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A history of Ohio River trade at Louisville from its beginning until 1840.

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HISTORY OF OHIO RIVER TRADE AT LOUISVILLE

FROM ITS BEGINNING UNTIL 1840.

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

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HISTORY OF OHIO RIVER TRADE AT LOUISVILLE FROM ITS BEGINNING UNTIL 1840.

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
Of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
In Partial Fulfillment of the
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Of Master of Arts

Department of History

By
John Edward Heller.

1922

To Doctor Wilson P. Shortridge,

Teacher and Historian,

this work is most respectfully inscribed.

"And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche."

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CHAPTER I.

THE BODY OF THE NATION.

The dominant theme in the study of any phase of Ohio River history is found in the great extent of the river system and the vast area of the drainage basin of the Mississippi to which this stream forms so important a part. The basin of the Mississippi, as has been aptly said, is the "Body of the Nation," all other parts of the nation being but members, important in themselves, yet more important in their relation to this.(1) In extent it is the second great valley of the world, being exceeded only by that of the Amazon.(2) In a large sense the Mississippi valley includes the whole interior basin, a province which drains into 2,000 miles of navigatable water of the Mississippi itself, 2,000 miles of the tawny flood of the Missouri, and 1,000 miles of the Ohio, 5,000 miles of main water highway, together with fifty-three subordinate rivers, navigable by steamboats, and some hundreds that are navigable by flats and

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(1) Harper's Magazine, Feb. 1863, Editor's Table.

(2) Turner, Frontier in Amer. Hist. (N. Y. 1921) p. 179.

keels. With an area of nearly two and one half million square miles of drainage basin, this drainage basin exceeds in extent the whole of Europe, exclusive of Russia, Norway, and Sweden, and is estimated to be able to support a population of two or three hundred million - three times the present population of the whole nation. Conceptions formed from the river basins of Western Europe are rudely shocked when we consider the extent of the valley of the Mississippi; nor are those formed from the sterile basins of the great rivers of Siberia, lofty plateaus of Central Asia, or the mighty sweep of the swampy Amazon more adequate.(3) Latitude, elevation, and rainfall all combine to render this valley by far the first place upon our globe as a dwelling place for civilized man.

The setting for this particular study lies on the Ohio River, the chief eastern tributary of this vast river system, reaching out toward and tapping the Atlantic coast states, thus providing the main course for the great commercial empire about to be called into being in the body of the nation. It is curious to observe that from the very first beginnings of settlement in Louisville, the unusual advantages of the location were seized

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(3) See Ogg, Opening of the Mississippi, (N. Y. 1904) chap. 1.

upon with prophetic instinct. It was before the days of the keelboats even, but the first-comers recognized the strategic importance of a location that was for a large part of the year at the head of navigation of the vast ramifications of the great Father of Waters with its tributaries lying west of the Falls of the Ohio. The growth and prosperity of the town, however well located it was, was obliged to wait upon the settlement of the country west of it and along the river.

CHAPTER II.

PIONEERS OF OHIO RIVER TRADE UNTIL 1810.

The beginning of Ohio River trade at Louisville can be traced to a very early period after the coming of General George Rogers Clark with a number of families to Corn Island on the Falls of the Ohio in 1778. These families became the founders of the City of Louisville, and the Falls of the Ohio were never without inhabitants after their arrival. The practical absence of internal communication by land for the purposes of trade led to the use of the river from the start as a channel by which immigration came to the Falls, and commodities for the use of the inhabitants were transported from Pittsburg and other upstream points. The commerce of the town was limited to these objects and points until the population of the valley became of sufficient number to look to New Orleans as a market for Western products and as a source of supply of foreign and domestic commodities not to be obtained at nearer points.

While there is an account of several trips made down the Ohio and Mississippi by adventurous pioneers, it was not until 1782 that a veritable commercial voyage was made.(1) In that year two

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(1) Casseday, History of Louisville, (Louisville 1852) p. 62

French traders, named Tardiveau and Honore, made the first trading voyage from Red Stone Old Fort - now Brownsville - on the Monongahela, to New Orleans. They subsequently settled in Louisville and continued to reside there as merchants and traders until their death.

