

S & D

REFLECTOR

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Thomas J. Nichol, Cincinnati's Calliope Builder
Battling Ice on the Illinois River
Fred, Stella and the Str. JOE FOWLER

Front Cover

Artco's m/v COOPERATIVE MARINER assists m/v COOPERATIVE VANGUARD and her tow in breaking Illinois River ice on January 6, 2018. Frigid temperatures in December and January brought extraordinary ice conditions to parts of the Ohio, Upper Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois Rivers. Read more about this story beginning on page 16. *Photo courtesy of Capt. Dan Shrake.*



Reflections from Our Readers

John Fryant writes: “The December issue was great, and particularly, the photo quality was much improved. I have every issue of the magazine and this issue has the best quality photos ever.

“However, I made a gross error in my column in sending you the wrong photo of the finished DUNCAN BRUCE model (at the bottom of page 31). How I managed this I don't know. Must have been working too late – eyes tired, brain not fully engaged. That model is not the DUNCAN BRUCE, but my twenty-year-old model of another Ward-designed towboat that was never built. The photo attached shows both models together, and they are as different from each other as night and day.



“What amuses me about all of this is that evidently no one has caught the mistake, as I have heard nothing from anyone. In thinking about all the experts in S&D who can identify a towboat from three miles away, along with its name and the company it worked for, I have to chuckle.”

💡 Well, this kind of thing inevitably happens to the best of us; although, admittedly, it rarely happens to all of us at once. Your editor fesses up to being among those who failed to notice this “irregularity”, and he extends an abashed thank you to John for graciously not pointing that out in his letter. See John's photo below if there remains any question about confusing the identity of the two models.

Bee Rutter writes: “The December issue of S&D REFLECTOR arrived yesterday. That issue is a show stopper! First of all the pictures on the front and back covers are beautiful enough to be framed – only I don't want to destroy this good magazine. Started to flip through it and stopped everywhere I opened it. The pictures are colorful and in good focus. The articles are well written and just the kind of detail I like.

“Everybody had fun doing this issue except for the obits which were news to me of the sad kind. Sorry to lose a good friend like Frank Pollock. We go back a long way. Anyway, let's have some of the same kind of overall good work. No problem finding new members after they get a sample of the December issue. Thanks to *all of you*. You deserve a fan letter.”

🕯 Bee's most kind words are seconded by your editor in passing them along to all the generous and talented contributors to our December issue. It is indeed an outstanding demonstration of the support and dedication of our S&D member/readers that they are able to produce such a fine magazine. We trust that this great community effort will continue throughout 2018 and for many years to come.

Jay Harman writes: "I wrote the enclosed poems and thought you might like to print them in the REFLECTOR. I enjoy the magazine and in particular like the photographs of the old steamboats."

The Beautiful Ohio

The Ohio River ebbs and flows
as on its journey to the sea it goes.

The river is a way of life
a legacy of both joy and strife.

As it meanders past the valley soil
it knows the tales of work and toil.

The trees that line its muddy banks
stand as sentinels, giving silent thanks
to this river, for all it's done for man

etched upon the Earth by God's loving hand.

As violent storms approach in a hurry
its waves crash with awesome fury.

At placid moments, its surface as glass
one feels at peace with this great watery mass.

In dark of night, moonbeams dance in hosts
upon its surface, like playful ghosts.

The morning mist ascends its flight
in a magical moment of sunburst delight.

And as sunset's rays pierce the sky
like a glorious knife
the river's force promises power, glory,
and eternal life ...

The DELTA QUEEN

I think that I have never seen
a sight as beautiful and serene
As that wondrous boat, powered by steam
cloaked in mist, as if in a dream.
With a mighty resolve and a lovely grace
she glides along the river's face.

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She shudders and shimmers from bow to stern
as her paddlewheel makes the river churn.

Puffing smoke and hissing steam
on night's placid waters
her sparkling lights gleam.

She's a relic out of another age
a different time of history's page.

What lessons that splendid packet has taught
while gazing upon her, one is lost in thought.

One glimpses the past
as if through a magic door
shrouded in mystery,
she silently hints at her lore.

If one could unlock them,
what secrets that craft would reveal.

Her legend would emerge
like an old ghost from her aged keel.

And it will be the fulfillment of a life-long dream
to take a ride on the DELTA QUEEN ...

🕯 Jay has the thanks of the editor and of our readers for sharing his gift of the River Muse.

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

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America's Steam & Diesel
Riverboat Magazine

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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.

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Getting Posted Up

2017 Ends on a High Note

As 2017 drew to a close, your editor received welcome news from Jean Yost at Ohio River Museum via a forwarded email from Bill Barr. In that note Ohio History Connection's Development Officer Kathy Wyatt wrote: "I am happy to tell you that we just received a \$15,000 check from the W. P. Snyder III Charitable Fund which allows us to complete the match of the \$100,000 National Maritime Heritage grant and draw down the entire \$100,000 for Phase III of the restoration. And their generous gift also *completes* the campaign for the SNYDER's complete restoration. A slightly belated Merry Christmas!!" With full funding of this phase now achieved, a green light for the towboat's complete interior restoration has been given. This could not come at a more opportune time, as S&D attendees at this September's annual meeting will gather to celebrate the boat's Centennial, with the interior work completed to restore the veteran sternwheeler to the same appearance as when she arrived in Marietta on September 16, 1955. A wonderful way to usher out 2017!

We have also been very encouraged by readers' gracious comments regarding our final issue for the year just past. Positive feedback has been shared by appreciative members of S&D on the improved quality of photo reproduction in both black-and-white and color provided by our new printer in Dubuque, in addition to the wide variety of stories by the many contributors to that December issue. Thank you for writing.

It is with some trepidation that we admit this March issue has more than the usual amount of text or print in its pages. The editor fully appreciates the desire of many of our members for issues with an abundant number of photos printed in large format with clear, sharp detail. It is a fine line that has to be walked to achieve just the right balance between the two when putting an issue together. But going out on a limb, we will promise to make a monumental effort at insuring the upcoming June issue will be "loaded to the guards" with photos. 📷

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Thank you for giving consideration to this opportunity. If you desire to make a contribution, please send your check to:

*J Mack Gamble Fund
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attn. Kevin McManamon
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Cleveland, OH 44114*

Steamboat Model Plans Catalog Available

John Fryant, model-builder and author of the REFLECTOR's Small Stacks column, has just reworked his riverboat plans catalog into a PDF combination plans listing & price list. It is four pages long and is FREE for the asking to anyone sending their e-mail address to jnboat@aol.com. This is John's final effort to make these plans available to the public. 📷



Meet Our Contributors

Jonathan Tschiggfrie (*Thomas J. Nichol: Cincinnati's Master Calliope Builder*, p. 8) has authored several articles and features for the REFLECTOR. Most of his contributions document the story of the steam calliope's adoption and use on inland river showboats and excursion boats, the subject of two summers of field research and on-going study begun when he was an undergraduate student at University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. Continuing that investigative venture in the decade since, Jonathan's latest article focuses on perhaps the single most noted craftsman of this quintessentially-American instrument. Initially presented at Howard Steamboat Museum's River Rambling series last October, he now shares this portrait of Thomas Nichol and his singular place in river history with you, our readers.

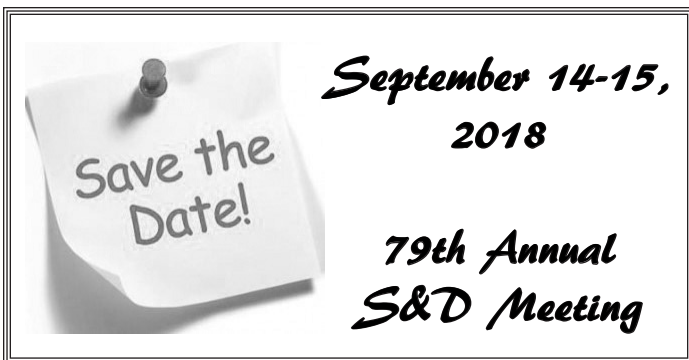
A resident of Broomfield, CO, Jonathan looks forward to return visits to the Upper Mississippi at Dubuque and St. Paul, and enjoys making the Fall tramp trips on the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE to Madison, along with occasional excursions on the Riverboat TWILIGHT. He also provides invaluable editorial assistance to his father in producing each new issue of the REFLECTOR.

Capt. Dan Shrake (*Battling Ice on the Illinois River*, p. 16) notes that his interest in the river, steamboats, etc., started at a young age. His granddad Irvin Shrake was a good personal friend with Capt. Ernie Wagner of AVALON and DELTA QUEEN fame. By the time Dan was born in 1973, the family connection with the DQ was still strong, and because

of this his sister met her future husband there and they both ended up working on the steamboat. The Shrake family grew up in Savanna, IL and being so close to the river, they naturally had a fishing boat and would often be out in the main channel or its many backwaters. By the time the 80s had rolled around, Dan's interest in the river started to wane, but it was soon reignited in 1987 when Capt. Dennis Trone brought the JULIA BELLE SWAIN and the newly-built TWILIGHT to this stretch of the river to begin running trips from Le Claire, IA to Chestnut Mountain/Galena. Savanna was right in the middle of this route.

By the time Dan reached 8th grade, he knew that he wanted to work on the river and oftentimes would ride his bike up to the city front to watch the TWILIGHT and JULIA BELLE. He was also interested in towboats as he watched them going past Savanna for so many years. Around 1986 the long dormant grain elevator in Savanna was brought back into service as well, which meant that the city now had a harbor tug staying there. It started out as a CGB tug, but eventually Newt Marine got the contract and had one of their boats (m/v CLEVALEE) based in Savanna. In 1990 while still in high school, Dan and his father had gotten acquainted with and become friends with the pilot on the boat. Knowing of his interest to work on the river some day, the pilot called when Dan was only 16 and said his deckhand did not show up, and asked if he would be interested in helping him do a bridge assist (bow boating a line boat through the Sabula RR Bridge.) Jumping at the chance, that was Dan's humble beginning at working on the river. After graduating high school, he went full time working on towboats and has been doing it ever since, along with, as Dan puts it, "some moonlighting on the TWILIGHT in my younger years."

Charles H. Bogart (*The Maysville Ice Piers*, p. 30), grew up in Newport, KY next to the Ohio River and the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway. For the last fifty years he has lived in Frankfort, KY next to the Kentucky River and the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. He served in the U.S. Navy as radarman on board USS DENNIS J BUCKLEY DDR 808, and worked one summer as deckhand on the LYNE GOEDECKE in the sand trade on Kentucky River between Frankfort and Madison,



IN. Since 1987, Charles has been a conductor at the Bluegrass Railroad Museum at Versailles, KY. He is co-author of the book *Kentucky River Packets*. A graduate of Thomas More College and Ohio State University, he worked for the Commonwealth of Kentucky Division of Emergency Management as a Plans, Training, and Operations Officer. Charles is presently employed by Frankfort Historic Sites as a living historian at the Fort Boone Civil War Battle Site. He has had stories published in *Sea Classics*, *Warship International*, *Powered Ship*, and *Ships Monthly*. His fondest childhood memory is riding the ISLAND QUEEN to and from Coney Island.

John Pope Ellis (*Fred, Stella and the Str. JOE FOWLER*, p. 18) grew up in Western Pennsylvania, attended Allegheny College, and served as a Navy officer before graduating from George Washington University Law School. John practiced law for nearly five decades in Virginia and the District of Columbia. Now retired and living in Colorado, he writes and ruminates when not skiing or hiking in the surrounding mountains. His mother's recollections of her early days in Parkersburg and his own memories of childhood visits to the home of Captain Elmer Pope prompted this story.

S&D Annual Meeting Program for 2018 Announced

Jeff Spear called recently to announce preliminary details for the program at our Annual Meeting on September 14-15. In addition to our customary Meet and Greet Friday evening at the River Museum and the business meeting Saturday morning at Lafayette Hotel, Jeff advises that S&D members will be able to enjoy a Moonlite excursion on the VALLEY GEM Friday night.

