

S & D

REFLECTOR

Published by Sons and Daughters
of Pioneer Rivermen



Vol. 53, No. 2

Marietta, Ohio

June 2016

Gillett, Eaton & Squire: Engine Builders Capt. Pink Varble & Falls of the Ohio (Part 2) CITY OF BATON ROUGE: Century of Service



Front Cover

The new catamaran steam ferry CITY OF BATON ROUGE is about to leave Howard shipyard on a trial run before her delivery to Baton Rouge Transportation Company in January 1917. The former centerwheeler celebrates 100 years of combined service for her southern owners, for Capt. Dennis Trone and for Capt. Kevin and Carrie Stier. A special anniversary program and rechristening was held on May 28th at Le Claire, IA, her current home port as landing boat for the Riverboat TWILIGHT. Her story appears on page 24. *Photo courtesy of Howard Steamboat Museum.*



Reflections from Our Readers

Tom Dunn writes: "I thoroughly enjoyed the recent REFLECTOR and story about D. W. Wisherd. Obviously, Streckfus highly regarded his knowledge of the excursion boat business as an occasional competitor and as an associate. For Capt. Joe Streckfus to entrust the company's Ohio River operations to Wisherd was truly unusual knowing the private nature in which they ran their business. However, I always heard that Capt. Joe's wife was always a little skeptical about their Wisherd arrangement.

As an example, when Wisherd was a competitor, on June 10, 1913 Wisherd's boat G.W. HILL was scheduled to be the first boat through the new lock at Keokuk as part of the celebration. But Capt. Roy Streckfus cut the steamer SIDNEY in front of him and entered the lock first and got all the glory. However, Capt. Roy didn't have the lock master's permission and later Capt. Roy's license was suspended for a few months as a result.

With regard to the PRESIDENT, Streckfus did have the structural blue prints of the ISLAND QUEEN. One could speculate whether he got them from Wisherd. The hulls were originally

the same; the new superstructure's steel work was similar also. However there were improvements in steel construction in between the time the boats were built. PRESIDENT's progressive overall final appearance reflected the "streamlined" design of the period, a departure from ISLAND QUEEN and traditional steamboats.

In 1988 when we took the PRESIDENT to Cincinnati for Tall Stacks, everyone commented how they felt they were stepping aboard their beloved ISLAND QUEEN. We even took them up to Coney Island for old time's sake. Thanks for another great issue!"

🔦 We appreciate Tom's insights into the early history of these two classic sidewheel excursion boats, and of the special relationship Capt. Wisherd enjoyed with the Streckfus family. Tom very kindly enclosed the two photos shown below of the PRESIDENT's superstructure being raised at St. Louis in 1933-34.



Carol Broderick writes: "Capt. Wisherd's date of birth is November 5, 1873. Please let me know if you need any additional information."

‡ Carol is office secretary at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Cincinnati, and was able to provide both Capt. Wisherd's date of birth and the names of his parents. Your editor's prognostication in placing his birth year in 1871 was predicated on a logical and very mathematical calculation that would have made the captain 23 years old when he bought his first steamboat VAN METRE and served as both her Master and Pilot. An entirely reasonable supposition – and also quite wrong! It seems the dynamic D. W. received his Master's ticket when he was 22 in 1895, a full year after going into business for himself.

Joel Roberts writes: "I work for the library at the University of Memphis, but am also writing a dissertation for my PhD about a Memphis musician named Bob Miller. Bob went on to New York and became a very successful music publisher and songwriter. However, his early years were spent in Memphis. Details about his early life are sketchy. One source mentioned that he possibly played piano on the Steamer IDLEWILD when he was 14, which would have been around 1909. I don't know when the boat was built, so my first question is if this was even possible. Newspaper articles indicate that he definitely played aboard this vessel later in the early 1920s. He even changed the name of his band from the Bob Miller Orchestra to the Idlewild Orchestra.

I am writing in the hopes that you might have some information as it would pertain to musicians that possibly worked aboard the boat. For example, information about where a band might have played on board would be greatly appreciated. Actually, anything at all would be appreciated since at this point, I only possess minimal information about this vessel. It seems it is now the BELLE OF LOUISVILLE? But I don't know if it would still appear on the inside as it did in the 1920s. Again, any direction you could provide would be great. Thank you."

‡ Joel promptly received our Cliff's Notes abbreviated version of the boat's early history, along with a photo of her dance floor/bandstand from the Memphis years. Other than that, we have scant additional info to provide Joel, and hope that maybe Capt. Doc Hawley or author William Kenney can assist in his research.

IN THIS ISSUE

Columns

<i>Reflections from Our Readers</i>	2
<i>Getting Posted Up</i>	5
<i>Meet Our Contributors</i>	6
<i>Final Crossings</i>	31

Features

<i>Gillett, Eaton & Squire: Engine Builders</i>	7
<i>Capt. Pink Varble & Falls of the Ohio</i>	12
<i>CITY OF BATON ROUGE History</i>	24

Articles

<i>Invitation to 77th Annual Meeting</i>	6
<i>An Inland Rivers Encounter</i>	6
<i>City of Baton Rouge Photo Album</i>	28



FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 16
SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 17
2016

77TH ANNUAL
MEETING

Thinking about submitting to the REFLECTOR?

Please follow these guidelines:

Articles

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

Features

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

Images

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

Send to the Editor as an e-mail attachment

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

1
9
3
9

America's Steam & Diesel
Riverboat Magazine

2
0
1
6

S&D REFLECTOR

Published by Sons and Daughters
of Pioneer Rivermen

Vol. 53, No. 2
ISSN 1087-9803

Marietta, Ohio June 2016
Post Office Permit #73, Marietta, OH

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

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

David Tschiggfrie, Editor
2723 Shetland Court
Dubuque, IA 52001
reflector@comcast.net

REFLECTOR BACK ISSUES AND INDICES

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

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

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

THE US POSTAL SERVICE DOES NOT FORWARD MEDIA MAIL! ADDRESS CHANGES - SEASONAL OR PERMANENT - REQUIRE TIMELY NOTICE TO THE SECRETARY TO ENSURE THAT YOU RECEIVE THE S&D REFLECTOR!

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS

FULL SUBSCRIPTION - \$35 each

FAMILY SUBSCRIPTIONS - (spouses and children under 18) \$1 for each additional name.

Please list full names of family subscribers and remit to:

Sharon Reynolds
1002 Oakland Drive
Paragould, AR 72450

You may also subscribe online at www.riverhistory.org

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF PIONEER RIVERMEN

PO Box 352
Marietta, OH 45750

www.riverhistory.org

OFFICERS

Jeffrey L. Spear, President • Vic Canfield, Vice President
Sharon Reynolds, Secretary • R. Dale Flick, Treasurer

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Term Ending 2016	Term Ending 2017
Lee Woodruff, Chairman	Capt. Robert Reynolds
Capt. William Barr	Michael Jones
John Fryant	Taylor Abbott

Term Ending 2018
Capt. William Judd
Thomas Dunn
Fred Rutter

J. MACK GAMBLE FUND TRUSTEES

Capt. William Barr, Chairman • Frank Pollock • Jim Bupp

MUSEUM COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

William Reynolds

The only requirement for a subscription
in S&D is an interest in river history!



The S&D REFLECTOR is the property of the Sons & Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen Corporation and is not to be reprinted or electronically reproduced without written permission of the Editor.



Getting Posted Up

More Anniversaries

It was but two years ago that S&D and the river community were poised to celebrate a pair of significant anniversaries: the commemoration of S&D's founding seventy-five years earlier and the centennial of BELLE OF LOUISVILLE, America's oldest continuously operating steamboat. 2016 finds preparations well underway for observing yet two more anniversary celebrations: the opening of Ohio River Museum at Campus Martius 75 years ago in 1941, and the launch of the steam catamaran ferry CITY OF BATON ROUGE in 1916, still in service as landing boat and quarters for the Riverboat TWILIGHT at Le Claire, IA.

A special photo exhibit honoring Ohio River Museum has been prepared for S&D guests at the opening session of the Annual Meeting on Friday evening, September 16. In addition, our September REFLECTOR will also feature a reprint of an early 1942 booklet prepared by Capt. Fred Way, which lists donors and items contributed to the initial displays at the new museum. Meanwhile, Capt. Kevin and Carrie Stier, owners of the TWILIGHT, have been hard at work renovating and dolling up the 100-year old ferryboat in preparation for her rechristening on May 28. A special commemorative magazine has been prepared, along with a boatload of other surprises for those who come to celebrate the CITY OF BATON ROUGE's centennial. The June issue of our magazine also honors the veteran Howard-built riverboat in a feature story.

While we're at it, we should also mention that in just another two years our own W. P. SNYDER, JR. will be observing her 100th birthday, and you can bet that there will be surprises and festivities associated with that event as well.

In the March "Reflections from Our Readers" column, James R. Lee sent a copy of letterhead from the James Rees and Sons Co. boatbuilding firm in Pittsburgh. We were reminded of that noted establishment on a cruise later that month while visiting the port of Cartagena, Colombia

S&D REGIONAL CHAPTERS

Ohio - Kanawha Rivers Chapter
Jim Bupp, President

Middle Ohio River Chapter
Frank X. Prudent, President

Mississippi River Chapter
Tom Dunn, President

ADJUNCT ORGANIZATIONS

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

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

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

Weblinks available at www.riverhistory.org

CONTRIBUTIONS TO S&D AND J. MACK GAMBLE FUND

S&D subscribers are permitted by Federal law to make financial contributions to S&D or to the Gamble Fund as 501(3)(c) organizations.

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

*J Mack Gamble Fund
c/o PNC Institutional Investments
attn. Kevin McManamon
1900 East Ninth St. 13th Floor
Cleveland, OH 44114*

in South America. There on display in the Navy Museum were pictures snapped at ports on the country's northern seacoast. And prominent in one of them was the unmistakable profile of a James Rees and Sons-built towboat/packet, engaged in the Magdalena River trade. It's a small world! 🌐



Meet Our Contributors

Leland R. Johnson (*Capt. Pink Varble and the Falls of the Ohio – Part 2, p. 12*) is author of the next installment in the biography of legendary Falls pilot Capt. Pink Varble in this excerpt from his 2013 manuscript. For those not familiar with Dr. Johnson, a brief sketch of his longtime association with the Ohio River appeared in our June 2011 and June 2014 issues. In addition to writing stories of the people and events at the Falls of the Ohio, Leland often worked with Louisville District Engineer historian Chuck Parish in documenting the history of improvements to navigation on the Ohio River. This biography of Capt. Pink Varble was Leland's last work prior to his passing in 2014.

An Inland Rivers Encounter on The Path Between the Seas

The Path Between the Seas is David McCullough's monumental tale of the building of the Panama Canal. Tucked carefully between the pages of this best seller were a group of historic 5x7 DELTA QUEEN photos. Your editor had wedged book and photos in amongst two week's clothing in one of the suitcases he and wife Debbie toted off to the Dubuque airport on March 13. Their destination was San Diego for the start of a sunny cruise through the Panama Canal. Along with a great desire to see the expansion and finished construction of the two new sets of locks (scheduled for a June 26 opening), this steamboat fan wanted to visit the site where DQ made her inter-ocean passage on May 11, 1947 en route to her new home. And those photos were meant to amaze the ship's cruise commentator with photographic evidence of one of the most unusual transits ever made. All went well until yours truly broached the topic and presented his photos for the edification of the Panamanian guide and narrator who boarded with the Pilot that morning. "Did you know that a Mississippi steamboat once locked through the Canal?" No answer. "I

An Inland Rivers Encounter continued on page 31

S&D's 77TH ANNUAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 16-17

You are cordially invited to attend the 77th Annual Meeting of Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen on Friday and Saturday, September 16-17. Room reservations may be made with the Lafayette Hotel, 101 Front Street, Marietta, OH 45750.

Friday evening's Meet and Greet Session convenes at 8:00 p.m. at Ohio River Museum, with a special photo exhibit commemorating ORM's 75th anniversary. Light refreshments will be served.

Saturday morning's Annual Business Meeting begins promptly at 9:30 in the hotel's Sternwheel Room. In addition to elections, updates on S&D chapters and affiliated groups, and financial and membership reports, news about a special promotion for subscribers and consideration of electronic publication of the REFLECTOR will be discussed.

A boxed noon luncheon will be served in conjunction with a trip to Blennerhassett Island. After driving to Parkersburg, boat transportation to the island and a house tour will be provided. Cost is \$25/person, and includes lunch, boat ride and tour. You may spend as much time on Blennerhassett as you wish; however the last boat leaves the island at 3:30 p.m.

Saturday evening's banquet and program begins at 6:30 in the Lafayette Ballroom. Entrees include prime rib (\$30/person), salmon (\$29/person), and lemon chicken (\$25/person). Make dinner reservations by calling the Hotel at 800-331-9336 or 740-373-5522. All prices include tax and gratuity. Our featured speaker is Capt. Alan Bernstein of BB Riverboats in Cincinnati.

Please note that reservations for the Blennerhassett Luncheon Tour must be confirmed and paid in advance by contacting treasurer Dale Flick in writing before September 1st and remitting the \$25 fee by check or money order. No reservations will be accepted on S&D weekend.