In May, same year, Captain Jacob Yoder, from the same point, descended the Ohio and Mississippi in the first flatboat - as is inscribed on his tombstone in Spencer County - that ever carried a cargo of produce to New Orleans. Here he sold his cargo to the Spanish commandant, taking in payment a draft on the Captain-General of Cuba. Proceeding to Havana, Yoder invested the proceeds of his draft in furs and hides, which he took to Baltimore and sold at a profit.(2) Thus was begun a system of exchange which became in time quite common; the proceeds of the sales made in Eastern markets being invested in merchandise in Philadelphia and other cities, which was brought west on pack mules, and the profits from their sale re-invested in Western produce, shipped to New Orleans and disposed of as before. Jacob Yoder also made frequent trips in flatboats from his farm on the waters of Salt River with produce to New Orleans and is recognized as the pioneer in Western

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(2) Johnston, Memorial History of Louisville, (N. Y. 1896) I, p. 244.

commerce.

As the population and the products of the soil increased, commerce became more extended, furs, hides, and salt being also added to the cargoes. General James Wilkinson, who came to Kentucky in 1784, added largely to the trade, especially after 1787 when he made a private commercial arrangement with the Spanish Governor at New Orleans by which he was enabled to ship produce to that point on advantageous terms and to import thence to Kentucky sugar and other commodities. In 1786 he was engaged, among others, in extensive schemes in dealing in salt made at Bullitt's Lick, near Louisville.

In 1787, Crevecour, a French traveler in the West, speaks of coming to Louisville from Pittsburg in a flatboat loaded with bricks, boards, bars of iron, coal, instruments of husbandry, dismounted wagons, anvils, bellows, dry goods, brandy, flour, biscuits, hams, lard, salt meat, etc. On the tenth day he arrived at Louisville, of which he says: "Already this little city, the metropolis of the country, contains articles of merchandise which contributes on the one hand to support the trade in skins from Venango and the peninsula of Lake Erie by the River Miami, Muskingum, and Scioto, and on the other hand, to descend the Ohio to supply the wants of the farmers of Indiana, of Kentucky, the Wabash, and even

of Illinois. Cattle, provisions, lime and brick made in Pittsburg, are shipped daily to Louisville."(3)

The commerce of Louisville thus inaugurated in the simplest form of exchange of commodities in the Ohio River trade developed and expanded gradually with the settlement of Kentucky and the West. The square-end flatboat, used for down-stream carriage, was supplemented by the barge and the keelboat with pointed brow, which, with sails and oars, was used for bringing cargoes upstream from New Orleans. This trade was stimulated by the Treaty of 1795 between United States and Spain, which gave to the inhabitants of the West the free navigation of the Mississippi River with right of deposit at New Orleans. Louisville was made a port of entry by Act of Congress in November 1799, and a collector appointed to prevent the clandestine importation of foreign goods, to which previously there had been no check, New Orleans being a foreign port.

At that time there was not one route to the great marts of the Eastern coast which was practical thru the whole year, and there was not capital enough to undertake one. All the commerce of the West was carried on by the Ohio and the Mississippi, which is, indeed still, and probably always will be,

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(3) Ibid, p. 244

the most economical route for bulky objects. The western boatmen descended the rivers with their corn and salt meat in flatboats, and the goods of Europe and the produce of the Antilles were slowly transported up the rivers by the aid of the oar and the sail, the voyage consuming at least one hundred days and sometimes two hundred. One hundred days is nearly the length of a voyage from New York by the Cape of Good Hope to Canton; in the same space of time France was twice conquered, once by the allies, and once by Napoleon. The commerce of the West was, therefore, necessarily very limited, and the inhabitants separated from the rest of the world had all the rudeness of the forest. It was in this period and this state of affairs that the popular saying which describes the Kentuckian as half horse, half alligator, had its origin. The number of boats which made the voyage up and down, once a year, did not exceed ten, measuring on an average about one hundred tons. Freight from New Orleans to Louisville was 6, 7, and even 9 cents a pound.(4)

The close of the first decade of the new century found Louisville with a slowly increasing number of inhabitants and a growing industry - the

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(4) See Callender, Economic History of U. S. (Boston 1909) p. 361.

trade afforded by the Ohio River - which offered an inducement for enterprise and capital.(5) Upon the acquisition of Louisiana in 1803, and improved navigation, culminating in the successful use of steam as a propelling power, the prosperity of Louisville as a commercial center was assured; and a new era in the history of Ohio River trade was inaugurated.

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(5) Hulbert, Ohio River, A Course of Empire, (N. Y. 1906) chap. XI, From Pittsburg to Louisville in 1806.

CHAPTER III.

1810 to 1820 - THE ADVENT OF THE STEAMBOAT.

