THE STEAMBOAT *NEW ORLEANS*

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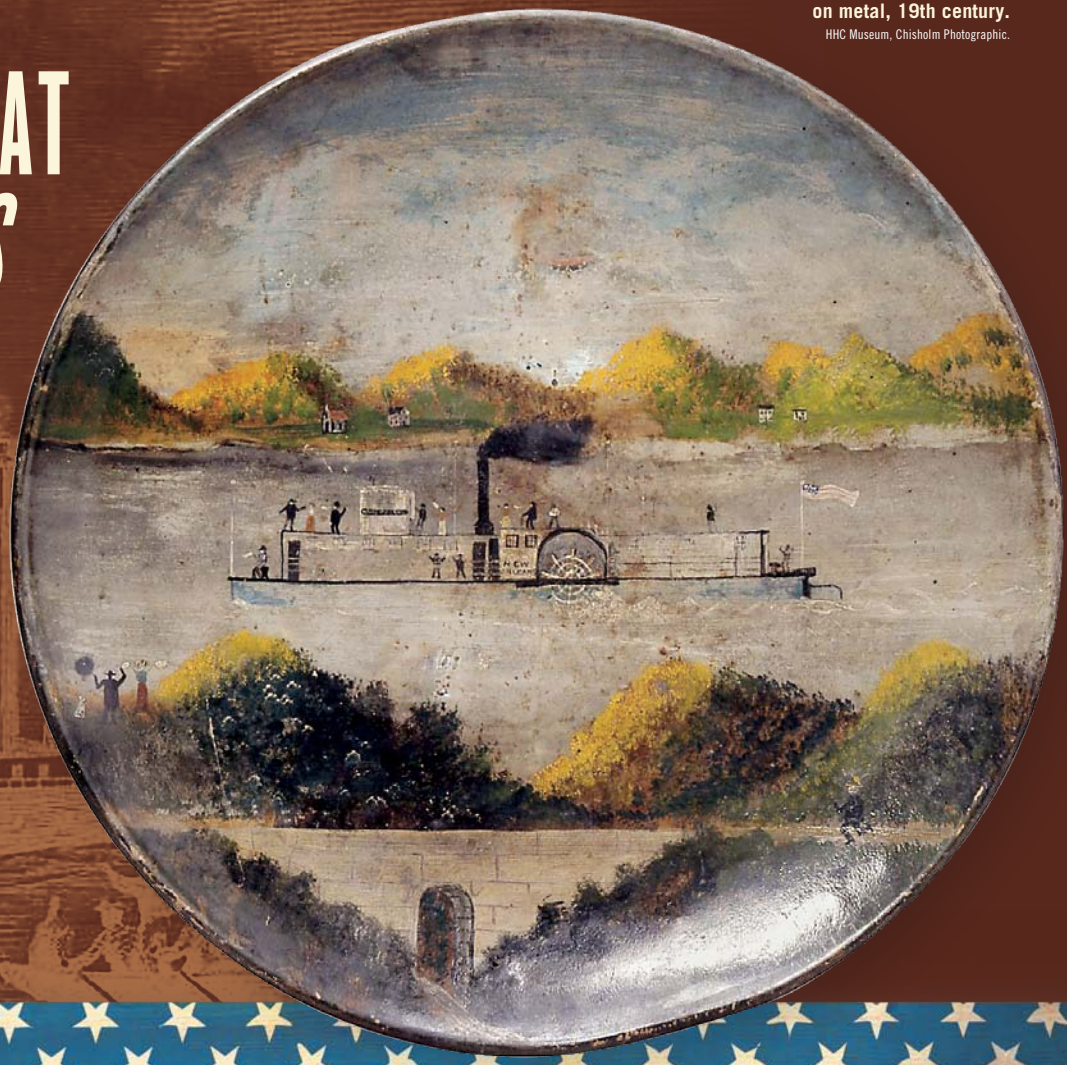

Steamboat *New Orleans*, painted on metal, 19th century.
HHC Museum, Chisholm Photographic.

repairs."[24] By September 1864, the *Cricket #6* reported back on patrol on the White River in Arkansas, where she served until war's end the following year.

