

CAHC Steamboat Discussion and Holdings for Web Exhibit
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From the earliest days of the nineteenth century, steamboats played a vital role in the history of Arkansas. Prior to the advent of steamboats, Arkansans were at the mercy of poor roads, high carriage costs, slow journeys, and isolation. In 1820, with the arrival of the Steamboat *Comet* at Arkansas Post, life for Arkansans quickly changed for the better. Soon, steamboats traveled the Arkansas, Black, Mississippi, Ouachita, and White Rivers, carrying passengers, raw materials, consumer goods, and mail to formally difficult-to-reach communities and thereby creating new possibilities for the young state. But this new mode of transportation had its dark side. Native Americans found themselves transported via steamboats to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma State) in the 1830s. And during the Civil War in Arkansas, steamboats played a significant role in the war's painful drama, including the destruction of the *USS Queen City* on the White River by Confederate forces June 24, 1864, and the explosion of the infamous *Sultana* on April 27, 1865, carrying approximately 1,500 paroled Union prisoners to their watery graves.

Early and mid-nineteenth century steamboats had notorious reputations for danger due to boiler explosions, snags (usually submerged logs), and sandbars. These dangers, however, did little to discourage steamboat travel and transport as the Arkansas economy depended on river transportation. After the Civil War, steamboats achieved hard-won reputations for safety and luxury, only to be overshadowed by the speed and efficiency of the late nineteenth-century transcontinental railroads.

Early to mid-twentieth century Arkansas saw the demise of the steamboat as diesel-powered towboats efficiently pushed steel barges carrying a variety of raw materials on the Arkansas's rivers. Even in the twenty-first century, this efficient mode of transport continues for bulk cargos such as iron, grain, construction materials, and coal.

The UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture's (CAHC) book, manuscript, pamphlet, and photograph collections house a variety of documents and images that honor the steamboat in Arkansas's history. From descriptions of river life from a steamboat clerk's point of view to an exciting image of the race between the *Eclipse* and *Natchez* in 1854, the following CAHC's collections provide a wide variety of research material for scholars, students, and the public:

Books

Bates, Alan. *The Western Rivers Steamboat Cyclopoedum, or: American Riverboat Structure & Detail, Salted with Lore, With a Nod to the Maker*. Leonia: Hustle Press, 1968.

This book provides the measurements and plans required to construct an American steamboats. The book also includes a detailed glossary of steamboat terms.

Berry, Rev. Chester D. *Loss of the Sultana and Reminiscences of Survivors*. Lansing: Darus D. Thorp, 1892.

This book provides a history of the sinking of the *Sultana* where over one 1,500 human beings were lost, most of them being exchanged prisoners of war on their way home after privation and suffering from one to twenty-three months in Cahaba and Andersonville prisons.

Custer, Jack. *The Steamer Sprague: This is the Story of Big Mama, the Largest Steam Towboat The World has Known. She now belongs to Vicksburg, Miss.* [s.l.: s.n., 196-?].

This book provides a detailed history of the Steamboat Sprague, a steamboat built for towing on the Mississippi River. On December 5, 1901, the boat was launched on the Mississippi River. Her career included rescue work during the 1927 Flood, defense work during World War II, and a starring role in the 1950 movie *Showboat*.

Elliott, Joseph Taylor. *The Sultana Disaster*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Publications, Vol. V, No. 3, 1913.

Former prisoner-of-war Joseph Taylor Elliot's first-hand account of the sinking of the Steamboat Sultana on April 27, 1865.

Ewen, William H. *Days of the Steamboats*. New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1967.

General discussion of steamboats, including the history of the steamboat during the early-, mid-, and late-nineteenth century, its venues, including the Hudson River, Long Island Sound, Mississippi River, Sacramento River, and the Great Lakes.

Gould, E. W. *Fifty Years on the Mississippi; or, Gould's History of River Navigation*. Saint Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Company, 1889.

This book discusses the history of the steamboat, the character of the early navigators, description of the first steamboats, the Steamboat *New Orleans*, Mississippi River floods, and the Mississippi River Commission and its work.

Huber, Leonard V., compiler. *Advertisements of the Lower Mississippi River Steamboats, 1812-1920: a Scrapbook with Introduction and Index of Vessels and Lines*. West Barrington: The Steamship Historical Society of America, 1959.

This book is a collection of steamboat newspaper advertisements found throughout the United States.

