

## NEW ALBANY TODAY

*The first steamboat on the Ohio River, a tiny craft named the New Orleans, steamed through the Falls in 1811. Two years later New Albany was founded, just at the time the steamboat was becoming practical. Before long the city's boat building yards were turning out dozens of palatial packets – the city's first big industry. From that early beginning until today the river has contributed to New Albany's growth . . .*

New Albany and the Ohio River have grown up together. When the city was founded in 1813, Indiana was still a frontier area and the river was the main transportation route to the West for thousands of settlers who were leaving the East to begin a new life in the fertile valley and plains.

The development of the steamboat made the river even more important, for now freight and passengers could be carried up the river against the current as easily as the flat boats floated down stream. New Albany shared in the river's importance. First it became one of the most famous boat-building centers on the river; after the Civil War the glass works, the iron foundries, tanneries, and mills depended on the river for transportation.

The expansion of railroads during the 1870s and 1880s threatened the river traffic. Railroads were faster and could operate throughout the year. River traffic often had to be suspended in summer when the water was low or in winter when the river was frozen over.

But today the river is more important than ever. Navigation dams have been built to maintain an adequate level of water at all times and ice is a minor

problem to modern steel-hulled boats. The colorful packets are gone and passengers travel the river only on excursions now, but throbbing diesel towboats and barges carry far more freight today than the packets ever did, even in their best days.

Cheap water transportation is attracting more and more industry to the Ohio Valley. Economists predict that in a few years this region will be the heart of the most important industrial area of the United States. The new floodwall protects the city from disastrous floods while the river supplies unlimited amounts of water to factories and power plants.

New Albany will share in this growth as it always has in the past. The Public Service Company of Indiana picked the city as the site for a new power plant that employs 300 men and provides abundant power for other industry. Up and down the river other power plants and new factories are being built.

The city is also keeping pace with other transportation developments. A new highway bridge will soon span the Ohio, linking the city closer to the South and to Louisville. A toll road from Chicago to Florida will bring new traffic to this area. The K & I Bridge provides railroad connections between North and South.

Today New Albany's industries are varied – plywood and veneer, prefabricated homes, clothing, fertilizer, leather goods, power lawn mowers, boxes and baskets, and other products.

In 1963 New Albany will observe the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. By that time river transportation will be even more important than it is now.

New dams are planned to provide a deeper channel so that larger boats carrying heavier loads can operate on the river. The river is as important to New Albany today as it was in 1813 when the Scribner brothers stepped ashore from their crude flatboat and decided that this was the ideal location for a city.

New Albany's growth and progress since then has been steady, and at times exciting. It has pioneered in many industrial enterprises and its history has been tied to the great events in the history of the nation, from the War of 1812 to the events of today. Through all these years the city's industrial progress has depended on the river, and the river will continue as New Albany's most important asset.

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