



## LIBRARY & ARCHIVES TREASURES

By David R. Grinnell, Chief Archivist

### The *New Orleans* Commemoration

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the launching of the *New Orleans*, the first steamboat on the “western waters,” or what is now the interior of the United States. Just a few years earlier, Robert Fulton had built the *Clermont* to operate on the Hudson River between New York City and Albany. He and other investors—Nicholas Roosevelt and Robert Livingston—were eager to see if a similar operation would be feasible along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. The *New Orleans* was launched at Pittsburgh on October 20, 1811, and ran between Natchez and New Orleans for three years before it sank near Baton Rouge. The importance of the boat and the industry that grew here helped mold Pittsburgh’s image as America’s earliest “Gateway to the West.”

In 1911, the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, predecessor of the Heinz History Center, took a leading role in the *New Orleans* centennial commemoration. A replica steamboat was constructed in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania, for a commemorative voyage to New Orleans. In Pittsburgh, formal banquets were held with representatives from the Ohio Valley Historical Association and the Water Ways Commission, and on October 31 a “Marine Parade” was held featuring a flotilla of 44 steamboats along the Monongahela and Ohio rivers.

The commemoration drew such prominent guests as President William Howard Taft, Pennsylvania Governor John

K. Tener, Ohio Governor Judson Harmon, West Virginia Governor W. E. Glasscock, and U.S. Congressman Nicholas Longworth of Ohio. Christening the replica steamboat (as seen below) was Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth, daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt and great-great grandniece of Nicholas Roosevelt.

Thousands of spectators participated in Pittsburgh, then the steamboat departed for New Orleans on a tour that docked at East Liverpool, Steubenville, Wheeling, Marietta,


Gallipolis, Ironton, Manchester, Maysville, New Richmond, Cincinnati, Madison, Louisville, Cairo, Memphis, and many more towns. Guests toured the boat and signed its guest register at each stop until it arrived in New Orleans on November 27, where the Louisiana Historical Society held more festivities.

The centennial activities are well documented in the Heinz History Center Library and Archives, where a collection of correspondence, the guest register,

Alice Roosevelt christens the replica *New Orleans* steamboat.

HHC L&A MSS# 299.

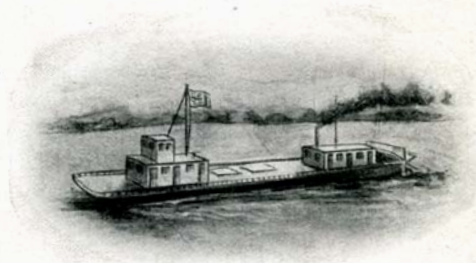


photographs, a program, and scrapbooks are preserved and cataloged (MSS# 299). The History Center is again part of an anniversary as it is arranging to dedicate a state historical marker near where the original *New Orleans* was constructed and launched. 

The Library & Archives collects materials related to the history and culture of Western Pennsylvania. The Reading Room, located on the sixth floor of the Heinz History Center, is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Search the L&A Catalog at: <http://207.67.203.74/S92015Staff/OPAC/index.asp>

# The New Orleans

First Steamboat on the  
Ohio River



From sketch by Geo. M. Lehman

## Steamboat Centennial Banquet

FORT PITT HOTEL  
Pittsburgh

Friday, March 24, 1911. 7 o'clock P. M.

