh on the cylinder heads was spelled without an “h” on the end, that may date their manufacture to sometime between 1890 and 1911. However, there is also written evidence in an old inspection booklet that they may date to 1872, while engineer Clarence McKinley is quoted in a newspaper story that the engines were built in 1878. Whatever the date of their manufacture, they are high pressure engines with a 16-inch diameter cylinder and a 6 ½ -foot stroke, developing about 400 horsepower. Typical of old high pressure engines, the boat scaped on the roof through two scape pipes located well aft on her hurricane roof. But sometime, most likely around 1931, the exhaust of the engines was re-routed through a newly installed feedwater heater, and she lost her scape pipes. The engines’ exhaust was redirected up the inside of the smokestacks, and remained there throughout her AVALON years. The boat was originally equipped with old-style engineroom



Starboard engine. The origin of these Rees high pressure engines remains a mystery. Photo from Murphy Library.



Engine room telegraph from GORDON C. GREENE, and original engine room jingle bell in extreme upper left corner. Photo from Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisconsin - La Crosse

“jingle bells”, an arrangement of bell pulls in the pilothouse connected to a group of bells near the engineer’s station at the throttle, used by the pilot for signaling speed and direction of the engines. In 1954, the telegraph system from the GORDON C. GREENE was installed in her engine room and pilothouse, and perhaps her throttle valve as well which dated back to the old packet FERD HEROLD. However, the boat’s original engine room bells were kept as auxiliaries.

Forward of the engine room on the starboard side was the cookhouse for the crew. The old cookhouse



Deckroom with dining tables for officers and crew located just aft of cookhouse, boilers and pumps.

had been raised above the level of the main deck, where the crew would go to get their food and then take it upstairs to the dance floor tables to eat. But when the boat was converted to oil, space for officer and crew dining tables was available in the deck room just forward of the engine room.

The tillers for the boat’s three rudders ran on a semi-circular track just forward of the stern transom, rigged up to the boat’s steam steering gear. In front of that track was a large curved sign which read “STEAMER AVALON” in big, shaded block letters. The superbly-designed stern rake of the boat earned her a reputation for backing well, and Alan Bates put the shape of that stern to good use in his design of the steamer NATCHEZ in 1974. Crammed into the engine room were the old-fashioned doctor, steam-powered dynamo, fire pumps and water pumps. All of this machinery shared space with electrical circuit boards, steam gauges, throttle, reversing lever, ship-up jack, steam steering rig, and the two engines with their



patented valve gear and Rees cut-off. Gliding back and forth on the slides atop the cylinder timbers, the crossheads linked up to the pitmans which turned the cranks out on the sternwheel. And sitting above the stern rake, conveniently placed above a hatch cover over a bilge compartment, stood a small iron cage serving as the boat's jail. The engineroom was undoubtedly the place on the whole boat that was at once the noisiest, hottest, and most frequently visited by passengers.

Supported by cylinder timbers and flanked on either side by the fantail, sat the boat's sternwheel. Built of white oak, each set of sixteen arms and three wood circles were banded together by iron circles with fillers and keys. The arms were held in position by an iron flange attached to the hexagonal paddlewheel shaft. Six sets of arms supported the bucket planks which had a two-foot dip, and were 24 feet long. U-shaped stirrup bolts fastened the buckets to the wheel arms, tightening them up against battens. The wheel was 19 feet in diameter, and turned at 12-15 rpm when the boat was moving from town to town. Ernie Meyer, always the master promoter and businessman, had the words "Visit Our Souvenir Stand" painted on the flat surface of the bucket boards, so that as passengers looked down onto the wheel as it turned, they were constantly bombarded with this advertising. Considering the large crowds of people who stood watching that wheel turn, fascinated by its power and hypnotizing rhythm, this was the best place on the whole boat to post an advertisement.



Sternwheel was built of white oak, 24 feet long by 19 feet in diameter, with 16 buckets having a two-foot dip and an ad.

At the top of the main stairs was the forward end of the boiler deck and the dance floor. Along the port side and across the bow was a concession stand featuring food and drink. Excursion boat popcorn was liberally salted, and generated good sales for soft drinks and beer on the boat. To further insure good beverage sales, the Chief also made sure that the water pressure on the boat's drinking fountain was adjusted to allow only a meager trickle. A large sign listing concession items and their prices covered the middle two windows at the bow. Forward along the starboard side of the boiler deck was the souvenir stand, selling a variety of novelties such as hats, hand-painted paper fans, decals, felt pennants, balloons, souvenir plates, and post cards. Souvenir hats which had defective printing of the boat's name were oftentimes given away free to the first fifty or so children as they boarded, and served as great advertising and greatly increased hat sales on the trip. Pictured in the early fifties photo below are Capt. and Mrs. Wagner with their daughter Sandy, Purser E. P Hall and his wife, Steward Louie Rudd and his wife and granddaughter, and Clarke Hawley, popcorn popper and calliope player.

Adjacent to the souvenir stand and tucked behind the stack jacket was the purser's office. Formica-topped tables with chairs lined the perimeter of the dance floor with smaller tables scattered about, while the after end featured a raised bandstand behind which was a large painted mural sporting a musical motif reading "Cruising Down the River on the Steamer AVALON." Restrooms were located on either side of the bandstand across the stern. The old skylight transoms were still uncovered above and behind the bandstand, and contained a frosted



AVALON crew at souvenir stand on boiler deck. Souvenir hats sold for 60¢ according to the sign behind Mrs. Hall.



The boat's 33 by 96-foot maple dance floor looking toward stern. By this time, the pressed tin ceiling had been replaced with more modern acoustical tile.

glass design in the shape of 8-petaled flowers. Two large stairwells led up to the hurricane roof at the after end of the ballroom. They had been added in the 1956 season to replace a smaller stairwell midship on the port side.

After going up the port stairs and looking forward at the top, a view of the hurricane roof and texas deck appears above right. A red-and-white "candy stripe" on the roof trim and edges of the pilothouse roof was used in the 1955-57 seasons. Beginning in 1958, it was repainted white, perhaps to better reflect the 339 light bulbs that outlined her decks and pilothouse at night. Many long tables and chairs filled the forward and after portions of the skylight roof, with park-style benches inboard along the hurricane roof. At the after end of the texas cabin was a small concession stand and bar for serving soft drinks and beer. Another notable example of Ernie Meyer's business acumen and cost-cutting was the deck covering on the hurricane and skylight roofs. Old canvas conveyor belts being replaced by the U. S. Playing Card Company in Cincinnati were acquired by Steamer Avalon Inc. After overlapping their narrow, frayed edges at the seams, the rest of the canvas was in good condition and made durable deck covering in lieu of the canvas duck that was typically used on steamboats. After the AVALON ceased operation, these discarded conveyor belts continued to provide a source of deck coverings for the DELTA QUEEN into the late sixties.



Above: Hurricane roof and texas looking forward on port side in 1957. Below: Three years later, the old wire mesh railing around the edge of the hurricane roof had been replaced with sturdier steel bulwarks in this same location looking aft.



At the start of her 1956 season, the AVALON's lifeboats and davits, and the old-style tank type life floats on the roof, were replaced with three life rafts stacked on platforms opposite the pilothouse and extending out over the hurricane roof. As the IDLEWILD, she originally carried three large wooden lifeboats on each side at hurricane roof level, but with her passenger service at Louisville in the early 30s, they were raised above the hurricane roof to provide more deck space there, probably around 1931. Her cabin had been shortened by the

time the pictures to the left were taken. Access to the roof and pilothouse was by a steep ladder on the port side of her texas cabin. In 1960, the old wire-mesh railing around the hurricane roof was replaced with steel bulwarks. Those red wooden ladder-back deck chairs were built specially for the boat by Bert Fenn's Tell City Furniture Company.

The AVALON's three-chime whistle has been the object of some discussion. A story was circulated at one time that each of the chimes came from a different steamboat: the PRINCESS, the AMERICA, and a third boat that ran out of Pittsburgh in the early 1900s. Even Capt. Wagner was quoted to that effect. The noted riverman and historian Capt. Fred Way, Jr., in discussing the origin of the whistle with J. Mack Gamble, made the observation that he believed the boat still carried the same whistle she came out with, and that version is probably the most accurate one. Since the AMERICA ran up until 1930, her whistle could not possibly have been placed on the IDLEWILD in 1914. But this much is certain: it has a beautiful, mellow, distinctive sound – an F major chord – that was immediately recognizable by literally hundreds of thousands of residents in river cities.



The front of the AVALON's pilothouse had large sliding glass windows, which replaced her original old-time breastboard early on in her career, probably at the same time as a door was installed

at the rear of the pilothouse. Tiller lines running back to the engineroom exited the front sides of the pilothouse in the wooden boxes on either side, and a water tank on the roof sat immediately in front. With the installation of those tiller line boxes, her old "Safety First" signs on each side of the pilothouse were removed.



In this pilothouse view, we see veteran Ohio River pilot Capt. J. Emory Edgington on watch. The metal visor over the front has not yet been installed.



In this view taken in back of the pilothouse, we catch a glimpse of another longtime Ohio River pilot, Capt. Lawrence "Bo" Allen on the left, standing beside New Albany calliapist Harry Stocksdales and Capt. Wagner. Murphy Library photo.

A cord from inside the pilothouse led up to the bell on the forward end of the roof. That roof bell was cast in 1899 by E. W. Van Duzen at the Buckeye Bell Foundry in Cincinnati. There is no information on where the bell served before it was placed on the boat in 1914.

The steamer's 8-foot maple pilot wheel was the main feature of the pilothouse. Two long handles were used to turn the wheel, which could spin as fast as the blades of an electric fan. A foot brake

pedal on either side of the wheel lay on the floor, and pressed a leather shoe against the wheel to slow it and bring it to a stop. There was a striker which traveled on the tiller line to sound a gong when the rudder was approaching hard down. The radar installation was rented by the company and placed on the boat in 1956, along with short wave radio to provide communication with river traffic and locks. The AVALON's radio call sign was WF 6270.

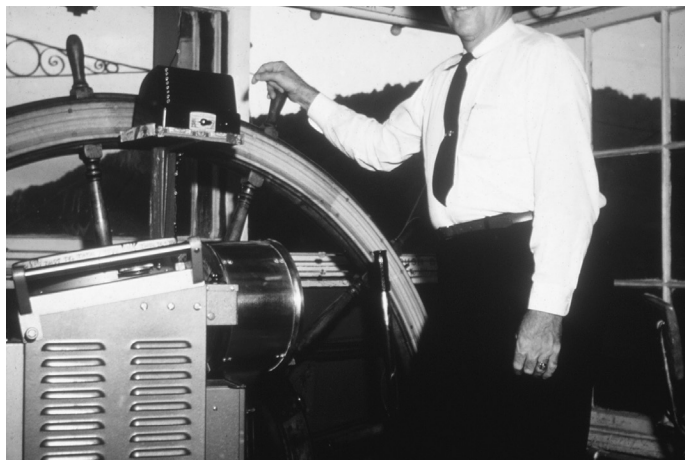


AVALON's eight-foot maple pilot wheel. With the steam steering assist controlled by the two long handles, this wheel could whirl like a fan and pack a wallop. Capt. Harry Fitzgerald learned that lesson the hard way on the IDLEWILD when his jacket was caught on a spoke and he was thrown across the pilothouse against the window sill, breaking his collarbone.



In this candid shot, Capt. Wagner takes a moment to relax during a Moonlite trip before heading downstairs to make sure everything is going all right.

Noticeably lacking across the rear of the AVALON's pilothouse was a lazy bench for dignitaries or assorted kibitzers, visiting river people, and anyone who might be lucky enough to spend a few minutes swapping stories with the pilot or just listening to the latest gossip and river news.



On the floor to the right of Capt. Wagner was the foot pedal for the boat's whistle. Although he could blow the whistle with ease using one foot on the treadle, older pilots like Capt. Roy Wethern had to bear down with their full body weight. Perched above the pilotwheel was Capt. Wagner's mascot, a stuffed toy monkey named Jo-Jo.

About midway toward the stern on the texas roof sat the boat's 1930s-vintage Nichol steam calliope with its 32 brass keys connected by wires to the poppet valves beneath each of the copper whistles. Weighing in at around 300 pounds, and played at about 35-40 pounds pressure, this instrument was responsible for announcing the boat's arrival and impending departure before excursions, and could be heard up to five miles away.



The AVALON's usual excursion season started in early April with trips on the Cumberland River to Nashville and the Tennessee River to Knoxville. By May and June she was tramping on the Upper Ohio between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh with high school and college prom trips and on up to Charleston on the Kanawha River. After spending a week to ten days at Pittsburgh, she headed back

Perhaps the boat's most surprising high school charter occurred on June 7, 1961. A Mr. Robert Hammett signed a contract with Betty Blake for a school excursion at St. Marys, WV. Betty didn't realize she was dealing with a 14-year old boy until she called to confirm the trip and discovered that Mr. Hammett was still in school. Realizing her mistake, Betty told

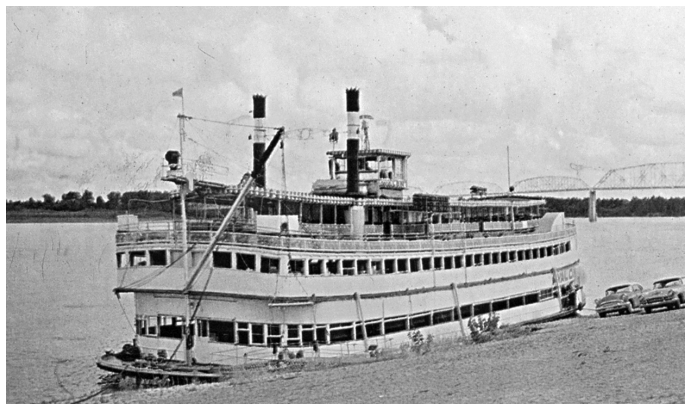


Capt. Wagner to be prepared to drop on down to Parkersburg and run an unscheduled Moonlite in case no one showed up. Mr. Hammett (later to become Capt. Roddy Hammett) had promoted the trip well: 687 passengers showed up, this in a town of 1,000 residents! Poster image courtesy of Jeff Spear.

down the Ohio toward Cairo. By July and August she was headed to the Upper Mississippi.

It's 180 long, slow, sparsely populated miles from Cairo up to St. Louis before the steamer reached excursion boat paradise. In the view at top right, the boat is en route and landed at Cape Girardeau, MO, days before her arrival at scores of river towns lying close to each other in the stretch between St. Louis and St. Paul. It was at Cape Girardeau where the boat's young calliope player decided to deal with a problem that had been plaguing him all summer. Back in the days of Streckfus excursion steamers, Capt. Roy Streckfus had attached a large umbrella to the boat's landing bridge to shield him from the hot rays of the summer sun. With that historic precedent, Doc Hawley came up with what seemed a brilliant idea, as he remembered that day.

"It was a tar paper roof and Upper Mississippi in the summer – and it was HOT. And I was getting pretty brown. You know, I'd have to wear a short sleeve shirt and so my arms were getting burned, my face was getting burned cause they didn't have good sun shade back then. So I said to Capt. Wagner, 'Boy, it'd be sure nice if I could get an umbrella, a beach umbrella or a patio umbrella, something to put up over that thing to keep the sun



At Cape Girardeau, en route to St. Louis.

off. And then if it started raining, I wouldn't have to quit and go get a raincoat.' So he said, 'Alright, we'll get one. You go up the hardware store.' I went up there at Cape Girardeau, I think it was, to get that thing. I got the umbrella, brought it down, and we hooked it on the side of the keyboard and I played about three songs. The steam and the water went straight up, hit the ribs and the canvas, and it just dripped right back down. It was like standing in the middle of a shower turned on low. Drip, drip, drip, drip ... water just running all over. The steam condensed and ran down the ribs. It was not only running off the end of the ribs, it was running off the middle of the thing! So that didn't last. But I didn't start complaining. I thought maybe this is just a short-lived thing. Maybe the humidity's extra high today or something. But after the next couple of days I said, 'Come on back and look what's happening.' Cap said, "Well, hell! We bought this thing. Now I'm gonna have to tell Ernie Meyer we paid six dollars – six dollars!" Of course, this was in the fifties, you know. 'Six dollars we paid for this thing and we can't use it.' I said, 'Well, maybe you could take it out on the bridge and put it up over the bridge.' Cap just looked at me and grumbled, 'Nawww ...' So that was the end of the sun shade!"



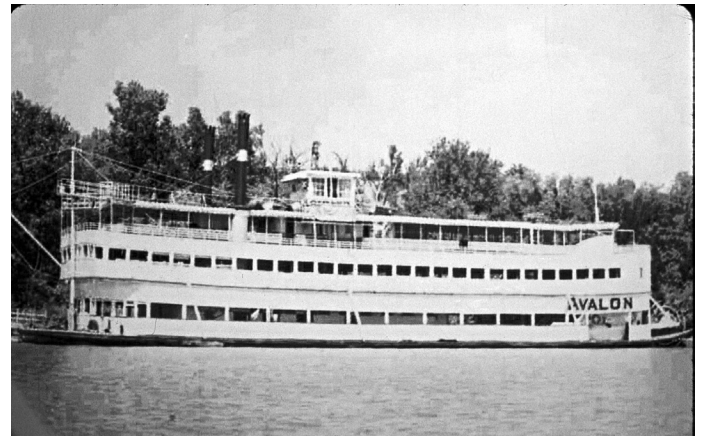
Steam bath on a hot tar paper roof. Murphy Library photo.



Upon arrival in St. Louis, the AVALON would refuel, but the boat ran very few excursions there or in New Orleans, since Streckfus Steamers considered these cities their exclusive territory. However, as these were the days when Streckfus still carried only white passengers on most of their ADMIRAL cruises, the AVALON provided several other opportunities for blacks to enjoy a river excursion while she was in St. Louis. In appreciation for providing those trips, Streckfus assisted the Cincinnati boat in making local arrangements for fuel and supplies. Consequently, the AVALON did not spend nearly as much time in St. Louis as she did at all the other major river cities on her itinerary.

Alton, IL, was the boat's first excursion date above St. Louis, and then came Grafton, at the mouth of the Illinois River. This was a favorite stop for the crew where an annual catfish fry was held in Pere Marquette State Park, hosted by Walter Wilson, a garage owner from Grafton and friend of the boat. Mark Twain's boyhood home at Hannibal was next, followed by excursions at Quincy, Keokuk, and Fort Madison. It was at Quincy, IL that the AVALON survived the worst storm in her career on June 28, 1960. A tornado touched down nearby with 115 mph winds as the boat lay below the Quincy Water Works. A culvert discharging the storm's floodwaters threatened to swamp the boat until Capt. Wagner had the hatch covers removed

on the main deck, allowing the water to run into the bilge where he had a siphon and the boat's bilge pumps working full time. The boat escaped with broken window glass on the ballroom deck and in the pilothouse. Quincy was also the home of "Bucky" Batchler, the most famous "jumper" in the AVALON's history. He would board the boat each year disguised in such a way that the crew wouldn't recognize him, and before the excursion was over, he would jump overboard. Five or six people would jump into the river from the boat each season, according to Capt. Wagner.



On up the Mississippi. Top: Grafton, IL for the crew picnic and catfish fry at Pere Marquette State Park shown in Center. Bottom: Excursions at Hannibal, Mark Twain's hometown.



Burlington, IA: watermelon capital of the Upper Mississippi.

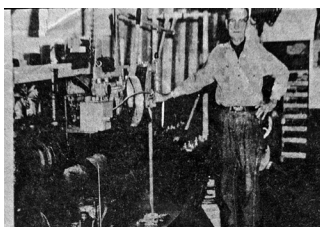
The next stops were at Burlington and Muscatine, IA. Muscatine was well-known for its large and extremely sweet, juicy watermelons which thrived in the sandy soil of the region. And it was in Burlington where Capt. Wagner spotted a newspaper ad with a coupon for watermelons – 3 for \$1. So up the hill went deckhand Harry Ricoh with Capt. Wagner’s \$10 bill and the coupon in his pocket with orders to buy some for the boat. Later that day, First Mate Hawley asked Wagner what he wanted him to do with the watermelons. They were tucked into every nook and cranny of the cookhouse, piled up along the guards, stacked on the barricades, and rolling all over the place. Wagner took a quick look at the mountain of watermelons, tracked down his deckhand and asked him how many he bought. “Why, \$10 worth,” he replied. And the farmer had even thrown in a bunch of free ones for good measure! Cap let out a roar, and during the rest of the boat’s Upper Mississippi season the crew ate watermelon for breakfast, lunch, and supper. They even sold slices at the concession stand. But try as they might, they just couldn’t get rid of that boatload of melons. Capt. Wagner never sent Harry Ricoh grocery shopping again.

