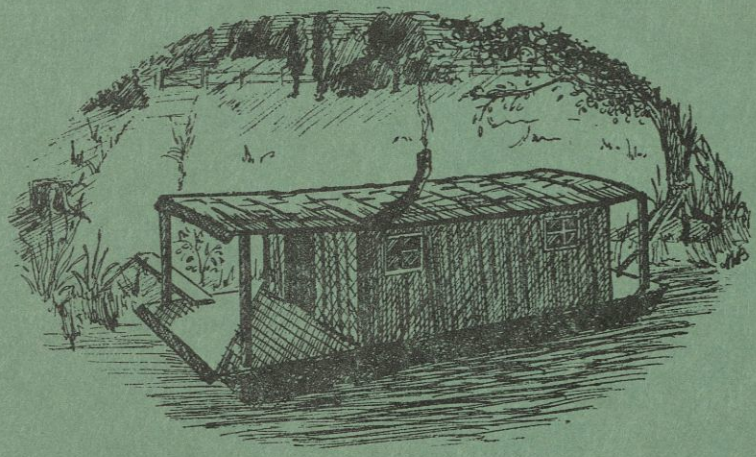
SHANTYBOAT



For Earl and Cecil Spencer
With best wishes
Carl and Jeanette Bogardus
December 25, 1959

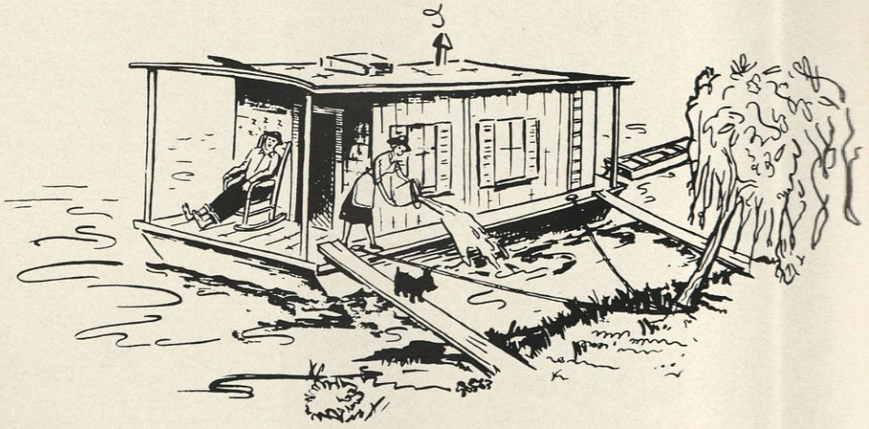
SHANTY BOAT MAN

by W. J. Devine

Oh! for the life of a shanty boat man
Who lives for each day without purpose
or plan;
For him not the worries, the trials and the
cares --
The pressure of business, the pitfalls
and snares --
No problems of profits, no quotas to
meet --
No meetings, no speeches, no deadlines
to beat;
Tied up to a tree at the edge of a stream,
His is the carefree life most of us dream.

Oh! for the life of a shanty boat man --
Just doing the least that he possibly
can --
He floats down the current -- the river's
his life --
A dog, an old stove, yeah! and maybe a
wife;
Some canned goods, some books -- a
philosopher he --
Content to live simply, just letting
things be;
Aspiring to nothing within his short
span--
Oh! for the life of a shanty boat man.

Courtesy of The Waterways Journal



SHANTYBOAT

Christmas 1959

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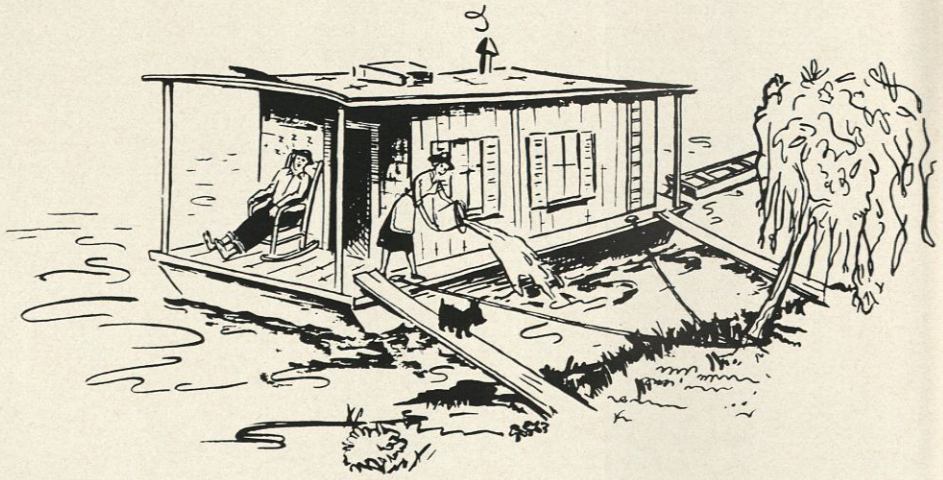


SHANTYBOAT

Christmas 1959

"O, Boatman! Wind that horn again,
For never did the listening air
Upon its lambent bosom bear
So wild, so soft, so sweet a strain!
What though thy notes are sad and few,
By every simple boatman blown,
Yet is each pulse to Nature true,
And melody in every tone.
How oft in boyhood's joyous days,
Unmindful of the lapsing hours,
I've loitered on my homeward way
By mild Ohio's bank of flowers;
While some lone boatman from the deck
Poured his soft numbers to the tide,
As if to charm from storm and wreck
The boat where all his fortunes ride . . ."

CONTENTS

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO ALL SHANTYBOATERS,
WOULD BE AND ACTUAL,
WHOEVER YOU WERE,
OR WHEREVER YOU ARE!