R. Dale Flick
1444 Burney Lane
Cincinnati, OH 45230

Gillett, Eaton and Squire Lake City, MN Engine Builders

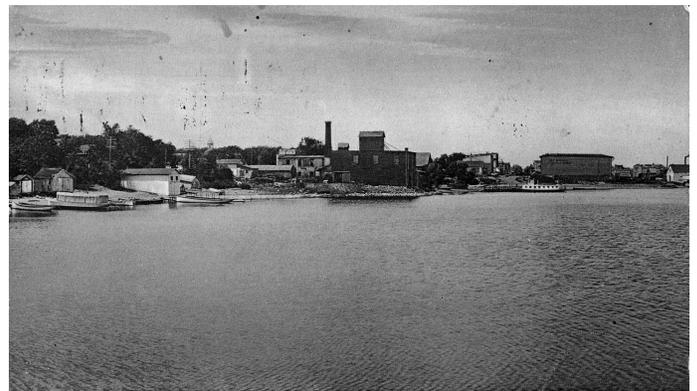
A portrait of the Baton Rouge-Port Allen steam ferry CITY OF BATON ROUGE is unveiled in word and pictures beginning on page 24 of this issue, as she celebrates one hundred years of service on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Her engines, built in 1915, were manufactured by a well-known Upper Mississippi River firm, and they are still providing reliable service forty-six years after they were placed aboard the JULIA BELLE SWAIN, currently undergoing major renovations in anticipation of her reappearance in the excursion trade at La Crosse, WI. And so this seems an opportune time to more fully acquaint our readers with the noted steamboat engine builders on the shores of Lake Pepin at Lake City, MN.

The Lake City Foundry and Machine Shop was established in 1868 by 44-year old Harrison Gillett, who moved to Lake City from Cooperstown in Otsego County, NY twelve years earlier. The first settlers of the town had arrived on the shores of the Lake only three years prior to Gillett's arrival. Before operating the foundry, he ran a sawmill and also constructed a flour mill as part of the active trade in river shipment of wheat by Joseph Reynold's well-known Diamond Jo Packet Line. Records also indicate that he served as a steamboat engineer on the Upper Mississippi. The original foundry was located on present-day Lakeshore Drive, across from the McCahill Play Park in the downtown area.

The business prospered, with Gillett being named as "founder of the manufacturing interests of Lake City . . . which bears close relation to the prosperity of the town." By August 1871, a new two-story stone building was erected. The first floor housed a molding room, boiler room and machine shop; while the second story provided space for a pattern shop, storeroom, and work area for metal turning lathes and wood working. By November of that year, iron was poured in the new facility for the first time. Two of Harrison's sons, James and Asa, along with eight others, were employed by the firm.



This 1891 view of Gillett's Iron Works and Foundry pictures the firm when it was located on Lake Pepin near downtown Lake City. It appears a steam tractor or thresher sits outside the entrance to the shop. Photo courtesy of Lake City Historical Society.



A 1908 Lake City view shows the main street of town near right center with a ferry or some other craft landed alongside the city's lakefront pier. Gillett & Eaton's foundry and plant are prominent near the center of the photo. Two very elegant gasoline launches with awnings for cruising the lake also appear on the shoreline at left and center. Photo from Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - LaCrosse.

Between 1860 and 1870, the city's population tripled to over 2,500, and provided a good market for cast iron products. The huge inventory manufactured by the shop included turbine water wheels for mills, 20-hp stationary engines, Doughty's Patent Steam heaters, an upright drill for use in the foundry and shop, cake dishes, kettles, columns for building fronts, caps and lids for windows, castings for keystones



Harrison Had Gillett (March 23, 1824 - Sept. 30, 1897). By age 12 he had an avid interest in steam machinery and was operating a steam-powered engine in Syracuse, NY. Two years later he became apprenticed at a machine shop to learn the art of constructing steam machinery. He wed Mary Bayard in 1846 and together they raised a family of eight children, two of whom were associated with him in the foundry and machine shop. Photo from Lake City Historical Society.



Robert Eaton (1872 - 1943) began working at Gillett Iron Works at age twenty. In 1901, he bought James Gillett's interest in the business, which became known as Gillett and Eaton. With patents for a slide valve engine in 1902 and a simplified independent inside valve drive in 1910, they made their mark as engine builders. Lake City Historical Society photo.



in arches, iron frames for sofas, schoolhouse seats and desks, the first cooking stoves manufactured in the state of Minnesota, castings for the Winnebago Broadcast Seeder and Cultivator, land rollers, iron fence, sled runners, and farm steam engines. Lake City was home to several flour mills at this time, and in 1872 the foundry cast a balance wheel 35 feet in circumference and tipping the scales at 4,500 pounds for use in one of the local mills.

With wheat a major crop in the first decades after Lake City was settled, Gillett owned and operated several steam thresher rigs in the area, and also invented the first straw burner for steam engines. By 1870, when 1,300,000 bushels of wheat were shipped by steamboat from Lake City, H. Gillett and Sons, as the company was then known, was kept very busy repairing steam threshers in farm fields and steamboat engines on the river.

Upon Harrison Gillett's death in 1897, company ownership passed to sons Asa and James. Under Asa's management the firm was renamed Gillett Iron Works. It was at this juncture that the business began production of steamboat engines. Employee Robert Eaton, who began working there in 1892, eventually bought out James' interest in the business in 1901, and once again the company took on a new name as Gillett and Eaton. They soon developed their own designs for both slide valve and poppet valve steamboat engines. On February 25, 1902, Asa and James Gillett received a patent for a new variable cutoff design; and on November 22, 1910, Robert Eaton secured a patent for an independent inside valve drive, which gained rather wide acceptance, as it was heralded as an economical and simplified improvement to the customary valve gear operated

by exterior cams and eccentrics on the paddlewheel shaft. The accompanying ad in an October 1909 issue of *The Waterways Journal* touted the invention as "Good News" and "Simplicity Itself." The government dredge H. S. TABER, built in 1914, was fitted with these engines, and the June 1915 *International Marine Engineering* observed: "This drive is taken from the pitman and thereby does away with the old style outside

Gillett's Balance Valve Variable Cut-Off Steamboat Engines

GOOD NEWS

WE ARE BUILDING } WHAT WE HAVE ALL WANTED FOR YEARS

Independent Inside Valve

PATENT Drive APPLIED FOR

NO CONNECTION WITH THE WHEEL SHAFT WHATEVER

SIMPLICITY ITSELF

Built especially for our own engines, but can be applied to all kinds of Lever Engines.

RECENT UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL

says: "One hundred boxes of coal runs boat seven days with our 10x48 inch engines. Old engines were 8x40 inches, and with same boiler, one hundred boxes of coal would not run three days."

Write for long list of splendid testimonials and other information.

GILLETT & EATON, LAKE CITY, MINN.

"OUR OWN" STEAMBOAT PATTERN AUTOMATIC CYLINDER COCKS

BOTH VALVES OPEN WHEN ENGINES ARE AT REST. NO MORE BLOWING—SAVE COST IN LESS THAN SEASON. WRITE FOR PRICES AND INFORMATION.

cam fitted to the shaft, with its necessary cam rods and brackets.”

The first decade of the 1900s saw the company’s engines powering steamboats on rivers from Pennsylvania to Washington and from Louisiana to Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, company records on the placement of these earliest engines are no longer available. However, an extensive check in *Way’s Packet* and *Towboat Directories* provides a partial listing of at least twelve Western Rivers vessels which had Gillett & Eaton engines, in addition to those on CITY OF BATON ROUGE and her cohort LOUISIANA. These dozen boats are profiled beginning on page 10.

In 1908, another partner was added to the firm when Warren Squire acquired an interest, and for a few years the business was known as Gillett, Eaton & Squire. In 1917 the company filed incorporation papers, and two years later the plant was moved from its original location to Neal and John’s Wagon Factory on North 8th Street in order to gain direct access to the railroad for shipment of its products.

This noted engine builder served the steamboat industry for 66 years, from the opening of Harrison Gillett’s foundry and shop in 1868, until the last steamboat engine part was manufactured in 1934. By that time, steam engines had been replaced on the river by Diesel, and the company had moved on to the piston business. During the years that Gillett and Eaton were recognized as steamboat engine builders, their foundry continued to produce gray iron castings for other contracts, and it was through these sales that the company gained entrance to the piston business. In 1923, a contract was signed with Arrow Head Steel Products of Minneapolis to supply all of its iron piston castings. Since that time, the Lake City plant specialized in this production.

Robert Eaton died in 1943, and shortly after Henry and Herman White of Eau Claire, WI bought a controlling interest in the company. After the War, Gillett and Eaton installed its first aluminum-melting furnace, and the manufacture of aluminum pistons is now an important facet of the plant’s business. In September 1958, all of the stock of Gillett and Eaton, Inc. was purchased by Gould-National Batteries, Inc. and four years later the

old corporation was dissolved when Gould Engine Parts Division was established. By 1990, T&N plc of the United Kingdom had acquired the plant, and Harrison Gillett’s pioneer machine shop and foundry had evolved into its 123rd year of operation as AE Piston Products Heavy Duty. ⓘ

Bidding Wars

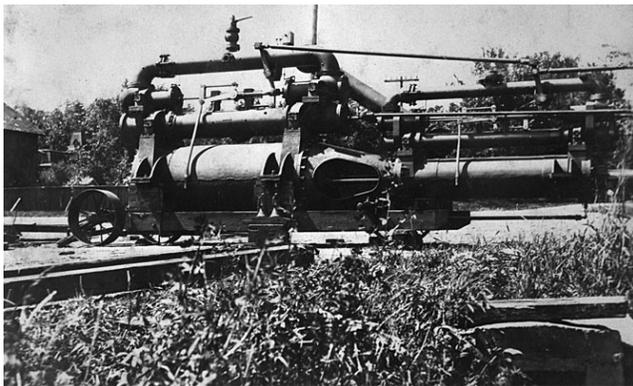
During its heyday, Gillett, Eaton and Squire were among the frequent bidders on contracts to provide steamboat engines for a variety of services. Two of those occasions are documented in the government-issued report of the 65th Congress, 2nd Session 1917-1918: Material and Labor for the Engineers Department 1917.

The first was a bid for constructing a pair of tandem compound engines without condensers for a steam sternwheel towboat for the Army Engineers and was opened on August 16, 1916. The Lake City firm’s price was \$13,510, with delivery in 120 days. Marietta Manufacturing also bid on these engines with a price of \$15,500, to be delivered in 150 days. An alternate bid was sought for a pair of non-condensing 1,200-horsepower engines. Although Marietta Mfg. did not submit a bid on this project, G E & S’s \$9,995 offer was accepted.

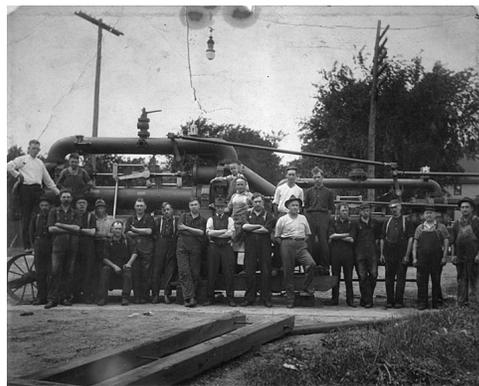
The other bid, opened on June 8, 1917 was for a pair of tandem compound condensing engines, 18’s, 48’s - 5 foot stroke for a USE steam towboat. Four companies bid this project: Gillett Eaton & Squire, Marietta Mfg. in Pt. Pleasant, Nordberg Mfg. in Milwaukee, and Schoellhorn-Albrecht Mfg. in St. Louis. Once again the contract was awarded to the Lake City firm on their bid of \$14,875 with delivery in 180 days. It is likely that these engines were placed aboard the Engineer towboat NOKOMIS to replace her original Iowa Iron Works engines installed at Dubuque in 1899 (top of next page).

Pictured here is the typical paddle wheel assembly for a sternwheel boat, showing cams attached to the shaft for operating the valve gear. Murphy Library photo.

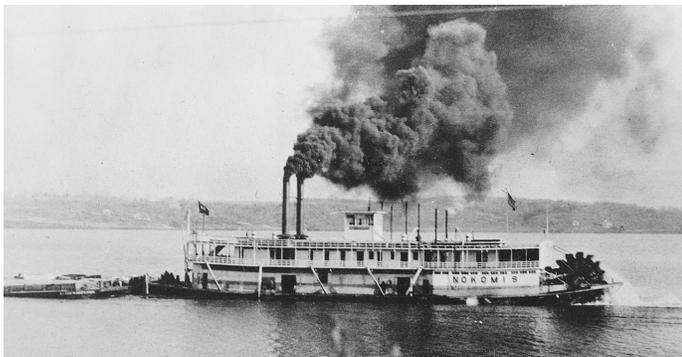




Gillett & Eaton large tandem compound engine photographed outside shop in 1915. These probably went to NOKOMIS. Capt. Way says they were 18's, 40's - 7 ft., but bid specs describe 18's, 48's - 5 ft. stroke weighing 63,000 lbs. Both photos from Murphy Library.