Lloyd, James T. *Lloyd's Steamboat Directory and Disasters on the Western Waters*. Cincinnati: James T. Lloyd & Co., 1856.

This book examines the history of the first application of steam, the lives of John Fitch and Robert Fulton, Maps of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, Plantations on the Mississippi River, and the Earthquake of 1812.

Potter, Jerry O. *The Sultana Tragedy: America's Greatest Maritime Disaster*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1992.

This book examines in detail the sinking of the Steamboat Sultana on April 27, 1865, including the construction of the ship, the former prisoners who were her passengers, the disaster itself, and Memphis' involvement with assisting the survivors.

Quick, Herbert and Edward. *Mississippi Steamboatin': A History of Steamboating on the Mississippi and Its Tributaries*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926.

The authors discuss bandits on the rivers, the Steamboat *New Orleans*, the Ohio-Lower Mississippi River

trade route, the upper Mississippi River, the Missouri River, steamboat pilots and engineers, steamboat racing, steamboats during the Civil War, and steamboat disasters.

Rathbone, Perry T. *Mississippi Panorama*. St. Louis: City Art Museum, 1950.

This work documents an exhibit held at the City Art Museum of St. Louis in 1950, including 188 illustrations of paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, bank notes, river boat models, and steamboat paraphernalia.

Tippitt, W. H. *Steamboats: 1870, 1871, 1872, Volume 1*. [s.l.: s.n.], 1967.

This work is a compilation of newspaper articles and photographs pertaining to steamboats built in the years 1870, 1871, and 1872, and which sank primarily in the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

***Traveller's Register, and River and Road Guide: Containing A New and Correct Map of the Rivers of the Mississippi Valley; Together With the Stage, Steamboat, Canal, and Rail-Road Routes Throughout the Western and South Western States, With the Distances, in Miles, from Place to Place*. Cincinnati: Robinson & Jones, 1848.**

This guide includes an almanac for 1848, memoranda pages, illustrations, and advertisements.

Way, Frederick, Jr. *Way's Directory of Western Rivers' Steam Towboats, Corrected to June 1953*. Sewickley: s.n., 1954.

This directory is a registry of tow boats, primarily running on the Mississippi River. It includes the early history of tow boats, dimensions of the ships, their various owners, and the year the ships were built.

Manuscript Collections

Miscellaneous Letter Collection, UALR.MS.0217

This collection contains miscellaneous letters written by Arkansans or by persons writing about Arkansas. The letters within this collection cover a wide range of topics concerning social conditions, description and travel (steamboats), medical conditions, and military affairs.

Rebecca Allen Turner Collection, 1840-1895, UALR.MS.0174

This collection contains letters from William Allen to Rebecca Allen Turner, and letters and documents related to Rebecca Allen Turner's husband Judge Jesse Turner. William Allen was a clerk on various steamships during the mid-nineteenth century. The bulk of this collection is made up of letters relative to William Allen's travels and his relationship to his family, which describes life on a steamboat and nineteenth century Arkansas.

Pamphlets

Allen, William H. *The Last Trip*. New York: Samuel Hueston, 1855.

This is an article published in *The Knickerbocker: or New York Monthly Magazine*, December 1855, by a steamboat clerk that describes the many colorful characters that embark on steamboat journeys, trips to Vicksburg, Natchez, and New Orleans, various plantations along the Mississippi River, fine food, and illness [Yellow Fever?].

Arkansas Daily Democrat. "Arkansas Steamboats: List of Those That Have Been Lost in the River During

Last 60 Years." Little Rock: Arkansas Daily Democrat, ca. 1903.

An appended list of steamers which have been sunk or destroyed in the Arkansas River during the last (sixty) years was prepared in 1894 by Captain T. J. Griffy, a veteran steamboat man. It does not contain the names of boats that were worn out and dismantled, only those that were lost through accident or otherwise. The majority of those listed as burned were intentionally destroyed during the Civil War to prevent their falling into the hands of the opposing army.

Arkansas Gazette. Obituary of Captain T. J. Griffy, a veteran steamboatman, died December 24, 1901.

Little Rock: Arkansas Gazette, 1901.

In 1866, he [Captain Griffy] moved to Little Rock, where he has since resided. In the eighties he was captain of the Steamboat *Ella*, one of the best boats in the Arkansas River trade, and resided at 1102 Scott Street. Later, he entered the government service on the river and was for several years captain of the United States Snagboat *Wichita*, which worked around Little Rock in the United States engineers' service on the Arkansas River. He was employed in the United States Engineer's of Ice, having retired from active river duty on account of his age.

