THE RECOLLECTIONS OF A YOUTH ON THE MONONGAHELA RIVER DURING THE 1870s

Charles Hatch Ehrenfeld

Edited by John Kent Folmar

During most of the last century, the Monongahela River was the interstate highway of southwestern Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, we captives of the automobile and jet age know little about the days when the river was the symbol of passenger traffic and status in the transportation industry. Therefore, it is indeed significant when a document about the river by an observant and literate person is made available to the reading public.

Fortunately for posterity, seven-year-old Charles Hatch Ehrenfeld was excited by the decision of his father, Charles Lewis Ehrenfeld, to accept the position as principal of the fledgling Southwestern Normal School (present-day California University of Pennsylvania) in California, in 1871. The small town was on the mighty Monongahela.

From a long line of educators, the elder Ehrenfeld was a graduate of Wittenberg College in Ohio, where he received both the A.B. and M.A. degrees, the latter in theology. Since 1860 he had been the pastor of Lutheran churches in Altoona, Shippensburg, and Hollidaysburg. While principal of the financially troubled normal school at California, he was responsible for its being moved to its new campus and for receiving state recognition in 1874 as the Southwestern State Normal School for the Tenth Normal School District. In 1877, he resigned to become financial secretary for the Department of Public Instruction. The next year he was chosen state librarian.

His son, Charles Hatch, also attended Wittenberg College, from which, like his father, he received the A.B. and M.A. degrees, the latter in 1889. Four years later he received the Ph.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He was professor of physics and chemistry at York (Pennsylvania) Collegiate Institute (present-day York

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College) from 1887 until 1916 and its president from that date until 1928. He was also an early photography “buff”; in fact, he printed his own photographs after his travels around the country. Until his death in 1937, he was chief chemist and consulting engineer for the York Manufacturing Company, now the York Division of the Borg-Warner Corporation.

Although active in political, civic, and professional organizations, Ehrenfeld never forgot the Monongahela River of his youth, particularly because his father returned to Southwestern in 1893 where he remained until his retirement in 1913. During that time he decided to write some recollections of those early exciting years. He entitled the paper “A Boy on the River.” Many years later, his son Walter Spahr Ehrenfeld of York found the manuscript among his father’s papers and had it printed privately in 1975. Walter S. Ehrenfeld founded and operated his own industrial supply company in York until 1968 and has been a trustee of York College since 1941.

These recollections provide an all-too-rare view of social, economic, political, and psychological circumstances in the Monongahela River valley more than a century ago from the perspective of youth and hindsight. I suspect that Charles Hatch Ehrenfeld knew the historical importance of his recollections. More of us should follow his example; our past would be richer by the effort.¹

The old wharf opposite the Monongahela House in Pittsburgh was grass grown and almost deserted when I last saw it a few years ago, but in [the packet boat] navigation days of my boyhood it was jammed with heavy drays jolting over cobble stones with their thick steel tires. All Pittsburgh was cobble-stoned then and one of my vivid memories is [of] the continuous roar of traffic in the business district around Smithfield Street leading down to the river.

There was no railroad up the Monongahela river in the early eighties [seventies], all transportation of passengers and goods being by boat.² Our family was moving [in 1871] to a small town up the river and, as a small lad, I was thrilled when we walked down the


² The Pittsburgh, Virginia, and Charleston Railroad was being constructed up the valley. By 1875 it had reached Monongahela and in 1879 it had extended its line to California.
The Monongahela wharf during the heyday of the packet industry.

cobbled wharf that morning picking our way amidst the wagons and drays. Big beer trucks drawn by huge horses were much in evidence.

Although small by present standards, the boat loomed up like a giant to my boyish eyes as she lay there beside the wharf boat. The name E. BENNETT stood out in large letters on the side of the wheelhouse. The “E” was for Elisha, but all the packets were “she” regardless of names. The BENNETT at that time was one of the best and fastest boats on the river, and like all passenger craft, she was a side-wheeler in contrast with the sternwheeler tow boats. The big paddle wheels were completely boxed in by semi-circular wheel houses on the sides of which were painted the name of the boat, the full title of the Navigation [packet] company, and the important announcement “U.S. Mail”.¹

We were going to spend a whole day on that fascinating boat and my youthful feet fairly skipped as we went up the gangplank, thence across the front lower deck with its piles of rope and its capstan, up

