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## Steubenville, Ohio, and the Nineteenth-Century Steamboat Trade

BY JERRY E. GREEN

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During the 1800s, the smaller towns in eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania and western Virginia (now West Virginia) contributed to the growing importance of a riverboat economy. While often overshadowed by larger cities such as Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, these smaller towns played important roles in supplying men and machinery to further the success of riverboat commerce on the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers. One of these smaller communities was Steubenville, Ohio.

City participation in the steamboat trade began with the construction of the *Bazaleel Wells* in 1819–20. While the construction of steamboats assured a role for Steubenville in the steamboat trade, the city also sent a number of men to the river as captains who would gain considerable fame and importance on the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers.

That the city of Steubenville attracted craftsmen and entrepreneurs who became involved in the river trade is not surprising. In 1830, with a population of 2,937, Steubenville ranked eighty-fifth among the top ninety urban places in the United States. Only two other

Ohio River cities, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, ranked in that group. In 1840, with an estimated population of 4,247, Steubenville ranked ninety-ninth in size of the top one hundred U.S. cities. By 1840, two other Ohio River communities, Louisville and Wheeling, had joined the top one hundred.<sup>1</sup> From the 1820s through the 1840s, it seems likely that, as a prominent Ohio River city, Steubenville would have been both an origin and a destination for those interested in the developing riverboat trade.

### *Steubenville's Early Boat Building*

In 1884, the U.S. Census Office published a volume containing several reports on the nation's economic activities. One of these, by Henry Hall, entitled *Ship-Building Industry in the United States*, was an extensive survey begun in 1880. The report covered fishing vessels, merchant sailing vessels, shipbuilding on ocean coasts, steam vessels, iron vessels, canal boats, U.S. Navy yards, shipbuilding timber, and statistics on shipbuilding.

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1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, "Population of 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in United States: 1790–1990," Population Division Working Paper No. 27 (Washington, D.C., 1998). Available at [www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab06.txt](http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab06.txt) and [tab07.txt](http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab07.txt).

The section on steam vessels noted that population growth in the West had been rapid, and that for more than fifty years (since 1820) “steamboat building flourished in the west.”<sup>2</sup> Western boatyards, it went on, were scattered principally along the Monongahela and Ohio rivers. In a list of active works, Steubenville was mentioned: “At Steubenville, Ohio, there is a small yard where much work is done in busy years.”<sup>3</sup>

William Mabry, writing in the next century of Ohio’s industrial beginnings, noted, “Other towns on the Ohio River, notably Cincinnati and Steubenville, shared with Marietta the boat building and ship building industry.”<sup>4</sup> In the same vein, J. Doyle’s *Twentieth Century History of Steubenville and Jefferson County* reported that “steamboat building now [1819] became a leading industry in which Jefferson County, especially Steubenville, took an active part.”<sup>5</sup> Steubenville’s reputation for boat building was apparently known more than locally, for an 1819 publication at Louisville noted that in Steubenville one boat of ninety tons was being built.<sup>6</sup>

Steamboat building, in fact, was widespread throughout the Ohio Valley. Using William Lytle’s historical survey as a reference for the time period 1807 to 1868, it is apparent that outside of the major cities Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, boat building was in full bloom (Table 1).<sup>7</sup>

While most of these sources did not mention by name a specific boatyard for Steubenville, in all likelihood it was that of Elijah Murray. Murray’s yard was located between Washington and North streets (Figure 1), which in 1819

**Table 1**  
**Riverboat Construction at Selected Cities**

CITY	RIVERBOATS CONSTRUCTED 1807–1868
Wheeling	146
Wellsville	44
Marietta	42
Steubenville	17
Portsmouth	16
Gallipolis	10
Ironton	9

Compiled by the author from William M. Lytle, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States, 1807–1868* (Mystic, Conn., 1952).

would have been north of the central business district centered near the Ohio River and Market Street.

### *The Murray Boatyard*

In 1819 Elijah Murray established a boatyard which produced a line of vessels, beginning with the *Bazaleel Wells* in 1819–1820. This vessel was actually a joint venture: Murray’s yard built the hull and cabins, and the Arthur M. Phillips firm built the boiler and engine. Phillips had migrated from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to Steubenville in 1807 and early on had established himself as a blacksmith and mechanic. His shops were located where the Means Foundry would later

2. Henry Hall, *Ship-Building Industry in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1884), 177.

3. *Ibid.*, 188.

4. William Mabry, “Industrial Beginnings in Ohio,” *The Ohio State Archeological and Historical Quarterly*, 55 (1946), 248.