Western Rivers Steamboats with Gillett, Eaton & Squire Engines



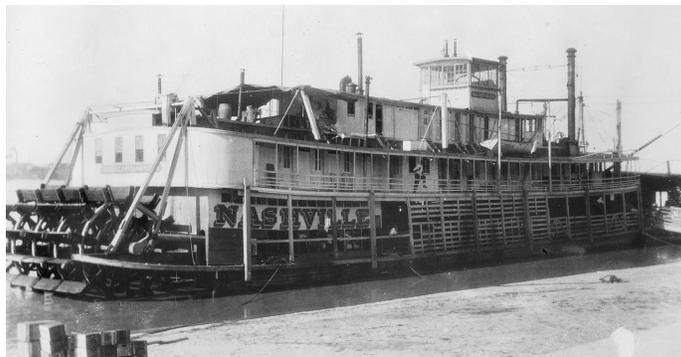
NOKOMIS (T1927), built 1899 by Iowa Iron Works for Mississippi River Commission with Dubuque-built engines 22's - 8 ft., received G&E replacements in 1917 as shown at top.



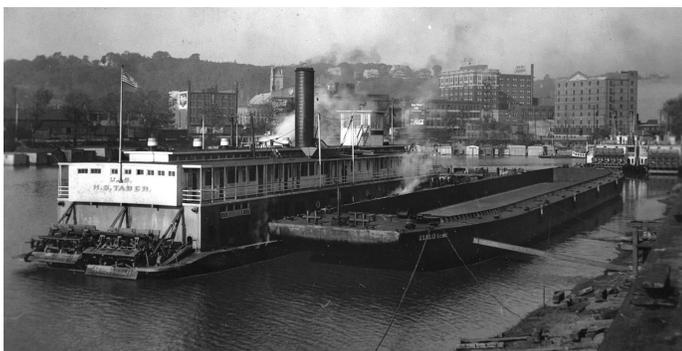
MERMAID (T1799), built 1903 at Guyandotte, WV for towing on Monongahela. Her original engines from FRED STONE were later replaced with G&E 9's - 3'8" stroke.



J. H. MENGE (2844) was a 1910 Howard-built cotton packet with G&E compound engines 13's, 26's - 8 ft. stroke. A brief bio of J. H. Menge appears in the March 2014 REFLECTOR.



NASHVILLE (4100) was another 1910 Howard sternwheeler built for Evansville-Nashville trade. She carried G&E 11's, 22's - 5 ft. stroke.



H.S. TABER was a USE dredge built 1914 by Dubuque Boat & Boiler Co. with staggered bucket planks and G&E engines 24's - 4 ft. stroke. This is the site of today's River Museum.



ROBERT MCGREGOR was the sister boat to TABER, same size, engines, also built in 1914. All photos on this and the next page are courtesy of Murphy Library, U. W. - La Crosse.



BEDER WOOD (To216) was another 1915 Dubuque-built boat with G&E engines 10's - 5 ft. stroke. She is pictured here doing construction work of Upper Mississippi locks and dams in the 30s. Timber on these islands was hand cut with cross cut saws before the pools were raised, leaving a forest of stumps.



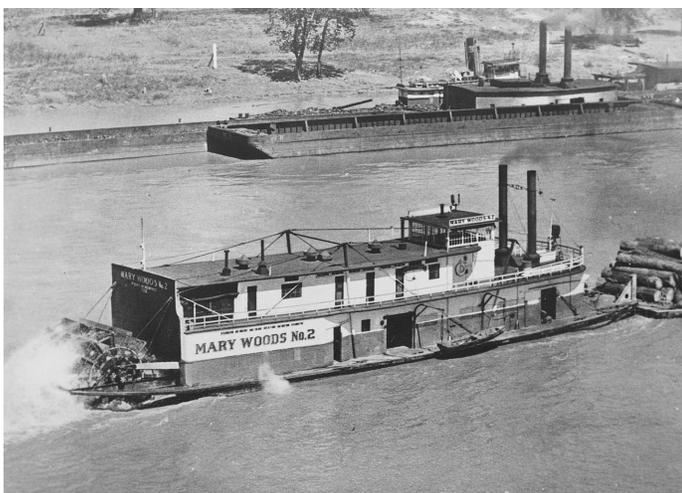
COMANCHE (To478), a USE towboat for the Illinois River was also built by DBBCo in 1915 and carried 340-hp G&E engines, although their dimensions are not given in Way's Steam Towboat Directory. Her pitman appears to be constructed with a steel lattice design.



JOHN HECKMANN (3072) was a Missouri River packet built 1919 at Hermann, MO for Heckmann family, sporting two wheels operated by four G&E engines, somewhat a rarity.



AQUILA (To147), built at Wabasha, MN in 1928 for contract towing on the Upper with G&E 10's - 6 ft. stroke. Sold in 1946 to Molo Sand & Gravel at Dubuque. When retired in 1951, her pilotwheel and pilot house resided in Dick Bissell's yard as a gazebo. It is now on display at the Mississippi River Museum.



The last steamboat engines built by G&E were placed on **MARY WOODS NO.2 (T1764)** in 1931 at Memphis, 12 3/8's - 6 ft. stroke. They were replaced in 1949 with Diesels.



USE inspection boat **MISSISSIPPI's** engines were built by G&E in 1924 and were placed aboard at Paducah in 1927 after the hull was completed by Howards. They were 15's, 32's - 7 ft. stroke. A replacement cylinder was manufactured in 1934, the last steam engine replacement part the company ever produced.

Capt. Pink Varble and the Falls of the Ohio (Part 2)

by Leland R. Johnson

CHAPTER 3: PINK'S PRACTICE

Captain Pink explored the Falls down and up as Eli's apprentice, and as captain of the ADELAIDE he learned them back and forth, back and forth. Ferrying the Ohio proved dull travel for the young steamboat pilot. Each dawn he boarded the ferry at the Louisville wharf, sounded the steam whistle, pulled the cord signaling the engineer below, and steered the steamboat a short distance upstream toward Towhead Island—to compensate for the current pushing the ferry downstream as it crossed the river. Tugging the pilotwheel spokes, he turned the boat toward Indiana and in a few minutes completed the voyage of less than a mile, blowing the whistle again when landing at Jeffersonville. Passengers walked or drove their wagons off the boat, clattering down the ramp into Hoosierdom, and Captain Pink descended stairs to the lower deck to welcome more passengers and collect fares. With a fresh crowd aboard, he climbed back to the pilothouse, piloting the ferry to Louisville, then back to Indiana every hour or so. Only when he saw the sun dropping like a golden tear and the Falls shading from green to purple and silver to black, did his steady sawing motion cease, as he tied off the ferry at its dock and walked alone in the dark to his room at Eli's house.

So went the ferrying, uneventfully for months, with Pink standing at the pilotwheel gazing forlornly at the Falls rumbling below. Eli and Jesse Vansickle, Enoch Lockhart, Jake Funk, Dave Dryden, and their fellow pilots constantly came and went, up and down the Falls, but Pink was stuck aboard the ferry. He went down the Falls in his ferry just once, when the steamer EMPIRE, coming up from New Orleans, attempted to ascend Indian Chute and failed. The steamboat rammed a rock in the chute and went down in mark twain water. From the Jeffersonville dock, Pink saw the EMPIRE in trouble, let go the lines, signaled his

engineer for full steam, and turned the ferry down the chute. Skillfully, Pink evaded Backbone Ridge and Rubel's Rock and came up alongside the stricken EMPIRE, holding the ferry in position for its crew and passengers to scramble onto its deck. When all aboard the sinking boat gained safety, Pink steered hard right around Wave Rock and Willow Point, then down through Big Eddy and to Shippingport below the Falls, setting the passengers safely ashore.

The wrecked EMPIRE soon went all to pieces on the rocks, spilling its cargo into the whitewater. Barrels of mackerel, raisins, wine, coffee, sugar, molasses, lemons and oranges washed out of the wreck, bobbed up, and spun off down the Falls to Shippingport and below, where scavengers in skiffs reaped a fruitful harvest pulling the barrels to shore. Crashing waves tore pieces off the wreck and sent them south, all the way to New Orleans if they remained afloat. Although the EMPIRE's owner suffered catastrophic losses, Captain Pink had gotten everyone off the wreck and not a life was lost.

This rescue brought Pink accolades, but not a Falls pilot license. He remained at ADELAIDE's helm although Eli's ferry business did not prosper. Too many ferries were running between Louisville and Jeffersonville, and keen competition for passengers reduced fares. Eli therefore shifted his ferry below the Falls, placing Pink and ADELAIDE in the short run between Portland and New Albany. Other than changing scenery, the move did little to relieve Pink's boredom, nor much improve Eli's profits, and after eighteen months Eli closed his ferry business. As Pink later recalled, the competition "broke" them, as also it did Captain Dave Dryden's ferry.

ADELAIDE, built as a ferry, was too small for long-distance trades, say from Louisville to New Orleans, so Captain Eli put it and Pink into the



Although no photos of Eli Vansickle's ferryboat ADELAIDE exist, this view of QUEEN CITY NO. 2 (4616), built in 1856 for service between Cincinnati and Newport, KY, is most likely typical of the ferries operating in the Louisville area.



Another example of a ferry is FRANK McHARRY (2128), built in 1867 for New Albany and Portland Ferry Company. These boats were about 150 tons with hulls 125 x 35 x 4. Both photos by Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

Salt River trade, running from Louisville twenty miles down the Ohio to West Point, KY, then up Salt River twelve miles to Pitts Point. A narrow stream, the Salt generally could float steamboats as far upstream as Pitts Point where its Rolling Fork tributary entered and swelled the stream's flow. Indeed, a steamboat bound for Louisville with presidential candidate Henry Clay aboard had once turned up Salt River by mistake and become entangled in snags, causing Clay to miss an election rally and birthing the mocking phrase that Clay was "up Salt Creek without a paddle."

Captain Pink regularly piloted the ADELAIDE from Louisville to Pitts Point, bringing out pig iron, hoop poles, and produce of the Salt River valley. When his steamboat loaded, he took it down the Salt and up to Louisville through the canal or through Kentucky Chute on the Falls. Off-loading cargo to merchant mills that bought it, Pink returned to Pitts Point for the next cargo. Pink recognized he might obtain more profitable trade if he could steam the boat another fifteen miles upriver to the Falls of the Salt at Shepherdsville, but so many snags blocked the channel above Pitts Point that no steamboat could reach Shepherdsville.

After a few months up Salt Creek, Pink looked for other opportunities. One came through his older brother John, who piloted coalboats from Louisville to Vicksburg and New Orleans. John Varble was employed by coal baron J. H. Mulford, who wished to open a coal yard at Vicksburg, MS. Mulford

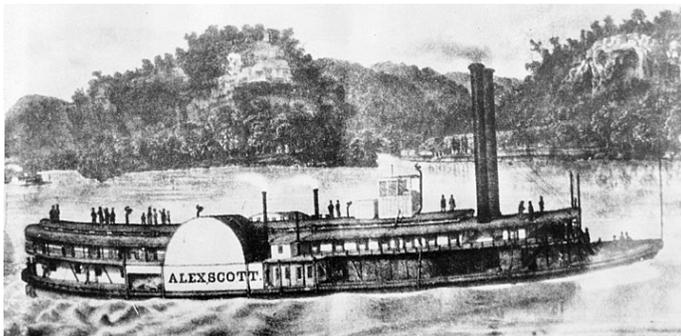
expected to boat Pittsburgh coal down the rivers to Vicksburg, land coalboats at his new dock and unload them into a storage yard for sale to steam mills in Vicksburg and cotton gins in Mississippi. Learning Captain Pink had managed Eli's coal dock operations at Louisville, Mulford made Pink a princely offer to build his Vicksburg coal dock, open the storage yard, and organize coal yard operations. Pink accepted the offer, and sadly bid goodbye to his friend Eli Vansickle and Louisville. He traveled downriver with his brother to Vicksburg in early autumn of 1851.

Pink busied himself that autumn grading a wharf at the river and building a floating dock for unloading coal boats. In evenings he lodged uphill from the river near Vicksburg's business district, dining in eateries frequented by rivermen, and he made acquaintance of the Littrell family. Captain Nelson and Elizabeth Littrell were parents of Frank, John, and Fred. Nelson and his three sons were steamboat captains and pilots, and Frank, the oldest son, piloted grand steamboats owned by Captain Thomas Leathers. That they hailed from Ghent, KY, a short distance from Pink's family home at Westport, quickly helped them cement their friendship, with Pink often spending most evenings at their Vicksburg home. Talk of the river and dinner were not the only attractions for Pink, because the brothers had a younger sister named Mary Frances. By the end of that winter, he and Mary Frances had become a couple inseparable, strolling the Walnut Hills among the magnolias.

When winter broke and spring came to Vicksburg, however, the Littrells returned north to Ghent, taking Mary with them and leaving Frank to his work for Captain Leathers. As the Littrells boarded the ECLIPSE northbound, Pink knew what he had to do. Mulford's dock was completed, Pink had hired and trained workers to unload the coalboats, so he wrapped up the project quickly and on April 16 boarded the ALEX SCOTT for Louisville in pursuit of Mary Frances.