After a stop at Muscatine, the AVALON arrived in the Quad Cities and landed at Rock Island. This was the largest metropolitan area between St. Louis and St. Paul, and the boat always played a three-day weekend stand here to large crowds. Rock Island had been the home of Capt. John Streckfus and his Acme Packet Co., forerunner to the iconic Streckfus Steamboat Line of excursion boats. While landed at Rock Island, Judy Patsch, her parents and great grandmother would sit on folding stools under the big “Ferry” landing sign to listen to the boat’s

calliope concerts before the trips departed. She recalled that cars on shore would honk their horns in appreciation between numbers. Another young steamboat fan who came down to the Rock Island landing to visit with the crew was Jerry Canavit, who later chronicled the history of the steamer LONE STAR of Builder’s Sand & Gravel Co. in Moline, the last operating steam towboat on the upper Mississippi.



STEAMER AVALON POPULAR HERE — The big river excursion boat is shown just prior to casting off at the Rock Island levee for a trip that carried more than 1,200 passengers down the Mississippi al-
most to Buffalo a couple of Sundays ago. The boat is always popular in this area and is prized by thousands each year. (Staff Photo)



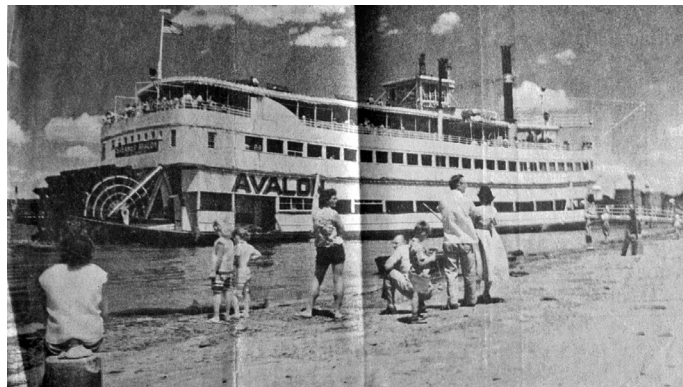
THEY MAKE THE AVALON ‘TICK’ each summer in this community. The Chief Engineer Clarence McKinley engines were built back in 1878 and stand by and all the two 60-horsepower power steam engines which drive the Steamer Avalon up and down the river. (Staff Photo)



ALL READY FOR TRIP DOWN THE RIVER — These Rock Islanders are shown as they anxiously awaited the start of their ride on the Steamer Avalon. (Staff Photo)



Top and above left: AVALON's 1957 excursions at the Quad Cities. Above right: Calliope concerts at the Ferry Landing.



1961 visit shown in full page color Quad Cities Times photo.



Through swing span of CNW RR Bridge at Clinton, IA and landed at city front with its signature lighthouses.



Continuing upriver from the Quad Cities, the AVALON's next stop was at Clinton, IA where she passed through the swing span of the Chicago Northwestern Railroad Bridge below town before making her landing at the city front with its distinctive lighthouses. At Savanna, IL, the boat had a good friend in Irvin Shrake. A conductor for the Milwaukee Railroad, Irv Shrake had become friends with Capt. Roy Streckfus when the CAPITOL cruised the Upper Mississippi. Years later, when the AVALON began her excursions there, Shrake also befriended that boat and her crew. On at least two occasions, he helped them out of a tight spot. One year the AVALON had a charter out of Savanna sponsored by a veteran's group. After an incident with some teenagers on the trip, word quickly spread around town that the boat was no longer welcome there. Unaware of what had

gone on, Betty Blake made the rounds in Savanna the next year attempting to secure bookings for the boat. Irate residents gruffly suggested that she pack up and get out of town. As it happened, the city's chief of police was Irv Shrake's brother. A frantic phone call from Betty to Mr. Shrake smoothed matters over, and Betty was allowed to continue arranging bookings for the AVALON. In fact, she sold several very successful school charter trips from Savanna in later years. On another occasion in 1955, the boat arrived at Savanna in the early morning hours and landed. However, during the night the wheel had run over some submerged stumps down in Pool 13. Capt. Wagner tells what happened when he was awakened a few hours later that morning.

"The mate on there was Stewart Williams from up on the Illinois River at Hardin, IL. He come and called me. He said, 'Cap, you better get up and come look at this wheel.' I looked at my watch and it was about five o'clock and I thought, 'Well, it must be pretty bad or he wouldn't a called me at this time of the morning to come and look at that wheel.' I went back there and looked over the back end, and I couldn't believe it. We checked a little bit closer. There was NOT ONE bucket plank that went from one side to the other! If it wasn't busted between one circle, it was busted between the next. There wasn't one bucket plank that went all the way through the wheel, believe it or not. But being since they were staggered, it held together. It didn't fall down. Now, I had Art Quinn on there as a second mate. He'd run that ferryboat at Rock Island and been a steamboatman. Stewart Williams had been a steamboatman a lot longer than me. Urbie Williams, my chief engineer, he'd been an old steamboatman all of his life. Archie Maples at the time was one of my pilots and Roy Wethern was the other pilot. They said, 'Cap, I don't see anything to do but let's try and get on up to Dubuque and let the shipyard up there try to fix it.' I said, 'Well, I'm afraid it'll fall down before we get to Dubuque.' 'Well,' they said, 'that's a possibility.' I had met Irvin Shrake the year before. He come down and brought me some *Waterway Journals*. I got acquainted with him and let him ride up to Bellevue or somewhere, you know, up the river there. But anyway, he come down that morning early and he shook his head and couldn't get over it. Well, I guess I had maybe ten or twelve bucket plank and a half dozen wheel

Rebuilding the Wheel at Savanna



Approaching Savanna, IL below Mississippi Palisades Park.

arms. There wasn't too many wheel arms tore up. So he said, 'That sure looks bad,' and he said, 'When it was the Idy-wile they tore the wheel up pretty bad like that and went up to Dubuque and had it fixed.' I said, 'Well, really, I guess that's what I should do, but I'm gonna try and fix it.' He said, 'I know a man out here that's got a sawmill that'll saw you any kind of lumber you want.' I said, 'How 'bout you gettin' him and send him on down here? See if he can get me a few more bucket plank and a few more wheel arms before I leave here.' So he did. Doc was playing the calliope and he run the popcorn machine at that time. He gets out there and gathers up a few kids, gives 'em a free pass for the afternoon ride to come on and help him clean the boat up. That way I took the deckhands and anybody that was able-bodied, took 'em back there and gave 'em a saw, an axe or something to chop all the ragged stuff out of that wheel. And we put four bucket plank on before we made the afternoon ride. We put two on, then turned the wheel over, then put two more on so I had four bucket plank that went from one side to the other. And then all the ragged stuff, we chopped it off. And each day we'd put in two or three bucket plank and a wheel arm, or whatever it needed. But that guy that Mr. Shrake went and got, he come down and took a measurement of what I needed, and before I left that evening, why he had all the material down there and we stacked it out there on the guard on the side of the boat. And each day we'd do as much as we could. Now, that was all green lumber, oak. The day before we put it in there, the birds was singin' in that tree. Same way we did down there at Tell City



with the DELTA QUEEN when we had to rebuild that wheel almost when they got on that sandbar there at the foot of Cannelton Lock. But anyway, when we got to St. Paul, I had the wheel pretty well rebuilt and back in shape. Never lost one trip. Well, when we got back that fall into Cincinnati - course, the insurance company paid Meyer for the material and everything. They paid so much for rebuilding the wheel, but they wouldn't pay for any revenue he lost. But they did pay for the wheel. So when we got back to Cincinnati, me and two more colored guys rebuilt that wheel from scratch."

Mr. Shrake was the boat's unofficial "Lake Pepin Pilot." He often rode the AVALON between his stints as conductor on the Milwaukee Road, and was given the honor of steering her through the middle of Lake Pepin. At the beginning of each season, he would send new officer hatbands to Capt. Wagner and Doc.

After excursions at Bellevue, IA, the AVALON would arrive at Dubuque. Here the boat would refuel, and receive her third quarterly inspection by the Coast Guard Marine Inspection Office which was located in the Federal Building uptown. Capt. Frank McCaffrey had been the longtime inspector at Dubuque when it was still called the Steamboat Inspection Office. He retired in 1947, and served for a time as one of the AVALON's Upper Mississippi trip pilots, the first pilot to take the boat up the St. Croix River. He was replaced by Capt. John Schmoker, who gave all the inspections for the AVALON through 1958. Cmdr. Arthur Lawrence, formerly in the Cincinnati office, became the officer in charge of marine inspection the next year, and he made the final three inspections of the boat at Dubuque. The public landing at the mouth of the Ice Harbor was adjacent to the Inland Molasses Company terminal, where sorghum was being pumped out of tank barges for transport by tanker trucks. That sweet smell of molasses mingled with the traditional smells from the steamboat, and is still recalled to this day by local AVALON passengers and crew. Tied up to shore inside the harbor sat Dick and

Marian Bissell's houseboat. On many occasions, the well-known Dubuque river pilot, author and playwright came down to the boat to visit with his old friend Capt. Roy Wethern. Dick had fond memories of listening to Fate Marable play "Dardanella" on the CAPITOL's calliope at this



Capt. Frank McCaffrey, OCMI at Dubuque and AVALON's first St. Croix River pilot.



Public Landing at mouth of the Ice Harbor in Dubuque.



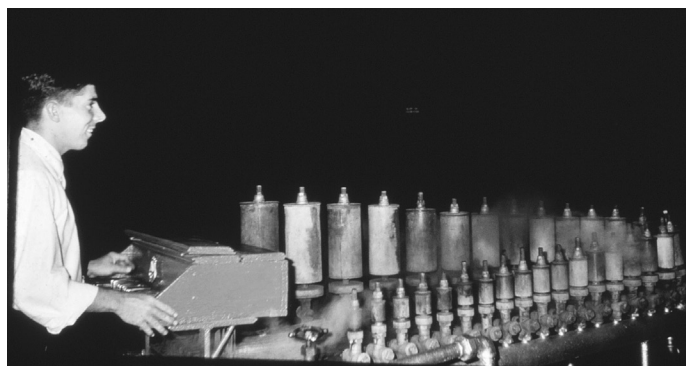
same spot back in the thirties. Among the groups which chartered the AVALON on several occasions was Roshek's Department Store, the largest department store in the state. In 1957 the store's employees took an all-day trip upriver through the lock, and during that trip Doc Hawley was asked to perform some calliope numbers for the board chairman John Roshek, his young son Tom, and their guests. When Doc was finished at the keyboard, Mr. Roshek slipped something into his hand, which the young crewman quickly tucked into the pocket of his uniform jacket without looking. He then took Tom on a tour of the pilothouse and the rest of the boat, and promptly forgot about what was in his jacket pocket. At the end of the season, when he absent-mindedly reached into the pocket of his jacket, he found a \$20 bill, the tip Mr. Roshek had given him that summer day. At the time, the Mate was only making about \$45 a week. The Dubuque Municipal Landing had welcomed the Streckfus boats in the 20s and 30s, the tourist boats GOLDEN EAGLE and GORDON C. GREENE in the late 40s

and into the early 50s. But as the decade of the fifties advanced, only the AVALON landed there in July or August, and eventually the DELTA QUEEN in September. Across the harbor from the landing, Dubuque Boat and Boiler Works was just beginning to produce a fleet of diesel powered, twin screw excursion boats, vaguely patterned after Mississippi steamboats, and dragging a fake paddlewheel behind. These imitations would very soon become the future of excursion boating. The first of many came out of the boatyard in 1959. Another river buff who was good friends with the boat's officers and with fireman Ed Smith, lived in Dubuque. He was Wilbert Hantelman, a city fireman who had decked on the Federal Barge Line steam towboats in his younger days. Bert was always at the locks and landings around Dubuque, and took many pictures of the AVALON and DELTA QUEEN. In the AVALON's final season, Dubuquer David Whitney was one of her Upper Mississippi and Illinois River pilots. Capt. Whitney had started his river career with the Federal Barge Line in the early twenties, piloting most of the sternwheel towboats of that company. Federal Barge Line had revived commercial traffic on the river above St. Louis after the packet and raftboat trades had died out, and several of those old steamboatmen served as trip pilots on the boat.

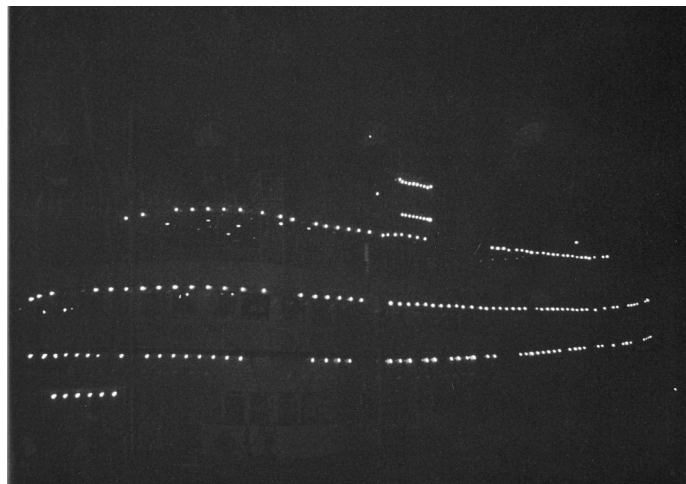
The next day the AVALON was running a double-header, carrying passengers from Cassville, WI and Guttenberg, IA, stopping at both towns to pick up passengers, and returning them to each city



Capt. David Whitney, Upper Mississippi and Illinois pilot.



Doc Hawley warms up calliope for Moonlite concert as the boat lies sparkling with hundreds of lights outlining her decks.



after the trip. This was common practice when two towns were fairly close together, especially if they were on opposite sides of the river. The same thing was done at McGregor, IA and Prairie du Chien, WI; and also at Wabasha, MN and Alma, WI. John Bickel, his wife Ruth, their son Corky, and their daughters were another group of river fans on the Upper Mississippi. John and Corky became



Landed below Lock 10 at Guttenberg, IA while running a double header from over at Cassville, WI.

good friends of the boat after they retrieved some AVALON deck chairs which had been pitched overboard during a Moonlite trip at Prairie du Chien. They had fished them out of the river and returned them the next morning. John had also been a good friend of Capt. Roy Streckfus on the CAPITOL during her final years on the Upper. After passing through the Milwaukee Railroad pontoon bridge at McGregor and Marquette, last one of its kind on the Upper Mississippi, the AVALON headed behind the island opposite McGregor. She entered the east channel and churned under the suspension bridge connecting the Iowa and Wisconsin shores to arrive at Prairie du Chien to pick up crowds from the Wisconsin side. The landing on St. Feriolo Island was adjacent to the grounds and mansion of historic Villa Louis, one-time home of Hercules Dousman, agent for John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company of pioneer days. A frequent visitor to the AVALON at Prairie du Chien was Don Rehm, who always brought his large photo album of steamboat pictures with him. In later years after the boat stopped running, he continued to visit on the DELTA QUEEN up at La Crosse. Don also made several on-site recordings of the AVALON's calliope, whistle, and bell when the boat was at Guttenberg and Prairie.



AVALON blows landing whistle below Marquette-Prairie du Chien suspension bridge upon arrival at St. Feriolo Island.



Under the Cass Street Bridge at La Crosse, WI.

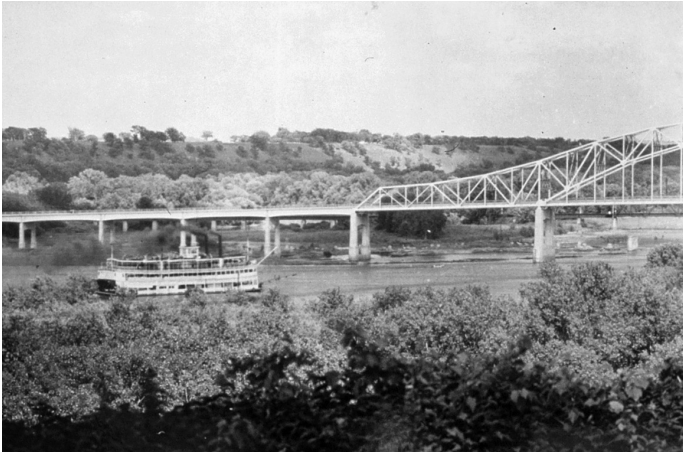
The next stop was La Crosse, WI, where the boat headed under the Cass Street Bridge to land at Riverside Park, one of the most beautiful landings and parks anywhere on the Upper Mississippi. A day later found the AVALON at Winona, MN, where local agent Ed Prosser arranged charters and sponsored trips for the boat. Her landing was near an old rafting steamboat which had been renamed JULIUS C. WILKIE when it was placed in the city's riverfront park in the mid-fifties. Upon departure upriver, the steamer ran another double header at Alma, WI and Wabasha, MN at the foot of Lake Pepin. It was at Wabasha that Jake Matthias, a friend of Capt. Wagner, brought an old steam whistle down to the boat and asked to have it connected to the steam line. The results, judging by the faces in a crew photo that was taken, were less than spectacular. Matthias also provided a wooden hull for a scale model of the AVALON that Doc was building at his home in Charleston, WV.



Landed at Winona, MN. Many of the boat's trips here and in the area had been booked by agent Ed Prosser. Photo courtesy of Winona County Historical Society.

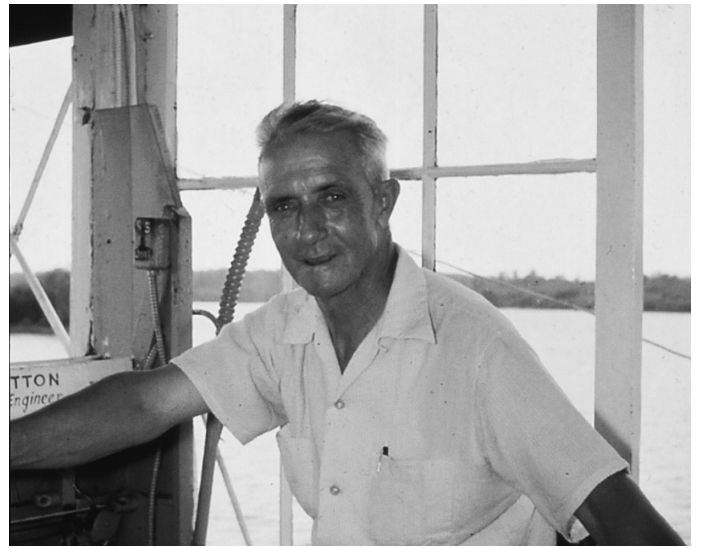
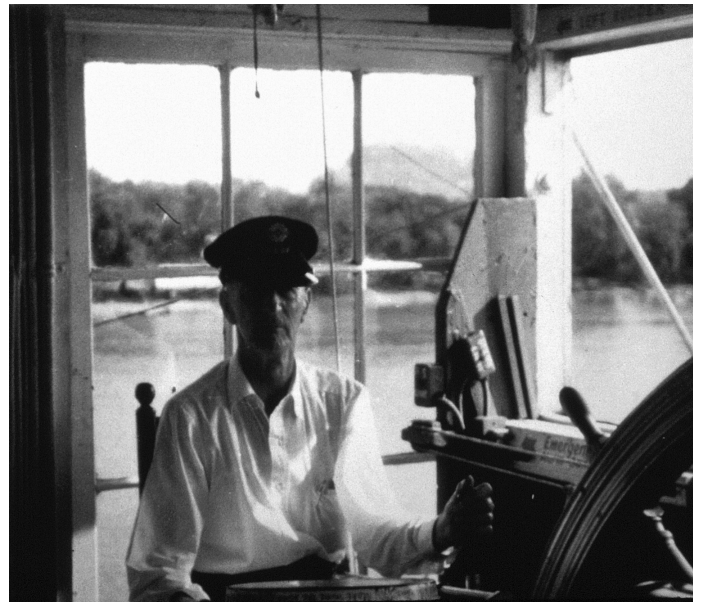


Above: Landed in Wabasha at the foot of Lake Pepin, for another double-header up to Alma, WI. **Below:** After cruising through the lake, the boat made excursions at Hastings, MN.