The *Cricket #6* finally went out of commission on June 30, 1865, sold at public auction in Mound City, Illinois, on August 17, 1865, for $5,500 to William Thatcher. Repairs while in government service tallied $2,558.00. Listed in New Orleans in 1866, the *Cricket* was finally abandoned, off ships lists, and assumed dismantled by 1867.[25]

The many Civil War-era vessels manufactured in Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania during the 1850s and '60s played a crucial role in the winning of the war, but are long gone. Other than a couple pieces of the USS *Wolverine* in Erie, they've been wrecked or scrapped into oblivion.[26]

[1] Many early boats are recorded as "built at Pittsburgh," though the hulls or boiler deck framing, for example, might have come from any number of locations. See S. Kussart, *The Allegheny River*, (Burgum, 1938); the firm of Snowden and Mason also won the government contracts to build the *Monitors: Manayunk and Umpqua*, however neither ship would serve during the Civil War. See Arthur Fox, *Pittsburgh During the American Civil War*, Chicora, Pa.: Mechling Bookbindery, 2002/2004/2008), pp. 86-87, and P.H. Silverstone, *Civil War Navies, 1855-1883* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001), pp. 6-7; 10, for further documentation regarding these two vessels; Tomlinson, Hartupee, and Company built the iron-clad Monitors: *Marrietta and Sandusky*; see Fox, pp. 85-87, and Silverstone, pp. 114.

None of the iron-clad *Monitors* built in Pittsburgh saw action during the Civil War; Bridges and Tunnels of Allegheny County, website: http://www.pghbridges.com/; James Yargates, "Steamboat Building In Beaver County," *Milestones*, Vol. 7 No. 2, Spring 1982; At Belle Vernon, boat hulls were built at L.M. Speer's boatyard. See George Thurston, *Directory of the Mon and Yough Valleys*, 1859 and Franklin Ellis, *History of Fayette County, PA.* 1882, for additional information on Belle Vernon; Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania with Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: L. H. Leverts, 1882), p. 635; Per. Comm., November 2, 2009 – Marc Henshaw, Nemacolin Archaeological Consultants, Brownsville, Fayette County.

For California, Washington County, see: Dr. John K. Folmar, *California, Pa. 1849-1881: History of a Boat Building Town*, (California: Yohogania Press, 2009), and communication with Dr. Folmar on 11/9/09; *Monongahela and the Ohio River Navigations Charts*, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, January 1995.

As long as humans have inhabited North America, rivers have been their "highways." Inland waterways provided food, sparked wars, and took travelers to new opportunities and ancestral homes. People traversed the waters in all manners: gliding, paddling, or poling their canoes, keel boats, and flat boats. However, one thing was certain—any trip of length was a one-way trip downstream. With the invention of the steamboat came the ability to do something that had forever seemed contrary to nature itself: float upstream.

Although the *New Orleans* was not the first steamboat—others operated as early as the 1780s in eastern waterways[1]—it was the first to navigate the western waters of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. In March 1811, the *New Orleans* put afloat at a Pittsburgh shipyard near the Panhandle Bridge. The current span, built in 1903, carries the "T" rail into the city.

During the *New Orleans*' inaugural voyage, from October to December, the first of the powerful New Madrid earthquakes struck. Besides the tremendous shaking and resulting damage to life and property, the quake caused panic for the crew and passengers as it shifted the very pattern of the Mississippi River, forcing the pilot to finish the voyage essentially "blind." Familiar natural navigating signs such as trees, rocks, bends, and pools had all shifted or were gone entirely.