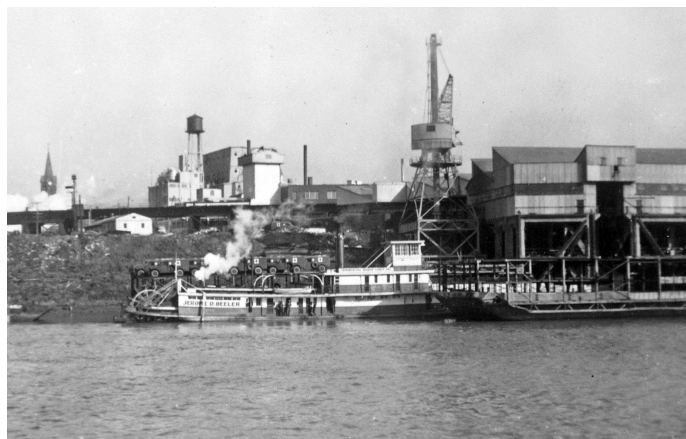
Celebration of W. P. SNYDER, JR.'s Centennial will take place following the Saturday morning meeting, with activities continuing into the afternoon. Watch for a special feature on the SNYDER in upcoming issues of the REFLECTOR. Capping off the festivities on S&D weekend will be the banquet Saturday night, featuring guest speaker Capt. Clarke "Doc" Hawley sharing many river stories from his six decades of Western Rivers steamboating. As many of Doc's friends can attest, he is a master story teller, and so you want to be sure and mark your calendar now for a memorable weekend. More details and menu options will be available in our June and September issues. ⓘ

More on Auto Carriers

In our December issue, we shared some of the history of Commercial Barge Lines' automobile carriers. That story continues with the photo below sent to Dale Flick by Sharon Cunningham. This photo pictures NORMAN CRAWFORD (T1932) with the accompanying caption: "Tennessee River Transportation History (ca. 1939) – Featured is a barge carrying the first shipment of automobiles ever to move on the Tennessee River at Guntersville, AL.



During the 1940's and 50's it was common for barge loads of new automobiles to be seen moving along the waterways of the Tennessee River, transporting from northern states to destinations south." In 1944, Commercial Barge Line was operating three towboats, including one steam sternwheeler, JEROME D. BEELER (T1362), shown below in this Murphy Library photo at Evansville. Between 1943-47, the six big Diesel-powered COMMERCIAL boats were built and placed in service. ⓘ



Thomas J. Nichol: Cincinnati's Master Calliope Builder

by Jonathan Tschiggfrie

In 1961, a new major thoroughfare opened at the southern end of Cincinnati's business district. Ft. Washington Way, carrying an east-west section of Interstate 71, was part of a major development plan to revitalize what was seen as a downtown plagued by an archaic and decrepit industrial riverfront. To create this new route, the city began buying up and demolishing the surrounding land in the late 50s, uprooting a number of streets with typical river town names such as Water Street and Front Street to be replaced with modern highway. In the end, all structures between Second and Third were razed, removing all vestiges of the once-thriving businesses that had held sway there through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

One casualty of this rejuvenation project was an industrial building at the southeast corner of Pearl and Ludlow streets, where today a jumble of overpasses and exit ramps stand just beyond the southern entrance of the Lytle Tunnel. Located less than three city blocks from the Ohio River, the five-story factory building was occupied by a modestly successful steamfitting business, one of many such foundries that Cincinnati had to offer at the turn of the century.

But elsewhere within the walls of this unassuming brick-and-mortar workshop, the Thos. J. Nichol Co. crafted a piece of steam machinery much more specialized than globe valves and elbow joints. Up on the fifth floor, Nichol and those in his employ built steam calliopes. The instruments they produced for the better part of four decades would go on to be the superlative archetype of this American innovation, dominating the calliope market and placing the Queen City at the heart of the steam music industry.

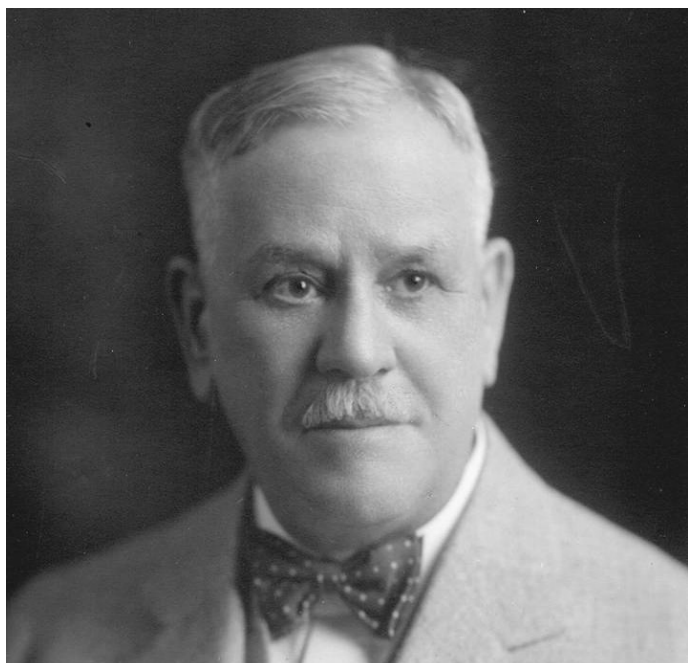
How did that company's founder, a hard-working industrialist-turned-captain of industry and a devoutly faithful man, make a successful go

in an undeniably niche market? It's a story that anybody could instantly identify as quintessentially American. So let's start where Mr. Nichol himself started: the William Kirkup & Son brass foundry on Pearl Street in downtown Cincinnati. Kirkup got going in 1846 and continued until 1892, and somewhere along the way the company had set up house at Pearl and Ludlow. Scant evidence exists to suggest that Kirkup ever had anything to do with calliope. For one, Nichol's wife recalled after his death that the firm that employed her husband all those years ago - no doubt Kirkup - "made an occasional steam calliope." Additionally, in an 1892 letter to the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company, the Ringlings of circus fame suggested to Case that he purchase steam calliope whistles from William Kirkup & Son in Cincinnati. While the connection is far from certain, it is commonly accepted that this is where Nichol learned the craft and subsequently sought to improve upon it.

William Kirkup & Son became a leading Cincinnati place of industry, building a reputation for sensible yet innovative steamfitting machinery, including an 1872 patent on improved globe valves. Amidst booming business, a new five-story plant was built at Pearl & Ludlow, 40 x 90 feet. Over 100 people were employed by 1886. Listings of "leading manufacturers" published glowing reports of Kirkup's success, including this effusive 1875 review: "This is a very old house, engaged in the manufacture of all kinds of brass goods required for steam, water and gas works. They are thoroughly practical men, and have an extensive business. In the particular branch of trade which they make a specialty of, there is no house in the city that enjoys a higher reputation." Another stated: "The business of the house of William Kirkup & Son is justly not only a source of pride to every citizen of Cincinnati but also to the whole country at large, while the members of the firm, educated to their calling, are well qualified to attend to it in all its branches."

The Kirkup firm and the Van Duzen & Tift Bell Works have sometimes been conflated, probably owing to their proximity in Cincinnati's factory district. Buckeye Bell Foundry supposedly built a single instrument for French's showboat *NEW SENSATION* in 1887, but this predates Nichol by several years and no other evidence has ever been forthcoming. Also worth mentioning is that a Robert Kirkup of uncertain relation opened his own brass foundry in 1872, but achieved little of William's success. With no definitive connection between Buckeye Bell, Van Duzen, Kirkup, and Nichol, little more can be said.

The same year as that first review heaped praise upon Kirkup's reputation, a young bookkeeper arrived on the scene. Thomas James Nichol came from good Scottish stock. His parents, James Nichol and Mary Kerr, were both immigrants from the old country born around 1825. James was listed in the 1861 *Williams Cincinnati Directory* as a blacksmith, but then no listing appears for the Nichol family until the 18-year-old Thomas shows up as a clerk in 1875 at the 119 East Pearl Street address of Kirkup. Thomas had been born on American soil November 30, 1857, almost certainly in Hamilton County. A sister, Lizzie, came along four years later. At some point, Thomas's mother remarried and was thereafter known as Mary Kerr Parker or Mary Nichol Parker.



Thomas J. Nichol (1857-1931), master calliope builder. Photo courtesy of Knox Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati.

In June 1892, the newspaper read that “the Cincinnati firm of William Kirkup & Son, brass founders, has been declared insolvent and a receiver appointed.” In short, a young bookkeeper probably now found himself out of a job, or at least saw the writing on the wall. In what can only be described as true American spirit, there was but one thing for him to do: venturing into the brass goods business for himself by 1893, the Thomas J. Nichol Company was born.

For the first three years, the Nichol Company set up shop at 100 E. 2nd near Ludlow, less than four blocks from the former Kirkup shop. In 1896 this changed to 426 E. 2nd, a plot just behind the old Kirkup plant, until in 1901 Nichol returned to the site his first employer had occupied on the southeast corner of Pearl and Ludlow to set up his own shop. The company would remain there for the rest of its Cincinnati existence. Officially, the factory was at 212 through 218 Ludlow Street and 441 Pearl. It appears the floors may have been repurposed from how Kirkup had them set up: the brass foundry remained on the fifth floor, but the brass finishing department and pattern shops were swapped between the third and fourth. The second floor was a machine shop with electric motor, and the ground level had additional machining equipment and the stockroom, which included a 60 horsepower engine.

While the Nichol firm primarily made brass goods for steam and hot water heating apparatus, apparently they made some other unique items, including a brass clock eventually owned by Ernest Wilde, he of a somewhat different brand of calliope notoriety in the mid-20th century. Notably, neither Nichol nor Kirkup before him ever mentioned calliopes in their directory listings or catalogs. The only direct reference in any available literature were the strategically-placed advertisements that Nichol ran in periodicals for the entertainment industry such as *Billboard* magazine. Throughout his career, Nichol opted to list his company primarily under straightforward headings such as “Heating Contractors, Steam and Hot Water.”

And in this industry, they positively excelled. References to the Nichol Company are peppered throughout many local and federal government documents. Nearly from the beginning, they were

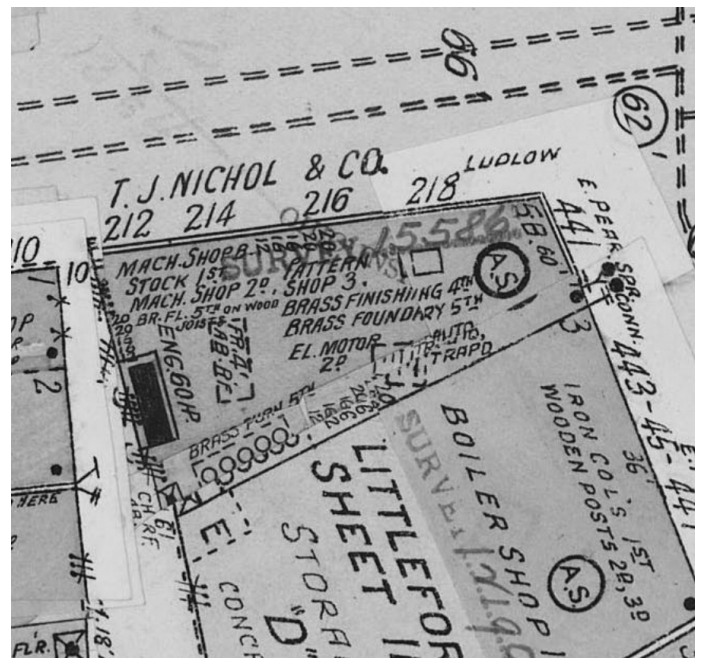
supplying parts for all manner of government projects, including pipe and fittings for Ohio River snagboats. One of their earliest successes was a one-year contract to supply brass stopcocks for the Cincinnati Fire Department. But what really paid off over the years were the many lucrative building and heating contracts secured throughout a five-state region. These included a steam heating plant at the University of Cincinnati in 1902, heating for the handsome new Maysville (KY) High School in 1907, heating and ventilating of the new St. Bernard (OH) High School in 1914, the heating system for the medical college building at Cincinnati General Hospital, many contracts for the Cincinnati waterworks, fire, and public buildings departments, a heating contract for the remodeling of the former Service Men's Clubrooms at 322 Broadway in 1923, and several contracts for residences of prominent Cincinnatians. Many of these entailed successful bids in the tens of thousands of dollars. The business was doing so well in its first two decades that Nichol intended to expand his operation to a site at Plum and McFarland streets in 1913, but these plans fell through when the man transferring the real estate failed to attend to numerous existing leases.

In 1906, the Nichol Company numbered 35 adult employees; twelve years later, this had risen to 44. An edition of the *Labor Advocate* identified Thomas J. Nichol Company as employing members of Local Union No. 392, United Association of Plumbers, Gasfitters and Steamfitters. By 1916, the employees had formed a baseball team to play in the Commercial League. Sometimes, the personalities hired turned out to be just as colorful as the peculiar instruments produced on the side: take traveling salesman Albert C. Joseph, who had been with the firm 27 years when he died of heart failure in a downtown Boston hotel in 1922. His widow and children were fairly astounded to discover that he had passed only days before he was to marry a Mrs. Rosa Sakman in Brooklyn.