5. J. Doyle, *Twentieth Century History of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1910), 220.

6. H. McMurtie, *Sketches of Louisville* (Louisville, 1819), 204.

7. William M. Lytle, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States, 1807–1868* (Mystic, Conn., 1952).

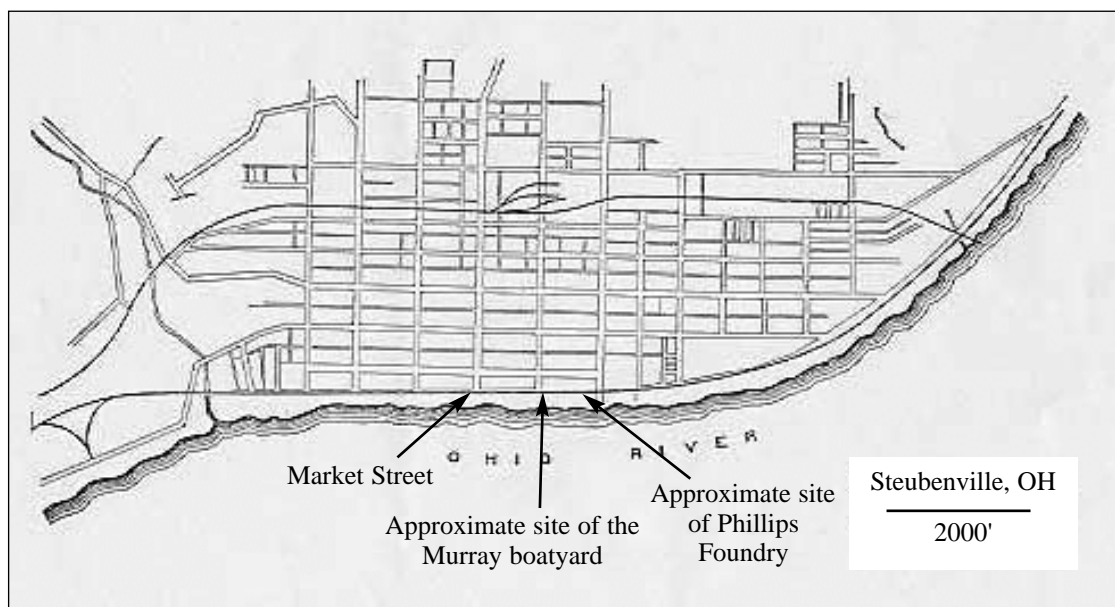


Figure 1. Locations of Murray Boatyard and Phillips Foundry. Locations added by author. Map from U.S. Department of Interior, Census Office, "Report on the Social Statistics of Cities, Part II, the Southern and Western States" (Washington, D.C., 1887), 419.

be located, which placed it about one block north of Murray's boatyard. His enterprise included a foundry and machine shop with the tools for boring and turning, which enabled him to turn to steamboat equipment. In addition to the *Bazaleel Wells*, Phillips went on to supply machinery for the *Congress*, *Thompson*, *Steubenville*, and *Aurora*, all built at Steubenville, and ships constructed at other places such as Wheeling.<sup>8</sup>

While little seems known about the background of Arthur Phillips, he must have had both skill and good equipment. As Louis C. Hunter has pointed out, to develop steam engines required skilled abilities in iron working technology.<sup>9</sup> Boring to close tolerances, more balanced casting of moving parts, and more precise machining to produce a reliable engine were necessary to build a steamboat. Also, Steubenville, only thirty-

eight miles by land and seventy-three miles by river from Pittsburgh, was fortunate in its location. The upper Ohio Valley, especially the area around Pittsburgh, was an early center of the iron and steel industry and provided a convenient environment in which to develop and produce riverboat machinery. Indeed, the manufacture of the *Bazaleel Wells* represents this convenience: "Her cylinder was taken from a Steubenville flour mill and the boiler built at Pittsburgh."<sup>10</sup>

Elijah Murray's first vessel, the *Wells*, had an interesting beginning that was reported in the *Olden Time Monthly* in August 1847 and re-reported in J. A. Caldwell's 1880 *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio*. The writer (a passenger who is not identified) noted that "as the builders were altogether unacquainted with the principles and construction of steamboat machinery, it was not to be

8. J. A. Caldwell, *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio* (Wheeling, 1880), 486.

9. Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers* (New York, 1993), 108.

10. *Centennial Souvenir of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio 1797-1897* (Steubenville, 1897), 20.

expected that the work would be very perfect.”<sup>11</sup> “Perfect” hardly describes the result. Bound for Pittsburgh on her first venture upstream in 1820, the *Wells*’s force pump, necessary for keeping the boiler full, failed. Even after repair, the passengers had to heave the boat along. After the second day they had made less than four miles, and by the end of the third day, the author notes, they could still hear the Steubenville town bell ringing for dinner. The *Wells* finally returned to Steubenville for repairs, and after a week continued its journey.

The unknown author continued his comments by noting that after some twenty miles, the force pump was again broken to the point that it could not be repaired. Faced with near mortification if they had to return again, the party agreed (not unanimously) that the men on board would fill buckets from the river and, using a funnel, keep the boiler full. On the evening of the third day, with its boiler operating, the *Wells* then ran out of fuel. As coal was miles away, fence poles were cut up as substitute fuel. However, when these were burned they did not produce the power needed. After a general uproar in which the captain blamed the helmsman for the problems and the pilot threatened to leave the boat, the problems generally appear to have been resolved by sending for a wagonload of coal from the nearest coal bank. The horsedrawn wagonload of coal was brought to the boat but was scattered “over a ten acre cornfield” when someone released “a puff of steam . . . from the safety valve which frightened the horses.”<sup>12</sup> Eventually, the passengers gathered up the coal, used it with the fence poles for fuel and

the vessel reached Pittsburgh.

