

# S & D

# REFLECTOR

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March 2020



**The Rise and Fall of a River Empire:  
The Ohio River Company  
Memories of ALEXANDER MACKENZIE**

## Front Cover

The Ohio River Company's flagship OMAR. From 1936 through 1961 she moved untold thousands of loads of coal between Huntington and Cincinnati, a permanent fixture on the middle Ohio River. When retired from service, she became West Virginia's Centennial Showboat RHODODENDRON. In 1981, St. Louis Ship built a 6000 horsepower twin prop namesake for Midland Enterprises, ORCO's parent company. Capt. Bill Judd's fascinating chronicle of the Ohio River Company begins on page 8. *Photo from Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.*



## Reflections from Our Readers

Dale Zubik writes: "Here is some information on old boats built at Dubuque Boat yards. And thank you for recognizing my grandfather Charles Zubik in your September 2019 story. The steam tug MOBILE was converted to diesel in 1950 into the twin screw towboat m/v CHARLES ZUBIK and the Corps of Engineer dredge TODD he made into his landing boat and offices. The JOHN J. HOOPES was bought by Crain Brothers, converted to diesel and renamed KILBUCK. They also bought m/v DEL COMMUNE and renamed her ALLEGHENY. I worked for Crain Brothers in river construction from 1976-1982. Maybe you could do a piece on Dravo Corporation in the future. Thank you!"

🦉 We are indebted to Dale for providing some further information about these early boats in the Dubuque boatbuilding story. Since this editor has been on watch the REFLECTOR has published pieces about boatbuilders Nashville Bridge Company and Dubuque Boat and Boiler, along with sketches of the historic Lee Line Packet Company at Memphis, Commodore Davidson's White Collar Line on the Upper Mississippi, Commercial Barge Line, and this issue's feature on The Ohio River Company. We have already extended an invitation to a

fellow S&D compatriot to record for our readers the latter-day history of Howard/Jeffboat Shipyard. Dale's suggestion to document Dravo's prominent place in inland boatbuilding is also quite deserving of attention. Which leads us to offer a further invitation to those faithful reader/authors who could help us in documenting these chapters of river history for future issues. Your editor would be delighted to offer assistance and encouragement to any who are able and willing to answer the call and put pen to paper. Please check out the bottom box on the next page if any of this piques your interest.

Steven Fye writes: "I was looking at the September 2019 issue at the Museum that I volunteer at in Le Claire, IA. On page 14 there is a picture taken when the boatyard caught on fire. In the picture are two CB&Q railroad boats, one of which is dredge #20 and harbor boat #201.

I am a member of the Burlington Route Historical Society (BRHS) and I sent this information out to the membership. I had a request to see if a scan of this photo could be acquired. I myself was wondering if any more information could be found or where I might look. The one comment I received as to why the railroad would have a dredge there was because they were double tracking up the river at this time and were using this for creating the roadbed."

🦉 With pleasure we were able to supply Steven with a jpeg image of that photo, but unfortunately what we were not able to send along was any additional info about the reason for these boats' presence in the Ice Harbor. One long shot we could pursue is local newspaper stories about the fire for a chance mention about these railroad boats at the site, but those odds admittedly are pretty long. If any of our readers, especially those with rail connections and/or interests, might shed some light on this discussion, both Steven and the REFLECTOR would be grateful.

Capt. Jim Blum writes: "The photo I am sending here is of a "bell" salvaged from the ISLAND QUEEN, so says the sign. It is currently in residence at the Behringer Crawford Museum in Covington, KY. If asked prior to discovering this exhibit, I would have said no bell or calliope was ever salvaged from

the remains. This bell on display has been painted white on the interior and brown on the exterior and appears to be a steel bell from best I could make out from top and underneath. No casting marks were visible and the exterior does not appear to have been finished or polished in any way. So where could it have been on the Big Liz and who had it for all these years? This might make for some interesting comment from S&D folks in a future issue.”

† Capt. Jim’s photo appears below, and we certainly invite our readers to weigh in on the questions raised by this artifact. Your editor recalls a display at Marietta of a deformed brass key from IQ’s Nichol calliope keyboard melted by the heat of the fire, and salvaged from the wreck as we recall by calliopist Homer Denny. Might this bell have been one of the engineroom bells that survived the inferno?



Capt. Bob Reynolds writes: “I’ve been enjoying all of the REFLECTORS, but especially the series on Dubuque Boat & Boiler Co./Iowa Iron Works. However, I have some questions and at least one correction about the December installment of this series.

On page 23 you mention the very first small diesel excursion boat that DBBCo built, the MEMPHIS QUEEN II, built for Capt. Ed Langford of Memphis. You also had a real nice photo of this boat as she originally appeared. What you may or may not know is that this boat underwent almost constant renovation since her delivery. Ed Langford became ill not long after he took delivery of that

*Reflections from Our Readers continued on page 31*

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- » .jpg, .tif, .png, or .bmp format
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**Send to the Editor as an e-mail attachment**

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

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America's Steam & Diesel  
Riverboat Magazine

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# S&D REFLECTOR

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

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

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## Getting Posted Up

**“Keep Up Steam,”  
Our Dear Friend!**

Early this year the river community received the sad news of Keith Norrington’s announcement that he was stepping down as Director of Howard Steamboat Museum because of ongoing health concerns. We remember only too well the excitement and great satisfaction felt by all of us when Keith was appointed to this position back in November 2012. For Keith, as he readily admitted, this was his “dream job” and those who know the New Albany native could not conceive of anyone more qualified than Keith to step in and lead the Museum to an even greater and brighter future following Yvonne Knight’s retirement. There have been many changes and additions, some large and some small since Keith took the helm. Completion of a renovated Wash House several years ago as a venue for small meetings and programs occurred shortly after a long-hoped for addition to the campus came to fruition with a climate-controlled facility for storing, sorting and preserving artifacts and records. But the undoubted crowning achievement for the Museum was the realization of a decades-long dream of converting the old Carriage House adjacent the mansion into a beautiful entertainment, program, and reception facility.

Your editor, whose friendship with Keith dates back over a half century now, was given the honor of being asked to present the inaugural program in his River Ramblings series of talks. These annual gatherings have been welcomed with great acclaim by historians and assorted steamboat buffs and buffettes alike



over these past fifteen years. Perhaps one of the high points in this event occurred in October 2014 when Capt. Doc Hawley addressed a packed house

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during the BELLE’s Centennial. A bright note for which we are grateful is that Keith will continue to write the “Old Boat Column” for *The Waterways Journal*, a job he inherited from another steamboat lover, Capt. Alan Bates. Of course, like all the legions of river friends Keith has made over the decades, we too are saddened to see our friend and colleague step aside, and wish him the very best. In doing that we extend our fondest wish in words he himself has so often written, “Keep Up Steam!” 🚢



## Meet Our Contributors

**Capt. Bill Judd** (*The Rise and Fall of a River Empire*, p. 8) makes another welcome appearance in our magazine with this latest telling of the history of one of the most well-known inland towing companies in modern time, the Ohio River Company. Capt. Bill comments that his story first appeared in the December 2004 REFLECTOR, or at least part of it. That earlier narrative had been condensed and the story stopped after the company's transition from steam to diesel.

He also observed, "Now I have to think of the next story as to where, when and why." We have no doubt that the well containing Capt. Bill's stories is deep and brimming to the full. Our hope is that he will lower the bucket and draw once again from that well to the delight of all his loyal readers.

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## S&D Delegation Visits CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

An unexpected phone call from Vic Canfield brought news of his mid-December visit along with S&D president Jeff Spear to the Crescent City to check out the new CITY OF NEW ORLEANS. Our vice president kindly provided the photos below as the newest addition to New Orleans' excursion fleet is about to make her debut. 🌀



The top view provides our first glimpse of CITY OF NEW ORLEANS at night. At bottom, the crane barge in lower right is setting the approach walkways in place.

S&D Delegation Visits New Orleans continued on page 30

# Capt. Wagner Exhibit at Chilo Lock 34 Museum

Capt. Jim Blum recently provided the REFLECTOR with photos of the new Capt. Ernie Wagner exhibit at Lock 34 Museum in Chilo, OH at Mile 434.1. Sometime in 2008 serious discussion and efforts were initiated to develop a permanent exhibit to honor Capt. Wagner in addition to the Capt. Wagner Memorial that was already located outdoors in River View Park at New Richmond, Cap's longtime home. Capt. Bill Judd spearheaded and coordinated these efforts through his previous work at the Chilo Museum. Clermont County Park Board offered their support with facilities, finances and exhibit construction in addition to funding and contributions of artifacts supplied by a group of river people designated The Capt. Wagner Memorial Committee and by friends of the Golden Eagle Club in St. Louis.

The Chilo Museum is housed in the old power house of Lock and Dam 34, which was closed when the new high lift dam was opened downstream at Capt. Anthony Meldahl Locks and Dam in 1964. The new exhibit joins many others which detail the workings of the system of navigation locks and dams on the Ohio, along with others featuring the natural fish and wildlife of the area.

The exhibit on the upper floor houses a three-panel glass display case containing the captain's uniform and cap, in addition to other artifacts from the DELTA QUEEN, including one of her pilothouse nameboards as pictured to the right.



*Capt. Ernie Wagner is pictured above on Str. AVALON in 1960 and on DELTA QUEEN in 1963.*



Adjacent to the display case are three storyboard panels titled "A Legend Begins", "Captain Wagner", and "The Boats of Ernie Wagner."

*Capt. Wagner Exhibit continued on page 27*



# The Rise and Fall of a River Empire: The Ohio River Company

by Capt. William Judd

This is the story of one of the inland river's most prestigious river towing companies from its humble beginnings till a huge unfeeling corporate giant swallowed it alive. It is also the saga of the river industry's transition from the steam age to the modern diesel era. This is the story of The Ohio River Company. While I'm sure many REFLECTOR readers have their own stories and tales about this company, in the following article the author has tried to stick to the historical facts.



## The Beginning

It all started with a horse and wagon. In 1915 a young entrepreneur named Albert Converse Ingersoll, Sr. was delivering coal by horse and wagon in Cincinnati. Ingersoll expanded his sales from residential customers to industrial and utility companies and soon was delivering by truck and rail, and had expanded into neighboring states. In 1917 Ingersoll took a hard look at his success and decided to enter the river towing business both to lower his costs and to insure the needed volume for his growing distribution base. He formed a new company, The Philadelphia and Cleveland Coal Company. Actually it had nothing to do with either city, Ingersoll simply wanting it to sound impressive so as to attract investors.

Their first vessel was the Str. CONVOY (T0501) which was chartered along with four wooden coal barges that Ingersoll insisted be numbered 1001-1004 so as to make the company seem bigger than it was. The Philadelphia and Cleveland Coal Company purchased this vessel in 1923 and renamed it for the owner's son, A. C. INGERSOLL, JR. (T0008).