At the Falls City Pink visited his brother Billy and Captain Eli. Eli asked him to resume command of the ADELAIDE running to Salt River. Eli had promises of fair profits, provided he would take Louisville's elite on river voyages to Paroquet Springs, a fabulous mineral-water spa at Shepherdsville owned by partners John Colmesnil of Shippingport and James Guthrie, Secretary of Treasury for President Franklin Pierce. When Pink warned that Salt River from Pitts Point up to Shepherdsville was blocked by snags, Eli agreed to hire laborers to clear the channel for passage. Pink then accepted Eli's offer, provided trips would not begin until he completed an urgent upriver mission.

Captain Pink boarded a Cincinnati-bound steamboat and set out for Ghent and a joyous welcome from Mary Frances. He immediately proposed marriage, and on the bank of the Ohio beneath the pink that April wears, the couple became one on April 28th. Pink stood manfully at the altar as he swore eternal fidelity, a vow he never forgot throughout the remainder of his life.

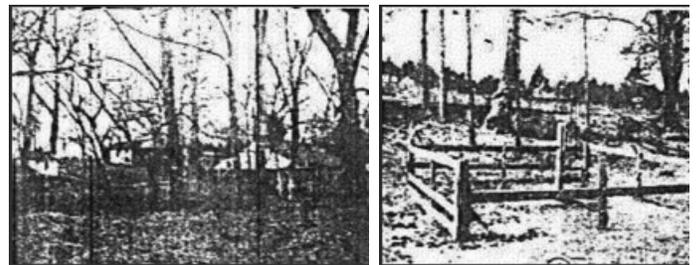


Capt. Nelson Litrell's family, including his daughter Mary Frances, departed Vicksburg in spring 1852 for their home in Ghent, KY. Within days, Pink hastened home in pursuit of Mary on ALEX. SCOTT (0125). The SCOTT, pictured here in a lithograph, was 266 x 34 x 8. She was also known as ALECK SCOTT. Murphy Library, U.W. - La Crosse photo.

The couple's honeymoon was brief, consisting of a palatial trip by steamboat back to Louisville. At their arrival in Louisville they found newspapers bruited the glorious excursion up Salt River to Shepherdsville planned for the first of May. "The ADELAIDE will be the first steamboat that has ever gone up Salt River as far as Shepherdsville," read a news bulletin. "That stream now is in fine navigable condition. The owners of the ADELAIDE deserve credit for the removal of some of the obstructions which have encumbered the navigation of that stream."

Captain Pink settled in a home on a street back of the Point, then took his bride with him aboard the ADELAIDE bound for Shepherdsville. He left the wheel in the hands of pilot Bill Meeks while introducing Mary Frances to the gala excursion party bound for Paroquet Springs. They met Louisville's best families along with its political leaders. Since John Colmesnil had opened Paroquet Springs resort in 1838, it had become customary for Louisville's wealthy to while away summers in cool shade at the springs. Secretary of Treasury James Guthrie had built his summer mansion at Paroquet, and he planned to build his Louisville and Nashville Railroad straight through the resort on its route south to Tennessee.

A. L. Shotwell, who dominated Louisville politics as City Council leader and Chamber of Commerce president, rode aboard the ADELAIDE on her maiden voyage to Paroquet Springs, and Pink during the trip up Salt River discussed with him the



These two 1909 views of Paroquet Springs spa and resort in Shepherdsville, KY on Salt River show (on left) cabins at the fishing camp with kitchen and dining room facilities, and (on right) the mineral water well for which the resort was famous. Capt. Pink piloted ADELAIDE with guests on the first steamboat excursion to the site in 1852. Photos courtesy of Bullitt County Genealogical Society's website at www.bullittcountyhistory.org

grand steamboat A. L. SHOTWELL building at New Albany, named in the politician's honor. At 310 feet long with six boilers, the SHOTWELL was designed to be fast and it was, soon setting a new record for the run from New Orleans to Louisville.

Captain Pink achieved two goals during his May 1852 trip up Salt Creek. Taking the wheel at Pitts Point, Pink deftly maneuvered the ADELAIDE around bends through the narrow channel, dodging rocks and tree stumps to reach Shepherdsville, safely delivering Louisville's elite to the mineral springs. From A. L. Shotwell, Pink also obtained a promise of influential support in the City Council if he quickly presented his name as candidate for election as Falls pilot.

Pink and Mary Frances returned to Louisville rejoicing in their trip, marriage, and opportunities. Pink resumed his command aboard the ADELAIDE, putting her in the Ohio River trade to Owensboro and exploring a Falls piloting career when in Louisville. He soon learned, however, the City Council only elected Falls pilots every five years—and by the next election Shotwell might well have forgotten his promise of support. Pink, however, conceived of a plan to press ahead while the goose was red hot. He searched out his friend Jake Funk, the oldest Falls pilot. Born in Virginia in 1795, Jake had moved to Kentucky when Louisville was but a village and had become a Falls pilot. He used his piloting profits to buy a farm near Westport and, at age sixty, seemed eager to retire to his farm. Visiting Jake, Pink explained how both might obtain their fondest wishes. Pink offered Jake \$500 to retire early and let him finish out Jake's five-year term. Jake thereby could become a gentleman farmer and Pink could become a Falls pilot. Jake accepted Pink's offer in September 1852, retiring to Westport, while Pink left Eli's service on the ADELAIDE and at age twenty-four launched his forty-year career as Louisville's foremost Falls pilot.

As a Falls pilot in 1852, Captain Pink continued steering flatboats and coalboats through the chutes, but his steamboat pilot's license and experience brought him growing business from steamers wishing to cross the Falls. Soon he was taking many boats each year over the Falls, and to meet demands for his services he hired oarsmen to help handle



A fleet of coalboats wait near Pittsburgh to be loaded and then floated downstream during high water, on the so-called "coalboat rise." At the Falls, Pink steered these boats through the chutes, and in subsequent years he skillfully piloted large packets and barge tows over the Falls as well. Photo from Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

the flatboats and coalboats. When his brother Billy also obtained a steamboat license, Pink employed him as assistant at the wheel of larger steamers. And he rented office space near the wharf to house his workers and equipment, a central place where rivermen needing pilots could always find him.

The Varble brothers found themselves on the cusp of the river's technological changes that made the 1850s the Golden Age of steamboating. While early steamboats had but a single engine and boiler, by the 1850s most had two engines powered by up to six boilers. These could move steamboats of the 1850s, more than three hundred feet long with three or more decks, dozens of staterooms and elaborate cabins, soon becoming known as floating palaces. Louisville became home port of the steamers ECLIPSE, A. L. SHOTWELL, DIANA, CRYSTAL PALACE, FASHION, and other floating divines racing from Louisville to New Orleans or St. Louis and back. In 1853, for example, Captain Pink and all Louisvillians closely followed news reports of the ECLIPSE and SHOTWELL racing from New Orleans to Louisville, and rejoiced when the SHOTWELL won the horns by two minutes, setting a lightning record never surpassed.

Captains Pink and Billy Varble seldom conducted these stylish vessels over the Falls

because, being too large to enter the Louisville and Portland Canal and too expensive to risk loss on the Falls, they landed below at Portland. This brought business to Louisville's draymen who hauled cargo from the floating palaces at Portland to smaller steamers at Louisville's wharf, or from the upper river boats to the Portland palaces. Most cargo then went around the Falls in drays, two-wheel carts pulled by two horses in tandem—pulling one behind another rather than side-by-side. Fast and maneuverable, the drays had plank floors hanging behind like rooster-tails, which could be raised or lowered to ease loading. Racing back and forth between Portland and Louisville, the fastest draymen earning the most business sought to organize their craft.

While draymen prospered moving cargoes around the Falls, Captain Pink and the Falls pilots seldom profited from the larger boats. When the great steamers were constructed above the Falls at the Howard or Barmore Shipyards in Jeffersonville or farther upriver near Cincinnati or Pittsburgh, Captain Pink steered their hulls down the Falls to Portland or New Albany where engines were installed and cabins elegantly finished. But often Pink never saw these big boats again; they remained below the Falls except during very high water.

The more powerful steam engines of the 1850s did bring Pink and the pilots added upbound business.

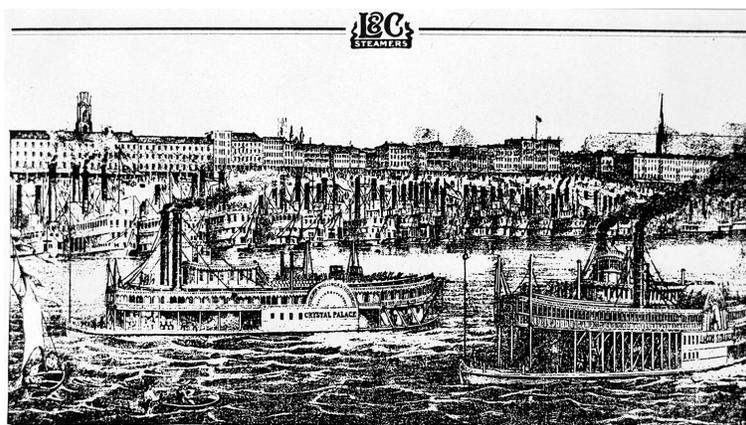
Like keelboats before them, early steamboats clung to the Kentucky shore when ascending. The currents were not so swift through Kentucky Chute or Middle Chute as through Indian Chute, where the river sweeping around the outside bend had immense force. No steamers broached Indian Chute currents without the pulling help of capstans and cables anchored to rocks. Although the

Indian was deeper than the Middle or Kentucky Chutes, and thus could pass larger boats, the delays and risks of pulling up the Indian made the chute nearly unusable for upbound boats. In 1852 the SPARHAWK and the GEORGETOWN with two engines and boilers became the first to break through Indian Chute's currents. Captain Dave Dryden handled the wheel on many of these first upbound boats to brave Indian Chute, but his reputation as Falls pilot suffered a setback in 1854's JAMES M. NILES disaster.

The NILES drew nine inches more water than Captain Dave Dryden knew, and when he attempted to pass Rubel's Rock in Indian Chute, the rock's sharp edges ripped out the steamboat's bottom. Rapid currents swept the careening boat downriver, and Dave tried to ground it on Goose Island before it went down in the Big Eddy, but the cascades proved too violent. The steamer rolled onto her side, the chimneys collapsed, her cabin floated off, and her boilers splashed overboard. As good luck had it, the steamer FRANKLIN PIERCE was awaiting passage of the NILES before ascending Indian Chute, and her captain saw the accident. The PIERCE put on all available steam, plowed up through the cascades to the wreck, and took off passengers and crew just before the NILES sank. This debacle became known throughout the Mississippi Valley to steamboat captains who soon transferred their trade from Captain Dave and Indiana pilots to the Kentucky

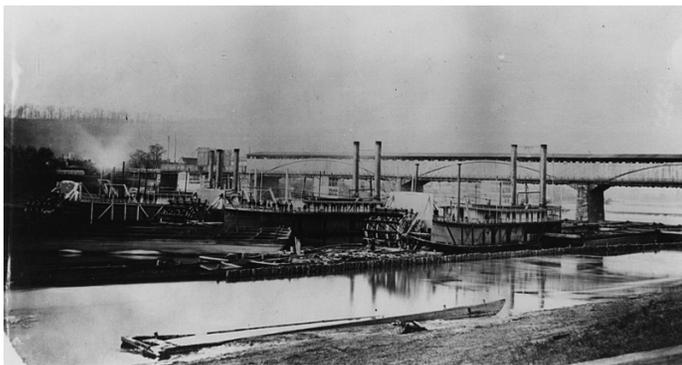
pilots, most notably to Captain Pink.

As Captain Dave's stellar reputation imploded, Captain Pink's brightened with each rescue he undertook on the Falls. In the freezing cold of January 1855, a ferry packed with 300 passengers and their baggage making the crossing to catch the morning train at Jeffersonville, departed from Louisville's wharf. Running ice



PUBLIC LANDING WAS A BUSY LITTLE PLACE IN 1850
This might be a picture of what the public landing at Cincinnati is expected to look like when all the dams from Pittsburgh to Cairo are completed. But in reality it is a picture of the landing in 1850. This likeness of a busy scene on the levee is in the annual report of the Chamber of Commerce for 1850. In that year the population of Cincinnati was a little over 100,000.

Shown in this lithograph from an L&C Line advertisement of the 1920s is a drawing of the packet CRYSTAL PALACE (1379), built in 1853. Capt. Pink seldom took boats like this over the Falls or through the Canal as they were too large and too expensive to take the risk. Image from Murphy Library, Univ. of Wisc. - La Crosse.



Towboats used for shepherding their fleet of coalboats are pictured in these two photos of COAL HILL (T0458), built in 1856 (shown above) and WILLIAM H. BROWN (T2664) built in 1860 (below). Assisting these boats and their barges over the Falls provided regular and profitable business for Capt. Pink and his colleagues. Both photos from Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.



floes slammed into the ferry, turned it downriver and forced it into Indian Chute, where it lodged against Wave Rock two hundred yards from the Indiana bank. Floating ice piling against the upstream side of the ferry climbed until it towered over the deck and threatened to overturn it and spill passengers into the river. Seeing this, men set out in small skiffs to rescue passengers, but few could get through the ice to the ferry and each could take off only two or three panic-stricken passengers. If not removed before the ferry capsized, icy death awaited them.