Cooley, Esther. Come Aboard The Steam America: The Last Cotton Packet Boat on the Lower Mississippi, 1898-1926. Slidell: Esther Cooley, 1962.

This pamphlet comprises the author's memories of the Steamer *America*. She was one of four children of Captain LeVerrier Cooley. The family did not live on the boat, but in fact had their home in New Orleans. The boat was built at the Howard Shipyard at Jeffersonville, Indiana. She was launched on October 12, 1898, and was continuously in commission until she sank at the foot of Broadway in New Orleans on August 13, 1926. The author describes in detail the daily activities of a steamboat on the Mississippi River.

Dethloff, Henry C. Paddlewheels and Pioneers on Red River, 1815-1915, and the Reminiscences of Captain M. L. Scovell. Natchitoches: Louisiana Studies Institute of Northwestern State College, 1967.

This is an article published in *Louisiana Studies*, Vol. VI, No. 2, Summer, 1967, that describes the impact of steamboats during the nineteenth century on the Red River, a river which borders the states of Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. In addition, the article documents the memories of Captain M. L. Scovell (1865-1904), wherein he discusses steamboat life on the Red River, including the Civil War, commerce, dangers and difficulties, the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1873, and the decline of the steamboat due to the railroads.

Minor, B. B. (Benjamin Blake). A Winter-trip Down the Mississippi. Richmond: W. M. MacFarlane, 1846.

This is an article published in *The Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review*, Vol. XII, No. 1, January, 1846. The author describes dangerous winter travel on the Mississippi River aboard the Steamboat *Palestine*, including running aground on a sandbar, encountering floating ice, the dread of fire on the ship, falling river levels, and the difficulty of transporting large animals such as cattle.

“Steamboat Disasters.” *The North American Review*, Vol. 50, No. 106, January 1840, p. 19-42.

This article discusses boiler explosions, river obstacles, collisions, fire, and night travel.

Transom, Guy. *Launch and Trial Trip of the Forest Queen*. Cairo: Cairo Printing Company, 1877.

This book is a poetic discourse on the launch and initial run of the Steamship *Forest Queen*, presumably one of the steamboats that ran the Vicksburg blockade on April 16, 1863.

Photograph Collections

Black Rock Photograph Collection, ca. 1880-1950 UALR.PH.0036

This collection contains photographic print reproductions of Black Rock, Arkansas, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, including street scenes, river scenes, and businesses.

Rivers, Landings, and Riverboats Photograph Collection, ca.1880-1927, UALR.PH.0056

This collection contains photographic print reproductions of rivers, landings, and steamboats in Arkansas, including steamboats on the, Arkansas, Ouachita, and White Rivers.

Civil War: Gunboats and Steamboats Photograph Collection, 1861-1865, UALR.PH.0070

This collection contains photographic print reproductions of Union and Confederate gunboats and steamboats used during the Civil War, which were collected for the 1989 book, *Portraits of Conflict: A Photographic History of Arkansas in the Civil War*, by Bobby Roberts and Carl Moneyhon.

Huddleston Steamboat Photograph Collection, ca. 1827-1976, UALR.PH.0070

This collection contains photographic print reproductions, notes, advertisements, and bills of lading concerning steamboats, snag boats, and gun boats and their travels on the Arkansas, Black, and White Rivers, collected by Harold Duane Huddleston. Included with the photographs are Huddleston's annotations about the ships and their captains.

J. N. Heiskell Photograph Collection, UALR.PH.100

This collection contains photographic prints, stereographs, engravings, illustrations, and postcards of Arkansas, collected by J. N. Heiskell, owner of the *Arkansas Gazette* newspaper, including depictions of Arkansas cities, buildings, colleges and universities, the Civil War, crime, disasters, industry, the Little Rock school crisis, monuments, nature scenes, **steamboats**, and street scenes.

J. N. Heiskell Oversize Photograph Collection, UALR.PH.101

This collection contains photographic prints, engravings, and illustrations of Arkansas, collected by J. N. Heiskell, owner of the *Arkansas Gazette* newspaper, including depictions of Arkansas cities, buildings, the Civil War, steamboats, and street scenes.

These collections, owned by UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture, can be viewed at the Arkansas Studies Institute building, Monday through Saturday, from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm.

CAHC web site: www.ualr.edu/cahc

CAHC Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ualrcahc>