

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF STEAMBOATING ON THE MISSOURI RIVER WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE BOONSLICK REGION

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Just because the Mississippi is the biggest river in the country, you mustn't get the idea that she's the best and the boats on her the finest and her boatmen the smartest. That ain't true. Son, real steamboatin' begins a few miles north there, where the Missouri and the Mississippi join up.

It takes a real man to be a Missouri River pilot, and that's why a good one draws down as high as a thousand dollars a month. If a Mississippi boat makes a good trip to New Orleans and back, its milk-fed crew think they've turned a trick.

Bah! That's creek navigatin'. But from St. Louis to Fort Benton and back; close on to five thousand miles, son, with cottonwood snags waitin' to rip a hole in your bottom and the fastest current there ever was on any river darin' your engines at every bend and with Injuns hidin' in the bushes at the woodyard landings ready to rip the scalp off your head; that's a hair-on-your-chest, he-man trip for you!

...And the Missouri has more history stored up in any one of her ten thousand bends than this puny Mississippi creek can boast from her source to the New Orleans delta. I know what I'm talkin' about, because I've seen navigatin' on the Missouri, beginnin' with the dugouts the Injuns hollowed out of tree trunks right down to those floatin' palaces you see tied up so pretty there....

Say, you didn't happen to know, did you, that I made the first trip ever made by a steamboat on the Missouri?

...Yes, siree-bob, that I did; on the steamboat Independence, **Captain John Nelson**, master, way back in 1819. The trip was from St. Louis to Franklin, Missouri, about [two hundred] miles. Some rich fellows in St. Louis financed the trip. It took us fifteen days to make it. Those rich fellows, bless their hearts, put up the money just to prove that

boats could get up the Missouri.

I was standin' in the forecandle as she hove into sight of Franklin landing. We had a cannon mounted on the bow and fired a salute. A cannon answered from the bank. There was a big crowd on the bank, and they were cheerin' and wavin' their hats. A few minutes later our roustabouts were hustlin' ashore a cargo of sugar, whiskey, and flour; the first freight haul by steamboat up the Missouri.

Yes, siree, the Missouri River was right up to date. It was only two years before that the first steamboat had arrived at the St. Louis waterfront. She was the Zebulon M. Pike. She was such a freaky-lookin' craft that her master, who had an eye for business, made himself a tidy penny by chargin' curious folks a dollar to come aboard and look around.

From **Old Man River: The Memories of Captain Louis Rosche, Pioneer Steamboatman**, Robert A. Hereford (Caldwell, Idaho, Caxton Printers, 1942), pp. 97-100. Quote from an old steamboat man Rosche met on the St. Louis levee in 1866 when he was trying to get a job on a steamboat bound for the gold fields of Montana.

The history of steamboats in the United States began in the 1780s with experiments conducted by James Rumsey, John Fitch and Robert Fulton. Fulton is often credited with inventing the steamboat, but it is more accurate to say that he made one of the first successful demonstrations of a commercially feasible steamboat when he launched the Clermont (Fulton actually referred to it as simply The Steamboat or The North River Steamboat on the lower Hudson River in 1807. One of Boonville's pioneer citizens, **Nathaniel Mack**, recalled having been among the first passengers on Fulton's steamboat (Boonville **Weekly Eagle**, February 17, 1871):

*In the year 1807, while on my way to take charge of a school, and while passing through New York, my attention was attracted by some large posters being posted up throughout the city. The bills announced the trial trip of the steamer, and inviting all who wished to participate to be aboard the boat at a given time on the following day. Being young and fond of investigating anything of that character, I left the stage (stage coaches being the only means of conveyance) and stopped in the city over night, going aboard the boat in the morning.... There were about three hundred on board the boat when she left the landing...[and] people lined the banks along the river, most of them fearing to appear too near the water. The slaves, (New York then being a slave state, and containing more*

*slaves than the State of Missouri at the commencement of the war) were terribly frightened and looked with amazement at the steam escaping from the boilers.... The engine when in motion made a rattling noise similar to half a dozen wagons.... But before running any great distance a part of the machinery gave way. The boat returning to the city for repairs, a great many left, fearing to return to resume the trip.*

Mack also said that after their arrival at Albany, Fulton advertised the boat to run as a regular packet, and upon receiving the first passage money shed tears, remarking that he had spent all that he possessed, and that it was the first money he had received. An excellent source of information for Fulton's first steamboat and for the whole early period of steamboat development is **James Thomas Flexner's, Steamboats Come True: American Inventors in Action** (New York, The Viking Press, 1944); see especially pp. 319-326 for an account of Fulton's first steamboat trip.