In August 1920 a corporation was chartered with Thomas as president and \$200,000 in capital stock (about \$2.4 million today). Starting in the 1921 city directory, Thomas's son Donald Kerr Nichol was listed as Vice President and his sister-in-law Belle McMillan was secretary and treasurer (replaced in 1925 by Lucy Zuenkeler). Nichol kept active in the

business and thus also kept producing instruments until 1924 or so, though the firm was still producing brass goods and securing heating contracts well into the 30s. Around the time of Thomas's death in 1931, Donald was named interim president and treasurer, his sister Edith as VP, and Clara Geers as Secretary. The following year, now understood to be in dire straits, the firm was simply listed as "The Thomas J. Nichol Company, J M Van Splunter, proprietor."

John Marcus Van Splunter, an electrical and mechanical engineering graduate from the University of Michigan, started out working for various employers including General Electric before becoming secretary and factory manager of the new General Devices & Fittings Company in Chicago in 1914. By 1919, he was leading the firm. Having purchased the Thomas J. Nichol Company in 1933, its de facto president quickly moved operations to Grand Rapids in 1935 as a division of General Devices. In that capacity, still using the Nichol name, Van Splunter produced a number of new instruments, primarily by taking existing 28-note models and adding spare Nichol whistles to the upper end of the instruments' range. He also secured work in calliope repair. During this time, it is believed that Van Splunter also started buying up old instruments, including Kratz models, so he could build new ones using the parts. Over time, Van Splunter and others moved, combined, replaced, and altered whistles so that today's existing instruments often have a mixture

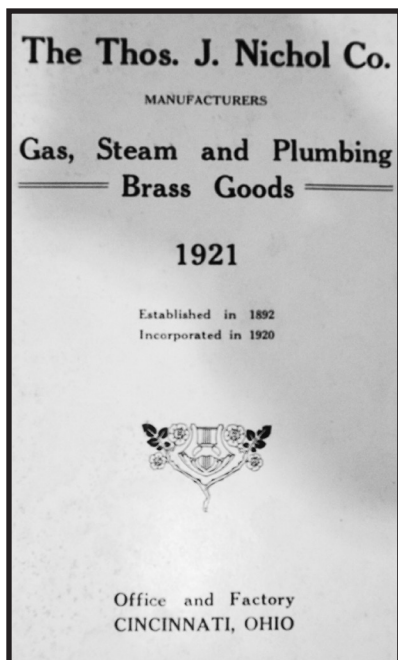


of original whistles and otherwise. Unfortunately for us, this adds to the out-of-tuneness that need not be a part of the modern calliope experience, a sentiment Dave Morecraft vigorously espoused.

It seems that Van Splunter continued to operate under the Nichol name well beyond the point at which he could have had any original parts still available. Already by 1937, he was making the hard sell on a “re-designed” and “much more compact,” “standardized” unit of 34 whistles, along with a “new style keyboard of aluminum” with “new action which plays as easily as that of a piano”, described in a letter to D. W. Wisherd of Streckfus Steamers, notably using the Nichol letterhead as a “Division of General Devices & Fittings Mfg. Co.” He even goes so far as to mention that “we are now working on a proposition for Captain Hall of the ISLAND QUEEN at Cincinnati who also desires an automatic outfit. We probably will rebuild the calliope now on the QUEEN and provide the automatic equipment which will eliminate the expense of a player except on special occasions.” One wonders if Van Splunter threw in that last suggestion knowing of the Streckfus family’s reputation for frugality. Van Splunter goes on in the letter to list prices for three different models: a 32-whistle “ ‘Nichol’ Improved Steam Calliope, hand played”, for \$650; a 34-whistle model adding two high notes, his usual *modus operandi*, at \$665; and the 34-whistle unit with automatic player rolls for \$850.

Left: Portion of a Sanborn fire insurance Cincinnati map, no. 105, sometime after 1901. The Nichol shop is on the corner of Pearl and Ludlow (north is to the right). Buckeye Bell Foundry was located just a block away.

Right: 1921 Thos. J. Nichol Co. catalog. This was published shortly after the company was incorporated. Both images provided by the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.



One of four or five similar but distinct picture advertisements appearing in Billboard Magazine shortly after the turn of the century. These are among the only marketing materials known for Nichol calliopes. Illustration from The Billboard, 4/9/1904, Volume XVI, Issue 15, p. 25

Van Splunter seemed to enjoy being recognized as “the last stronghold of the calliope” via his repair work and was fond of identifying Grand Rapids as the “calliope capital of the United States.” Perhaps it’s little wonder that the Cincinnati factory and the august calliope manufacturer that took up residence there were so often forgotten until the latter decades of the 20th century. Even in 1954, Van Splunter was still offering information on new 37-note models utilizing Hammond organ-style keyboards, though by this time, without making fresh castings, a completely new Nichol-style instrument was, in every sense of the phrase, a pipe dream. Thus the Thomas J. Nichol Company sputtered and fizzled out of existence with credit not ending up where credit is due, an unfitting end to the robust firm built from the ground up by one of Cincinnati’s most enterprising industrialists.

But what else do we know about the man behind the company now so legendary to calliope historians? Little is known about Thomas’s early life other than in 1882 he married Elizabeth McMillan, the daughter of another pair of Scottish immigrants. Prior to this, Thomas boarded at a new address every couple of years on average, going from Eastern Avenue to Weeks & Fulton to Goodloe, and finally settling for several years at 65 Oregon once he married. Between

1884 and 1885, Thomas and Elizabeth relocated to the Mt. Lookout neighborhood and spent the next 22 years on Corbett Street. By the time Thomas had started his own business, he had a daughter, Edith, and three years later a son, Donald, who would go on to become plant superintendent by 1922. The family moved to 3413 Burch Ave in Hyde Park in 1907, mere blocks from the eventual location of Knox Presbyterian Church, which Nichol was instrumental in founding.

Though Nichol's name does not appear as having been present at the first gathering of what would become Knox Presbyterian Church in 1892, his name does appear quite early. When the church was organized in July 1895, he was one of the 24 founding members and he, along with three others, was elected an elder on that day. That September he was one of seven elected as a trustee. Nichol signed the original loan papers for the purchase of the church property that same month. According to church records, it was Nichol who suggested the name of "Knox" for the church. He served as superintendent of the Sunday school for 25 years beginning in 1894, a large endeavor that in 1906 saw 309 students enrolled with 25 teachers. Through 1927 he had also served for 30 years nearly continuously as Clerk of Session.

By the time Thomas was ready to get out of the steamfitting business, he was also apparently ready for a new home. For four years he lived at 3049 Springer Avenue, still in the Hyde Park neighborhood. In 1929, the aging yet staunchly devout man requested a letter of transfer to the Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church on behalf of himself and his wife. By now, Nichol and his second wife, Bess Pugh, had already retired to what would be his final residence at 6211 Orchard Lane. He had the 2900-square-foot, 3-bedroom brick and masonry Craftsman-inspired Colonial Revival house built in 1928 on nearly a half-acre of land on the edge of Cincinnati's affluent Pleasant Ridge neighborhood. Thomas and Bess spent their summers in the tranquil community of Omena, MI, a relaxing hamlet on the western side of Grand Traverse Bay started by a Presbyterian minister in 1852.

Thomas died aged 73 on Saturday, January 17, 1931 at Bethesda Hospital and was interred at 3 p.m.

the following Monday at Spring Grove Cemetery. His official cause of death was pneumonia. He was survived by his children from his first marriage to Elizabeth McMillan, and by Bess, who died March 7, 1980 in her residence at the Presbyterian Home in Pleasant Hill, not far from her late husband's final resting place. Nearly fifty years since his passing, she returned to his side at Spring Grove.

We don't know much about Nichol's musical interests, if indeed he had any at all. In fact, most of the credit for the enduring success of especially late-model Nichol instruments is commonly given to another employee, a man well-known in the riverboat community. Homer Denney had been playing on the Coney Island boats for years and eventually was brought on by Nichol as salesman and expert tuner. Like Harry Stocksdale over on the ISLAND QUEEN, Denney played slowly in a relatively minimal "oom-pah-pah" style without any flashy countermelodies or large chords. This was understandable, as on the boats the feed for the calliope was coming directly off the main steam line from those big Western rivers boilers, and if you knew what was good for you, you didn't try to imitate the lively circus style on your tracker keyboard. Even so, Denney was recognized by Nichol for what he was: a musician of the utmost caliber. No one less than Dave Morecraft said that it was thanks to Homer Denney's involvement that Thomas J. Nichol produced the "Cadillac of calliopes." With Denney's able musical assistance, perhaps it's little wonder that Nichol came to perfect the art of crafting the steam calliope and was able to give the river its lasting and unmistakable voice.

A common question among calliope researchers is why the middle Ohio River valley, and particularly Cincinnati, seemed the hub of calliope production, and this has invited much speculation. Actually, Cincinnati almost seems specifically designed to bring the steam calliope into existence. The city was an industrial focal point during the Civil War, perhaps due to its relative proximity to Pittsburgh on the Upper Ohio. Its positioning as a manufacturing powerhouse came about as a result of its prime location. Raw materials – coal and iron primarily – passed through the region from the mountain valleys to the east, and Cincinnati was right in the middle of river trade routes. Packet

steamers carried these materials between towns and cities, and the larger cities began to support scores of factories that required these raw materials.

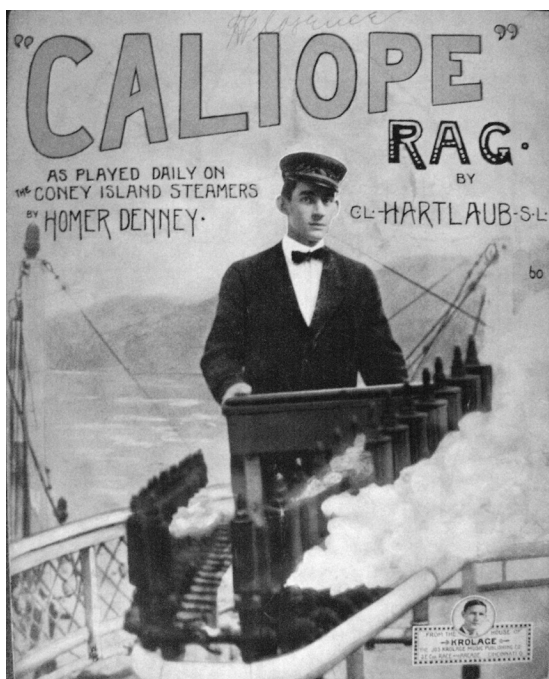
With manufacturing becoming a bigger industry in Cincinnati, many industries turned to producing products specifically for the steamboats, with the apex of this period between 1890 and 1910. The Cincinnati Marine Railway built steamboats, Buckeye Bell Foundry cast steamboat bells, Lunkenheimer manufactured whistles and valves for steamboats, and both the Charles Barnes Company and Frisbie Engine and Machine Company built steamboat engines, valves, and other machinery. All of this is to help explain why a company like Nichol's might find success here as a calliope manufacturer, when the market for such an arcane curiosity was necessarily minuscule.

Though, for various reasons, Nichol became the undisputed king of calliope manufacture, one must acknowledge that he wasn't building them in a mercantile vacuum. A rare photograph of future Evansville-based calliope builder George Kratz and Thomas J. Nichol standing together was taken sometime between 1892 and 1896, right around the time Nichol was going into business for himself. Shortly after that meeting, Kratz started building his own instruments of several radically different

designs through to his death in 1914. But as far as is known, no operable Kratz instruments exist today, and all of the extant vintage calliopes are Nichol models, a testament to the longevity of the design. It is largely due to the quality of construction of Nichol instruments that the steam calliope tradition has been preserved at all.

Most likely, the earliest Nichol instruments were more-or-less clones of the Kirkup models which Nichol's employees later redesigned into the instruments we know today. The Bryant showboat model at the Ohio River Museum in Marietta is very different from later Nichol instruments, from the smaller manifold diameter to the wider valve bore, from very different tracker linkage design to the taller height of the bowls of the highest notes. Another identifying characteristic of these early Nichol models is the globe tops to the whistle stems, a feature that quickly fell out of use.

One key element contributing to the success of Nichol's calliopes was that they were simple affairs from the get-go, perhaps described as utilitarian and practical. Most photos of historic instruments reveal the unadorned, no-nonsense style typical of all Nichol calliopes. Among other innovations, the Nichol firm came up with a vastly improved tracker mechanism for a manual keyboard. The manifold



Sheet music cover (note misspelling), with Coney Island Co. calliapist & Thos. J. Nichol Co. employee Homer Denney on first ISLAND QUEEN. Keith Norrrington collection.



