

Research on the Steamer “Rockford”

Compiled by Ric Skinner, ric.skinner@gmail.com

1/2/2014

Map of area between Oregon and Rockton Illinois referenced in the following newspaper articles

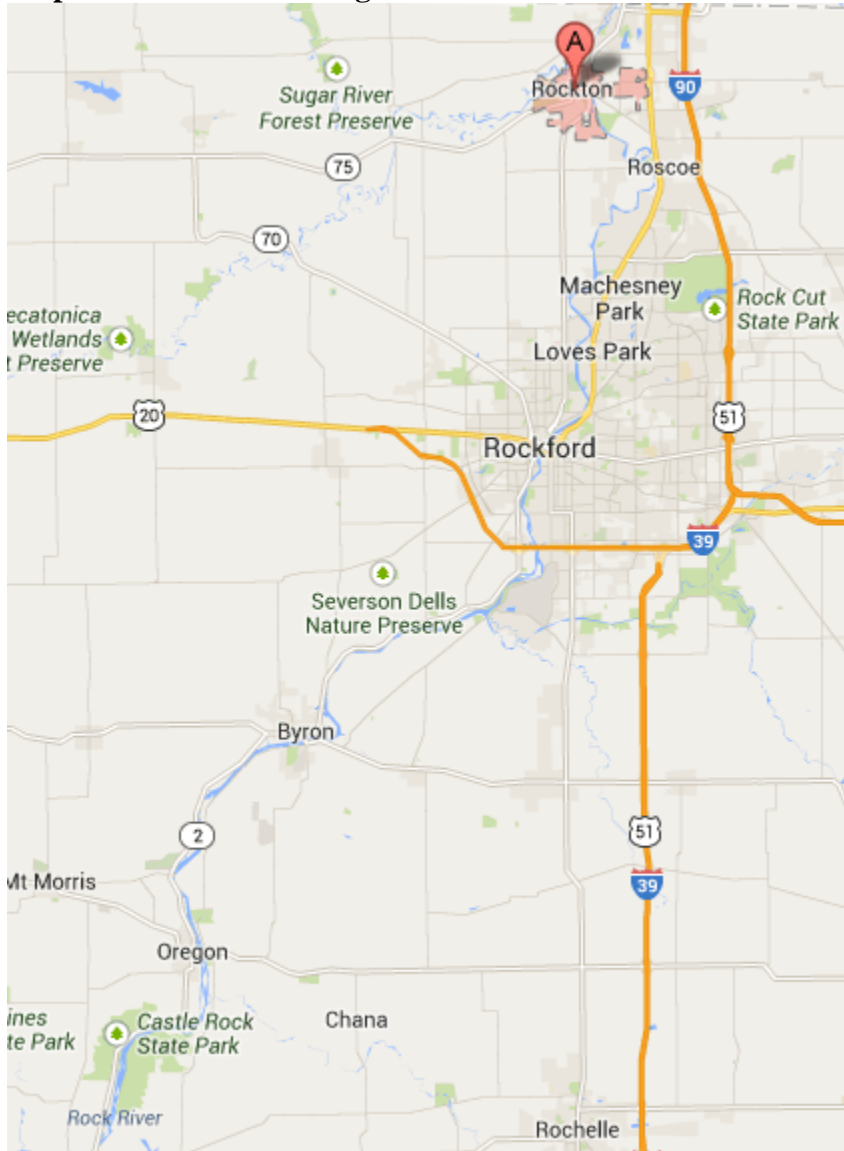
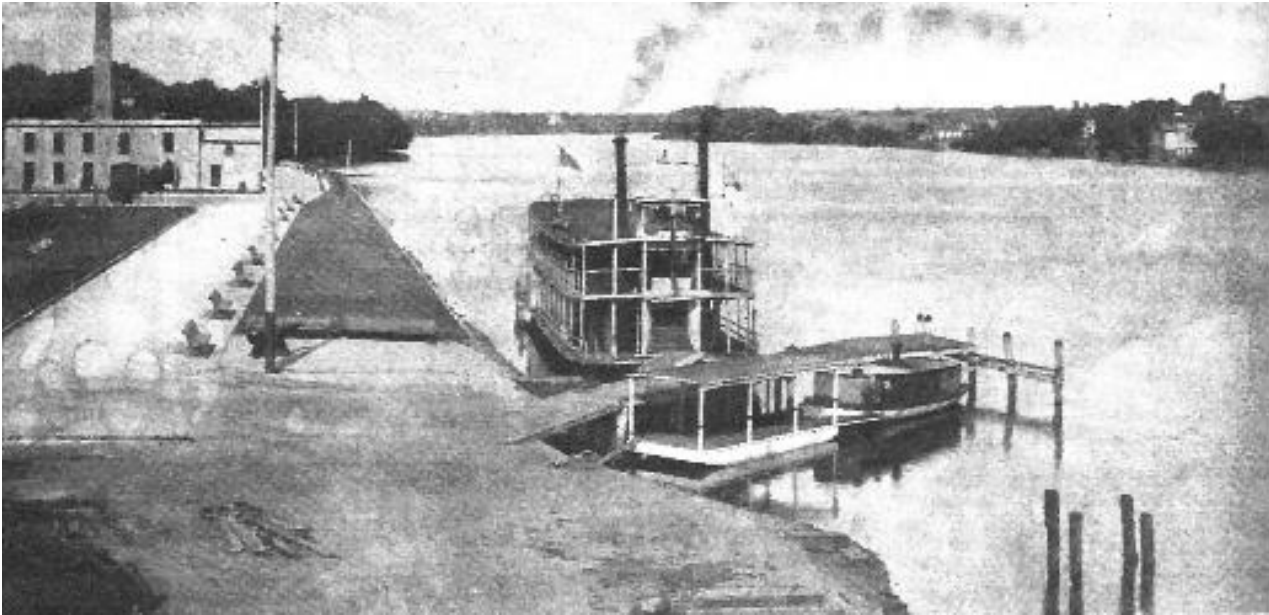


Image reportedly of the “Rockford” as it supposedly appeared in 1857

(<http://rockriverhomeowners.org/history/riverboat.html>). However, according to the Lytle-Holdcamper List the “Rockford” was built in 1859, therefore “1857” may be a typo or the photo is possibly another steamer. Note that this does not appear to be the same boat referenced in a 1904 article further down in this document.



What this research has revealed about the Steamer “Rockford”:

- (1) The “Rockford” was operating at Rockford and between Oregon and Rockton IL during the period 1857 – 1862.
- (2) A “Rockford” was operating in the Quad Cities area (between Andalusia, Rock Island and Davenport in 1864. This may not be the same “Rockford” or may be another similarly named “City of Rockford”.
- (3) A “Rockford” was operating on the Arkansas River and Mississippi River as far north as Cairo, IL in 1867. This may not be the same “Rockford” or may be another similarly named “City of Rockford”.
- (4) I don't know if the vessel in (1) is the same as the vessel(s) in (2) & (3).
- (5) Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States 1790-1868, also known as the Lytle-Holdcamper list states she was built in 1859 (however, several newspaper articles below state the “Rockford” was built in 1857) in Rockford, Illinois, with her home port being Galena, IL (this needs to be confirmed). She weighed 24 tons, and her registry number was #21350. She was either abandoned, or disappeared from official records, around 1869 (Lytle, W. H. and R. R. Holdcamper. Revised & edited by C. B. Mitchell. 1975. Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States, 1790-1868. Also known as the “Lytle-Holdcamper List”. The Steamship Historical Society of America, Inc. Staten Is., NY. p. 91).

Excerpts from newspaper articles

1849

Rockford Forum (Rockford, IL) 5/23/1849, page 3

These newspaper items link James B. Skinner to Pennock and Sterling, believed to be owners of the Steamer "Rockford" prior to James B. Skinner's ownership

O Y E S.

'Try it and then Buy it.

A Cultivator with which you can afford to raise corn cheap, with little labor. Hear what those say that have used them :

Rockford, May 13, 1849.

THIS is to certify, that we have used Wm. Dyser's Patent Universally Adjustable Cultivator, as manufactured by James B. Skinner, of Rockford, and can recommend it to every farmer in Winnebago county as being a great labor-saving machine. It also does the work in a manner superior to that of any other Cultivator we have ever seen.

Duncan Ferguson,	Stephen Allen,
Palmer Allen,	Jacob Knapp,
Wm. D. Pennock,	A. J. Pennock ,
Alonzo Corey,	Russel Pennock,
Joseph Jewell,	Cyrenus N. Woods,
Edmund Oviatt,	John Travis,
S. P. Pearsons,	James Jackson,
James Sterling ,	Wm. Fowler,
H. Hicks.	

Many more names might be added if necessary. For sale at my shop in West Rockford, and at Maynard & Warner's. I have no hesitancy in saying that they cannot be equalled by any Cultivator in this country.

J. B. SKINNER.

Rockford, May 23d, 1849.