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The beginning of steamboating on the Western rivers dates to 1811 when **Nicholas Roosevelt**, great granduncle of **Theodore Roosevelt**, piloted a Fulton built steamboat, the New Orleans, from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. The trip began on October 20, 1811, when the boat left Pittsburgh. It arrived at Louisville, Kentucky, on October 29, 1811, where Roosevelt's wife, Lydia (Latrobe), gave birth to their son, Henry. Roosevelt remained in Louisville for the next five weeks then resumed his journey on December 8, passing over the Falls of the Ohio and continuing downstream to Shippingport, Kentucky, and Yellow Bank, Indiana (December 14). While at this latter place they experienced the first shocks of the New Madrid earthquake (December 16) and continued downstream to Henderson, Kentucky, to see John and Lucy Audubon and survey earthquake damage. The boat reached the Mississippi on December 18 and passed New Madrid, Point Pleasant and Little Prairie (the epicenter of the quakes) on December 19. On December 22 they spent the night near the mouth of the St. Francis where they learned about the disappearance of Big Prairie from **John Bradbury's** party, which was also descending the river at this time. They arrived in Natchez, Mississippi on December 30, and New Orleans on January 10, 1812. The New Orleans continued in service on the lower Mississippi River between New Orleans and Natchez until 1814 when she was sunk by a snag.

The primary source for the journey of the New Orleans was written by **John H. B. Latrobe**, Lydia Roosevelt's half-brother, who told the story as he heard it from her. This account was published as **The First Steamboat Voyage on the Western Waters** by the Maryland Historical Society (Fund Publication No. 6, Baltimore, 1871); but a more accessible account is **Mr. Roosevelt's Steamboat: The First Steamboat to Travel the Mississippi**, by Mary Helen Dohan (New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1981).

In 1815 a steamboat called the Enterprise made the first successful trip upriver from New Orleans to Louisville; and on August 2, 1817, the Zebulon M. Pike arrived in St. Louis and became the first steamboat to make it up the Mississippi beyond the mouth of the

Ohio.

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The source of the Missouri River is in Red Rock Creek, Montana, some 2,500 miles from where the Missouri empties into the Mississippi, but the river is not navigable above the Great Falls in Montana because the gradient above the falls is extremely steep. In fact, the actual head of navigation is at Fort Benton, Montana, about 37 miles below the falls. From Fort Benton to the Mississippi the distance is about 2,300 miles, though one should keep in mind that there are different methods of calculating river miles (some measure with the curves, others across the curves) and the river has been shortened significantly (especially in its lower reaches) over the past 100 years.

In terms of navigation history, the Missouri River is commonly divided into the Upper Missouri and the Lower Missouri, with the dividing point generally considered to be the mouth of the Big Sioux River near present day Sioux City, Iowa, about 850 miles from the Mississippi.

Before 1830 scarcely any steamboat business was done above the mouth of the Kansas River, and between 1830 and 1860 only a few boats had ventured up the river any farther than Fort Union at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. The first boats to actually reach Fort Benton, which was, for all practical purposes the head of navigation on the Missouri, were the Chippewa and the Key West in 1860. But following the discovery of gold in Montana in 1863, there was an explosion of steamboat business to Fort Benton. In 1865 twenty packets set out from St. Louis for Fort Benton, and the following year almost sixty boats left for the gold fields, although not all of them arrived.

Most of the early steamboats on the Missouri river (as well as the other Western rivers) were built on the Ohio River, first at Pittsburgh, then at Wheeling, then at the area around the falls of the Ohio at Louisville, including Jeffersonville, Indiana, then at Cincinnati and other points on the Ohio.

The early steamers were mainly side-wheelers, though a few were sternwheelers. The preference for side-wheelers continued up to about 1850, but after that date, especially on the Missouri River, the preference switched to stern-wheelers, and it is a tradition in the Kinney family of Howard County that **Capt. Joseph Kinney** was one of the main people responsible for influencing the shift to stern-wheel boats on the Missouri River.

The early boats were relatively small, 75' to 150' long and 20' to 35' wide. They were characterized by deep, well-rounded, carvel built hulls with projecting keels and very marked sheer fore and aft. Double framed hulls housed engines, boilers, firebox and cargo; and some of these early boats retained masts and sails.

Early engines were of the low pressure, condensing, exhaust type featuring walking beams, a single vertical cylinder designed to produce maximum piston thrust on the vacuum stroke, though by the late teens or early twenties high pressure engines with

horizontal cylinders and pitman arms driving counterweighted paddle wheels began to be used. Paired side wheel engines were introduced in the mid-1820's and the engine, firebox and boilers were moved to the main deck rather than being in the hold. Perhaps the best single book on the technological as well as the economic history of steamboating on the western rivers is **Louis C. Hunter's** classic **Steamboats on the Western Rivers**, originally published in 1949, but republished in 1993 by Dover Publications, New York.

In terms of numbers, scarcely a dozen steamboats were built by 1817, but in the next two years over 60 were launched for traffic on the Mississippi, the Missouri and the Ohio.