¹ Built in 1867 in Brownsville, the Bennett was named for the famed river captain who had died aboard the Franklin in 1863. She was the first Monongahela River packet to have a calliope. Data on the packet boats are from Record Group 41, Industrial and Social Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
the wide divided stairway and out upon the promenade deck. I leaned over the rail captivated by the sight of the deck hands, all black huskies, carrying and rolling the freight on board. They were a lively crew and sang in rhythm with their work, but their care-free music often was broken up by the yelling and cursing mate who was anxious to get away, for it would take all day to go up the river to Brownsville only fifty some miles. It was my first introduction to river profanity which probably is nowhere excelled in picturesque quality or variety of expletive. I realize now it would make an interesting phase of language study, although it might have to be written, like cuneiform, upon tablets of fireclay.

Meanwhile quarters had been secured for our family for the day's run, if eight or ten miles an hour can be called a run. There was one long cabin down the entire length of the boat, lined on either side with staterooms, for there were night trips also. Later we learned that these night journeys had to be followed with careful scrutiny of luggage and clothing in order to avoid unwelcome visitors at home. At the rear end of the cabin or saloon was the ladies' section with plush, upholstered furniture and marbletop tables in the prevailing style of the seventies. There were also small rear windows where one could look out and see the frothy wake of the boat far back over the water.

At the forward end of the cabin the dining table was set out at meal time. The midday meal was dinner in that day and the steward rang an old time hand bell that could be heard all over the boat. There were no reserved seats except the Captain's at the head of the long single table. The only part of that first river repast I remember was the water. It had the same color of the river, muddy; and it tasted as it looked. Later, when I had become familiar with the lowest deck, I saw how they got the water for the table. One of the deck hands took a wooden pail, tied a long piece of rope to the handle, stood at the extreme edge of the deck which had no rail and was only two or three feet above the water, and threw the pail out into the river open end down. It always was tossed upstream and then drawn in while it was floating down with the current. If the water had been allowed to reach the end of the rope the deckhand would have been jerked into the river. At any rate that is what they told me. But those roustabouts knew the trick and never missed. On numerous other trips I watched them draw the water and waited, rather eagerly I'll admit, to see one of them take a dive; but it never happened.

There were current reports that gamblers were on the passenger list. There may or may not have been any on board that day but I lost
my first money then nevertheless. While leaning over the rail I saw at my feet a small wad of bills. It was before the resumption of specie payments and the money was all "shinplasters" — quarters, fifties and ten-cent notes. Another older boy was standing near me and after I picked up my treasure trove I asked him, lunkhead that I was, if he knew who had lost the money. He looked astonished at the moment, then said he knew whose it was and took the money and went into the cabin. He came back in a few minutes smiling and told me he found the owner. Too late I realized who was the possessor, if not the rightful owner, at that moment.

Here and there on our journey we came to bridges crossing the river. Some of them were high enough to permit the boat to go underneath with no special preparation for the event, though sometimes it looked to me as if the smoke stacks surely were going to be knocked off; but always there was enough room when we passed under. At length, however, we approached a bridge so low that it was perfectly apparent that it would be hit by the smoke stacks. Almost breathless I watched to see what they were going to do about it. Surely the boat would slow down; but it did not. Then, just in the nick of time, with appropriate tackle and a sputtering "donkey" engine somewhere below, the tall stacks were laid backward parallel to the top of the deck, and then gracefully raised again when the menacing bridge had been left behind.

Being only a small boy, I had not yet studied physical geography, so I did not know then that the Monongahela, like "old man river" himself, is a striking and beautiful example of the meandering type of stream. Running between and around hills it forms some of the most perfect curves nature has ever produced. Rounding one of these bends we came presently to a desolate looking spot along the wooded shore. Slowing down, the boat drew in to land, and dragged up the steep bank to what was the merest semblance of a road. Two or three rickety frame houses, drab and paintless, constituted the village; but that was the beginning of what is now the great steel town, Monessen.

At times, when the signal came from the shore there did not seem to be any landing place at all and it appeared as though we should run right into a thicket of undergrowth; but always, when we got close to the bank, there was some sort of opening in the bushes where the gangplank could be thrown out to touch the shore, although in some

4 One part of the Resumption of Specie Act of Jan. 1, 1879, provided for the removal of fractional currency from circulation and its replacement with silver coins.
places there was little more than a narrow footpath leading back to a very small village, or even some single house. Anyone could hail a passing boat, including the large side-wheelers, by merely waving a handkerchief or by some other signal, whereupon the captain or mate would order the boat to put ashore. Every passenger or piece of freight counted in the business of the river.