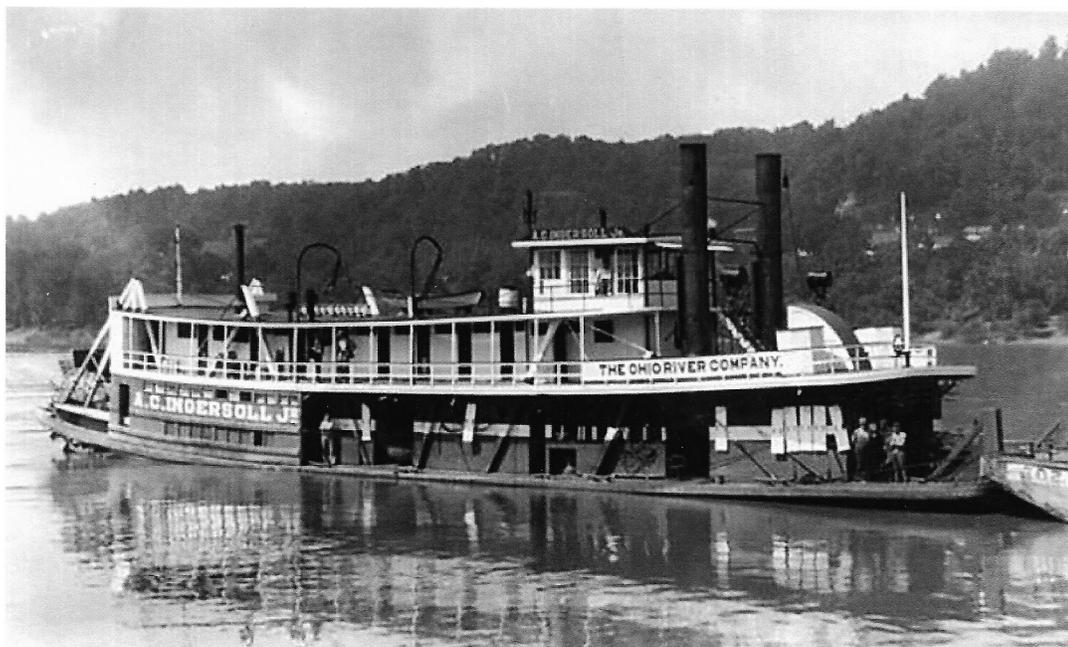
As Ingersoll's success increased, so did his

monetary needs, and he took in a partner, W. W. Marting, a steel and foundry magnate of Ironton, OH. Together they embarked on an ambitious growth spurt. In 1922 they acquired the Logan Dock Co. facility on 25th and 26th Streets in Huntington, WV. After extensive renovation and installation of equipment that was state-of-the-art at that time, it officially opened

for business in 1924. In its first month, over 19,000 tons of coal were loaded into its river barges. About this same time the company acquired property at Addyston, OH at Ohio River Mile 485, fifteen miles downriver of Cincinnati and about a mile below old Lock and Dam #37. Here they also built a large efficient terminal. This lucrative trade from Huntington to Addyston was the goose that laid Ingersoll's golden egg.

It soon became apparent that the Str. A. C. INGERSOLL, JR. and the small fleet of barges, now numbering over thirty, could not deliver the needed tonnage. The Philadelphia and Cleveland Coal Company was forced into chartering towboats and barges. Ingersoll disliked the arrangement due to both high costs and his lack of control over the vessels.

One of the company charters is certainly worth mentioning. It was the big Str. IOWA (T1190) in 1926. The IOWA at this time was still a sternwheel boat of huge size, 230' x 58'. She was a Goltra vessel, designed for the Mississippi River service and seemed way out of place on the Ohio. She ran upriver as far as Neville Island near Pittsburgh, the location of the Dravo Shipyard and Marine Railway. It is important to remember that the original lock and dam system was not yet finished in 1926. This charter was quickly terminated and the IOWA returned to her native habitat.



**Top:** The steamer A. C. INGERSOLL, JR., renamed for the son of the founder of Philadelphia and Cleveland Coal Company. Built in 1901 as ROBERT TAYLOR in Higginsport, OH, she measured 119 x 27.1 x 5.6. Renamed W. T. SMOOT in 1908 and CONVOY in 1920, she was the company's first towboat, purchased in 1923. She towed coal out of the Kanawha and from Huntington for the new Ohio River Company beginning in 1925. She ventured down to Cairo in June 1926 delivering Goltra barges there, and also made one trip to the lower Mississippi as far south as Vicksburg in February 1935. The INGERSOLL burned on August 23, 1940 near Augusta, KY. Salvage operations on the burned out wreck are pictured at the bottom.



**Left:** The big Goltra steamer IOWA, 230 x 58 x 8, was one of four identical sternwheelers built in 1921 at Stillwater, MN. Chartered by ORCO during the spring of 1926, she was out of place on the Ohio, and soon returned to her usual Mississippi River trade.

## Expansion Years – Phase One

Ingersoll saw that with the continuing success, new equipment was needed. The problem, as always with expansion, was money. At this point Ingersoll made a deal with C. E. Hutchinson, president of the West Virginia Coal and Coke Company based in Omar, WV. This company had extensive rail holdings, The Coal & Coke Railway; a mining operation, Davis Colliery Company; and large land holdings in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky.

On April 17, 1925, the Ohio River Company (ORCO) was incorporated in West Virginia as a wholly-owned subsidiary of West Virginia Coal and Coke Company. Both A. C. Ingersoll, Sr. and



*Wreck photo from Murphy Library - University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. All other photos are courtesy of Capt. Bill Judd unless otherwise noted.*

W. W. Marting were retained to head the new concern. The Philadelphia and Cleveland Coal Company ceased to exist as an operating company, a trend that became common in the next seventy-nine years of the Ohio River Company.

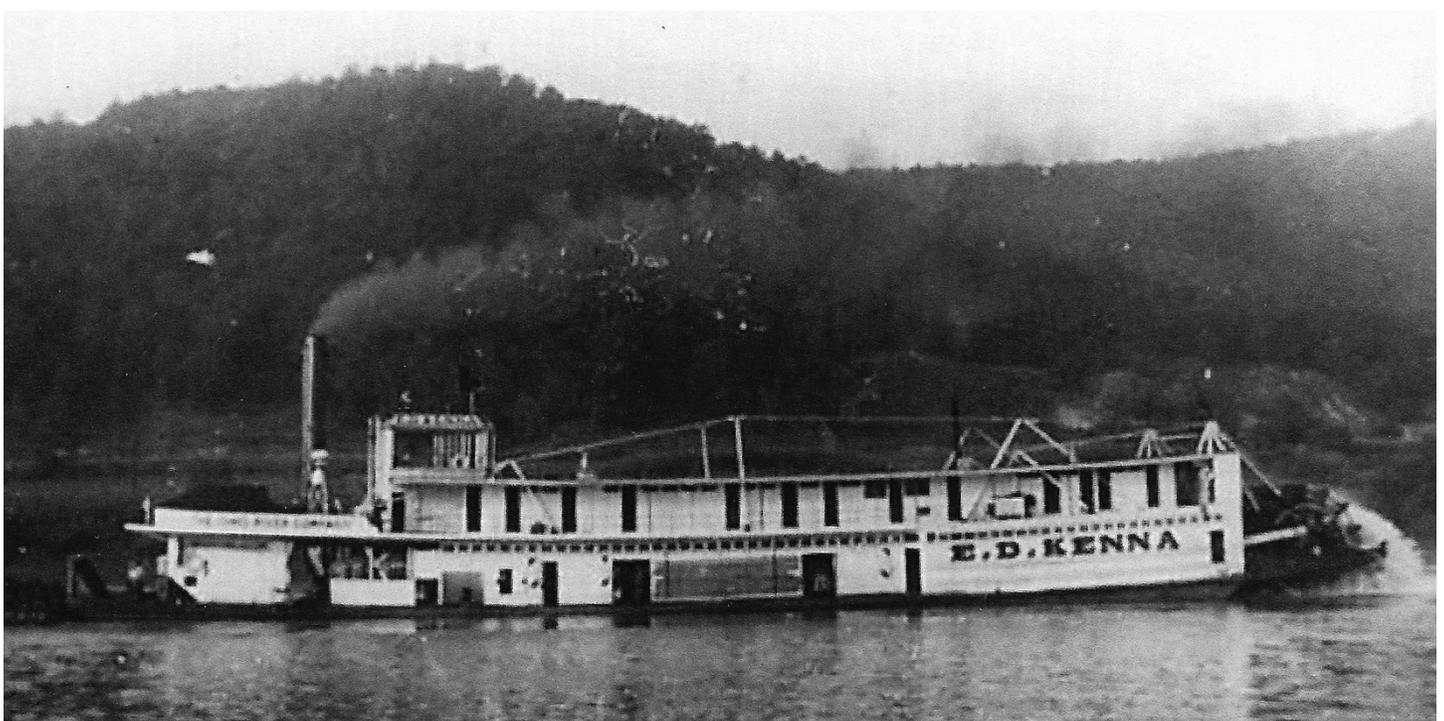
One of the first moves by the new company was to let a contract to Ward Engineering Works at Charleston, WV for construction and purchase of a new steel-hulled, 750 horsepower sternwheel towboat, the Str. E. D. KENNA (T0651). Total price delivered amounted to \$179,325. The boat was delivered to ORCO in July 1926 with Capt. Edgar "Jocko" Meek as master. Capt. Meek reportedly was quoted as saying "before any deckhand can become a mate for me, he has to be able to whip anyone in the crew or make them think he could." ORCO also let contracts for thirty new steel "standard" barges costing \$14,000 each.

Also in 1925, ORCO signed huge contracts with the Cincinnati Gas & Electric Company for coal delivery to CG&E power plants. Probably due to this relationship, ORCO moved its offices to the seventh floor of the Atlas Bank Building in Cincinnati.

The new company's terminal business had an explosive growth. Huntington Terminal tonnage in 1925 was 338,000 tons, and by 1927 was 747,000 tons. A third terminal was opened in 1931 at Mill Street in

Cincinnati, Ohio River Mile 471.2. Several large barge fleet areas were established in the Cincinnati harbor. This growth of tonnage, even though it was during the Depression years, continued at a fast pace and once more strained the limited river fleet. Once again numerous vessels were chartered, among them the steamers CATHARINE DAVIS (T0361), D. W. WISHERD (T0553) and ARTHUR HIDER (T0168).