Seeing this calamity, Captain Pink rushed his oarsmen aboard a handy barge and embarked through the ice. Fighting across the river, they entered Indian Chute and Pink navigated the

barge around deadly ice floes down the chute, deftly bringing the barge alongside the ferry. Ferry passengers scrambled over cakes of ice onto the barge, and Pink cast away into the swift cascades, threading the barge between ice and rocks, through Big Eddy and safely ashore at Shippingport, where grateful passengers disembarked with a cheer. Pink then raced back over Shippingport Turnpike to Louisville and commandeered another barge. Repeating his hazardous journey, he saved the ferry's crew together with passengers' baggage and horses, again floating this precious cargo down the pass to Shippingport. Expressing people's gratitude, the City of Louisville later honored Captain Pink with a \$250 gift to pay his oarsmen for their risky rescue labor. This ferry's salvation confirmed Pink's growing reputation as best of his craft.

Ice again challenged Pink at the end of 1855 when the river froze at Christmas. Passage blocked by the frozen stream, steamboats carrying mail to Louisville stopped running and the city began to suffer from lack of coal for heating. Coalboats at the wharf were empty and no reserve coal was stored except in coalboats at Pumpkin Patch over on the Indiana shore. Fearing suffering from lack of heat, the city's leaders turned to Captain Pink for help in getting fuel. Pink called his friends and recruited workers to cut open a passage through the ice. Working with axes and hand tools, Pink's party pried apart the ice to create a channel from Pumpkin Patch entirely across the river to Louisville's landing, then they pushed ten loaded coalboats through the gap. This emergency coal refueled the city's stoves and delivered Louisvillians from freezing until weather warmed in February.

By then rivermen and shippers were developing a towboating scheme to move entire fleets of coalboats cabled together as single unit "tows" to markets. Towboating began at Pittsburgh in the 1840s when steamboats pushed two or four coalboats linked together to Cincinnati, and by 1851 Captain Pink saw the first towboats reaching Louisville: the BEAUTY and the VENTURE. He steered the VENTURE over the Falls in the 1851 high water, towing coal barges from Pittsburgh to St. Louis breweries. The BEAUTY, which steamboat fanciers dubbed the ugliest steamboat ever built, in July 1851 came to Louisville towing barges bearing a railroad

locomotive made for the Louisville to Frankfort railroad then abuilding. Louisvillians watched as six yoke of oxen were hitched to the locomotive, dragged it off the barge, and inched the twenty-ton iron monster to its rails at the new depot.

Arrival of a railroad at Louisville augmented the market for coal, needed to fire locomotive boilers; and towboats pushing coalboats to the Falls cities soon appeared. Captain Pink witnessed the SEA GULL arriving from Pittsburgh in late 1852 with eight coalboats in its tow containing 60,000 bushels of coal. He watched construction of the first towboat built at Louisville, named the JAMES GUTHRIE for Kentucky's richest man and Secretary of Treasury. Launched at King Shipyard near Pink's office on Louisville's Point in 1853, the GUTHRIE was owned by Louisville coal dealers and it towed coalboats from Pittsburgh to Louisville on a regular schedule.

In addition to witnessing the first towboats and railroads arriving at the Falls City, Pink also saw, and indeed invested in, the entry of electric telegraph poles and lines into town. Morse telegraph first reached Jeffersonville in 1847, then crossed the river into Kentucky on wire strung from a high pole on the Indiana bank to another on Towhead Island and on to the Kentucky bank. This wire sagged low, however, and the sailing brig M. H. GILMORE, loaded with whiskey bound for Boston, MA, broke the wire with its topmast in 1848, leaving Louisville without telegraph communications for days. After passing boats snagged and broke wires over the river several times, the telegraph company wrapped wires in rubber and laid them on the river bottom out of harm's way.

News of successful Falls passages was hand carried originally on foot from Portland back to Louisville, but in 1856 two pioneer telegraphers, N. M. Booth and James Leonard, installed a telegraph line from Portland to Captain Pink's office on the Louisville wharf. James Leonard had learned telegraphy at his Frankfort, KY home, becoming the first operator to translate messages by sound—listening to tapping telegraph keys and writing messages as received. Using this method, Leonard deciphered fifty-five words a minute in a demonstration for Professor Samuel Morse, the

telegraph inventor. Leonard was in Pink's office on November 26, 1858, when Booth in Portland put the first message on the wire, and Leonard wrote it as it came in: "STEAMERMEDIATORJUSTPASSED GOING TO LOUISVILLE. RED WING LYING AT THE WHARF WITH STEAM UP. RIVER STATIONARY. OPERATOR, PORTLAND, KENTUCKY."

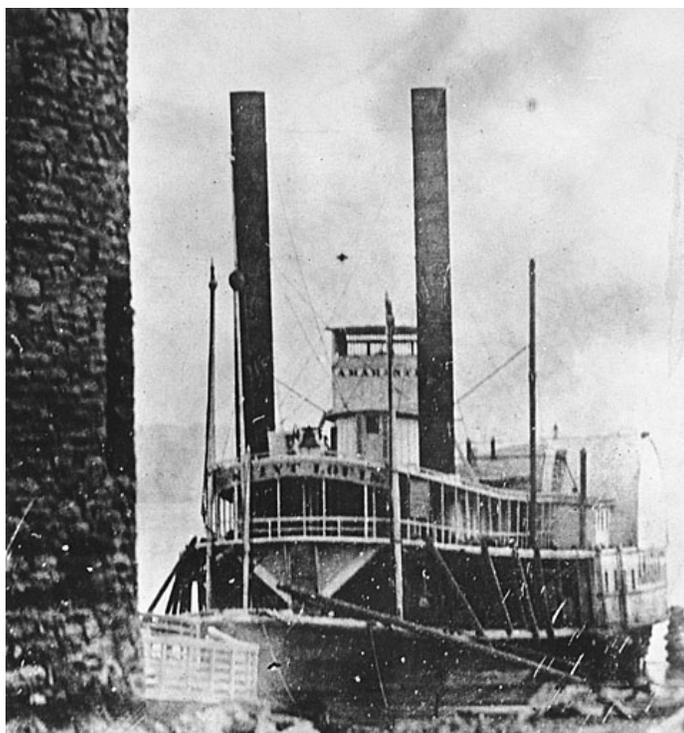
With the telegraph now in service, when Pink landed at Portland he could transmit news of safe passage to the boat's anxious owner at Louisville. Or if an upbound boat landed at Portland, it might transmit to Pink's office, requesting him to come steer the boat up the Falls. Captain Pink found telegraph so useful he invested in a company Booth established to extend telegraph lines along the Ohio to Evansville, Paducah, and Cairo. This line paralleling the river allowed boat captains to communicate with cargo owners at Louisville, Cincinnati, Wheeling, and Pittsburgh. And it allowed Pink to monitor locations of boats on the river, estimating when they might reach the Falls and need his services.

Telegraph, towboat, and related technical advances did not immediately kill coalboats, and Louisville still bustled when Pittsburgh coalboats arrived. Pittsburgh crews wandered into O'Neil's Alley for refreshment, while Louisville crews boarded the coalboats, going over the Falls two by two with Captain Pink or another pilot standing watch. After the fleet departed, Louisville's wharf was quiet for few weeks until steamboats bought the crews back from the South. Once the packet ECLIPSE from New Orleans landed at Louisville to disgorge 700 passengers, and a reporter knew they were returning coalboatmen because "every third man of them had an ornamental eye." By this he meant that coalboatmen often had a glass eye replacing one gouged out in a brawl.

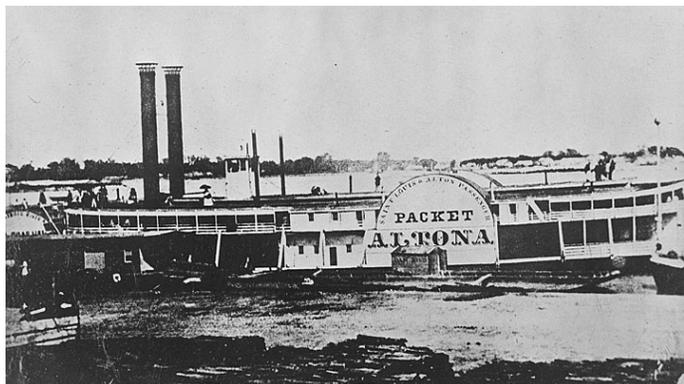
Meeting a crowd of coalboatmen, Captain Pink learned the sad news that his brother John would not return. John's coalboat went down in a storm on the Mississippi River and all the crew were lost. Pink's grief at this loss was assuaged only by the arrival of his younger brother Richard from Westport, where he decided to abandon the cobbler's trade and join Pink and Billy at the Falls. Pink and Billy called their

youngest brother “Dick”, and so he became known to rivermen. After Pink trained Dick as boatman, the three brothers formed an incomparable trio of Varble Falls pilots.

Captain Pink during the 1850s learned how important politics was in Kentucky, especially in Louisville. He found political support for his Falls pilot license and became active in politics as a result. He also witnessed the advent of railroads and telegraph at Louisville, investing in these technological advances. He also applied technology to the Falls, planning to use explosives to permanently alter their obstructions to river traffic for the benefit and profit of Falls pilots and inland river commerce.



Typical of packets from the middle of the 19th century were AMARANTH (0219), above, built 1846 for service between St. Louis and New Orleans and ALTONA (0209), below, built 1852 for St. Louis-Alton trade. Murphy Library photos.



CHAPTER 4: PINK'S PERMIT

Captain Pink's friends Enoch Lockhart and the Vansickle brothers busied themselves busting open Falls passages in 1856. Lockhart became Portland Canal superintendent in 1852 and undertook canal widening to allow larger steamboats to use it in bypassing the Falls. To counter this expansion of canal competition, Falls pilots Jesse and Eli Vansickle widened and deepened Indian Chute to make it passable for larger boats. Captain Pink later joined with his best friend Eli in further efforts to widen Indian Chute.

When Captain Enoch Lockhart became Canal superintendent, he inherited a campaign John Hulme pursued for years to expand the fifty-foot wide canal and build larger locks. Largest steamboats on the Ohio when the 1830 canal was built were 175-foot-long and 40-foot wide, making a 50-foot wide canal with 190-foot-long locks large enough. By 1852, however, steamboats were built to 75 feet wide and 350 feet long, far exceeding canal dimensions, and Lockhart saw enlarging the canal was imperative for it to remain profitable.

Hulme's canal improvement plans had wrecked on political rocks in 1842 when canal stockholders began transferring ownership to the United States. As result, no stockholders would invest in the enlargement, nor would the federal government act until it owned the entire canal. Moreover, sectional division over slavery hampered enlargement plans: Indiana wanted a new canal built on its “free” side of the Falls and opposed enlarging the canal on Kentucky's “slave” side. Lockhart managed to start the enlargement in 1856, nonetheless, largely through political influence of James Guthrie.

James Guthrie, canal charter member and its attorney, received appointment in 1853 from President Franklin Pierce as Secretary of the Treasury, the cabinet member who managed federal stock in the canal. By 1853 the United States owned all canal stock, and Secretary Guthrie appointed five former stockholders as its board of trustees. Although Guthrie ordered canal tolls slashed by half, from fifty cents to twenty-five cents per cargo ton, tolls still generated surplus, and Guthrie told Captain Lockhart to apply this surplus to enlarging

the canal as John Hulme had planned.

During 1856 Lockhart employed 800 workers in excavating the canal, deepening it a foot and widening it to sixty-four-feet. Lockhart demolished the canal's stone-arch bridge, which blocked passage of large steamboats, and replaced it with a swinging bridge pivoting aside to open the canal for tall stacks. By the end of 1856 the canal accommodated wider and taller steamboats passing through at half the former tolls. This done, Lockhart and trustees planned to build larger locks in the canal near Portland.

Recognizing this canal expansion as a threat to business, Falls pilots decided to blast and widen Indian Chute. Captain Dave Dryden of the Indiana pilots and the Vansickles of Kentucky joined forces during October 1856, employing workers to blast wider the twenty-eight-foot passage through the chute. When receding river exposed the rocks, pilots and workers waded onto the Falls, drilling holes with sledgehammers and iron stakes, packing explosives into the holes, and blowing the rocks. By the time high water returned, pilots had deepened Indian Chute a foot and widened it to forty feet. This not only opened the way for larger packets, it allowed towboats pushing two coalboats abreast to pass the Falls without paying canal tolls.

Expansion of the channel was mirrored by expansion on shore. To open room in its business district, the city of Louisville dug a new "cutoff" channel to divert the smelly Beargrass Creek into the river several blocks upstream of its natural channel, ridding downtown of the stench and allowing the city to fill the old creekbed to obtain more building space. When the city demolished buildings lining Beargrass creek, Eli moved off the Point and so did Pink. He and Mary Frances had welcomed their first child, Mamie, into their family in 1853, and their baby daughter was joined in 1855 by a son, Nelson, named for his grandfather

Captain Nelson Littrell. Their small house near the Point became too small. And they moved them into a larger home on Washington Street in Louisville's east end neighborhood where his brother John Varble's widow Eliza lived with her sons. The Varble's new abode stood two blocks from the river, so Pink installed a cupola atop its roof to watch the Falls from his home.