At such places the gangplank was literally a plank. It was scarcely more than a foot wide and rather bendy, but this was all there was for a single passenger at an obscure landing. Besides, the plank was always more or less in motion sidewise with the boat swinging around in the current while momentarily touching the shore. It seemed a very insecure footway but I never heard of that anyone fell off. A few of the larger towns had a wharf boat moored permanently for the shelter of passengers and the safety of freight; but when the latter was unloaded at an ordinary open wharf the responsibility of the navigation company ended; it was the business of the consignee to come and get his goods. It made no difference if a barrel of crackers from Brownsville was unloaded late at night in the rain. The consignee was supposed to be on hand to get it. If the crackers got soaked it was his fault. 5

At last in the late afternoon, we reached our El Dorado, a flourishing town whose name was California, named during the gold rush days. It was, and is, distinguished by having amidst the coal industry one of the earliest and best of Pennsylvania’s State Colleges for the training of teachers. My father was the newly elected Principal of the school and we were to live there. Our first home was in an old hotel [on Water Street]. . . . In addition to our regular quarters there was a mysteriously spooky room which had no opening except the one door through which it was entered. There were no windows nor ventilators of any sort and even the door opened into a dark hall. We were told that back in slavery days the hotel had been a station on the “underground” railroad, and that the fugitives were hidden in this dark room. Once, as the story ran, when some riders in pursuit of a runaway slave stopped there and searched the place, they came to this room and asked the proprietor where the door led. With his gun on his arm and a dangerous glint in his eye he replied “That door opens straight into hell.” The hiding slave was not taken.

Immediately opposite the hotel on the waterfront was the [Eberman, McFall and Company] boatyard where they built the huge barges

5 The “water” crackers of Chatland and Lendhart Company, Brownsville, were well known throughout the region.
which carried the coal down the river. To this day I can close my eyes and in fancy scent the fragrance of the fresh sawdust that clung to the damp planks when they were hauled out from the sawmill to the building yards. Boat building was the town’s chief industry.\(^6\) The yard regulated all local affairs, including the time system, probably one of the earliest attempts at daylight saving [time]. They kept their clocks fifteen or twenty minutes fast, greatly to the disturbance of the college schedule. But there was only one thing to do — yield as gracefully as possible.

This yard also built some of the passenger boats, the largest being the CHIEFTAIN. The latter was put into service as a rival of the old [Pittsburgh and Brownsville Packet] line company and caused a cut in the prevailing rate of ten cents per mile. The rivalry produced exciting times on the river...?\(^7\)


\(^7\) The Chieftain was completed by McFall and Company, California, Pennsylvania, in May 1866, for the new Peoples’ Line to compete with the Pittsburgh and Brownsville Packet Company.
The local adherents of the old and new lines formed two factions in the river towns and the relative merits of the competing boats were argued by schoolboys and discussed in the clubs — not real clubs, of course, just grocery store groups — with all the ardor and acrimony of rival volunteer fire companies or baseball champions. A minor feature of the rivalry was the calliope whistle. My friend, Captain Henry W. Wolfe, of Pittsburgh, one of the oldest commanders on the river, informed me that the first “lope” was installed in the early sixties and that it raised quite an excitement. When the competing boats were put on the river they had bigger and louder calliopes. After the two lines had consolidated a notable addition to the fleet was the JAMES G. BLAINE, named for the statesman whose birthplace was West Brownsville. Years later, at the close of the century, it was dismantled and lay for a long time at the old wharf, a decrepit and pathetic relic of a passing era in American development, while at the same period the old Blaine homestead was crumbling and falling into ruin.8

In the pre-railway days time schedules received little consideration. There was a day boat and night boat each way and an hour or two did not matter; we knew the boat would come some time, depending on how much freight there was to be handled along the way. I remember once when we were going to Pittsburgh we waited for the day boat from one o’clock, the approximate scheduled time, until five in the afternoon. That meant staying on the boat all night to go less than sixty miles. At times also passengers would go aboard at Brownsville in the evening and sleep on the boat so as to avoid getting up early or possibly waiting around several hours in the morning. One evening in the winter of [18]76-77 I adopted this plan, but the boat never got away at all. During the night a sudden cold snap swooped down on us and in the morning the river was frozen over with three or four inches of ice. The boat was tied up for the winter and a cold little boy walked back home five miles across the country.9

8 The two packet lines were consolidated on Sept. 28, 1868, as the Pittsburgh, Brownsville, and Geneva Packet Company. The battles between the two lines occurred prior to Charles’s moving to California, therefore, he had to have heard those stories from local river people. The James G. Blaine was built on the Captain Adam Jacobs property at East Riverside (seventeen miles south of Brownsville) in March 1882. She ran on the river until 1902.