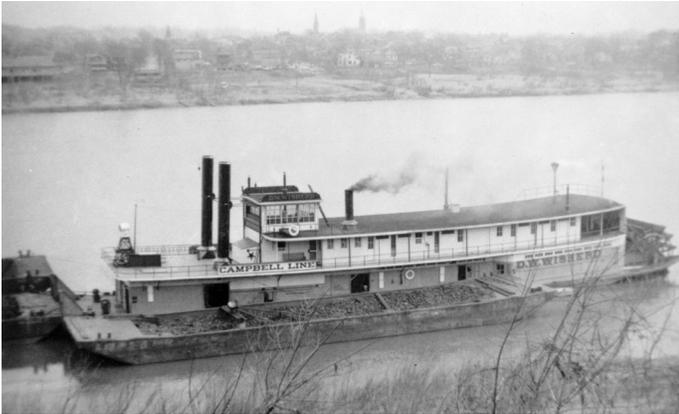
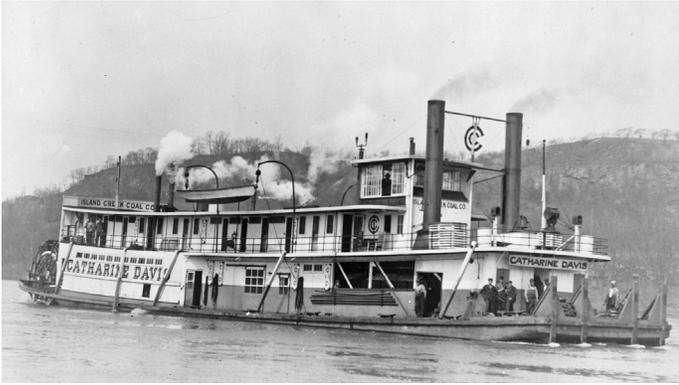
Again Ingersoll chafed under the charter agreements and soon embarked on a fleet enlargement. His first move was to let a contract with Dravo Corporation of Neville Island, PA to construct a large steam sternwheel towboat of 1000 horsepower. This vessel, the steamer OMAR (T1958) was completed in 1936 and would become the company's flagship and probably the best-known towboat on the middle Ohio River. Even to this date, fifty-eight years after her retirement in 1962, when the author gives a slide presentation, four or five individuals in the audience chime in "I know that boat." Capt. John C. Marting, son of W. W. Marting, was in charge of her construction. Capt. Marting went on to become Vice President of ORCO. Incidentally, the boat was named for the small town in West Virginia where West Virginia Coal & Coke was originally headquartered. The OMAR on January 14, 1939 moved 28 barges carrying 24,041 tons of coal from the Huntington Terminal to Cincinnati. This was a record. By 1940 ORCO



was moving in excess of 2,500,000 tons annually, a big boost over its first year of 388,000 tons.

## New Markets and a New River

In 1937 ORCO was awarded several large towing contracts with the Commonwealth Edison Company to supply coal to their Chicago-area plants. ORCO formed the Illinois River Division and sent over the Str. E. D. KENNA (To651) and their thirty new jumbo barges. Capt. A. C. Ingersoll, Jr. was placed in charge of this operation. ORCO built a rather large terminal and fleeting facility at Kingston Mines, IL (Illinois River Mile 146.6). Part



*Pictured top to bottom are CATHARINE DAVIS, D. W. WISHERD and ARTHUR HIDER, among the boats chartered by ORCO in the 1920s and 30s to meet the company's growing needs. Photos courtesy of Murphy Library.*

of this landing dock area was the old lock walls of one of the original Illinois & Michigan canal project locks completed back in 1848 and abandoned upon completion of the Illinois River Waterway in 1933.

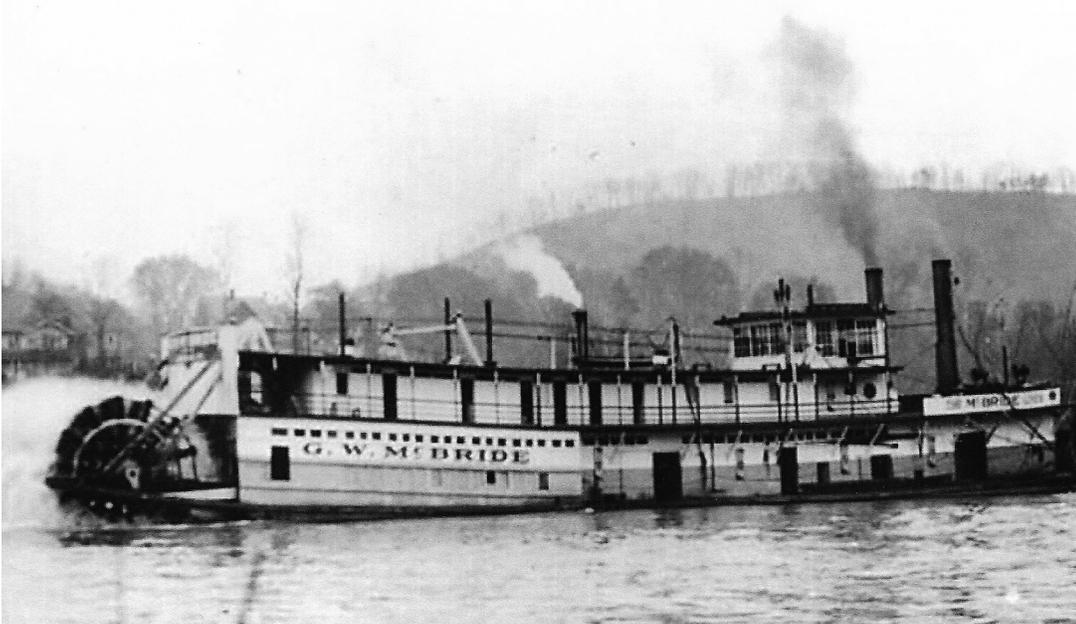
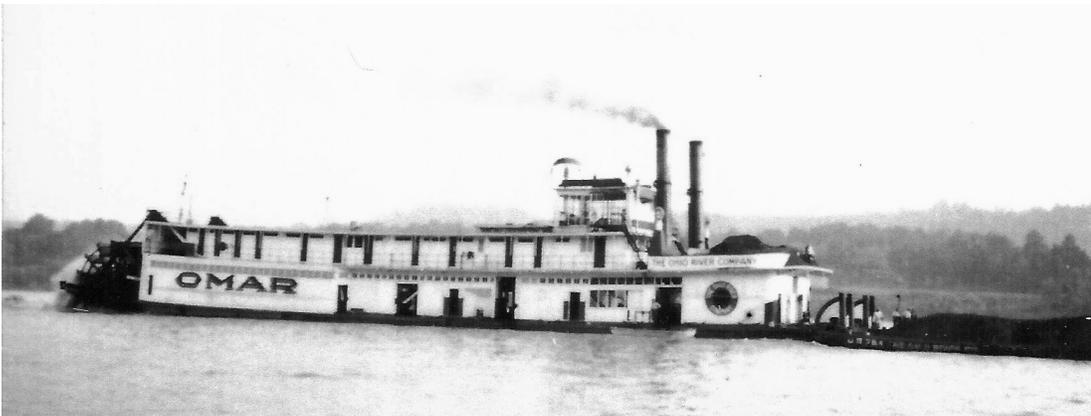
Several significant events were a result of this Illinois River venture. First was the purchase of the Str. G. W. McBRIDE (To870) to replace the E. D. KENNA in the Ohio River trade. Second was the purchase of a diesel prop towboat, the NORTH STAR. This vessel had been built by Nashville Bridge Company in 1925. NORTH STAR was completely rebuilt in 1938 at ORCO's Addyston terminal with two new Fairbanks-Morse diesels of 800 hp, and its superstructure was cut off to just the main deck with a retractable pilot house for Illinois River service. Because of the success of the NORTH STAR, a contract was let in 1941 with St. Louis Shipbuilding and Steel to construct a new large 154' x 34' all-steel, 1600 hp vessel, single deck with retractable pilot house to be named W. W. MARTING. Both NORTH STAR and W. W. MARTING were the beginning of ORCO's changeover to diesel power.

The third event was a real shocker. Albert Converse Ingersoll, Sr., along with his son Capt. A. C. Ingersoll, Jr. abruptly left the company. Rumor had it that the senior Ingersoll was totally opposed to the diesel boats. The upshot of the deal was that he quickly founded the Central Barge Company to compete with ORCO on the Illinois. It's evident that Ingersoll was reluctant to leave the steam era as he let a contract with Marietta Manufacturing at Point Pleasant, WV to build the big Str. ALEXANDER MACKENZIE (Too85), launched in 1939 with Capt. A. C. Ingersoll, Jr. in command.

## Tragic Events

There is an old saying that bad things happen in a series of three. For ORCO that certainly held true. On August 23, 1940 the company's first vessel, the Str. A. C. INGERSOLL, JR., burned and was a total loss just above Tietzville, KY about two miles below Augusta, KY. The Str. GORDON C. GREENE rescued the crew.

The second tragic event happened on February 22, 1942 when the Str. G. W. McBRIDE, in high



**Top:** OMAR, built in 1936 by Dravo measured 171.4 x 34.6 x 7 with 1000 hp engines supplied by Marietta Manufacturing. She was the company flagship and was perhaps the most well-known boat on the middle Ohio. Murphy Library photo.

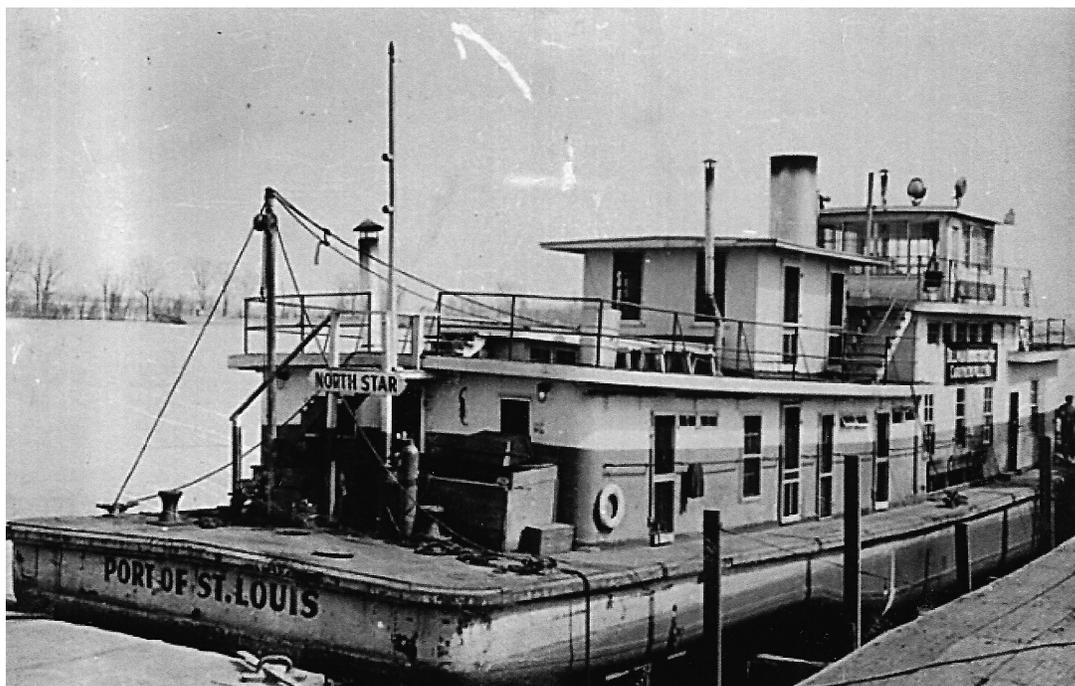
**Middle:** This 1954 photo at Mile 457 captures a skiff alongside OMAR getting ready to bring crew over to pick up William Judd.