Leaving Wabasha, the boat headed on up through Lake Pepin, with no scheduled trips there. It was in Lake Pepin that one of the AVALON's veteran pilots, Capt. Roy Wethern, lost his mother and brother when his father's excursion boat, the SEA WING, had been caught in a tornado and overturned in 1890. Capt. Roy was the dean of Upper Mississippi pilots, and served on the boat along with Capt. Archie Maples, who had piloted the IDLEWILD when she was towing oil barges during World War II, and Capt. Tom Craig, who was also the boat's Missouri River pilot in 1958 and 1959. Those were the only times that the AVALON ventured up that treacherous river which had been her stomping grounds in the late twenties and thirties.

Above Lake Pepin excursions were made at Red Wing and at Hastings, MN, after which the AVALON headed up the beautiful St. Croix River for dates at Hudson and Stillwater. Finally arriving at St. Paul, the boat was based at Lambert Landing, foot of Jackson Street, the end of the line on her Upper Mississippi itinerary. Typically, she spent a week to ten days at St. Paul. Not having to travel



Trio of veteran Upper Mississippi River pilots on the AVALON were (top to bottom) Capt. Roy Wethern, Capt. Archie Maples, and Capt. Tom Craig.

from town to town or make locks during this extended stay, the mate and deck crew had time to do work in the wheel, scrub the sides of the boat, and catch up on painting and other maintenance. During her 1957 excursions at St. Paul, *National Geographic Magazine* writer and photographer Willard Price did a photo spread and feature story about the AVALON. Upper Mississippi pilot Roy Wethern was photographed in the pilothouse. He headed a list of notable pilots with license on the Upper: Billy Clark, Selby Crader, Tom Craig, John Knight, Archie Maples, Frank McCaffrey, Art Quinn, Clarence Schaffert, David Whitney, and Harry Woodruff.

One of the facts of life of excursion boating is that whenever crowds of people gather for an excursion, there is always the chance that a disturbance or fight could break out. One such occurrence was reported by the Associated Press in August 1960 while the boat was at St. Paul. A motorcycle gang was aboard the boat, but not wearing their motorcycle garb, and so their presence went undetected by the crew. When the boat returned to the landing, a rival gang was waiting for them, and a free-for-all broke out on the boat and at the landing, complete with fire hoses and riot squad. Cmdr. Lawrence, the Coast Guard Inspector from Dubuque who was in St. Paul at the time, made an investigation and cleared the boat of any blame in the incident. However, the melee continued to hang over the steamer like a cloud for the remainder of her time in St. Paul.

A classic portrait pictured the crew of the AVALON assembled on the bow at St. Paul in her 1958 season. The only person missing was Capt. Wethern, who had gone home to Diamond Bluff for the day. But three short years after that crew photo was taken, the AVALON's career as a tramp also came to an end. In comparing data from the steamer's entire 1961 season with just her Upper Mississippi portion of the season, it is apparent that the Upper river section of her itinerary was a viable, financially successful venture. Unfortunately, the same could not be said of her trips on the Tennessee, Cumberland, and lower Mississippi. And in comparing data from the boat's 1951 and 1961 Upper Mississippi seasons, the handwriting is on the wall. Although passenger counts remained good on the trips that were scheduled, they weren't good



Above: End of the line at St. Paul's Lambert Landing. **Below:** AP story of riot at Lambert Landing appeared in many papers.

200 Youngsters Defy Policemen on Avalon

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—A Mississippi River excursion cruise ended in a riot Sunday when about 200 youngsters, many of whom had been drinking, defied police in a battle lasting more than an hour.

Police were pelted with bottles, stones and beer cans. Fourteen young persons, including six girls, were taken into custody.

Several rioters, bystanders and police were injured, none seriously. A fire department squad turned high pressure water streams on the rioters, finally restoring order.

Police said the trouble started from a fight among a few youths in the dance hall section of the large sternwheeler, the Avalon. There were 1,547 passengers aboard, most of them under 21.

The battle reached its height when the boat docked at Lambert's Landing in St. Paul. About 20 St. Paul policemen joined 6 private policemen and a half dozen deckhands in attempting to control the milling youngsters.

Jack Puterbaugh, state liquor control commissioner who witnessed the riot, said he may move to impound the boat. Puterbaugh had assigned two agents to the boat to investigate whether Minnesota liquor laws were being violated.

Under Minnesota law drinking is prohibited by persons under 21. The boat sometimes cruises in waters within the boundaries of Wisconsin where beer can be legally served to persons over 18.



RIVER EXCURSIONS—TUE. JUL. 5
DUBUQUE ★ ONE DATE ONLY

Aft. Lvs. 2:30—Moonlite Lvs. 9 PM
Orch. ★ Dancing ★ All Trips
Fare at Boat: Children 75c
Adult Aft. \$1.50—Nite \$1.75



Formal portrait of AVALON crew at Lambert Landing, St. Paul on August 22, 1958. L to R on stage: William Marcum, steward; Ernest E. Wagner, master; Everett P. Hall, purser; Clarke C. Hawley, mate; J. R. "Happy Jack" Carter, Leonard "Whitey" Dick, and Harold Donelson, all watchmen; Urbie Williams, chief engineer; Jasper Sidell, asst. engineer; John Sidell and Kenton Taylor, strikers. L to R on bow: Leroy Battoe, Marty Valencour, Bobby Thompson, Harry Ricoh, Carl "Shorty" Robinson, and Steve Burton, all deckhands. Second row on bow L to R: Gerald Wright, Bob Williams, Paul Tanner, George Bagley, Brennan Sears, "Butch" Lehnertz, Russell Elkins, Harold Hurd, and William Willis, all cabin boys. Third row on bow L to R: William Samuels, Laddie Fair, Gene Walker, Ronald Brown, and Walter Smith, all musicians in Rhythm Masters Orchestra; Ed Smith, fireman; Jess Wilkes and James Madison, musicians in Rhythm Masters Orchestra; Charles "Bubba" Chinn, fireman; Archie Rigdon, cook; Florence Witherspoon, maid; and Hilliard Witherspoon, orchestra leader of Rhythm Masters. Pilot Roy Wethern is not pictured.

enough. The boat needed to average 1,000 passengers a day to break even, according to an interview given by Capt. Wagner. But significantly, the number of trips actually scheduled continued to drop each year, as the AVALON and her management on shore simply wore out. The boat and her crew, already pushed to the limit, just could not maintain the figures needed to be a financially sound operation. The end was inevitable. With the availability of air conditioning and television in people's homes, plus the changing patterns of leisure-time activities, the future of the AVALON in the tramping trade, just

like that of the IDLEWILD three decades earlier in the ferry and packet trade, had come to an end.

What would turn out to be the AVALON's last season began on April 7, 1961, at Cincinnati. However, two weeks earlier, before steam had even been raised, she and the DELTA QUEEN had an impromptu calliope contest. The QUEEN was departing on her 20-day spring pilgrimage cruise to New Orleans, while the AVALON, at the other end of the Greene Line wharfboat, was just coming out of winter lay-up. The crew fired up her

<u>Avalon's 1961 UMR</u>		<u>Avalon's 1961 Excursion</u>	
<u>Season</u>		<u>Season</u>	
No. of cities	28	No. of cities	96
No. of excursions	64	No. of excursions	268
No. of days	39	No. of days	191
Passenger count	28,264*	Passenger count	101,059
Pax avg/trip	442	Pax avg/trip	377
Pax avg/day	725*	Pax avg/day	529

**estimation based on passenger data from trips recorded in log*

Comparing data from the boat's last year, her 39-day Upper Mississippi itinerary compares very favorably with her 191 day excursion season. Other rivers were not so profitable.

donkey boiler, and E. J. Quinby and Doc manned their respective keyboards on that harsh, windy afternoon.

With the 1961 season finally underway, the middle of May found the AVALON en route to Pittsburgh with a side trip up the Kanawha. While passing under some low-hanging wires at St. Albans, WV, her port stack was pulled down on May 17. She continued her excursion schedule, but underwent repairs at Dravo when she reached Pittsburgh later that month. Like the Upper Mississippi, the Upper Ohio River was also profitable excursion territory for the AVALON. Pittsburgh was an especially good source of revenue for the boat. She landed at the foot of Wood Street on the Monongahela wharf, the same landing where the ISLAND QUEEN had burned 14 years earlier. This landing was adjacent to downtown Pittsburgh, and highly visible to all residents and commuters passing by on the highway and bridges. Late afternoon saw her returning to the landing from one of her many day trips, while twilight found the boat waiting to load passengers for the Moonlite.

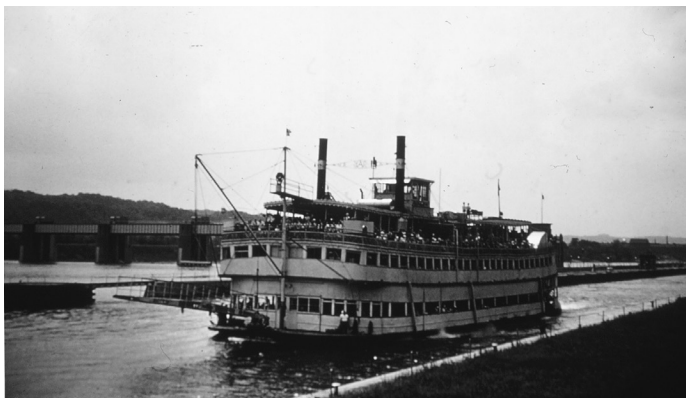
However, in spite of the boat's success at Pittsburgh, it was here that the incident which sealed her financial fate took place in May 1958 as the boat approached Emsworth Lock below town during a charter. After the steamer entered the lock chamber, she failed to back for some reason and struck the gate, causing damage to the bow, mast, boom, and stage, and knocking several passengers off their feet. In the words of Alan Bates, when these people got up, they didn't ask for a doctor, they asked for a lawyer. The AVALON again went on

<u>Avalon's 1951 UMR</u>		<u>Avalon's 1961 UMR</u>	
<u>Season</u>		<u>Season</u>	
No. of cities	22	No. of cities	28
No. of excursions	96	No. of excursions	64
No. of days	46	No. of days	39
Passenger count	29,944	Passenger count*	28,264
Pax avg/trip	312	Pax avg/trip	442
Pax avg/day	651	Pax avg/day	725

These UMR comparisons show a definite decline in number of excursions run over 10 years. Although passenger counts per trip and per day are higher, they weren't high enough.



Top: AVALON landed below CHAPERON and DQ in Cincinnati. **Middle:** After tangling with low hanging wires at St. Albans, WV. **Bottom:** At foot of Wood Street, Pittsburgh.



Departing Emsworth Lock below Pittsburgh. This was the site of the boat's accident that signaled the beginning of the end.



View showing damage to bow, mast and boom.

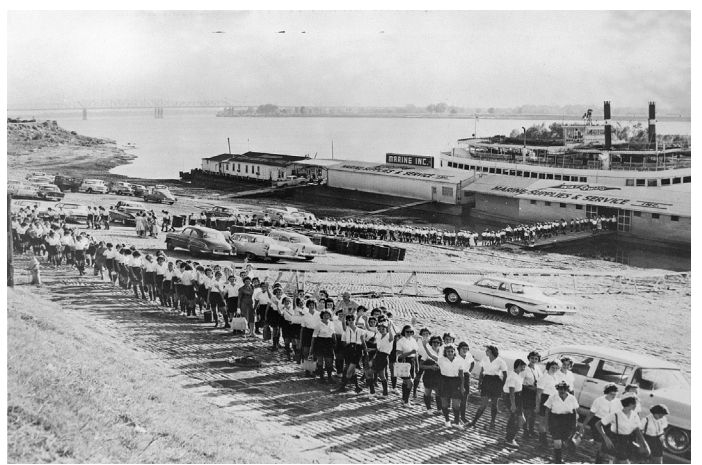


On marine ways at Dravo Corporation's Neville Island shipyard during repairs.

the drydock at Dravo for repairs. But the repair bill was insignificant compared to the \$315,000 leveled against Steamer Avalon, Inc. in pending lawsuits. That litigation in 1958 was the beginning of the end for the company. They could ill afford to settle these lawsuits, as their aggregate amount was far in excess of the potential earning power of the boat in those changing times.

Trouper as she was, the AVALON hung on for three more years, but when she finished her excursion season at Pittsburgh and passed the Golden Triangle in May of 1961, she would not return there again. She was headed down the Ohio and Mississippi, bound for Memphis, where she would run two of the most unusual charters of her long career. She was on her way to pick up 500 Girl Scouts for a week-long trip from Memphis to New Orleans. At Cairo the boat stopped so the deck crew could tighten flange keys in the wheel for the long trek on the Lower Mississippi. The Girl Scouts boarded at Memphis, camped out in sleeping bags on the dance floor and texas at night, and went on field trips along the way using buses that met the boat, including stops at Greenville and Baton Rouge, and a dinner at the most unlikely location on the grounds of the Louisiana State Prison in Angola. A visit to Vicksburg to take in the show in the steamer SPRAGUE's theater, saw the two veteran sternwheelers landed side-by-side. When she reached New Orleans, a second group of 500 Scouts boarded for the return trip to Memphis. Two weeks after it had all begun, the AVALON landed back at the city which had been her first home.

She had three more months of excursions on the Upper Mississippi, Illinois, Tennessee, Lower Mississippi and lower Ohio before completing her 1961 schedule. Her last trips of the season were run at Evansville on October 14 and 15. But unbeknownst to her crew, when the 267 residents of Evansville disembarked from their Moonlite trip on October 15, the AVALON had carried her final passengers. After drydocking at Portsmouth, OH for her quarterly inspection, she went into winter lay-up at Cincinnati on October 23rd. A day later Doc Hawley and Ed Smith drained her steam lines to keep water in them from freezing and damaging her engines over the winter, and then they left the boat in the care of Greene Line's wharfboat watchman.



NOW Sat.—Sun. Only
Oct. 14-15

DAYLITES
2:30-5:30 pm

MOONLITES
9 P.M.

ORCHESTRA Calliope
4 Decks



CRUISES Lv. Ft. of Main St.
Get Ticket at Boat

or
Att. Tickets
**Catholic
PTA**

Moonlite
Sunday Only
**Optimist
Club**

Left: Newspaper ad for the AVALON's last excursions of her career at Evansville, IN on October 14 and 15.

Right: Announcement in The Waterways Journal that the boat had been put up for sale appeared within months of Steamer Avalon, Inc.'s business ad in the big annual Christmas issue.

Below: Notification of the Public Auction Bankruptcy Sale appeared in The Waterways Journal and in many large river city newspapers. To maximize proceeds from the sale, the boat's furnishings and fixtures were all sold separately.


Last of the excursion boats tramping the inland rivers, the steamer Avalon has been retired and put up for sale, it was reliably reported this week. Stockholders of Steamer Avalon, Inc., Cincinnati, decided to dispose of the veteran stern-wheeler, a familiar sight along the waterways since she came out at Pittsburgh, as the Idlewild, in 1914. Under several ownerships, she had operated day and moonlight trips out of scores of river cities and towns.

MOONLITE EXCURSION NITELY 9 PM

STEAMER AVALON

7 Rivers — 17 States
April Thru October

229 E. 6th—Duttenhofer Bldg.
Cincinnati DU 1-6010



The Christmas issue of *The Waterways Journal* carried the company's ad as usual, but a month later a brief announcement reported that the end had finally come. On May 24, 1962, the boat, stage, calliope, outfit and fixtures were all auctioned off in separate lots by the Efron Corporation in Cincinnati at a bankruptcy sale. Few individuals entertained thoughts that she would ever run again, with the notable exception of Jefferson County Judge Marlow Cook who came to the auction prepared to put in a bid to keep the boat alive. Fortunately, his winning bid of \$34,000 from Louisville and Jefferson County Fiscal Court meant the boat was destined to return to the place she had spent many summer seasons in the 1930s. Incredibly, in an age when steamboats were viewed as river dinosaurs that had outlived their usefulness, the AVALON was given new life. After 47 years of service for six owners, traveling every navigable mile of eight major inland rivers, she would continue to offer river excursions to new generations of admirers. And at long last she would find a home where she would remain longer than at any other place in her lifetime. 🕒



In this poignant view, AVALON blows her landing whistle at Pittsburgh, the home of her birth, when returning from an afternoon excursion.

Top to bottom in left column on facing page:

Departing Pittsburgh at the Point; Landed at Louisville en route to Girl Scout trip; Stop at Cairo to do wheel work on way to Memphis; Arrival at Memphis, TN, beginning and ending point for two Girl Scout charters.

Top to bottom in right column on facing page:

Buses pick up Scouts for tour at Greenville; AVALON and SPRAGUE at Vicksburg, MS; End of the epic charter back at Memphis; AVALON's last Moonlite excursion at Evansville, IN.

PUBLIC AUCTION SALE BANKRUPTCY



Ordered Sold Free of Liens at Public Auction by the Hon. Raymond V. Pellman, Referee in Bankruptcy. C. Wm. Kinzeler, Trustee, Nicholas L. White, Atty. Case No. 31971, Steamer Avalon, Inc.

STEAMER AVALON, INC.

Paddle Wheel River Boat
Public Landing, Foot of Broadway, Cincinnati, Ohio

SALE DATE:

THURSDAY, MAY 24th at 10:30 A. M.

Inspection: May 14th 'til Sale Time
9 to 4, or by Appointment.

Twin-Stacked, Steam, Sternwheel, Luxury River Boat, Flat Bottom, Steel Hull, 2 Steam Engines, 400 hp, 4 decks, 2 Glass Enclosed; Approx. 181 ft. long by 49 ft. wide; Cap. 1,370; Crews Quarters, Spacious Marine Ball Room with Band Stand and Seating Cap. of 500. Boat includes Calliope, Radar, Apparel, Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment.

"Dock It, or Operate It". One of the last of three of its kind. A nostalgic remnant of the past which can be preserved as a part of our American heritage. Twin smoke stacks with crowns maintain the authentic Mississippi and Ohio River Packet Boat legend. Perfect for a "Bo-Tel". Useful and unusual for the Civic Minded as a Museum; For Large Companies; Entrepreneurs; For Sighted Club Owners, such as Yacht, Dinner, Dancing, Private, etc.; For Philanthropic groups to use for Boys' or Girls' Clubs, etc.; For the Beau Monde. Or, just for the Man or Woman who has Everything and has a need for the unusual or conversation piece!

For Further Information, Call, Wire or Write Auctioneers.

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THE EFFRON CORPORATION

4736 Spring Grove Ave.
Cincinnati 32, Ohio

Telephone: 542-3800

Assisted By: C. Garth Semple & Associates.

Terms: 25% deposit cash or certified check. Sale subject to confirmation by the Court. Complete terms read day of sale, prior to auction. Complete payment on confirmation.

Back Home as the BELLE

by Kadie Engstrom

With the AVALON saved at auction in the spring of 1962, a unique future was being shaped for one of the last of the steam excursion boats. Jefferson County Judge Executive Marlow Cook – with backing from former Louisville Mayor Charles Farnsley and somewhat hesitant initial support from then-Mayor William Cowger and the City Fathers – turned the page on the AVALON’s river log and brought her to Louisville, KY. Ownership had been transferred from Steamer Avalon, Inc. to Jefferson County Fiscal Court on May 25th, and American Commercial Barge Lines was lined up to bring her downriver to Jeffboat in early June. After months of layup, she was a bit scrappy, in need of repair and couldn’t run under her own steam. In the beginning, few people believed the AVALON was a prize to win. At least some of the citizenry – certainly the more vocal ones – called and sent letters describing their thoughts on the horrible waste of taxpayer’s money that had been spent to purchase the boat. There is a wonderful story of Marlow Cook’s response to those who decided to visit his office and confront him face-to-face. As the tale goes, he would let the disparager rant and rave for awhile, then he would open his desk drawer and take out a small stack of pennies. He’d slowly scoot the pennies toward the unhappy complainer and tell them that stack of pennies was their portion of tax dollars spent on the boat, and he was giving it back to them.