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Rockford, May 23d, 1849.

1857

Rockford Republican (Rockford, IL), 5/7/1857, page 2
(Presumably this is the "Rockford")

STEAMER ON ROCK RIVER.—A couple of our enterprising mechanics, Messrs. Inman & Pennock, we understand, are engaged in rather a novel enterprise, but one which we have no doubt they will make a paying one. They are building at an expense of between six and seven thousand dollars, a small steamboat to ply between this city and Rockton. The boat is to be provided with a 20 horse power engine—is to be of light draft—drawing only about 9 inches of water, and is to have a cabin 16 by 30 feet. The engine was constructed at the Machine shop of Clarke and Utter, and the craft is to be set afloat in a few weeks. Now for pleasure excursions and pic-nic parties up the river.

Rock River Democrat (Rockford, IL), 6/16/1857, page 3

EXCURSION TO ROCKTON.—Last Friday a large company of our citizens took a pleasure excursion to Rockton on the steamer Rockford. We were favored with an invitation from its gentlemanly owners for the excursion, but very much to our regret, imperious engagements prevented our attendance. We are informed that the company on board had a very pleasant time indeed of their trip, as indeed it could not be otherwise.

P. S. Since the above was in type, the *Register* has been issued, containing an account of the excursion, in which its editor participated, and from its account we make the following extract:

We should not omit to mention that on the return trip, just before reaching Rockford, a meeting was organized by calling C. I. Horsman, Esq., to the Chair, after which the following resolutions were presented by Dr. Lyman and unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the officers and all attached to the Steamer Rockford, by their gentlemanly conduct and courteous bearing during the Excursion to Rockton, are entitled to the unanimous thanks of all fortunate enough to be of the party.

Resolved, That only by a trip on the steamer Rockford can the beauty of our own Rock River be properly seen and appreciated.

Resolved, That our trip has been much enlivened by the cheers and hearty reception at Roscoe and Rockton.

Resolved, That our thanks be tendered to the Sax Horn Band for their well selected and executed music during the trip.

Resolved, That these resolutions be published in the city papers.

Following this M. Smith was called out and made a few pertinent remarks. The Rockford soon after reached her dock, and the excursion ended.

Excursion to Rockton.

About 120 of our citizens, ladies and gentlemen, took a pleasure excursion to Rockton on board the steamer "Rockford" on Friday of last week. Business arrangements were such as to preclude the possibility of our making one of the joyous party, but we did what we were able toward it—we saw them off. The steamer left her moorings here in gallant style—and what with the lively strains of music by the band and the radiant countenances of the good steamer's company we predicted for them just such a time as they are represented to have had. Our neighbors at Rockton, it is said, gave their guests a cordial and substantial welcome, a fact which contributed greatly to the pleasure of the occasion. The following resolutions were offered by Dr. Lyman and passed unanimously by the company on the return trip.

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✍ The steamer *Rockford* brought down five tons of paper from Rockton last Saturday, to be shipped by rail from this point to Galena. We understand that she now makes tri-weekly trips to Rockton—Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays, and promises to do a very fair freighting and passenger business between these two points.—*Rock River Democrat*.

RIVER PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRAFFIC.—By the politeness of Mr. G. H. Bush, clerk of the steamer *Rockford*, we have been furnished with the following list of the passenger and freight business of the steamer for the week ending June 27th:

Passengers from Rockford to Rockton,.....	39
" " Roscoe to Rockton and return,.....	208
" " Rockton to Roscoe,.....	24
" " Rockton to Rockford,.....	27
Total,.....	291

FREIGHT.	
From Rockford to Rockton—Merchandise,....	8 tons.
" Rockton to Rockford—Wrapping paper, staves, &c.,.....	15 "
Total,.....	18 "

We should state that the above list comprises but three days work out of the week for the steamer. The other three she is engaged in freighting stone to our city, for which she has several very heavy contracts. These facts seem to demonstrate pretty clearly that the steamer will do a profitable business, and we congratulate her owners upon the success which promises to attend their enterprise.

P. S.—The *Rockford* takes a pleasure excursion to the Roscoe rapids this evening. It promises to be a beautiful evening for such a pleasure trip.

THE FOURTH.—We learn from Mr. Bush, the Clerk of the steamer *Rockford*, that about two hundred of the citizens of Rockton and vicinity intend visiting our city to participate in the coming celebration. They will take the *Rockford*, and arrive here in ample season for the festivities. We can assure them a pleasant ride down the river, every attention from the gentlemanly officers of the steamer, and a cordial welcome from us Rockfordians—such a welcome as neighbors should receive, and as is appropriate to the day which they unite with us in honoring.


The arrangements for the celebration are now all perfected, and it will undoubtedly be a very fine one. The fire works are purchased, and are on quite an extensive scale. In addition to the societies and companies announced in the programme, the following companies are expected to participate: The Boone Rifles, of Belvidere; the Engine Company, of Peatonica.—It is expected that the Rockford City Greys will also be out that day in full dress uniform.

THE STEAMER ROCKFORD

WILL MAKE

REGULAR TRIPS TO ROCKTON


TUESDAY, THURSDAY & SATURDAY,

 Of each week, leaving Rockford at 7 A. M. and arrive at Rockton at 11.30 A. M. Leave Rockton at 3.30 P. M., and arrive at Rockford at 6 P. M.

Passengers landed at intermediate points on the River.
FREIGHT of all kinds taken on reasonable terms.

PLEASURE EXCURSIONS.

The Steamer can also be procured for Pleasure Excursions, on application to either of the proprietors.

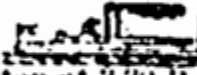
 We noticed that the steamer *Rockford* was very busy all day on the Fourth. After bringing down her large load of passengers from Rockton and Roscoe to participate in the festivities of the day, she took three or four excursion trips a few miles up the river, each time heavily laden with excursionists. At the conclusion of the celebration she returned home with the citizens of Roscoe and Rockton who had visited us. She must have made a nice thing for her owners that day.

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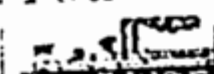
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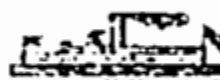
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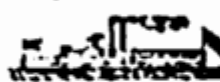
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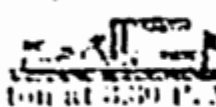
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We notice by the Ogle County Reporter that the steamer Rockford, built in this city last summer, is to be transferred over the dam at this place this fall, and next summer ply between this city and Oregon. We were not aware that such was the intention of the proprietor or proprietors of the boat, but presume our neighbor speaks advisedly when he makes the statement.—Dem.

The Steamer Rockford
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Regular Trips to Rockton
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Rock River Democrat (Rockford, IL), 12/8/1857, page 3

The **steamer Rockford**, the *Register* learns instead of being taken over the dam at this place, is to be put upon rollers and moved around it, and next spring will ply between this city and Oregon, as we stated a week or two since. All aboard for ports down the river.

Rock River Democrat (Rockford, IL), 12/8/1857, page 3


STEAMER ROCKFORD—So we are now to have regular communication by Steamboat with Oregon. This boat which has undergone thorough repairs, left her dock below the dam on Monday last, on her first trip down the river. She had on board an extensive pleasure party and the Forest City band.

1858

Rockford Republican (Rockford, IL), 4/1/1858, page 2

STEAMER ROCKFORD—So we are now to have regular communication by Steamboat with Oregon. This boat which has undergone thorough repairs, left her dock below the dam on Monday last, on her first trip down the river. She had on board an extensive pleasure party and the Forest City band.

Rockford Weekly Register-Gazette (Rockford, IL) 6/6/1858, page

GREAT FLOOD IN ROCK RIVER And its Tributaries.

The almost unprecedented rains of the past week, in this section, culminated on Thursday night. The rain fell in torrents, hour after hour, from 5 o'clock P. M. till near midnight, raising the River to a higher point than it has ever been known before, with the exception of the memorable time a year ago (last spring, when the ice went out. We then saw a mark made at the highest point the water reached, and the water rose on Thursday night to within thirteen inches of the former mark.

During that night the water in the River could not have risen less than five feet, and in Kent's Creek, in consequence of the water being dammed up at the Railroad Culvert and setting back, it must have risen some fifteen feet, reaching a higher point by six or eight feet than was ever before known. We are assured by a person who was at the Culvert in the night that the water above it was at least ten feet higher than below, being above the top of the arch and the water pouring down like a tunnel. Had the culvert or embankment at this point given away the water would have swept down everything before it. A number of Irish families living on what is familiarly known as the Isle of Patmos, just below the culvert, would have been in that

event beyond the hope of rescue; as it was, they were badly frightened and cried lustily for help.