**Bottom:** G. W. McBRIDE, originally built in 1916 as CONQUEROR, was sold to ORCO in March 1937 to take the place of E. D. KENNA. **Opposite page top:** ORCO's first diesel boat, the NORTH STAR. This twin prop vessel was sold to the company in 1938. **Opposite page middle:** W. W. MARTING, built for ORCO by St. Louis Ship in 1941. **Opposite page bottom:** Salvaging the wreck of G. W. McBRIDE in Feb. 1942. Murphy Library photo.

water and towing only four barges, got out of shape and struck a pier of the L&N Railroad Bridge at Cincinnati. Capt. Roy Edgington was at the wheel and sounded a distress whistle which was heard throughout the harbor and uptown in Cincinnati proper. Help was immediately mobilized, but it was too late. The McBRIDE caught the pier sideways, literally broke apart, and rolled over in just a few minutes. Sixteen lives were lost including Capt. Edgington and the master, Capt. P. O. Lallance. The additional fourteen lives lost out of the crew of twenty-one numbered her mate, chief engineer, second engineer, watchman, four firemen, three cooks/maids, two deckhands, and a boiler man. To show how family-connected steamboaters were, those lost included two sisters, two brothers, a brother and sister, and a husband and wife.

This event attracted national headlines and drew large crowds to the riverfront to watch the salvage operation.

The third event happened on May 22, 1948 when the Str. OMAR, running upstream light boat, decided to do a deep six and ended up sunk to her second deck at the mouth of Licking River, directly across from the Cincinnati Public Landing. This was extremely embarrassing to ORCO as the scene was visible from their office windows in the Atlas Bank Building. Officials ordered quick salvage, regardless of cost, to get its flagship up and out of view. Luckily, these three events were the

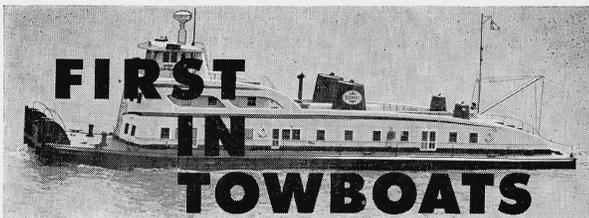


most serious in the company's seventy-eight year history, actually an exemplary record for as big a river operation as ORCO.

## Expansion Years - Phase Two

The period from 1940 to 1965 saw ORCO double, then triple, and finally quadruple in size as to terminal facilities, tonnages, floating equipment, and corporate value. Two important events affected this period of growth: World War II and the modernization of the Ohio River lock and dam system.

The success of NORTH STAR and W. W. MARTING convinced management to pursue the development of new diesel propeller boats. In 1943 a contract was awarded to St. Louis Shipbuilding to construct the new diesel boat HENRY S. STURGIS, 154' x 36', with Fairbanks-Morse 1600 hp diesels. This was the start of a long relationship between ORCO and St. Louis Ship, resulting in the construction of over thirty large towing vessels over the next thirty-five years.



### by Over 2 to 1

Towboats Designed and Built by St. Louis Ship Since 1933:

Alice	Barry Dean	Kit Carson	Albert Rowse
Aliquippa	Delta Cities	Klondike	Sheryl L
Anna B	De Soto	Kokoda	St. Louis Zephyr
Ato	J. H. Duffy	LaCrosse Socony	Lew Simms
Barbour	Dixieland	La Salle	Chilli Simpson
Bayou Barataria	Eddie E	Meriwether Lewis	Standard
Beauregard	Joe F	Lady Linda	Charles R.
Bilge	John Fabick III	Louise	Stevenson
Edw. W. Bilhorn	Fayette	Lucy E	Stubby
Bonnie Bawn	Ferdinand	Lulubelle II	Henry S. Sturgis.
Buckridge	Chas. Folsom	W. F. McCrady	Sydney
Buna	Fort Dearborn	Wallace McGeorge	Sylvia T
Caillouet	Fort Jackson	Margie	Tipton
Casablanca	Stephen Foster	W. W. Marting	Titan
Celeste	E. Frakes	Massman	Glenn Traer
Charles B	Glen Jr.	Mateur	Triad
Cherokee	Gona	Memphis Zephyr	Tri-Cities
Chuckie D	Gunnel	Midwest Cities	Claude Tully
CIS 6	Hancock	Mississippi II	Tunis
Wm. Clark	Havana Zephyr	Richard Moyle	TVA No. 1
Samuel Clemens	W. L. Heckman	Nima F	Twin Cities
Senator Combs	C. F. Hood	Pacific	Valvoline
Commercial	Robt. M. Hoover	Geo. Peterson	Vance
Clipper	Sam Houston	Pasa	Valean
Commercial	Gene C. Hutchinson	Posey	Wailles
Express	Illinois	H. T. Pott	Weinert
Connee	Joel Jim	Pug	Whitewater
A. H. Crane	Katherine	Pulaski	Snow Wilson
Davy Crockett	Kay D	Geo. Richwood	L. L. Wright
Elinor D	W. J. Kearns	Rodney	45-F-205
J. K. Davison	Kentucky	J. W. Rose	45-R-11

BARGES - TOWBOATS - KORT NOZZLES - CONTRAGUIDE RUDDERS

### St. Louis Shipbuilding & Steel Co.

Foot of Davis St., St. Louis, Mo.

Member American Waterways Operators, Inc.

A very similar and near look-alike vessel also built by St. Louis Ship that year, but not an actual sister ship as many have assumed, was purchased in 1950, the CHARLES R. STEVENSON. She had Fairbanks-Morse diesels of 2400 hp, considered very powerful for that time. The STURGIS and STEVENSON began the architectural trend evident in many of the succeeding ORCO boats with their sloped cabin decks and lots of streamlined false work. This look flew in the face of the typical new diesel towboat that Capt. Fred Way, Jr. described in an early *Inland River Record* as "a shoe box on a barge with engines."

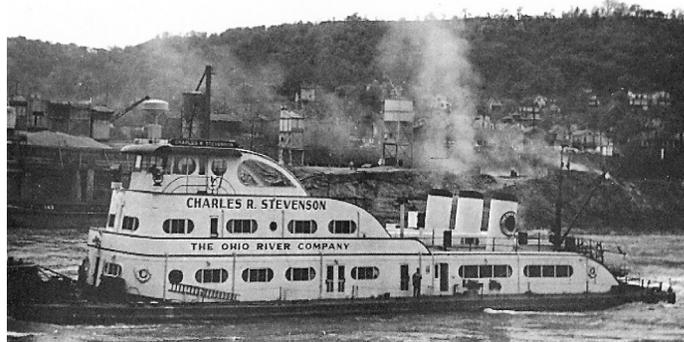
The CHARLES R. STEVENSON, which spent most of her life in the upper Ohio trades, was known as a "rattler." The good housewives on the upper Ohio knew to keep an eagle eye on glass objects sitting on shelves when the STEVENSON was close, lest those objects would "walk off" the shelf and crash to the floor. ORCO in this period also added two "Illinois River style" retractable pilot house boats, the F. B. PAYNE and BETTY M. to the fleet.

But management was not yet quite fully sold on the diesel era, as evidenced by the company's purchase in 1947 of two big, steam sternwheel boats, the CHARLES DORRANCE (T0379), formerly JOHN W. HUBBARD; and the JOHN J. ROWE (T1415), formerly CHARLES T. CAMPBELL. These two steamers, built by Dravo, were almost identical sisters to ORCO's flagship vessel OMAR. In 1952, two more identical steamboats were purchased from Jones & Laughlin Steel Company, this time propeller-driven craft, the T. R. WORKMAN (T2385) and MIKE CREDITOR (T1810). However, both boats lasted only three years under ORCO ownership.

By 1955 even ORCO knew that the steam era on the Western Rivers had come to an end. The E. D. KENNA was sold in 1947, the CREDITOR and WORKMAN in 1955, the DORRANCE in 1957, the ROWE in 1960, and finally in 1961, the company's darling, the Str. OMAR was laid up and then donated to the State of West Virginia and renamed RHODODENDRON to be used as a showboat and museum for that state's centennial. Ironically, both the OMAR and DORRANCE

continue in use today: the OMAR at Clinton, IA and the DORRANCE until recently as the Mike Fink Restaurant at Covington, KY, but now out of service and laid up in BB Riverboats fleet at Newport, KY.

ORCO was getting big – probably huge would be a more adequate description. Its river tonnage figures were 2,500,000 tons in 1940; 6,600,000 tons in 1950; and by 1960 close to 20,000,000 tons. They employed more than 900 people and had revenues in excess of \$25 million. It had acquired



**Bottom of opposite page:** This ad from the 1955 Inland River Record details the prominent place St. Louis Ship occupied in the marine construction business.

**Top right:** CHARLES R. STEVENSON was acquired in 1950 from the Sohio Corporation to augment HENRY S. STURGIS. Both boats pioneered the "streamline" look. The STEVENSON, known along the river as a "rattler", announced her arrival by the shards of glassware that she vibrated off shelves in riverfront homes. **Middle right:** Originally named SOHIOAN when built in 1943, she was featured in this Fairbanks-Morse ad from the 1945 Inland River Record. She was touted at the time as "the largest and most powerful Diesel towboat on the river." **Bottom right:** ORCO's HENRY S. STURGIS was the first towboat built for the company by St. Louis Ship in 1943, a partnership that lasted for thirty-five years and spanned thirty large towing vessels. Her design featured engines that were located well aft with relatively short prop shafting.

## Staying Power!

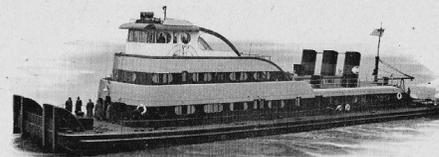


SANDY, a dredge tender, is powered by a Fairbanks-Morse Model 36, 120 h.p. Diesel engine. It has been in almost continuous oper-

ation on inland rivers since it was built eight years ago—another testimonial to the reliability of Fairbanks-Morse Diesels.

## Fairbanks-Morse

Fairbanks-Morse Bldg.  
Chicago, 5, Illinois



The SOHIOAN, designed and built by the St. Louis Shipbuilding and Steel Company is the largest and most powerful Diesel towboat on the rivers. It is powered by three Fairbanks-Morse 805 h.p. Diesel engines and has two Fairbanks-Morse 90 h.p. Diesels for auxiliary service.

### Fairbanks-Morse Diesels deliver power that stays!

It is dependable power generated by Fairbanks-Morse Diesels that keep going efficiently year after year under continuous heavy duty service.