BELLE in spring 1963. Photo from Murphy Library

It took vision, perseverance, and a Great Steamboat Race to rally the community to support her; from then on, she was home for good. In the fall of 1962, Marlow Cook wanted to rename the boat to honor his wife Nancy, who was called the “Louisville Belle” by her college chums when she went to school in New York. The City Council approved the official name BELLE OF LOUISVILLE in October, undoubtedly without realizing how widespread that name would eventually become.

That winter, Robert Condon of the Kentucky Derby Festival contacted Betty Blake of Greene Line Steamers, owners of the DELTA QUEEN, and suggested a steamboat race be conducted during the Kentucky Derby Festival in 1963. They both thought it was a tremendous idea and began to make plans to incorporate it into the major events preceding the now-famous horse race the first Saturday in May. The fact that the BELLE was not running on her own at the time, nor with any guarantee that she would be by spring, did not dissuade the promoters. Broadsides were printed, announcements went out in newspapers all over the area, and the community was alerted to save the Wednesday before the Derby for what was to be the greatest spectacle of all time – a race between the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE and the DELTA QUEEN – the last two steam-powered sternwheelers on the inland waterways. A calliope duel was challenged, captains were throwing insults right and left (all in fun, of course), tickets were printed and sold, people everywhere were encouraged to participate, long before anyone – including the BELLE crew – knew if she would ever leave the wharf on the scheduled date.

It had been a hard job getting her back into shape. With very little money dedicated from the city or county governments, it was a matter of scrounging and pillaging pieces and parts, depending on mostly volunteer labor to repair and paint the boat, finding the right people with the right skills willing to work for the “price,” and believing in the ultimate goal: getting her under her own power and out into the

river at Louisville so people could ride an authentic steamboat from America's past.

Between January and April, another race was underway to pass the U.S. Coast Guard inspection that would allow the BELLE to carry passengers under steam. The crew worked tirelessly to get the boat ready, knowing it was crunch time. Shortly before the day of the Great Steamboat Race, the Coast Guard did not give her clearance to run. But they were willing to give her a second chance, and returned on the day of the race to check her out again. With a phlegmatic cough, a couple of stutters, and a good sized wheeze, she passed the second inspection (though just barely) with two whole hours to spare!

Shortly before 5:00 p.m. on April 30, 1963, the newly-restored BELLE OF LOUISVILLE (a work in progress, mind you) left the wharf to challenge the DELTA QUEEN to the first of what was to become 45 years of tradition. She limped along while the QUEEN took a resounding lead, and while the BELLE certainly did not cross the finish line first, the fact that she was running at all and under her own steam made her a winner in the eyes of the community. The next year, all the work paid off and the BELLE beat the DELTA QUEEN by a slim margin. From then on, the gauntlet had been thrown down.



Start of the Great Steamboat Race of 1963. Editor's collection.

Early On ...

Those first years were busy and adventurous ones. In 1964, when there was still a cobblestone wharf leading all the way into the river, the Louisville JayCees financed a facelift on the wharf, putting in flagpoles and flower boxes, and building

an information kiosk. New cabin arches were installed on the dance floor and the engines were overhauled. By then, the BELLE's 50th year, she was in the best physical condition she had been in a long time. She took two tramping trips that year – up the Green River near Owensboro, KY and above Cincinnati as far as Maysville, KY, though even with large crowds they were losing propositions. She carried 135,000 passengers that year, creating a healthy bank account. But, like an old house, there's always something that needs repair. Her boilers were condemned by the Coast Guard and she was searching for new ones to start the 1965 season.

That venture proved to be one of the worst equipment choices ever made for the BELLE. Those in charge accepted a bid from Brown Fintube Company, a manufacturer that had never built boilers before, and the enterprise was plagued with trouble from the beginning. They were delayed by more than six weeks, and though the Coast Guard had cleared them prior to the April 27th Great Steamboat Race, her severely undersized boilers bulged while the boat was underway and they revoked her certificate the next day. After repairs, when the crew built up steam, the boat blew a gasket. Having replaced that, she raised steam again, blew a generator and all the lights went out. It's ironic that their charter that night was General Electric. They repaired the generator, but the next night they were chartered by a high school, and all the musical instruments they plugged in overloaded the system and the cruise blacked out underway. Needless to say, it just wouldn't do. With low horsepower, the BELLE couldn't really compete against the DELTA QUEEN, so Greene Line laid down the law: unless there was a change for the better, the 1966 Great Steamboat Race would be the last one.

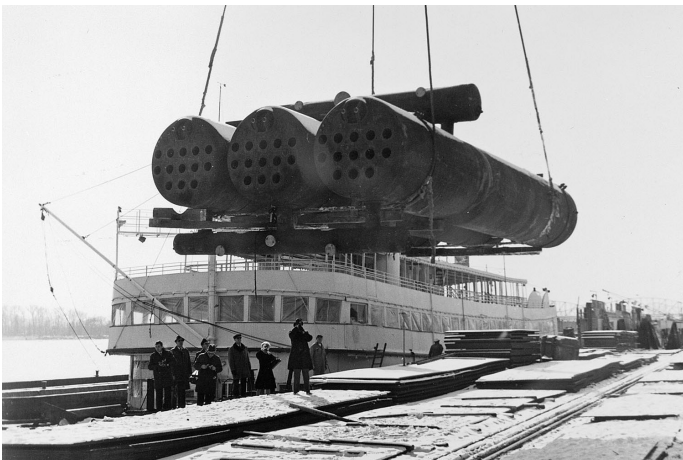
Fund raising began for new boilers and other upgrades, and the community got involved. There were "Bucks for the BELLE" efforts all over town, with money raised or materials provided by school groups, civic organizations, businesses, and industries. Ultimately, the largest contribution came from a local bank, and new boilers were commissioned from the Nooter Corporation of St. Louis, a manufacturer with a great deal of marine equipment experience. Even the Kentucky Derby Festival assisted by declaring they would



BELLE approaches landing in June 1968. Editor's collection.

donate profits from the 1966 Great Steamboat Race to the new boilers the BELLE would require. Unfortunately, though they planned to sell 500 tickets, only about 170 were purchased. Officials felt it was the high price of \$20 per ticket that held people back. Interestingly enough, today's price is almost \$140, and the boat is full to the brim and bulging at the passenger seams. Since no race was held in 1967 because of high water, she had a year's reprieve and the boilers were installed and time-tested well ahead of the 1968 Great Steamboat Race.

More restoration occurred in 1965, including rebuilding the dance floor and modernizing the bathrooms. There was even an ad that the BELLE put out - "Wanted: one sturdy upright piano for the Steamer BELLE OF LOUISVILLE. Price is no object, if less than \$5.00." However, not all was grins and giggles. One such incident occurred when the RENOWN, a former steam towboat that had become the BELLE's wharfboat in 1964, was hit by a couple of barges when the towboat lost power



New boilers installed for 1968 season. Murphy Library photo.



Alan Bates designed a new bow for the boat and faired her boxy sponsors into the existing hull. Photo from Murphy Library.

under the Second Street bridge. As luck would have it, the BELLE was out on a cruise at the time, and was not involved in the collision. In that same year, a barge broke loose from its tow near the McAlpine Lock canal, and the boatmen from the Coast Guard Station (formerly Life-Saving Station #10) headed it off at the pass, hogtied it about 50 feet from the BELLE, and saved her from imminent and crushing damage.

There's very little about a steamboat that stays the same. Over the next few years, there was a constant stream of cosmetic and operational changes, but nothing changed the appeal the BELLE had to the general public. People came from all over the world to experience an authentic steam-powered riverboat, and more and more organizations and businesses began to support the boat's restoration and preservation efforts. Another tramping trip took her to the Tennessee River and the Southern Governor's Conference in 1966, and a new steam calliope built by Ernest Wilde of Cincinnati

replaced the air-powered one that had been put on in 1963. Repair and rebuilding work continued, visitors were coming for rides, and the BELLE was rapidly gaining a reputation as a worthwhile attraction for the city.

The Start of a New Era ...

With the scramble of the '60s behind her, the BELLE entered a new era as Louisville's riverboat. In 1971, work was begun to rebuild the 4th Street Wharf, putting in a concrete riverwalk and wall the BELLE and RENOWN could land against, making it much easier for passengers to wait in line and board the boat. The cobblestones (paving stones) were often slippery and always treacherous – a turned ankle waiting to happen – so having an actual boarding area was a plus. Parking was easy, right in front of the boat, though people still had to navigate the cobblestones that had been left in place as the surface for parking. Once at the river, the going was much smoother. During that summer season, the boat boarded her passengers at Carrie Gaulbert Cox Park a few miles upriver. By August, the reconstruction had been completed, and the BELLE and her wharfboat moved back to their traditional spots at the foot of Fourth Street.

The idea of bringing alcohol on board the BELLE was not new, to say the least, but another important addition in the middle 1970s was the installation of a bar serving beer on the main deck – a lockable room with a large, sliding-door window. The boat was not licensed to sell alcoholic beverages, but

beer could be dispensed free on charter cruises, and oh, my, was that a popular place. There were times when they tried to lower the window at the end of the cruise and had to watch carefully to make sure they didn't catch the last grabbers' hands and arms in the process. Until the BELLE installed a licensed bar almost twenty years later, passengers brought their own alcohol and the concession stand sold ice and mixers. There were times when it seemed that if the boat could just list a little as she landed, all those drinkers would slide right off like a large bundle of sloppy rag dolls.

The 1970s and 80s were the wilder days of the BELLE's life. Though she was licensed for 1048 passengers and crew, it was crowded with 600 people on board. She generally took on as many passengers as she could hold, so there were often 700 to 900 people on the boat – especially on evening charters, teen cruises, and Saturday night dances. When the temperatures soared, tempers flared and anything could happen. Live music was the norm for nighttime public cruises, and many bands made a name for themselves on the boat's cramped, hot, steamy, bandstand. It was cramped, hot, and steamy on the dance floor, too, with too much alcohol and too little self-control.

In the mid-1980s, a long-term restoration plan was launched by the BELLE's operating board using sizable grants from local and national foundations. From 1985-1996, the restoration efforts included restrooms, roof, pilot house, smoke stacks, gingerbread trim, texas cabin, all windows, and the hurricane deck. New calliope whistles and valves were manufactured and installed by Dave Morecraft to replace the older ones, and the keyboard was moved to the stern end of the texas cabin. Everything from the waterline to the stacks was replaced or rebuilt, new ceiling fans were installed, extensive work was done to the interior of her hull, and the entire exterior of the boat was restored. The mud drum for the boilers was replaced, and a new paddlewheel shaft was purchased and stored, just in case the need arose down the road. Machinery work was done, as well, to the steam pumps, engines, and generators. And through it all, most of the work on the boat (except for the heavier steel work done at Jeffboat) was completed by BELLE employees. Along with all the restoration work, a training program for crew



BELLE is joined by DELTA QUEEN and JULIA BELLE SWAIN at christening for MQ, April 1975. Murphy Library.

members aspiring to become officers was begun, with the BELLE paying for schooling and licensing.

In typical steamboat tradition, pieces and parts over the years came from other vessels, and many of them you can see today. Among others, two sets of boilers were from other boats (including one set from the GORDON C. GREENE); “Big Bertha,” a boiler feed pump from the DELTA QUEEN; the GORDON’s telegraph, throttle valve, and feed water heater; and the W. P. SNYDER’s Van Duzen gauges that indicate boiler water level are all still on board. The philosophies of “if it’s not broken, don’t fix it,” and “use everything you can as many times as you can” are just as current today as they were in the BELLE’s early life.



Officers smile for the camera prior to a cruise in the 80s. L to R: Mate Pete O’Connell, Master Mike Fitzgerald, Chief Bill Prudent, and Pilot Joe Hughes. Courtesy of Frank Prudent.

Then Came the ’90s ...

In the early part of the decade, with changes to the concession stand and demand for additional electrical power during a cruise, a new Caterpillar diesel-powered generator was added to the engine room, though the Cummins steam turbine generator put on in 1968 – replacing the original Westinghouse generators – can still run the boat. Good old steam machinery is worth its weight, as proven recently when the diesel generator ceased to function right before a cruise was getting ready to board and the engineers fired up the steam generator and the cruise took place as planned.

In the middle of the decade, the wharf was once again rebuilt to the style it is today. The historic

cobblestones were removed from most of the landing, and many of them were used to build retaining walls, line the slope to River Road, and to build in a section lightly called “the amphitheater” at the end of the Third Street exit ramp from Interstate 64.

While much of the 1990s was spent restoring, rebuilding, and refurbishing, intending that the work would last many years, no one could have imagined the tragic event of August 24, 1997, when a human being deliberately tried to sink the boat. It was a heartbreaking time. When word went out across the airwaves that the BELLE was sinking, only one person in the crowd watching the rescue activity knew what had actually taken place. Everyone else, including the crew, believed the worst: that the old boat had somehow sustained a hole in her hull large enough to sink her, and there would be no saving her from an unexpected – and far too early – demise.

It all began with an early-morning call to the boat’s Master, Capt. Mike Fitzgerald, from the watchman who had discovered water coming over the port fantail and into the engineroom. An immediate call went out from Capt. Fitzgerald to other crew members. Within 15 minutes of that discovery, help had begun to arrive from McBride Towing Company to hold the BELLE against the wharf to keep her from sliding over sideways into the river. Crew members had started pumping water, while Chief Engineer Jim McCoy, without regard for his own safety, waded into the firebox to release steam from the boilers to avoid a potential explosion. The margin of time from manageable recovery to total loss was very, very small. The immediate evaluation didn’t reveal the cause, but the decision was made to call in Okie Moore’s salvage company from St. Louis to raise the BELLE and uncover the reason for her sinking.

It took a week of slow, backbreaking work in the hottest part of the summer to pump out the compartments in the hold one at a time. With each success at clearing a compartment, it seemed a foregone conclusion that the hole would ultimately show up in the last compartment pumped. However, when the last one was emptied, she popped up like a cork and floated normally. With



Left: BELLE sunk on morning of August 24, 1997. Above: After being raised, she is towed by SHARON M. to Jeffboat for major clean-up and restoration. Courtesy of Keith Norrington.

a towboat attached, she was moved to Jeffboat and put into dry dock with her caretakers in a confused state. Without a hole, how could she sink? It took a computer program to determine that it was, instead, the purposeful opening of a valve at the back of the engine room that allowed city water to flow unchecked into the hold, filling the compartments until they began to overflow.

With repairs underway, and the anticipation of massive costs for restoration, an investigation revealed the involvement of one person, who was eventually brought to trial and convicted. Though he did serve some jail time, he has never repaid his court-assigned financial debt to the BELLE. Yet, with community compassion and support, the then 83-year-old steamboat simply moved on and began a new chapter in her life.

This was also a time of upheaval and genuine concern about the future of the BELLE. Faced with mounting repair estimates, the Jefferson County government was considering making her a dockside restaurant, stopping her paddlewheel for all time. Where the citizenry had once questioned her purchase in 1962, in 1997 they rallied in droves to keep her running. Thousands of e-mails to government officials, school projects to raise money for her, countless phone calls, supportive media attention, and contributions from organizations and businesses were the overwhelming indicators of the importance of the steamboat to the community. It took more than eight months, but the BELLE was ready to run for her next summer season, the plan

to keep her dockside a vanishing memory.

The Turn of the Twentieth Century ...

Just like the constantly changing Ohio River, another county government decision two years later indelibly altered the Belle's course. Hornblower Marine Services, headquartered in New Albany, IN and operating marine properties on both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, submitted a bid to manage the boat. To the officials, it seemed like the perfect financial solution, and Hornblower began taking over boat operations in February 2001. Within a year, the BELLE's Operating Board had been abolished, and crew members had become HMS employees.

In 2003, additional restorations took place, putting in a new mahogany cabinet and closet doors and changing from curtains to swinging doors in the restrooms. The boat's original pressed tin ceiling, which at one time spanned from the bow to the bandstand on the boiler deck, had been reduced long ago to the area between the souvenir and concession stands. A new pressed tin ceiling was installed above the dance floor, and was heavy enough to reduce her passenger and crew capacity to 999.

At the end of that year, Hornblower terminated their contract with Jefferson County Fiscal Court, and for a time there was indecision regarding the future management of the BELLE. In 2005, the Waterfront Development Corporation was

assigned the job by Mayor Jerry Abramson, and yet another chapter was begun as the oldest operating Mississippi River-style steamboat in the world became an even more integral part of the evolving Waterfront Park.

Besides the changes in management, the first decade of the twenty-first century brought several significant occurrences. In 2007, an exciting discovery was made – something no one could have predicted. Because of a decision to remove the raised bandstand platform to allow more room on the dance floor, the IDLEWILD's original decking was discovered layers beneath. And imprinted on that decking was the outline of the AVALON's bandstand. What a find it was, and what a cause for historic celebration. While much of the boat is original, the dance floor decking had been replaced several times and is currently made of oak. No one was aware that the IDLEWILD's maple decking was still there.

Near the end of the 2009 operating season, the BELLE was out on an afternoon cruise when the wind carried her into a dry dock at McBride's Towing Company landing. While debilitating at the time, it was a relatively minor crisis with no serious injuries to anyone on board. The BELLE's crew rebuilt the paddlewheel buckets and a new jockey bar was installed, and she was back in business the next season. In 2010, air-conditioning was installed for the first time – a definite comfort for today's typical passenger wanting to enjoy the buffet meal served on the dance floor.

In an attempt to lighten the boat, the BELLE's brig, in service since the 1930s, was moved to the yard of the Howard Steamboat Museum at Jeffersonville in 2000, where it resides today. More work was done to reduce the boat's overall tonnage to accommodate the air-conditioning equipment installed in 2010, but even with changes, the extra weight of the air-conditioners further reduced the capacity of the boat to 800.

Some Special Distinctions ...

One hundred years after the first inland station of the Life-Saving Service was installed in November

1881 at the foot of Louisville's Second Street, the historic Life-Saving Station #10 – renamed the MAYOR ANDREW BROADDUS in the early 1970s – replaced the old RENOWN as the BELLE's "new" wharfboat. She was the third version of the original LSS #10, with the first lifeboat station being replaced in 1902 and the second one in 1929. Back in 1915, the Life-Saving Service, Revenue Cutter Service, and other national agencies combined to become the U.S. Coast Guard; and LSS #10 became USCG Station #276. When the vessel was decommissioned in 1972, she was turned over to Jefferson County to become a river police station. Less than ten years later in 1981, she again started a new life in true river fashion as a perfect example of historic preservation and re-use.

In 1989, both the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE and her wharfboat were named National Historic Landmarks, and were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Each was designated because of her unique contributions to American history: the BELLE as the last of the steam-powered day packet boats, and LSS #10 as the only inland life-saving station.

In 2010, her 95th year, the BELLE was declared an Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. This is a very prestigious award, recognizing the historical evolution of mechanical engineering, the BELLE's significance to society in general, and acknowledging her 19th century technology.

Beginning in 1988, the BELLE was the highlight of the Tall Stacks events at Cincinnati. It was a celebration of the steamboat era, and boats from all over the inland waterways joined in. She was the only steam-powered vessel that was open to the general public, and they came by the thousands to experience her and enjoy her history. Subsequent events in 1992, 1995, 1998, 2003, and 2006 proved the interest the world had in steam vessels had not waned. She was the BELLE of the ball.

Today ...

On her 100th birthday, she is remarkable. Because of the generosity of Atlas Machine and

Supply, a local company which has been in the same family for almost 107 years, the BELLE's engines were rebuilt and rebored in the spring of 2014, as reported in Dan Lewis' article in the June 2014 S&D REFLECTOR. With the new efficiency of the engines, she's running smoother than she ever has, and is continuing the legacy of more than 200 years of steamboat history on the inland waterways. With a world-wide community solidly behind her, she has many more years in her yet.