Pink prospered during the late 1850s as his reputation for piloting skills and personal integrity spread throughout the valley. In this Golden Age of steamboating in the 1850s, maintaining schedules for passengers boarding at Louisville bound for distant ports became important to packet boat lines; yet, their schedules depended in part on river stages at the Falls. Captains knew the draft of their boats, empty or laden, but they were never certain of depths available for crossing the Falls. To assist boats in planning departures, Captain Pink in 1857 cut horizontal notches on a stone pier near the mouth of Beargrass Creek, thereby marking the river's rise and fall and indicating the depth over the Falls. "This is a great convenience to steamboatmen and news reporters," said Louisville's newspaper, adding, "We owe you one, Captain V."

Although pilots Vansickle and Dryden in 1856 widened Indian Chute, their work had not removed all hazards from the passage. Captain Dave Dryden learned this to his regret when steering the steamboat JOHN P. TWEED down the chute and striking the rocky reef at its side called the Backbone, gashing



JOHN KILGOUR (3078) squeezes through Portland Canal ca. 1870. Engineering projects to widen the canal were countered by efforts to blast a bigger channel through the rocks of the Falls. Photo by Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.

a lengthwise hole through the boat's wooden hull. As water poured into the hold, Captain Dave clung to the pilotwheel, rang the engineer full ahead, and kept the boat surging down past Rubel's Rock, around Wave Rock, and across Big Eddy. He guided the sinking boat into shallows at Portland wharf just before she settled to the bottom, and he got all passengers to safety. Yet, another mark had been cut into his reputation.

Thinking about the loss of the TWEED and similar mishaps, Captain Pink decided Indian Chute must be widened further. He hoped to open it to a fifty-foot width by cutting down the stony ledge that sunk the TWEED. During low water of October 1858, Pink put up his own savings to hire drillers and blasters and set them to blowing away Backbone reef. Blasts shook Louisville all month until the Backbone was but a skeleton. Captain Pink hoped also to attack Rubel's Rock, but exhausted his funds on demolition in Indian Chute. Still, Pink told a reporter, he had "deepened and widened the channel enough to enable even broad gauge pilots, when they are guessing at the channel and depth, to steer clear of the rocks."

When Captain Pink's wry remark appeared in newspapers, Captain Dryden saw it as a veiled slur on his piloting talents, and he publicly retorted Pink's blasting of Backbone ridge as a waste of time and money. After Pink stopped blasting, the ridge still stood thirteen inches above the bottom of the chute. "Blowing out rock in this manner will injure navigation of the Falls and cause more danger in piloting," Captain Dave proclaimed, and he argued that Pink, instead of blasting Backbone ridge, should have concentrated on removing Rubel's Rock that had wrecked so many boats. Indeed, Captain Dave's comments on the dangers at Rubel's Rock proved accurate: a month after Captain Pink stopped work, a pair of coalboats smashed against Rubel's, spilling cargo into Indian Chute and blackening its bottom.

Captain Eli Vansickle had not joined Pink in the excavation, but had retired and sold his Salt River roarer, the ADELAIDE. When, in time, the river's lure revived his interest in life, however, Eli contracted with Thomas and Barney Nadal at their New Albany shipyard to build him another boat. Eli named it JOHN BELL in tribute to the senator

from Tennessee, soon to become peace candidate for President in 1860, opposing the Illinois candidates, Republican Abraham Lincoln and Democrat Steven Douglas.

Not long after the launch of JOHN BELL, Captain Eli found it needed repairs and returned it to Nadal shipyard. He and Thomas Nadal disagreed about who should pay for repairs, and their argument escalated until the two began scuffling in Nadal's office. Seeing the two rolling on the office floor, and his father getting the worst of it, Barney Nadal snatched up a stick of wood and clouted Eli on the head, knocking him senseless. When Eli awoke, he stumbled out of the office and returned home, but that evening he became ill and suddenly died. Police thereupon arrested and jailed Thomas and Barney Nadal, charging them with manslaughter, but when a jury heard the case it acquitted the shipbuilders, setting them free.

Eli's death shocked Captain Pink and troubled him the rest of his life. A quarter century later a news reporter interviewing the senior Falls pilot asked him if he remembered a shipyard that once built steamboats on Louisville's Point.

"Yes, the Nadals had a flourishing yard there, but they went under," Pink recalled.

"Got into trouble?" queried the reporter. "One of them killed a man, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," Pink answered, "Barney Nadal killed the best friend I ever had!"

"Who was that?"

"Eli Vansickle, one who did more for me than any man who ever lived!"

In addition to Eli, Pink had many close friends on the river and among them was the redoubtable Captain Nicholas Hughes, a wealthy Louisville coal dealer who bought barges of coal and retailed them. Nick sold coal chiefly to Senator John Bell, who had married an heiress of the Tennessee iron industry, opened a coal mine on the lower Ohio River, and purchased more coal to fuel his iron mills.

Nick Hughes employed Pink in late 1857 to steer the first tow of coal barges through Indian Chute for delivery to Senator Bell. When Pink steered this tightly cabled tow of barges down the chute, around the bends, and safely through Big Eddy, Hughes sent

more barges downriver under Pink's management. By crossing the Falls, Nick saved substantial sums compared to paying higher tolls charged per ton at Portland Canal.

Sitting together one morning around the stove in the Falls pilot's office on Water Street, as rivermen were wont to do during chilly weather, Hughes suggested Captain Pink should buy his own towboat. It could be used to shove coal barges around Louisville's harbor and could help coal tows meander down Indian Chute. Pink concluded Nick had a fine idea, and he bought the steamboat LADY PIKE built in 1851 that had become too antiquated for packet trade. Pink had the old boat rebuilt at Howard Shipyard in Jeffersonville and, strengthening the bracing, converted her into a towboat. He renamed her PINK VARBLE, giving it his own name to attract attention to his new venture.

When the river was high enough to cross the Falls, Pink used his new towboat to help wiggle tows down the serpentine chute; and when water was low he chartered PINK VARBLE for any business he could find. In June 1859, for example, he chartered his boat to take a huge crowd of what Louisville newspapers labeled the "dregs of society" upriver to Twelve Mile Island. There on the shady island, safe from city heat and the law's long arm, the crowd cheered, betting on a brutal sixty-six-round prize fight between the Allegheny Boy and Dublin Tricke, with the winner taking home \$400 and the PINK VARBLE hauling home the bloody loser. Pink made his brothers Billy and Dick captain and pilot of the VARBLE and kept them at work towing while he continued his Falls piloting.

Although Pink was a family man rather than a gambler, he once made a risky bet with captain of the steamboat IZETTA. After a rough trip down the chute over churning shallow water, the captain predicted ascending the Falls would become impossible before he returned with the IZETTA from Salt River. Pink thought not and offered to pay the boat's canal tolls if he could not bring her back up the Falls. When the steamer returned a few days later, the river was still low, the current through Indian Chute swift, and the wind stiff, but Pink stood at the wheel and brought the boat up through the cascades to the Louisville wharf. "He

knows no such word as fail, and brought her up gallantly!" declared an impressed Louisville news editor.

Much of the PINK VARBLE's towing business in the years just before the onset of the Civil War included towing barges of railroad iron and equipment to the rapidly building railroad network. After service as Secretary of Treasury, James Guthrie returned to Louisville in 1857 to become president of Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Louisville then was connected north and east by rail through Frankfort and Lexington to Cincinnati, or by ferry to the Jeffersonville railroad terminal, but it had no connection south other than by river steamboat or slow stagecoaches over rough turnpikes. Guthrie set out to open a southern rail connection by completing the L&N Railroad to Nashville, where it could link with railroads spiderwebbing east to Georgia, west to Memphis, and south to Mobile and New Orleans.

Under Guthrie's management, L&N built quickly south. By September 1859 a traveler reached Louisville from New Orleans after only sixty hours travel, all by rail except for an eleven-hour stagecoach ride over an uncompleted gap in the line. The L&N opened to the south a month later, and in November a train from Nashville brought up ten cotton bales, the first cotton shipment ever made to Louisville overland; and a Louisville newspaper crowed: "Both daily trains are full of passengers. They eat breakfast in Nashville and dinner in Louisville."

Completion of the L&N sounded the death knell for Louisville's steamboat trade with the South, although it proved a long time coming. Railroads gradually captured much passenger and light freight business formerly moving by river, but the river still carried coal and bulky cargoes cheaper than rails. Captain Pink's purchase of a towboat for pushing barges of bulky cargo thereby proved a timely investment, and he soon bought a second, the brand-new CHARLES MILLER built in 1860 at Elizabeth, PA.

Politics became a leading interest among rivermen around the stove in Pink's office as the nation perched on the verge of civil war. When the

State of South Carolina fired on Fort Sumter in April 1861 and President Lincoln called for volunteers to put down the rebellion, political turmoil peaked in Kentucky. And as Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee left the Union, secessionists closed the lower Mississippi to commerce from the North, seizing boats belonging to Union loyalists. Southerners canceled orders for new steamboats, and boatyards at Jeffersonville and New Albany ceased building boats by June 1861. U.S. Customs officers at Louisville adopted a permit program allowing boats to steam downriver only after their cargoes were cleared of arms or other commodities possibly contributing to Southern military preparations. Of this, a Louisville news editor lamented: "Not only the sixty millions of dollars worth of steamboats but the vastly greater value of the commerce carried on, through them, upon the Mississippi and its tributaries is to be lost, sacrificed, swept away by this wretched war, the most useless and foolish and insane war in the world's annals."

In September 1861, war came to Kentucky when General Simon B. Buckner went south to Tennessee followed by many state guards, some taking arms with them. While Captain Dave Dryden, Indiana Falls pilot, cast his lot with the Union, joining loyal Kentuckians at Camp Joe Holt, Captain Pink sought to stay neutral with his towing business in spite of disruptions to river commerce. Late in 1861, Captain Pink made the last boat trips south before shooting started in the Mississippi Valley, sending his steamboat PINK VARBLE, with Captain Billy Varble in command, up the Cumberland River to Nashville, and taking the wheel of his CHARLES MILLER on the last run to New Orleans. The Confederate government had organized by late 1861, so Pink had to obtain permits from the Confederacy to enter its territory and also permits from U. S. Secretary of Treasury Salmon P. Chase to leave the United States.

Captain Pink gave his brother Billy a permit from Secretary Chase to pilot the VARBLE into the Confederate state of Tennessee, delivering barges of cotton-mill machinery to Nashville. Going up the Cumberland, Billy and the towboat were threatened by Confederate batteries and brought to at Fort Donelson, where Rebel officers inspected cargo and detained the boat. When orders came to

let the VARBLE proceed, Captain Billy steamed on to Nashville and delivered the machinery. Meanwhile, Union gunboats entered and blocked the Cumberland River while preparing their attack on Fort Donelson. Captain Billy and the towboat thus became stranded in Nashville.

As Billy went up the Cumberland, Captain Pink steamed down the Ohio and Mississippi with his towboat CHARLES MILLER and barges transporting streetcars built for New Orleans. Pink wended through the paperwork maze and fortifications to reach New Orleans and return to the United States, a venture so novel and trying that its memory amused him the rest of his life. Questioned about his trip many years later, Pink recalled:

"When the war broke out I owned the towboats PINK VARBLE and CHARLES MILLER. In '62 I took a number of streetcars to New Orleans, having to obtain a permit from the Hon. S. P. Chase, Secretary of War then, to leave here and go South, and one from Jeff Davis, at New Orleans, to get back through the lines. The Confederate permit read like this: 'By authority of the President of the Confederate States of America, the steamer CHARLES MILLER is permitted to pass into the United States of America without molestation.' It was signed by Governor Moore of the State of Louisiana. It was endorsed on the back by General Gideon J. Pillow at Memphis, and I came through all right." ⓘ

WAY'S PACKET DIRECTORY 1848-1994

ISBN No. 0821411063

List price at \$39.95 plus \$5 shipping/handling

WAY'S STEAM TOWBOAT DIRECTORY

ISBN No. 0921409697

List price at \$39.95 plus \$5 shipping/handling

**Note: any additional copies ordered ship for \$1 each*

CONTACT

CHICAGO DISTRIBUTION CENTER

11030 South Langley Avenue

Chicago, IL 60628

Phone toll-free: 1-800-621-2736

Check, Money Order or Credit Card

CITY OF BATON ROUGE: A Century of Service

The story of CITY OF BATON ROUGE has its origin with its namesake. Settled by European traders in 1721 and incorporated in 1817, Baton Rouge was first named Louisiana's state capital in 1849. Directly across the river lay the small village of St. Michaels in West Baton Rouge Parish. Originally laid out in 1809, the town was eventually renamed Port Allen in 1878. FLYING BRIDGE, first ferry to serve both towns, began crossing the river here in April 1820. It was a simple affair, consisting of a barge working a long chain anchored to a buoy in midstream. She was succeeded two years later by another ferry. Then in 1832, H. B. Favrot signed a contract and began providing service. Within eight years he entered the first steam-powered ferryboat SOPHIE in the trade. She would be followed by CREBE, JULIA, IRENE and JOHN J. BROWN. Over a span of 128 years, at least twelve steam-powered vessels that have been documented plied this route, although perhaps many others provided service as well.