Of course a large amount of damage has been done along the stream—buildings and fences carried off, stock lost &c., which it is impossible as yet to ascertain. The following summary embraces what has thus far come to our knowledge:

Kent's Creek, as we have already stated, was raised to an unprecedented height by the set back from the railroad culvert. The State Street Bridge and Cedar Street Bridge were both taken off, the former lodging a few rods below, but the latter broken up and carried downstream. It is thought by those living in that vicinity, that the Bridge lodged against the culvert before breaking up, and caused a sudden rise of the water, which at one time rose several feet in as many minutes. On the East bank of the Creek some dozen or more Irish families were driven out, their shanties being flooded to the depth of several feet.—Pigs, chickens, &c., were left to their fate and floated down stream. Dr. Richings' fence was partially carried off, trees washed out, and he also came very near losing his horses. The Doctor was absent at the time, and a neighbor succeeded with difficulty in swimming the horses out. The water rose into the second story of the barn. His loss will be perhaps a hundred

dollars. Fences all along the bank were swept away, and on the Fair ground we are informed fish were found plentifully as the water receded.

On the west side of the Creek the water rose in several houses on Elm street, and from the one next to the Creek the family were with difficulty got out of the windows when the water was up to the arms of those who assisted.— The second house was unoccupied. The third was occupied by Mr. Hazard, but fortunately his family were absent on a visit. He carried most of his furniture to the upper story. On Cedar street a house occupied by Oliver Goodhue had three feet of water on the floor, but his family were got out.

The small bridges near Mrs. Holland's residence were taken from their foundations, but are lodged close by.

Along the River the banks in low places were overflowed, and the Race was full to overflowing. The water poured over the end in a heavy body and forced its way into the Creek beyond. All the works along the power on both sides of the River were stopped with the exception of Clark & Utter's machine shop. Their wheel sets up higher than the others, and was not so seriously affected.

The lower story of the large Reaper Factory was under water to the depth of several feet, but fortunately the previous night the planers had been raised up and were not injured. A large number of the flasks, however, in the Foundry floated out and were carried off. On the flat south of the Depot a large number of pieces of Reapers had been laid out to dry, and a gang of men were engaged nearly all night in conveying them to a place of safety. We understand they succeeded in saving most of them, but Messrs. Talcott, Emerson & Co. estimate their total loss at about a thousand dollars.

The **steamer Rockford** was coming up the River when the storm commenced, and lay to over night about four miles below the city.— She had hard work to make headway against the current, but finally arrived here and for the first time run a short distance up Kent's Creek for anchorage. Her officers reported seeing a large amount of rails, timber, and dead stock, &c., floating down.

A small story and a half house floated down the River early in the morning—where from is unknown.

About 8 o'clock we saw a cow float down and go over the dam.

Heavy Rain--Flood in Rock River--Damage to Railroad, Property, &c.,--Lives Lost.

This vicinity was visited last Thursday night by one of the severest storms of rain we ever witnessed. Thursday, it had been quite lowry during the day, and at about 6 o'clock P. M., the rain began to fall very rapidly, and continued so till midnight, with but very slight interruptions. It is almost inconceivable what an amount of water fell in these six hours. It had been falling but a few minutes before the whole ground seemed to be covered as with a lake, which rushed down to the river through every little depression in the surface of the earth which it could find.

Of course Rock river went booming right up, and early the next (Friday) morning everybody expecting that the falling of such an immense amount of water would be the cause of much damage, large numbers of people were out to see what had been the effect of the storm. Go

ing down to the railroad bridge, we found it covered with our citizens, who were looking upon the vast volume of foaming waters as they tumbled over the dam. The river had spread far beyond its banks, and had flooded the mills and factories on the water works, compelling them to suspend operations. At this time of writing (Saturday morning) they are yet submerged, and it is not likely that work can be prosecuted for several days. The river wall of the foundry of the Reaper Works seemed to be partially swept away, and the roof rested on the boiling waters.

The "Patch," just above the bridge, was the greater portion of it submerged. This low piece of ground is the habitation of many of our Irish population, and their shanties are thickly planted over it. We are told that they were made to vacate their quarters very suddenly in the middle of the night by the swelling waters;—some of them manifesting much terror at their

situation. We heard it said that one of the shanties had commenced floating with its occupants in it, when they were aroused to their dangerous situation, and escaped by the assistance of a neighbor who came to their rescue with a boat. The shanty floated off, and has not since been heard of. If this be so, this family had a very narrow escape from death.

We learn that the Starch Manufacturing Co. had some \$400 worth of starch in their vats, which was entirely flooded by the waters, and was probably spoiled.

Some half mile below the dam the steamer *Rockford* was endeavoring to gain her landing at the foot of the factories. She had then been laboring for several hours to reach her landing but the current of the rushing waters appeared to be too strong for her. She, however, at last succeeded, but to the spectators appeared to be in eminent danger of capsizing when she was obliged to expose her broadside to the tremendous force of the vast volume of water. She careen

ed fearfully, but effected her landing safely, however.

Learning that the railroad track had suffered considerably a short distance from our city limits, we proceeded to the spot, which is at the culvert across the low land on Mr. Samuel Gregory's farm, and close to his dwelling. A very small stream, which is quite dry in the summer, runs along here, and a culvert had been constructed for the passage of the water. The culvert proved altogether too small for the vast body of water which rushed down this little stream on Thursday night. Which piled up against the embankment of the railroad to the height of some twenty feet; we should judge, when it forced its way through the embankment just east of the culvert walls, carrying away about fifty feet of it, and leaving the rail and ties of the road suspended in the air, they holding together by the spikes by which they were fastened. The culvert was preserved entire, and only the embankment will have to

be replaced.

When the water had carried the embankment the whole volume of it came through with tremendous force, carrying with it about an acre of swelling ground which was exposed to its full force in the bend of the stream just below the embankment.

The damage to Mr. Gregory is considerable, in the way of loss of fences, destruction of fowls, &c. It is estimated that he lost near \$1,000 worth of fencing on his farm by the flood. All of his fowls, we believe, with the exception of one solitary turkey, which lodged in a tree top, were swept away. The water surrounded his house, and the family were obliged to move all the furniture into the upper story. His horses were rescued from the stable, though not until the water had risen up to their bellies. His sheep were also rescued from their enclosure just in time to save them from being swept away.

After thus finding its way through the rail-

road embankment, the body of water rushed on down the bed of the stream until it came to Kishwaukee street bridge, at the Buckbee farm, which it swept away completely. This bridge rested on substantial stone abutments—not one of the stones is left in its place; they were all torn out, and scattered along down the stream for twenty rods.

Crossing over the river, we found some damage to have been committed on Kent's Creek.—The railroad culvert just beyond the depot, was like all the others, altogether too small to admit the passage of the water which came down the stream, and it set back on the low land above, flooding the whole of it, carrying away the bridges on State street, and Cedar streets.—The water rose to such a height as to flood several buildings and barns adjacent to the low land, in some instances rendering it a difficult labor to rescue horses from their stalls. Dr. Richings' fence was partially carried off, trees washed out, and he also came very near losing

his horses. The Doctor was absent at the time, and a neighbor succeeded with difficulty in swimming the horses out. The water rose into the second story of the barn. One family in a house on Elm street, on the west side of the creek, were obliged to be taken out of the windows of the house, with the water up to the arms of those who rescued them.

The eddy formed by the water as it forced itself through the culvert, washed out the south side of the railroad embankment considerably, taking away a portion of the main track. Below this, the water submerged the flat, and as

we are told, drowned quite a number of hogs which were enclosed in a pen on the flat.

We learn that two more culverts have been swept away between Cherry Valley and this city, of course, all railroad communication is suspended. No train has passed over the road either way since Thursday, and probably cannot for a few days.

It seems to be beyond question that a very great portion of this damage is the direct result of the smallness of the culverts on the Galena Railroad. Their want of capacity to accommodate the large body of water which came down the small streams, set it back on the land above until it had gained such a volume and power as to force its way through the embankments, and then, its course no longer impeded, the whole vast body moved together and at once, with a force which nothing could resist, and hence most of the damage. We learn that the Galena company were told on all sides,

when building the road, that these culverts were altogether too small for the purpose, but they would listen to no suggestions from those who were better acquainted with the country than they, and here is a result of their obstinacy. That they can be made to "smart" for it is the general impression, and the inclination seems to be, among those who have suffered from their inadequate culverts, to make them pay the damages which their obstinacy has occasioned. It will be a useful lesson to them, if they take it rightly, and be the prevention of much damage in the future.

The bridge on the Beloit road, near the cemetery on the East Side is destroyed, and most of its buttments, which were of stone. The stream which this bridge spanned, is an insignificant little rivulet at most all times, and in summer is entirely dry. All the bridges on this road between here and Roscoe are swept away.

We went up on the line of the Kenosha Railroad along the river bank, yesterday (Friday) but we found the embankment entirely safe so far as we went, though the waters of the river were all around it and had submerged it for about half its height. We do not think that any damage is done to this road any where in this vicinity.