While there were thousands of them at one time, she is the last of the packets still operating, the last of what was, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a common way of life. She is the only active steam-powered river vessel to ever reach the age of 100, and she is part of America's history.

Be a Part of the *Festival of Riverboats* and the Belle's 100th Birthday!

From October 14th-19th the country will celebrate the BELLE's remarkable legacy and 100th birthday with a waterfront celebration at her home port of Louisville, KY. Other riverboats will be joining her, and visitors will be able to experience river life in many forms on land and on water. Check out the event website, www.festivalofriverboats.com, or call 855-259-0350 to see what tickets might still be available. You won't want to miss this one-of-a-kind festival recognizing the importance of the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE to all of steamboat history. It's your one and only chance to be a part of it all. 🍷



The BELLE of the Ball at Cincinnati's Tall Stacks. Photos on this page courtesy of Kadie Engstrom.



BELLE's elegant, renovated ballroom with refurbished woodwork and restored original-style pressed tin ceiling.



Mike Fitzgerald and Linda Harris examine progress during removal of old bandstand and restoration of original flooring.



Steamer BELLE OF LOUISVILLE aglow at her Fourth Street landing, prior to her departure on a Moonlite cruise.

Centennial Reminiscences

The REFLECTOR asked several officers and crew of the BELLE and AVALON to share some memories and experiences from their years on the boat. We are pleased to present these special glimpses into her amazing and colorful history. You will detect at once a shared sense of pride in the part that this veteran steamboat has played in each of their lives on the river.

The BELLE's Restoration – An Ongoing Process

by Capt. Mike Fitzgerald

The Steamer BELLE OF LOUISVILLE transcends generations in the community she serves. From her very first cruise on April 30, 1963 in a steamboat race against Cincinnati's DELTA QUEEN, through this centennial year, the BELLE has become an important part of Louisville's cultural fabric. Her historical significance has grown at a steady pace over the years as she became the oldest of her kind still plying the Mississippi River system.

It seems as though the Steamer AVALON was destined to live on long after her 1961 cruising season. Following that pivotal year, who could have imagined that she would once again be underway with passengers in some eighteen months or so as the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE. From those early years to today, many individuals have been and continue to be an important part of her success. This story is about some of the crew members that have restored and continue the ongoing restoration process of the BELLE. She has in many ways become a reflection of their efforts and those of others throughout the years.

Shortly after the AVALON was purchased, a committee was formed that later became the Belle of Louisville Operating board. Under the direction of committee chairman C. W. Stoll, Naval Architect Alan Bates and retired Chief Engineer Dave Crecelius were hired. Their job was to get the AVALON operational again. Together they went to work with a lot of help from newly hired crew

members and volunteers. Among them was a high school-aged young man named Kenny Howe. After several years he left to serve in Vietnam. Following his service Kenny eventually returned to the BELLE as a Chief Engineer.

Through sheer determination and tremendous effort, the AVALON was born again as the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE. Alan Bates served as the boat's First Mate and guided the restoration process through the 1960s, and became a licensed Master. Without a doubt, more extensive restoration occurred during the 1960s than at any other time. A few of the large ticket items were an extended bow, new boilers, and extensive hull plate replacement.

In the fall of 1974, when BELLE OF LOUISVILLE Captain Clarke C. (Doc) Hawley was bidding farewell to his crew, a young deckhand asked, "How long do you think the BELLE will last Cap?" Doc replied, "If you take care of her as she is now, at least another ten years. If the city continues to put money into her, she'll last a lot longer." Those prophetic words were clearly evident by the early 1980s. By that time, some of the restoration work completed in the early 1960s and before was in need of repair. A plan was laid out for another restoration.

The boat's second restoration began in the fall of 1985 and would take eleven years to complete. The extensive restoration program ignited a positive surge of energy as young deckhands eager to learn soon became mates, pilots, and captains. In the engine room, striker/firemen became engineering assistants and chief engineers. Many of these officers are still with the BELLE today.

In the early planning stages it was decided that restoration projects would be kept as close to original as possible. Captain C. W. Stoll provided plenty of photographs of the early IDLEWILD years. Based on these, Captain Jim Blum designed, cut, and installed the original "IDLEWILD style" gingerbread trim around the pilothouse roof. Captain Kevin Mullen redesigned and rebuilt the dance floor stanchions. In the engine room Chief Engineers Lee Moore and Mike Pfleider began rebuilding steam pumps and assorted machinery. In addition to this they replaced deck plating, plumbing, wiring, and

electrical fixtures wherever needed throughout the boat. They had a lot of help from future Chief Engineers Jim McCoy, Steve Mattingly, and Engineering Assistant Wayne McDole. Jim was promoted to Senior Chief Engineer in 1992 and has served in that position the longest.

Future captains Pete O'Connell, Mark Doty, and Ed Mattingly all had projects of their own in the restoration process. Pete rebuilt the concession stand and bar. Mark oversaw the removal and rebuilding of the Texas roof and cabin. Ed replaced the old souvenir shop with a new one that Chief Purser Kadie Engstrom helped design. First Mate Ronnie Lawrence was involved in many of the above projects, as were Captains Angela (Shackleford) Boyer and Bill Ray. There were plenty of other projects and crew members too numerous to mention involved in this large task. Captain Alan Bates donated his time as a consultant and Chief Kenny Howe oversaw all of the shipyard work as Jeffboat's Superintendent of Marine Repair, from hull plating to exterior main deck bulkhead replacement.

Restoration work and repair never stops; there is always something that needs to be done. On almost any given day Chief Engineer Dan Lewis can be found machining parts on a lathe that was donated by Chief Engineer Bill Prudent. Tom Coursen laid down his pipe wrench recently and sat for his Engineering license, becoming the boat's newest licensed officer. He is already putting it to good use. Captain Drew Cederholm is currently working with a local shop on fabrication and design of new hurricane deck stairwell covers. Captain Joe Kenny and Mate Tim Connor both come over from the SPIRIT OF JEFFERSON to assist with BELLE restoration projects, the latest of which is replacement of the hurricane deck and paddlewheel repair. Chief Mate Nick Lukaszewski, Engineering Assistant Richard Lannon, Lead Deckhand John Bishop and others are also heavily involved in both projects.

Most of the crew members listed above worked their way up on the BELLE from entry level positions. All were hired with certain aptitudes, abilities, and skills that were honed over time as they were mentored by those who came before

them. In turn they pass their knowledge and know-how along to those rising through later ranks. In true river fashion, the mentored become the mentor, and so it continues onboard the BELLE as it has since the IDLEWILD first set sail from Pittsburgh for Memphis in January of 1915.

Since the AVALON was purchased in 1962 and renamed BELLE OF LOUISVILLE, she has undergone restoration work from the 1960s through this year of her centennial celebration. The boat has been operated by a Board of Directors, a private corporation, and today, Louisville's Waterfront Development Corporation. The BELLE has steadily improved and generated a long list of licensed officers. Today more than ever, the City of Louisville recognizes the treasure that they have in their soon-to-be one hundred year-old National Historic Landmark. How long will she last? Barring some major calamity, our BELLE will be with us for many years to come. 🍷

River Veterans Crewed the AVALON by Capt. Clarke Hawley

During the 1950s and early 60s, barnstorming here and there on the Mississippi system was hard work with long hours, good food, beautiful scenery, chances to visit with friends in just about every city, town and hamlet, and frequent fights. It was a constant study of geography and human nature, and just as interesting as anything else were the constant changes of pilots for eight or nine different rivers. Steam engineers were every bit as interesting but more constant, having no particular route. Only a very few of these river veterans were resistant to answering questions from a fascinated, young calliope player who ran errands, carried gallons of coffee, and brought newspapers when available.

Other than Capt. Ernest Wagner who hired me and took me under his sizable wing, the first officer I met was Capt. J. Emory Edgington, who was born in 1870 and worked on the Ohio River when there was only one lock and dam between Pittsburgh and Louisville. My mother's grandfather and uncles owned boats on the Kanawha River and when

I asked him if he had ever heard of the Calvert brothers, he beamed and replied that they gave him a job when he earned his Kanawha River license in 1891. Later on he piloted the QUEEN CITY and in 1914 the STEEL CITY (former VIRGINIA) with his brother Fred who was her regular master.

By 1922 he was master on W. K. FIELD. In the mid-1920s he joined the Island Creek Coal Company serving as master of both CATHERINE DAVIS NO. 1 and NO. 2, as well as SAM P. SUIT. It was on the SUIT in 1937 that a boiler exploded, the blast of which blew away the bulkhead holding the mirror and the sink at which Edgington was shaving. The captain found himself with razor in hand and an unobstructed view of the beautiful Ohio.

Edgington piloted the Ohio, Pittsburgh to Louisville, for seventy years and only ventured below Louisville twice - on U. S. Corps of Engineer's C. B. HARRIS doing relief work during the 1937 Flood and in 1962 as guest on the DELTA QUEEN. His usual partner on the AVALON was Capt. Arthur "Red" Schletker, who held Master, Pilot, and Chief Engineer license before joining the U. S. Coast Guard in 1941.

Schletker was chief engineer on the HELPER when she sank at Cincinnati in 1922, drowning Capt. E. A. Burnside, five crewmen, and Mrs. Schletker who was on board as cook. In 1938 Schletker went on to command the sternwheel GREENBRIER of the U. S. Lighthouse Service, which was transferred to the U. S. Coast Guard in 1939 with Schletker retaining command. During the war she ran with an anti-aircraft gun mounted on the roof.

Capt. Schletker usually continued as pilot Louisville to Cairo, but filling Edgington's position would be Capt. Lawrence "Bo" Allen, longtime veteran of Greene Line aboard TOM, CHRIS, and GORDON C. GREENE and the DELTA QUEEN. He started with the Combine in 1900 as a "pumpman" running steam siphons in wooden barges. His boss was Howard "Doc" Carr. They both "retired" after 1903 and Carr went on to the JOHN L. LOWRY at his home town of Cave-in-Rock, while Allen joined the TARASCON in 1909 and on to the brand new NASHVILLE in 1910. By 1922 the NASHVILLE was rebuilt as the

SOUTHLAND with Carr as mate and Allen as pilot. When SOUTHLAND burned in 1932 they both went to the Greene Line.

The AVALON's season usually began in April with trips on the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers with both Paul and Harris Underwood serving as pilots. They had both piloted the GOLDEN EAGLE to Nashville and Chattanooga with Capt. Buck Leyhe as master. Paul owned J. LUTHER TROXELL in 1925-26, and both brothers served on the CHATTANOOGA (former Gospel boat MEGIDDO) 1920-21. Harris had license on the French Broad River and in 1955 he piloted the AVALON to Sevierville, TN near the present "Dollywood" for a Baptist Church "Old Time River Baptism and Picnic" in the afternoon and a Moonlite at 8:30. I was later fortunate to work with them on the DELTA QUEEN in 1959 with Paul as master and Harris as pilot, teaching me the Mississippi, Cairo-Greenville. Also working the Tennessee River occasionally was Capt. Tommy Utter, who had piloted the sternwheel towboats JAYHAWKER and MILDRED which carried the DELTA QUEEN's roof bell for several years.

Also piloting the AVALON on the lower Ohio on occasion was Capt. Leon Ash, who was pilot on J. F. BUTTS, a wooden hull towboat which was the first boat through the new lock in the Louisville Canal in April 1921. He also served as the first master of the JASON in 1941.

Helping out on the lower Ohio and Mississippi was Capt. Fred McCandless of Paducah. He started out on the JOHN L. LOWRY with Capt. H. M. "Doc" Carr. By 1935 he was master of the CHARLES F. RICHARDSON. This boat attracted a great deal of attention because of her size and power. In April 1938 she handled sixty-one pieces of U. S. Engineers equipment Paducah to Cincinnati, including the dredge C. B. HARRIS and fifty-three pontoons. In 1927 Capt. Fred McCandless did heroic flood relief with his brother Carl on the BEN FRANKLIN NO. 2.

Another of the AVALON's lower Mississippi pilots was Capt. Johnny Graham. He began his career on the Streckfus steamer CAPITOL as a hat checker in 1920 and went on to pilot the CAPITOL,

J.S. DeLUXE, SAINT PAUL, and IDLEWILD. In 1942 he joined the U. S. Coast Guard as a first lieutenant. He was the OCMI at Memphis who gave permission for the Girl Scout trip Memphis to New Orleans and return to Memphis.

One of the most notable pilots was Capt. C. Sewell Smith, whose license read: "Master all gross tons on all rivers flowing into the Gulf of Mexico. Also First Class Pilot Pittsburgh to the Sea," with additional license on the Black, Ouachita, White and Arkansas Rivers. He served as master on SLACK BARRETT, C. S. WILLIAMS, D. R. WELLER, and pilot on the SPRAGUE and on the KATE ADAMS during the filming of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in 1926. Capt. Tommy Dunn came up on the Federal Barge Line serving on the various State and City boats, DELTA QUEEN and AVALON.

Coming on the AVALON for Upper Mississippi and St. Croix excursions was Capt. Roy Wethern, "Dean of the Upper River." His father, Capt. David Wethern had survived the sinking of the SEA WING in July 1890, which capsized on Lake Pepin drowning his mother and brother and 90 passengers. Capt. Roy went on to the ALTAIR and boats of the Federal Barge Line. In 1943 Capt. Wethern towed the DPC towboat BATAAN away from a shipyard at Savage, MN and down the Minnesota River, this with the DEMOPOLIS. In 1944 he pulled new ocean tankers with tugs from the same yard.

Capt. Archie Maples was usually Capt. Wethern's partner pilot on the Upper Mississippi as well as the Illinois River to Joliet. He had worked as trip pilot on vessels of the Federal Barge Line's Upper Mississippi Division, and Central Barge Line on ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, GENERAL ALLEN and MINNESOTA. He also piloted the IDLEWILD while she was chartered by the Corps of Engineers during World War II. He once showed Capt. Wagner and me the location of the fittings upon which the tow knees were bolted.

On the Missouri River was Capt. Tom Craig, who had worked with Capt. Roy Wethern on the ALTAIR, and served as master of E. D. KENNA, GENERAL ASHBURN, and trip pilot of Federal Barge Line boats on the Upper and Lower Mississippi Divisions.

Serving as Chief Engineer on both the IDLEWILD and AVALON was Chief Urbie Williams, who had started as striker on BELLE OF CALHOUN, went to CAPE GIRARDEAU NO. 1 as striker, and was on CAPE GIRARDEAU NO. 2 when she sank at Fort Gage in 1916. He was First Assistant Engineer on CAPE GIRARDEAU NO. 3 (later GORDON C. GREENE) when she made her first Mardi Gras trip in 1925. While still working for Eagle Packet Company, he went Chief on GOLDEN EAGLE in 1927 and then to IDLEWILD in 1932. In 1954 he hired Jasper Sidell, longtime Eagle Packet Company engineer, and First Assistant on IDLEWILD, to join the AVALON's crew.

From time to time Chief Paul Inglehart, formerly engineer on ROBERT F. BRANDT and ROBERT GORDON, would fill in an engineer's position, as would Charles F. Dietz. Charlie Dietz was the first Chief Engineer on the DELTA QUEEN after she was sold to Greene Line, and he also served on CINCINNATI and QUEEN CITY. They both would spell Chief Williams and others at various times. Chief Ray Gill, who had served on board CATHERINE DAVIS, GEO. M. VERITY, SALLIE MARMET, STEEL CITY and BETSY ANN, worked during the 1957 and 1958 seasons.

Working as Chief and then First Assistant during the 1960 and 1961 seasons was Courtney Ellis of Bowling Green, KY. He was a frequent correspondent for *The Waterways Journal*. Chief Ellis had a keen memory and kept detailed logs. In 1907 he was an oiler on the SAMUEL (see *Way's Towboat Directory*, number T2257) towing logs on Green River. In a fog, the SAMUEL and her tow collided with a moored log raft with raftsmen's shanty, killing four persons. In 1910 he was a fireman on the same boat when Capt. Knight Bowles became embroiled in an altercation with Brigham Young, a hoisting engineer on the SAMUEL. Young killed Capt. Bowles with a cant hook, and turned himself in to the sheriff – no charges filed. In March 1914 he was engineer on the LEAVENWORTH when it capsized in the Missouri River, twelve miles above St. Charles. He then went over to St. Louis and the GEORGIE S. which was engaged in building an intake pier above St. Louis, and was there when the excursion steamer MAJESTIC struck it and sank in June 1914. An exciting year! In 1916 he was an

engineer on STACKER LEE when she sank four miles above Memphis. Ellis later recalled a sign over the crew table which warned, "No steamboating at meals." In 1917 he was engineer on the steamer QUINCY running in the St. Louis-St. Paul packet trade just before becoming the J. S. DeLUXE in 1918. In 1920 he was engineer on the EVANSVILLE and in 1922 on the FAIRMONT. He then became a stationary engineer at a plant near Bowling Green.

One of the most interesting crew members was Robert "Preacher" Lollar who, as a boy, had been taken under the wing of Capt. Tom Ryman, Sr. following Ryman's conversion by the Rev. Sam Jones. Capt. Ryman built Ryman Auditorium in Nashville for Rev. Jones in particular and Nashville preachers in general. Ryman regularly read from the Bible to family and his young cabin boy "Preacher." And he would regularly quiz his family as well as Lollar. The steamer R. DUNBAR had Biblical inscriptions in the cabin, "In God We Trust" over the purser's office, and a large framed picture of Christ in the ladies cabin. After Capt. Ryman's death in 1904, Lollar worked for Capt. Tom Ryman, Jr. on various Ryman steamboats. He was fireman on VALLEY QUEEN that sank at Omaha in 1934. He then went to the IDLEWILD and was there when she became the AVALON in 1948. He knew lots of Scripture by memory, but never learned to read or write. Capt. Wagner "inherited him" in 1949 and he, Ed Smith, and Purser E. P. Hall were the only AVALON personnel to go on the DELTA QUEEN in 1962. Preacher's job there was to shine brass eight hours daily, Sundays off. He went home in 1963 and never returned.

Ed Smith decked on the GOLDEN EAGLE, fired on the ADMIRAL, joined the AVALON in 1957 and helped me drain the AVALON in the winter of 1961 after the referee in the boat's bankruptcy sent all the others home. 🍷

The AVALON: A Reflection from the Summer of 1959

by Capt. Don Sanders

June 1959. Jess Sanders was my father. As head of the Traffic Division for Covington, KY, our

home town, he made sure the excursion Steamer AVALON had ample automobile parking along the riverfront each time the steamboat came to visit and haul a boatload of locals to the Coney Island Amusement Park above Cincinnati on the Ohio River for "Covington Day." For those eager to go to "Old Coney" by steamboat, this was a tradition going back to the late 1800s, long before the AVALON was built. In consideration for his services, Dad received several thick, yellow pads of complimentary passes good for free admissions to ride the AVALON. Though he was given more passes than we ever used in a year's time, our family took advantage of the tickets and made several cruises annually.

Whenever the AVALON was playing its home port of Cincinnati, the skipper was Capt. Arthur J. "Red" Schletker. Cap'n Red, as he was better known, relieved the regular master, Capt. Ernest E. Wagner, who took off whenever the AVALON was home. My dad quickly became friends with Capt. Schletker, who invited my father and me to ride in the pilothouse while Mother enjoyed the riverboat ride astride a comfortable couch on the starboard side of the Texas Deck by the chimney, and my two younger brothers explored the rest of the boat. Dad occasionally steered the AVALON, but he preferred sitting on the Lazy Bench in the pilothouse, and that gave me some steering time. But mostly we listened to Capt. Red tell of his many years on the river as both Chief Engineer and Master of the U. S. Lighthouse Service's steamboat U. S. GREENBRIER, while pilots John Emory Edgington or Lawrence "Bo" Allen kept the AVALON in the marks.

We owned our own sternwheeler, the MARJESS, a forty-footer built in 1947 on the Great Miami River, which my parents bought in 1955 and had hauled to the Ohio River on a flatbed trailer. Actually, we started on the river three years before on the PAL-O-MINE, a 52-foot, wooden houseboat owned by Dad's friend Walter Hoffmeier, who was born on a shantyboat on the Licking River in the late 1890s. Seeing what joy the family gained from the PAL, my parents made what was a major financial investment, and borrowing a thousand dollars, they bought the sternwheeler SHANGRI-LA and renamed it for themselves – Marge and Jess.