The *Wells*’s early years were marked by other unfortunate experiences. Her stacks, originally built of brick by Steubenville builder and contractor Ambrose Shaw, had on one occasion, upon impact with the shore, come tumbling down<sup>13</sup> (Figure 2). When the vessel eventually reached Pittsburgh at the conclusion of the trip noted above, the brick chimney was replaced by a metal one. At a somewhat later date (February 15, 1820) the *Wells*’s chimney figured in the news again as a fierce storm’s wind “lifted her chimney out and hurled it into the river.”<sup>14</sup> This was presumably the metal one installed at Pittsburgh.

### *The Developmental Years*

The early problems associated with the *Wells* did not seem to have had an adverse impact on Murray’s boatyard. The July 4, 1829, issue of the *Western Herald and Steubenville Gazette* carried an advertisement that notified the readers that “steamboats, keel, flat, and all other kinds of boats built at short notice and on reasonable terms at the boatyard of the builders.”

Boats, the advertisement went on, would be built of any wood desired, but that locust or oak frames were considered best for steamboats. The notice, entered by Elijah Murray, Thomas Thompson, and William Murray, mentioned materials commonly used in boat building.<sup>15</sup> White oak, along with white pine for decking, cabins, masts, and spars, were commonly used woods.

With the successful introduction of steam-

11. Caldwell, *Belmont and Jefferson Counties*, 486.

12. *Ibid.*, 488.

13. *Centennial Souvenir of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio 1797–1897*, 18.

14. Caldwell, *Belmont and Jefferson Counties*, 466.

15. *Western Herald and Steubenville Gazette*, July 4, 1829.

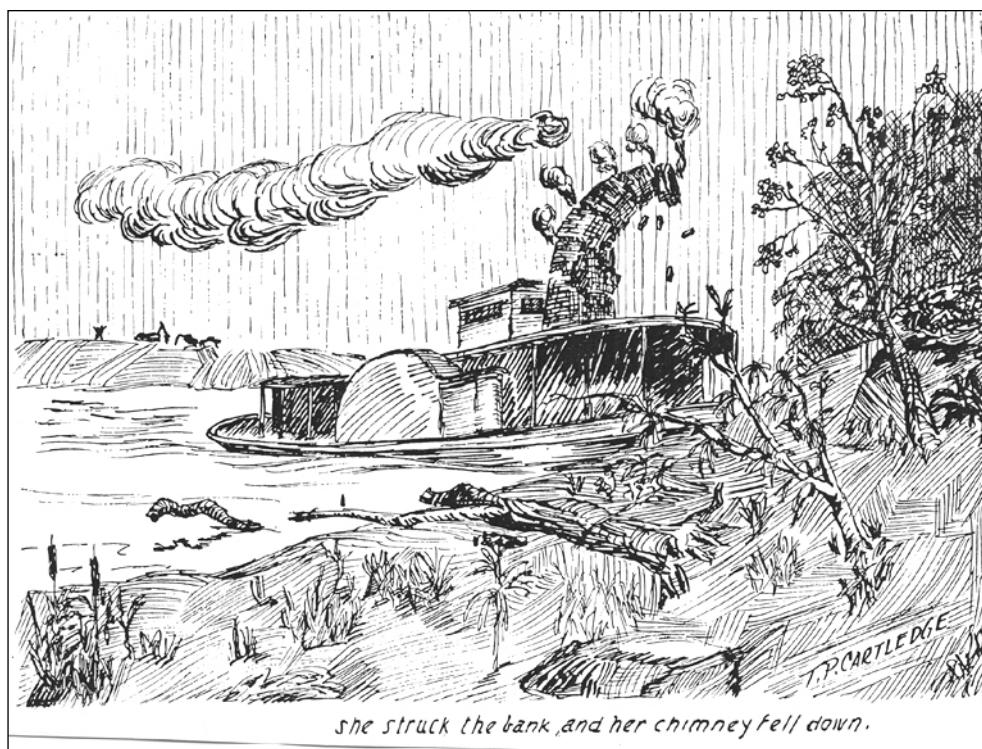


Figure 2. A sketch of the *Bazaleel Wells* by T. P. Cartledge. From Malcolm J. Brady (ed.), *Steubenville Sesquicentennial, 1747–1947* (Steubenville, 1947), 18. (IMAGE COURTESY OF THE STEUBENVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.)

boat construction in the city came other steamboat-related businesses. Also appearing in the same issue of the *Western Herald and Steubenville Gazette* was a notice that Alexander Devinny “manufactures steam engines of all descriptions for steamboats.” After providing some background regarding the firm, the advertisement concluded: “As his shop is immediately on the river bank, he will be prepared at all times to repair steam boat ENGINES at the shortest notice and in the best manner.”<sup>16</sup> Arthur Phillips also used the same newspaper to announce his return from Wheeling “to his old establishment,” where he would produce “all kinds of machinery such as...steam engines.”<sup>17</sup> By the late 1820s,

therefore, the Steubenville waterfront was an active area, containing within its environs facilities for steamboat construction and engine repairs, as well as engine foundries.