But the saddest part of the calamity is yet to be told—that is the loss of life. Fortunately no lives were lost from the flood in our city, and perhaps none were endangered, unless it were in the case of the shanty which was floated from the "Patch," which is more than likely to be apochryphal. But not so can all our neighbors say. The village of Roscoe was visited with a terrible loss of life, which has cast a deep gloom over that place. We give the account of the *Register* in regard to the sad calamity, as it accords exactly with the facts of the case as we have received them:

The village of Roscoe was inundated by a

sudden rush of water, houses tumbled into ruins and nine lives lost. We are indebted to Mr. H. S. Brown, of that place, for full particulars of this sad calamity. Mr. Brown came down on horseback, reaching here about noon yesterday. He reports every bridge gone between here and Roscoe, and he had to ford the streams. The people along the route report all the small streams higher than was ever before known.— A large amount of fencing has been carried off, and grain washed out.

Of the affair at Roscoe Mr. B. says the water was dammed up at the railroad culvert about a fourth of a mile east of the village, across a small creek that puts into the River right in the village. The embankment here is very high, probably forty feet, and the culvert being entirely too small to discharge the water, it soon accumulated so as to form a small lake. The pressure finally became so great that about a hundred and fifty feet of the bank gave way, and the water rushed down with resistless force

sweeping everything before it. Five buildings in its course were demolished almost in the twinkling of an eye, and in one were congregated a family of ten persons—nine of whom were hurried to a watery grave. This family was that of Rev. Horatio Hsley, (a Presbyterian Clergyman,) and consisted of himself, wife and eight children. The mother and children were all lost, and Mr. Hsley was rescued from the top of a tree, near half a mile from where the house had stood. The bodies of four of the children had been found when our informant left—9 o'clock yesterday morning. Mr. Hsley is a brother-in law of E. I. Tinkham, Esq., of Chicago. The children ranged in age from infancy to 18 or 20 years. The oldest was a young man who had returned from Milwaukee on Saturday last on a visit. He had been employed in that city as a Clerk in Marshall & Hsley's Bank. The house was a good two story brick structure. Mr. Hsley states that the family were all awake, and had taken refuge in

the upper story.

Three other houses in the village were carried away. One of them was a grant house, occupied by a family named Adams. Being so near the creek, the family considered it unsafe, and they left it in the early part of the evening. Another, a frame house, occupied by a family named Welch, was left by the family just before the water came down upon it, and it was swept. A new wooden building and a barn were also destroyed. The bridge over the creek was also carried away. The *Register's* informant represents the excitement of the people of Roscoe as intense when he left there Friday morning.

This terrible calamity at Roscoe was also, it will be seen, caused by the inadequacy of the culvert built by the Galena road at this point on its Beloit Branch.

One other loss of life we have to record—that of a Prussian named Sass, a tenant on the Britton farm, near the mouth of the Kishwau-

kee. He was endeavoring to cross a low place which was overflowed on horseback about 10 o'clock A. M., when the horse suddenly pitched into a hole above his depth, throwing Sass out of the saddle into the water, who being unable to swim, was drowned. He leaves a wife and one child, who were standing in the doorway of the house; and were agonized spectators of his sudden death.

Rock River a Navigable Stream.

We learn from the *Dixon Telegraph* that the Steamer *Rockford* of this city arrived at that place, for the first time, on the 30th ult.—making a speedy passage.

We have long harbored the idea that Rock River, with a comparatively small amount of dredging and the addition of a few locks, (mostly for the purpose of accommodating manufacturing establishments,) could be made a navigable river throughout nearly its whole extent. Last year the *Rockford* made regular trips between this city and Rockton—and now she glides down with equal ease and facility in an ordinary stage of water, to the city of Dixon—thus traversing (by the river) a distance of nearly seventy miles;—and we hear from her officers that a much larger craft could have performed the trip without encountering the least difficulty.—This too, it will be remembered, without any attempt whatever to clear the channel. We shall next expect to hear that the *Rockford* has arrived at Rock Island.

Only think of it—a direct water communication with St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, New Orleans

and St. Paul—indeed with all the towns and cities on the Mississippi, and all his mighty tributaries. At the risk of being scouted as an *enthusiast* we will make the prediction that in less than ten years, this will come to pass—and Rockford will be a port of entry of no inconsiderable pretensions. Mark the prediction.

DRY GOODS ON TIME

For a living, consequently, I shall HEREAFTER sell

ONLY FOR CASH.

It would have afforded me great pleasure to have given my friends and customers in Rockford, a sight of the noble ship, but as the Land Telegraph was out of order, and she being too bulky to send by Express, and believing also, the little Steamer Rockford, better adapted to navigate Rock River, (especially in a low stage of water,) concluded instead, to send lots of

NEW GOODS

Of the best styles and qualities which the market affords, which please call and examine, PURCHASE, and pay for, and you have my guarantee that you will never regret it. I shall forward during the next thirty days, a complete assortment of

FALL AND WINTER GOODS,

In my line, which will be sold CHEAP, because sold for CASH. Thankful for past favors, I ask (and hope to merit) a continuance of the same.

New York, 1858.

R. A. SANFORD.,

Rockford, August 30th, 1858.

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New York, 1858.

R. A. SANFORD.,

Rockford, August 20th, 1858.

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"O GULL."—We extract the following from "Ye Historie of O Gull Countie," which appears weekly in the *Ogle Co. Banner*, in regard to the reception of the *Steamer Rockford* by the citizens of that county upon her first trip.—To be better understood, we will state that the editor of the *Polo Advertiser* has been writing and publishing a history of that county, and that Dick Redfield of the *Banner* has in his inimitable way been burlesquing said Historie. It is a good thing, but Richard, we think has drawn largely upon his imagination, for we don't know of any one, much less a steamboat captain, up this way, that "smiles."

The year 1811 is distinguished as the one in which the mammoth stern-wheel steamboat *Rockford* was built, the first steamer that was ever built this side of Grand de Tour. This steamer, which was the first to navigate Rock River, arrived at Oregon in the same year, where it was received with great demonstrations of joy. The ladies of the city, accompanied by the Mayor, were upon the levee awaiting its arrival, as a despatch had been received

by 'clothes line,' or 'fish line,' announcing its departure from *Rockford*. The ladies were beautifully attired in pink dresses fastened about the waist with turkey-red sashes embroidered with oyster shells and goose-quills. Upon the arrival of the *steamer* the captain was presented with a clean shirt, and a splendid banner, bearing the appropriate motto—

"Oregon an all Right on the Goose Question!"

The captain went ashore and mounted a dry goods box in front of a restaurant, and commenced an eloquent and pathetic speech, but owing to the frequency that he had "smiled" during the trip, his tongue refused utterance, and he was carried back to the boat on a shutter!

The Steam Boat Rockford

Will commence running from this City to Oregon on next Monday, at 2½ o'clock, P. M., in time to take passengers from the afternoon Chicago train. It will make three trips per week from this City, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and returning, will leave Oregon on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, in the morning, but at what hour, we are not informed.

The Rockford has had ten feet added to her size, and the owner expects her speed will be much increased. Mr. James B. **Skinner** is the owner, and Harmon Hill, the Captain.

STEAMBOAT ARRIVAL.—Under this heading the *Dixon Republican and Telegraph* notices the arrival in that city of the **Steamer Rockford**, Capt. Hill. That paper states that Capt. H. is desirous of making regular trips to that place and would do so provided certain conveniences were made for the landing of freight. This boat, during the past winter, has been much improved. She has been re-modded from a stern wheel to a side wheel steamer, and with increased power, in a new engine, now makes good time against the strong current of our river. Last season she transported a large amount of produce, goods, &c., between this city and Oregon, and it is fair to presume with increased facilities and greater speed, her business will be largely increased this season.

GRAND PICNIC

—TO—

BYRON, ON THE FOURTH.

The Spiritualists of Rockford have made full arrangements for a Grand Celebration, on the National

ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

and give a cordial invitation to all parties, without distinction, to join them in a picnic at Byron.

The Steamer "Rockford" has been chartered for the day, and will leave the Starch Works at 7 A. M. precisely, and return by 8 or 9 P. M. Good Music has been provided for the day's festivities, and able and

ELOQUENT SPEAKERS

engaged to speak. Mr. Jerold Sandford's lovely Grove has been kindly given for the occasion, which will be fitted up with everything requisite for the

CONVENIENCE AND COMFORT.

of the company.

Tickets for the whole day's excursion only \$1.00 to be had of Waldo & Gilbert, and by John B. Young.

As the number is limited to 100 persons, an early application is necessary in order to secure a passage, and enjoy the beauty of Rock River scenery.

Rockford, June 28th, 1859.

171d5t

The Fourth in Rockford.

Notwithstanding there has but little exertion been made to get up any exciting show in town for the 4th, it seems we are, after all, to have a celebration worthy the place and the occasion. Our citizens have felt more like acting in accordance with the day and hence we are to have several independent celebrations. Early in the morning the "Antiques and Horribles, or Tremendous Curb Stone Guards," will make a parade which if done up as it ought to be, will afford an immense fund of amusement for Young America. At eight o'clock the Spiritualists will leave for Byron in the Steamer Rockford which they have chartered for the occasion, and will there spend the day. At nine o'clock the Catholic Benevolent Association of the city will turn out in procession and march through the principal streets. This association will have a grand ball in the evening. They signify their willingness also, to unite with any other public body in procession and other celebration exercises.