James G. Blaine moved to Maine before the Civil War. He soon entered politics and, for the next generation, played a prominent role in the Republican party and the nation as U.S. House speaker, presidential candidate, and secretary of state.

9 The level of the river was lower in those years because the smaller dams did not lift the water as high as today. Hence, the river usually froze every year.
When school closed at Christmas I joined an overland sleighing party and went to Pittsburgh to join my parents. While there a mild winter thaw broke up the ice and I stood on the high bluff overlooking Lock No. 110 and watched the wreckage go over the top of the dam—skiffs, shanties, coal barges, some empty and others full of coal, and a vast quantity of lesser debris. In the same ice flood my old first love, the BENNETT, went over the dam at Lock No. 4, now Charleroi while the CHIEFTAIN sank just above the same dam. They had been torn from their winter moorings [in Brownsville] and there was no possible way to save them.

The most fascinating place on the boats was the pilot house. Perhaps because I was a boy and possibly also being the son of my father, the pilots were good to me and let me come up into their sacred place and watch the passing panorama of the river and also observe the manipulation of the boat. Even high up as we were we could hear the jangle of the signal bells on the engine deck far below. I learned to know the meaning of the bells and could tell when the pilot signaled slow or stop or reverse as the boat came into the shore with a long sweeping curve and stuck its nose, without a jar, into the edge of the wharf. At first I did not know why the pilot turned his wheel to the left when the boat was going to the right, but after I looked at the winding of the long cable in the wheel house and had traced it back through the engine room to the area of the big rudder, I understood. The pilot wheel, five and six feet in diameter, was operated by hand power. Often in making a sharp turn the pilot would send it spinning until the slack in the cable was taken up and then he would "climb" the wheel on its spokes. The latter were deeply worn where his boots—men did not wear shoes then—had mounted many times. After I had become known to several of the pilots, occasionally one of them would let me hold the wheel a short time when we came to a long stretch of deep water where no turns were to be made. Thrills from my fingertips down to my toes! Even today part of the zest of driving my car comes from thinking that I am steering the old boat with my hands on the wheel.

Each boat had its own peculiarities, a kind of personality. Our

10 Lock and Dam 1, about a mile above the Smithfield Street Bridge, was built by the Monongahela Navigation Company in 1844. In the ice breakup of Jan. 13, 1877, both boats were swept downriver from their moorings at Brownsville. The BENNETT, after going over the dam at Lock 4 (North Charleroi), where she lost her boilers, continued over the remaining dams to the head of Brunot's Island just below Pittsburgh. The CHIEFTAIN, after striking several coal tipples, sank opposite North Charleroi.
home was near the river and as I lay in bed and heard the night boat go by, I could tell by the cough of the exhaust steam, or by the peculiar rhythmic clatter of the paddle wheels, whether it was the Bennett, or the Elector, the Geneva or the Blaine. The whistles too were distinctive. Years later when the railroads adopted the steamboat whistle for passenger trains it gave me nostalgia. The whistle was located on the upper deck, close to the smokestacks. The longest standing-broad-jump I ever made I executed one day, quite involuntarily, when I forgot and stood within a few feet of the whistle when the pilot suddenly blew the signal for an approaching passing boat. The boat going up-stream had the right of way and blew first, one blast to pass on the right and two to the left.¹¹

One of the most picturesque men on the river was Captain M. A. Cox, who for many years commanded the Geneva. Cox was a "hard" Democrat while his chief mate, Enoch Daugherty, was an equally "black" Republican.¹² Most of the crew were Republicans and practically all of them lived in Brownsville. In the presidential campaign of 1876, when feeling ran high between the followers of [Republican Rutherford B.] Hayes and [Democrat Samuel J.] Tilden, it appeared as if even Pennsylvania might be in doubt [for the Republican party].¹³ The day before election the Geneva was in Brownsville and Captain Cox sent it down to Pittsburgh on the night trip in command of the mate with orders to lie over the next day, in Pittsburgh, and not to make the usual trip up the river. Cox himself stayed in Brownsville so as to be home to vote and at the same time to cut out a large number of Republican votes by marooning his crew in Pittsburgh. But mate Daugherty had different plans. For that day at least he was in full command of the boat and he issued orders to take the Geneva up to Brownsville on the usual day's run, orders that had the enthusiastic endorsement of the crew.