From its literally shaky beginning, the *New Orleans* and its ability to move people and cargo both down and up the mighty Mississippi opened up the west to commerce and settlement, bringing change to the American frontier.

On October 15, the Heinz History Center will commemorate the bicentennial of the *New Orleans* launching with the installation and dedication of a historical marker near the location of the original shipyard. Visit the events page at www.heinzhistorycenter.org for the time and location.

[1] Thompson Westcott, *Life of John Fitch, Inventor of the Steam-boat* (Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1857), 192.

REFERENCES:

Dahlinger, Charles W., "A Critical Account of the Beginning of Steamboat Navigation on the Western Rivers of the United States," *Pittsburg Legal Journal* 59 No. 42 (Oct. 21, 1911), 570-591.

Dohan, Mary Helen. Mr. *Roosevelt's Steamboat: The First Steamboat to Travel the Mississippi* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1981), 591.

http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/states/events/1811-1812.php for information on the Madrid earthquakes.

Latrobe, John H.B. *A Lost Chapter in the History of the Steamboat* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1871).

[2] The boat-building industry in the Pittsburgh vicinity during the Civil War has received little secondary documentation, the most noteworthy being Theodore R. Parker's 1948 article, "Western Pennsylvania and the Naval War on the Inland Rivers, 1861-1863," and his earlier work on "William J. Kountz, Superintendent of River Transportation," both published 1938 in the forerunner of this journal, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*. (Kountz built ships for over 20 years, more than any other single firm in southwestern Pennsylvania.) More recently I documented 120 Steamships built in Allegheny County in Appendix H (399-407), of *Our Honored Dead, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania in the American Civil War*, (Chicora, Pa.: Mechling Bookbindery, 2008 & 2009). For additional information on Kountz, see MSS-CA-518 Flat File at the HHC L&A.

[3] Bradley A. Rodgers, *Guardian of the Great Lakes: The U.S. Paddle Frigate Michigan*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 11. Also see, "More Photographs of the US Steamer *Michigan*," in *Military Images*, Volume 3, November/December 2008, pp. 38-40.

[4] Ibid, 23.

[5] Ibid, p. 4. The first iron vessel, produced in the United States was the *Codorus*, built in 1825 by nail cutter John Elgar of York, Pa. In 1838, Charles W. Copeland of the West Point Foundry in New York produced the 222-ton steamer *United States* from native iron. The second rolled-plate iron ship made of native U.S. materials was the *Valley Forge*. This ship was manufactured by Robinson and Minis of Pittsburgh. The *Valley Forge*, launched in 1839 at Pittsburgh, was designed to ply the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, (Rodgers, pp. 8-9). The *Codorus* and *Valley Forge* however, were not U.S. Navy vessels.

[6] Ibid, 17.

[7] Ibid, 16-17.

[8] Ibid, 159, note 40. The original ordnance contract was awarded to Freeman, Knap, and Totten of Pittsburgh in 1845, later known as the "Fort Pitt Foundry."

[9] Ibid, 85.

[10] Ibid, p. 92. Also see "Last Raid of a Rebel Pirate," in *Civil War Times*, (April 2009), pp. 42-47), that describes the *Michigan's* role during the Confederate raid on the Johnson's Island POW camp in Lake Erie. See Bradley, Appendix A that documents shipwrecks, rescues, and collisions involving the USS *Michigan*.

[11] Rodgers, 87.

[12] Ibid, 107.

[13] Ibid, 127.

[14] Ibid, 135.

[15] The Maritime Museum in Erie, Pa., has a huge display of the USS *Michigan* and *Wolverine* material culture and photographs of the nearly 80 years of the ship's history. In addition, impressive models of the *Michigan* and its later conversion to the *Wolverine* are also in the exhibit. The display is dominated by a section of the original iron bow of the ship, then the *Wolverine*, when it was disassembled in Erie in 1949. The author in May 2010 photographed the preserved bow on display at the museum.

[16] Paskoff, 175-176.