

Also in newspaper article Mar 29, 1932

PORTAGE DAILY REGISTER, MAY 10, 1909,

BIG RIVER STEAMERS ARE IN PORT HERE.

Coming is watched by great number of people.

An illustration for Fox River improvement

Telephone and electric wires are torn down-large boats bring back pioneer reminiscences.

The large steamers, Grand and Rapids, arrived in port here Sunday evening after a trip of several weeks duration from Grand Haven, Mich. The approach of the big craft was watched with interest and many people boarded the boats when they reached the Winnebago lock and had an excursion up the canal. It was a rather tedious one, though, for it took the boats about three hours to reach the Wisconsin river lock. The steamer Rapids, passed the DeWitt Street bridge at six o'clock in tow of W.C. Gault's yacht, "May". The Rapids made clean work of wires crossing the canal and at Ketchum Point twenty lines of the Portage Telephone Co. were torn down. At Adams street near the York elevator four of the main wires of the Portage electric light company caught on the smoke stack of the steamer and as the pole on the south side of the canal was about to break, Electrician F. J. Forbes mounted the "hurricane deck" and before further damage could be done, quickly cut the wires, which necessarily put the first ward in darkness Sunday night. As the Rapids was passing the DeWitt Street bridge the stacks caught the wires of the local telephone co. and ten wires which were 47 feet above the water line had to be cut to allow the boats to pass. The Wisconsin Telephone Company lines at the DeWitt Street bridge as well as the Western Union Telegraph Company lines were not molested by the boats as they were at least fifty feet above the water's edge.

As the Rapids was pulling into the Wisconsin River lock at the head of the canal, its sister boat the Grand could be seen approaching at Ketchum Point. The Grand was in tow of the three yachts one being captained by N. H. Behnke and Elmer Lashure, No. 1 owned by the Portage Boat and Engine Works captained by William Nehls and the "Meteor" captained by Charles Kutzke and F. R. Graham. The Grand had no difficulty with the wires and pulled into the Wisconsin River lock a half hour after the steamer Rapids had arrived.

The arrival of these large steamers brings to mind of the early residents similar scenes enacted on the waters of our diverging rivers. They of course well remember the Ellen Hardy, a large stern-wheeler which plied between Sauk City and Portage, carrying loads of wheat, salt etc. to the wharf located near the residence of Geo. Clemmons in the First Ward, where it was transferred to the cars. Such boat names as Granite State, Boscobel, Winneconne, Portage, Dekorra, Gussie Girdon, City of Berlin, and others are still in the memory of the citizens, but have like most of our early associates passed out of existence.

Portage.
Waterways

The steamer Gussie Girdon, was notable as a freight carrying craft, designed so by the late Ferd. Schulze to compel the railroad companies to lower the freight rates on merchandise. Many of us remember the "Navy Yard" at the head of the canal on the site where the Giller residence now stand where for many years two large barges and a steamer lay till reduced to kindling wood. The scene shifts and today one finds on the site by them occupied a row of dwellings and gardens. The eye scans over the water and beholds numerous small craft darting about propelled by power unheard of in the early days, and were some of the early pioneers to awake from their slumber and view the change what an astonishment would be depicted on their faces. They would find many strange things to mark the march of progress, but the boats, they always had fascination for them. Neither is this order reversed now as has been attested by the crowds which lined the banks of the canal Sunday to watch the arrival of the largest vessels that ever passed through.

These steamers getting through to this city is an example to illustrate what could yet be accomplished with a good waterway from Green Bay to Portage and Prairie du Chien. Each member of the crew on board the boats from the owners and captains to the deck hands are happy in reaching Portage port safely after their long and tedious trip which has covered a period of 15 days. The boatmen are also enthusiastic as to the river possibilities between Green Bay and Portage. and were plain in their remarks regarding the government's neglect of the conditions on the upper Fox.

The boats were bought by Messrs W.E. Ingram and J.R. Young from Peter Venima of Menominee, Mich. They were built by the Grand Rapids and Lake Michigan Transportation Company at a cost of \$21,000 apiece and according to statements made the boats have had less than 6 months of actual usage, and were used by the original owners to ply on the Grand River, between Grand Haven and Grand Rapids Michigan. The boats were brought to Menomoneie by Capt. J.F. Cavannaugh last June and lay there since. Capt. Cavannaugh is a Lake Michigan pilot and operated the Pierre Mar uette No. 5. He has also been in the government engineering department for ten years. Capt. Cavannaugh states that with very little work on the part of the government a fine waterway can be obtained. He states that the most trouble they have had enroute were the weather conditions.

The boats are twin steamers and are almost identically alike being 155 feet, 34 feet wide and 32 feet 6 inches high from the waterline to the top of the cabin and 45 feet over all from the water to the top of the stacks. The first deck is used for the engine, freight and boilers, the boilers being lowered down into the hull, thus keeping the weight below. On the second deck are the dining room, sitting room, and clerks room besides a spacious open deck. The boats are propelled by the latest patent Clinton engine of the Clinton Novelty Works of Clinton, Iowa. The engines have 12 inch cylinders with 6 ft. strokes. Each of the boilers of the boats has a capacity of 300 h.p. They are steamers of a typical Mississippi type being flat bottomed and drawing 20 inches of water, light and 22 inches loaded.

The boats came across Lake Michigan from Grand Haven to Milwaukee under their own steam and on the trip across they came at the rate of 14 miles and hour.

Capt. Harvey Olson in charge of the tug Hollister towed the boats from Oshkosh to within one and one half miles from Governor's Bend, when fearing that the low water would make it impossible for the tug to return left the big steamer, and Portage yachtmen came to the rescue. W.E. Ingram one of the managers and owners is high in his words of praise for the loyalty of the Portage yachtmen and bestows special praise on Supt. Herman Zastrow of the Portage Boat and engine works and W.C. Gault.

Mr. Ingram said to Register reporter, "I wish you would thank the yachtmen and people of Portage, for their kindness towards us. We have been taken up finely. We had good sailing barring the wind and weather conditions which delayed us considerably. There is no reason why large boats cannot be put through Portage, as it would require but little expense to the Government and it would make a waterway which would be of much commercial value. Mr. Ingram is a former railroad contractor a jovial fellow, and like his partner Mr. Young, extends every possible courtesy visitors on the boats.

The crews are now busily engaged in placing the stern wheels on the boats and they expect to leave here not later than Friday. The Burlington road which has a bridge across the Wisconsin near the mouth of the Mississippi has informed the owners that they will remove a span of the bridge to allow the boats to continue pass. Their destination is Little Rock, Arkansas. One of the steamers will run from Little Rock to Fort Smith and the other from Little Rock to Arkansas City, carrying freight and passengers. On arriving at Little Rock they will be turned over to the Little Rock Packet Co, of which Messrs. Ingram and Young are the promotors. The boats will be piloted down the Wisconsin by Liberty Cross of Pacific and Jerry Hannifan.

Negotiations are also in progress for the purchase of the steamer Annie M. of Oshkosh which lies at port here by Messrs Ingram and Young who if the purchase is made will use the boat as a pleasure steamer for their private use at Little Rock.