Steamboating on the Missouri River began in May 1819, when the Independence, a boat commissioned by **Elias Rector** and captained by **John Nelson**, became the first steamboat to successfully navigate the Missouri River, making it to Franklin in thirteen days (seven days of actual running time). The boat left St. Louis on May 15 and arrived in Franklin May 28. After continuing up river a short distance to the old town of Chariton (just above present day Glasgow) the boat returned to St. Louis on June 5th. The Franklin **Missouri Intelligencer** (which also began in this year to become the first newspaper published west of St. Louis) noted in an article on June 4, 1819:

*We may truly regard this event as highly important, not only to the commercial but [also to the] agricultural interests of the country. The practicability of steamboat navigation, being now clearly demonstrated by experiment, we shall be brought nearer to the Atlantic, West Indian and European markets, and the abundant resources of our fertile and extensive region will be quickly developed.*

A little over two weeks after the return of the Independence to St. Louis, a government military and scientific expedition led by Col. Henry Atkinson and Major Stephen Long started up the Missouri River in four steamboats and 9 keelboats (there were actually 6 steamboats originally, but two of them never made it to St. Louis). The original goal of the expedition was to establish an American presence at the mouth of the Yellowstone River to discourage British incursions on American fur trading territory, but the scope of the expedition was later curtailed and the government fort was established at Council Bluffs (just above present day Omaha) rather than at the Yellowstone river.

This expedition, popularly known as the Yellowstone or Missouri Expedition, involved the transportation of 1,100 escort troops and their supplies under Col. Atkinson, as well as a scientific team headed by Major Long in his specially built steamboat, the Western Engineer, a small sternwheeler, 75 feet long with a 13 foot beam and drawing only 19 inches of water light, which came to be known as "Long's Dragon" because of its distinctively carved bowsprit in the shape of a serpent with exhaust pipes from the steam engine venting steam through its mouth and nostrils.

The other steamboats in the expedition were the R.M. Johnson (named for the 9th vice president of the United States and the brother of the man who had the government contract to supply the steamboats for the military portion of the expedition), the Expedition, and the Jefferson (named for Thomas Jefferson). This latter boat, the

Jefferson was grounded and disabled in the Osage chute (not far from present day Jefferson City). The other three boats also encountered difficulties, but all of them made it beyond Franklin and Chariton, passing these western-most Missouri River towns in mid-July and early August of 1819. The R.M. Johnson, however, gave out not far from the mouth of the Kaw or Kansas River (vicinity of present day Kansas City); and the Expedition made it only as far as Isle de Vache or Cow Island (above present day Leavenworth) where a temporary encampment had been established the year before by a vanguard of 350 troops and called Cantonment Martin.

The Western Engineer made it up to **Manuel Lisa's** fur trading fort at the mouth of the Platte, and was forced to stop there for the winter where Cantonment Missouri, and, later, Ft. Atkinson was established.

The following spring, both the R.M. Johnson and the Expedition returned down river, passing Franklin in early April. About two months later the Western Engineer came back down river, passing Franklin on June 17. Despite the limited success of these three steamboats, the government experiment with steamboat exploration was considered a failure, and it was another ten years before regular steamboat trade on the Missouri River began.

The only other steamboats on the Missouri River in 1820 were the Missouri Packet, which arrived in Franklin on May 5, but was snagged and sunk shortly after leaving Franklin, and the Expedition, which passed Franklin in late May 1820. Both boats were carrying supplies for the troops at Cantonment Missouri.

The Missouri Packet, which sank near Hardeman's Island, just above the mouth of the Lamine River, was probably the boat referred to in a letter reprinted in the 1883 **History of Howard and Cooper Counties** indicating that during the summer of 1819 a boat with \$250,000 in specie was sunk by a snag shortly after leaving Franklin and her valuable cargo was unable to be salvaged. The letter, which contains a number of confusing discrepancies when checked against other source materials (including the date of the mishap and the fact that it is highly unlikely that anything like \$250,000 in specie was being carried upriver at this period of time), led to several efforts at locating and salvaging the "treasure" boat over the years, the most recent in 1987 by the Hawley family of Independence and others. Unfortunately the boat was seriously damaged in the futile search for lost treasure. The Hawleys did, however, manage to salvage the engine, two of the boilers and some other artifacts before the remains of the boat were reburied.

The Hawleys later performed a much more careful excavation near Parkville of the steamboat Arabia, which wrecked in 1856, and they have established the very interesting Arabia steamboat museum in the river market area of Kansas City where the numerous salvaged artifacts from the boat can be viewed.