A photograph of rather historic significance: the only recorded meeting of premier calliope builders George Kratz (L) and Thomas Nichol (R). Source unknown.

was a straight round pipe bent to form an elongated “U” shape, unlike George Kratz’s cast manifolds. Nichol would take a length of straight pipe, fill it full of sand, heat it in the middle, take it out to a nearby tree and have a draft horse bend the thing into the correct shape. This manifold was then placed atop simple legs made of narrower pipe. The balanced poppet valves Nichol used were remarkably similar to those outlined in the original 1855 Joshua C. Stoddard patent. Whistles were constructed of several threaded cast brass parts with a bell made of rolled copper sheeting sheared to size – not tubes, as many other manufacturers may have used – secured with a brazen seam. One source claims that the copper sheets were stamped with a desired diameter and then sent off to another firm to be formed into a cylinder before being returned for soldering, but this, as many things, is only hearsay.

Even to an untrained observer, a Nichol whistle is instantly recognizable, not only for the ingenious simplicity of its design but also for the clarity of its tone. The real trade secret of the Nichol calliopes was in the stream emanating from the circumferential opening formed by the bowl and languid plate. This stream curls back on itself at a specific point after escaping the bottom of the whistle, depending on the pressure applied. Nichol determined that if the narrow edge of the copper bell is placed at that point, the resulting airflow would cause a reverberant sound wave to form along the length of the whistle bell, producing the clear tone that characterizes the Nichol instruments. The remaining air or steam is merely exhaust, but that portion of gases that perform their precise dance of fluid dynamics offer the perfect medium by which to convey the sweet, dulcet notes of a finely-honed Nichol original.

Somewhat astoundingly, Nichol used no blueprints or drawings beyond the casting patterns. His instruments, and consequently the authentic reproductions built by Dave Morecraft, were largely a matter of “feel” and craftsmanship learned through experience and trial-and-error, rather than the product of some formulaic method involving complex equations and detailed blueprints. This remarkable feat of engineering and artistry perhaps underscores better than any other evidence just why these instruments are the gold standard against which all others are judged.

One of the finest instruments Nichol ever built is the calliope that today remains in operating condition in the “America” circus wagon. This instrument is such a superlative model that when a Baraboo resident named Wilbur “W. W.” Deppe decided in the 1960s to make a steam calliope of his own, he primarily used measurements of the America to figure the dimensions of his own replica. Former director of the Circus World Museum (and thus caretaker of the America calliope) C. P. “Chappie” Fox was contacted by Capt. Dennis Trone when the latter was building the JULIA BELLE SWAIN in the early 1970s and was seeking a calliope for the boat. Fox sold him the calliope that Deppe had made, and so the instrument installed on the boat was, at least by whistle dimensions, a near replica of one of the best Nichol calliopes built. Coincidentally, while playing the “America” instrument in 2009’s Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee, your author observed to Dave Morecraft that the calliope seemed to have numerous leaks. The fascinating response was that every Nichol that’s still got the original tracker mechanism leaks this way because Nichol-built valves never seat all the way, thus keeping the whistles hot between notes. Is that one of Nichol’s trade secrets? We’ll never know.

Nichol built many different models with varying numbers of whistles. Homer Denney, employed as player and salesman for the company, said that Nichol charged up to \$1000 for calliopes. There was a 23-note showboat model, a fairly common 28-note model, the ubiquitous 32-note, and even an impressive 37-note circus instrument. In fact, Nichol would build whatever was requested: evidence exists for 19, 20, 21, 24, 30, 34, and 36-note calliopes in addition to those already mentioned.

Another identifying feature of Nichol’s instruments is the unique whistle scaling. By this we mean the various dimensions of each individual whistle and the relation of those dimensions to adjacent whistles. For most instruments that are confirmed to be Nichol originals, the scaling follows a relatively smooth progression from whistle to whistle not only in the height of each whistle bell but also the inside and outside diameters of the cast brass elements. For each of the lower notes, there was a single pattern used for the brass castings. As the pitch gets higher, the same castings could be


used for two, then three, then even four consecutive whistles. This was exactly what Nichol intended.

A telltale sign that Van Splunter may have gotten his hands on an instrument is obvious out-of-sequence scaling. It's easy to observe from the sudden jumps in dimension that an instrument of limited range served as the original instrument and higher-pitched whistles were added to extend the range, but usually by "cutting down" whistles with the wrong scale. A prime example are the whistles found aboard the Str. DELTA QUEEN; at the risk of stirring up controversy, this lends possible credence to the argument that this could have been the originally-28-note instrument of the showboat WATER QUEEN. Likewise, the measurements from the calliope in the "America" circus wagon (which goes back at least to the Str. QUEEN CITY, then to the towboats I. LAMONT HUGHES and R. J. HESLOP) also abandon the expected scaling pattern at the high end. To be sure, there's a story to be found there, but the details are lost to history.

Regrettably, the same is true for many aspects of the Nichol company and of Thomas James Nichol himself. For one, we don't know as simple a fact as exactly how many instruments Nichol (or anyone, for that matter) built. Most estimates range from 60 to 90 calliopes produced by the Nichol firm in Cincinnati. By buying out the Nichol Company in the early 30s, Van Splunter now owned all of their patterns and records. Nichol had kept meticulous records of every calliope he'd sold, who it went to, how many whistles, and so on. Unfortunately, some sources say that Van Splunter's family, not knowing what they had on their hands shortly after his death, pitched everything. Others claim that Slim Somers was on the scene immediately upon learning of Van Splunter's death, and the patterns may even have passed on to Harry Shell. But most likely, all the foundry patterns were discarded and the remaining parts were probably sold for scrap after Van Splunter died in 1958.

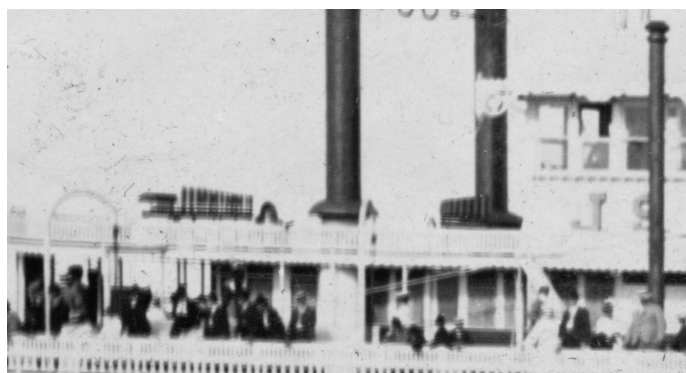
In the words of historian Fred Dahlinger, "in later years, Van Splunter declared he was bothered by information seekers, those who asked questions about calliopes but never came through with orders. It seems they wanted to pick his brain for the trade secrets of calliope building, and he resented it. But

there were those with whom he talked shop: E. Deacon Albright, Crazy Ray Choisser and others of the old school, Ellsworth Somers and Harry Shell among latter-day calliopists." While opinions of said individuals varies among modern-day calliope enthusiasts, these were the men responsible for preserving what was already becoming a lost art.

And when Dave Morecraft successfully reverse-engineered the authentic Nichol instruments, a very-nearly lost art was revived. Dave took great delight in inviting guests to discern which was the original Nichol whistle and which was his. It's to his great credit that even most calliope aficionados couldn't tell them apart. His whistles are the real thing. And of course, you can hear Dave's handiwork today on the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE and be transported back to the heyday of the Nichol instruments. Through the labors of love of people like Dave and others dedicated to the preservation of historical instruments, Thomas J. Nichol's legacy is being passed on to another generation who have studied existing instruments and begun to preserve those facts they can find for historical posterity. 



Above: Streckfus bandleader and calliapist Fate Marable at the calliope keys aboard Str. ST. PAUL in this Murphy Library photo. **Below:** Close-up of texas roof of the sternwheel J.S. The two instruments bear the characteristic traits of their respective manufacturers, Nichol (L) and Kratz (R).



Battling Ice on the Illinois River

by Capt. Dan Shrake

The COOPERATIVE VANGUARD is a sister boat to the one I am on. I ride the COOPERATIVE MARINER. They are St. Louis Ship-built, constructed in 1982 and 1980 respectively, 168 x 40 and both 3800 HP twin screw open wheel boats with GM 16-645E6A diesels. We left Peoria together with six barges each and were running buddies. The VANGUARD was leading and we were following close behind. It was some very tough going with the ice last trip as you can see.

The main pictures fighting the ice were between Grand Island Bend and Sharps Landing on the Illinois (Mile 105, a no-man's-land between Bath and Beardstown). Even with only six barges it was a struggle. As you push through the ice it will build up under the tow and when you come to a shallow spot you actually will get on ground. If you can get to open water all the ice from under you will come out, but as you can see in the photos there was no open water so the ice under us just kept building.

The CO-OP VANGUARD got stuck so I came light boat to help him. I just left my six barges sitting in the ice as they were not going anywhere. In a situation like this, I run around his tow and on ahead of him trying to break and loosen up the ice. He was still stuck so I faced up on the head of his tow and with him backing full and me shoving full we were able to back up a couple tow lengths. Before we tried shoving forward again, I came around and faced up on the stern of his boat and we both shoved full ahead together. We were able to move forward at a good speed, but soon had to stop because he was pointed out of the channel and couldn't steer because of the ice. It took a little more of me boring out a hole big enough with my boat so that he could maneuver. That was a particularly hard spot and the rest of the trip down was uneventful.

The poor CO-OP VANGUARD took most of the beating since he was leading. He was the one breaking the trail and had a lot of backing up and



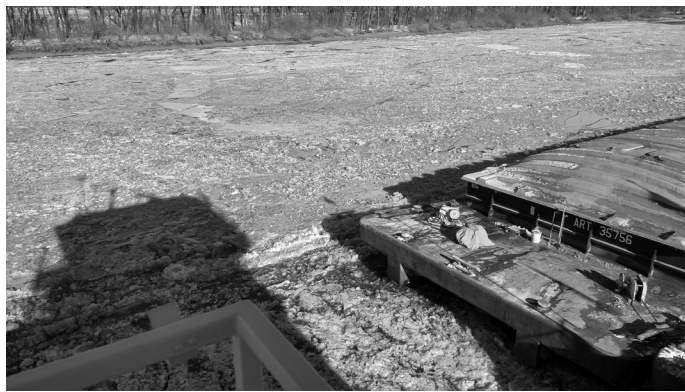
COOPERATIVE VANGUARD, assisted by COOPERATIVE MARINER, on the Illinois this January 6. Dan Shrake photos.

ramming, Full Ahead to Full Astern and burning lots of fuel. With me following in his trail, it was much easier but still a hard shove.

The pictures from St. Louis are interesting because all the ice you see was coming from Missouri River. There was no ice immediately below Mel Price Dam, but bank-to-bank ice was coming out of the Missouri and flowing down the Old Chain. I'm not sure how far south they were getting ice, but I know it was at least as far as Cape Girardeau 130 miles downriver. It was/is low water right now, so that did not help things. What made it so bad on the Illinois River was that there was almost no current to get the ice moving. It just sat there.

I'm at home now and sitting in my warm cozy house. When I go back middle of February, I hope all the ice is gone by then. I was thinking of the John Hartford song "Long Hot Summer Days" while we were battling that ice and also thinking what completely opposite days we were having! ❄️

Also sequestered in his warm "office" this January, your editor read news reports of sub-zero temperatures and blizzard conditions ravaging parts of the country. This prompted thoughts of running a companion piece to Charles Bogart's "Maysville Ice Piers" story. And then an email arrived from Dan Shrake, doing battle on the ice-choked Illinois River. Towboaters are all too familiar with what he describes. The rest of us maybe not so much.



Fred, Stella and the Str. JOE FOWLER

by John Pope Ellis

At 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 6, 1914 the sternwheeler JOE FOWLER was about to leave the Monongahela wharf at Pittsburgh on a three thousand mile round-trip to St. Paul, MN. One of the passengers waiting for her departure was thirteen-year-old Frederick Way Jr., who was travelling with his parents and seven other relatives. Minutes after the deck bell sounded, warning visitors to disembark, the lines were let go, and with smoke belching from JOE FOWLER's twin stacks, she backed out into the current. Water showered passengers standing under the boat's long-barreled steam whistle as it announced their departure. And, after the boat headed down river and forged into the Ohio, Fred's mother took a picture of him standing on the starboard roof. Her snapshot captured a portrait of a tall, scrawny young teenager wearing baggy knickers, wrinkled knee socks and worn tennis shoes. His left hand gripped a notebook in which he planned to record the details of this voyage over the next fourteen days.