About a year after the MARJESS was introduced to the Ohio River, Walter started a boat harbor he also named for himself – “Walt’s Boat Club” in West Covington. My folks, being strongly over-protective, kept me on a short leash and the only source of amusement and entertainment I was allowed away from the house after school hours was earning my supper at the boat harbor under Walter’s stern supervision, which suited a river-hungry lad just fine.

Eventually graduating in the lower half of the Class of 1959 and freed of that burden, my sights were set on working on the river, but in those days, decent-paying jobs on towboats were cherished and it took connections to land one. Captain Red, my only river contact, disappointed me when he revealed he had no pull in the towing industry to help me land a job, but he promised inroads to employment on the AVALON, something I had not considered. But working on the steamboat would, at least, be a beginning. So I agreed to meet him at the AVALON which lay tied below the Greene Line wharfboat on the Cincinnati Public Landing.

Emil Werner, the Chief Steward of the AVALON, was finishing the last dregs of his breakfast coffee seated at a wooden picnic table in the deck room, a broad open space forward of the Engine Room. Captain Red introduced us and mentioned, “He’s a good boy... sober...his father is Jess Sanders who got us the parking when we landed in Covington...” and so forth. Mr. Werner appeared interested enough in me, but seemed the type who would not have been so cordial without Captain Red’s presence. Near the end of the interview, the Steward asked again for my name which he wrote inside a pack of half-empty matches. “Be back here in the morning before eight o’clock,” he said before turning back to his coffee. I stood a few feet away from Mr. Werner to take in the excitement happening in the deck room.

Cincinnati was the beer capital of the country before Prohibition killed off most of the breweries in that beer-guzzling city of Germanic origin. One of the few surviving brew houses was the Burger Brewing Company, and the biggest buyer of their product, Burger Beer, was the AVALON. Thousands of cases of Burger, bottled in steel cans, were stored

in the hold below the main deck, directly-aft of the AVALON’s boilers. On this particular morning, Burger trucks were off-loading case-after-case of canned beer onto a long metal ramp equipped with steel rollers that stretched from the cobblestones ashore to the side of the steamboat where everyone able was assembled to lend a hand with the precious cargo. Deckhands, cabin boys, off-duty strikers, and even a few band boys, union musicians in the AVALON’s house band, The Rhythm Masters, worked with a sense of anticipation fueled by the knowledge that once the cases of brew were snugly tucked into the holds, cold cans of Burger, presently chilling in large steel tubs of ice, would be generously lavished on all participants who shared in the work. As was usually the way, I later learned that several cases were secretly broken open and cans of warm beer were guzzled out of sight of what lax supervision may have been present. All-in-all, it was a joyous exhibition of labor gladly shared, and in the excitement of witnessing such a jolly crew, I reveled in my own anticipation of becoming one of them.

Without warning, the intense activity suddenly stopped and the area exploded with thunderous cheers and shouts as a giant-of-a-man came unannounced into the room. He stood six-feet and many-inches-more above the deck, and looked at least 250 pounds, but was fit and well-proportioned for his size. The colossus wore tan slacks and a flowered, Hawaiian-print shirt, and by the excitement and the widespread commotion that filled the room, the man was endeared to all. Even the glum Mr. Werner seemed excited to see him. A broad smile stretched across the face of the big fellow who went directly to the table where Mr. Werner was seated and took two large spoons; put them together in one great paw and began beating and clicking them together, up and down, between his free hand and the broad side of his body in such a rhythmic way that music suddenly filled the air to the joyful shouts and applause of all assembled there. A deep tone arose from within the man as he began singing in tune to the tapping of the spoons, and I could hear words that sounded like... “Katie went to the well...”

“Who is that man,” I asked the closest person standing nearby. Looking puzzled, he turned and

answered, "Man ... don't you know? That's Captain Wagner!"

Capt. Ernest E. Wagner was not only the charismatic musical master of the AVALON, the demonstration witnessed in the deck room also proved that he was the one person in full charge of the forty-five-year-old steamboat. Soon after all the excitement cooled down and the murmur of industry replaced the revelry, and the loading of the Burger resumed to the pitch it had been before the unexpected arrival of the Captain, I crossed the stage and walked the ancient cobblestones to the top of the landing and glanced back at the AVALON. The crew worked more harmoniously now, in a cadence that hummed to the rhythm of their Captain's presence.

The route to the bus station was along the sidewalks traveled by lost generations who once trod between these same buildings that were photographed in the Cincinnati daguerreotype of 1848. The musky smells that wafted from cellar doors and open, broken windows were scents familiar to steamboat travelers before the Civil War and into the 20th Century when trains and, eventually, busses and cars replaced the steamboats, and travelers to distant cities no longer crowded these banquettes. After a short bus ride across the Roebling Suspension Bridge and into downtown Covington, I stopped at the EFKO Army Surplus Store where a large foot locker was procured. Another bus ride took me closer to home. Lugging the heavy locker, I found the front door open and my parents in the living room talking, but seeing my large parcel, they stopped their conversation and inquired if I was going somewhere. When told that I was set on reaching Omaha, they asked how I intended to get there... "On the AVALON," I cheerfully answered. At that, they both loudly began refuting my intentions that I had so carefully formulated earlier. Mother, I remember, was shouting, "OH, NO YOU'RE NOT!" But in spite of their combined efforts to dissuade me, I made my way to my room and packed the foot locker with all that I figured would be necessary on my steamboat adventure scheduled for early the next morning.

The heavy foot locker was filled with more things than would be needed for a rough life on

the steamboat; even the beautiful Elgin watch Grandmother Edith had given me for graduation was packed. Downstairs, by early morning both my parents were waiting and primed for another battle over my going, but after tears from Mother and hard scowls from Dad, I was surprised when he told me to put the foot locker into the car. For he was giving me a lift to the landing where the AVALON lay waiting for a new day and the beginning of my steamboating adventures. The ride from the house to the steamboat was solemn as this was the first time I had gone against my folk's wishes, and apparently... I won!

Once more, I found Mr. Werner seated at the breakfast table where he was the morning before, but this time his attitude was hostile and belligerent when I informed him I was reporting for duty as a Cabin Boy as he had promised. "I don't know you ... we're filled up ... no jobs." "But, I was here yesterday ... you wrote my name on your match pack ... Captain Red brought me ... Captain Red ..." I literally cried.

The repeated mention of Capt. Red Schletker's name apparently jogged the Chief Steward's foggy memory, though he had used the remaining matches in the pack he wrote my name on. Surely he consumed several more fresh packs to light the long chain of cigarettes he obviously smoked in the past twenty-four hours, but instead of inviting me to grab a plate and eat my first meal with the crew, he told me: "Go up front and I'll be with you when I'm done." So I followed Mr. Werner's orders and went to the forward end of the main deck and sat on the wooden bench on the starboard side facing away from the river. Glancing up, I looked toward shore, and still parked on the cobblestones, was my father. Dad sat in the car glaring back with cold, hard stares. I vowed that whatever happened, whether or not Mr. Werner was going to hire me, I was not going back across the stage lugging that heavy foot locker and return, defeated, to my father's car. Instead, I would wait until he left and return home on the bus. Making matters worse, at that very same time two black men, obviously veterans of the steamboat, came walking around the corner on the port side of the boiler room, and I could overhear what they were saying: "Who's that white boy," one asked. "Dunno," the other answered, "but he

won't last long." It was Ed Smith and Bubba Chinn, AVALON firemen who soon became two of my most beloved friends, ever, on the river. Many years later when I was captain of the DELTA QUEEN and they were the QUEEN's firemen, I asked if they remembered their conversation about my steamboat career possibilities that first day on the AVALON. They did, they confessed. Several more agonizing minutes passed before the Chief Steward appeared and told me to grab my foot locker and follow him to my room, and after stowing my gear, I made my way to the grand staircase to head up top to the concession stand. Looking toward shore, I noticed my father had departed.

The most exciting summer of my youth had finally begun. The AVALON steamed to Coney that afternoon, with a boatful of Ludlow, KY revelers, mostly mothers and their children. And with a Moonlite charter ride that night after the boat returned to the Public Landing, it was well early into the next morning before the concession stands closed and the cabin crew was free to retire. After the charter, the AVALON turned its bow south for Louisville.

Captain Red was piloting on the back watch, the six hour hitch between midnight and six a.m., and instead of getting some sleep, I sat with him within the black silhouette of the pilothouse and listened to the creaking of the great wooden steering wheel as it spun to the pilot's commands, until he warned me that I had better get some rest. Outside on the starboard side of the pilothouse, was a comfortable-looking couch with soft cushions that was more inviting than the top bunk in a tiny, sweltering, metal cubicle alongside the boilers shared with three other sweating men. So I laid there where the sounds of the pilot's wheel, heard through the open sash, quickly lulled me to sleep ... until shouts in the night started me back to reality: "What're you doing down there, boy? I almost peed on you!" It was the pilot about to relieve himself through the open window, and where I lay had obviously been the target of past micturitions. Returning below deck, my face felt greasy, and looking into a mirror, a face masked with black soot from the smokestacks that had been blown down during the night, stared back. My rudimentary steamboat education had already taught me two invaluable lessons thus far:

1) Rest after a long, hard day's work and 2) Never sleep under a smokestack below an open pilothouse window on a dark night.

By morning, the AVALON was well on its way toward Louisville, and Big Cap Wagner was supervising the overall cleaning of the steamboat as it deadheaded down the Ohio River. The concession stands were scrubbed and shined, and the Skipper, personally, led the deck crew in stripping, scrubbing and waxing the dance floor. My assignment was cleaning the aft steel stairways from the boiler deck to the hurricane roof, and working as I had been taught at home and at Walt's Boat Club, the results were such that Mr. Werner, seeing my enterprise, hailed Capt. Wagner and brought him over to where I was working. "Look what a good job this kid is doing ...", and the outcome of my efforts obviously pleased them both. Later that day, when I approached the giant Captain and requested a transfer to the deck, he had already seen an example of my work, so he gladly exchanged me for a deckhand who wanted to be in the Steward's gang. The heavy foot locker left the hot room on the starboard side close to the boilers and was dragged to Room 12 at the after-end of the line of rooms on the port side; away from the boilers where the walk-in reefer box helped cool the deckhand's sleeping compartment. Room 12 remains my favorite on the main deck, even now that the boat is named the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE and will be celebrating its 100th anniversary this fall, some fifty-five years later.

After racially-segregated colored charters and open, all-white rides in Louisville, the steamboat made its way down the Ohio, playing a few towns, but mostly she was on her way to the Upper Mississippi River. My first introduction to the Mississippi was a tremendous roar heard beneath the landing stage where I was sleeping, projecting over the water and out in front of the bow, as the AVALON turned the corner at Cairo Point and the sound of the swift current as it rushed past the bow was enough to startle me awake. Turning to Watchman Harry Ricoh who had also been sleeping on the stage, I asked, "Is that the Mississippi?" "Yep, that's her," he answered, and after listening awhile to the sounds of the powerful stream, I fell back asleep. The next day was our arrival at St. Louis,

several years before the Gateway Arch was built. Here again, during those times of racial separation, the AVALON catered to all-colored trips as the local excursion boat, the Steamer ADMIRAL, normally excluded Negroes as passengers. The all-black trips were generally some of the best and most well-behaved rides we had anywhere we went on the river.

Up the mighty Mississippi River the AVALON traveled all summer, stopping in towns and cities along the way with new and exciting names I had heard of only in books, on television, or at the movies. Alton, IL, the first town the AVALON played above St. Louis, was where the grand, deep tones of the whistle frightened mothers and made their kids howl in terror. There I was delegated to stay ashore to catch the lines when the boat returned from a late-night cruise, and instead of finding a beer joint uptown, or hanging around the Greyhound bus station looking for available strays like the older deckhands usually did, I found a hidden place on the riverbank and curled up and slept until the thunderous whistle announced the arrival of the returning steamboat.

Hannibal, MO was where the boyhood adventures of the author Mark Twain played out in the guise of Petersburg. The characters Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Jim, and Becky Thatcher were all concocted names that Twain had contrived to disguise the identity of those guilty of the errors recorded in his books – books that served forever to ruin the writing ambitions of future river authors. The kiss of death for an aspiring writer of steamboat and Mississippi River tales is to be tagged “The New Mark Twain.”

Above Hannibal on the Illinois side, the AVALON spent a couple of days at Quincy where I scrawled the initials of my own boyhood gang of river boys into the cement pier of the highway bridge: “LVA” for the “Licking Valley Association,” an imagined band of Licking River roughnecks composed of myself, two younger brothers, and a cousin. Quincy, in those days, was home to a number of bawdy houses and the matrons of the bagnios enjoyed afternoon breezes cruising aboard the steamboat on the Mississippi whenever their work allowed.

At each landing, I learned where the ties were hidden; how to secure the headline to a tree or a ringbolt using toggles and shackles, and when and how to use one or the other. I learned which way the lead of a spring line went and what horn of the kevel the line went to first. Captain Red showed me early-on what the bight of a line was, and to be aware of the potential for death or destruction by standing in one. He, and others, taught me how to keep on the dry side of the line and not go past the middle of the stage unless someone was standing on the heel. The further up the river the AVALON went, the more I became comfortable and at ease with my deck duties. Before and after each ride, we deckhands ran up top to clean the boat of Burger Beer cans, Wagner Cola bottles, cigarettes, paper cups, napkins, and every other sort of debris that party-goers could leave behind in two and a half hours. The boat had to be sparkling before the next group of rubes crowding the riverbank hurried aboard, filled with expectations of drinking, dancing, or cooling off in the river breezes. Some came with the anticipation of finding a stray playmate... others came spoiling for a fight.

The historic Lock and Dam Number 19 at Keokuk, and the ruins of the Mormon settlement at Nauvoo were held in wonder by myself and a couple other newcomers to the Upper River. Inspired by yarns told by old river pilots like Captains Ray Fugina and Roy Wethern, and further inflated by veteran AVALON deckhands like former Golden Gloves boxer Jackie Armstrong, and Joe-from-Pomeroy on the Upper Ohio River, who stayed to the end of the season annually to collect the year-end bonus. Watchman William “Big Bill” Willis looked much like the popular television comedian Jackie Gleason, and claimed he was a graduate of New York University. Big Bill enjoyed flaunting his higher learning over the rest of the crew, and this was received with mixed feelings ... mostly he was referred to as an “educated fool” by his lesser-schooled crewmates.

Harry Ricoh, who signed on at Pittsburgh several seasons earlier, especially enjoyed fetching and running errands for the Captain. A year later, one of Ricoh’s stunts would land him in memorable trouble with Capt. Wagner, but for now, his experience as a seasoned boatman made him invaluable to the

steamboat. My association with Harry was as the oarsman on the rescue boat, a johnboat that acted as a platform to find and pull jumpers out of the river. He was the person-in-charge of the little wooden boat. Harry sat on the stern thwart manning a steering oar while guiding me toward the victim as I rowed with my face looking aft and, consequently, could not see where the boat was heading. Above Cassville, WI that summer, Ricoh and I were in the rescue boat on a dark, swift river looking for a jumper. I wore a round, Navy-style Bosons' high-pressure cap I had found in an Army-Navy outlet in Louisville not long after I first started on the deck. We were about a half-mile downstream from where the AVALON was shoved into the bank to load a group onto the boat from Cassville. The steamboat was already half-filled with sodden citizens from Guttenberg, IA, an upriver, neighboring rival town, and the two groups did not mix well together – especially after alcohol was added. The intake of a power plant caused a strong draw towards it that I could feel as I rowed in the darkness, lit only by distant lights ashore and Ricoh's flashlight, powered by two half-spent batteries.

“Don't hear nothing,” I said to Ricoh, “Wanna go back?” Ricoh intently studied the waters ahead. “I think I hear something ... get in closer.” Carefully, the johnboat pulled nearer to the roaring water intake. Searching ahead, Ricoh's flashlight caught the faint sight of a man being drawn closer to the inflow of the power plant. A feeble voice cried for help, and soon we were alongside and brought aboard a frightened, foolish young man who would live another day. A friendly yacht saw our lack of progress in stemming the Mississippi's current and gave us a tow close to the AVALON. After turning loose, I rowed the boat with the three of us alongside and into the glaring light of a thousand electric light bulbs. The cacophony of hundreds of yelling, shrieking, and cursing revelers were carrying-on over the throbbing music of the Rhythm Master's Band, playing enthusiastically to an appreciative audience.

Suddenly, the hot summer evening was filled with a thundering explosion and a brilliant flash of searing, white light! The Bos'n's cap flew into the darkness and was never seen again. My left shoulder hurt worse than I had ever felt such pain

before, or since. Above us, sweating faces peered over the side of the steamboat and laughed and spit at us ... and on the wet bottom of the johnboat, a half-empty glass, quart-bottle of Wagner Cola was spinning around and round. The man whose life we had just saved laughed, and proudly proclaimed, “They's my friends.” In spite of the burning pain, I slammed the ungrateful fellow onto the bottom of the boat and held the point of the pike pole, the tool that minutes before had plucked him from the unforgiving jowls of the water-intake, against his throat. I kept it firmly in place until the johnboat reached the shore and he was in the custody of a local policeman stationed on the landing to deal with such miscreants. My wounded shoulder ached for a week, or two, but fortunately the bottle found the shoulder instead of my neck or head.

Lambert's Landing in St. Paul, was the AVALON's northernmost home for two hot summer weeks. Afternoon rides were generally filled with mothers taking the kids for a boat ride while the dads worked. Evening Moonlite trips were for the young adult crowd. Without a liquor license, the steamboat allowed bottles of alcohol to be brought aboard, but non-alcoholic mixes, ice, and beer were turned away. The AVALON made a profit by selling mixes in the infamous glass bottles, and ice was peddled by the paper bucketful, all for over-inflated prices. Burger Beer was the only brew aboard. The trips had all been orderly, for the most part, and the watchmen had incarcerated but a few over-exuberant revelers in the “gorilla cage” jail behind the steam engines. There the searing heat was certain to render the most inebriated guest the sobriety sought after by the most ardent supporter of the temperance movement. On a particular evening, Red Wilke, the First Mate in charge of the deck that year, was replacing Capt. Clarke C. “Doc” Hawley while Doc was on the DELTA QUEEN getting service time experience for an Unlimited Master's License exam he was taking after the end of the season. Red ordered me to stay ashore during the Moonlite trip to be handy to catch and tie off the lines when the AVALON came back from the ride, a normal procedure relished by the deckhand assigned to the duty.

Lambert Landing at that time had a broad, flat, concrete esplanade between the river and the

highway built not very high above the water. As the last turn was taken on the sternline, I stepped down onto the fantail of the boat, and as I did, the esplanade immediately turned green with shards of broken glass as hundreds of Wagner soda bottles broke onto the cement promenade where I had been securing the lines only minutes before. Blackey the Watchman, his white shirt stained red with blood, came dragging a battered man down the back steps toward the jail and yelled as he passed, "Get up to the post office and call the police!" The landing was full, by then, with people who had been driven off the boat. Some were fighting, but many were struggling to get away from the brawlers as fast as they could. Without a uniform to identify me with the boat, it was easy to pass through the crowd and up Jackson Street to a coin-operated telephone inside the post office lobby.

Sirens quickly announced the arrival of the police, and following them were fire trucks, paddy wagons, and eventually, ambulances were called to haul off the wounded. Returning to the landing, I easily slipped back aboard across the fantail and onto the boat where the combatants had been driven ashore in my absence. The crew was on the roof, watching, as the battle raged-on at a safe distance away. For the first time, I witnessed police dogs in action as the firemen manning the hoses were blasting streams of water against the battling crowd. The next night, a report of the violent struggle that started on the AVALON was broadcast on the "Huntley-Brinkley Report," the NBC television network's flagship evening news program. Everyone in America, including my parents, watched as they sat down to their evening meal. As soon as the AVALON's office opened the next morning, my father phoned and demanded my return home, but after assurances that I had survived unhurt, and with the confidence of getting Capt. Wagner to promise that he would look out for my safety, my folks let the issue drop. A few days later, the AVALON departed St. Paul, much to the relief of the officers, crew, and the St. Paul community. The boat received the blame for the riot that was later found to have been an opportunity for rival gangs to rumble, but whatever was said about the origin of the commotion, plunging ticket sales spoke the loudest. So, early of a morning, the AVALON slipped the bonds that bound it to Lambert's

Landing and headed down the Mississippi toward the St. Croix River.