The only other known successful excavation of a wrecked steamboat in recent years on the Missouri River was the excavation of the steamboat Bertrand (which sank in 1865) near Omaha, Nebraska, over the winter of 1968-69. Artifacts from this excavation are on

display in the Visitors Center of the DeSoto Wildlife Refuge where the excavation took place. The National Park Service published an interesting book on this excavation in 1974 entitled **The Steamboat Bertrand** by **Jerome E. Petsche**.

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In the ten years following the Yellowstone Expedition, steamboat traffic on the Missouri River was limited and sporadic. One boat, **Captain Shreve's** Washington, went up the river as far as Franklin in the spring of 1821. She was also a supply boat carrying supplies for the troops at Ft. Atkinson. No known steamboats went up the river in 1822. One boat, the Pittsburgh and St. Louis Packet, went up river as far as Franklin in the spring of 1823. Two boats, the Gen. Neville and the Mandan, bound for Council Bluffs, went up the river in 1824. No known steamboats went up the river in 1825, though at least 9 keelboats equipped with manually operated paddles went up the river that year with **General Atkinson** and **Major Benjamin O'Fallon** to make treaties with the Indians. In 1826, the Muskingum, and possibly a steamboat called the George Washington, went up the river. The latter boat may have sunk near Hardeman's Island (the same approximate place where the Missouri Packet went down in 1820). No known steamboats went up the river in 1827; but in 1828, two boats, the Illinois and the Liberator, went up the river to Leavenworth in April. These were probably the only steamboats to go above the mouth of the Kansas River since 1824.

In 1829 the steamboat Diana went up to Leavenworth in May and the steamboat Crusader went up to Leavenworth in August. In April, the Wm. D. Duncan left St. Louis for Franklin on the first of several trips she made to that place during the 1829 season. By 1830, both the Duncan and a steamboat called the Globe were making regular trips to Franklin and occasional trips to Leavenworth. Thus between 1819 and 1830 there were probably no more than 15 steamboats that operated on the Missouri River, and regular steamboat packet service on the lower Missouri River (below Ft. Leavenworth) did not begin in earnest until 1830.

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By 1831 there were five regular packets on the lower Missouri; the Car of Commerce (which sank May 6, 1832), the Chieftain, the Globe, the Liberty and the Missouri. And Liberty Landing (near the present day town of Liberty) was opened. It soon became one of the principal early steamboat ports on the lower river.

It was in 1831, also, that the American Fur Company boat, the Yellowstone, began making annual trips to the upper Missouri River country. **H.M. Chittenden**, in his classic study of The American Fur Trade of the Far West, says, "in several respects the voyage of the Yellowstone in 1832 has been a landmark in the history of the West. It demonstrated the practicability of navigating the Missouri by steam as far as to the mouth of the Yellowstone with a strong probability that boats could go on to the Blackfoot country. Among the passengers on this voyage was the soon to be famous artist **George Catlin** who made a valuable written and artistic record of the Indian tribes living along

the upper Missouri. An excellent book on the voyages of the Yellowstone **Donald Jackson's** Voyages of the Steamboat Yellow Stone (University of Oklahoma Press, 1985).

Two fur company boats went up the Missouri River in the spring of 1833, the Yellowstone and a new boat, the Assiniboine. On the Yellowstone was **Prince Maximilian** and his Swiss artist companion, **Karl Bodmer**, who made another one of the truly important early records, both in words and in images of the Missouri River and the people who lived along it. Also on this 1833 trip serving as clerk on the boat, was 18 year old **Joseph LaBarge**, destined to become one of the truly legendary Missouri River pilots.

By 1834 there were 230 steamboats on western waters. By the close of 1835 there were 684 steamboats on the western waters (but only about 10 were operating on the Missouri River): 304 of these were built in the Pittsburgh district, 221 in the Cincinnati district and 103 in the Louisville district.

By 1836 the number of steamboats operating on the lower Missouri River had increased to fifteen or twenty which made at least 35 round trips to Boonville and Glasgow.

In 1838 there were at least 22 boats operating on the lower Missouri River, and the next year there were at least 39 boats. Between 1840 and 1844 the number of boats operating on the lower Missouri stabilized at about 26, but in 1845 the number of boats jumped to at least 37, and by 1849 there were some 58 steamboats operating on the Missouri River.

During the period from 1830 to 1840 the entire traffic on the lower river was confined to the towns, the Santa Fe trade at Westport Landing, now Kansas City, and the government trade at Fort Leavenworth.

Prior to about 1840 cabin facilities and other passenger amenities were somewhat limited, but the rapidly increasing population along the Missouri river after 1840 caused a corresponding demand for additional transportation facilities and a better class of steamboat was adopted. These boats had full-length cabins, double (as opposed to single) engines, and a battery of boilers instead of just one or two. Great improvements were also made to the hulls of the boats about this time. Rounded hulls gave way in the 1830's to flatter, more rectangular single framed hulls that drew less water but had about the same carrying capacity as the rounded hulls, and the keel virtually disappeared. By the 1840s many vessels contained three decks or more and boats were being built that were considerably larger than the earlier boats.