After the JOE FOWLER steamed beneath the new Sewickley Bridge just below Pittsburgh, Fred stayed on deck observing the shoreline and noting how the boat got through several locks. Assigned to stateroom No. 14, he went to bed that night sharing an upper bunk with his younger brother Willie, while his mother slept below them. Past midnight he woke to the roar of steam being released through the scape pipe that ran outside his room. When he went on deck the next morning, he discovered that the boat was tied to a tree on the bank and had been there most of the night because of fog.

Each day Fred wrote several paragraphs in his journal about what he saw and experienced, the persons he met on board and the river traffic and hazards he observed along their route. For years he had watched steamboats plying the Ohio and other rivers around Pittsburgh, and two years before this his parents had taken him to Cincinnati on a different sternwheeler. That trip went unreported, but the record Fred kept this time showed a precocious fascination with steamboats and river

commerce, an interest that eventually determined the course of his life.

As Fred soon learned, JOE FOWLER was purchased in 1912 by two brothers, Ben and Elmer Pope, for use in the Ohio River packet trade, running regular routes carrying freight, passengers and mail. To drive their vessel at unrivaled speed, the Popes refitted her with new boilers that could maintain the maximum pressure permitted. For years the Pope family had owned and operated the Parkersburg Dock Company on the West Virginia shoreline where the Little Kanawha empties into the Ohio. There they built and repaired all sorts of river vessels while operating a fleet of steamboats. But by 1914 their share of the packet trade was dwindling. They resorted to providing less profitable passenger excursions, some of which went as far as the one Fred was now embarked upon. Like their father Lewis Pope, founder of the company, the brothers had years of riverboat experience. Both worked their way up to become licensed captains before they inherited the business in 1905.

Until the Way family purchased eleven round trip fares, the owners of JOE FOWLER weren't sure they could afford to undertake this particular trip. Finally they booked enough passengers to make the trip worthwhile. At that point both Captain Ben and Captain Elmer decided to go along and to invite some of their family members to join them.

Once the trip began Fred lost no time in documenting the condition of the JOE FOWLER. In his journal he noted that, according to her inspection certificate, she was built in 1888 and was allowed 200 passengers, utilizing 52 staterooms. The hull was 182 feet long and she measured over 31 feet across. The crew required to run her included a master, two pilots, a mate, deckhands, a chief engineer, an assistant engineer, and two firemen. In addition, some 25 others took care of culinary and housekeeping duties. To this account Fred added his own observations – the boat had no running water or bathtubs, and the drinking water tasted muddy.

After the fog lifted that first morning, JOE FOWLER proceeded down river, meeting other packets and saluting them with her melodious whistle. Ben and Elmer were in the pilothouse, both wearing straw hats, but another pilot was steering. It was Sunday, and if Captain Lewis Pope had been aboard, they might have been tied to the river bank all day, since he had been a devout Methodist and did not approve of running his boats on the Sabbath. As they passed Moundsville, WV Fred strained to see the famous Indian mound in the center of town, but without success. Early that afternoon they reached Marietta, OH and then at about 3 p.m., their boat made its first scheduled landing at the town wharf across from the Parkersburg Dock Company.

Earlier that morning there had been a lot of activity in a house up the streetcar line, north of the Parkersburg wharf. Thirteen-year old Stella Pope, her younger sister Anne, her mother and her grandmother were getting ready to join Captain Ben and Captain Elmer on the JOE FOWLER when it arrived from Pittsburgh. Stella's mother Eva, finished putting the last touches on dresses she'd sewn for her daughters and herself. She'd made all three of plain white cotton with fold down, navy collars; Eva's closed at the neck with a scarf while the girl's blue-trimmed collars laced sailor style. And to complete the outfits, she attached ornate, striped belts to each waist. Despite the hot weather, Granny insisted she would wear her usual dark-colored dress and hat.

They ate a quick lunch of beaten biscuits and homemade elderberry jam with slices of country ham that had been "frizzled" in a pan. "Don't get jam on those new dresses, girls," their mother warned several times. Finally they got together their overnight things and walked over to the car line, where a trolley ran down Market Street almost to the wharf. There they caught one of the open, green cars that regularly traveled the Inner Loop of the Parkersburg and Marietta Inter-Urban Railway. As they headed downtown, Stella and Anne sat on the river side of the trolley car, vying to see who would be the first to spy the JOE FOWLER. Because it was so warm, the breeze created by the trolley's swaying motion felt wonderful.

It was a short walk from where the trolley

turned at 7th Street to the wide wharf area where JOE FOWLER was landed with a coal barge along side. As they got close, Stella whispered, "Look, Anne, isn't she beautiful! They have her all painted up." The steamboat's white sides glistened in the sunlight – even the paddlewheel shone white with green highlights on the wheel circles. On the engine room bulkhead the name JOE FOWLER was painted in large black letters shaded with light green at the sides and dark green below. And up forward, attached to the top rail, was a canvas banner that read "Steamer JOE FOWLER for Cincinnati, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Way Points." Soon after arrival Fred left the boat to get a soda and to buy postcards, and in the process may have noticed four female members of the Pope family coming aboard as passengers.

The JOE FOWLER left Parkersburg with her new contingent late that afternoon and soon passed Blennerhassett Island a few miles downstream. Fred was inside the cabin and missed seeing the island, but Stella was on deck watching as they went by. She was thinking how often she had visited that place with her family and played in the ruined foundation of the post-colonial mansion that once stood there. She remembered hearing stories of how Aaron Burr and the original owner, Harman Blennerhassett, had used the island as staging point in a scheme to commandeer western lands.

That evening supper was announced by a black man in a waiter's jacket, striking a Chinese brass gong. Stella would see that gong again four or five years later, hanging on the dining room wall of her Aunt Adelle's house, and years after that in a show case in the Ohio River Museum in Marietta. Passengers were fed in the long, white-paneled cabin located adjacent to their staterooms. Rows of high transom windows along each wall of the cabin let in light that played on an intricately carved wooden ceiling. Fred and his family dined at the first table and most likely were introduced to Stella and the other Pope women at that time.

At breakfast the next morning Fred's family drank bottled water that his uncle had brought aboard in Parkersburg. While there his uncle had also purchased a mechanical mixing glass which he used to make chocolate milk. The JOE FOWLER

took on coal to fire her boilers at Ashland, KY and then slowed below Portsmouth because the river became shallow. The boat scraped bottom just before lunch and Fred heard the grinding sound of gravel rolling under her wooden hull. Sometime that afternoon his mother took another photograph. This time it was of a group of passengers on the main deck below the pilothouse. Stella Pope can plainly be seen among those in the front row, standing between her mother and her sister Anne. Next in line is Stella's grandmother, and on the end stands Fred Way.

About 9 p.m. the third evening out, JOE FOWLER arrived in Cincinnati and tied up to the wharf boat. Some of the passengers "went up town and saw the sights" and "some stayed at the Sinton Hotel to take baths." But Fred's family pulled chairs to the railing, rested their feet and watched lit-up excursion boats, travelling back and forth to Coney Island amusement park.

After breakfast the next morning, Captain Ben and his four female relatives got off the boat and returned to Parkersburg by train. Stella and Anne would have loved to have stayed on board, but their invitation had been to travel only so far. Captain Elmer was scheduled to go the whole way, acting as the owners' agent. After another captain and two new pilots came aboard to take the JOE FOWLER as far as Cairo, IL, they got under way. Later that morning the electrician guided Fred through the hull, "a dark and steamy place," and the chief engineer gave him a tour of the engine room. That afternoon Fred spent time discussing steamboats with the boat's cross-eyed steward. JOE FOWLER ran all that day without slowing, except while in the canal and locks around Louisville.

That night was very warm and everyone stayed awake until eleven. Fred's father sat up the entire night to see the Oxbow Bends in the river, "vexing" his son who had to go to bed. Next morning, coming around a sharp bend, they met the TELL CITY, "a big sternwheeler with a fancy blue-topped pilothouse," coming upstream. Both boats blew a whistle salute. The pilothouse of the TELL CITY was removed when she sank in 1917 and preserved. In 1976 it was donated to the Ohio River Museum, where it was restored and is on display today.

The JOE FOWLER landed at Evansville, IN around 5 p.m. and unloaded sixty barrels of glassware that had come aboard at Pittsburgh. After supper she passed a steamboat sitting aground on a big sand bar. The new captain told Fred, "She has been there two weeks and may stay there until November." Before dark they caught up with the packet RUTH. She was making a lot of smoke trying not to be passed. The JOE FOWLER started making smoke and pretty soon big chunks of scale blew out of her stacks and came down on her tarpaper roof. Fred's aunt told the new captain to "stop this nonsense," or "she would get off at the next landing." As they overtook the RUTH, Captain Elmer remarked, "It was foolish for that boat to be wasting so much coal." But both boats paid a price because near midnight the engineer confirmed that during the impromptu race JOE FOWLER had damaged her paddle wheel - probably by hitting a drifting log. While the paddlewheel was being repaired the RUTH came by, turned a searchlight on the scene, and offered help.

The next day the mate was busy measuring the depth of the river with a sounding pole as the boat floated above Paducah, KY. The river was shallow and their boat needed three and a half feet of water to avoid grounding. Because of this delay they didn't get to Cairo until after supper. Fred went "up the hill" there, as he had in Parkersburg and Paducah, to buy post cards that pictured steamboats and to record the names of the boats landed nearby. In his journal he described the town as "a sorry place." That evening the JOE FOWLER left Cairo and entered the current of the muddy Mississippi. Sitting on deck her passengers watched "millions" of fireflies and Cairo's lights aglow in the night sky.

In Fred's opinion the ride from Cairo to St. Louis was dreary - nothing to see, "except rocks, hills, trees and water." His mother brought out a box of chocolates she had been saving, but they'd melted into "sticky goo." He played pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey with some children, and then looked at steamboat pictures with the steward again, outside the pantry where cinders from the smoke stacks couldn't bother them.

The boat got to St. Louis at 8 p.m. and tied up at the foot of Vine St. The next morning she had

steam up early and slipped by other boats landed at the wharf. Among them was the QUINCY, a side wheeler that was supposedly the fastest boat on the Upper Mississippi. The engineer on JOE FOWLER wanted to race her and so did the rest of the Way family, except for Fred's aunt. However, they were underway on the Mississippi River by noon with a new pilot, and it was cold and windy. The engineer said it would take three or four more days to get to St. Paul, but Fred's Dad thought that depended on when the pilot got sleepy. The pilot did get sleepy that night and their boat tied up for hours. They were going again at daylight, and in rain and wind passed Hannibal, MO, Tom Sawyer's hometown. Off in the distance behind them they could see the QUINCY, but she was making a landing.

In the Keokuk Lock at 3 p.m. Fred wrote, "This is a whopper and we went up 40 feet, higher than they do at the Panama Canal." Later the JOE FOWLER landed at Burlington, IA, a place of many islands, and picked up another pilot. That night the new pilot hit a buoy with a big crash, causing it to spear through the forecastle on the port side. The new pilot claimed the cause was that the searchlight wouldn't go on to help him find the buoy in the dark. Next day, after Fred helped the electrician take apart and clean the light, it still wouldn't go on. Finally, the electrician found that the main switch for the light had been turned off in the engine room. During the following day they made three stops, including one to pick up ex-Governor Van Sant of Minnesota and his party.

On Wednesday morning, June 17th, after almost eleven days of steaming, the JOE FOWLER reached St. Paul. As she tied up at the wharf other boats and nearby factories began blowing their whistles and workers cheered from crowded roof tops. Fred wasn't sure whether the celebrating was in honor of the former Minnesota Governor, who was waving to the crowd, or for the arrival of the first boat to bring Pittsburgh passengers to the city in several years. In any case, he wrote in his journal, "Golly, what a show!"

Apparently the fuss was being made over the passengers, for they were soon invited to the St. Paul Hotel as guests of the city, driven around the area and given a banquet supper that evening. However,

that night Fred, Willie and their parents stayed with different relatives in neighboring Minneapolis. Their night was quiet and still compared to the, "whistle blowing and the bedspring shaking" that they experienced back on the JOE FOWLER.

The JOE FOWLER's return trip was delayed until the afternoon of the next day, but once headed back down the Mississippi she made great speed in the swift current - 18 miles in the first hour. Later, it began to rain hard and the pilot had to use the searchlight most of that night. The next day the boat landed at Le Claire, IA to get a "rapids pilot." The captain knew they could save a lot of time by shooting the rapids below that town, instead of going through the Moline Locks. Those rapids dropped the Mississippi River 22 feet between Le Claire and Moline. After the rapids pilot came aboard, they shot through and "never hit anything."