My mother was ill in Pittsburgh and I had been down to see her

¹¹ Built by Cock and Williams Company for the Peoples' Packet Company in Brownsville in June 1866, the Elector was the sister packet to the Chieftain. She plied the river until 1881. The Geneva, named for the head of navigation on the river, was built in Brownsville in June 1871. The ice was cut away from her on Jan. 13, 1877, and she escaped the fate of her two sister packets. In 1885 she was put into the excursion trade out of Pittsburgh.

¹² A long-time resident of Brownsville, Cox had begun steamboating in 1844. He was popular and known for his record of safety on the rivers. The Three Towns: A Sketch of Brownsville, Bridgeport, and West Brownsville . . . (Brownsville, 1976; reprint of 1881 ed.), 33.

¹³ The Democrats were optimistic because of the continuing economic problems since the Panic of 1873 and the fraud and corruption associated with the outgoing Grant administration.
The *Adam Jacobs*, named for the former president of the Pittsburgh, Brownsville, and Geneva Packet Company, was in Brownsville in the late summer of 1885. She ran on the river until being dismantled in 1903. The same year she was rebuilt as a wharfboat for use at McKeesport by the company.

over the week-end and was told to go back home on Tuesday [Nov. 7], election day, so as to be in school the day following. When I got down to the wharf just before eight o'clock that morning I noticed the absence of the customary hubbub about the boat. Little or no freight was being taken on and exactly on the stroke of eight the whistle blew, the deck bell clanged, the pilot pulled his signals and the *Geneva* drew out into the channel, pointed her nose up the river, and began what was perhaps the most notable trip of her career. If there were any belated passengers that day they were out of luck, although on another occasion I saw Captain Cox himself bring his boat back from midstream through the river traffic in order to pick up a single passenger who had arrived a few minutes late, but who had waved a signal from the wharf.

No stops were made that election day, even at regular points, without a definite signal. No freight was taken on and there was none
to put off, for the boat was running light to make time and the decks were clear. There may have been plenty of goods to take on but, after the passengers were transferred, boxes, barrels, crates and packages of all sorts were left on the wharves in spite of pleas and curses. The mate simply would not touch them that day. Time was precious; he was taking the crew and himself to vote. There were very few passengers at any rate and those who were aboard were possibly unofficial like myself. I call it unofficial because I just couldn't pay for anything that day. The bursar, or clerk as he was called, told me he was busy when I tried to pay my fare and would not take my money. The same thing happened when I went to his window a second time, so I did not try again. I also had my dinner for nothing. Perhaps it was just because I was a small boy travelling alone, or because the boat officials knew who I was; but I never heard that my father got the bill for that day's exciting trip.

We ran around other boats and the geneva reached Brownsville about two o'clock in the afternoon well ahead of scheduled time, possibly the only time it ever happened, and Daugherty and his crews voted for Hayes and [vice-presidential nominee William A.] Wheeler. In the heated political days that followed I never heard what Captain Cox did or said when he heard that his boat had pulled into the wharf that afternoon, or what, if anything, was done to mate Daugherty for exceeding his authority.14 Years later [in June 1899], spurning the railroad, I again took the trip to renew my boyhood impressions. It was my good fortune that the geneva was again the boat making the up-trip that day, and my delight was keen indeed when I found that Captain Cox was still in command, although I noted signs of his gathering years. He was very gracious when I introduced myself and was good enough to stand in front of the pilot house and let me photograph him. I never saw him again.

At about the same time as that famous political battle of '76 [Dwight L.] Moody and [Ira D.] Sankey were holding a series of religious meetings in Pittsburgh.15 It was one of the common topics of conversation all along the Monongahela valley. "Hold the Fort" became a famous revival hymn and the tune was seized upon for cam-

14 The Republicans barely managed to carry Pennsylvania by 50.6 percent of the vote. There were twenty "disputed" electoral votes, and an ad hoc Electoral Commission determined that they should be Hayes's. Fayette County had a Democratic majority of about one thousand votes. Brownsville voted for Hayes, however, 188 to 164. Uniontown Genius of Liberty, Nov. 16, 1876.