Steamboats had to be piloted, and thus came the steamboat captain. Through these early years of the nineteenth century the rank of captain included Elijah Murray, Peter Dohrman, George Dohrman, and M. E. Lucas. While some of these men were experienced enough to move onto the river early in the steamboat era, others emerged with the growth of the Murray boatyard. The Batchelor family contributed several notable rivermen. Alonzo Batchelor was born in 1816, Charles W. Batchelor in 1823, and James W. Batchelor in

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

1829. Growing up during the time of Steubenville's expanding role in the river trade, each would assume the position of captain on a number of riverboats.

During the 1830s, meanwhile, the Murray boatyard changed ownership several times. On October 2, 1830, the *Western Herald and Steubenville Gazette* announced that "Elijah Murray and Thomas Thompson have entered into partnership . . . and will continue to carry on under the firm of Murray and Thompson."<sup>18</sup> In August of 1832, however, the dissolution of the partnership of Murray and Thompson "by mutual consent" was announced. Nevertheless the firm's ad for the boatyard remained otherwise unchanged, noting that "the boat building business will continue to be carried on by the subscriber [Elijah Murray]."<sup>19</sup> Later in 1832, the entire business was destroyed by fire.

In the meantime, several Steubenville citizens were taking their place on the river. In 1835, Charles W. Batchelor, then twelve years old, became cabin boy with Captain Lucas of Steubenville aboard the *U.S. Mail* on the Steubenville-Wheeling-Wellsville run. Also coming of age were several members of the O'Neal family of Steubenville: Abner, George and James, each of whom would play an important role in riverboat development.

In addition to participating in the *business* end of steamboating, several persons developed interlocking family and friendship links through marriage and shared business enterprises. Early in the steamboat era, Joseph S. Batchelor married Sarah Murray, sister of Elijah Murray the boat builder; their union produced a long line of successful riverboat captains including Alonzo, Francis, Charles,

and James Batchelor. Also related by marriage were the O'Neal and Wintringer families, both familiar names on the Ohio River. Friendships also extended to building and naming steamboats. Captains Nathan Wintringer, John Edie and several O'Neals collaborated in building the *C. W. Batchelor* in honor of their friend C. W. Batchelor, who was rated as "a favorite river captain of the [eighteen-] fifties."<sup>20</sup>

### *Steubenville Boats in Use*

The 1832 Murray fire apparently did not deter riverboat manufacturing in Steubenville, as the production of riverboats over the years continued at a regular pace. A total of seventeen vessels were produced from 1820 to 1861, beginning with the *Bazaleel Wells* in 1820 and ending with the *Union* in 1861. Eleven of these boats were manufactured during the 1830s (Table 2). All of these vessels were side-wheelers. Their quality of construction seems to have been such that they survived well within their anticipated life spans. While about five years was the average life span of the early riverboats, Steubenville boats averaged a little more than six years, with the *Bazaleel Wells*'s tenure being shortest at two years and the *Anna Calhoun* and *Superior* the longest at ten years. All had moderate tonnages, a matter of necessity because of their construction. "The accepted style of those early steamboats was sixty to ninety-foot keel, fourteen to sixteen-foot beam, three to four-foot open hold in which the boilers were placed, side-wheeler with a single engine and cabin on the first floor."<sup>21</sup>

The *Robert Thompson*, also constructed in Steubenville, was like the *Wells* in that its

18. Ibid., October 2, 1830.

19. Ibid., August 15, 1832.

20. Doyle, *Steubenville and Jefferson County*, 229.

21. Ibid., 220.

**Table 2**  
**Steubenville Boats Produced, 1820–1861**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Tons</i>	<i>Year Built</i>	<i>First Home Port</i>	<i>Final Disposition*</i>
<i>Andrew Jackson</i>	98	1833	Cincinnati	L, 1838
<i>Anna Calhoun</i>	133	1835	Cincinnati	A, 1845
<i>Bonaparte</i>	185	1837	New Orleans	A, 1842
<i>Chippewa</i>	150	1832	Pittsburgh	L, 1841
<i>Bazaleel Wells (Hero)</i>	126	1820	Louisville	L, 1822
<i>Lady Byron</i>	90	1830	Pittsburgh	A, 1837
<i>Niagara</i>	121	1829	Pittsburgh	L, 1834
<i>Pan Handle</i>	46	1854	Wheeling	A, 1861
<i>Post Boy</i>	43	1833	Pittsburgh	A, 1838
<i>Reporter</i>	134	1836	Pittsburgh	A, 1842
<i>Southron</i>	133	1834	Apalachicola	W, 1863
<i>Steubenville</i>	148	1823	New Orleans	A, 1829
<i>Steubenville</i>	45	1836	Pittsburgh	A, 1840
<i>Superior</i>	74	1822	New Orleans	L, 1832
<i>Tallyho</i>	142	1830	Nashville	A, 1835
<i>Union</i>	44	1861	Wheeling	A, 1868
<i>Wacousta</i>	98	1834	Pittsburgh	A, 1841

\* L = Lost; A = Abandoned and/or Dismantled; W = Sold to U.S. War Department

Compiled by the author from William M. Lytle, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States, 1807–1868* (Mystic, Conn., 1952).

construction was a joint effort: she had a hull of sixty-five feet in length, a beam of eleven feet, with a three-foot hold. The hull was built at Wellsville, Ohio, at the boatyard of Robert Skillinger, who had opened his yard in 1815.<sup>22</sup> After construction, the hull was then floated to Steubenville where it was fitted out with cabin and machinery. The *Robert Thompson* was also credited with having the first double-flue boiler on the river.<sup>23</sup>

Historian J. Doyle felt that the *Robert Thompson* was the first vessel to enter the Arkansas River.<sup>24</sup> This has been disputed by Louis C. Hunter who noted that “the first steamboat to *ascend* the Arkansas River was the second *Comet* (154 tons, built 1817), which, in 1820, succeeded in reaching Arkansas Post, fifty miles above the mouth.”<sup>25</sup> Perhaps the distinction is between “enter” and “ascend.” While this controversy may be difficult to

22. Horace Mack, *History of Columbiana County, Ohio with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Pioneers* (Philadelphia, 1879), 278.