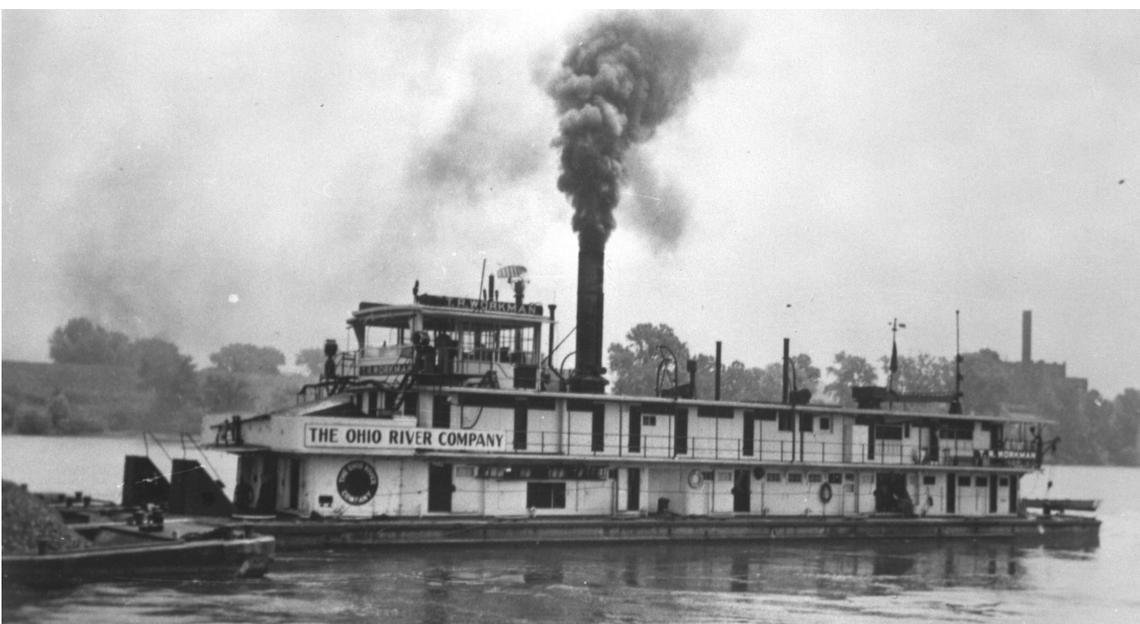
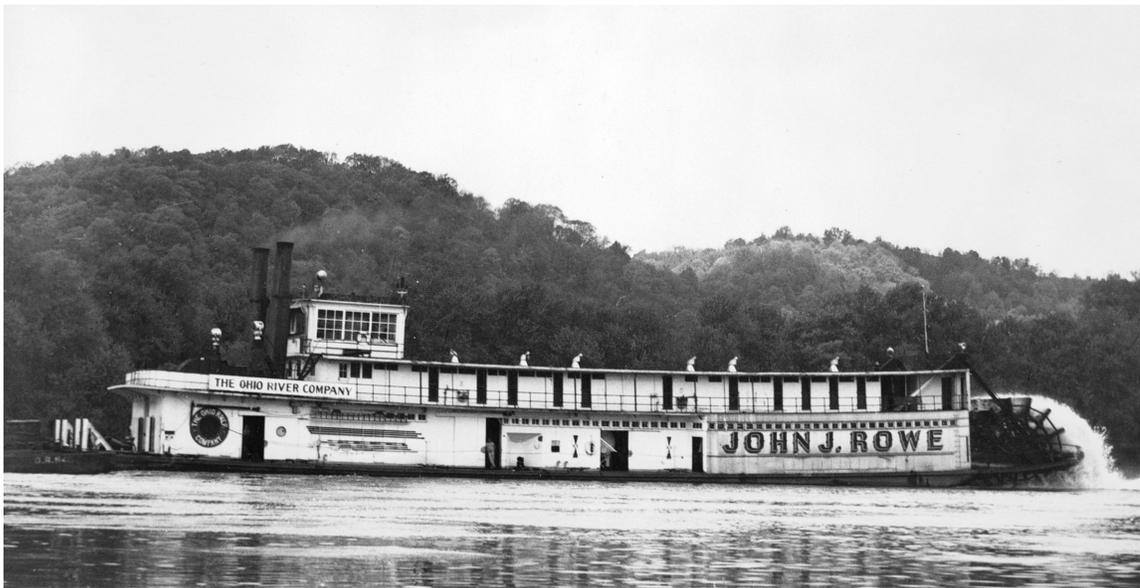
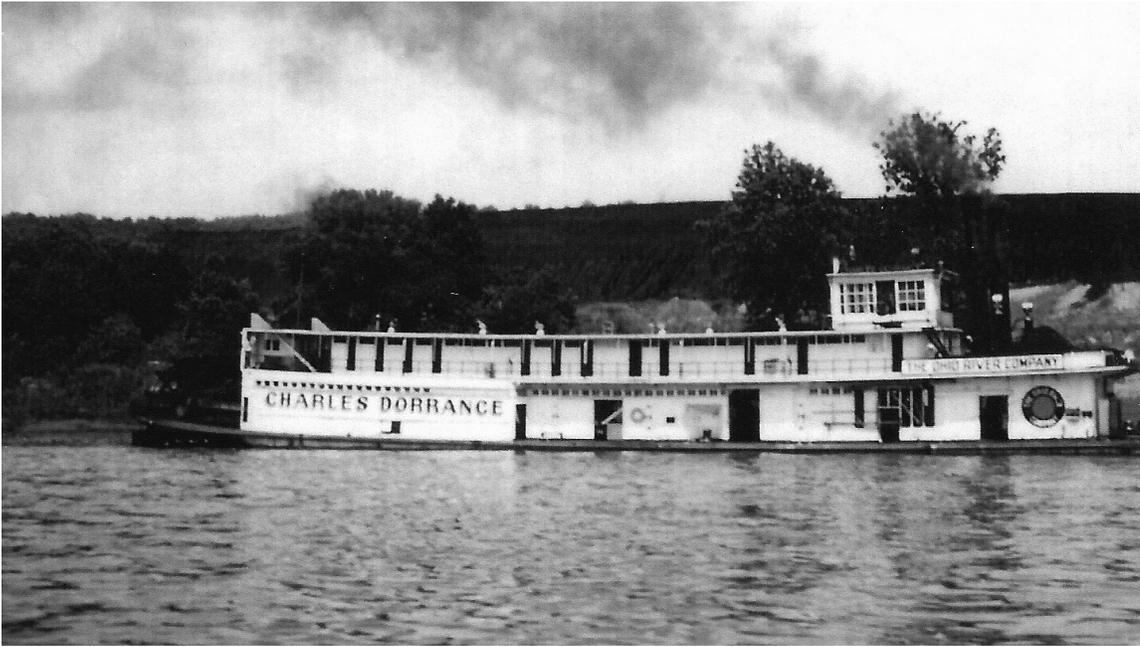
It is low cost power generated by Fairbanks-Morse Diesels that have outstanding record for low fuel cost and extremely low maintenance cost.

If you are planning to build or convert, have a Fairbanks-Morse engineer study your problem. There is no obligation.

## DIESELS

Diesel Locomotives . Diesel Engines . Generators  
Motors . Pumps . Scales . Magnets . Stokers  
Railroad Motor Cars . Standpipes . Farm Equipment





**Top:** Str. CHARLES DORRANCE at Beckjord Station in 1950. This vessel and the steamers OMAR and JOHN J. ROWE helped to maintain a steam presence in ORCO's fleet throughout the late 40s and into the 50s. **Middle:** Str. JOHN J. ROWE, along with the DORRANCE, was built by Dravo in 1936, and they were near-sister boats to the OMAR. Murphy Library photo. **Bottom:** Built in 1931 as HENRY A. LAUGHLIN by Ward Engineering, this 456 hp single prop boat was purchased in 1952 and renamed T. R. WORKMAN. **Top of opposite page:** MIKE CREDITOR with loads of coal heads upstream at Marietta in this Murphy Library photo. A twin prop vessel also built by Ward in 1931 as VESTA, she too was sold to ORCO in 1952 and renamed. Her name changed a third time to ORCO when a new diesel prop MIKE CREDITOR appeared in 1954. **Middle of opposite page:** When OMAR was decommissioned in 1961, the State of West Virginia remodeled her to house exhibits during the state's Centennial in 1962 when she was towed from Charleston to Fairmont. Murphy Library photo.



a new terminal at Kenova, WV to supplement the Huntington Terminal which had been rebuilt, but was at capacity and out of room to expand.

The size and success of ORCO attracted outside investors, namely a New Yorker named Simon Scheuer who acquired control in 1954. Scheuer pretty well cleaned house as to top management. Eli Goldston was brought in to reform the company. In the process, Goldston and Scheuer decided the river operation was the way to go and began

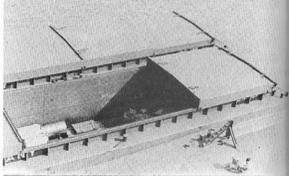
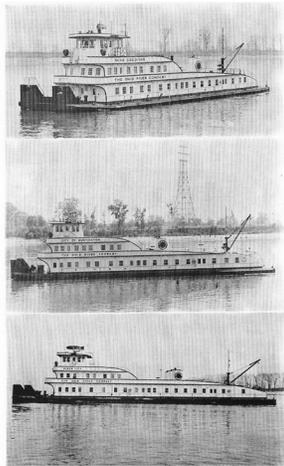
to systematically purge the mining side of the operation. In April 1955 West Virginia Coal & Coke Company ceased to exist. The new parent company name was to be Midland Enterprises, Inc., with The Ohio River Company left intact as a wholly-owned subsidiary. Under the new ownership and management, ORCO embarked on its most ambitious expansion ever. A towboat and barge building program was put into place, the likes and size of which had never been seen in the inland river industry prior to 1954. Over the next

**THE OHIO RIVER COMPANY**

GENERAL OFFICES  
Cincinnati 2, Ohio



largest transporter of inland waterborne tonnage in the nation. From its beginning in 1926 with a total movement of 399,000 tons, The Ohio River Company has expanded its services to the point where in 1956 it handled over 13,000,000 tons. The company is proud to its part in the growth of the lignite industry by virtue of its I.C.C. rights and through joint services and tariffs with other barge lines. The Ohio River Company provides dependable service throughout the entire Mississippi River system.



**COVERED JUMBO BARGES**

For large shipments of all types of commodities requiring protection from the weather. Semi-enclosed, single cargo compartment protected by double skin, with side and double bottom compartments, telescopic rolling covers.

<b>Hull Dimensions:</b>	
Length	190' 0"
Breadth	33' 0"
Depth	22' 0"
<b>Cargo Compartment:</b>	
Length of top	172' 0"
Length of bottom	162' 0"
Width	33' 0"
Height	11' 0"
Cubic Capacity (Level Full) 51,500 Cu. Ft.	
<b>Carrying Capacity - Tons (2000 g.)</b>	
Grain*	300
Coal	300
Iron	300
Steel	300
Timber	300
Other	300
Grain	1000

**The Ohio River Company**

operates the arterial barge lines that connect mid-eastern coal and steel centers with the Great Lakes, Upper Mississippi, Lower Mississippi, Gulf ports, and the southwestern of country.

**COVERED STANDARD BARGES**

For shipments of all types of commodities requiring protection from the weather. Semi-enclosed, single cargo compartment protected by double skin, telescopic rolling covers.

<b>Hull Dimensions:</b>	
Length	170' 0"
Breadth	33' 0"
Depth	22' 0"
<b>Cargo Compartment:</b>	
Length of top	152' 0"
Length of bottom	142' 0"
Width	33' 0"
Height	11' 0"
Cubic Capacity (Level Full) 36,500 Cu. Ft.	
<b>Carrying Capacity - Tons (2000 g.)</b>	
Grain*	300
Coal	300
Iron	300
Steel	300
Timber	300
Other	300
Grain	1000

\*To nearest ton.

**OPEN JUMBO BARGES**

Semi-enclosed, single cargo compartment protected by double skin, with side and double bottom compartments.

<b>Hull Dimensions:</b>	
Length	190' 0"
Breadth	33' 0"
<b>Cargo Compartment:</b>	
Length of top	172' 0"
Length of bottom	162' 0"
Width of top	33' 0"
Width of bottom	33' 0"
Height	11' 0"
Cubic Capacity (Level Full) 51,500 Cu. Ft.	
<b>Carrying Capacity - Tons (2000 g.)</b>	
Grain*	300
Coal	300
Iron	300
Steel	300
Timber	300
Other	300
Grain	1000

\*To nearest ton.