At the Fair Grounds a mammoth tent will be erected which will be devoted to the use and benefit of the City Band in which to hold a Promenade Concert. Good music and good refreshment may be had there at a moderate price.

This tent will be decorated in a superb manner and furnished with a nice smooth floor on which the lovers of terpsichore will have opportunity to test their skill. The tent will be brilliantly lighted, and crowded with the youth and beauty that will assemble beneath the canvass, will make the most imposing display our city has seen the entire season. Not one of those who are fond of "moderate pleasures conscientiously indulged," should fail of being present.

The scholars of the West Side Union School intend having a celebration on their own hook to which they invite their friends. They will have exercises appropriate to the day and the occasion, including fireworks and other patriotic demonstrations.

The order of exercises for the entire day will be duly interspersed with squibs, fire crackers, bel ringing and gunpowder according to the enthusiasm. Let everyone be careful how they handle these implements of amusement. No toys can be so suddenly transformed into missives of destruction and death as these, and we sincerely hope we shall not be obliged to chronicle the account of any accident arising from their use. A little forethought and reflection upon this point may save much suffering after the bustle and glory of the day are over.— With these inducements to remain at home we see no reason why our citizens should desire to go abroad, for though some of our neighbors have made a louder noise about what they intend doing we believe there will be as much excitement here as anywhere. Enough certainly to feed the patriotism of the most enthusiastic.

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Rockford, June 28th, 1859.

121d5t

1860

Rock River Democrat (Rockford, IL), 2/28/1860, page 3

DOWNWARD BOUND.—The Steamer Rockford, Capt. Hill, we understand, will make her first trip of the season some time during the present week. "All aboard for Oregon and points intermediate."

Rockford Republican (Rockford, IL), 9/6/1860, page 2

ARRESTED.—A man by the name of J. R. Doty, living in the western part of the city, was arrested on Monday last by officer Upright, on a charge of stealing a couple of buffalo robes from the steamer "Rockford" and the running geer of a wagon from Mr. Oviatt, of Burrill. He was committed under \$150 bonds.

1861

Rock River Democrat (Rockford, IL), 3/19/1861, page 3

STEAMER ROCKFORD WRECKED—NO LIVES LOST, OWING TO THE SEAMANSHIP AND INTREPIDITY OF CAPT. HILL.—
We regret to be compelled to record the sinking to the bottom of Rock River of the fast sailing, *high pressure Steamer Rockford* H Hill, Captain. It is gratifying to us to be able to state that no lives were lost, as through the superior seamanship of Capt. Hill, they all succeeded in reaching *terra firma*, glad to escape the boiling and turbulent waters that every moment threatened to engulf them. We understand that a series of resolutions were passed and signed by all the passengers fully exonerating Capt. Hill and his crew from blame, also testifying to his great coolness and daring in the hour of peril. The *Ogle Co. Reporter* thus narrates the accident. It is from the pen of their special reporter who took passage upon her expecting that she would go under, and thus afford an item:

Last Monday afternoon the steamer Rockford started from this place to Rockford, with three passengers and 900 bushels of wheat and a quantity of oats. About 9 o'clock, when she was four miles above Byron, in attempting to cross an island that was overflowed with water, she struck a snag and cap-sized, in about nine feet of water. We have not learned what amount of damage was done, but presume she will be an almost total loss, as the current is said to be very swift at that point, and she is very lightly built. The passengers and crew were all saved by swimming ashore. The wheat, which belonged to Potwin & Stone, J. H. Ralledge and Louis Williams, of this town, will probably be a total loss.

Rockford Republican (Rockford, IL) 10/3/1861, page 2

~~new~~ The steamer "Rockford," Capt. Hill, is now plying regularly between this city and Oregon.

[7] The Ogle County Reporter states positively that the fast sailing **Steamer Rockford** was not lost in a gale on the river a few weeks since. She simply collapsed a flue, which will be repaired in time for the spring business.

1862

Rock River Democrat (Rockford, IL) 3/25/1862, page 3

OLD ROCK OPEN.—The ice in the river went out this year without making any fuss. It went almost before we know that it had such intentions, and without doing any damage. When navigation will be resumed by the **steamer Rockford** we are unadvised.

Rock River Democrat (Rockford, IL) 4/8/1862 page

TV The **Steamer Rockford** commenced making regular trips between Oregon and this burg last Friday a week, her whistle waking the stillness of the waters of old Rock, and scaring the water-fowl from their accustomed haunts. She is to run tri-weekly, arriving here Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. She delivers wheat at the Depots in this City for 5 cents a bushel. Look out for the Steamer when you hear the whistle.

Rockford Republican (Rockford, IL), 4/10/1862, page 2

NAVIGATION OPEN.—There is now an excellent stage of water in our river, and navigation has opened briskly. The **steamer Rockford** was the first vessel to arrive at the levee, and of course is entitled to free wharfage for the season. She is now making regular trips between this city and Oregon, carrying freight and passengers. Her tariff of prices is lower than any other first-class steamer on the river.

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1867

The Sunbury American (Sunbury, PA), 3/23/1867

It is uncertain if this "Rockford" is the same referenced in other articles from the Rockford, IL area.

Serious Flood in the Southwest.

CAIRO, Ill., March 14.—The officers of the steamer Rockford, just from the Arkansas river, report the country overflowed, and great loss of property and suffering of inhabitants.

Twenty-seven lives were lost at Helena by the flood, mostly freedmen. The steamer Peter Bolen was damaged by running into the bank at Red Fork, and lost part of her cargo, one soldier and one deck hand.

THE WATER TWENTY FEET DEEP IN THE CITY OF CHATTANOOGA—PEOPLE STARVING, &c.

CINCINNATI, March 14.—The Union Convention to-day nominated Chas. F. Wilstach for Mayor.

The *Gazette's* Nashville special says the reports of the suffering at Chattanooga and other places along the Tennessee river, are appalling. At Chattanooga, on the 12th, the water was from twelve to twenty feet deep in the city; many houses are toppling over, and others are floating away. The Mayor, with a posse of citizens and soldiers, were foraging among the loaded cars for food. The agents of the railroad protested, but the mayor said the people were starving. Twenty-five dead bodies were seen floating down the river at Bridgeport, Ala., on the 12th. The loss of property is estimated at a million of dollars. General Carlin, at Nashville, was making efforts to send rations through to Chattanooga.

1873

Rockford Journal (Rockford, IL), 6/21/1873, page 1.

According to the Lytle-Holdcamper List (cited above) the "Rockford" was abandoned or disappeared from records in 1969, so it is unclear if this "Rockford" is a different boat.

—The little steamer Rockford has been neatly repaired, and put in apple pie order for the coming pleasure season. A board roof has been put overhead, comfortable seats have been fixed and everything about her is now neat, taut and tidy.

AN EARLY DAY STEAMER

How Navigation From Rockford
to Rockton Was Opened.

RIVER PARTIES WERE THE RAGE

Some Recollections of the Famous
Old Steamer, The Rockford—
Her Trial Trip and Ex-
cursion to Rockton.

A little company of old residents of Rockford, while returning from a river party one evening last week turned the conversation to the subject of early boating on the Rock. All recalled the "Belle of Rockford" or "The Rockford"—it was known by either name—and dwelt upon the popularity of this, probably the most famous of the craft that plied the Rock in this vicinity.

In the early fifties there were a surprisingly large number of boats traversing the river between Rockford and points south. Rockford was a regular port of entry and clearance for small craft up the river from the Mississippi and the navigation interests were of respectable proportions. But the stately river was found so valuable for water power that the flat boats and small stern wheel steamers soon disappeared and the port of Rockford became only a memory.

might have been the blacksmith's anvil in disguise.

A committee waited upon the excursionists and escorted them to the Mansion house, where an elaborate dinner was served. The Rockton people spread themselves on that meal and the long journey had sharpened the appetites properly for it.

At 7:30 o'clock the steamer cast off and turned her nose homeward amid a parting salute of the cannon and the cheers of the Rocktonites gathered on the river bank. Roscoe was passed without delay and in three hours time the party was landed at home, safe and sound.

There was dancing and speechmaking on the homeward trip and as they neared Rockford the excursionists organized by electing C. I. Horsman chairman and adopted the following resolutions:

"Resolved: That the officers and all attached to the steamer Rockford, by their gentlemanly conduct and courteous bearing during the excursion to Rockton, are entitled to the unanimous thanks of all fortunate enough to be of the party.

"Resolved: That only by a trip on the steamer Rockford can the beauty of our own Rock river be properly seen and appreciated.

"Resolved: That our trip has been much enlivened by the cheers and hearty reception at Roscoe and Rockton.