American Fur Company boats (generally smaller than the lower river boats) continued to make annual trips into the upper Missouri river country throughout the 1830s and 40s, with one particularly disastrous trip being made by the steamboat St. Peters in 1837. Several people on this boat came down with smallpox before the boat reached the Mandan country and the disease spread like wildfire among the Indians. The Mandan tribe was particularly hard hit; indeed the tribe was nearly annihilated by the disease to



which they had no immunity. But the disease also took a heavy toll among the Aricaras, the Assiniboines, the Blackfeet and the Crows. Estimates of the number of Indians killed by this smallpox plague vary widely, but even the most conservative estimate puts the number killed at more than 15,000.

Another notable steamboat trip to the upper Missouri River country occurred in 1843 when **Capt Joseph LaBarge** as master of the steamboat Omega took the celebrated naturalist and artist, **John James Audubon**, up the river to Fort Union. This trip was perhaps one of the most completely documented of any of the early steamboat trips on the Missouri. LaBarge (1815-1899), whose career embraced nearly the whole history of steamboating on the river from 1831 to 1896, was the subject of a very interesting biography that also covers much of the river's steamboating history entitled **History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River** (1903), by H.M. Chittenden. Another excellent source book for Missouri River steamboating is the biography of the other great Missouri River steamboat captain, **Grant Marsh** (1834-1916) who operated the classic upper river steamboat, the Far West and brought the news of the Custer defeat downriver in 1876. This biography, entitled **The Conquest of the Missouri** (1909), was written by **J. M. Hanson** and covers an approximately fifty-year period from the early 1850s to the early 1900s.

Between 1840 and 1850 much of the lower river steamboat traffic was involved with handling the migration of the Mormons to the west, the surge of settlers moving west on the Oregon Trail, and, by 1849, the great rush of treasure seekers to the California gold fields.

The real "Golden Era" of steamboating, was the period between 1850 and 1860. By the 1850's the larger lower Missouri river steamboats and the average Mississippi River steamboats were about 250 feet long with a 40 foot beam and carried 300 to 400 passengers as well as some 700 tons of freight. A steamboat this size could cost \$50,000 to \$75,000, but this amount could often be made back in one good season. Sometimes a boat could be paid for in a single trip. During 1858, the peak year of Missouri River steamboating, there were as many as 60 steam packets and 30 or 40 transient or tramp boats operating on the lower Missouri River. In 1859, more vessels left St. Louis for the Missouri River than for both the upper and lower Mississippi.

The outbreak of the Civil War retarded steamboat traffic on the lower Missouri River since most of the boats were used by the Union to transport men and material on the Mississippi, and steamboating on the Missouri River was a dangerous proposition because of the roving guerrilla bands that would regularly attack boats below Kansas City.

After the war steamboat traffic on the lower Missouri picked up once again, and among the most prominent steamboat men during the last half-century of Missouri River steamboating were the **Heckmanns** and **Wohlts** of Hermann and **Capt. Joseph Kinney** of Howard County. But by this time the expansion of railroads was beginning to have an increasingly significant effect on the economics of steamboating. Despite a brief

resurgence of steamboat activity in the early 1870s it was becoming clear by the 1880s that the days of the steamboat were numbered, and by the 1890s there were very few steamboats operating successfully on either the lower or upper Missouri River.

To give you some idea of the mortality of steamboats, perhaps as many as 700 different boats operated on the Missouri River between 1819 and the final disappearance of the paddle wheelers in the first decade after 1900. About 300 of these boats were wrecked during this same period of time. A report prepared by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers **Captain H.W. Chittenden**, secretary of the Missouri River Commission, in 1897, gives the names of 273 steamboats wrecked on the Missouri River from the beginning of navigation until 1897. About 100 of these boats were lost in the period between 1820 and 1860.

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With this overview of steamboating on the Missouri River, I want to conclude with a closer look at steamboating in the Boonslick region of central Missouri, especially that stretch of the river lying roughly between Rocheport (mile 186 on present river charts) and Glasgow (mile 226.5 on present river charts), a stretch of river that covers about 40 miles.

As was stated earlier, there was very little steamboating activity between 1819 and 1830 on the Missouri, and the primary landings in the Boonslick area during this period were at Franklin (until at least the late 1820s) and Chariton (just above present day Glasgow).

After 1830, however, Rocheport, Boonville, Arrow Rock and Glasgow were the primary ports of call in the Boonslick region for steamboat traffic.

Although Rocheport was not officially founded until 1825 and the town was not laid out until 1832, a ferry had been established there as early as 1819, and a warehouse was built there in 1820 at which time the mouth of the Moniteau (then known as Arnold's Landing) was recognized as a desirable landing place. By 1835, however, Rocheport was a town of considerable size and by the 1850s it had become a primary shipping point for hemp and tobacco.