**OPEN STANDARD BARGES**

Double sided, single cargo compartment protected by double skin.

<b>Hull Dimensions:</b>	
Length	170' 0"
Breadth	33' 0"
<b>Cargo Compartment:</b>	
Length of top	152' 0"
Length of bottom	142' 0"
Width of top	33' 0"
Width of bottom	33' 0"
Height	11' 0"
Cubic Capacity (Level Full) 36,500 Cu. Ft.	
<b>Carrying Capacity - Tons (2000 g.)</b>	
Grain*	300
Coal	300
Iron	300
Steel	300
Timber	300
Other	300
Grain	1000

\*To nearest ton.

ten years contracts would be let for nineteen large towboats, sixteen of which were built by St. Louis Ship. Contracts were let for 1,000 barges.

The towboat-building program began with what was known as the "first generation" boats in 1954. Each series picked up its own name amongst the river community. "The first five" were A. H. CRANE (1954), MIKE CREDITOR (1954), A. L. LONG (1955), CITY OF HUNTINGTON (1956) and BOB BENTER (1957). Each of these vessels was twin prop, 140' x 35' and 2160 hp. The "Illinois twins" were TOM RAGSDALE (1955) and DES PLAINES (1956). Each of these boats was single prop, 100' x 28', of 1080 hp and fitted with a retractable pilot house. The "big four" series consisted of JOHN J. ROWE (1955), WALTER C. BECKJORD (1955), OVEC (1956) and QUEEN CITY (1957). Each of these were triple prop, 164' x 44" and rated at 3240 hp.

One interesting fact about the "first generation" boats was their engines. All these boats had Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton engines. This was the first use of this make on the river system. The basic engine had been in use on locomotives with great success for quite some time. All eleven of the vessels had identical B-L-H 6-cylinder models of 1080 hp each,

The Ohio River Company featured ads in The Ohio River Handbook above and in Dec. 18, 1971 Waterways Journal.



# Try losing a barge in here sometime.

When you ship by barge, there's no chance of ever having your cargo lost and forgotten on some siding in Pocatello.

At Ohio River Company, we have computers and radio telephone systems that tell us exactly where every ounce of cargo we're shipping is at all times.

Shipping by barge moves your cargo nearly as far every day as shipping it by rail, yet costs about 1/4 the shipping charges and really lowers cargo insurance rates.

And since most of the country's markets and manufacturing centers are located either on or within 300 miles of one of the inland waterways, you can actually get your shipment to where it's going more reliably, cheaper by barge.

Without getting lost in the middle of nowhere. Why not call us for full information?



The Ohio River Company  
Provident Tower  
1 East Fourth Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202  
Phone: (513) 721-4000  
J. Paul Toner, Traffic Manager

Additional sales and service offices located in Little Rock, New York City, New Orleans, Pittsburgh and Joliet.

set in configuration of one, two, or three depending on the boat. This was an innovative approach due to minimum parts stock, engineers being able to move from boat to boat and deal with the same machinery, along with spare engines being immediately available to replace any of the twenty-four engines in service on the boats.

The so-called “second generation” boats soon followed. Known as the “fantastic five”, they were JOHN LADD DEAN (1961), ORCO (1961), WM. H. ZIMMER (1962), ROBERT P. TIBOLT (1962), and L. FIORE (1964). The boats were twin prop, 165' x 42' and rated 4000 hp. This series of boats were equipped with Fairbanks-Morse 38D8 series engines. This move back to F-M can be traced to the NORTH STAR, W. W. MARTING and HENRY S. STURGIS.

## Acquisition - Merger - Consolidation

Some think “bigger is better,” while others would argue that such is not the case, but is rather the root of all corporate evil. Much of both arguments can be applied to the final thirty years of ORCO and its parent companies.

In 1961 Midland's chief stockholder Simon Scheuer,



**Top:** m/v BOB BENTER, one of the “First Five.” 2160 hp. **Middle:** m/v TOM RAGSDALE, one of the “Illinois Twins.” 1080 hp. **Bottom:** m/v JOHN J. ROWE, one of the “Big Four” boats. 3240 hp. Named for the president of Fifth Third Bank.

having made a fortune on his investment in Midland/ORCO, with his shares of stock going from \$15 to \$58 per share, was looking for more of that green stuff. He found it in Eastern Gas & Fuel Associates of Boston. A merger agreement was set in place and Eastern took over Midland Enterprises. Through all of this, ORCO survived as a wholly-owned operating subsidiary. With this change came a new breed of leadership. ORCO's middle management had almost always consisted of people brought up through the ranks. Included were persons who had both terminal and boat experience. Now came the corporate "whiz kids", the bean counters, pseudo lawyers and so-called "transportation specialists." Times were a-changing!

One of the first new ventures was to enter the offshore Gulf of Mexico trade hauling phosphate from Tampa, FL to Taft, LA on the Mississippi. This soon was followed by a sulphur contract from Tampa to Uncle Sam, LA for Freeport Sulphur Corporation. The equipment to be used were three tugs of 5000 hp and three big barges with notched sterns. Also constructed was a terminal at Tampa. This operation was under ORCO but called Red Circle Transport, and was the company's first venture into new markets since forming the Illinois Division in 1937.

ORCO had both contract and common carrier rights on the Ohio and Illinois Rivers, but in 1965 set its sights on the lower Mississippi. Orgulf Transport Company was formed to transport coal, phosphate, rock and grain. Three new towing vessels were built for this trade: ELAINE G. (1965), HELEN S. (1965), and HARLLEE BRANCH, JR. (1966). All three had Fairbanks-Morse diesels of 4300 hp. The builder was Dravo Corporation of Neville Island, PA and was further evidence of ORCO/Midland's new management. The first real acquisition, a harbinger of things to come, was the signing of large contracts with Wheeling Steel Corporation in 1967. In the deal ORCO acquired the entire floating plant of Wheeling Steel, including two diesel towboats, KENOVA (ex-ROBERT E. REED) and WHARTON (ex-LA BELLE), along with a large fleet of 88 barges.

By 1970 the ORCO/Midland corporate structure was so intertwined it is virtually impossible to tell

"Who's on First and What's on Second?" ORCO continued to have rapid growth, but its operations were so inter-connected with the parent company Midland that in most cases its operations were one and the same. This applied to management as well. One event that occurred in 1975 that did not set well with ORCO's faithful was the new stack logo and color scheme for the boats. Ever since NORTH STAR and HENRY S. STURGIS were built, ORCO boats had been snow white with dark green trim and carried the famous "bull's eye" logo on their stacks. Now the trim was to be a gaudy red and the stack logo a red ball with a white "energy wheel" star. Tacky to say the least. After all, on the Ohio River all young, new, hopeful towboat owners had for years painted their boats white with green trim. Follow the big boys and hope for the same success. This writer fell for the idea. The colors looked good but the success was not so great.

Through the late 1970s, 80s, and 90s, ORCO prospered and in fact grew in size in its equipment and volume of tonnage. Its parent company had gone on several buy-out sprees acquiring such concerns as Chotin Transportation with its fleet of 15 towboats and over 150 specialized tank barges in 1971. The Walker Companies of Paducah were acquired in 1982, consisting of R&W Marine Towing and the Walker Shipyard operation. The big move came in 1984 when the Federal Barge Line, with its 12 towboats and over 700 barges, was purchased. A touch of irony in the FBL purchase was that one of its strong leaders and CEO until his tragic death in August 1965 had been Capt. A. C. Ingersoll, Jr.

As ORCO continued to grow, more equipment was needed. A large towboat and barge-building program was begun in the late 70s with the addition of six new 5600-6000 hp towboats for ORCO and two 9000 hp boats for Orgulf. By 1990 ORCO moved in excess of 35 million tons, and that year's *Inland River Record* listed 84 towboats in the Midland Enterprise fleet.

Acquisitions continued, but this time there was "a wolf at the door." Eastern Gas and Fuel was acquired in 2000 by KeySpan Energy Corporation, whose headquarters were in New York City. KeySpan was the fourth largest natural gas utility in the U. S. and was interested in Eastern only for its

gas business. KeySpan announced that all the river operations were up for sale as a unit or piecemeal. That was the first shoe to drop with ORCO operating in a “hunkered down” defensive mentality for the next three years.

In 2002, Ingram Industries of Nashville acquired all the assets of Midland Enterprises, including ORCO and Orgulf. The Orgulf Division was the first to go, with Ingram stating that The Ohio River Company name was historically important to retain. The ORCO office at Cincinnati, meanwhile, was reduced from over 130 employees to six. And then on May 19, 2004, the fatal blow came with Ingram’s terse announcement that The Ohio River Company would cease to exist. Its Ohio River boats, namely the so-called “second generation” towboats, were all put up for sale. And with that sale, the dreams and vision of Albert Converse Ingersoll, Sr. had come to an end.

*Author’s note: A special thanks goes to Mrs. Patty Hyer, retired from Ingram Barge and now a Board member of the Ohio Valley River*



**Top:** m/v WM. H. ZIMMER, one of second generation “Fantastic Five.” Zimmer was president of Cincinnati Gas and Electric from 1962 to 1975. **Middle:** m/v HELEN S. was built by Dravo, not St. Louis Ship. 4300 hp. Named for wife of CEO Simon Scheuer. **Bottom:** m/v ELAINE G.

Museum at Clarington, OH, who kindly supplied the writer with articles and printed material on The Ohio River Company and also a booklet "History of Midland Enterprises." ①

Pictured on the right is Orgulf's 9200 hp. ROBERT A. KYLE, 200 x 54, built by Dravo. "The bigger they come, the harder they fall." Below, Ohio River Co.'s JOHN J. ROWE flanks the bend in Cincinnati harbor to get lined up for running the bridges in this Murphy Library photo circa 1948.



# Memories of the Steamer ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

Surprising things can pop up in the dead of winter whenever your editor opens his email. It happened again early this January when S&D member Capt. Dan Shrake sent a message about some photos he had snapped from the pilothouse of m/v COOPERATIVE MARINER: "A few days ago while still on the boat we went through Joliet and I took a few pictures of the old girl. The ALEXANDER MACKENZIE is my all-time favorite steam sternwheel towboat, and I would be happy for you to share those with the readers. Maybe you could include a picture of the boat when it was in service also. Whatever happened to her sister boat, the JASON?"