Wearing a round Detex watch clock hanging from a leather strap slung around his neck, Harold Donelson, the night watchman, patrolled the AVALON from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. He doubled on the dancefloor when rides overlapped the hours he was on the lookout for fires and other abnormal occurrences that presented a danger to the boat and crew during those late hours when most of the company was sleeping. Harold's room was one of the steel boxes alongside the boilers where soaring interior temperatures could boil a kettle of fish. So he slept underneath the pilothouse in a cramped space close to the spinning pilotwheel that came through the overhead close to his head, slumbering while the rest of us worked in the sunshine. Harold's uniform, like those of the other watchmen Harry Ricoh, Big Bill Willis, Blackey, and Whitey, was a white shirt, black trousers, and a high-pressure boat cap. But, because his shirts had been worn for many years, and though they were sent off to the cleaners every time a laundry truck hauled off the linen and the officers' cleaning, his shirts had, over the years, turned a dingy yellow - the color of old ivory piano keys. At one time, my mother Anna Margaret, seeing the condition of his uniform shirt and thinking it unclean, called him, "Dirty Shirt Harold," and the name stuck.

Even in those days, long before the Clean Water Act came into law to regulate the discharge of pollutants into the waters of the United States, the St. Croix River was already a National Scenic Waterway. As such, it presented a problem to the AVALON for the disposal of garbage, sewage, and other wastes while cruising the beautiful, protected river. The common practice for all commercial and pleasure boats was to toss, pump, or otherwise dispose of all forms of feculence into the water. Therefore, we continued in the traditional manner of waste disposal on the lovely St. Croix, only we had to be cleverer than we did on unprotected and unpatrolled waters. All the Burger Beer cans not thrown overboard by high-spirited passengers were carefully collected for Dirty Shirt Harold who, between patrols, punched additional holes into each steel can so that they quickly went to the bottom of the river as soon as they were dumped over the

side after dark and out of sight of prying eyes. From Prescott to Stillwater, the bed of the lovely St. Croix River was lined with metal cans imported from the Cincinnati brewery. For perspective, it would be another eleven years before the more-elegant DELTA QUEEN no longer disposed of her waste in this same manner. Otherwise, the St. Croix River was stunningly pristine, and though it was our duty to elude the protective eyes of the Wisconsin and Minnesota conservation officers, I remember that resplendent river having some of the best scenery anywhere on any rivers the AVALON traveled that summer.

Passing Prescott, WI and turning south, the AVALON departed the scenic St. Croix River and visited towns along the Mississippi again. Red Wing, MN, named for Hupahuduta the Sioux chief, "The Wing of the Swan Dyed Red," but to most people, Red Wing, was better known for its Red Wing Shoes. Downstream, the AVALON passed Lake City and into my favorite stretch of water on the Upper Mississippi River, Lake Pepin. Pepin, a naturally-occurring lake, is the widest part of the Mississippi River not made by the hand of man. By this time, the AVALON was some sixty miles below St. Paul. Impressive Maiden Rock on the Wisconsin side was where the Indian maiden Winona leaped to her death rather than marry a suitor she did not love. Lake Pepin on a windy day was the closest I had been in what I imagined to be sea-like conditions. The bow of the steamboat at that time was built low to the water with little freeboard. To compensate for the flaw, plywood splash-boards were fitted around the bow to keep small waves from washing over the head of the boat. But the huge swells on Lake Pepin buried the bow, crashed against the sliding doors, and threw sheets of water onto the upper deck of the steamboat as high as the concession stands windows on the boiler deck. What a sensation it was to stand behind the protective glass of the heavy doors as the full force of the lake crashed against the bow, spray breaking over the superstructure of the AVALON as it plowed its way through the white-capping waves.

Below Lake Pepin, enchanting Alma, WI, "Best town on the river ... by a dam site," refers to Lock and Dam # 4 straddling the center of the two-mile long by two block deep town which emptied out

to fill the AVALON with fun-seekers, including those from villages and farms all around Buffalo County. More than fifty years later, I became closely-associated with friendly Alma when I found the sternwheeler CLYDE., a faithful representation of the type of raft boats that brought huge rafts of virgin Wisconsin pine downriver to sawmills as far south as St. Louis. Alma, in the heyday of the rafts, boomed with the lumber industry when thousands of men were there assembling the great rafts of logs that were guided down the Mississippi River by steam rafters like the original 1870 CLYDE., the first iron-hulled steamboat on the Upper, and the namesake of my CLYDE. Alma was, and remains, my favorite town on the Upper Mississippi.

The AVALON was the last tramp excursion boat. Tramping meant going from town to town, and that is when the crew had the boat all to themselves. After all the work was caught-up, for work on a steamboat is never done, deadheading to the next town, without passengers aboard, was like having a private cruise. This was a time for catching up on lost sleep, to find a cozy place to watch the river, to wash clothes in a five-gallon bucket, or a time to hang out with the guys and jaw; or listen to someone blow on the harp, as the harmonica was called. In the days before cell phones, a pay telephone ashore, and letter writing were the only ways to communicate with loved-ones back home or with that new girlfriend met on a cruise at one of the towns we played. Room 12, my room shared with three other deckhands, was far enough away from the heat of the boilers that it was comfortable enough to sleep in, but with limitations. The two sets of bunks were so close that a man could be standing between them talking to someone on the bottom bed while resting an arm on the top of each upper bunk. One single four-drawer, wooden dresser gave each occupant a drawer apiece, but there was space below the bottom bunks large-enough for suitcases. Even my army footlocker found room to fit. An oscillating fan sat on the top of the dresser, and though the room was the coolest of those on the main deck, Room 12 was still hot by normal standards of comfort in the summer time. As the electric fan rotated, the refreshing breeze was delightful as it passed, but as soon as the breeze journeyed on to the next guy, beads of sweat would break out on my forehead ... then, "Aaahh," I would

say silently as the cool air returned. Sleep was interrupted by frequent locks that demanded the quick turnout of the deck crew. Depending on the schedule, working fifteen, twenty, even thirty hours without sleep was not unusual, and then as soon as sleep came, Dirty Shirt Harold might appear at the doorway and yell inside, "LOCK TIME! HAUL OUT!" There was the time or two, coming into a lock, when I was all alone on the fantail, standing with the heavy sternline in my hand while waiting for the boat to stop, that I suddenly realized that I had been standing there sound-asleep. A bump against the concrete lock wall while I was sleeping could have tumbled me between the boat and the wall. I wrote about that experience to my folks at home, and when I received a letter back saying I should come home, and all other sorts of pessimistic remarks about my being on the AVALON ... I quit writing them.

In the summer of 1959, the Steamer AVALON had been built forty-five years earlier by James Rees and Sons in Pittsburgh, but the Rees engines were older by any number of years. They came off another steamboat before they were re-installed on the IDLEWILD, the AVALON's original name. These engines were designed with a feature that saved steam and consequently, fuel. By capitalizing on the expansive quality of steam and the momentum of the heavy moving paddlewheel and associated parts, once the steamboat had gained its cruising speed, an overhead operating rod was adjusted to reduce the amount of steam entering the cast iron cylinders while maintaining the speed of the vessel and the efficiency of the engines. Originally this feature was patented by the builders as the "Rees Variable Cut-Off Steam Engine." In the full cut-off position, metal dogs, parts of the mechanical linkage, made a pleasant clacking sound as the engines went about their business of propelling the boat. This pleasing clatter of the dogs and the rumble of the long wooden pitmans, connected by crossheads to the piston rods, made a relaxing white noise that was conducive to both introspective daydreaming and somnolence. Room 12, by its close proximity to the sounds and vibrations of the port engine, was restful as a baby's cradle after an eighteen-hour day. My bed was the top bunk nearest the engine, and with a narrow window, I enjoyed both cooler air and the lullaby the machinery played. The song

the engines sang went something like this: "Clack, Clack, Clack ... Shooooooooo... Clack, Clack, Clack... Shooooooooo..." throughout the night.

Rock Island, Muscatine, Burlington, Ft. Madison, Keokuk, Quincy, and of course, Hannibal, became familiar towns known more intimately by the crew for the locations of the best ties for the AVALON's heavy ropes or lines, for how far the closest bars were from the river, and which towns had the friendliest girls. But, being seventeen, with girlfriends and alcohol yet to become a major issue in my persona, my spare time was spent doing odd-jobs, or helping the Captain or the Chief with special projects – like the wind vanes Capt. Wagner requested for the roof so the pilots could tell the direction of the summer breezes that toyed with the sternwheeler, especially during landings and departures. While other crewmen guzzled away their \$19 weekly pay ashore, my money was kept in E. P. Hall's safe inside the purser's office. Personally, I spent as much free time as possible between rides in rowing the wooden johnboat that was stowed against the open windows back on the port engine room bulkhead, where the heat off the engines dried out the boat and caused it to leak fiercely whenever it was launched to recover another drunken jumper. So the Skipper was always agreeable whenever I asked to take the boat for a row, which helped keep the wood swollen so it did not sink before the next jumper was reached. Cap's only admonition was, "Get the boat back before boarding time. I can't sail if I don't have a rescue boat."

One time in Hannibal that July, I had the rescue boat up Bear Creek, the same "crick" a young Sam Clemens nearly drowned in according to his autobiography, which would have opened careers for future river writers without them having to carry the scourge of being branded "The New Mark Twain." It was getting close to departure time for the afternoon ride, and I figured there was plenty of time to get the wooden boat back, when it suddenly ran upon a submerged stump and was hard aground. As strenuously as I could row, and I was an exceptional oarsman, the boat would do nothing but pivot around on the submerged stump. The mighty three-chimed steamboat whistle blew the fifteen-minute call for departure, but the johnboat was no closer to freedom than it had been immediately

after the stump captured it. Only those who knew the wrath of the great Captain could understand the agony I was feeling, knowing that I was about to be the cause of the cancellation of a cruise with the associated loss of revenue and all. 🕒

Capt. Don's reminiscences of the AVALON will continue in the December 2014 issue of the REFLECTOR - Ed.

The Best Job I Ever Had by John "Corky" Bickel



Corky Bickel looks up at Capt. Wagner after joining AVALON crew in Guttenberg Lock. Below, Capt. Archie Maples offers a few pointers. Photos courtesy of Corky Bickel.



I don't remember when I was not wild about steamboats. My father, John P. Bickel, grew up the son of a grocer in the small northeast Iowa river town of McGregor. One of his jobs was to accompany my grandfather delivering groceries to

steamboats making regular stops for provisions in McGregor. Growing up he loved steamboats and all things connected to the river, and I suspect that my love was partially genetic and partially as a result of the endless tutorials given by my father about the sternwheelers and river men who made their lives on the boats.

At about the age of nine I accompanied my father in his friend's Chris Craft. We sped out of Harpers Slough north of McGregor/Marquette, IA chasing after the GORDON C. GREENE. We had to get a last look at her as she made her final trip south on the Upper Mississippi River. What an elegant sight to see this magnificent lady with her graceful lines and the powerful rollers in her wake. My father expressed great sadness at the passing of an era with this last southbound trip.

By the time I was thirteen I was an accomplished river rat, and with two river friends, embarked upon the "great journey" taking our outboards up the Mississippi. We passed the Twin Cities, Lock and Dam #1, and went as far as Taylor's Falls on the St. Croix. One of our stops was in Fountain City, WI to visit the long retired Capt. William Henning who had made his life as a steamboat captain on the Upper Mississippi. Capt. Henning was very gracious in sharing with us his extensive collection of photographs of steamboats and his memories from more than three quarters of a century working and piloting on the river.

On occasion during the summer, my buddies and I would have a chance encounter meeting the steamer AVALON taking day cruises out of Prairie du Chien. We marveled at her size, the sound of her calliope, and fantasized about "steamboating" every time we saw her. One particular evening, my father, mother, and a group of friends (I was never invited on evening outings) were enjoying a cruise on their Chris Craft at 11:00 p.m. watching the AVALON as it prepared to land in Prairie du Chien at the end of the moonlight excursion. As they watched they witnessed several young male passengers who had apparently had "one too many" pick up and throw a number of wooden deck chairs off the port side of the texas deck. My father steered his boat to the area where the chairs were floating in the river and fished them out. The next day I accompanied him to

Prairie du Chien in his boat, where the six plus deck chairs were stacked on the motor hatch. Pulling up to the bow of the AVALON, he asked if he could speak to the captain. A very formidable giant of a man, 6'4", dressed in un-ironed wash pants and short sleeved open collared button down shirt appeared on deck. In his mesmerizing drawl Capt. Ernest Wagner asked my father how he could help him. My father indicated that he had something he believed belonged to the captain and pointed to the stack of chairs. Capt. Wagner expressed both joy and surprise, exclaiming that he had never had anyone return anything belonging to the boat which had been stolen or thrown overboard. He graciously thanked my father as crew members offloaded the chairs onto the deck of the AVALON. Pointing to me he addressed my father asking, "What does that young man have planned for the afternoon?" "Nothing special," was the reply. "Why don't you let Corky (introductions had already been made) take a ride with me this afternoon?" This was the beginning of lifelong friendships which endure to this day.

I spent the afternoon on the heels of Capt. Wagner (now in more officer appropriate dress, white shirt, black shoes, black trousers, black tie and his Master's cap) watching him orchestrate the operation of an excursion steamer, and listening to him call out orders to his crew. It was not long before we were in the pilot house and I was introduced to the second "best friend" I made on the boat that day, First Mate "Doc" Hawley. I trailed Doc while he played the calliope to entice aboard the afternoon crowd. I still recall vividly the smell of live steam and classical "melodious sounds" which came from his pushing hard on the brass keys that day. Back to the pilot house after the concert was concluded, I alternated between quietly and respectfully sitting on the visiting pilot's bench, or standing out of the way watching the pilot on watch skillfully steer the AVALON, and listened to the conversation between the pilots. Capt. Wagner and Doc would periodically appear in the pilot house. It was the best day of my life. At the end of the cruise, my father came in his boat to Prairie du Chien to retrieve me. I thanked both Capt. Wagner and Doc and bid them a fond farewell.

As a stroke of luck would have it, when we arrived

in our family boat later that summer in Stillwater, MN on the St. Croix, I saw the AVALON again. I begged my father to take me over to the boat so I could say hello to my "good friends." Reflecting at the present time on that chance reunion in Stillwater, much to my amazement (as a 13 year old there was no doubt in my mind they would remember me), both of them warmly greeted me by name and invited me aboard for the afternoon cruise.

This same scenario was repeated the next summer when the AVALON visited Prairie du Chien. The boat's visit was without question the highlight of the summer of my fourteenth year.

I was fifteen when the scenario repeated itself, but with a life altering twist. I arrived at the boat with my father and was again warmly greeted by Capt. Wagner and First Mate Doc Hawley. After appropriate pleasantries were exchanged, my father and Capt. Wagner visited about the state of the river in the Prairie du Chien area, and the boat's northbound itinerary. Then he looked at my father, smiled and said, "How would Corky like to work for me this summer?" He explained to my father that I would be bunking with Doc in his cabin. The officers and crew would keep an eye on me to make sure that I was safe and I would be returned in good condition. My father asked me if I would be interested in working on the boat for the rest of the summer as a crew member. "Absolutely yes, you bet I would," was both instant and euphorically affirmative. The plan was to join the boat on her downbound trip when she returned from the north.

After the boat departed northbound and arrived in St. Paul, there was a "disturbance" on the landing when the AVALON docked. Rival motorcycle gangs from St. Paul and South St. Paul engaged in a major brawl and arrests were made. The event was deemed newsworthy by the Twin City newspapers and several other newspapers along the river to the south. Somehow my grandmother, who lived in McGregor, became aware of the "river front riot," which the incident was now being called by the press. Grandma Bickel, an "old school Methodist," did not approve of drinking or dancing, let alone the wild life of a river man. When my father announced to her that I was "shipping out" as a crew member

on the steamer AVALON, her response could not have been more negative. My summer as a crew member proved Grandma wrong on all accounts.

On a warm summer day my mother, father and sisters drove me to the riverbank in Marquette, a mile above McGregor, and we waved at the boat as she passed on her way south. We headed back to McGregor, passed through town and onto the highway to Guttenberg where we raced down river to Lock and Dam #10. After the AVALON pulled into the lock, I hoisted my bag over the lock wall railing to a waiting crew member, swung myself over the rail onto the second deck of the steamboat, the place of my first full time employment. As a crew member on the steamer AVALON I had been directed to bring black tie and trousers, a pair of black shoes, and white shirts with me as part of my duties would involve contact with the passengers. I was a trim, athletic, blond fifteen year old ready for a new adventure. I was on my own, alone, and knew I was up to the job.

Upon arrival at the boat I was issued my station card. My emergency station was on the texas deck and today my station card is proudly framed, and cherished as one of my most valuable possessions. Originally it was bright orange, but the side which has been exposed to the sun for decades is badly yellowed, while the back side is still a prominent orange color.

Doc was assigned to take me to his cabin where there were two bunks along its inside wall, bottom and top. I was shown the top bunk which would be mine for the summer. The cabin was no longer than the bunks and between the bunks and the outside wall was room enough for only one person to squeeze in. The bottom bunk had space under it to stow my suitcase. Reflecting on this in later years, it was an obvious sacrifice for Doc to share his cabin as there was such limited space. It was under this bunk where he had to store all of his own belongings and gear for the entire season. But never once did he exhibit any indication of irritation or displeasure with the fact that his usable personal space had just been reduced by 50% or more. To the contrary, he was extraordinarily hospitable and gracious during my entire time on the boat. I understood that I was privileged to be staying in an

officer's cabin, this one located on the port side of the texas deck. The boat had no air conditioning, but our cabin did have a window on the outside wall which was shuttered and never opened, along with transom windows which did open. A powerful brass-bladed old fashioned fan was mounted near the top of the back wall. A small sink hung on the low wall. Hot water came from the river, cold water from tanks located just overhead our ceiling on the roof. Our linens were washed every week. We turned our sheets over during the week so that we would have "clean" linens. A maid (we had very few female crew members) would bring us our clean sheets. My sense is that those crew members who lived in the confined steel walled rooms with no ventilation on the main deck did not enjoy such luxury. The summer was very warm, no blanket was ever needed. Living on the top bunk, my head was only three feet below the bottom of the pilot wheel and when underway, I was lulled to sleep by the rhythm of the calipers which stopped the rotation of the wheel.

We cruised down the Mississippi River, part way up the Illinois River and then back down the Mississippi, making stops at all the river towns of any size. Sometimes we stopped at the larger towns for several days. Otherwise we left a town after the evening moonlight cruise and journeyed through the night to the next stop.

The day began at 7:00 a.m. with breakfast handed to the crew members through a small galley window that was located ahead of the engine room, but near the stern of the main deck. Picnic tables provided the seating for meals. The food we ate was not fancy but very ample and I liked it. Immediately after breakfast I joined fellow crew members in mopping the decks, picking up trash from the night before that had been missed after the crew's night cleanup, and readying the boat for the next afternoon cruise.

When I was not working, I was occasionally allowed to go to the pilot house. During these off times when I was there, I talked with the pilots and listened to the rich conversations they had with an occasional visiting pilot, and other "specially invited" passengers who were fortunate to have the privilege of experiencing firsthand where the AVALON was

operated. As a young crew member, you sat quietly, and engaged in conversation only when invited to. You remained silent and enjoyed the privilege of being in the presence of veterans including Capt. Archie Maples who was piloting the boat. On one afternoon excursion, Capt. Sewell Smith was in the pilot house engaged in conversation with Capt. Tom Craig who was on watch. Captain Smith had long before retired from his illustrious and lifelong career on the river. The two pilots were reminiscing about their career experiences when two women and a gentleman appeared in the pilot house. The women were verbalizing their excitement about being in the pilot house ad nauseam. After several minutes of talking, one of the women exclaimed, "This is just like being with Mark Twain piloting a steamboat." Captain Smith had heard enough. He responded, "Ladies, my father was a pilot when Mark Twain was a cub pilot on the same boat, and I can tell ya Mark Twain warn't much of a pilot." The women stood in silence. The pilot house returned to normal.