"Resolved: That our thanks be tendered to the Saxe Horn band for their well selected and executed music during the trip."

River parties then became all the rage and the "Rockford" had all the business

In 1857, a new steamer made its appearance on the Rock and for a number of years its popularity was unbounded. It was the one to which reference is made in the foregoing and with which it is the purpose of this article to deal. "The Rockford," as it was perhaps best known, was built and owned by the firm of Pennock, Sterling & Co. It was quite a pretentious affair and was made entirely in this city. It was equipped with a twenty-horse power engine which was made in the establishment of Clark & Utter, under the supervision of A. G. Springsteen, who was the first engineer of the boat. The steamer only drew nine inches of water and was considered a substantial craft.

The trial of the Rockford was made Monday, May 25, 1857. She left her moorings at noon, with a private party on board, and steamed up the river against a strong current, making about seven miles an hour, which was all her builders had anticipated. Mr. Springsteen quickly discovered where some improvements and changes were necessary. By June 6, these were completed and on the evening of that day the staunch little steamer took out her first pleasure party. An early day writer thus describes the trip:

As we left the port the sun was sinking to rest in the far west in a sea of glory, its resplendent rays bathing spire, tower and residence with the rosy light of a western sunset. It was matchlessly beautiful, and the bright eyes of the happy throng, who crowded the deck of the good steamer were turned in admiration upon a scene as enchantingly lovely as ever poet of old dreamed of. Under the guidance of

and the "Rockford" had all the business she could well handle. The following year the boat was improved and made regular trips to Rockton, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday of each week, carrying passengers and freight.

In 1859 she began plying the river between Rockford and Oregon and did a large business. Rockford people remember how one night she stuck on a sandbar and staid there all night with a large number of passengers. Captain Hill ran the boat for a long time and on July 30, 1859, took her as far south as Dixon. She occasionally went to Grand Detour, but her regular trip was between Rockford and Oregon.

• William Roach, of Elm street, was engineer of the boat for a time. She was wrecked below the dam and there her career ended.

the man of steam we sped upon the bosom of the river, passing now a splendid residence, the abode of luxurious ease and comfort, and perhaps happiness; anon the cotage of some husbandman hove in view and was passed with mental ejaculations of "how beautiful"; aged elms whose foliage bathed itself in the waters which washed its base; noble oaks whose ragged limbs pointed heavenward, and mossy banks covered with nature's verdure; we shot by and naught broke the stillness of the hour save the merry voices and the music of the Saxe Horn band, who discoursed most excellent music. All was mirth and jollity.

A ten-mile trip was taken on this occasion which required three hours time.

"The Rockford" was the first steamer to open navigation between Rockford and Rockton and the event was a notable one. A company of one hundred or more, ladies and gentlemen, chartered the steamer for a trip to Rockton. The people in the latter town heard of the excursion planned to give their visitors a cordial reception. The excursion took place on June 12, 1857. The boat left its dock at 10 o'clock in the morning and it was figured that it would arrive in Rockton soon after the dinner hour. The Saxe Horn band was along, of course, and the boat steamed away amid the strains of music. "The Rockford" proceeded up the river without delay until Roscoe was reached. There, owing to a misunderstanding about the channel and a strong current, the boat was stalled and Rockton was not reached until the afternoon was well advanced.

The Rockton people, who had waited patiently to see the steamer come 'round the bend, had made complete arrangements for the entertainment of their guests. A flag was planted at the landing and as the steamer pulled up she was greeted by salutes of a cannon, which

Rock River and Its Varied Flotilla.

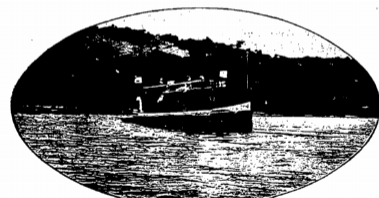
The use made of Rock river for water power has the effect of making a beautiful lake because of the slack water which sets back many miles up the river, increasing its breadth and giving a good channel for boating. In former years considerable sport was

Amasa Hutchins. It has a carrying capacity of about 1,000. The three steamers together comfortably pro-

quest for large parties from out of the city. It has proved a favorite point for society and other excursions.

Of late the river at Rockford has come into re-vitalizing places for the picnic dinners, privilege of the river ride at small ex-

and for such games as the people pence, during the heated term, there are many citizens who have their pri-



The steamer "Rockford," one of the earliest pleasure craft.

had from a boat club, and races on the river. As there is a fine course here it is not unlikely that the exhilarating pleasure of aquatic sports may again be brought into play.

The general uses of the river for comfort and pleasure have greatly increased of late years, and have led to the building of a suitable equipment of steamers and other craft for the enjoyment of the privilege bestowed by the presence of a body of water. The banks of the Rock are varied and picturesque, and permanent residents as well as visitors enjoy the pleasure of the ride through the changing scenes, forming a winding lake about 15 miles long.

It is over 15 years since the Arrow was bought from parties at Janesville and brought to this city by a number of Rockford gentlemen, who used it for their own pleasure and to some extent made it available for the use of the public. Later it was devoted principally to general service, but was finally put out of commission. Its engine and boiler are still doing duty for power purposes on land. The steamer Queen was built at Dubuque for Theodore O. Largent in 1881 and is in service here today, being employed especially for clubs which make weekly use of pleasure grounds up the river. It is owned by C. C. Lloyd and R. E. Dewey. The steamer May Lee was built here for the river service by Mr. Largent about seven years ago. It has had its capacity enlarged to that of carrying 400 people, by lengthening its hull, and is doing a general excursion business.

The steamer Illinois was also built here to meet the demand for increased capacity, the builders being the present owners, J. T. Buker and ex-Mayor

THE MAY LEE LANDING A PICNIC PARTY.

The owners and managers of the steamer pay especial attention to the pleasure of visiting parties, and their

vate launches and vary the tedium of the summer months by afternoon or evening rides, according to their pleas-



TWO WELL KNOWN BOATS AWAITING THEIR LOADS OF SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNICKERS.

ford. There is a large variety of attractions here for visitors, the river trip being, of course, the leading one. The variety of the scenery along the banks is held to be fully as interesting and attractive as that of Lake Geneva. The pleasure parks and picnic grounds at various points afford in-

terest for the welfare and enjoyment of out-of-town people has won many friends for Rockford as the objective point for excursions over the large territory from which the river here can be conveniently reached.

In addition to the steamers, which give the residents of the city the daily

hood of 30. The pioneer of this large list of pleasure boats was built by Fletcher Barnes. This was followed by bringing to Rockford the official electric launch of the world's fair at Chicago, the Electra, the boat which won the concession for the lagoons

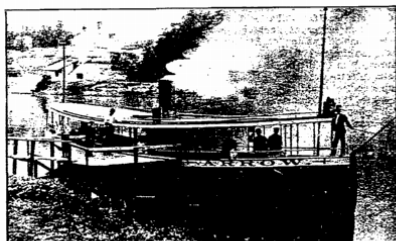
for its owners, and was subsequently used by the officers of the exposition in the public functions and the tender of the hospitality of the association to distinguished visitors. The Electra has been out of commission this season but its owners expect to put it into service again.

Most of the launches use gasoline power, the two owned by W. F. and John Barnes and the Electra being the principal exceptions. Among those who are interested in this form of pleasure to the extent of ownership of private launches are M. A. Boal, Paul Schuster, T. D. Reber, M. A. Love, E. H. Keeler, T. H. Clarke, A. E. Henry, Charles Reisch, Herbert Lewis, George C. Spafford, Harry Williams, Harry Winter, George Cor-

mack Jr., Oscar Ross, A. V. Comings, Fred Neumeister, George Swenson, Orvin Carpenter, John McDermaid, Dwight Manny, W. B. Taylor, Fred Savage, H. M. Johnson, the Jeanmaire brothers, the Berg brothers, the Atwood brothers, H. Snow, and a number of others.

The launches cost from \$300 to \$500 each. The total investment in the craft of all sorts on the river is about \$30,000, of which something more than one-half is in the steamers built for general public use.

Not the least important privilege which people here derive from the river is that of the evening parties on the steamers, and the river concerts, sometimes on the steamer decks, sometimes at the picnic grounds. Many an evening of delight has been passed in this way when the heat of the summer forbade such enjoyment on land. Altogether the presence of the river enters into the daily life of the people of the city to a degree which is scarcely appreciated by those who have never known what it was to be deprived of such pleasures. In this issue will be found illustrations of the principal river craft.



The old Steamer Arrow, for many years a popular transit between the city and up-the river outing points.

