

In The Heyday of Steamboating In New Albany.

(By Mart Tellon, of East Market street,
whose father was one of the biggest steamboat
and foundry men of New Albany back in the '50s.)

The LEDGER is indebted to Mr. Tellon and also to Mr. John Baer, for the following interesting historical impressions of New Albany in the days of the steamboat's supremacy and New Albany's premiership on the Ohio river.

At about where the K and I bridge now stands was the shipyard of Christopher Tillsen, who either just before the Civil War or shortly after moved to Algiers, Louisiana and engaged in the steamboat building business.

At the foot of east Sixth or Fifth street was located the shipyard of George Armstrong & Co., which continued to operate during the early Sixties.

The Marine Railway, where steamboats and other water craft were hauled out to be caulked and other repairs made was located at a point between West Second and Third street by D. M. Hooper & Co. Mr. Hooper was at one time Mayor of the city. Mr. Hooper, I neglected to say, built a number of fine steamboats on the "Marine Railway." One I remember was named for our former citizen, John Briggs who owned the controlling interest in her, another I call to mind was named the "Antelope" which was a large passenger steamer, the controlling interest of which was held by the commander, the late Capt. Edward Brown.

The next shipyard was that of Peter Tellon & Son, afterward Tellon & Alford. Peter Tellon also built and operated the large foundry and machine shops, boiler and sheet iron shops. This plant including the shipyard occupied the ground on the river front extending from West Fourth to West Sixth street and on West Fifth street as far North as the alley upon which the Southern Railway now lies. The foundry, machine shop and boiler and sheet iron shops occupied the ground from a point half way between West Fifth and Sixth street and from Water street to a point on the North near Main street

Peter Tellon & Son built the large gunboat Tuscumbia; the machinery, however, was built by Hartipee & Co., of Cincinnati. This boat was of immense proportion and the hull was covered with iron 3 inches thick.

Wm. Tellon and Jacob Alford under the firm name of Tellon and Alford built during the Fifties and early Sixties many fine passenger boats, among which was the Peter Tellon, Robert J. Ward, Rapides Baltic, D. B. Campbell and others. The next shipyard was that of John Evans, afterwards Hill and Payne, builders of the famous Robert E. Lee and many others.

The next shipyard below Hill & Payne was that of Wibel & Townsend builders of the large freight and passenger steamers Uncle Sam and the Leviathan, the latter steamer completed and allowed to float off.

The next shipyard was that of Wm. Jones who also operated a large saw mill which cut all the lumber used in building the many boats built by that firm.

The next shipyard was that of Dowerman & Humphreys located at a point below Falling Run Creek; this firm built many large passenger and freight boats among which was the large palatial steamer "Eclipse", which was 365 feet long, or one foot for every day in the year.

In addition to the shipyards above mentioned there were also quite a number of foundries and black smith shops, that did the iron work for the boats, even the spikes and nails used in their construction.

The first foundry on the river front was that of Fidler & Co. located at Bank and Water streets; operated during the Fifties and Sixties, no machine shop was connected with this foundry.

The next Foundry & Machine Shop was that of Lent South & Shipmen which with their large blacksmith shop occupied the entire river front from Pearl to State street and from the Water street front to Southern Railway track. This firm made all their own coke. Their principal business, however, was the building of steamboat machinery of every description and much of the time were compelled to run day and night.

On the corner of West Second and Water streets was located the large steamboat cabin building plant operated by Hipple & Smith, directly below this cabin building plant was the large blacksmith shop of Samuel S. Marsh, maker of all the wrought iron work for steamboats and directly below this plant was another steamboat blacksmith shop operated by Ewin Marsh, brother of Samuel Marsh.

On the corner of West Fourth and Water streets was located the large pump and block shop of M. J. Robinson. There were many other firms along the river front engaged in the same business as those enumerated above, but I have only given those of most importance.

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