The opening year of the decade 1810-20 saw the inauguration of an event that was destined completely to revolutionize transportation by water. In October 1811, the first steamboat that ever moved upon any of the waters of the Mississippi valley made her appearance at Louisville.(1) From this event dates the substantial development of Ohio River trade and commerce, and the growth of Louisville in population, manufactures, and all the varied elements of a city.

The evolution of the steamboat from the rude craft of the pioneer to the palatial side-wheeler, capable of bearing swiftly thousand of tons of freight and hundreds of passengers in comfort and elegance is one of the most interesting incidents in the settlement of the West. Long before the Indian had ceased to harass the pioneer settlers, the chief route of immigration and commerce was by the Ohio from Pittsburg. The boats used for this transportation were of various sizes, but of uniform pattern, of rectangular frame, square at both ends, with broad thick gunwales, which, in case

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(1) Durrett, Centenary of Louisville, (Louisville, 1893) p. 83.

of attack, would protect the occupants from the arrows and rifle-balls of the Indians. Sometimes they were open, but generally a part of them was partitioned off and covered with a low, flat roof for protection of the passengers and their effects from the weather. One or more pairs of large oars on either side and a large oar or sweep at the stern for steering, completed the equipment of this primitive craft which was called by the various names of ark, family boat, and broadhorn. The latter appellation has survived, and the early style of aquatic architecture can still be recognized in the shanty boat used for residence and small traffic along the shores of western rivers, and in the various small crafts employed in bearing hay and other products of the field, forest, and mine to downstream markets.(2)

The broadhorn had its uses, but for stemming the current a modification of the keel was necessary. This was furnished by the model of what was known as the keelboat, which was introduced at an early day by the French and propelled by expert boatmen, known as voyageurs. A keelboat was generally manned by ten hands, principally Canadian-French, and a patroon or master. The boat seldom carried more than twenty or

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(2) Johnston, Memorial History of Louisville, I, p. 309; Hulbert, Ohio River, A Course of Empire, chap. X, From Keelboat to Schooner.

thirty tons. Barges had frequently a crew of forty or fifty men with a patroon, and carried fifty to sixty tons. Both of these kinds of vessels were provided with a mast, a square sail, and coils of cordage. By means of oars, sail, poles, and ropes for cordeling, this style of boat was adapted for overcoming the resistance of strong currents.(3)

Audubon, the famous naturalist and traveler, in an account of his Western travels relates how a barge that left New Orleans on March 1 often did not reach the Falls of the Ohio until July, sometimes not until October. A barge that came up in three months had done wonders; and after all the immense trouble it brought only a few bags of coffee and, at most, one hundred hogsheads of sugar.(4) The number of barges at that period did not amount to more than twenty-five or thirty, and the largest probably did not exceed one hundred tons burden. Such was the state of things at the advent of the first steamboat.(5)

The improvement in steamboats was so rapid, and the incidents attending them so interesting and vital to the development of Ohio River trade, that a particular history of a few of the earliest steam-

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(3) Casseday, History of Louisville, p. 64.
(4) Johnston, Memorial History of Louisville, I, p. 310
(5) Casseday, History of Louisville, p. 67.

boats that were built can hardly be considered a digression from the theme of this paper.

The first steamboat on the Western waters, the Orleans, built at Pittsburg in 1811, was owned and constructed by Robert Fulton. She was a side-wheel, single deck vessel of a tonnage variously estimated at from 200 to 400 tons burden. She had but a single boiler, which was placed in the hull of the vessel, and the paddle wheels were without boxing to conceal them from view. Her smokestack rose from the center, with masts fore and aft, and her cabin covered the middle three-quarters of her deck, leaving but one-eighth in front and rear for an open deck. She had a low-pressure engine, which afforded power enough to drive her from Pittsburg to Louisville the fourth day after she set out. When she reached Louisville, the water was too low for her passage over the rapids; and she ran between Louisville and Cincinnati until a November rise enabled her to pass the Falls. She arrived at Louisville in the night and created no little consternation by the noise of her steam as she rounded to at the foot of Fourth Street. Many of the good people, used to the quiet glidings of the keels and flats, were aroused from their slumbers and repaired to the wharf to see what was the matter. Others were so terribly frightened that they slept no more during the night and feared the end of the world was at hand. Early

in December, 1811, the river having risen, the Orleans sailed to New Orleans. She reached New Orleans safely December 24, and plied between that place and Natchez until July 14, 1814, when she was sunk by a snag.(6)

The second Ohio River steamboat was the Comet, a stern-wheeler of 45 tons, built at Pittsburg in 1813. She made a voyage to Louisville in the summer of 1813, descended from New Orleans in the spring of 1814, made two voyages thence to Natchez, and was dismantled and the engine put in a cotton-gin.(7)

The third steamer was the Vesuvius, of 390 tons, built at Pittsburg by Robert Fulton in 1814. She sailed from New Orlaans in the spring of 1814 where she took the place of the Orleans in the Natchez trade, in which she remained until her end in 1820.(8)

The fourth steamboat was the Enterprise, of 45 tons, built at Brownsville, Pa. She made two trips from Pittsburg to Louisville in the summer of 1814 and then went to New Orleans with a cargo of ordinance stores. She arrived there December 14 and proved of great service to General Jackson in the operations pending the Battle of New Orleans.