PREFACE

THE PROSAIC little shantyboat, perennial wanderer of the inland waterways, has long been neglected as insignificant and is only mentioned briefly, if at all, in passing by the various writers of river history. Many see fit to ignore it altogether. Actually it occupies its own important niche in the hall of river life and furnishes an extremely interesting segment in the lore of the river. The shantyboat itself is a timeless way of life and is fully as much an American institution as the much more glamorous steamboat or showboat, both of which today are practically things of the past. At this time on western waters there are only three actively operating steamboats—the *Gordon C. Greene,* the *Avalon* and the *Delta Queen,* of which only the first two are bona fide western rivers steamers;[1] while the latter was built to operate on the Sacramento River, in California.[2] Of the many showboats which have promenaded up and down the Mississippi and all its tributaries since that day in 1831 when William Chapman[3] set forth from Pittsburgh on his *Floating Theatre* only two are left —the *Goldenrod,* which still packs them in to see the old-fashioned "mellerdrammers" on the levee at St. Louis, and the *Majestic,* which still cruises up and down the Ohio showing at river cities and towns.[4]

But the good old shantyboat is still very much with us, as attested by its presence along the water fronts of many river towns and cities, and along the willow-bordered shores between the urban centers. However, it must be admitted that these picturesque little craft are not nearly so numerous these days as they were in the early 1900s, but still they are here, nonetheless, and show promise of remaining for many years to come, so long as there are restless souls to live in them and follow the aimless, hoboish sort of existence which naturally goes with them. A view of the river would indeed seem empty without a weather-beaten little shantyboat moored to the bank, a wisp of blue smoke spiraling up from its crooked stove pipe chimney.

Ben Lucien Burman in his *Big River to Cross,* 1938, says, "Once I estimated their number as thirty thousand. But this was a guess, based on my journeys among them. There has been no census of shantymen, for the census is the Government, and shantyboaters do not like the Government. That is the reason why they are shantyboaters. They are the original rebels, the perfection of rugged individualists."

THE BEGINNINGS

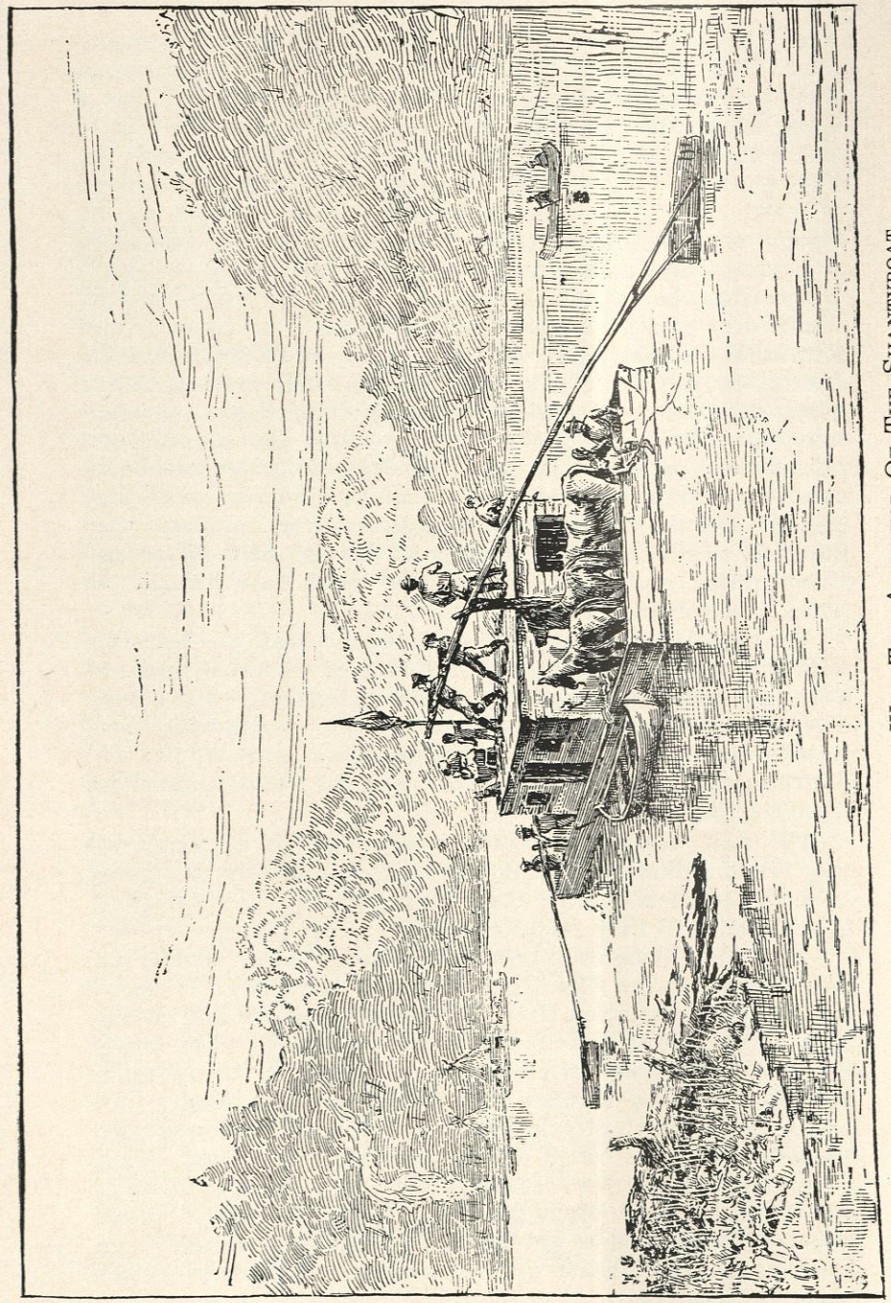
THIS VERY utilitarian means of transportation had its crude beginnings in the emigrant's flatboats of one hundred and fifty years ago, during the pioneering days of our nation's history. They were then known as "arks" after the well-known Biblical craft of Noah, which served such a useful purpose. Those were times of feverish migration[5] into the vast, empty and rich country west of the mountains. After General Anthony Wayne's victory over the Indians at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in northwestern Ohio in 1794, and the resultant Treaty of Greene Ville, in 1795, made conditions safer for the pioneer, settlers-to-be from the older states to the east flocked over the Cumberland Road from the Potomac River to Redstone Old Fort, now Brownsville, Pennsylvania, on the Monongahela River. At Redstone they either built flatboats for themselves, or purchased them ready-made, at so much a foot, from professional boat-builders. These crude craft were constructed on the banks of the Monongahela of timber obtained from the surrounding forests. When his boat was finished the emigrant moved in as she sat on her shoring and lived on her until the boat floated free with a rise in the river. After stocking the boat with provisions and supplies for his family, and fodder and grain for his animals, he made certain that his caulking was tight and every thing was shipshape. Then he drove his cattle, horses, sheep, hogs and any other livestock he proposed taking with him, into the pen on the after end of the boat. The chickens, ducks and other fowl were put in coops made of small poles. Then, having made their good-byes, the lines were untied from the trees on shore and the settler was off on a voyage on a craft that was built solely for a one-way trip. If he was really on his toes he had in his pocket a copy of Zadok Cramer's *Navigator,* which gave an accurate description of every mile of the Ohio River. They drifted northward with the current to Pittsburgh, where the Monongahela joined the Allegheny River to form the Ohio. Thence their course would be roughly southwest.