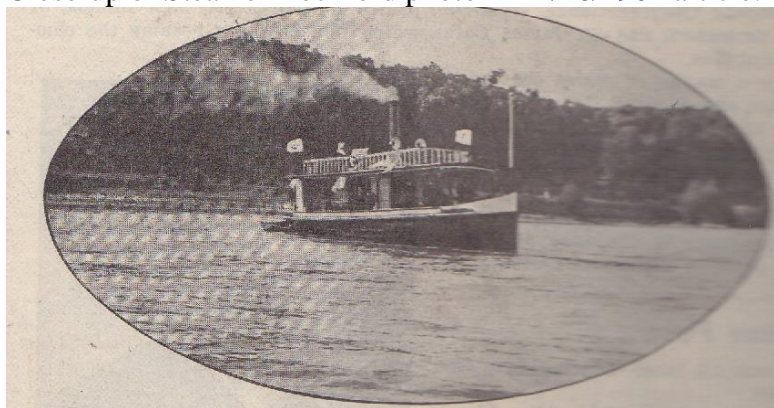


The Illinois, the largest and finest boat on the Rock. Capacity 900 passengers.



The Electra, with its owners and a merry party of well known People on Board.

Close-up of Steamer Rockford photo in 12/16/1904 article.



1905

Rockford Daily Republic (Rockford, IL), 7/26/1905, page 1 & 2

WHEN THE "STEAMER ROCKFORD" SAILED ROCK RIVER 48 YRS AGO

J. H. DAVEY TELLS OF THE BUILDING OF THE STEAMER AND
HOW IT CARRIED PASSENGERS UP AND DOWN THE ROCK IN
THIS VICINITY—LATER IT WENT TO OREGON AND DIXON—
HOW GEORGE KEELING JUMPED IN THE WATER AFTER HIS
PAINT BRUSH WHEN THEY WERE FIRST PAINTING BOAT.

The steamer Rockford, a two decker built for pleasure but suitable for freight, was one of the first to attract attention on the river here. It was built on the river bank on the site of the city water works, in the year '57. Steve Inman, father of Billy Inman, was the contractor, and he had working with him William Inman, a brother, and Captain Weldon. The latter two did all the corking on the hull. The owners were Potter and Finnick, both of whom lived here at that time.

The decking and wood work for the boat was furnished by Wood and Company, who were in the sash and door business then. Their shop was on the water power on ground where the electrical power plant of the Emerson company stands.

A funny incident connected with the building of the steamer, that is yet remembered and laughed at was told the other day by J. H. Davey, of Rural Route 1, who plainly remembers the boat. George Keeling, who was one of those painting the boat, dropped his paint brush in the water. Without hesitating he jumped head first in after it. There was about twenty feet of water at the spot, but Keeling got the brush, came to the top swam ashore and began painting again as if nothing had happened. His fellow workmen laughed so much about the incident they could hardly work the rest of the afternoon. Keeling was a relative of J. H. Keeling, the druggist.

The boat was a double decker, with side paddle wheels. It plied above the city about four seasons doing considerable trafficking among pleasure seekers. Later it went below the dam, using the chute that then gave access to the stream below that barrier. It plied for two seasons between Oregon and Rockford, doing a freight business. Later it went between Dixon and Oregon, doing the same sort of business. Lastly the machinery was taken out after it was run on an eddy, and the hull was used for a ferry boat. When its useful life was over it was pulled up on the bank be-

(Continued to Page Two.)

WHEN STEAMER SAILED THE ROCK

(Continued from Page One.)

tween Dixon and Oregon and left to rot. Some remains are still there.

J. H. Davey, who tells the story of the boat, brings to light the trafficking in wheat between Oregon and Rockford, that used to form an important factor in river business when this steamer was in existence. It carried many loads of wheat from Oregon to this city where the grain was ground.

OLD STEAMER ROCKFORD POSTER FORTY EIGHT YEARS OLD

INTERESTING RELIC IS BROUGHT FORTH BY STORY IN THE
DAILY REPUBLIC CONCERNING EARLY DAY BOAT — EX-
CURSIONS AND FREIGHT—WAS ON THE RIVER IN 1857.

The story in Wednesday's Republic concerning the "Steamer Rockford" an early day steamer on the Rock, brought back many incidents to old Rockford residents. One reader of the Republic Mr. Irving Foltz was especially interested in the story, because of the fact that he has in his possession a little hand bill printed at that time in which the old steamer advertised its pleasure trips. The hand-bill, printed in the style of type of those days and now grown yellow with age, is reproduced herewith in the identical type used when it was printed forty-eight years ago.

THE STEAMER ROCKFORD

WILL MAKE

Regular Trips to

ROCKTON,

TUESDAY,

Thursday and Saturday,

Of each week, leaving Rockford at 7 A.

M., and arrive at Rockton at 11.30

A. M. Leave Rockton at 3.30 P.

M., and arrive at Rockford at 6 P. M.

Passengers landed at intermediate points on the River.

FREIGHT

Of all kinds taken on reasonable terms.

PLEASURE EXCURSIONS.

The Steamer can also be procured for Pleasure Excursions, on application to either of the proprietors.

PENNOCK, STERLING & Co.

1922

Morning Star (Rockford, IL) 7/21/1922, page 2.

This article undoubtedly refers to the "City of Rockford" (originally the "Illinois"), a much larger steamer built in 1920.

SUICIDE NOTE AS JOKE RESULTS IN EXCITING TIME

An attempted joke in the form of a suicidal letter left in the room of June Thore, 202 North Church street last night caused no small amount of excitement in the neighborhood. Her roommate who gave her name as "Dollie" to the police said that she returned home about 12 o'clock with a girl friend and on entering the house found the letter addressed to her and from her friend.

Following is the contents:

"Dear Dollie:

"I told you all today and I know Ken wont come back to me so I am going to end it all. I know this is terrible but I can't help it. Dollie, if you would have stayed home to-night, I could never have done this but it's best for I could have never stood it any longer and with my poor health I could not have lived long anyway. Dollie, I dont know what I am thinking of but I am to weak to control myself. Oh God. I hope this has taught Kenneth a lesson to never fool another woman.

"Oh God, forgive me,

"June"

Rushes To Police

"Dollie" who had been up the river on the **Steamer Rockford** took the note and rushed down town, halting the first police officer she met and explaining the situation.

Police were rushed to the home to investigate but in the meantime June had arrived home and was in bed. It is said by police that she explained that she was playing a joke on her roommate and wrote the note as a means of scaring her.

The police are of a different opinion however and they will make further investigation into the case. Efforts will be made to locate the girl's lover.

1923

Daily Register Gazette (Rockford, IL), 7/7/1923, page 8
This is the "City of Rockford", built in 1920.

The Don Leatherby orchestra will furnish music for dancing tonight on the **Steamer Rockford**. The orchestra is playing Wednesday and Sunday nights at the Terra Aqua gardens, Freeport, and has recently been playing at the Interstate Gardens, eBloit, and Electric park, Sycamore.

1929

Rockford Republic (Rockford, IL), 4/16/1929, page 1

Although newspaper article is dated 1929, it refers to a letter dated 1860 and therefore pertains to the Steamer "Rockford" built in 1859.

ED. J. Thompson, Rockford man, who does business for Isler-Tompsett Lithographing Co. from 168 N. Michigan blvd., Chicago, is owner of a letter written Feb. 29, 1860, by a group of Ogle county pioneers at Oregon, to James B. Skinner, who had a shipping interest in the Steamboat Rockford.

These early Ogle county business men beg Manufacturer Skinner to induce Capt. Hill to remain master of the Good Ship Rockford.

The letter which follows recalls the commercial grandeur of Rock river when it was a passenger and freight lane for this part of the world:

J. B. Skinner, Esq., Rockford, Ill.,
Dear sir: We were happy to see the Rockford again last evening. As by the boat is the only way to forward anything to your city at present. But we regret to hear that Capt. Hill is not going to remain on the Rockford as master of her.

From the fact that Capt. Hill is well acquainted with the farmers and has managed their sales so well that they will ship by him rather than by anyone else. As he has often got a better price for grain than the owner could. All who have had anything to do with him have entire confidence in him, either to sell or buy for them, and we think if he can be induced to run the boat it will be to our interest as well as yours.

Respectfully, your obedient servants,

E. P. Sexton,	James V. Gale,
Daniel Etnyre,	Phillip R. Bennett,
W. R. Stewart,	C. H. Stone,
C. R. Potter,	C. H. Palmer,
J. W. Snowden,	Light & Schults,
Michael Nohe,	apothecaries.

* * *

THE MEN named here were grain men and store keepers of the Ogle county seat.

Philip R. Bennett was grandfather of former mayor, W. W. Bennett, and sat opposite John Greenleaf Whittier, the poet, in the house of representatives of Massachusetts and was also brigadier-general of Massachusetts troops that escorted Gen. Lafayette on his second visit to American and Boston.

James B. Skinner was one of the early manufacturers of farm implements in Rockford, one of the most substantial citizens of his day. His home in those days was at the north end of the block now containing the Palace theater. The late Mrs. A. C. Gray and Mrs. C. F. Henry were his daughters.

Who reading these paragraphs remembers the Steamboat Rockford?