One of these steamboats was ISTROUMA. She was a wood hull steamboat built catamaran style in 1896 with her paddlewheel positioned between twin hulls. Later ferry designs allowed auto traffic to drive around the outer perimeter of the main deck in parade fashion for easier unloading when reaching the other side of the river. This was the style employed by most ferryboats on the Lower Mississippi. ISTROUMA's name came from the local Native American word for Baton Rouge. She was built by Howard Shipyard at Jeffersonville, partnered with a smaller boat named BROOKHILL, and operated by the Baton Rouge and Western Transportation Company. For 19 years ISTROUMA plied the ferry trade back and forth, until the massive hurricane of September 29-October 2, 1915 hit Baton Rouge. Days earlier that storm had damaged 25,000 buildings in New Orleans and flooded low-lying sections of the city with up to 8 feet of water. Although some of its destructive force was spent by the time it reached Baton Rouge, there was still enough punch left to sink ISTROUMA and make her a total loss,

along with the BROOKHILL. As a result of that misfortune, Solon Farrnbacher, a successful Baton Rouge businessman, saw an opportunity to acquire an exclusive and very lucrative ferry contract.

By December he had become the successful bidder on the lease. He and a group of partners formed the Baton Rouge Transportation Company (BRTCo), and in January 1916 Farrnbacher transferred his ferry lease to the new firm. Like their predecessor, they too turned to Howard Shipyard, but this time they contracted for a steel catamaran hull. They wanted their new ferry based on the successful design of the Howard-built L. H. MARRERO of 1905, which operated for Bisso Ferry Company at New Orleans. Mr. Daniel J. Cohn, Secretary, Treasurer and General Manager of BRTCo signed the contract with master boatbuilder Capt. Ed. J. Howard on December 9, 1915. Work was to commence immediately and the boat was to be completed in six months (by June 15, 1916). The ferry company would pay Howards a \$20/day bonus for early completion of the boat, while Howards would pay a \$20/day penalty for every day past the delivery date of June 15. The contract price was \$22,000, to be paid in installments, and place of delivery was Howard Shipyard in Jeffersonville. Howards also guaranteed that the speed of the boat would be such that it would be capable of crossing the Mississippi River at Baton Rouge to St. Michaels within seven minutes.

BRTCo would become the proud owners of a staunchly-built ferry on a hull 115.2 feet long, 54.0 feet beam by 7.2 feet deep. She was equipped with one conventional Western Rivers style boiler 48 inches in diameter by 20 feet long, fired by coal, and providing steam to her engines at a normal operating pressure of 140-145 psi. Her two engines were built in 1915 by the well-known Gillett, Eaton and Squire Company of Lake City, MN. They were traditional high pressure, non-condensing engines rated at 325 horsepower, with cylinders 12-inch diameter and a 5-foot stroke. However, the design of these engines

had recently been patented by the Lake City firm, as they were fitted with “balanced valve, variable cut-off engines featuring Eaton independent inside valve drive.” This drive was taken direct from the pitman and thereby did away with the more complicated old style-system in which outside eccentrics or cams were fitted to the paddlewheel shaft, with all its necessary cam rods and brackets. Simplicity and efficiency seem to have been the determining factors in selecting the new engines for the company’s ferryboat. Terry Steam Turbine Co. of Hartford, CT provided the 7½ kW steam turbine for producing electrical power on the boat. Records also show that steel for construction was supplied by Illinois Steel Company of Chicago, a subsidiary of U. S. Steel. The boat would be allowed to carry up to 21 cars and 500 deck passengers. Her main deck cabin housed boiler, coal bunker space, and engines; steam turbine; house, fire and feedwater pumps; paddlewheel; office, work bench, locker, crew toilet, a 7 x 23-foot deck room across the after end serving as a gathering area for black passengers; and a set of stairs leading to the upper deck. The second deck contained a deckhouse about half the length of the boat, with outside deck space for passengers to walk around its outer perimeter. The enclosed cabin was referred to as “the waiting room,” and provided ample seating space with long benches for white passengers. Unfortunately, the customs of time and place in which the ferry operated dictated separate seating facilities and separate toilet facilities on board. It is interesting to note that in Howard Shipyard plans for the main deck, the use of the large room on the after end is not identified.

Throughout 1916, as CITY OF BATON ROUGE was under construction, three other centerwheel ferries were also on the ways at Howard boatyard: H. O. PENICK, JOSEPH BISSO and S. HALLIDAY. In addition, two passenger steamers for St. Paul and Louisville, and a packet for St. Louis were being built in the yards as well. Not surprisingly with this amount of construction underway, it appears that the ferry’s June 15, 1916 contracted delivery date came and went, while officials of the Ferry Company wrung their hands impatiently. A surviving Western Union telegram dated November 9, 1916, from Howard Shipyard to C. V. Porter, BRTC Co vice president, tells the tale: “Doing everything possible to hurry ferry boat to

completion. Will take about three weeks to finish up. Everything ready for the trial trip. Will let you know in time to be here.” On January 4th of the new year, ferry company officials Cohn and Porter finally traveled to Jeffersonville to inspect the boat and to witness her trial trip, and, one might suspect, to attempt to keep moving things along as quickly as possible. As it turned out, Howards most likely paid a penalty in excess of \$4,000 when the ferry company took possession of the boat that January.

Arriving at her home port on January 20, the ferry was delayed an additional eleven days while the level of docks and loading ramps on both sides of the river were raised to accommodate the height of the main deck on the new boat. Once all was in final readiness, she commenced daily operations, running from her landing at the foot of Main Street in Baton Rouge to the ferry landing at the foot of Court Street over in Port Allen. To say that the ferry was a permanent fixture on the riverfront would be an understatement, as she logged well over six million miles on her daily shuttles back and forth during her 51 year run, the longest-serving ferryboat in Baton Rouge history.

During the heyday of her career in the 20s and 30s, when she was teamed with another ferry, the boats operated on a very convenient schedule for commuters. Between midnight and 5 a.m., the boats maintained an hourly schedule. Between 7 a.m. and 10 a.m., and between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m., they operated on a fifteen-minute schedule. The remainder of the day between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., and between 8 p.m. and midnight saw boats arriving and departing every half hour. Fares were 5¢ per person; 20¢ for a two-passenger auto and driver; up to 35¢ for a six or seven-passenger auto and driver.

One of the first major interruptions in her ferry service occurred in May 1927 during the record Mississippi River Flood, when the river at Baton Rouge crested at 47.28 feet, twelve feet over flood stage, the highest ever recorded there. It is very probable that the ferryboat was used for flood relief work in evacuating individuals and their possessions from the rampaging flood waters. In her first decade, CITY OF BATON ROUGE was partnered with the much smaller and older wooden-

hulled ferryboat HAZEL, built in Lake Charles, LA in 1888 and renamed PORT ALLEN around 1925. However, that aging vessel was replaced for two weeks in May 1926 by the Algiers ferry A. M. HALLIDAY in order to undergo renovations.

Later that year, PORT ALLEN would be permanently superseded by another new steel-hull catamaran steamer, LOUISIANA. Also built by Howards, LOUISIANA was lightly larger than CITY OF BATON ROUGE, with accommodations for 47 autos and 1,000 passengers. She carried the patented Gillett and Eaton engines with independent inside valve drives like her sister, but with 17-inch cylinders and 7-foot stroke, they were nearly half again as large. The new boat boasted two cabins on her second deck; a white cabin at the front end and a smaller black cabin at the after end, with separate toilet facilities adjacent each cabin. There was also a concession stand accessible from the white cabin and from the outer deck for remaining passengers. Local papers reported that CITY OF BATON ROUGE was scheduled for drydocking once the new boat was put in service, and that a new Gardener steam steering gear would be installed, along with passenger "improvements" to the second deck to bring her in line with LOUISIANA.

The ferryboat had an enviable safety record during most of her first decade at Baton Rouge. She performed her duties without any accident to the boat or passengers and crew from her opening day on January 31, 1917 through November 28, 1925 when a blaze broke out on the roof of the craft at about 4:30 p.m., scorching the woodwork around the smokestack, but not causing extensive damage. The fire department was summoned, but by the time the engines arrived the flames were extinguished. Earlier that morning the boat was tied up for 45 minutes when a log broke her rudder chain.

There were a few occasions when riders jumped overboard, but there is only one record of any fatality by drowning as a result. In addition, there were several instances of fires aboard the boat, most caused by careless disposal of matches or smoking materials by passengers, but all were discovered in ample time to prevent any serious damage. On another occasion in August 1936, a sunken

obstruction in the river tore off about one-third of the buckets on both CITY OF BATON ROUGE and LOUISIANA. The object was removed from the river by the fire tugboat ISTROUMA, and was apparently either the remains of an old scow or remnants of the former ferryboat landing at Baton Rouge. The remains surfaced because of the extremely low river stage at the time. The only major change in the operation of the two ferry boats took place in 1940, when both vessels were converted from coal-fired to oil-fired vessels. During the twenties and thirties, ferry traffic had increased tremendously, and two other boats were brought in to assist the existing BRTCo ferries. JOHN R. DRACKETT operated in the trade for a time, and she was joined in the early thirties by the old New Orleans-Algiers ferry THOMAS PICKLES, which had been purchased and refurbished for the service.

Twenty miles below Baton Rouge on the opposite side of the river, lies the town of Plaquemine, LA. In 1909, a lock was built there to provide entrance to Bayou Plaquemine, linking the Mississippi River with Atchafalaya and Red Rivers. In 1961, a new, larger lock was opened to replace the old one at Plaquemine. It was located at Port Allen, and provided an alternate link between the Mississippi and the Intracoastal Waterway, creating access to ports from Florida to Texas. CITY OF BATON ROUGE took part in the grand opening celebration of Port Allen Lock that year, being the first boat to lock through the new chamber. While river routes were expanding, so too were the highways. Back in August 1940, the Huey P. Long Highway Bridge, first automobile bridge to span the river at Baton Rouge, had been completed about 5 miles above town. Because of its location, this bridge did not eliminate all ferry service. Transit across the river required 8-10 minutes by ferry, while twenty or more minutes were required using the new bridge. But shades of things to come began to cast their shadow. With the opening in April 1968 of Horace Wilkinson Highway Bridge, carrying Interstate 10 across the river in plain view of the ferry route between Baton Rouge and Port Allen, the end of the ferry trade finally came. At 7:30 p.m. on April 20, 1968, CITY OF BATON ROUGE departed her Baton Rouge landing for the last time. When Capt. Owen Rucker rang off the engines at the Port Allen ferry landing at 8:00, that arrival marked

the conclusion of a century-and-a-half of ferry service between the two cities. Later that spring, the boats were advertised for sale as the Baton Rouge Transportation Company began liquidation proceedings, and it looked as if their long careers might be coming to an end.

The 42-year old LOUISIANA, younger of the two ferries, was first to be sold. She was purchased by Plaquemines Parish Commission Council at Pointe à la Hache, LA for use there as a ferry. However, operating a steam-powered paddlewheeler in the middle of the twentieth century was not economically feasible, and so the boat went to Avondale Shipyard in New Orleans in 1969 to be converted to an 800 horsepower Diesel-powered twin prop vessel. After her refit and renovation, LOUISIANA continued service for another four decades until finally retired in 2008.

CITY OF BATON ROUGE, on the other hand, navigated a completely different course from that of her sister. On the Upper Mississippi River at Dubuque, IA, an old established boat-building firm was nearing the celebration of its one hundredth year in business. Dubuque Boat and Boiler Company (DBBCo), founded in 1870, was a pioneer in iron and steel-hull steamboat construction. The company's vice president and naval architect, Capt. Dennis Trone, had made the boat-building firm an industry leader in the design and construction of modern-day propeller versions of the old excursion steamboats, complete with fake smokestacks and paddlewheel. And so as DBBCo's centennial year approached, a nostalgic design for a modern steam sternwheel excursion boat took shape on Capt. Trone's drawing board: the steamer JULIA BELLE SWAIN. The new steamboat would be operated by Capt. Trone's Sangamon Packet Co. and based at Peoria, IL. The major difficulty was that steamboat engines had not been built in three decades, and few people were alive who had the knowledge and skills to construct them. Fortunately, CITY OF BATON ROUGE had just such engines, and they were in fine shape and available to the highest bidder.

And so on October 18, 1968, Capt. Trone was notified by Mr. Marion B. Kahn, president of BRTC since 1924, that he had become new owner of the veteran ferry with a successful bid of \$40,000.

It's interesting to note that the company's vice president at that time was still the same C. V. Porter who 52 years earlier had sent an impassioned plea to Howard shipyard to speed along construction of the new ferryboat. CITY OF BATON ROUGE left her home port for the last time on the morning of November 7, 1968, as part of the tow of m/v PAT CHOTIN, and she arrived at St. Louis on the morning of the 12th. From there, she was towed the final 400 miles to the Ice Harbor in Dubuque, location of DBBCo's boatyard.