23. Doyle, *Steubenville and Jefferson County*, 222.

24. Ibid.

25. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers*, 51.

resolve, Doyle goes on to recount that the *Thompson* left Steubenville in February 1822 “for the purpose of transporting 300 tons of army stores to Fort Smith, Ark.” “She was the first boat above Little Rock, made four trips from Montgomery Point to Fort Smith, and left Little Rock, July 4, on her last downward trip.”<sup>26</sup> Doyle also credits the Murray boatyard with contributing the *U.S. Mail*, built about 1830 and commanded by Captain Peter A. Dohrman of Steubenville, and the *Phaeton*, built at Steubenville in the late 1800s.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Middle Years*

A major shift in Steubenville’s relationship to steamboating is evident in the records of the 1840s; no steamboat construction is attributed to Steubenville throughout that decade. One reason for this lack of riverboat production may have been Elijah Murray’s departure from Steubenville in 1838 to open a new boatyard.<sup>28</sup>

Murray arrived at a place that would eventually be named after him, the town of Murraysville, Virginia (now West Virginia), where he would establish his boatyard in 1838. Murray managed the boatyard “until about 1840 at which time he sold his interest in the facility to Robert W. Skillinger and John Roberts.” Murray then moved to Paducah where he died.<sup>29</sup> As noted earlier, Robert Skillinger was a boat builder from Wellsville, Ohio, who had worked with Murray on at least one other riverboat, the *Robert Thompson*.

While the Steubenville boatyard may have

ceased being productive, during the 1840s individuals and facilities assumed important roles in Steubenville’s contribution to steamboating. Two more captains, Alex Norton and M. E. Lucas, became prominent in the trade. Captain Norton commanded the *Western World*, which was built for him at Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, in 1848. She ran the Pittsburgh–New Orleans route. Meanwhile, Captain M. E. Lucas took out the *Mary Stephens* in 1847 following her completion at Wheeling. In 1848, he took over the *Zachary Taylor*, which he also owned, and piloted her on the Pittsburgh–Wheeling run.<sup>30</sup>

Steubenville also saw the establishment of a wharfboat in 1841–1842. Wharfboats, which were introduced around 1840 but did not become common until after the Civil War,<sup>31</sup> were vessels that were moored at the wharf to serve as transfer points for both passengers and freight arriving and departing at a landing. They may have had a waiting room for passengers. In this context, Steubenville was an early adopter of their use. The wharfboat was established by Captain Whittaker O’Neal, with Alex Doyle as one of its early officers.<sup>32</sup>

Once established, a series of wharfboats continued to serve the city for nearly one hundred years. Receipts and orders at the Jefferson County Historical Association and the Inland Rivers Library of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County indicate an active trade through the wharfboat. In 1856, David Myers was listed as wharfmaster in the Steubenville directory.<sup>33</sup> The *Ohio Press* for

26. Doyle, *Steubenville and Jefferson County*, 223.

27. *Ibid.*, 228.

28. Caldwell, *Belmont and Jefferson Counties*, 489.

29. Daniel Bonar, “A Brief History of Murraysville, W.V. and its Boatyard,” *S & D Reflector*, 39 (September, 2002), 6–9.

30. Frederick Way Jr., *Way’s Packet Directory, 1848–1994* (Athens, Ohio, 1994).

31. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers*, 352.

32. Caldwell, *Belmont and Jefferson Counties*, 489.

33. *Williams Steubenville Directory, 1856*.



Friday, September 5, 1879, carried a brief article regarding Charles Staples as architect for a new wharfboat being constructed at the Washington Street Landing.<sup>34</sup> In that same year, the wharfmaster was Captain George O'Neal.<sup>35</sup> In 1893, a new wharfboat would be built at Brownsville, Pennsylvania, and brought to Steubenville. The new manager was to be Captain Logan Noll who had formerly had an interest in the Steubenville-East Liverpool packet *Olivette*.<sup>36</sup>

The 1850s were, along with the 1840s, low decades for riverboat construction in Steubenville. Only the *Panhandle*, built in 1854, was constructed during the period. A growing number of captains from Steubenville continued to play an active role on the rivers, however. While the O'Neal and Batchelor families mentioned earlier appear to have made up a considerable part of the Steubenville contribution to steamboating during the middle 1800s, there were at least twenty-three persons from Steubenville identified as captains on Ohio River vessels (Table 3).