Amidship the flatboat was a rude cabin which afforded protection from the elements for the flatboater, his family and

what "house-plunder" they had transported over the mountains. This shack was to be their home until they arrived at their eventual destination far downstream. Forward was a space where the family might congregate during the trip to watch the varied scenery drift lazily by. Around all were the high gunwales of the ungainly craft, the tough oak timbers of which were thick enough to withstand the arrows or rifle balls of savages lurking along the shore. Not only was there still some danger at first from the Indians, but a later and worse danger was the rapacious renegade white river pirates, who wrecked or captured the boats, plundered their contents and murdered the passengers. For these reasons the flatboaters for mutual protection usually traveled in company with other boats; which also afforded the women and children the additional companionship of others. They rarely tied up on shore, unless it was on a small island where they could feel reasonably safe. Though it was risky to travel by night because they couldn't see the ever-present snags, rocks or sandbars, they infinitely preferred these dangers to the risk of redskins and river pirates, and often continued on their way through the hours of darkness.

The usual procedure was to allow the craft to float free with the current. One man on the roof of the cabin operated a long steering sweep, and also served as lookout, while others, only when occasion demanded it, manned long oars which projected from each side of the boat. Thus, they were able to avoid obstructions in the river and could steer the flatboat into shore when deemed necessary.

The boats drifted down the river with the current until they found a likely spot along the shore to settle, or they poled or cordelled their clumsy craft up one of the many navigable tributaries until they found a suitable place. Many were veterans of the Revolution who had Bounty Land Grants for land in the fabulous Blue Grass Region of Kentucky. On arriving at their destination they tied up to the shore and disembarked themselves and their various belongings. The trusty old ark, which had faithfully carried them so many miles through countless dangers and hardships, was finally dismantled and the stout oak lumber thereby obtained was used to build their first rough house upon their own land. Thus was many a new citizen settled in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana or Illinois, as the case might be. These were the settlers whose primary interest was to get their roots sunk deep in their own rich dirt and they made up the backbone of pioneer society



THE ARK OF THE PIONEER WAS THE ANCESTOR OF THE SHANTYBOAT

of that day. Today their countless millions of descendants are scattered far and wide over the country.[6]

However, not all the pioneer emigrants who descended the Ohio in their crude arks followed the preceeding pattern of events. Some had the wanderlust in their blood—they were restless souls who preferred to keep moving instead of taking root on a river bank or in the country back of the river. They found the carefree life of the aimlessly drifting flatboat much more to their liking, so they elected to stay with it. They became the original shantyboaters, gypsies of the river, and their boats, without too much structural change, evolved into the later-day shantyboat, which is probably pretty much the same now as it was in the early 1800s.

NOMADS OF THE RIVER

THE STANDARD shantyboat, and there was very little variation in design, consisted of an unpainted cabin, made of rough clapboards earlier and tongue and groove boards later, set on a flat-bottomed wooden hull, with some rake[7] fore and aft, which always seemed to require caulking in order to keep the boat afloat. There was an open deck space on the bow as well as the stern and over all extended a long, sway-backed roof, through which projected at a crazy angle a crooked rusty stove pipe. Tied on to the stern by a frayed rope was the ever-present, square-ended johnboat[8] without which useful conveyence a shantyboater simply could not exist. As the name of this simple craft we are discussing clearly indicates—it is a shanty[9] on a boat, and is not to be confused with or compared to the more modern houseboat, which is a horse of an entirely different color.[10]

Shantyboaters as a whole embody the very acme of independent social existence. They pay no rent and they pay no taxes. They come as they please and they go as they please, and are beholden to no man for anything. Their sort of aimless existence suits them perfectly. However, their particular type of wanderlust gives them no real peace or social stability.

In the summer they laughed at convention and went barefooted—men, women and children—and wore as little clothing as possible. Large families usually occupied their little craft and their movements on board were undoubtedly somewhat cramped for lack of space, but they got along without troubling

too much about what might happen on the morrow. Tomorrow could take care of itself, as they were in the habit of doing. When the boys reached eighteen and the girls fourteen they usually married and started out on their own. Admittedly there were lots of good men and women among the shantyboaters, but the bad conduct of the tough element usually brought ignominy on the whole tribe of these gypsies of the river.

The pioneer shantyboaters drifted as they pleased and tied up at the bank when the mood moved them, or hunger dictated. In the early days the forests along the river were full of buffalo, deer, wild turkeys and other game readily available for food. And the river beneath them teemed with all kinds of fish practically begging to be caught. During the spring and fall migratory seasons there were plenty of ducks and geese on the river. Of course these early shantyboaters needed a medium of exchange with which to purchase the necessities or luxuries of life. The abundant beaver, otter, mink and other fur-bearing animals found in the many creeks and branches along the Ohio supplied this need with their valuable coats.