Once her boiler, paddlewheel assembly, engines and usable equipment were removed, she was to be renovated and modernized to serve as landing barge, quarterboat and ticket office for JULIA BELLE SWAIN on the Peoria riverfront. With her vitals carefully removed and transferred to the JBS, the old ferry was preserved, given a major facelift and a second life. The open main deck space was converted for additional storage after the paddlewheel well in the middle of that deck was plated over; and a ticket booth was added on the bow, along with new kitchen and concession facilities on the main deck. Her upper deck was rebuilt as well with cabins and toilet facilities added for the crew. When completed, the boat was towed to Peoria in the summer of 1970, as work continued on the JULIA BELLE SWAIN to prepare for her November 12th launch date and her entry into excursion service on the Illinois River the following May.

For the next 24 years, CITY OF BATON ROUGE served as wharfboat for JBS at Peoria and then at Le Claire, IA, where Capt. Trone moved his operations in May 1987. That year he had constructed the new Diesel electric-powered twin prop TWILIGHT to run opposite JULIA BELLE SWAIN on trips up to Chestnut Mountain Resort near Galena, IL. During all these years, the only serious incident to befall the former ferryboat occurred in the early morning of August 10, 1980. A report by Capt. Fred Way in the REFLECTOR narrated the incident: "All was serene at Peoria the night of August 9th last. JULIA BELLE was nestled alongside her CITY OF BATON ROUGE wharfboat and the crew of 13 had retired to their staterooms. Then, about 2 a.m. came a tremendous whoosh. Whoosh, and off went roof, railings, pilothouse and all. A torrential downpour didn't

help matters, and the lights had all gone out. Almost miraculously nobody had been injured. The first streaks of dawn revealed wooden wreckage strewn across the Peoria esplanade, fragments of the 1916-built ferryboat's superstructure. JULIA BELLE SWAIN, moored alongside her battered consort, was not harmed in the least. Capt. Dennis Trone and his crew, mostly family, were already at work. There was a big cleaning-up job to do to put CITY OF BATON ROUGE back together again. Maybe it was a tornado and maybe it wasn't. An ancient mariner once in a similar circumstance, his boat scattered over two counties, spoke of 'the terrible breeze.' Coincidentally, it was also in 1980 that the boat had been used for filming of the 2-hour TV special "Life on the Mississippi," in which her cabin was decorated with uncharacteristically fancy wooden scrollwork, quite out of place on a plain, no-nonsense ferryboat.

With the opening of the 1994 season, JULIA BELLE SWAIN was beginning her 24th year in service, and Capt. Trone was ready to modify his river excursion business at Le Claire to a one-boat operation. As a result, the steamboat was sold to Robert Kalhagen for running excursions out of La Crosse, WI. Meanwhile, TWILIGHT inaugurated two-day round trip excursion service between Le Claire and Dubuque, operating for Capt. Trone as usual from her CITY OF BATON ROUGE landing boat. Upon Capt. Trone's retirement in 2006, long-time employees Capt. Kevin and Carrie Stier purchased TWILIGHT and CITY OF BATON ROUGE and continued the popular two-day cruises up to the present day, adding a new one-day round trip cruise upstream between Dubuque and Guttenberg, IA. And so, with the start of the 2016 season, CITY OF BATON ROUGE completes an historic century of service and begins her second hundred years of welcoming future generations of travelers to the mighty Mississippi. ☉

The REFLECTOR offers a special word of appreciation to Kevin and Carrie Stier for their gracious and most generous assistance with research. Howard Steamboat Museum, Lilly Library at Bloomington, IN and Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge also provided yeoman service. On a related note, thanks are also extended to Don Schwartz of Lake City Historical Society for info on Gillett, Eaton & Squire.

CITY OF BATON ROUGE

Photo Album



NEW FERRY BOAT TO ARRIVE HERE THIS AFTERNOON

Public Invited to Inspect
Craft Saturday After-
noon and Sunday.

The "City of Baton Rouge," the new ferry boat, built by the Baton Rouge Transportation Company for the local ferry service, left Angola at 10 o'clock Saturday morning and is expected to arrive in Baton Rouge about 5 o'clock Saturday afternoon. The vessel was delayed for several hours at Angola waiting for a heavy fog to lift.

President Solon Farrnbacher, of the transportation company, has issued an invitation for the public to inspect the new craft upon its arrival here Saturday afternoon. The vessel will also be open to public inspection all day Sunday.

Government inspectors have declared the "City of Baton Rouge" to be one of the most modern and substantial boats of its kind ever built. It will be placed in the local service immediately.

Top: Ferry ISTROUMA was predecessor of CITY OF BATON ROUGE from 1896 until she sank in October 1915 hurricane. **Middle:** Launching of CITY OF BATON ROUGE hull at Howards in spring or summer 1916. The ferry company had contracted for a June 15, 1916 delivery date.

Bottom: Baton Rouge State Times account of boat's arrival and open house on January 20, 1917. Photo credits: (top to bottom) East Baton Rouge Parish Library digital archives; Howard Steamboat Museum; Baton Rouge State Times newspaper archives.



CITY OF BATON ROUGE at Port Allen ferry landing with Streckfus steamer CAPITOL landed at Baton Rouge city front in the 1920s. From East Baton Rouge Parish Library digital archives.



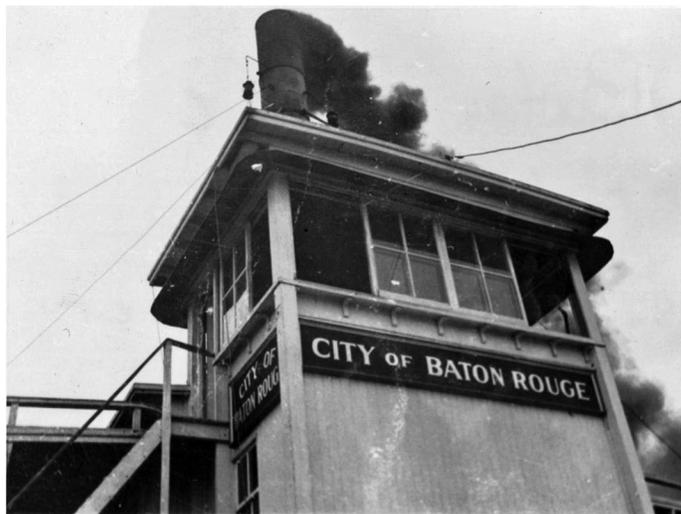
Making the crossing sometime in the 40s. By this time, the boat had lost her fancy pilothouse dome. Murphy Library photo.



CITY OF BATON ROUGE's new sister ferryboat LOUISIANA at Howards undergoing finishing touches in spring or summer 1926. Murphy Library photo.



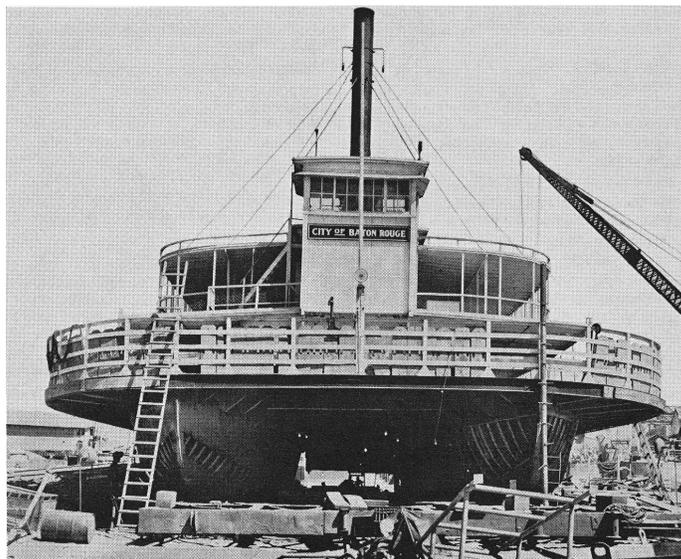
Baton Rouge Transportation Co.'s popular ferries at their Main Street landing. Photo courtesy of Carrie Stier.



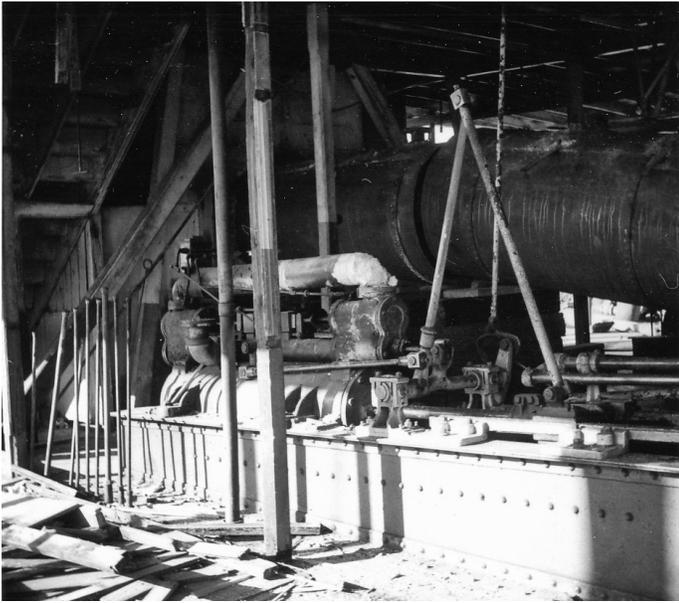
Good view of pilothouse from main deck. Although built as a coal-fired boat, both she and her sister were converted to oil-burners in 1940. Photo courtesy of Carrie Stier.



Steam 'scapes from the boat's exhaust on the roof in this dramatic shot by David Meare of Oldham, England.



The framing and plating of CITY OF BATON ROUGE's catamaran hulls show plainly in this shot taken on Avondale Shipyard's marine ways in 1958. Waterways Journal photo.



Upper two photos show CITY OF BATON ROUGE on March 21, 1970 at Dubuque Boat and Boiler yards as work progresses on salvaging her engines and paddlewheel assembly. In bottom view, her engines wait to be placed aboard JULIA BELLE SWAIN, while hull plating nears completion in the background. CITY OF BATON ROUGE had been renovated by this time and taken to Peoria. Photos from Editor's collection.



The two boats at their landing in downtown Peoria in the 70s, and the BATON ROUGE, sans pilothouse, in the aftermath of the Big Blow on August 10, 1980.



Capt. Trone's new TWILIGHT tows BATON ROUGE to their future home at Le Claire, IA, as shown in bottom photo.



Final Crossings

Susan H. Eastman

Susan Howarth Eastman of Alton, IL passed away on March 13, 2016 at the age of 79. She earned degrees from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana and also, after beginning a family, from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. Susan was a highly respected member of the Alton Community Unit School District No. 11, where she taught high school history and English for twenty-five years. She was a knowledgeable local historian, with an ardent interest in the Mississippi River. Mrs. Eastman authored "River Bend, An Area that Knows No Panics" (1981), and "Federal Promotion of Commercial Barging on the Inland Waterways: 1920-1940" (1984). She served as river historian and correspondent-at-large for *The Waterways Journal*.

As a member of the Alton Museum of History and Art in the 1970s, Susan organized and supervised the establishment of the River Room, and maintained exhibits for the museum at Mel Price Locks & Dam. Her enthusiasm for the river led her as well to memberships in the Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen and Midwest Riverboat Buffs. She is survived by her husband, Charles Dana Eastman, Jr., daughter Marynell Eastman, and sons Charles Dana Eastman III (Michele), and David William Eastman (Michelle Mallo).



Our thanks to Keith Norrington for providing Susan's obituary notice from the Alton Telegraph. Keith kindly sent us the accompanying photo showing Ruth Ferris with two of her proteges – himself and Susan.

brought some photos." With a somewhat subdued flourish, they were presented for her inspection. After no more than a half minute's quick perusal, a noncommittal "Mmmm, hmmm" was the only response that was forthcoming. So in a last attempt to salvage something from this less-than-engaging conversation, a concluding shot was fired: "I suppose this might have been one of the most unusual vessels ever to go through the Canal." What the guide's thoughts were about this supposition remained unsaid. She did observe that the photo was snapped in Pedro Miguel Lock, which we had only recently vacated. And with that, she resumed her narration over the PA. Later that afternoon as the ship traversed Gatun Lake, your editor crossed paths with a fellow passenger from near the Quad Cities, who knew of the DQ. "Did you know that the boat once locked through this Canal?" No, she didn't, but after the earlier encounter, it was thought best to let the photos remain tucked in the suitcase until a more promising occasion might present itself. 🌐



*Pedro Miguel Lock then and now. Shown on left is her *Lady* ship entering the outside lock chamber at 8:30 a.m.*



on Sunday, May 11, 1947. Below, m/s MAASDAM approaches that same lock at 9:18 a.m. on Tuesday, March 22, 2016.

Back Cover

CITY OF BATON ROUGE is the first boat to lock through newly opened Port Allen Lock in 1961. The ferry carried some two hundred invited guests for the occasion. *Photo courtesy of Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.*