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(6) Joblin, Louisville Past and Present, (Louisville 1875) p. 20.

(7) Hall, Notes on Western States, (Phil. 1838)p.230.

(8) Ibid. p. 230.

On May 6, 1815, she again set out for Pittsburg, under command of Captain Shreve, and arrived at Shippingport (Louisville) May 30, twenty-five days out, the first steamboat ever to arrive at this port from New Orleans. This was regarded as a great feat, as indeed it was, considering the fact that she ran only in the day time, for there were no wood-yards and she was obliged to tie up while the crew cut wood from the forests on the bank. Thus had Captain Shreve accomplished in twenty-five days, a trip which previous to that time had never been accomplished in less than three months. The Enterprise, under the command of Captain D. Worley, then proceeded to Pittsburg but was lost in Rock Harbour, Shippingport.(9)

The fifth steamboat was the Aetna, of 390 tons burden, built at Pittsburg in 1814. She sailed from Pittsburg to New Orleans in March, 1815, and then went into the Natchez trade.(10)

The sixth boat was the Despatch, of 75 tons, built at Brownsville in 1817. She made several voyages from Pittsburg to Louisville, and one from New Orleans to Shippingport, where she became a wreck in 1820.(11)

The seventh and eighth boats were the Buffaloe

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(9) Ibid, p. 231.
(10) Ibid, p. 231.
(11) Ibid, p. 232.

and the James Monroe, of 250 and 150 tons burden respectively, built at Pittsburg in 1816. The Buffaloe became worn out and useless in 1819, and the James Monroe was lost on the lower Mississippi in 1821.(12)

It was not until the appearance of the Washington, the ninth steamboat in order of construction, that the practicability of steamboat navigation was assured. She was designed and constructed by Captain Shreve at Wheeling, W. Va., and was destined to revolutionize completely the navigation of the West. The engines and boilers of all previous boats had been placed in the hold and had but one deck, but on the Washington Captain Shreve placed them on the main deck and built an upper deck for passengers. This design has been the model for boats on the Western rivers ever since. She was completed in September, 1816, and made a successful trip to Louisville and thence to New Orleans and returned to Louisville in the early winter. In March, 1817, Captain Shreve left with the Washington on her second trip and returned, having been absent from Louisville but forty-five days. This was the trip that first convinced the discouraged public that steamboat navigation would succeed.(13)

In 1818, the General Pike, the first steamboat

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(12) Ibid, p. 232.
(13) Ibid, p. 233.

on Western waters designed for the exclusive convenience of passengers, was constructed at Cincinnati and plied as a packet betwwen Maysville, Cincinnati, and Louisville. Boats previously built had been intended solely for transportation of merchandise; these objects subsequently were successfully united.(14)

In 1819 the first attempt on Western waters to carry mail by steamboat was made. The Post Boy, 200 tons, built at New Albany by Captain Shreve and others was designed for the conveyance of mail between Louisville and New Orleans, under an Act of Congress passed March, 1819.(15)

The progress that was made in steamboat navigation and the difficulties that frowned upon this enterprise can thus be seen in the history of a few of the first boats in their regular order. The first advance was slow and the prospect very discouraging. The fourth boat that descended the river was the first to re-ascend as far as Louisville, and even then it was considered doubtful whether steamboats could be rendered useful as a mode of navigation for ascending trade. It was not until 1817, when the boat that was ninth in order of building, which made the trip from Louisville to New Orleans and back in 45 days, that the question of practicability was considered settled.

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(14) Ibid, p. 233.
(15) Ibid, p. 234.