Perhaps during the summer they would tie up at the bank, or in a secluded creek mouth for a spell, long enough for the old woman to raise a little patch of garden in the rich, sandy soil above the ever-present line of willows. Or maybe they would raise some chickens, starting with a few that had been surreptitiously purloined from some innocent settler's chicken house. Possibly they would let a few pigs, which had previously been kidnapped from the litter of an ear-marked old razor-back sow seen rooting grass-nuts from the river bank higher up stream, range in the near by woods to grow and fatten on the beechnut and acorn mast until late fall.

Probably these chores came under the heading of "woman's work," which according to the old saying, is never done; while the old man fished, hunted, tended a still on the hill, or merely loafed in the shade of the tall, overhanging cottonwoods. The children, wild as Indians, played on the sandy beaches, swam in the river, explored through the surrounding countryside, or, in season, picked raspberries and blackberries on the hillsides. A formal education for them was non-existent, and almost without exception, all were totally illiterate.

None of the shantyboaters could associate with the neighboring, well-rooted settlers, for they were shunned and frowned upon by all as shiftless, lazy and completely untrustworthy, a feeling which has persisted until fairly recent times. Their

attitude was not without good reason, for many a time, in the still of the night, or even by broad daylight, their barnyards, orchards, gardens and fields had been raided by these nomads of the river, so they had only resentment and enmity for the drifters, and wanted no part of them, neither the good ones nor the bad ones. When the near by farmers got too riled at their continued presence, they merely cast off and dropped on down the river to some other location.

SALUDA LANDING, JEFFERSON COUNTY, INDIANA, 1958

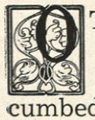
STRANDED

OCCASIONALLY a sudden recession of the river from near flood stage to normal caught the sleeping shantyboat dwellers unawares. They would wake up the next morning and find their craft high and dry on the sloping bank. They didn't like for this to happen for it meant manual labor to shore up the boat to put it on an even keel. However, that irksome task finally being done they waited for another rise to come along and take them off again. Sometimes they

remained stranded for months and then they yielded to circumstance and made the best of their stay. They were then unwilling squatters on someone's land, for the landowner's land, or property rights, extended to the low-water mark at the river's edge. The old woman didn't care too much if this happened for the occasion gave her an opportunity to exercise that feminine prerogative to plant some marigolds or zinnias in the sandy dirt along the sides of the boat, and some varicolored morning glories around the bow and stern, which she trained to climb up strings to the roof. Her opportunities for growing a few posies were few and very far between. At least she was happy at being stranded ashore.

I well remember during my boyhood days at Warsaw, Kentucky, that the great flood of 1913 deposited a shantyboat at the foot of the slope above the second terrace above the river. Its location was in the upper end of town adjacent to the old General John Payne house, one of Warsaw's oldest. In the level terrace below was the Warsaw baseball park and near the edge of the ball diamond grew an enormous cypress tree, which probably had been planted there by one of the early Paynes, since cypresses do not grow native this far up the Ohio. This shantyboat remained in this position for a number of years. On board this well-stranded craft lived a disreputable character by the name of Posey Story, who earned a very precarious living as a bootlegger—Warsaw in those pre-prohibition days being dry by virtue of the local option laws. His boat was noted as a hang-out for the gamblers of the vicinity, especially during the inclement weather of fall, winter and spring. During the warm, summer months the favorite spot for crap shooters and poker players was the fringe of willows along the river shore, where they might indulge in their games of chance unmolested by the minions of the law in the cool, firmly packed sand under the shade of the trees. Any kid who wandered too near the gaming place was promptly chased away, so we observed it only from the distance.

BAYOU COUNTRY



THER MORE restless dwellers on the ample bosom of la Belle Riviere, instead of remaining permanently on the hill-bordered reaches of the upper Ohio,[11] succumbed to the lure of the Southland, and continued on their

unhurried way down the gradually widening stream until they drifted with the current into the muddy Mississippi River at Cairo, Illinois.[12] From there they leisurely floated with the current of the mighty Father of Waters, avoiding caving banks, snags, sawyers,[13] sandbars and their ancient and implacable enemies, the steamboat pilots, until finally they reached the bayous of the Louisiana "Cajun" country.[14] Here in shallow, sluggishly-flowing, lilly-filled bayous, over hung with enormous live-oaks draped with long streamers of Spanish moss,[15] which lazily swayed to and fro in the warm breezes, they fell into a dreamy sort of existence. Here they fished, hunted, trapped and drifted as they pleased, free from the frost, ice and chill winds of the north.

However, every rose must have its thorns, and their apparent life of ease in the bayous was not without its complications, for they had to contend with the ever-present cotton-mouth moccasins, rattlers, and the beautiful, but deadly, little red, yellow and black banded coral snakes.[16] Death in this form could, and frequently did, strike at any time and the shantyboater had to have his wits about him at all times in order to survive.

In the early days another danger almost as great, and a lot more insidious, was that of yellow fever, commonly called "yellow jack." Many a shantyboater found his final resting place in a swampy graveyard because of this dread disease.[17] Another pestilence of the swampland was, and still is, though to a lesser degree, malaria fever, commonly known simply as "chills and fever," "buck ager," "swamp fever," or in its more severe form, "black-water fever." The dwellers of the swamps more or less successfully combatted malaria with bitter, quinine-containing chill tonics.[18]

Many of these migrants from the north elected to remain permanently in the bayou country, where they intermarried with the native, French-speaking Cajuns, and their present-day descendants still live there on the sluggish waterways, fishing, trapping muskrats and gathering Spanish moss, which is used in upholstery. Some again felt the call of the north, disposed of their boats and made their way back up the rivers by steamboat to start their nomadic life anew on the more salubrious Ohio. Other more restless adventurers regularly spent their springs, summers and falls lazying up and down the Ohio, and their winters sojourning in the languorous bayous of the lower Mississippi valley. This seasonal migration was made much easier at the turn of the century when the gasoline engine

became available. Every shantyboater who could afford it installed one in his trusty old johnboat and he was then able to cruise upstream or down, as he pleased. He was thereby released from the confining shackles of the relentless current of Old Man River, which previously had limited his line of travel to one direction, and he became as free as the lazy buzzard who drifted effortlessly through the sea of blue above him. It was in much the same manner that the gypsies of the land forsook their horse-drawn wagons and adopted instead automobiles and trucks in order to cruise about the country, bent on their various nefarious activities. We River Rats always steered clear of the camps of the gypsies because of the reputation they had for kidnapping.