Boonville was not officially laid out until 1819, but the first settlers had come into the area by 1810 and by 1816 there was a ferry operating between Franklin and the Boonville side of the river, and there was a full-fledged scheme to lay out a town on the site. For a number of years after the town was platted and the first simple businesses had been established Boonville languished in the shadow of Franklin, just across the river. But with the demise of Franklin in the late 1820s Boonville began to rapidly grow in importance and size. By 1839 when the town was officially incorporated it was a thriving steamboat port, and it continued to be an important shipping point down to the time of the Civil War.

One of the first known steamboats to be built in the Boonslick was a boat called the Far

West, a small sidewheeler built by **Justinian Williams** of Boonville in 1834 about two miles above the mouth of the Bonne Femme Creek. She was a typical boat of that period, 130' long, 20' wide and with a 6' hold. Justinian Williams left Boonville in this same year, and his boat is listed as having sunk at St. Charles in 1836. Little else is known about it.

The next boat mentioned as being built in the Boonslick was a light draught steamboat called the Warsaw that, according to the **Missouri Register**, May 20, 1841, was the first boat to actually be built in Boonville. The boat was built under the superintendence of a **Captain McCourtney** and was meant for the Osage trade.

A ferry was established across the Missouri river near the present site of Arrow Rock as early as 1811 and the first expedition to Santa Fe crossed here in 1821, but the town was not platted until 1829 (by Santa Fe trader, and later Missouri governor, **Meredith Miles Marmaduke**), and at first it was called New Philadelphia, though this was changed to Arrow Rock in 1833. By the mid-1830s this town, too, had become a bustling steamboat port.

Glasgow was not laid out as a town until 1836, however, there had been settlements in the area since at least as early as 1817 when the town of Chariton was laid out near the mouth of the Chariton River just upriver from present day Glasgow. This town met its demise by the mid-1820s because of its proneness to flooding, and after several more abortive attempts to site a viable town in the area (Monticello, Thorntonsburg and Louisville-on-the-Missouri), the Glasgow site finally proved successful. By the time the town was officially incorporated in 1845 it, too, was a thriving steamboat port and became noted for its large shipments of tobacco.

Although the towns just mentioned were the ports of call for the regular St. Louis based packets, there were a number of smaller boats operating locally in the Boonslick throughout the years of the heaviest steamboat traffic, and these smaller boats often called at a number of chartered landings on both sides of the river. Some of these chartered landings were Hay's, Hobrecht's, Elliott's, Moore's, and Kinney's landings between Rocheport and Boonville; Haas, Lamine, and Chancellor's between Boonville and Arrow Rock; and Carson's, Lisbon, Griffith's and Bluffport between Arrow Rock and Glasgow. There was also considerable small boat traffic on the Lamine River.

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In the period between 1820 and 1918 there were at least 25 steamboats known to have burned or wrecked in the Boonslick stretch of the river between Rocheport and Glasgow: Nine boats were wrecked near Glasgow or in Euphrase Bend the Euphrase (1840) the boat for which the bend was named, the Chian (1836), the Chariton (1837), the Dart (1838), the Amelia (1849), the J.H. Oglesby (1859), the West Wind (1864), the Annie Lee, and the Joseph Kinney (1882).

Four boats went down near Arrow Rock; the John Aull (1845), the Sam Gaty (1867 or

1868); the Plow Boy No. 2 (1877), and the Tom Rodgers (1887).

Five or six boats went down near the mouth of the Lamine in Slaughterhouse Bend just upriver from Boonville; the Missouri Packet (1820), the George Washington (1826), the Radnor (1846), the Sacramento (1849), the T.L. Crawford (1857), and perhaps the John Golong (1862).

Four boats went down near Boonville or Franklin Island; the Charles H. Green (1840), the El Paso (1855), the Mettamora (1875), and the Velma (1918); the Bright Light (1883) and the Joe Kinney, also were wrecked at Boonville, but they were raised and repaired.

Three boats went down near Rocheport or in Diana Bend, including the Diana (1836), for whom Diana Bend is named, the New Lucy (1857), and the H.C. Coleman (1884).