It was not long after the first steamboat at Louisville before the former makers of keels and barges were at work making steamboats. The old boat-yards at Shippingport and above the mouth of the Beargrass were turned into regular ship-yards, and so were those across the river at New Albany, Clarksville, and Jeffersonville. The Governor Shelby, launched in 1816, was the first steamboat built entirely at Louisville, but when Dr. Mc Murtrie published his History of Louisville in 1819, he gave a list of no less than eight that had gone out from yards in and about Louisville, and as many more being built.(16)

From 1812 to 1819 there had been built and employed in navigation on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers 68 steamboats, of the first 41 of which seven were built by Kentuckians and twenty-four owned by them. The size of the boats were increased until 1819, when the United States, built at Jeffersonville, with duplicate engines made in England, measured 700 tons. A chronicler of the day says, "She is doubtless the gaint steamboat in the universe, drawing but little water and capable of carrying 3,000 bales of cotton."(17)

The impetus given to river trade by the introduction of the steamboat was reflected in the substantial growth and development of Louisville

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(16) Johnston, Memorial History of Louisville, p. 72.
(17) Ibid, p. 312.

and Shippingport. In 1812 Paul Skidmore started an iron foundry which was the forerunner of many establishments for making castings and steamboat machinery. A sugar refinery, two steam saw mills, a nail factory, two carriage factories, several distilleries, flour mills, and pork houses, and numerous other manufactories were started at this time.

In 1819, the principal exports were steam engines, beef, pork, bacon, lard, flour, whiskey, tobacco, and formerly hemp. In addition to the above articles may be added various pieces of household furniture, as beds, sideboards, chairs, etc. Of the quantity of pork packed in Louisville at this time - which afterward became the leading business of the city, in which she had few rivals - Dr. Mc Murtrie says, "that one individual during the year 1818 shipped 9,000 barrels, averaging 320 pounds, a total of 2,880,000 pounds."(18)

To Shippingport, also, the rival of Louisville as a commercial point, the steamboat in its early years brought a great urge forward; so much so, that in 1818 Louisville and Shippingport were put on equal footing. John and Louis Tarascon had bought the greater part of the townsite of Shippingport in 1806. It was then considered an important place on account of its being at the head of

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(18) McMurtrie, Sketches of Louisville, (Louisville 1819) p. 55.

navigation of the lower river, as Louisville was the port of that of the Upper Ohio, where all ascending boats were compelled for three-fourths of the year to discharge their cargoes. The population had increased by 1818 to rival that of Louisville. It boasted many handsome houses. Shipping-port, according to Dr. McMurtrie, was called the "Bois de Boulogne" of Louisville, it being the resort of all classes on high days and holidays. At these times, it exhibited a spectacle at once novel and interesting. The number of steamboats in the port, each bearing one or two flags, the throng of horses, carriages, and gigs, and the contented appearance of a crowd of pedestrians, all arrayed in their "Sunday's best," produced an effect impossible to describe. There were rope-walks there where cordage was made; the Napoleon Distillery, where were made different kinds of distilled waters, cordials, and liqueurs; and above all the great flour mill which cost the Tarascons $150,000.00. The building was six stories high and was equipped with the most expensive machinery imported from France. The capacity of the mill was 500 barrels of flour a day. Its power was derived from the Falls of the Ohio thru a channel cut for the purpose, the first of a long series of attempts to harness the power of the falls for commercial purposes.(19) All this was destined

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(19) Ibid, p. 161.

to fade away when the canal was built in the next decade, and Louisville became both the head and the foot of the Falls.

CHAPTER IV.

1820 to 1830

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CANAL AROUND THE FALLS.

After the demonstration by Captain Shreve of the practicability of navigation by steamboats upstream as well as down with safety and dispatch, the building of boats received a fresh stimulus. The obstruction to navigation by the Falls, however, soon made evident the need of constructing a canal to avoid the necessity of a portage in low water. Although this improvement, as one benefiting the commerce of the entire Mississippi valley and all its tributary territory, was a proper subject for Federal construction and control, it was left for the State of Kentucky, and largely the city of Louisville to inaugurate it and carry it to completion.

The project of a canal around the Falls was entertained in the beginning of the settlement of Louisville. When the town was founded there is reason to believe that the enormous value of a canal around the Falls had been suggested. At what time the project was first proposed cannot be stated accurately. Certain it is that a map of the town, drawn in 1793, presented the projected canal virtually as it was built thirty-seven years later.

This map appears in a book entitled A Topographical Description of North America, by Gilbert Imlay, published in London in 1797.(1) It is interesting to know that one of the first agitators of the canal project was General James Wilkinson, who settled in Lexington in 1784. General Wilkinson frequently visited Louisville, and the canal project was one that seems to have occupied his mind to a considerable extent. In 1804 a canal company was chartered, but nothing was done beyond surveys for many years after this time.