FISHING

LATER DAY shantyboaters were still very dependent upon the river for a living. Probably the most prevalent means of bringing in a modest supply of that very necessary wherewithal was fishing. Burman said, "It is a lazy life, the life of a shantyboat fisherman. There is much time to talk. And there are few who are better conversationalists, with their mellow philosophy and vast store of information, so much of it inaccurate."

They fished with wing-nets, baited with roasting-ears filched from some farmer's corn field, or an over-ripe dead cat—both hard to resist by catfish. They also fished with trot lines—long lines of heavy staging dangling with hooks baited with dough-balls or chicken-guts, with a rock for an anchor on one end to hold it in place, and a float (usually a jug) on the other end to aid in tracing the line, which was usually done night and morning. The catch was principally catfish, with an occasional ugly waterdog, as the giant Ohio River salamanders are called.

Then, too, the River Rats seined for fish. The seines were a hundred yards, or more, long, with wood or cork floats along the top and lead sinkers along the bottom. The seine was draped in folds on a broad platform on the stern of the johnboat or skiff. Then while two men held on to the end on shore, two others rowed the boat swiftly out into the stream, the seine dropping into the water from the boat as it progressed out in the river. After proceeding out to the proper point the

rowers turned down stream for a way, then rowed quickly back to the shore, landing some distance from the starting place. By then the seine was all out in the river in a huge loop. As the boat grounded on the pebbly beach the oarsmen leaped out and they, in unison with the two men above them, began slowly pulling the seine in to shore, hand over hand, walking slowly toward each other, piling it on the beach as they pulled it in. As the loop out in the river grew ever smaller and closer to shore, the fish contained therein became panicky—swift, but worthless, skip-jacks skittered about hither and yon, and occasionally one skipped right over the seine to his freedom. Bass also resented this herding procedure and would leap wildly in their frantic efforts to escape the encircling net. Finally, as the loop became smaller the remaining portion was pulled up on the shore, and usually it was full of struggling denizens of the deep. The skip-jacks, ferocious-looking alligator gars (with their long jaws filled with sharp teeth), and water-dogs were tossed up on the shore to die. Once in a while they brought in leathery, soft-shelled turtles, whose vicious, razor-like jaws one must needs steer clear of; and big, ugly, moss-backed snapping turtles—the flesh of both being very delicious and much esteemed by river folk. The edible varieties of fish—shovel-nose (sturgeon), channel cats, bass, buffalo, white perch (which are really fresh water drum—with white lucky bones in their heads), and others, were placed in fish boxes to keep them alive until they could be cleaned and peddled through the streets of the towns.

Another character I well remember, though daily seen in Warsaw, was not a citizen. He was "Moots" Biddle, a resident of Florence, the little town across the river on the Indiana shore (when it was founded in 1815 it was called New York). The U. S. Mail for Florence came in to Sparta, (on the L. & N. Railroad, nine miles south of Warsaw); from there to Warsaw on Mitch Carver's horse-drawn bus; and Moots carried it across the river by skiff to the Florence Post Office. In memory's eye I can still see him trudging up and down the hill with the big mail bags slung across his back. In his spare time Moots fished both by trot-line and seine. He peddled his catch through the streets of Warsaw yelling, "Fish, Fish, Fresh Fish!" Then when he had moots for sale he would yell, "Moots, Moots, Fresh Moots!" It was for this reason that he was affectionately known as "Moots." A moot is an old riverman's name for a shovel-nose, and as we explained above, a shovel-nose is a sturgeon. Just for the record we will say that the sturgeon is

a very primitive fish, which has no bony skeleton, but its body is held together by its tough, horny skin. In cleaning them two tender, boneless and delicious fillets are obtained. In those days moots was considered an especial delicacy, but is unheard of today.

But to return to the shantyboat fisherman—the seine when pulled in to shore was not always full of fish. Occasionally it was empty, and that was what was known as a "water haul," a term still heard today in other connections, but with the same meaning.

The shantyboater's fish box, afloat in the river alongside the boat, was always full of choice channel cats, than which, rolled in a tight-fitting jacket of corn meal, fried in deep fat, and eaten with corn-dodger, there is no better eating in the world. That is an opinion of the writer, with which most other River Rats will readily agree.

MUSSELING

MUSSEL FISHING is the oldest occupation on the river, for it was practiced by the prehistoric Indians, through countless centuries before the white man came. They used the shells for beads, ornaments, dishes, utensils, etc. Musseling, for a good source of income was participated in by some, but not all, shantyboaters. In the days before the navigation dams made long, quiet lakes out of swiftly-flowing stretches of the river, musseling flourished as an extensive industry. Huge piles of mussel shells on the bank beside the shantyboat were often seen in those days by the curious passengers at the rail of the packets which then plied the Ohio. The shells were, and are, used by the pearl-button industry. At intervals small towboats pushing barges came along and bought the shells. As late as 1942 they were bringing the fisherman $32.00 a ton—and he earned every cent of it.