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During the 1850s, 60s, and 70s the best known names in steamboating associated with the Boonslick region were probably **Capt. Joseph Kinney**, **Capt. Joseph S. Nanson**, and **Capt. Henry McPherson**; though others such as **Capt. William Jewett** of Cambridge, Mo., who was a popular man on the river, especially around Glasgow, and **Capt. David DeHaven**, who operated a boat called the South Wester built in 1857 for the Boonville Steamboat Co., and the Alonzo Child, which he took south with him in 1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War, were also of importance

Captain Joseph Kinney, the best known of the Boonslick steamboat men, came to Boonville nearly penniless from Indiana in 1844, the year of the Great Flood, and built up a successful retail shoe business, first in Boonville (from 1844 to 1850) and then in St. Louis (from 1850 to 1856). He entered the steamboat business in 1856 when he commissioned the building of a 200 ft., 400 ton sidewheel packet boat that he called the W.H. Russell (named after a friend who in 1860 was one of the founders of the Pony Express). Kinney operated this boat successfully until 1862 when it burned in a big steamboat fire at St. Louis. During the Civil War Kinney built and operated at least four other boats: the Fannie Ogden (built for Kinney in 1862, but sold by him to **Capt. John P. Keiser** of St. Louis in 1863); the Cora No. 1 (built in 1864) and the Cora No. 2 (built in 1865), which were named for one of his daughters; and the Kate Kinney No. 1 (built in 1864), named for another daughter. The first Cora sank in 1865 just above Omaha, while the second Cora operated until 1869 when she sank not far from the mouth of the Missouri and created a 1000-acre island named for the wreck. The Kate Kinney No. 1 operated until 1872 when it burned at New Albany, Indiana (after surviving another fire at St. Louis in 1868). It was replaced by the Kate Kinney No. 2, which Kinney had built in 1873. It operated until 1883 when it finally burned at Shreveport, Louisiana.

Other boats owned and operated by Kinney on the Missouri River were the St. Luk (1868-1875), the R.W. Dugan (1873-1878), the Alice (1870s), named for his youngest daughter, and the Joe Kinney (1872-1882), which hit both the Boonville railroad bridge and the Kansas City railroad bridge before she sank after hitting the Glasgow railroad

bridge on April 23, 1882.

Kinney was one of the primary advocates of sternwheel boats on the Missouri river in the 1850s and 60s and he retained an active interest in steamboating down to the time of his death in 1892, but in 1869, when his mansion, Rivercene, on the river bank across from Boonville was completed and he was approaching his 60th birthday, Kinney left the river and concentrated on the managing his steamboat business and other merchandising businesses up and down the river from Boonville.

Capt. Joseph S. Nanson was born in Fayette in 1827 and operated a store in Glasgow until he went to St. Louis in 1855 and purchased the steamboat, Banner State, which he then piloted on three trips between St. Louis and Glasgow before it hit a snag on the third trip in April of 1855 and sank. He then bought a boat called the Tropic and ran it for the remainder of the 1855 season. In 1856 he went to Louisville and commissioned the building of the N. J. Eaton, but it sank on its first Missouri River trip and nearly bankrupted its owners. Following this, Nanson commissioned the building of the Kate Howard in 1857 and ran it for three seasons on the Missouri River until it was snagged and lost in the Osage Chute in 1859. Between 1859 and 1860 he operated a boat called the John D. Perry on the Missouri and then opened a commission house in St. Louis where he remained throughout the Civil War period, returning to the river in the final year of the war with the purchase of the steamer Shreveport. In 1868 Nanson was elected president of the a St. Louis and Omaha Packet Company and sometime after this he apparently moved to Texas where, I believe, he died.

Capt. Henry McPherson, whose house still stands in Boonville on the north side of Spring Street near the corner of Spring and 4th Streets, was involved in steam-boating on the Missouri River from at least the mid-1850s until the mid-1880s, sometimes with his brother, **Capt. E.B. McPherson**, better known in Boonville as the irascible but lovable master of the City Hotel. Some of the boats associated with Capt. Henry McPherson were the Mars, which ran on the river between 1856 and 1865, though probably only the last two or three of these years under Capt. McPherson; C.W. Sombart, named for the well known Boonville entrepreneur and mill operator (who also had an interest in several other steamboats), which only ran on the river two seasons 1858 and 1859; before burning near St. Louis in June of 1859; the Carrier, which operated between about 1858 and 1861; the Jennie Lewis, built in 1864 and operated in the St. Louis/Glasgow/Cambridge trade before burning at St. Louis in 1869; the Twilight, built in 1865 for Henry McPherson, **C.W. Sombart** C.W. Sombart, and John P. Keiser, but lost that same year near Napoleon, Mo., with a cargo that included a large amount of whiskey and prompted several salvage efforts over the years following its sinking; the Isabella, which operated between 1865 and 1868; the Headligh, a boat built by Henry McPherson, **Joseph L. Stephens** and C.W. Sombart (who called themselves the River and Railway Transportation Co. in 1878 to run between Boonville, Arrow Rock and Rocheport and make connections with MoPac trains; and two boats owned by McPherson in the period between 1882 and 1884, the Martha Stephens and the Rob Roy.

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During the 1870s, 80s and 90s several other men and boats were associated with the Boonslick region in the steamboat trade.