Well, now! Dan's seemingly innocent note set in motion a search for photos and info about the MACKENZIE, just as your editor had been fretting about what we might use to "round out" the rest of the March issue. Knowing that Dan takes devilish delight at dangling interesting bits of info and steamboat discoveries of photos and other memorabilia that would whet the appetite and curiosity of any true steamboat devotee, we suspect that his inquiries and suggestions might have been more than casual comments. And so in response to our good friend's message and photos, we offer this snippet about his favorite steam towboat. We hope our readers will enjoy it as much as Capt. Dan. 🕒



*This April 12, 1939 Murphy Library photo shows the brand new flag-bedecked ALEXANDER MACKENZIE (TOO85) up on the ways of the Marietta Manufacturing Company in Point Pleasant, WV. As Capt. Bill Judd relates in his feature story about The Ohio River Company, A. C. Ingersoll, Sr. and his son left that company to form Central Barge Line, to go into direct competition with ORCO when they expanded their operations to the Illinois River in 1937. That new company's first towboat is pictured above. She was designed by Floyd Alexander, a native of Marietta, OH and longtime employee of Marietta Manufacturing. He also designed the earlier sternwheel towboat STEEL CITY. Her hull measured 167 x 37.5 x 8.4. Her two Foster Wheeler boilers supplied steam for her compound condensing engines, 16's, 32's with a 10-foot stroke.*



**Top of opposite page:** The MACKENZIE is pictured here nearing Peoria, IL on the Illinois River with twelve loads, most likely destined for delivery to Commonwealth Edison's Chicago-area power plants. And it's cold! Note the ice hanging from her guards on the fantail. The white terminal barge ahead to her port side belongs to Federal Barge Line. **Bottom of opposite page:** The big coal burner is shown here somewhere on the Upper Mississippi, as evidenced by the fact that this photo was snapped by McGregor, IA photographer Margery Goergen. The partially empty fuel flat carried alongside provided coal through an automated bunkering system. She certainly is turning a mighty impressive wheel in this view. Both photos courtesy of Murphy Library, U.W. - La Crosse.



Dan's photos of the MACKENZIE were taken at Joliet, IL on Des Plaines River near Mile 288.5. The views above show the stern transom and splashboard with the cylinder timbers on the fantail at left and portions of the main and boiler decks at top with a larger midsection view on the right above. Conspicuous by its absence is the boat's pilothouse. The photo below gives a full portside view.





*These two upper views picture the forward section of the boat, with a close-up of the main deck bow and its two tow knees appearing on the left of the photo. The view below clearly establishes the location of the pictures with the steeples of St. Joseph Catholic Church on North Chicago Street in Joliet towering in the background.*



*As far as the earlier history of the boat goes, she ran for Central Barge Line until her ownership was transferred in July 1952 to Mississippi Valley Barge Line. She was brought to Cincinnati that August and sold to Amherst Barge Line who had acquired her sister boat JASON the previous fall and renamed her HERBERT E. JONES. The MACKENZIE was dismantled in 1954 at Port Amherst, WV. The HERBERT E. JONES operated for Amherst until August 1959. According to Capt. Fred Way's Steam Towboat Directory, sometime after 1961 her hull and superstructure were converted into a nightclub, restaurant and floating marina called the THUNDERBIRD at Blawnox, PA on the Allegheny. Eventually she was scrapped. Your editor saw those remains in company with Jim Swartzwelder and Gabe Chengery in the summer of 1968.*



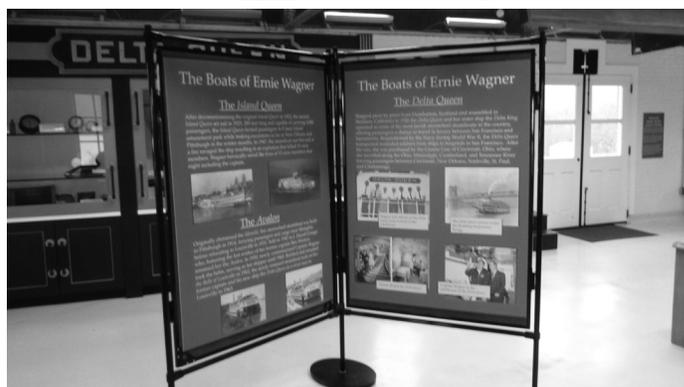
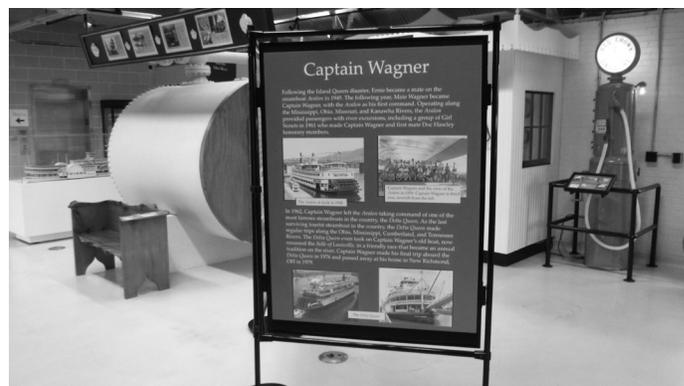
*Captain Wagner Exhibit continued from page 7*

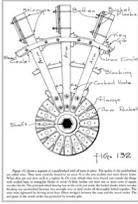
The first panel begins: “Born in Tennessee in 1910, Ernest ‘Ernie’ Wagner got his first taste of steamboating in 1929 when he left his home intending to join his brother in Dayton, OH. With no other means of transportation, Ernie hopped a freight train heading north. So the story goes, the first sight that greeted Ernie as he emerged from the train car was the majestic ISLAND QUEEN, and he was so captivated by her that he soon took a job on the steamboat ... In 1935 he was made a Mate aboard the ISLAND QUEEN and after serving in the military during World War II, Ernie returned to the boat in 1947. Ernie was aboard the ISLAND QUEEN on September 9, 1947 when an explosion occurred, causing the boat to quickly catch fire. Moving through the flames, he saved the lives of 13 people before being hurled from the boat in a second explosion ...”

Panel 2 goes on: “Following the ISLAND QUEEN disaster, Ernie became a mate on the steamboat AVALON in 1949. The following year Mate Wagner became Captain Wagner, with the AVALON as his first command. Operating along the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and Kanawha Rivers, the AVALON provided passengers with river excursions, including a group of Girl Scouts on a two-week charter in 1961 ... In 1962 Captain Wagner left the AVALON, taking command of one of the most famous steamboats in the country, the DELTA QUEEN. As the last surviving tourist steamboat in the country, DELTA QUEEN made regular trips along the Ohio, Mississippi, Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers ... Captain Wagner, who lived for years in nearby New Richmond, made his final trip aboard the DELTA QUEEN in 1976 and passed away at his home in 1979.”

The final panel sums up Cap’s career on three of his boats: “The ISLAND QUEEN ... 285 feet long and capable of carrying 4000 passengers, carried people to Coney Island amusement park while making excursions as far as New Orleans and Pittsburgh in the off season. In 1947 the steamboat met her end as a fire ravaged the boat resulting from an explosion that killed 19 crew members. Wagner heroically saved the lives of 13 crew members that day ... The AVALON, originally christened the

IDLEWILD, was a sternwheel steamboat built in Pittsburgh in 1914 ferrying passengers and cargo near Memphis before relocating to Louisville in 1931. Sold in 1947 ... [she was] renamed the AVALON. In 1950, newly licensed Captain Wagner took the helm, serving as her skipper until 1961 ... The DELTA QUEEN was shipped piece by piece from Dumbarton, Scotland and assembled in Stockton, CA in 1926. The QUEEN and her sister ship DELTA KING operated as some of the most lavish sternwheel steamboats in the country ... Requisitioned by the Navy during World War II, the DELTA QUEEN transported wounded soldiers from ships to hospitals in San Francisco. After the War, she was purchased by the Greene Line of Cincinnati, OH where she traveled along the Ohio, Mississippi, Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers, carrying passengers between Cincinnati and New Orleans, Nashville, St. Paul, and Chattanooga.”





# Small Stacks

## Modeling the RAINBOW

### Part I

by John Fryant

This is the first installment of a series dealing with researching and building a model of a small Pacific Coast steamer that operated on the Coos River in Oregon. The RAINBOW was a sternwheeler which ran from 1912 to 1923 and easily falls into the “cute little steamboat” category. More importantly, she was one of the so called “mosquito fleet” of small commercial boats that plied the rivers and estuaries of the Pacific Northwest, providing links with the outside world for many of the communities in the area.

The RAINBOW was built in 1912 in Marshfield, (now Coos Bay) OR. A listing in the appendix of *Sternwheels Up Columbia* by Randall Mills lists the hull as being 64 feet long exclusive of the stern wheel. Her design was typical of the West Coast boats, with a single stack behind the pilothouse exhausting the smoke from a locomotive type wood-burning boiler.

She had a covered paddlewheel, again typical for many of the western boats. Why were they so equipped? As far as your writer knows, the engines ran a bit faster than those on the Mississippi system, so the wheels made more spray and noise. And the covers provided a solution for this. Anyone having additional knowledge on this subject is encouraged to communicate with the author or with the REFLECTOR.

Building this model has been on my “bucket list” for at least twenty years. The initial inspiration for the project was a set of plans drawn and copyrighted by Bill Roy of Eugene, OR and published in a model railroad magazine around 1982 (see photo 1).

This model builder also obtained an excellent set of photos of the RAINBOW from Mr. Duane Davis of Friday Harbor, WA. Exactly how we got in touch has long since vanished from memory, but he has my sincere thanks for providing the photos (see

photos 2, 3, 4). Comparing them against the plans, it became obvious that Mr. Roy had condensed the length of the boat, those drawings showing the hull being only 45 feet long.

Fortunately, the photos included some good broadside views of the boat which revealed that the plan drawing had been shortened considerably. There were other parts of the drawings that also proved inaccurate when compared with the photos, and those things will be covered in future installments of this column as well.