The shantyboater converted his johnboat to a musselboat by building a rack-like framework on it. On each side of this frame he hung two long pipes, or iron rods, from which were suspended festoons of heavy cord strings of varying lengths. On the end of each of these were tied four-pronged, barbless, mussel hooks, made of twisted galvanized wire and resembling miniature grappling-hooks. When the mussel beds, in shallow water, were reached by the mussel boat, the strings of hooks

were lowered into the water and dragged slowly across the sandy bottom. When a prong of a hook entered the partly open shell of a mussel he clamped down upon it with a vengeance and would not relax his hold soon enough for his own good. At intervals the lines of hooks were raised, the rods hung back on the racks, and the boatman plucked off the tightly-clinging mussels and tossed them into tubs in the boat. The process was repeated over and over until he had a johnboat load. Then he rowed back to his camp, where his wife had a goodly supply of boiling water in readiness in a big, flat-bottomed, homemade vat, with a driftwood fire underneath. The tubs of mussels were dumped into the tank. The hot water killed them and rendered them much easier to open. Then they were shoveled on a bench for opening. With a thin, sharp knife the muscles at each end of the bivalve were cut, and it fell open. Then the fleshy part was scooped out, and after being inspected for pearls, was cast aside, and the shell was thrown upon a near by pile. One can imagine the horrible, stomach-turning stench which hung over a mussel camp during musseling time, due to the putrefying flesh of the discarded mussel "innards." Interesting, as well as valuable, by-products of this industry of the past were the pearls, baroque and perfect, which were occasionally found, the quality of which was fully as good as the salt water variety.[19]

DRIFTING

IN THE WINTER and spring the shantyboaters picked up a little spending-money by practicing an occupation known as "Drifting." During periods of high-water, or floods, driftwood of every description came floating down the river from above. The people would go out in skiffs or johnboats and with spike-poles bring in to shore choice bits of timber and logs. Or they would, with much less physical effort, stand on the bank and retrieve the driftwood as it floated past in the swift current. Later in the summer, after the river had returned to its normal stage they would pull the wood out of places of lodgement against the trees along the river bank. These accumulations were known as "drift-piles," and remained all summer unless they were burned by the landowner. The material obtained by drifting was used mostly as fuel or for building purposes.

Some River Rats are said to have practiced an interesting and lucrative illegality known as "dehorning saw logs." In those days logs were made into enormous rafts on the headwaters of the various tributaries of the Ohio River—particularly the Big Sandy River. These were floated to the sawmills in times of high water (or tides, as they are called in the mountains). On both ends of each log was stamped the owner's individual mark. Then, even though a log breaks loose, or a raft accidentally breaks up, as often happened in very turbulent streams, the logs are still the property of the owner, no matter where they may have floated to. The dehorners would merely saw off a few inches from each end of the log and then stamp thereon their own brand and sell the logs as their own. This bit of subterfuge was known only by hearsay, but it was popularly supposed to have been practiced quite extensively along both shores of the Ohio by various lower-type shantyboaters and disreputable "under-the-hill" dwellers.

TICKLEBRITCHES

WELL REMEMBER another of Warsaw's characters, of which there were a great many. Who she was, whence she came or whither she went, no one today seems to know. Anyway, early one summer a weather-beaten old shantyboat came floating with the current down the Ohio, drifted into shore above the landing, and remained there the rest of the summer. Upon it lived a woman about forty years of age, a most eccentric female, known only by the very humorous appellation of "Ticklebritches." She was so called because of the voluminous pair of bloomers which she always wore instead of the usual feminine attire. Her obsession was dogs, of which she had at least twenty-five or thirty of all kinds, colors, sizes, breeds and mixtures. She would climb up the hill leading to the main part of town with her entire pack of curs trailing her heels. Her daily excursions to town always created a sensation among the townspeople, and a gang of curious boys, including the writer, usually trailed along after her and her mongrels.

Tragedy, however, finally came to Ticklebritches and her brood. One day one of her curs bit one of the boys. The irate townspeople rose up in arms, descended on the puzzled Ticklebritches and slaughtered every last one of her howling horde.

Then the disconsolate and grief-stricken Ticklebritches shook the mud of Warsaw from her feet by boarding her shantyboat and drifting out of sight around the bend, never to be heard of again. Ticklebritches was just another one of those small town characters which helped to make life in a river town a little more interesting.

FEUDIN' AN' FUSSIN'

ANE OF the steamboat pilot's existence was the shantyboater, and possibly vice versa. The pilot had to always be on the alert to keep from running down a drifting shantyboat. The shantyboater was usually too tired, lazy, or maybe it was just that he was as independent as that well-known "cow on crutches"—to make an effort to get out of the way. All he possibly could have done would have been to jump in his johnboat and row like mad, but that would have been too much trouble. Instead he had supreme confidence in the pilot's ability to see him first, and there was no need whatever for him to tax his brain or strain his muscles about the matter. The pilot could just steer his steamboat around the shantyboat. In order to retaliate for such an attitude, after a fashion, the pilot usually ran his boat in as close as possible in order to give the shantyboat a good rocking and tossing in his wake with the view of breaking a few dishes. For this he got a threatening fist and a furious, though inaudible, tongue-lashing. He could well imagine what was being said though he couldn't hear a word of it. Because of this traditional enmity between the two the shantyboater occasionally sent a pot-shot from his rifle through the windows of the pilot house. This devil-may-care, or go-to-hell attitude on the part of the shantyboater toward the steamboat pilot probably stems from the fact that the shantyboater felt that he was entitled to some special privileges because he was on the scene long before the steamboat made its first appearance.

AROUND THE BEND

HERE WERE times while writing this story that I actually felt myself feeling a little envious of the carefree shantyboater, especially when my wandering thoughts reverted to some quiet creek mouth under the big-leafed branches of a huge, leaning sycamore tree, the surface

of the cool, still water dappled with dancing lights and shadows, where some lucky shantyboater has his decrepit craft tied up at the bank, while he dozes in a rickety rocking chair on the bow of the boat, completely oblivious of the vigorously bobbing cork on his fishing line. How I would like to have been right there with him, my bare feet dangling in the clear water, and wiggling my toes so the chubs wouldn't nibble on them.

So it is with a feeling of great reluctance that I bring to a close this little dissertation regarding one of the most captivating and interesting phases of life in this country, as is provided by the migratory instincts of the delightfully picturesque shantyboater. My only regret is that I haven't been able to do a better job of it.