**Capt. John Porter** had a virtual monopoly on the Boonville ferry service from the 1850s until his death in 1891, his best known boats being the Birdie Brent, which ran from 1871 until 1887, and the Joseph L. Stephens, which ran from 1887 until she was replaced by the Dorothy in 1909. His chief engineer during the time he operated the ferry was **Capt. F.C. Wilson**.

**David B. Clark** grew up in Cooper County, just east of Boonville (near the site of the Civil War "Battle of Boonville") and worked on the river from 1861 until at least 1896 serving as purser and captain on many boats, then returned to Boonville and became a skilled cabinet maker.

**Louis Moehle**, a German immigrant, came to Cooper County in 1867 and built a saw mill on the Lamine river, where he also engaged in boat building with his son, Gustav. Later, Gustav and his sons built boats at Arrow Rock, including the Guy Hunter, the Minna, the Nadine, the Laura and the gasoline powered Roy L.

**Capt. Andrew Jackson ("Bud") Spahr** was born in Boonville in 1842, the son of a well-known Boonville tobacco manufacturer, **David Spahr**. He worked on the river for some 50 years beginning about 1864, part of this time as a pilot on Captain Kinney's boats on the upper Missouri, later with the Star Line, and for the last 25 years with the U.S. government engaged in Missouri River improvement work, principally as commander of the snagboat U.S.S. Suter. Spahr, who was 6'6" tall, was fond of telling the story of how he brought Sitting Bull and 250 Sioux Indians down the river from Fort Buford to Fort Yates after Sitting Bull's surrender in 1868.

**Capt. Lee Thomas Sites** was born in Lamine township, Cooper County in 1856, the grandson of well-known Boonville and Arrow Rock gunsmith, **J P. Sites**, and was engaged in the steamboat business off and on from 1873 down to the turn of the century. He and **Gus Moehle** built a small, popular steamboat called the Nadine in 1897 that operated into the early 1900s on the Missouri and Lamine Rivers offering occasional "moonlight excursions".

**Capt. Nicholas W. Smith** lived near Blackwater and was a riverman for over 50 years on the Missouri and Osage rivers prior to his death in 1893. At one time he was captain of the Plow Boy.

**Capt. John S. Campbell**, from Wooldridge, served on the Missouri River for some 49 years between 1879 and 1928 as a pilot and master of several steamboats, including a number of years working on U.S. government boats. Following his retirement in 1928 he returned to Wooldridge and devoted the last nine years of his life to making violins, a hobby he had begun while still working on the river.

**John J. (Jake) Walther**, a Boonville builder and contractor, began work in Boonville in the 1880s constructing store fronts and residences and also building a number of Missouri River steamboats, including the Alda, which ran on the Missouri River between 1891 and about 1902, and the well-known Boonville ferry, the Dorothy, in 1909.

Other Boonville residents associated with the river during the last quarter of the 19th century were **George Thomas**, Thomas and **James Dunnivant**, **Jesse** and **George Homan**, **Fielding** and **Theodore Wilson**, and **Charles** and **James Colter**.

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With the revival of Missouri River transportation in the 1930s, Boonslick residents once more began making names for themselves on the river.

**Wesley Wohlt** worked on the river for more than 50 years beginning in the early 1900s with his father, **Gustav Wohlt**. The Wohlt and the Heckmann families were the main steamboating families of Hermann. Wesley's father and grandfather (Henry) operated in the vicinity of Hermann and on the Osage and Gasconade rivers. Wesley operated boats like the Robert C. McGregor, the William S. Mitchell, and the Bixby up and down the Missouri River throughout the 1930s, 40s and 50s. He was also the man who operated the reproduction keelboat out of Rocheport in the 1960s. More about the Wohlt and the Heckmann families can be found in **Capt. William L. Heckmann's** personal reminiscence, **Steamboating Sixty-Five Years on Missouri's Rivers** (Burton Publishing Co., Kansas City, 1950); and in **Dorothy Heckmann Schrader's** very interesting recently published books, *Steamboat Legacy* (1993) and *Steamboat Treasures* (1997), both published by the Wein Press of Hermann, Missouri.

**Captain Thomas P. Craig** operated the ferry at Rocheport with his brother in the early 1920s, then built and operated a coal-burning steamboat, the Decatur, from 1924 to 1929. In the 1930s he operated the Federal Barge Line's diesel powered towboat, the Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s and was, in fact, the man who brought the Roosevelt up the river in 1935 to reopen navigation on the Missouri.

In 1948 Boonville journalist and historian **Eelston J. Melton** paid tribute to the Missouri River towboat industry in his novel, **Towboat Pilot** (Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho). And in more recent years **Dan Burnett** of Boonville has operated his own line of towboats on the Missouri River, continuing the Boonslick tradition of riverboat operation down to the present day.