### Civil War Era

The onset of the Civil War initiated a depression throughout the riverboat industry. The Union blockade at Cairo, Illinois, followed by the Confederate blockade at Vicksburg, Mississippi, effectively severed long-established north-south trade patterns. Idle vessels languished at their wharves in all river towns. This depression ended quickly when Union forces created demand by renting and chartering riverboats; vessels were desperately needed to move troops and supplies. By August 1861, the first use of boats

**Table 3**  
**Riverboat Captains from Steubenville, Ohio**

CAPTAIN	BOAT(S) ON WHICH SERVED
Batchelor, Alonzo F.	<i>Carrie Jacobs</i>
Batchelor, C. W.	<i>Hibernia #2, Allegheny, Allegheny Bell #3</i>
Batchelor, F. Y.	<i>Darling</i>
Batchelor, J. W.	<i>W. I. Maclay</i>
Devenny, John S.	<i>Silver Lake #2, Arctic, Utah, Post Boy</i>
Devenny, H. H.	<i>North Carolina, Nora</i>
Dohrman, George A.	<i>Robert Thompson</i>
Dohrman, Peter A.	<i>U.S. Mail</i>
Doyle, Basil W.	<i>Eclipse, Forest City</i>
Edie, John A.	<i>Forest City, later named Abner O'Neal</i>
Lucas, M.E.	<i>U.S. Mail, Mary Stephens, Zachary Taylor, Post Boy</i>
McDonald, Thomas J.	<i>Junietta # 2</i>
Murray, Elijah	<i>Bazaleel Wells</i>
Norton, Alex	<i>Western World</i>
O'Neal, Abner	<i>Veroca, Syllas Wright, James Means</i>
O'Neal, George E.	<i>Abner O'Neal, Silver Wave, T. M. Bayne</i>
O'Neal, James	<i>James Howard</i>
Reynolds, Henry K.	<i>Arctic</i>
Scull, Spence F.	unknown
Sheperd, A. S.	<i>South America</i>
Shouse, John	<i>Citizen, Clipper #2</i>
Stewart, William	unknown
Wintringer, Nate	<i>Eclipse</i>

Compiled by the author from Frederic Way Jr., *Way's Packet Dictionary 1848-1994* (Athens, Ohio, 1994); J. A. Caldwell, *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio* (Wheeling, 1880); *Waterways Journal*, May 2, 1896, p. 10, and April 23, 1898, p. 5, and July 11, 1896, p. 5-6; *1850 City Directory* (Steubenville); J. Doyle, *Twentieth Century History of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1910); *Pictorial History of Jefferson and Harrison Counties* (Steubenville, 1994).

34. *Ohio Press*, September 5, 1879.

35. Caldwell, *Belmont and Jefferson County*, 489.

36. *Waterways Journal*, December 2, 1893, 15.

**Table 4**  
**Vessels Chartered From Steubenville Captains**

VESSEL	CHARTER DATES	COST	CHARTERED FROM
<i>Emma Duncan</i>	1/14/1863 – 3/17/1863	\$200/day	F. Y. Batchelor
<i>Navigator</i>	3/28/1863 – 4/9/1863	\$140/day	J. Shouse
<i>Norman</i>	4/9/1863 – 4/30/1863	\$160/day	J. W. Batchelor
<i>Carrie Jacobs</i>	4/19/1863 – 6/1/1863	\$175/day	*NOT LISTED
<i>Sunnyside</i>	10/11/1863 – 10/12/1863	\$275/day	S. J. Batchelor
<i>Nora</i>	8/16/1864 – 1/1/1865	\$75/day	H. H. Devenny
<i>Navigator</i>	3/24/1865 – 7/14/1865	\$205/day	F. Y. Batchelor
<i>New York</i>	6/4/1865 – 11/3/1865	\$220/day	J. Shouse
<i>Giudon</i>	6/16/1865 – 7/28/1865	\$205/day	J. W. Batchelor

\*While there is no listed "Chartered From" for the *Carrie Jacobs*, she is included here because of her association with Captain Alonzo Batchelor.

Compiled by the author from U.S. 40th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set 1346.

to transport masses of troops was underway.<sup>37</sup> To secure the needed vessels, federal authorities issued contracts and charters. Steubenville captains were involved in this practice throughout the War (Table 4).

Most of the vessels were chartered for about \$200 per day, with extreme exceptions being the *Nora* at \$75 per day and the *Sunnyside* at \$275 per day. This disparity may have been based on vessel size or the immediacy of the need. The *Nora* was chartered for a comparatively long time, while the *Sunnyside* was chartered for one day only.<sup>38</sup>

Chartering was followed later in the war by reinvigorated construction activities. The *Cincinnati Gazette* for June 1863 noted 105 boats being built along the river (Ohio) from

Pittsburgh to Wheeling.<sup>39</sup> Steubenville did not share in this construction activity to any great extent, however, as only the *Union* was built during the war (Table 5).

During the Civil War, several Steubenville captains saw combat service. John S. Devenny commanded the *Silver Lake #2*,<sup>40</sup> and Stanton Batchelor commanded the *Emma Duncan*. C. W. Batchelor wrote an extensive article in *Waterways Journal* discussing his shipping activities, which included the construction of the riverboat *Emma Duncan* in 1860. The *Duncan*, a light draft sidewheeler sold to the government during the war, was for some time commanded by Stanton Batchelor who saw service on the Cumberland River from the Ohio River to Nashville.<sup>41</sup>

37. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers*, 548.