THE END

NOTES

1. The *Gordon C. Greene,* a sternwheeler, was built at the Howard Shipyards, Jeffersonville, Indiana, in 1923. She is 210 feet long, 38 feet wide, with 6½ feet depth of hold. Originally named the *Cape Girardeau,* she was sold in 1935 to the Greene Line Steamers and renamed *Gordon C. Greene* after the founder of that steamboat line. Today, 1959, she is tied up at Sarasota, Florida, where she is used as a tourist attraction restaurant. The *Avalon,* also a sternwheeler, was built at Pittsburgh by James Rees & Sons, in 1914. She is 157.5 feet long, 36 feet wide, with 5 feet depth of hold. Variously operated as a packet, ferry, and excursion boat. Long known as the *Idlewild,* her name was changed in 1948.

2. A sternwheeler, built at Stockton, California from parts prefabricated in Scotland, in 1926. She is 250 feet long, 58 feet wide, with 11½ feet depth of hold. She ran on the Sacramento River between San Francisco and Sacramento. In 1946 she was sold to the Greene Line Steamers. She was boarded up, towed by a tug down the Pacific Coast, transited the Panama Canal, and came up through the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans. There the protective boarding was removed and she made her own way to Pittsburgh for remodelling. Recommended reading is Captain Frederick Way's classic *Saga of the Delta Queen,* 1951, in which he gives the complete history of this beloved steamer.
3. William Chapman, Sr., came from London, England, to New York, in 1827, with his theatrically-inclined family. He built his *Floating Theatre* at Pittsburgh in 1831. It was 100 feet long and 16 feet wide, and had a crew of eleven, nine of whom were Chapmans. They drifted down the river beginning a career of showboating which was to last for twenty years.
4. The *Goldenrod* was built for W. R. Markle in 1909 by the Pope Dock Company, Pittsburgh. It was the biggest showboat ever built—200 feet long, 45 feet wide, and originally seated 1,400 people. She was sold to Ralph Emerson in 1913, and he sold her to Captain Bill Menke in 1922. The *Majestic* was built by Captain Tom Reynolds in 1923, and seats 450 persons. In 1959 she was bought by Indiana University for the use of her dramatics classes. Philip Graham's excellent book, *Showboats,* 1951, is suggested reading along this line.
5. Before the Ohio was opened up to reasonably safe travel many, many thousands of early settlers of Kentucky came from the east down the "Valley of Virginia" to the Wilderness Road, thence through historic Cumberland Gap, where they fanned out over Kentucky. This route, while more difficult, was much safer after the danger from Indians was past.
6. The author's great-great-great-great-grandfather, Davis Ball (1758-1819), a veteran of the Revolution, made this very same trip in a flatboat. He married in 1781, Mary Hatfield. In 1787 they left their native Essex County, New Jersey, and emigrated to the "Redstone Country," where he bought a farm and settled down. Then in 1800 he emigrated by flatboat down the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers, and up the Great Miami River to Butler County, Ohio (near Hamilton). There he, and the other New Jersey natives with him, entered land and founded a town which they called Trenton after the capital of their native state. Davis Ball operated a ferry

across the Miami River, known as Ball's Ferry, until March 8, 1819, when he, his son-in-law, Daniel Craig, and five other men were drowned in an accident which capsized the ferry during a flood.

7. An upward slant of the bottom, which facilitates progress through the water.

8. By some River Rats this indispensable craft is called a joe-boat.

9. This is a word of strictly American origin, but it came originally from the French, chantier, meaning a place where timber is stored. The French Canadians changed the meaning somewhat and called a log hut, or cabin, a chantier, which is pronounced shan-tya. Pioneer Americans borrowed the term from them and Anglicized it to shanty. Webster defines a shanty as "A small, mean dwelling; a rough, slight building for temporary use; a hut."

10. A house boat is larger and more commodious and is usually occupied by a family in fairly good financial circumstances, which has succumbed to the lure of the river. Some are very pretentious in their fittings, with plumbing, gas stoves, and other conveniences. They may be likened to bungalows which have been set on small barges. They usually are propellor-driven, with a gasoline engine on board, so they can come or go, upstream or down, as fancy leads them.

11. The Ohio, a big river from its beginning at Pittsburgh, to its mouth at Cairo, is 981 miles in length. Many rivers are larger and longer, but none are more beautiful.

12. The mud is mostly contributed to that stream by the wide Missouri River, above the mouth of which the Mississippi during most of the year is a clear river, as is the Ohio.

13. A sawyer is a sunken tree trunk which moves up and down from the force of the current, creating a navigation hazard.

14. Made famous by Longfellow's *Evangeline*. Acadia is a district in Nova Scotia, colonized by the French, it became English in 1713. Then at the beginning of the French and Indian War in 1755, the British, in order to prevent possible revolt, destroyed their settlements and deported the Acadians to the Bayou Teche region of Louisiana, where their many descendants still live today, and are commonly called "Cajuns."