The following day the JOE FOWLER put in at Hannibal, MO where the passengers visited Mark Twain's childhood home. Using his family's folding Kodak, Fred took a picture of his mother, Willie and some other kids, standing in front of the Twain house. Before re-boarding they bought a newspaper that reported the sinking of the new excursion steamer MAJESTIC, after she hit an intake water tower above St. Louis. By 7:30 they passed the mouth of the Missouri, and within half an hour came upon the sad sight. There was the MAJESTIC, "all humped up and badly broken and sunk almost to the roof."

Ten hours later the JOE FOWLER was dodging big trees that were floating down the muddy Mississippi when she met a showboat, FRENCH'S NEW SENSATION, which was being shoved upriver by a steamer. Then, just before noon, they reached the Ohio River, which Fred thought was, "green as grass," and landed at Cairo to get coal. Surprisingly, after days of chilling rain, it was hot again. Someone said that a thermometer on the boat's roof hit 120 degrees that afternoon. As they left, Fred's Dad told him, "the reason Grant won the Civil War was to get out of Cairo."

The passengers were in bed that night when the boat hit a sandbar while running at a fast pace, and "the JOE FOWLER flattened out on it and

stopped.” Fred got up and watched in his pajamas as deckhands tried to lift the front of the boat. They stuck a spar, a long, heavy wooden pole, down into the river, then tightened lines attached to it as the pilot backed. It was early in the morning before the boat was floating again, and after that they ran “slow bell,” making soundings as they went. That evening a packet towing the showboat SUNNY SOUTH came upriver and passed alongside them. Built by the Pope Dock Company in 1905, that famous showboat plied the rivers until crushed by ice in the Monongahela in 1918. When the SUNNY SOUTH was foreclosed on by a Parkersburg bank in 1915, Captain Ben Pope got her calliope and used it on the JOE FOWLER when she ran excursions.

Above Louisville the JOE FOWLER got into shallow water again. She struck bottom and this time swung sideways. Two spars were put down, one on each side, but the boat wouldn’t budge. Late that night another boat was able to pull her free, but in the process a rock pierced the hull and caused a serious leak. Using pumps, the crew got her to shore and tied up while the hole was patched. Next day Captain Elmer was able to get more water let out below the dam near Louisville so they could land at that city.

Captain Ben met them at Louisville to tell them that the river up above was too low to get to Pittsburgh and that he’d bought train tickets to get all the passengers home. Ben saw everyone off at the station because it was the custom for a riverboat captain to say goodbye to every passenger as they left.

Back home in Sewickley Fred felt “strange” and missed the friends he had made while aboard the JOE FOWLER. He said he was “blue” because Captain Ben, who was such a good sport and “every inch a gentleman,” had lost money on their trip. But he felt better after his mother told him, “Nobody ever forgets a graceful loser.” Fred longed to be back on the JOE FOWLER, not realizing that he would see the Popes again before long.

In February 1916 the Pope steamboat OHIO burned to the waterline at the wharf in Parkersburg. Captain Ben had purchased an interest in that big sternwheeler eight years earlier, when she

was named AVALON. Renamed the OHIO, she became a part of the Pope flotilla and served as a packet and excursion boat until catching fire. This was a serious blow to the struggling Pope Dock Company for there was no insurance to cover the loss. Fred was 15 at the time, and because he’d had a “love affair” with the JOE FOWLER and “held Ben and Elmer in high regard,” he made a pilgrimage to Parkersburg to see the remains of the OHIO. During that trip he stayed as the Popes’ guest in their sister Adelle’s “fabled home on Ann Street.”

When it became time to attend college, Fred enrolled at Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh, but the lure of life on the river was too strong. He got a job on a boat and didn’t return to school. Apparently he had decided what his occupation would be. At nearly that same time, Stella became a coed at Marietta College, aspiring to become a writer. She couldn’t afford to live on campus so she commuted to school from Parkersburg, travelling to classes each day by trolley. She’d lost her sister Anne to juvenile diabetes, and when her mother and her grandmother perished in a car accident in the summer of 1922, Stella went to live in her Aunt Adelle’s home, in order to complete her senior year. However, that didn’t turn out as expected because before Christmas Stella fell in love and became engaged. The following spring Stella and her fiancé eloped and were married before she could graduate. Like Fred, she never finished college.

Fred Way’s career as a riverman progressed at a fast pace. He began as a “mud clerk,” so-named because part of his job as an apprentice clerk was to step ashore every time his boat tied up on a riverbank. Between jobs he began to study at the University of Cincinnati School of Engineering. This time he attended for a year before accepting permanent employment on a steamboat. After that he rapidly qualified as a mate, then as a master, and finally at age 22, as a pilot. In just a few years Fred had become one of the youngest steamboat captains on the Ohio and Mississippi. From then on he would be called Captain Fred.

Not long after marrying in 1924, Captain Fred persuaded his father to provide funds so he could purchase the iron-hulled sternwheeler BETSY ANN. This was a risky undertaking – the

BETSY ANN was old and the packet trade was disappearing. It took lots of nerve and imagination to keep her operating. Challenged in 1928 to race from Cincinnati to New Richmond, OH in a highly publicized match, the BETSY ANN lost narrowly. Barely making ends meet, Captain Fred ran her as a packet for seven years, and then, after selling her, served as master and pilot on excursion steamers. He was one of two pilots on board the well-known packet SENATOR CORDILL.

During those times Stella, now Stella Pope Ellis, and her husband lived in several cities before settling in Pittsburgh to begin raising a family. Stella became a busy homemaker, yet kept writing stories and sending them to the publishers of popular magazines. Despite regular rejections she never stopped trying. Little that she wrote ever appeared in print, other than some regular columns she authored for a local newspaper.

By contrast, Captain Fred had rapid success as an author. In 1933 he wrote *The Log of the Betsy Ann*, an intriguing recollection of his times on the river. Seven years later, while he was living in Sewickley and supporting a young family by piloting the excursion steamer ST. PAUL, he became president of the newly founded Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen. Later he founded and was longtime editor of that organization's quarterly magazine S&D REFLECTOR. Remarkably, he continued to serve in both those positions until his passing in 1992.

For years Fred assembled pictures and descriptions of the many steam-driven vessels that traveled the Western Rivers of the United States (those rivers that drain into the Gulf of Mexico). Utilizing this collection, he formed the Steamboat Photo Company in 1939, and in 1942 began to publish a series of steam packet and steam towboat directories, the last of which came out in 1990. At Fred Way's urging, the Ohio River Museum was established in Marietta during the early 1940s. He was elected its president and remained in that position as long as he lived. In 1942 a New York publishing house came out with Fred's book *The Allegheny*, as part of its "Rivers of America" series. And not long after that, his *Pilotin' Comes Natural* was published. It was another unique, homespun

account of his experiences as a riverman, and the product of a master storyteller.

A high point in Frederick Way's career came in 1947. The huge Sacramento River overnight steamer DELTA QUEEN, used during World War II to ferry wounded troops around San Francisco Bay, was retired and put up for sale. One of Fred's river cronies, Capt. Tom Greene, bought her and asked him to get her down the California coast, through the Panama Canal, and up the Mississippi and Ohio to Pittsburgh, where she was to be renovated. Captain Fred coordinated the team that successfully accomplished this difficult task over a period of 14 months, and then wrote *The Saga of the Delta Queen* to tell the public how it had been done. This project sparked new interest in river travel that was borne out by the multitude of nostalgic passengers the DELTA QUEEN carried up and down the Ohio and Mississippi long afterwards.

Through these busy years Fred remembered Captain Elmer Pope, and probably saw him at S&D meetings in Marietta. Although Captain Ben had passed away at age 63, Elmer was 91 when he died in 1954. His final days were spent living alone in a hotel near the river in Parkersburg.

A great many years earlier, after the OHIO burned, the Parkersburg Dock Company had been forced to file for bankruptcy. The much-loved JOE FOWLER was condemned and sold, then kept in the excursion service by the new owner until she burned on the Green River in 1920. Sixty years later Fred still recalled details of the boat's white exterior, red-lead main deck, grey-floored cabin deck and black tar paper roof. Clearly he had never forgotten his teenage sojourn on the Pope's favorite steamboat.

Stella and Fred became reacquainted when she joined S&D in the 1980s. After that she wrote to him for information about her grandfather Lewis Pope and the JOE FOWLER, and got quick replies. Several years later Stella had occasion to write to Fred with another request. She had authored a family memoir called *A Dried Bouquet* and needed permission to publish photographs of several Pope owned steamboats from his collection. Fred promptly granted her request, praised the memoir

she sent him and told her how much he appreciated receiving it because “I had a love affair with the JOE FOWLER and count among my blessings having known Capts. Ben and Elmer and your aunt Adelle McCreary, and you and Anne.”

Then, in the March 1986 issue of the S&D REFLECTOR, Fred devoted his editor’s column to Stella’s memoir. He explained how he had met her and her uncles Ben and Elmer on a JOE FOWLER trip and visited the family later in Parkersburg. After citing some of the details of her story he ended by saying, “Stella is the last of her generation, the last of all the persons involved in the story. And to think that she produced this memorial at her age, 83, I just had to tell somebody.”

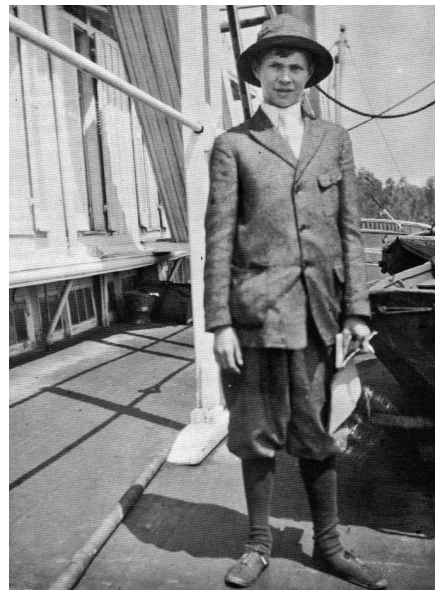
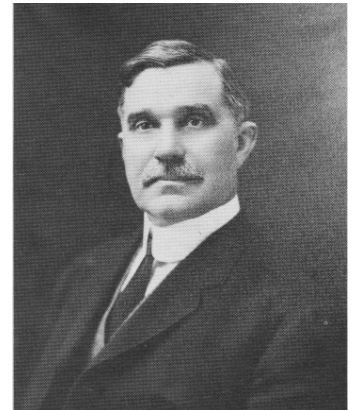
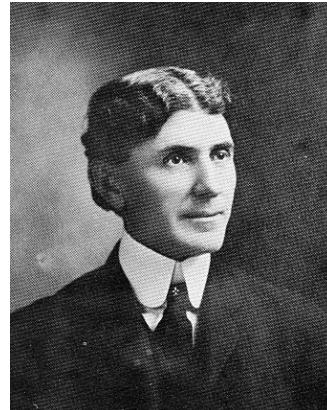
AUTHOR’S NOTE

In writing this story I relied on Fred’s journal as it was reproduced in the June 1967 issue of the S&D REFLECTOR. Unfortunately I never met Captain Fred Way, although I lived close to his hometown for years. And while I knew Captain Elmer Pope when I was young, I’m afraid I didn’t listen very well to his stories about life on the Ohio River. Of course I was well acquainted with Stella Pope Ellis – she was my mother. And I still have lots of her records. But at some point it occurred to me that Captain Fred’s early experiences on the JOE FOWLER, and his stay with the Pope family a few years later, might have helped steer him toward his career as a steamboat captain and historian. And I just had to tell somebody. ①

Editor’s Note: Fairly early in Capt. Way’s editorship of S&D REFLECTOR he narrated the story of his family’s trip from Pittsburgh to St. Paul and return on the JOE FOWLER through the eyes of a 13-year old boy who had kept a journal during that excursion. This was very early Fred Way at its best, and gave a foretaste of things to come from the good captain’s pen years later. John Ellis has shared with us this youthful impression of that cruise through the eyes and memories of his mother, another youngster on board in the first days of the journey. Although Capt. Way’s grandson Fred rightly suggests that his grandfather had caught the steamboat bug well before the events described in these narratives, perhaps it is fair to say that this trip and association with the Pope family certainly may have “set the hook” even deeper.



Mrs. Stella Pope Ellis, the author’s mother and passenger on JOE FOWLER along with the Way family in 1914. Photo courtesy of John Pope Ellis.