* * *

Rockford Republic (Rockford, IL), 4/16/1929, page 1

This article does not reference the Steamer "Rockford" however is about the "Gypsy", reportedly the first steamer on the Rock River at Rockford, IL.

GIPSY was the first steamboat to visit Rockford.

One morning, late April or early May, 1838, dense, black smoke was seen rising above the woods at Corey's bluff. Soon the Gipsy came in sight and was greeted by cheering multitudes gathered along the bank.

The boat on reaching the rapids, suddenly swung around and went down stream much faster than it had ascended. It rounded to and tried a second time, but without success. Finally, by aid of lard thrown into the furnaces, it developed sufficient power against the swift current.

Eleven tons of merchandise were unloaded for Dr. Haskell who had just purchased the G. A. Sanford interest in the Platt & Sanford store.

This first trip of Gipsy, from Alton (Ill.) to Rockford, was made occasion for much public rejoicing. The boat was a stern-wheeler, one hundred feet in length, thirty feet wide. It had a cabin above the hold, an upper deck and a number of state-rooms.

Ten tons of merchandise were loaded on at Rock Island, destined for a Beloit store. Passengers, coming in from the country, chartered the boat for an excursion. The happy throng danced all night and kept the cabin in uproar day and night until the Gipsy reached Rockton. The music was furnished by Andrew Lovejoy, who played the flute, and another man with his violin.

This first trip of the Gipsy was made with the Mississippi and the Rock in spring flood.

The streams were high, bottom lands overflowed so that the steamer would sometimes leave the channel and run across points of land.

1932

Register-Republic (Rockford, IL), 10/3/1932, page 6

This article while dated 1932 refers to a 1857 article pertaining to the Steamer "Rockford".

EXCURSION TO ROCKTON.

Navigation between Rockford and Rockton was established on June 12, 1857, and the Register of June 13, had this story:

"The steamer Rockford made her first excursion to Rockton yesterday, having on board nearly a hundred excursionists, including many of our prominent citizens and a goodly portion of those important requisites—the ladies. We had the good fortune to be one of the party. The day was cool and lovely and the boat left at about 10 a. m. amid the strains of the Sax Horn band, who discoursed most excellent music during the trip to enliven interest in the occasion.

"The scenery of our noble river and its beautiful banks covered with the velvet verdure of spring, and studded with the magnificent trees just in the brightness of new dress, with the landscape on either hand stretching back to cultivated farms, formed a view as enchanting as it was imposing.

"Soon after leaving port a pleasing incident occurred in the swimming across the river of a deer, at first supposed to be wild, but which proved to be tame. The primitiveness of the scene was also heightened by observing a boy with bow and arrows, preparing to give the deer a warm reception. The waving of handkerchiefs and tablecloths from the dwellings along the way, the cheers of various parties on the shore who had flocked to see the novelty of a steamer on Rock river, formed the chief item of interest in the passage up."

Rockton greeted the excursionists with a salute by the town's cannon.

"The fact is now established that Rock river is navigable from Rockford to Rockton," the Register said.

1938

Morning Star (Rockford, IL), 3/20/1938, page 35

This article refers to the Steamer "City of Rockford", built in 1920 (as the "Illinois") and destroyed by fire in 1924.

Rock river around Rockford at one time was alive with large excursion steamboats. The last of these, the "City of Rockford" was destroyed by fire March 3, 1924. The steamer was originally christened "Illinois" and plied the river for 25 years. The blaze which destroyed the boat was spectacular. The boat at the time was moored at the foot of St. Clair street across the river from Franklin place. A second blaze a year later further destroyed the parts of the boat which remained.

The steamer "Illinois" was built by John T. Buker and Amasa Hutchins, former Rockford mayor. This boat Buker steered up the

river and back not less than 3,000 times, or about 50,000 miles. It is reported to have carried 65,000 passengers. It had two covered decks and a third without and carried up to 900 passengers.

Rivalry For Excursion Trade

Previous to 1900 for about a decade, Buker and Hutchins were interested in the Rockford Steam Yacht company, owning the **steamer** "Arrow," a small propellor boat. The two Rockford men had purchased it in 1890 at Belo

Captain Theodore O. Largent also operated a **steamer** "Queen," built at Dubuque, Ia., in 1891. and rivalry between it and the "Arrow" prevailed. In 1896, Largent had a larger boat, the "May Lee," named for his daughter, constructed for him.

This caused Buker and Hutchins to decide they wanted a larger boat. Two carloads of fine lumber were purchased in 1900 and work was started on construction of what became the "Illinois." It was built on the east river bank just north of the present Jefferson street bridge. The new boat attracted most of the excursion business. Largent lived until May 21, 1931, when he died at the age of 77.

Captain Buker, his rival, is still living. When the federal government raised the war tax on pleasure boats from \$2 per foot, charged in 1918, to \$4 per foot in 1919, Buker decided there was no longer any profit in operating the "Illinois." Accordingly he retired in May, 1919. The boat was purchased by the Rockford Excursion & Amusement company and rebuilt at a cost of about \$15,000. It did not operate long, however, until its career on the river was ended by the fire just prior to opening the 1924 sea-

son. By that time its popularity had already begun to wane. Automobiles had arrived on the scene and when the family went on an outing they took their car.

Another boat that plied the river in the '90's was the "Arrow," which was launched in 1890 and carried the Rockford populace from downtown up the river to the Harlem amusement park. This boat sank in 1900 opposite Knightville as the crew sought to beach it. It was left on the river bottom.

In the early '90's, W. F. Huffman brought to Rockford a lake boat named "City of Rockford" but it was built for deeper waters and could not be used here. The "Queen" owned by Largent was the next craft. It was iron-hulled, built like an enlarged canoe with an engine. It spent one winter on the bottom of the river, being frozen to the bottom when high water sank it in early winter.

Fletcher Barnes is reported to have owned the first private launch on the river.

As early as 1857, a steamer named "Rockford" was built here on the river bank. It was a double decker with side paddles. For two seasons it plied between Oregon and Rockford and later from Dixon to Oregon.

1983

Register Star (Rockford, IL), 8/5/1983, page 5

From the canoes of the first Indians who inhabited Winnebago County in the 1700's to the roar of ski boats, the Rock River has always been a large part of the Rockford community. The rushing water of the Rock first became a source of hydraulic power in the 1800's. And while it never achieved any marked degree of success as a means of transportation, it played a vitally important part in the industrial life of Rockford.

The Rock River was Rockford's first means of transportation when Indian canoes filled the water in the 1700's. As man progressed toward a mechanical form of water transportation, the canoes were replaced by steamboats. The first steam-propelled craft ever to reach the Rockford area was the Gipsy, a stern wheeler 100 feet long and thirty feet wide which

made the trip upstream from Alton, Illinois, in 1838. Dr. George Haskell, for whom a Rockford park and school have been named, made that historic trip.

Although many attempted to utilize the Rock River as a navigable waterway for transporting produce and livestock, the river was never used as a frequent passageway. The rapids at Rock Falls proved to be too much for cargo boats to safely make it through.

One of the first pleasure craft to ply the waters of the Rock River was the steamer Rockford, a two-decker constructed on the river bank in 1857. The city's most famous steamboat, the Illinois, began operation in 1900. For almost a quarter of a century, the Illinois was an institution on the Rock River. With a length of 125 feet and a beam of 26 feet, she

could hold nearly 1,000 passengers. In 1918, the Illinois was renamed the City of Rockford and continued carrying an estimated 50,000 passengers a year until fire destroyed the vessel on March 4, 1924.

In 1843, a portion of the River became incorporated into the Rockford Hydraulic and Manufacturing Co. as its prime source of energy. The Illinois legislature provided a charter under which the first water power company was organized and the first dam constructed. The State reserved the right to assume ownership of the dam and locks with an agreement to keep them in good repair. All hydraulic power, however, was to remain the property of the corporation, an act still in existence.

1969

Morning Star (Rockford, IL), 2/8/1969, page 3

Q—I have a picture that belonged to my grandmother. She had told my mother that it was a picture of the Rock River taken in Rockford. In the picture is a steam, ferry type boat (she called it a steamboat) tied to a dock. Alongside the dock is some type of factory. Across the river appears to be a public building with a flag flying from it. Did Rockford ever have this type of boat? What was its name? Where was the dock? During what years did it operate?

A. C. R., Poplar Grove

A—There were a number of steamers of all sizes plying the waters of the Rock River during the 19th century. One of the first was the **steamer Rockford** a two-decker constructed on the river bank in 1857. Most famous was the Illinois, an institution on the Rock from 1900 until its destruction by fire March 4, 1924, at its winter berth across the river from Franklin Place. With a length of 125 feet and a beam of 26 feet, the Illinois carried up to 1,000 passengers on its afternoon trips from the landing at the foot of Mulberry Street up the river and back. TRACE could not find the name of the boat you mention although we suspect the picture may be the same one as on page 116 of "Mississippi Saga." Is it?