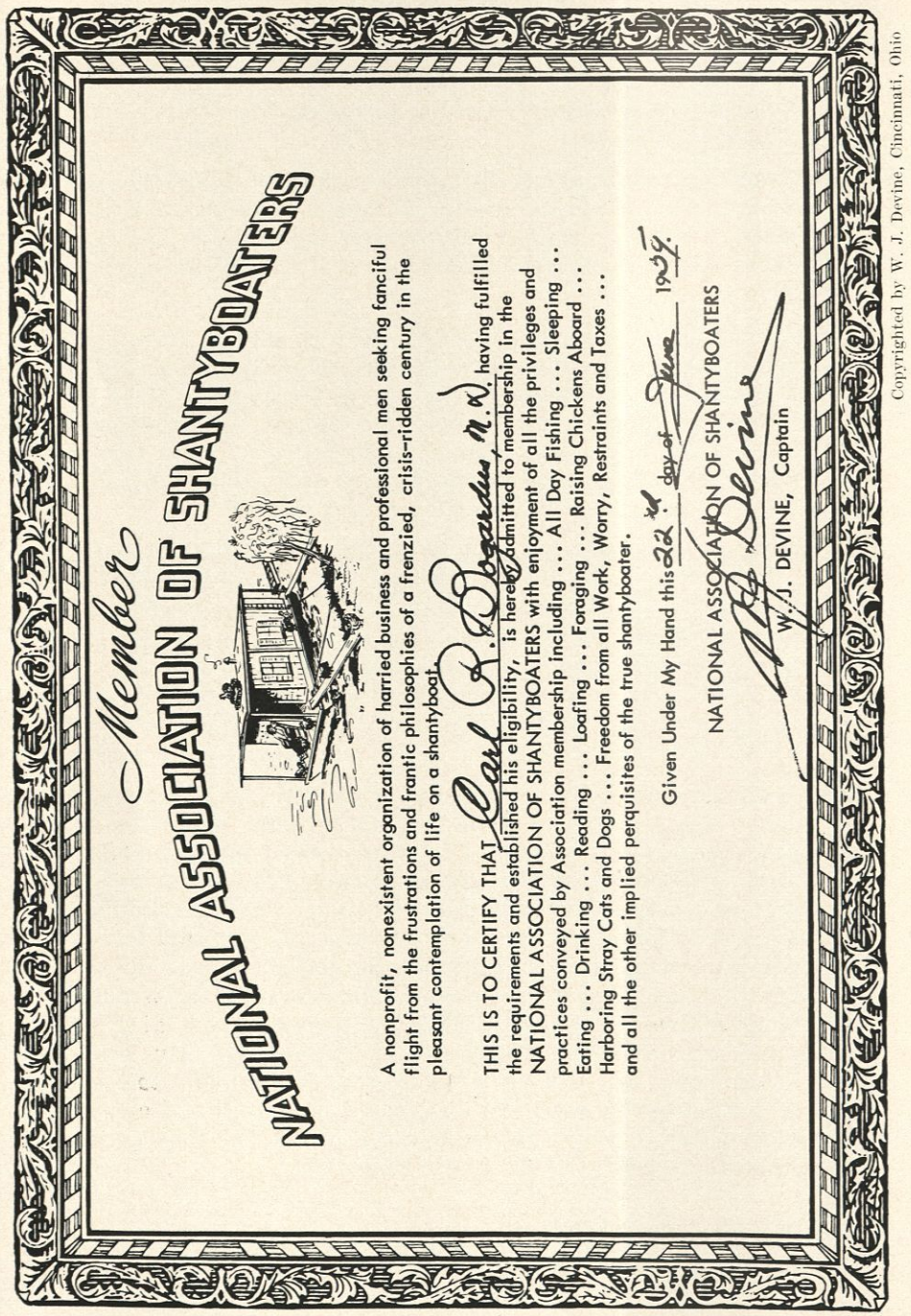
15. Not a true parasite, like mistletoe, for instance, but strictly an aerial plant, it obtains its nourishment and moisture from the air, and takes nothing from the tree from which it hangs.

16. Water moccasins, along with rattle snakes and copperheads, belong to the pit viper family; while the more deadly coral snakes are the only representatives of the Old World cobra found on this continent. These four are our only poisonous snakes.

17. Yellow Fever is a virus disease which is carried from the sick to the well by the pesky, but seemingly harmless, little *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito. The disease has long since been entirely eradicated from the United States, but in former days severe epidemics raged over the entire country. However, *Aedes Aegypti* is still very much with us, so theoretically, we could still have Yellow Fever again.

18. Malaria is a disease caused by a protozoa called a "plasmodium." It is transmitted by the bite of an *Anopheles* mosquito which has previously bitten a person afflicted with the disease. It is mankind's most prevalent and debilitating disease, occurring all over the tropical and subtropical world. It was once very common in midwestern United States, but today is seen only in the southern states, where it is still fairly common.

19. I well remember during my boyhood at Warsaw that a man named Tom Freeman (what an appropriate name for a shantyboater—Freeman!) had a mussel camp at McDanell's Landing, about two miles above Warsaw (named for John McDanell, who came to Warsaw in 1839). His wife, Dovie, was a very large and corpulent woman and she used to go swimming with us boys. For a bathing suit she wore a dress. What a sight she was as she would emerge from the water, the thin dress revealingly clinging to every part of her ample anatomy. She, too, was a character. One day Tom showed me a bottle of pearls of all shapes, sizes and colors. He poured out in my hand all I could hold so that I could inspect them closely. He made me a present of a baroque (imperfect) pearl, which I still have today.



CREDITS

This brief account of a picturesque, though vanishing, way of life was written by Carl R. Bogardus, Sr., Austin, Indiana, in 1951, and is presented here with only a few minor changes in the original manuscript. It is being published as a Christmas Keepsake by the Muscatatuck Press, Austin, Scott County, Indiana, in an edition of 700 copies.

The vignette on the cover, depicting a shantyboat moored to the shore, is a line drawing by Nancy Hyden Bogardus, Chicago, Illinois.

The frontispiece is a heart-warming and thought-provoking poem written by William J. Devine, Cincinnati, Ohio, in June, 1957, and first published in the same month in *The Waterways Journal*, St. Louis, Missouri. It is reproduced here with their kind permission.

The quotation on the reverse of the title page is from the poem *The Boat Horn*, written by William Orlando Butler, of Carrollton, Kentucky, and first published in the *Indiana Republican* at Madison, Indiana, on August 21, 1819.

The certificate of the *National Association of Shantyboaters*, on page 20 is used by courtesy of Captain William J. Devine of that nobly-conceived and capably-administered nonexistent organization.

The cuts and halftone engravings were done by Jerome Flaig at the Parkway Engraving Company, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The typesetting, composing, printing and making of this book was done under the direction of Arthur E. Patterson and Faye E. Patterson of the Jobbers Publishing Company, Inc., Patterson Building, Indianapolis 20, Indiana.