Above: Capt. Elmer Pope (L) and Capt. Ben S. Pope (R) owners and captains of JOE FOWLER.
Left: 13-year old Fred Way on hurricane roof of the boat en route to St. Paul in June 1914.
Right: The only known photo of JOE FOWLER taken during the trip. All photos from June 1967 S&D REFLECTOR.



Above: (L to R) Stella's mother Eva Pope, Stella, her sister Anne, her grandmother, and Fred Way. Photo courtesy John Pope Ellis.



Str. L. H. BUHRMAN and the Cincinnati Cooperage Works

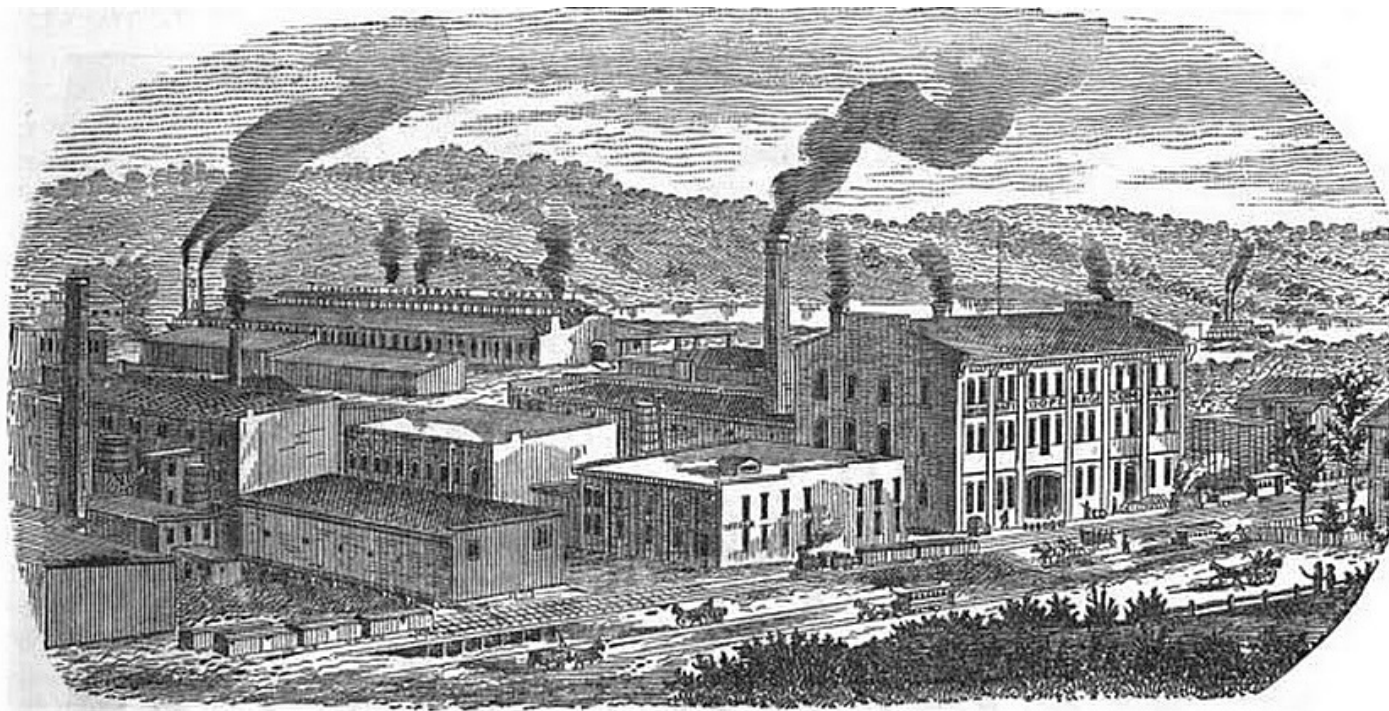
Jerry Sutphin's sharp, detailed photo of the towboat L. H. BUHRMAN (T1530) pictured on our back cover arrived with the teaser, "Here is a really good one to start the New Year off with the towboat lovers." Ah yes, Jerry is quite right, a picture to be admired by both towboat aficionados and steamboat lovers alike. But in tracking down the BUHRMAN's pedigree, a good deal more surfaced than meets the eye as is typical with many steamboat photos. So let's begin.

Capt. Way tells us that the BUHRMAN was built in Hawesville, KY in 1899 for the Cincinnati Cooperage Company (Works) with a hull 112.6 x 23.2 x 4.9. A second reference gives her hull a width of 28.2 feet and a net tonnage of 80 tons. The *Steam Towboat Directory* further mentions that she towed timber, etc. from the Mississippi River to Cincinnati until she burned near Stevenson, KY in March 1903.

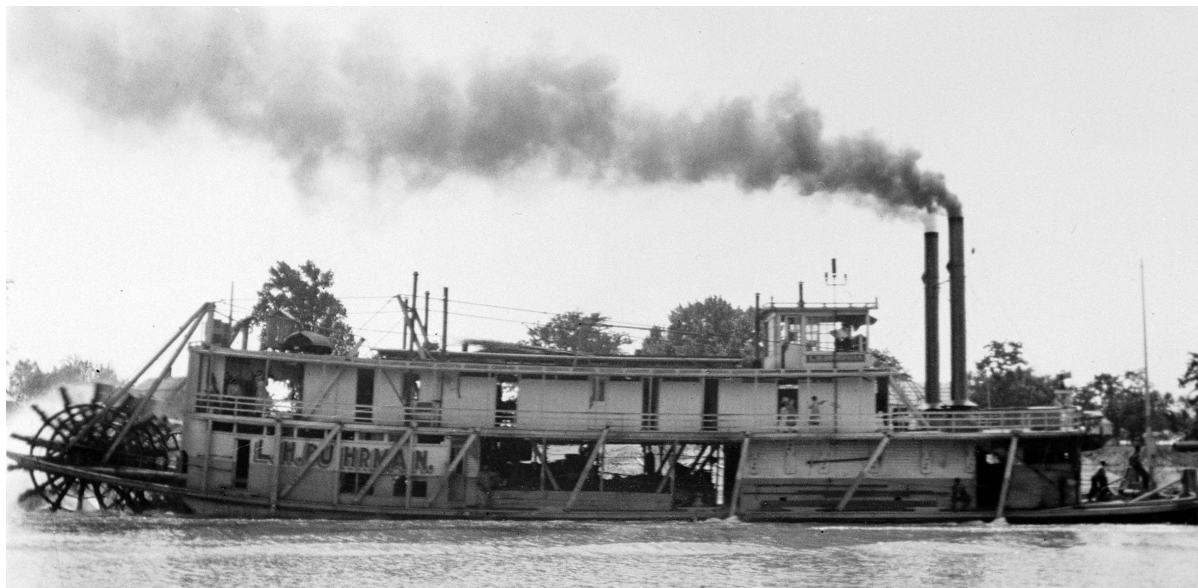
And who was L. H. Buhrman? A banker and businessman listed in 1907 as a Vice President and Director of the Queen City Savings Bank & Trust, he also served as a Board member of the Union Gaslight and Fuel Company in Anderson, IN following discovery of natural gas there in March

1887. Apparently Mr. Buhrman kept his finger on the economic pulse of central and southern Indiana and southwestern Ohio, and might possibly have helped make arrangements to bankroll the sternwheeler which bore his name. Neither can it be ruled out that he might have had a financial interest in the Cincinnati Cooperage Works.

Cincinnati Cooperage Works, the boat's owner, is mentioned in Daniel J. Kenney's 1875 volume *Cincinnati Illustrated: A Pictorial Guide to Cincinnati and the Suburbs*. Mr. Kenney describes the plant as occupying an entire block between Walnut and Vine Streets and between 4th and 5th Streets. At that time, the business employed 300 men and boys, and was serviced by 125 steam-powered machines, including three large steam engines supplied by five boilers. The business had access to a 500-foot river frontage, ample space for unloading and loading the boats and barges bringing lumber from the Big Sandy River and the Kanawha. Lumber was also delivered by rail on the Cincinnati Southern RR. Their daily production amounted to some 2500 containers, which included bourbon barrels, pork and lard tierces (42-gallon casks), large beer kegs and half barrels, lead and paint kegs, and barrels for gin and other spirits. Their specialty, not surprising in a city of Cincinnati's German heritage, was the manufacture of lager beer kegs which were also shipped to 22 other states. The staves they produced



THE CINCINNATI COOPERAGE WORKS.



L.H. BUHRMAN plying the lumber trade for Cincinnati Cooperage Works 1899-1903. In 1901 alone she towed almost 15,000 staves from Obion River in northwestern Tennessee to the Queen City plant. The boat burned in March 1903 and was rebuilt. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library - UW-La Crosse.

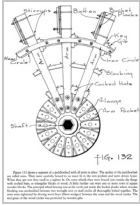
each day ran to 50,000 board feet of lumber. The company had been founded by James W. Gaff. Mr. Gaff (1816-1879) and his older brother Thomas operated a distillery in Philadelphia prior to moving to Aurora, IN in 1843, where they founded the distilling company of T. & J.W. Gaff & Co. These brothers were also involved in farming, silver mining, foundry and machine works, turnpike construction, banking and steamboat operation. They were the principal owners of the packet FOREST QUEEN (2093) which successfully ran the blockade at Vicksburg on April 17, 1863. J. W. was also co-owner of the ST. CLOUD (4921), LADY FRANKLIN (3333) and NAUGATUCK (4121) for a brief time. He also owned the barges OTTAWA, YOUNKER NO. 3, and WABASHA NO. 1. Prior to the start of the War, J. W. had moved to Cincinnati. Although his cooperage works may have maintained a fleet of barges for transportation

of their lumber, it is likely that the BUHRMAN was the first and only company-owned and operated towboat, as the *Steam Towboat Directory* makes no mention of any other vessels owned by that firm. Interestingly, Memphis & Ohio River Packet Co. built the big sternwheel packet JAMES W. GAFF (2951) in 1876. See page 31 for more details.

In 1901, the BUHRMAN is recorded as plying the busy lumber trade on the Obion and Forked Deer Rivers in northwestern Tennessee. The latter river flows into the Obion, which in turn empties into the Lower Mississippi about 27 miles downstream from Caruthersville, MO. In that year alone, a total of 14,740 staves were transported on those streams. The BUHRMAN was joined by JACOB HEATHERINGTON, MINNEHAHA, A.R. HALL, VERONA, SARAH, HOCK WHITE, JOY PATTON, and GYPSY in that business. ☪

MARTHA E. HENNEN (T1736) was built at Evansville in 1904 from the burned out remains of the BUHRMAN. After operating in that area for several years, she was sold to the Pickley Brothers on the Warrior River at Mobile and was still running in 1916. Photo courtesy of Murphy Library.





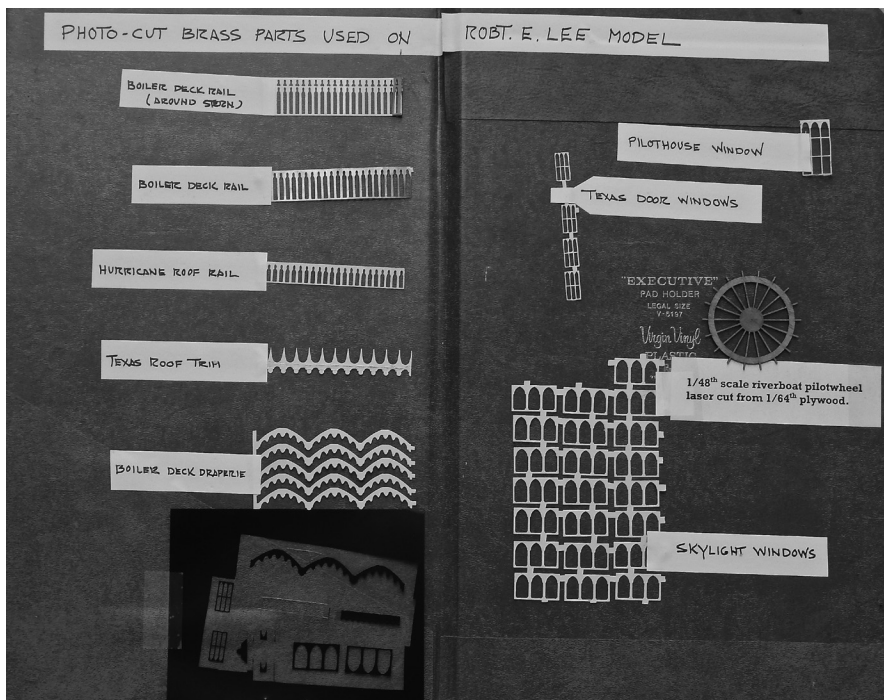
Small Stacks

New Materials & Techniques for Riverboat Modelers

by John Fryant

New model building techniques and tools are now available for modelers that enable them to produce more realistic and better quality work than ever before. These include photo and laser cutting, paper cutting, and 3-D printing. This column provides an overview of these processes.