By an Act of the Kentucky Legislature of January 12, 1825, a corporation was chartered by the name of the Louisville and Portland Canal Company, to construct a canal around the Falls of the Ohio River in three years, with a right to levy tolls on vessels passing thru the canal. The United States, under Acts of Congress, became a stock holder in the company. Actual work was begun under this charter in 1826, but greater obstacles presented themselves than had been expected, and the Canal Company found it necessary to obtain an extension of another three years in which to complete the work begun. The canal was completed within this latter limit.(2) On December 21, 1829, the first steamboat, the Uncas - a good

(1) Allison, City of Louisville, (Louisville 1887)p.4.
(2) Ohio River Annual Report, Chief of U. S. Engrs., (Washington 1873) p. 8.

name for an adventurous vessel - squeezed thru the canal, although the work was yet far from ready for business.(3) The canal was about two miles in length and cost $750,000.00 when first constructed. The canal would have been begun and completed long before it was but for conflicting interests of the Indiana side of the river. The Indiana influence retarded the work from the time the first charter was granted by the Kentucky Legislature in 1804 until it was begun under the new charter of 1825.

In spite of the hard times which followed, the general bankruptcy prior to 1820 and which continued thru the decade, Louisville steadily grew in importance as a commercial center for Ohio River trade. During this decade the population of Louisville was doubled. The number of steamboats in service on the Ohio River increased from 72 in 1821 to 200 in 1829 with a grand tonnage of 35,000 tons.(4) As steamboats became more efficient, the time required for the trip from New Orleans to Louisville was gradually decreased. In 1821, Captain Pierce, in the Car of Commerce made the voyage from New Orleans to Shawneetown, a little below Louisville, in ten days, as compared with twenty-five days required by the Enterprise in 1817. In 1825 after fourteen years of experiments and trials

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(3) Durrett, Centenary of Louisville, p. 78.
(4) Casseday, History of Louisville, p. 173.

the proper proportion between the machinery and boat was finally settled.(5) Two years later the Tecumseh ascended from New Orleans to Louisville in eight days and two hours, a record trip for this decade.

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(5) Callender, Economic History of U. S., p. 363; also see Turner, Rise of New West, (New York 1906) chap. VII, Western Commerce and Ideals (1820-31)

CHAPTER V.

1830 to 1840

THE OPENING OF THE CANAL:

THE DAWN OF A NEW COMMERCIAL ERA IN LOUISVILLE.

The year 1830 saw the successful completion of the canal and the commencement of the commercial prominence resulting therefrom, which Louisville has held so long. The times were propitious for such expansion. Steamboat navigation was no longer an experiment. The tide of immigration which had so rapidly increased the population of Kentucky during the last decade continued undiminished, and Kentucky was lifted from the fourteenth to the sixth state in order of population. During this decade the population of Louisville was again doubled. The hard times and general business depression of the twenties were changed to days of thrift, prosperity, and enterprise. New Orleans sprang into sudden commercial importance from the cotton and other agricultural products which poured into that city from the rapidly developing country along the Mississippi and its tributaries. Vicksburg and Natchez became thrifty towns, while Louisville assumed a commercial importance at the northern end of the line corresponding with that of New Orleans at the southern. She became the distributing point of both the migrat-

ing population and the supplies necessary for their maintenance.

The topographical feature which attracted its early settlers to the Falls as the point likely to become a city on account of the obstruction to navigation and the consequent necessity of portage seems early to have been regarded as an important factor in its development as the country increased in population, traffic, and travel. That the theory and the policy pursued thereon were unsound and operated in the long run as a disadvantage, cannot be questioned, as evidenced by the greater progress and development in every respect since the enlargement and freedom of the canal, the construction of bridges, and other facilities for rapid and unobstructed transportation. But certain it is that for a long time individual and municipal effort was exerted to derive as much profit as possible from the obstruction, which the canal only partially relieved. In the first place there was a toll upon all steamers or other river craft of 80 cents a ton, but soon reduced to 50 cents, rated by the capacity of the boat and not by her actual load.(1) Thus boats from and to downstream points, unloaded and took on passengers and freight destined for the South at Portland instead of Louisville, thereby avoiding passage thru the canal. But the profit derived by the drays

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(1) Johnston, Memorial History of Louisville, p. 313.

and hacks was perhaps the most potent factor in the effort to increase rather than remove this tax on transportation. Even until within the memory of many citizens there was a systematic obstruction to free trade thru Louisville, which did not disappear altogether until 1880.