I would often accompany Doc on the texas deck's hot tar paper roof to stand near him during the pre-boarding calliope concerts. The smell of the live steam and the shrieking melodies that rang out from the calliope whistles were pure heaven. To this day live steam and calliope music still evoke in me the strongest emotions.

In preparation for each cruise, I made my way to the dance floor deck, starboard side, at the bow. I took up my station for the cruise behind the concession counter, which was explained to me as an important and responsible job. Running the popcorn machine, selling candy bars and pop to the passengers was indeed very important. It was explained that the passengers liked salt on their popcorn. "Be sure to use plenty of salt," was the instruction from the highest authority. No one explained, and it did not dawn on me that the more salt, the more pop (and beer) is sold. I was good at my job and enjoyed it.

Being at the front end of the dance floor gave me a great view of the elevated bandstand located at the stern. I could clearly hear every note the band played and every word of each song. It was a wonderful band, comprised of all black musicians

from the South who sang all of their numbers loud and clear, there were no separate instrumentals. During breaks, I was allowed to provide the band with popcorn and soft drinks. They became regular customers and good friends. Soon I memorized the words to the songs, and quietly sang with them to myself while serving my customers. I never tired of those songs, not even to the present day. Several of the band members told me of playing with legends including Louis Armstrong.

In the larger towns and cities along the river there would occasionally be an offer by band members for me to accompany them "up town" to get ice cream. One or more of the band always walked back to the boat with me to ensure my safe return. There was never inappropriate discussion in my presence. However, in the larger cities I somehow understood that band members who sometimes did not return to the boat had been making inquiry about the location of the local fun house (the same type of house that had been reputed to be located on the foot of Main Street in McGregor in generations past).

I was a number of years younger than the other crew members. For a period of time Capt. Wagner's stepdaughter Sandy, who was close to my age, worked on the boat as a maid. But because of limited crew quarters for women, she had to sleep on a cot in the women's bathroom, behind the bandstand on the dance floor deck. She was pleasant and good looking, but we had few opportunities to visit.

One of my first jobs on the boat was one of the most unpleasant. As a skinnier crew member I was assigned to position myself at a hatch, which was approximately four feet in diameter, out on the head of the boat. I stood inside the hatch with my head and shoulders sticking out above deck. My job was to hand cases of beer down to someone below me in the hold. The work itself was not particularly heavy, but it was hot in the sun and there was a steam pipe which ran along the underside of the deck which had a leak. Live dripping steam condensate is very unpleasant when it spits onto your back on a hot day. Fortunately that job was not a regular one as we did not "take on" beer that often.

Getting to know the crew members was quite an experience. They were without exception nice

to me. One of the deck crew, Leroy Battoe, from Louisiana, was a particularly strong, stout man who embellished in detail the “riot” which had occurred in St. Paul. In the middle of his story he said, “Wait a minute,” rushed to his cabin on the main deck and returned to show me with pride his well-worn, unlaundered white t-shirt with the blood spatters that resulted from that “row.” Leroy explained that a toggle (a two-foot long 2 x 4 used to secure a line) had been put to good use during the fight. Some unfortunate gang member made a big mistake picking a fight with Leroy.

Work on the boat involved long hours but there were moments of glamor and excitement. Glamor came during the cruises with me working the popcorn machine on the dance floor. Normally the Formica topped tables, lining the sides of the dance floor, were bare. On special occasions we covered the tables with freshly pressed snow white linen tablecloths. One night the boat had been chartered in Memphis by a “colored” organization (“whites and coloreds” were the socially accepted terms of reference at that time on the river.) The passengers that night came in their Sunday finest and were good looking, gracious passengers. A special effort was made by those of us on the dance floor to have our cleanest and nicest looking clothes on in order to serve them. The group had an auction on the dance floor during the cruise and the highlight of the auction was a pony which was led willingly up the grand staircase from the main deck to the dance floor. The auction came to an end and the boat landed. It was time for the pony to descend from the dance floor to the main deck and leave the boat with his new owner. At the top of the staircase, that pony took one look down the stairs and wanted no part of it. Capt. Wagner directed First Mate Hawley (put in charge of logistics for the pony), to summon at least four of the strongest deck crew and watchmen, including Leroy, to pick up the now-petrified pony and carry it down the staircase. Fortunately, no one, including the pony, suffered injury. What an unforgettable spectacle to behold!

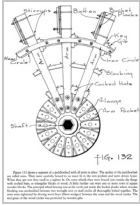
Each evening after the last passenger had disembarked, there was a nightly ritual at about 11:30 p.m. or so, which was particularly enjoyable. The crew, with the exception of the pilot, engineer, firemen and others on-duty, would congregate at

the picnic tables on the first deck for our midnight snack. Two hot dogs each and two cans of beer for each crew member, in my case pop. After the beer and pop everyone turned in at midnight for a few hours’ sleep, until the ritual began again the next morning. Breakfast at 7:00 a.m. sharp.

Upon arrival in New Orleans in August, I bid my fellow crew members farewell. With my newfound wealth (\$27 per week, most of which I saved), I checked into the Roosevelt Hotel on Canal Street. My intention was to spend the night in N’Orleans before heading to the airport to fly to Chicago and then board a passenger train for Prairie du Chien, across the river from McGregor. After checking into the Roosevelt Hotel, a tour of the French Quarter would be my next experience. As a veteran river man, I had become worldly (I thought). I walked across Canal Street to the French Quarter and began enjoying the sights. After a period of time a thin, nondescript young-looking man started to follow me. I went in and out of several shops but this guy was still trailing me from a distance. This experience totally unnerved me. I took off on a dead run up Canal Street, back to the hotel, checked out, took a cab to the airport, and that afternoon flew directly to Chicago. (The hotel did not refund my room charge.) I spent the night on a bench in the Chicago train station, which may have been as dangerous as walking alone in the French Quarter in New Orleans. I caught the first train out to Prairie du Chien the next morning. So much for my new level of worldliness.

I worked hard as a crew member and believed that I would have the opportunity to return the next season, but as fate had it, I did not return to the boat. To this day I can still hear the sounds of the calliope, smell the fragrance of live steam, and enjoy salt on my popcorn.

My strong friendship with Capt. Wagner and First Mate, now Capt. Hawley, remain cherished memories. After the AVALON no longer “tramped,” it was my privilege to visit them both regularly when they came back to the upper river on the DELTA QUEEN. My deep feeling of affection for the AVALON, Capt. Wagner, and Capt. Hawley endure today as do my memories of the best job I ever had. 🌀



Small Stacks

Scale Models Celebrate Historic Steamer

by John Fryant

Since this issue is all about the history of the IDLEWILD/AVALON/BELLE OF LOUISVILLE, I thought it appropriate to talk about some models of her. Alan Bates reconstructed model builder's plans for the IDLEWILD and BELLE quite a few years ago, and most likely many models of all versions of the boat have been built. This column includes a few examples from the last fifty years or more.

When Capt. Clarke "Doc" Hawley was mate on the AVALON, he built a model of her, which is now owned by S & D President Jeff Spear. I'm not sure of the date, but this may be the oldest model of her around, probably built to 1/48th scale. (Top photo on left)

Several years ago I finished a model of the BELLE for Ohio River Museum after the original builder had passed away before completing it. That model is now displayed at the museum. (Second photo on left)

Ship-in-a-bottle expert Bill Niehaus of Cincinnati, OH built an unusual model of the BELLE in a bottle. Although its actual dimensions aren't readily at hand, the photo looks like the model was constructed inside a wine bottle. Modeling ships (or steamboats) in bottles is an art in itself requiring many specialized tools, most of which must be custom made for the purpose. (Third photo on left)

Some years ago Frank Brockhardt built an excellent display model of the IDLEWILD from Alan's plans. Frank was a retired machinist who had owned a gear manufacturing plant in Wheeling, WV. He had a retirement home on Deep Creek Lake in Western Maryland. Frank took some liberties with his model and fancied it up a bit with beautiful brass fittings and decorative trim. Had the full size IDLEWILD been built on an unlimited budget, she might have more closely resembled Frank's model, which he named QUEEN B. After Frank's passing, the model was donated to Campus Martius Museum in Marietta where it is currently displayed. (Top two photos on right)

Yours truly built a 1/48th scale model of the IDLEWILD in the late 1960s. Originally an RC operating model driven by a battery powered electric motor, it

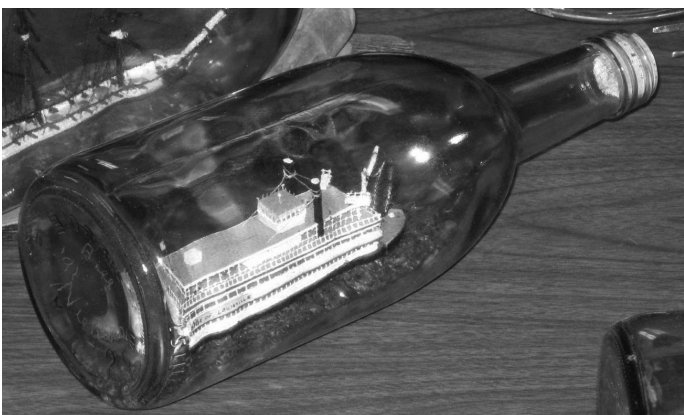
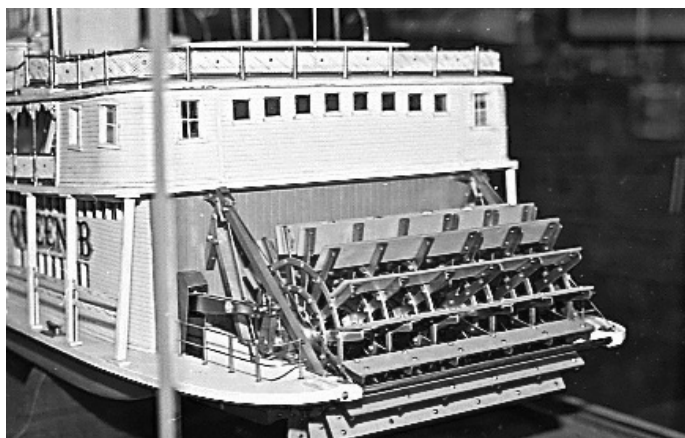
made the rounds of model shows, S & D meetings and other steamboat "happenings" prior to its sale in 1975. One of my favorite photos of that model was made on a trip to Louisville during the time that "Doc" Hawley was the BELLE's Master. The photo of him holding the model with the BELLE in the background was featured in a past REFLECTOR issue. I thought that newer S & D members might enjoy seeing it again, as it is especially appropriate for this issue. One hundred years of steamboat history in one photo with Capt. Hawley as a bonus! (Bottom photo on left)

Another outstanding event in this model's history was when she got to paddle around with the J.M. WHITE. The occasion was the 1973 S&D Annual Meeting when Jack Leslie and Ralph Hitchcock brought their fantastic live steam-powered WHITE model for a demo run in Ohio River Museum's reflecting pool. Not to be outdone, I brought the IDLEWILD along.

Photos of the two models together on this occasion appeared in a previous Small Stacks column, but I remembered taking some others that showed the dramatic difference in size between the two boats. Until a few months ago, I had been unable to find them, but they re-appeared while searching for something else, and one of them is shown here. Since both models were built to the same scale of 1/4 inch equals one foot, this photo accurately shows the dramatic size comparison between the IDLEWILD and a big cotton packet. Of course one might get the same perspective with the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE tied up next to the AMERICAN QUEEN, which is longer than the J.M. WHITE, but "beamier" than the AQ. (Bottom photo on right)

Both of these models ended up in the Smithsonian's Museum of American History where they were displayed in the Museum's Merchant Marine Hall. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case. When the maritime transportation portion of the museum was re-done a few years ago, the IDLEWILD model was put into storage. The J.M. WHITE is still prominently displayed in all its glory, but the IDLEWILD model is probably stored in some huge government warehouse along with the Ark of the Covenant (as per the first "Indiana Jones" movie).

Today's model builders are still able to build accurate versions of the boat in all three of her incarnations, as both sets of Alan Bates' plans are still available from either my Paddlewheels and Props plans service or from the Howard Steamboat Museum. Thanks to the many photos of the boat now available on web sites and in this issue, the research portion of the modeling process is much easier than when any of these models were built.

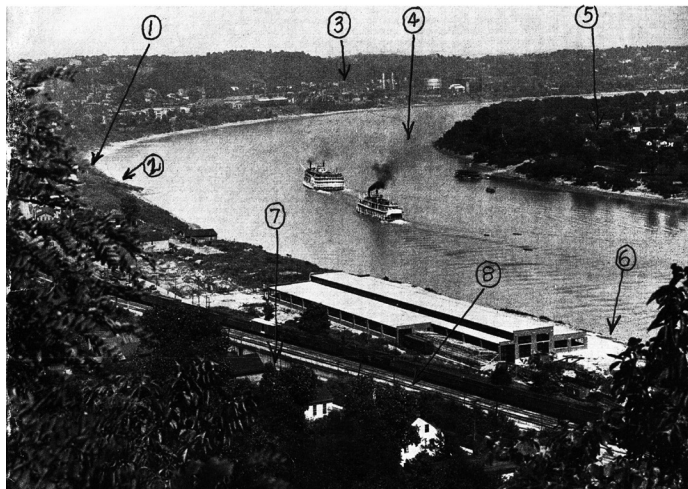


Top left photo of Capt. Hawley's AVALON model from editor's collection. Photo of John Fryant's BELLE model on left courtesy of Glenna Hoff. Photo of Bill Niehaus' BELLE in a bottle courtesy of John Weise. The photos of Frank Brockhardt's QUEEN B (aka IDLEWILD) model and those of John Fryant's IDLEWILD model are all from John's collection. Reference is made to the source of the hull for Doc's handcrafted model in the history of the boat told in this issue.



Reflections from Our Readers, continued from page 2.

“The big bend just east of downtown Cincinnati from Eden Park overview, is a very public space and offers wonderful views of the river. I visited often as a youngster and the scene has not greatly changed – except for the absence of steamboats!



1. Water Works. East End Pumping Station built here in 1907.

2. Location of the Cincinnati Marine Railway and Drydock Company. After building its last boat in 1897, it lingered on for several more years.

3. St. Rose Church, built 1869. River captains used the church clock to check their watches.

4. Dayton (KY) Bathing Beach and sandbar that required much dredging.

5. Ludlow, KY.

6. Future location of a big crane built on the riverbank here in the 1930s and still in use.

7. Eastern Avenue follows the north bank of Ohio River to Columbia about five miles from Cincinnati.

8. Pennsylvania RR tracks went into East End of Cincinnati. Originally built by Little Miami RR in 1830s and 40s.

The general scene on left side is Fulton, home to many boatyards. Mostly on western (or southern) end of all we can see of Kentucky is Dayton. On the Ohio side seen at middle and upper left is Pendleton and Columbia. The general location of this view is about two miles from the Suspension Bridge or about the center of Cincinnati.”

† The only info your editor can add is that he misidentified the Coney Island steamer ISLAND MAID as Streckfus' WASHINGTON!

BELLE Scrapbook Collection of Daniel McCay

I would like to dedicate this collection to three of my grandfathers: Great-Great Grandfather Capt. James Michael Speck, Great Grandfather Capt. Horace Edgar Speck, Sr, and Grandfather Capt. Horace Edgar Speck, Jr. All of these men spent their lifetimes as captains of steamboats and towboats on the Inland Waterways. Thanks to these three great men, I have a love for the river, steamboats, and towboats flowing through my veins.

When I was eight years old, I read Alan Bates' book *Belle of Louisville* and fell in love with the boat. After reading his book, I decided to create a small scrapbook with as many photos and documents as I could collect about the BELLE's history.

On my fifteenth birthday, the greatest surprise I received was when my parents arranged for me to meet Capt. Mike Fitzgerald, who gave us a personal tour of the BELLE. We were able to see places on the boat that are not accessible to the general public. I was also made an “honorary” Captain and received a Captain's “License” and hat. I cherish these mementos that have a special place with many other BELLE memorabilia in my home.


My first scrapbook contained only eight pages. I now have 31 scrapbooks of her life dating from 1914 to the present time, and am always researching and collecting more historical photos and articles to add to my collection. I was very blessed in October 2010 when Linda Harris, CEO of the BELLE, allowed me to display my scrapbook collection on the boat's cruise up to Madison, IN. The response to this collection was overwhelming with wonderful feedback from all the crew and passengers.

Then in October 2011 Linda allowed me to display a "Special Edition Scrapbook" containing articles and photos covering all of the BELLE's 97 years. This scrapbook was on display during that year's BELLE's Birthday Bash Cruise. Also in October, the entire collection was shown on the boat as she cruised to Madison in celebration of 200 years of steamboating. During the three day weekend trip, many of the crew and passengers

enjoyed looking through this library, with quite a few of her passengers remembering me and the display from the BELLE's previous trip to Madison.

One of the passengers on that trip was the President of Hanover College, who was so impressed with the library of scrapbooks that he presented me with discounted tickets and a letter of thanks for displaying them that weekend. Another person who has expressed great interest in these volumes is Capt. Clarke Hawley. We have plans to meet in the future, hopefully during this year's Centennial celebration for the BELLE.


In my collection are four "Special Edition Scrapbooks" celebrating the BELLE's 100th Birthday, and containing articles and photos of all 100 years of her life. I'm hoping to display these during her week-long birthday celebration this October. The scrapbook library collection consists of 31 volumes, including 1914-1947: The IDLEWILD Years; 1948-1962: the Steamer AVALON years; the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE years from 1962 through 2014; and The BELLE OF LOUISVILLE's Life 1914-2011 (displayed on her 97th birthday cruise). There are also those four special volumes to celebrate the BELLE's 100th birthday: 1914-60; 1961-64; 1965-89, and 1990-2014.

I want to express special appreciation to the S&D REFLECTOR for this opportunity to tell my story. Perhaps this will interest others in the BELLE. I would thoroughly enjoy meeting and visiting with anyone who has stories to share. Please feel free to contact me at thefoundations5488@yahoo.com 



A Note from Your Editor

The task of assembling an issue such as the one you now hold in your hands is a monumental one, and represents the efforts and contributions of many, many people. Of course, our contributors play the key role in each and every REFLECTOR, and all of those individuals named on pages six and seven have our special thanks.

But in addition, and at the risk of inadvertently omitting someone, this editor wants to acknowledge those friends who made particular contributions to this issue. Brenda Colladay at the Grand Ole Opry surfaced those wonderful photos and story of the IDLEWILD's Nashville radio broadcast and Moonlite in 1946. David French and Maureen White generously shared the early Memphis views from the Sells family excursion. Ted Guillaum, one-time DELTA QUEEN purser and now with the Tennessee State Library and Archives, provided a photocopy of the *Commercial Appeal's* story of the IDLEWILD's arrival at Memphis. Sean Visintainer from the Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library at UM-St. Louis dug through several issues of *The Waterways Journal* in search of information about Capt. Jim Phillips. Judy Patsch graciously supplied photocopies of Steamer Avalon, Inc.'s financial records from 1949-1961, while Capt. Doc Hawley allowed your editor to read and record the AVALON's logbooks for 1949, 50, 51 and 61. Walter and Dan Shrake, and the late Don Rehm, Irvin Shrake, and Bert Hantelman supplied much from the boat's AVALON years. As always, many thanks to Murphy Library and the Public Library of Cincinnati for the use of their photos. And finally, to Keith Norrington, who nearly delayed the publication of this issue because he kept turning up new photos every other day, my deep gratitude. 

Back Cover

John Fryant's "Time Traveler" provides an especially appropriate closing scene for this issue. Appearing like a ghost through the mists of time, this haunting work by our S&D Board member and REFLECTOR columnist simultaneously evokes a sense of nostalgia and a connectedness to the present day and age. *Photo courtesy of John Fryant.*



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