15 Moody was a well-known Protestant evangelist in the United States and Britain during the 1870s and 1880s. Sankey was his organist and singer.
ampaign songs. We had a boys' Republican club and one of the songs in our repertoire was:

"Hold the fort for Hayes and Wheeler,
Tilden is too thin;
Send the answer back to Hendricks,\textsuperscript{16}
Hayes and Wheeler win."

That, too, was the time of the torch-light parade in all its glory. But Pittsburgh surpassed itself and all competitors on the Monday before election with a daylight parade ten miles long in which practically all the industrial plants participated. It took more than four hours to pass the proverbial "given point". My given point was somewhere on upper Fifth Avenue, and next day, after my memorable ride on the \textsc{Geneva} with mate Daugherty and crew, I swelled [bragged] around the home village, telling the other boys about the biggest political parade in the country.

Among the outstanding features of the river and its early traffic was the [John] Gibson['s & Son] distillery that gave fame to Monongahela whiskey. Brought up as I was to regard anything alcoholic as of evil origin, I always looked from passing boats at the distillery and its big, blank-wall bonded warehouses with awe and repulsion. And when the boats stopped and the barrels of whiskey were rolled up the gangplank I wondered where in the world it all could go. It was inconceivable that so much whiskey could find people enough to consume it. There were numerous other distilleries up and down the river and very excellent whiskey, as I remember hearing, could be had for — think of it — fifty cents a gallon. What a price! But Gibson was the name that made Monongahela whiskey famous.\textsuperscript{17}

Then, as now, everywhere under the hills was coal, very dirty, but often iridescent and beautiful. The thick beds of it, often miscalled veins, cropped out along the roads and hillsides, sometimes sloping down to the waterline and disappearing under the river. One could buy the winter's domestic supply for almost nothing, and the fine material, called slack, was thrown away. It really was not necessary for the poorer families to buy coal at all and many of them didn't. Coal was, like King Solomon's silver, literally stones in the street; it could be picked up along roadsides anywhere.

\textsuperscript{16} Senator Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana was the Democratic vice-presidential nominee.

\textsuperscript{17} The Gibson distillery, located in the village of Gibsonton about one-half mile below Belle Vernon in Westmoreland County, had since 1858 been the largest producer in the area. The major supplier in the United States, it also shipped large quantities to foreign countries. John S. Van Voorhis, \textit{The Old and New Monongahela} (Pittsburgh, 1893), 388-96.
The difference in relative value of things was forcibly impressed upon me when we came back east to live in ... Harrisburg where anthracite was the prevailing domestic fuel. Going to school one day with a group of boys we came to a pile of coal which had been dumped on a pavement in front of a cellar window. The value of coal was just nothing to me. Hadn't I seen thousands of tons of it lying around for anyone to take who wanted it? So I picked up a chunk of anthracite and playfully hurled it in the general direction of a telegraph pole across the street. About that time the man with the shovel got into action and behaved, as it seemed to me, in a most unwarranted manner. He must have thought his coal was gold! When I got home my father explained to me the difference between anthracite in an eastern city and bituminous coal on the banks of the Monongahela. I have not used anthracite as ammunition since.

One of the large coal mines was in a hill just across the river from our town and the miners, then as now mostly foreigners, rowed across the river to their work in small skiffs. In winter they would walk over the ice; but during the break-up in the spring getting across the river was a precarious procedure and the miners had to fight their way through cakes of floating ice. The longest, bitterest, most awful stream of profanity I ever have heard was occasioned by this river condition one spring morning. Each miner received from the operating company his own individual can of blasting powder which he carried to and from the mine. On the day referred to a miner had worked his frail little skiff a hundred yards or so through the crunching blocks of floating ice, only to find that he had left his can of powder on the shore. He stood up in his skiff and at the top of his voice which could be heard clear across the river, poured forth a stream of blasphemy that could be printed only on asbestos paper.

Monongahela coal, black but beautiful, still comes down the river to fuel the industries of the nation; but the picturesque passenger boats and the romance and adventure of their traffic belong to a departed day.