The stimulus given Ohio River trade at Louisville by the completion of the canal and the development of population and agriculture in the West and South, resulted in a rapid increase in number and size of steamboats employed in river transportation. A large amount of capital was invested in the business, and Louisville became the leading city in the ownership and management of steamboats penetrating all the rivers tributary to the Ohio and Mississippi. Steamboat-building, especially the building and equipment of steamboats of the larger class, became a leading industry in Louisville; but the better location for ship yards at Jeffersonville led later to its transfer to that point. The number of steamboats on Western rivers January 1, 1834 was according to estimation about 230, measuring 39,000 tons, twenty-five of which over 200 tons each, plied between Louisville, New Orleans and Cincinnati. The number of flat bottom and keelboats was estimated at 4,000, with tonnage of 160,000 tons, making the grand tonnage of Western waters about 200,000.(2)

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(2) Pitkin, Statistical View, (New Haven 1835) P. 536.

A conception of the actual conditions on the steamboats plying the Ohio and the Mississippi during this period can best be obtained from the following account of Chevalier, a French traveler in these parts in 1836:

"The number of passengers which these boats carry is very considerable; they are almost always crowded, although there are some which have two hundred beds. The rate of fare is low; one goes from Pittsburg to New Orleans for $50.00, all found, and from Louisville to New Orleans for $25.00. It is still lower for boatmen, who run down the river in flatboats and return by steamers; there are sometimes five or six hundred of them in a separate part of the boat, where they have shelter, a berth, and fire, and pay from $4.00 to $6.00 for the passage from New Orleans to Louisville; they are, however, obliged to help take in wood. The rapidity by which these men return has contributed not a little to the extension of the commerce of the West; they can now make three or four trips a year, instead of one, an important consideration in a country where there is a deficiency of hands. On the downward voyage their place is occupied by horses, cattle, and slaves which are sent South for sale."(3)

In the same way other industries were founded as the demand grew and as capital could be spared.

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(3) Callender, Economic History of U. S., p. 363.

from commerce which was the overshadowing pursuit engaging the leading and most enterprising citizens.

Tobacco had become a stable crop for Kentucky and Southern Indiana and found its chief market in Louisville where it was shipped to New Orleans. Tobacco manufactories were established, and cigars were produced on a rather large scale. This industry has increased with the growth of Louisville until it has become the largest tobacco market in the world.

Pork packing at Louisville, beginning shortly after the navigation of the river by steamboats had become an assured success, increased rapidly during this decade until Louisville stood among the first in this industry, the South drawing its supplies from this city. Shipments of bacon and other pork products from Louisville embraced foreign as well as domestic markets. The gradual economic emancipation of the South by home production, and the concentration of this industry at Chicago and a few other points for supply of foreign markets, led to the gradual reduction of this industry until it has become a minor industry. As a by-product of the pork packing industry, Louisville developed early into a center for the manufacture of soap and candles; and a trade was built up in these wares that extended to Europe.

The facilities of transportation which insured

a supply of grain and a market for the product early led to the establishment of flour mills and distilleries at Louisville. During this decade these industries flourished and furnished a great percentage of the export tonnage of Louisville.

Some idea of the amount of Ohio River traffic can be obtained by the commercial statistics of importation to Louisville from December 1, 1831 to August 4, 1832, which were as follows:(4)

Flour	48,470	bbls.
Molasses	6,309	"
Loaf Sugar	4,318	"
N. O. Sugar	7,717	hogsheads.
Nails	10,395	kegs.
Bale rope	28,830	coils.
Mackerel	12,037	bbls.
Salt	16,729	"
Tea	63,500	lbs.
China & Crockery ware	1,170	pkgs.
Cotton	4,913	bales.
Bagging	33,411	pcs.

In 1835 for six months ending June 30 exports from Louisville were as follows:(5)

Tobacco	1,337	hogsheads.
Bacon	2,813,560	lbs.
Whiskey	14,643	bbls.
Flour	19,990	"
Lard	60,713	kegs.
Pork	14,419	bbls.
Bale rope	42,030	coils.

This indicated the large expansion of commerce as the direct result of the opening of the canal, increased tonnage of vessels, and development of population and agriculture in the West and

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(4) Otis, Louisville Directory (Louisville 1832)p.153.
(5) Johnston, Memorial History of Louisville, I, p.245.

South. Commerce was the chief business of Louisville, a large capital being invested in it; and the best business talent engaged in the forwarding and commission business.