Photo etching, or cutting, has been around for some years. It is similar to the process used to produce printed circuit boards. Black and white drawings of the part or parts needed is first produced to a larger scale, then photographed and reduced to the proper size. The negative is placed over a piece of metal coated with light-sensitive material. When exposed to strong light the sensitive coating is burned away, leaving only the portions under the negative. The metal is then put in an acid bath and the light-exposed portions of the metal are eaten away, leaving the protected portion intact. There are now do-it-yourself kits available for this process, but I have found that far better results are obtained when commercial processes are used.



A "sampler" of brass photo-cut parts used on large model of ROBT. E. LEE.

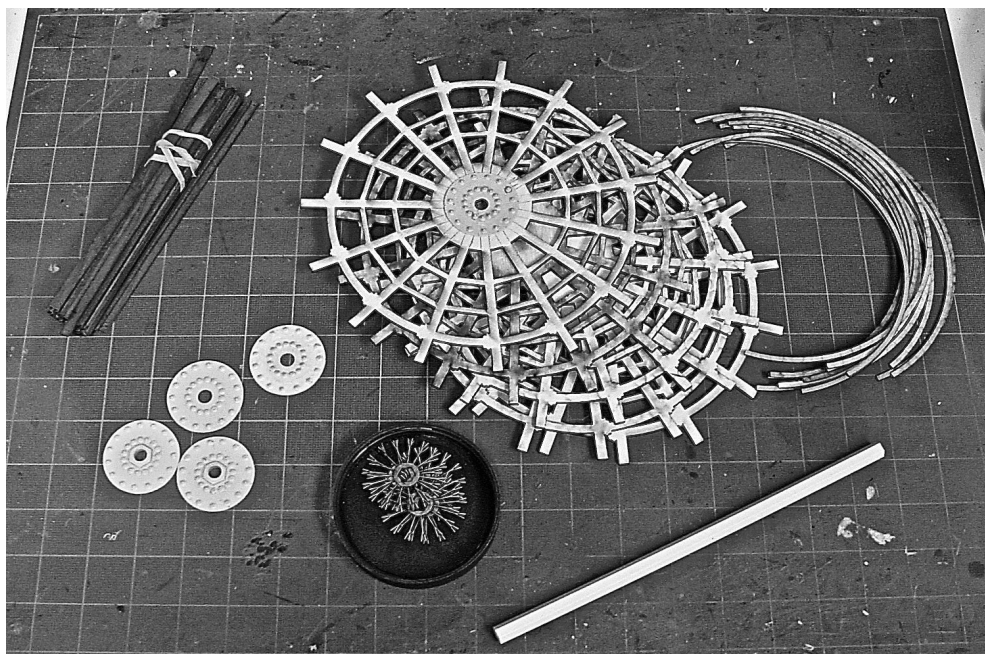
When building the huge ROBT. E. LEE model for Mud Island Museum at Memphis, your author did all the art for the railings, roof trim and windows, then let a commercial company do the rest (see photo 1 below). Many scale model kits produced today come with detail parts made by this method.

Laser cutting is a more recent process used by the majority of scale model kit producers to provide ready-cut parts for many types of kits. The parts are first drawn on a computer screen and the computer then "drives" the laser cutter to produce the parts. Photo 2 at top of the next page shows the laser-cut and cast resin parts for a stern paddlewheel. The arm/hub parts were all cut at the same time from a single sheet of 3/32 plywood. I watched the cutter doing the job, which took only seven and one half minutes. What a time saver! It would have taken probably a week to jig-saw out these parts by hand.

Another process which has become popular, especially with paper crafting, is the computer-driven paper cutter shown in Photo 3 on the far right of the next page. These work very similar to a laser cutter but use a precision knife instead of a laser beam to produce the desired parts. Their cutting capability is limited to craft paper, thin vinyl or plastic sheet. Having purchased one of these machines, I haven't yet become proficient in its operation, but plan to use it to cut window frames and fancy railing parts from craft paper.

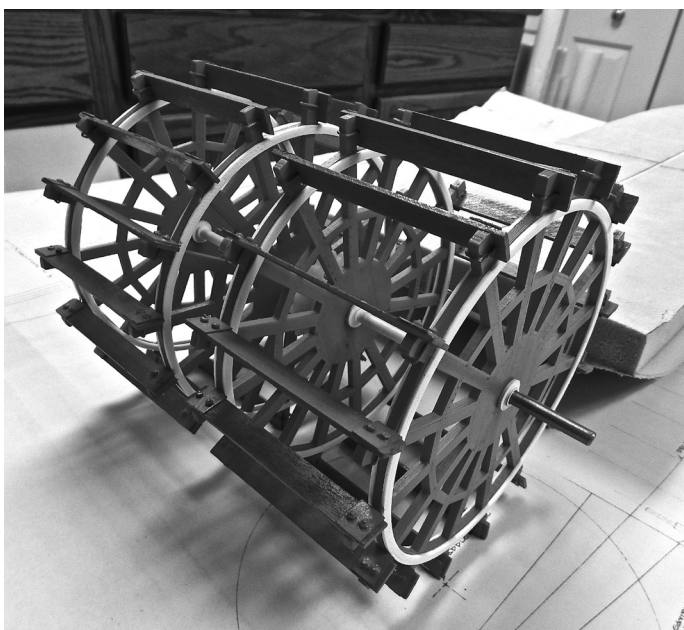
The latest process used by modelers is three-dimensional (3-D) printing. In this process the part(s) are designed on the computer and displayed on the screen. The computer then "slices" the drawings into very thin sections (like slicing a loaf of bread) and directs the 3-D machine to duplicate them in layers of resin or thin layers of plastic. This process is widely used by industry and has now made its way into the home hobbyist market. Photo 4 at middle left next page shows a paddlewheel with arms, hubs and outer rings made by this three-dimensional printing process.

A more complex 3-D printer would be capable of producing the entire wheel and all of its details in one piece. 3-D printing is the wave of the future and is already being used to produce parts for full-size autos and many other products. A quick overview of all these processes as applied to model building can be had by ordering a copy of the Micro-Mark catalog from Micro Mark, 340 Snyder Ave., Berkeley Park, NJ 07922, or www.micromark.com on your computer. They also sell



Above: Laser-cut and cast resin parts used for the stern wheel on "New Big Sandy" model displayed at the Howard Steamboat Museum.

Left: Hubs, arms and outer rings of this paddlewheel were all made with a 3-D printer. The bucket planks are made of plywood and glued in place.



complete lines of other tools and machines used by modelers.

This March column closes with an apology for the gross photo error committed by your author in the December 2017 issue about building the towboat DUNCAN BRUCE (see letter and photo on page 2). The actual completed DUNCAN BRUCE model is shown at right.

All photos in this column are courtesy of John Fryant.



The Maysville Ice Piers

by Charles H. Bogart

I recently bought at our Humane Society's second-hand store six photos of boats operating on the Ohio River. Two of the photos were a fascinating find as they showed the GORDON C. GREENE at the Maysville, KY ice piers on 30 January 1953, the only photos I have ever seen of a boat taking shelter behind one of the Ohio River ice piers.

These two photos show GORDON C. GREENE tied up to the ice pier with two sand barges lashed to her starboard side. Lashed to her port side is a harbor towboat with a sand barge made fast to her bow. The photos were taken from the Simon Kenton (US 62/US 68) Bridge.

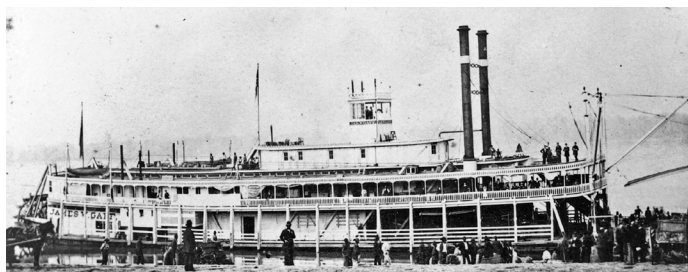
Ohio River ice piers were concrete monolithic piers sunk into the river bed near the river bank. These ice piers, all built circa 1900, each consisted of three wedge shaped concrete piers with their wedge face facing up river. The purpose of the ice pier was to provide shelter for boats from ice flowing down the Ohio River following an ice break-up upstream or an ice runout into the Ohio River from one of its tributaries. Between 1874 and 1985 the Ohio River at Cincinnati had ice in its water during 57 of the 84 winters encompassed by this period.


An examination of a 1958 chart of the Ohio River showed ice piers at eight locations on the Ohio River. Ice piers on this chart are shown located at Bellevue, PA; Ambridge, PA; Economy, PA; Gallipolis, OH; Huntington, WV; Ashland, KY; Maysville, KY; and Cincinnati, OH. On the chart only the ice piers at Gallipolis, Maysville, and Cincinnati are prefixed with "U.S." On page 351 of Benjamin F. Klein's 1958 edition of his *Ohio River Handbook* it is stated, "The

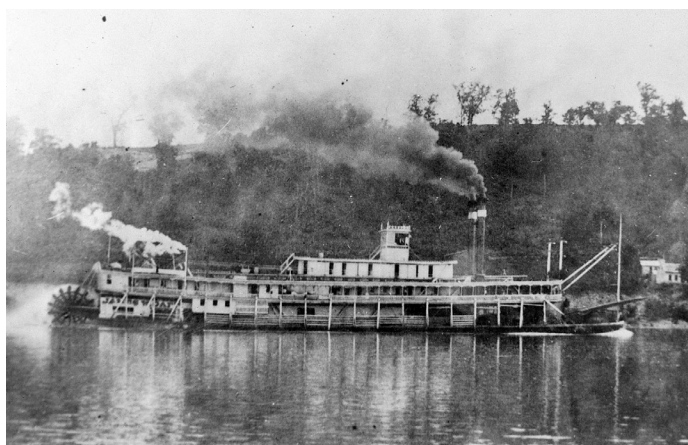
United States Government has constructed several ice piers in the Ohio River between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati — several private ice piers are also available in this stretch of river." [Other locations for safe winter layups out of harms' way of floating ice were a few natural harbors and along the banks just above the mouth of tributary streams. -Ed.]



Packet JAMES W. GAFF



Mention was made of the sternwheel packet JAMES W. GAFF (2951) on page 27. This 600 ton boat was built 1876 in Cincinnati with a hull 230.4 x 25.6 x 5.6 and engines 16's-6 ft. stroke. She was owned by Memphis and Ohio River Packet Co. for service between Cincinnati and Memphis. James D. Parker was president of the line, and would go on to manage the estate of James W. Gaff following his death in 1879. Capt. Parker had been a partner in the Parker, Wise & Co. boat store at Cincinnati, and also had a packet named for him. 



Both photos from Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisc.-La Crosse.

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Final Crossings

Nina L. Faith

Nina L. Faith, 86, of Mauckport, IN passed away on September 14, 2017. She was born September 12, 1931 in New Albany. Nina served three terms as Heth Township trustee, served on the township Fire Board, was treasurer of Central Cemetery Foundation, and was a longtime member of Mauckport United Methodist Church and Phi Beta Psi Sorority. She also was a member of S&D and of the Middle Ohio River Chapter of S&D.

Her love of history was well known to those who knew Nina, and Barbara Hameister observed that "many MOR members may remember the fine program she presented on the ALICE DEAN at a Fall 2002 MOR meeting in Louisville."

Nina was preceded in death by her husband Gayland E. Faith and her brother Arlie Beanblossom, Jr. Survivors include daughter Robin Gayle Boyd (Mark), sister Jo Ann Timberlake, and grandchildren Dayton, Katrina and Jerry Boyd. Services were held September 20 at Mauckport United Methodist Church, with burial in Mauckport.

Our thanks to Jo Ann Schoen and Barbara Hameister for sending obituary information for Nina.

Visit us online at

www.riverhistory.org

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Back Cover

This detailed, high resolution shot of the towboat L. H. BUHRMAN was likely snapped on Obion River in northwest Tennessee sometime between 1899 and 1903, while she was towing lumber for making barrel staves at the Cincinnati Cooperage Works. See page 26 for more details. *Photo courtesy of Jerry Sutphin.*