38. U.S. 40th Congress, 2nd Session, Serial Set 1346, table entitled "Vessels Bought, Sold and Chartered by the United States."

39. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers*, 549.

40. Caldwell, *Belmont and Jefferson Counties*, 458.

41. *Waterways Journal*, July 11, 1896, 5–6.

**Table 5**  
**Vessels Built at Steubenville**

VESSEL NAME	YEAR BUILT	TONS
<i>Congress</i>	NL	NL
<i>Phaeton</i>	NL	NL
<i>Van Buren</i>	NL	NL
<i>Volunteer</i>	NL	NL
<i>Mercury</i>	1819	15
<i>Hero (Bazaleel Wells)</i>	1820	126
<i>Robert Thompson</i>	1821	NL
<i>Superior</i>	1822	74
<i>Steubenville</i>	1823	148
<i>Aurora</i>	1825	150
<i>Niagara</i>	1829	121
<i>Lady Byron</i>	1830	90
<i>Tallyho</i>	1830	142
<i>U.S. Mail</i>	1831	NL
<i>Chippewa</i>	1832	150
<i>Andrew Jackson</i>	1833	98
<i>Post Boy</i>	1833	43
<i>Southron</i>	1834	133
<i>Wacousta</i>	1834	98
<i>Anna Calhoun</i>	1835	133
<i>Reporter</i>	1836	134
<i>Steubenville</i>	1836	45
<i>Bonaparte</i>	1837	185
<i>Pan Handle</i>	1854	46
<i>Union</i>	1861	44
<i>Rebecca</i>	1868	32
<i>76</i>	1876	56
<i>Maggie</i>	1879	NL
<i>Sherrard</i>	1886	NL
<i>Nathaniel</i>	1887	NL

NL = not listed in sources

Compiled by the author from J. Doyle, *Twentieth Century History of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1910); *Centennial Souvenir of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio, 1797–1897*; *Waterways Journal*, January 12, 1895, 9; James Hall, *Statistics of the West at the Close of the Year 1836*, 252–263 (Cincinnati, 1836); William M. Lytle, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States, 1807–1868* (Mystic, Conn., 1952); Frederick Way Jr., *Way's Packet Directory, 1848–1994* (Athens, Ohio, 1994).

### *Post–Civil War Years*

Following the Civil War, the Steubenville boatyard reopened as a sawmill under other owners, and in 1867 it burnt again. After passing through the hands of several other owners, it eventually became Staples boatyard, named after the new owner Charles H. Staples. Staples, born in 1846 at New Market in Harrison County, came to Steubenville in 1872 where he engaged in boat building and the lumber business on Water Street near the C and P Depot.<sup>42</sup> He is credited as being the architect for a new wharfboat built at Steubenville in 1879, and for building the 76 in 1876 when it went into service on Wells and Barrets ferry, and the *Maggie* in 1879.<sup>43</sup>

The five vessels built during the post–Civil War period were ferryboats. (See Table 5, which provides also a chronological perspective on the long-term boat-building activities at Steubenville.) While we cannot determine the first home port for these vessels, we can determine, from *Way's Packet Directory, 1848–1994*, their dimensions and/or tonnage: *Rebecca* (21 tons), 76 (56 tons; 85' x 20' x 4'), *Maggie* (79' x 17' x 4.5'), *Sherrard* (73.5' x 18' x 2.9'), and *Nathaniel* (85' x 20' x 3.9').<sup>44</sup>

Some barges may also have been built. Eighteen-eighty records indicate that in Jefferson County, Ohio, eight vessels were built with a total tonnage of 1,447 and a value of \$9,000.<sup>45</sup> The value of barges in 1880 ranged from \$1,000 to \$1,300, which suggests that barges were the items constructed.<sup>46</sup> Support comes from a news item in the September 1879 *Ohio Press* that reported a

42. Caldwell, *Belmont and Jefferson Counties*, 511.

43. *Ibid.*, 469.

44. Way, *Way's Packet Directory*, 1994.

45. Hall, *Ship-Building Industry*, 257.

46. *Ibid.*, 187.

new barge 120' x 20' was turned out by Staples sawmill, and that the mill had orders for a number of the same.<sup>47</sup>

Riverboats, however, did not seem to be the order of the day for the Staples yard. In a brief comment about a month later (October 3, 1879) the *Ohio Press* called for some enterprising person to “come forth and open a boatyard of large scale.”<sup>48</sup> Apparently no one did “come forth” on a large scale. The *Maggie* in 1879, the *Sherrard* in 1886, and *Nathaniel* in 1887 were the last riverboats produced.