The growth of Ohio River traffic at Louisville is graphically shown in the following abstract of the boats that passed through and tolls received on the Louisville and Portland Canal for the decade:(6)

Year	Steamboats	Flats and Keelboats	Tons	Tolls.
1831	406	421	76,323	$12,750.77
1832	453	179	70,109	25,756.12
1833	875	710	169,885	60,736.92
1834	938	623	162,000	61,848.17
1835	1,256	355	2,413	80,165.24
1836	1,182	260	182,220	88,343.23
1837	1,501	165	242,374	145,424.69
1838	1,058	438	201,750	121,107.16
1839	1,666	-	300,406	180,364.01
1840	-	-	-	134,904.55

A comparison of the statistics for the year 1831 and 1839 in the table above shows a commercial increase that is typical of this decade. The tolls collected for the year 1839 are the greatest for any year until 1872 when tolls were abolished, except the years 1866 and 1871; the value of tolls in 1866 being $180,925.40 and for the year 1871,$207,025.19.(7)

In this period Louisville was purely a commercial city handling the manufactures of the East and the great agricultural products of Kentucky developed by

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(6) Hazard, U. S. Commercial & Statistical Register, I, 1840, p. 32.

(7) Ohio River Annual Report, Chief of U. S. Engrs., (Washington 1873) p. 13.

slave labor. The city grew rapidily in wealth and in importance, but it could not grow in an independent and courageous common population because the blot of slave labor kept white mechanics of the best classes away. It was in this decade that Louisville established her social and political power, and became the resort of the most cultivated classes of the South who were attracted by the temperate climate and healthfulness of the place.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

The important role played by Louisville and its early citizens in the most vital act in the phenomenal drama of American development - the settlement and founding of a colossal empire within the heart of the nation, the incomparable Mississippi basin - cannot be over-estimated. In the opening scene of this drama we saw the coming to Corn Island of that heroic character, General George Rogers Clark, with a group of rugged pioneer families, whose prophetic sight saw the vision of a great commercial metropolis rise out of the silent wilderness about the Falls of the Ohio, the strategic portal to the great West and South beyond. Four years later the apparently inconsequential passing by this settlement on the Falls of the Ohio of the adventurous French traders Tardiveau and Honore, the first to make a veritable commercial voyage down the Ohio to New Orleans, was fraught with significance. Likewise the performance of Captain Yoder, the pioneer of Western commerce, who, in the same year, descended the Ohio and Mississippi in the first flatboat that ever carried a cargo of produce to New Orleans

affected the destiny of Louisville profoundly. It was he who established that cycle of trade in which Louisville played an important part for many years, embracing Ohio River ports, New Orleans, Havana, eastern Atlantic markets, and back to Ohio River ports again.

The whole tenor of the story of pioneer trade on the Ohio River was influenced by these events. Louisville became the rendevouz of all who were interested in the conquest of territory, the courageous schemes of developing a river commerce with Spanish provinces, and the building of a canal through which passing commerce might pay toll to the enterprise of Louisville. It is during this phase of the story that General James Wilkinson, the perennially interesting rouge of pioneer times, together with Aaron Burr, appear temporarilly upon the scene.(1) The fact that Yoder and both Tardiveau and Honore, with their first-hand knowledge of the river and contiguous territory from Pittsburg to New Orleans, subsequently chose to settle in Louisville or its vicinage and reside there as merchants and traders until their deaths, proves conclusively the strategic importance of Louisville in the development of Ohio River trade and the commercial empire within the body of the nation during the tremendous

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(1) Allison, City of Louisville, p. 4.

days of pioneer history.

Like a hero in the drama, the steamboat made its appearance at the psychological moment. The romance of the evolution of the steamboat, the unequal combat between the steamboat and its predecessors, the broadhorns and barges, and the story of Shippingport in its halcyon days of prosperity, gaiety, and culture forms an absorbing interlude in this great drama. The position of leadership which Louisville assumed in this phase of Ohio River trade and traffic again substantiated the vision of the pioneers on Corn Island.

The triumphal completion of the Louisville and Portland canal through the initiative and perseverance of the early citizens of Louisville against political opposition and great physical obstacles, forms the climax of the great drama. The era ushered in by the intrepid Uncas in 1829, the increased tonnage of steamboats, and the rapid development of population and agriculture in the West and South culminated during the decades immediately preceeding the Civil War, before the era of railroads diverted the trade and travel from the rivers, in the golden age of steamboat traffic on the Ohio(2) and in the com-

(2) See Hulbert, Ohio River, A Course of Empire, chap. XIV., When the Steamboat was King.

plete realization of the pioneers' dream of a commercial metropolis at the Falls of the Ohio.

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