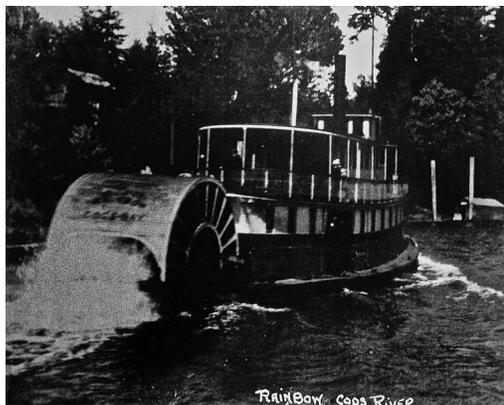
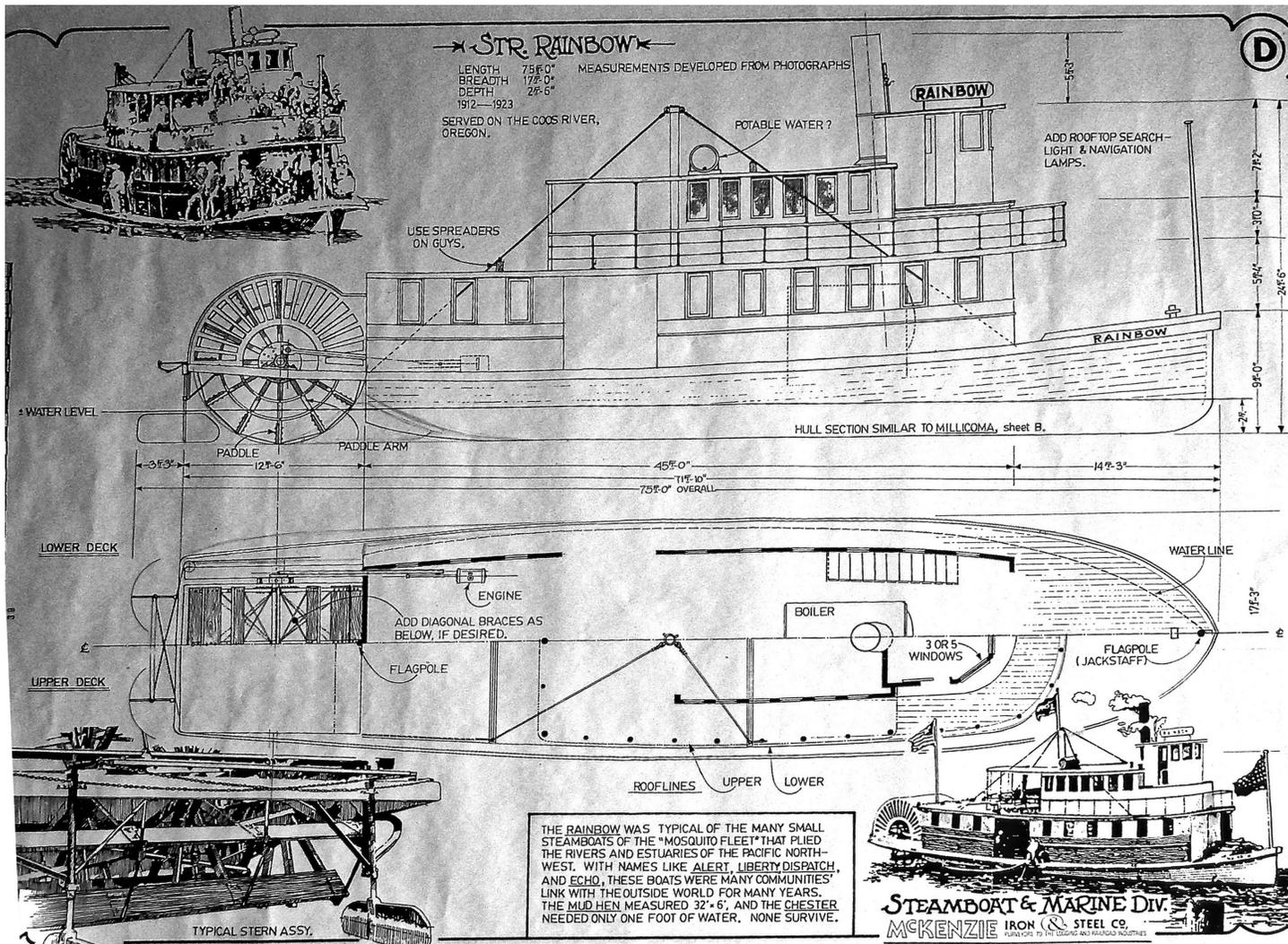
A “guestimation” of the hull length as being 73 feet was based on the size and spacing of the main deck windows, a nine-foot difference from the 64 foot length given in Mills’ book. Given that official hull measurements are usually taken from the inside hull dimensions, a few more feet could be added resulting in a smaller variance between the two figures.

Still, being satisfied with the re-draw, no further changes were made. The overall beam (width) of the main deck worked out to be 18 feet, which corresponded closely to Bill Roy’s plans.

The drawings didn’t include hull lines, so it was necessary to give the boat a typical stern-wheel hull. Most importantly, the bow to stern sheer curve had to be accurate and again the broadside photos were very helpful in getting this right.

The information mentioned in this and subsequent installments is given to illustrate the importance of the thorough research required in creating an accurate model. Whatever type of boat model to be built should be as accurately researched as possible. This is especially true of the Western Rivers (Mississippi River system) boats, as many of them were subject to major changes in their lifetimes. Researching an obscure little boat like the RAINBOW can be particularly difficult due to lack of accurate recorded data. So while 100% accuracy can’t be claimed with this model, it will at least be a believable replica.

All boat photos shown in this column were kindly provided by Duane Davis. The photo of the plan drawn by Mr. Bill Roy was taken by the author.



**Above:** Original plans drawing by Bill Roy. **Center left:** Here's RAINBOW comin' at ya with a bone in her teeth. Note the row of milk cans on the port side of the cabin and the pile of wood on the head of the boat. **Bottom left:** Poor quality stern view showing the wheel cover. At some point in her life RAINBOW was equipped with one or two monkey rudders behind the wheel. However the wake completely hides the number of rudders, so the truth will probably never be known. **Below:** Port side view of RAINBOW tied up to ALERT, a similar but larger boat.





## Final Crossings

### Mary Louise Otte

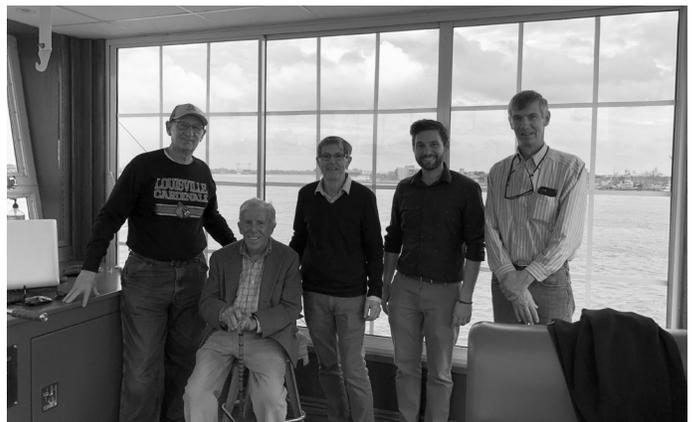


Mary Otte, 106, passed away on January 21, 2020 in Quincy, IL. She was born on March 15, 1913 in Centralia, IL and married William F. "Bill" Otte in 1936. He preceded her in death on May 13, 1986. Professionally, Mary was a secretary with the Quincy Public School System for twenty years. In the 1930s, Mrs. Otte worked as purser on

the Streckfus excursion steamboats J. S. DELUXE and CAPITOL. She often visited Quincy in that capacity before becoming a resident there after her marriage to fellow crew member Bill Otte, a mate and steersman on the boats. Mary is survived by a daughter Shirley (Jeffrey) Long, a grandson and nieces, nephews and friends. Funeral services were held January 24 at Good Samaritan Home Chapel with interment in Quincy's Calvary Cemetery.

Annie Amantea Blum recalls meeting Mary at a Midwest Riverboat Buffs gathering, where "there was the instant attraction that both of us worked for Streckfus and knew some of the same people. Mary was petite, full of spirit, a good storyteller, and interested in everything. She told us how it was to work on the old wooden hulled boats in the 30s when she had tramped on the steamers CAPITOL and J.S. She and her mother had gone to lunch at the home of Lola Streckfus, wife of Capt. Joe Streckfus, president of the Line. After lunch the guests helped make table decorations for the boats and that is how Mary became interested in getting a job on the river. Most of her work was in the purser's office so she paid the various captains and personnel of the boats, including the band. Sometimes she roomed with Shirley, who later married Capt. John Streckfus, Jr. They became friends and Shirley became the godmother of Mary's daughter, also named Shirley. Because Mary was curious, she learned about things all along the rivers by asking questions. She knew

*S&D Delegation Visits New Orleans, cont'd from p. 7*



**Above:** New walkways at Toulouse Street Wharf. **CITY OF NEW ORLEANS** pilothouse with Capt. Steve Nicoulin, Capt. Doc Hawley, Vic Canfield, Capt. Matt Dow, and Jeff Spear. **Below:** Steamer NATCHEZ adorned with her Christmas garland, prepares to make her landing.



what the boats did when they got stuck in the mud, places to eat in various river towns, and she remembered the plans for the boats even into her 90s. In fact, Mary drew the layout of two boats so they could be put in the files at Mercantile Library. Her relationship with the rivers and those boats became a big part of her." *Our thanks to Annie and to Duker & Haugh Funeral Home for their kind assistance.*

*Reflections from Our Readers continued from page 3*

boat, and sold the boat and the Memphis excursion business to Tom Meanley of Memphis who wrote the river column for the *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, the city's afternoon newspaper. Capt. Meanley almost immediately began renovating the MQ II by enclosing the main deck. The business continued successfully and grew over the years. At some point in the 1960s, Capt. Meanley had DBBCo build him the shell of a large excursion barge, the MEMPHIS SHOWBOAT. Capt. Meanley finished out the SHOWBOAT himself. As delivered, it was just the hull with the shell house for the generator room and restrooms, a steel second deck and supporting stanchions, and the steel stairways. Capt. Meanley wired, plumbed and finished the boat himself, creating a very nice excursion barge with two enclosed, heated decks and a large bandstand. DBBCo built a similar (identical?) boat for Gateway Clipper in Pittsburgh.

Since the MEMPHIS SHOWBOAT was just a barge, they needed something to push it with. Capt. Meanley decided to further modify the MEMPHIS QUEEN II by adding a roof on the second deck to protect it from rain and sun, and then he added a new pilothouse on top of the old one so as to be able to see over the SHOWBOAT. He then used the MEMPHIS QUEEN II to push the SHOWBOAT! Capt. Meanley was a very interesting, very smart and eccentric man who never spent one dime that he did not have to!

That brings me to the question and the correction. My question: On page 26 you mention that DBBCo built the BELLE CAROL for John Halverson of the Memphis Queen Company. Who was John Halverson? To my knowledge, there was never anyone of that name associated with the Memphis Queen Company. In addition to Capt. Tom Meanley mentioned above, the Memphis Queen Company was owned and operated by Capt. Tom's son and son-in-law, Jake Meanley and John Lozier. Could the John Halverson you mention in fact be John Lozier?

As to the correction I mentioned, the photo identified as the BELLE CAROL on the top right of page 26 is *not* the BELLE CAROL built for the

Memphis Queen Company. Memphis Queen's BELLE CAROL was a small (64 feet long?) scow-bow sternwheeler. It was always my understanding that, like the SHOWBOAT, Capt. Meanley had Dubuque build the hull for the BELLE CAROL, had it shipped to Memphis on a railroad flat car, and that Capt. Meanley finished her out himself. All this finishing boats started by others eventually led Capt. Meanley to build three more boats himself from the bottom up, but that's a whole 'nother story! So, I wonder what handsome boat that really is on page 26? And who is John Halverson? Ah, that's what we love about history — we always learn new things and have to revise it!

Interesting side note about you meeting Franz and Carmen on the QM2. You seem to have a knack for meeting the nicest people in the strangest places! Hope to see y'all in 2020."

‡ Capt. Bob's letter (coincidentally, printed in meticulous, elegant block lettering) does indeed underscore the truth that those desirous of recording history need always come equipped with a pencil in one hand and an eraser in the other. Perhaps some further digging in the DBBCo document archives at Bill Bowell Library at Dubuque's National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium will unearth the answer to his question about who is John Halverson? His challenge to our misidentification of the large model bow hull shown on the ways on page 26 is right on target. This writer pleads guilty. *Mea culpa*. She is not BELLE CAROL. She may be, we suspect, CAPT. CLARK'S SHOWBOAT. In any event, our thanks to Bob for making the effort to help the REFLECTOR maintain its tradition of accuracy and trustworthiness in what appears in these pages.

## Back Cover

The passing of Mary Otte, a purser on the Streckfus excursion steamers J. S. DELUXE and CAPITOL, is reported on page 30. Shown here is a rare view at St. Paul inside the office of the Str. CAPITOL with Capt. Roy Streckfus. Mary may have spent some of her time on board in this very location. *Photo courtesy of Murphy Library.*