As the boatbuilding business declined, however, Steubenville’s rivermen became more widely involved in business, commerce, and government. (Steubenville vessel owners are shown in Table 6.) Following the Civil War, Captain Alex Norton moved to New Orleans where he ran a boat store and commission business.<sup>49</sup> By the time he died, Captain James O’Neal had been master for the Valley Line between St. Louis and New Orleans, had been appointed Supervisory Inspector of Steamboats for the St. Louis District during the Cleveland Administration, and finally had become owner of the Park Hotel in Salem, Illinois.<sup>50</sup> In March of 1865, Captain Henry H. Devenny was appointed by President Lincoln as Supervising Inspector of Steam Vessels, a position he held for thirty years.<sup>51</sup>

During the late 1870s, Steubenville rivermen took their experience and expertise to the Missouri River. As early as 1857, M. E. Lucas of Steubenville had taken the *U.S. Mail* to Atcheson, Kansas, where she was snagged

on a submerged log and sank. While not an auspicious beginning, Lucas’s foray to the Missouri in search of wider trade was followed by other Steubenville natives after the Civil War. In 1877–1878, Captain C. W. Batchelor (who had taken a business position in Pittsburgh) built the *F. Y. Batchelor*. Named for his deceased brother, it was built in Pittsburgh for the trading firm of Leighton and Jordan, which was doing business on the Missouri at Forts Buford and Keogh and the Poplar River Agency. Captain Batchelor was noted as being an “eastern partner” of the firm. On May 9, 1878, the *F. Y. Batchelor* cleared Pittsburgh, bound for the Missouri, with Captain Grant Marsh in command.<sup>52</sup> Captain C. W. Batchelor, incidentally, was so highly regarded on the Missouri River that he was called upon to act as host for the occasion when the great Indian Chief Sitting Bull made a visit to Bismarck, North Dakota.<sup>53</sup>

### *Concluding Years of Boatbuilding*

The 1870s began a period of decline in the importance of riverboats to Steubenville. This decline in boatbuilding, and indeed in the ties of Steubenville to river traffic, was evident in the news coverage. By the late 1870s the *Steubenville Evening Gazette* was no longer running a “river news” column on a regular basis, and by 1880 a similar column in the *Ohio Press* was much reduced.

In retrospect, several events led to the decline of Steubenville’s role in steamboat building and captaining. Beginning in 1856,

47. *Ohio Press*, September 12, 1879.

48. *Ibid.*, October 3, 1879.

49. Way, *Way’s Packet Directory*, 1994.

50. *Waterways Journal*, September 16, 1899, p. 8.

51. *Centennial Souvenir of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio 1797–1897*, 176.

52. Joseph Hanson, *The Conquest of the Missouri* (New York, 1946), 389.

53. Thomas Myhra, “The Social Significance of Steamboatmen on Early Bismarck,” *North Dakota History*, 30 (1963), 73–95.

**Table 6**  
**Vessels With Steubenville Owners**

BOAT	OWNER
<i>Bazaleel Wells</i> (1820)	Captain Wells
<i>Southerner</i> (1840)	William Stewart
<i>Mary Stephens</i> (1847)	Captain M. E. Lucas
<i>Western World</i> (1848)	Captain Alex Norton
<i>Zachary Taylor</i> (1848)	Captain M. E. Lucas
<i>Eclipse</i> (1854)	George Moore (VA), Bazil Doyle
<i>Forest City</i> (1865)	B. W. Doyle, Abner O'Neal, Nate Wintringer (later, John A. Edie bought Doyle interest)
<i>Abner O'Neal</i> (1875)	Abner O'Neal and Nate Wintringer
<i>Abner O'Neal</i> (1884)	Nate Wintringer and George O'Neal

Compiled by the author from Frederick Way Jr., *Way's Packet Dictionary 1848–1994* (Athens, Ohio, 1994); J. A. Caldwell, *History of Belmont and Jefferson Counties, Ohio* (Wheeling, 1880); *Waterways Journal*, May 2, 1896, p. 10, and April 23, 1898, p. 5, and July 11, 1896, p. 5–6; *1850 City Directory* (Steubenville); J. Doyle, *Twentieth Century History of Steubenville and Jefferson County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1910); *Pictorial History of Jefferson and Harrison Counties* (Steubenville, 1994).

Frazier, Kilgore and Co. established Steubenville's first ironworks, initiating what was to become an important aspect of the local economy. Certainly as a source of employment it eclipsed anything that boatbuilding could provide. Additionally, the growth of the railroads by the 1860s provided both employment and means of transportation that the steamboat could not match. The increased safety and flexibility of location also gave the railroads a competitive advantage compared to steamboats. Thus, the stage was set for the demise of a once important element of the local economy.

Exactly when boatbuilding ended in Steubenville is difficult to determine. *Way's Packet Directory* has the *Nathaniel* being built in 1887, and that is the last vessel noted as being built in Steubenville. Certainly the heyday of the type of vessel traditionally built at Steubenville (side-wheelers) had passed. Hunter notes that by 1860 "stern-wheelers [outnumbered] side-wheelers more than four to one" at Pittsburgh, and goes on to say that, "the technical improvement of the stern-wheel steamboat took place principally in the twenty years following the Civil War."<sup>54</sup> Thus, Steubenville riverboat construction, devoted to side-wheelers, came to an end. As a somewhat sad commentary on the whole steamboat episode, while a Steubenville centennial volume of 1897 devoted several pages to Steubenville boatbuilding and riverboat activities, a 1911 review proudly commented on the city's glass, iron, steel, and pottery industries. The authors made no mention of boatbuilding.<sup>55</sup>

54. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers*, 174.

55. Steubenville Chamber of Commerce, *Steubenville, Ohio* (Steubenville, 1911).