

# VESSELS ON THE INLAND SEAS

## Propellers, Steamships, Brigs, and Schooners Mentioned in Seattle Public Library's "Scrap Book of Picture Cards"

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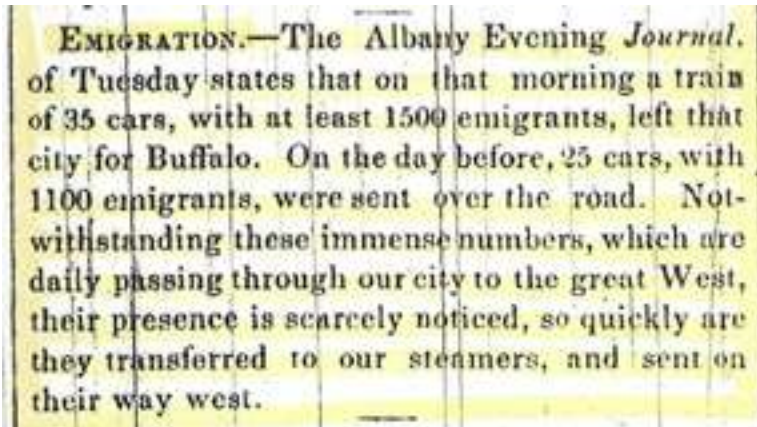
*Bucephalus. Ogontz. Queen of the West.* The names themselves evoke curiosity. These ships once pranced on the waves of the Great Lakes. Hauling grains, coal, lumber, foodstuffs, and people, the wooden crafts connected the cities of Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Toledo, and smaller ports in Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin to each other, as well as to the rest of the world. Their existence was vital to the westward-expanding economy of the United States. Their presence in the water brought adventure to the seamen, joy to the merchants, and calm repose to observers on the shores and on the passenger decks.

One of those observers, who sailed from Buffalo to Chicago and back (a distance of more than 2,100 miles), reported in 1847 that more than 700 vessels were navigating the Great Lakes. This journalist, Thurlow Weed, produced a detailed but very readable account of his journey.



Map by Evelyn M. Roehl

He described his excursion as having "most auspicious weather" with "stunning" and "striking" views. Yet, he lamented, "our Government refuses to recognize this great interest as a part of the Commerce of the Republic!"<sup>1</sup>



EMIGRATION.—The Albany Evening Journal, of Tuesday states that on that morning a train of 35 cars, with at least 1500 emigrants, left that city for Buffalo. On the day before, 25 cars, with 1100 emigrants, were sent over the road. Notwithstanding these immense numbers, which are daily passing through our city to the great West, their presence is scarcely noticed, so quickly are they transferred to our steamers, and sent on their way west.

Today, many genealogy researchers are unaware of how significant Great Lakes transportation was for expanding settlement in the midwestern United States. Mr. Weed's newspaper, the Albany Evening Journal, in 1854 described a 35-car train leaving that city for Buffalo with

at least 1,500 emigrants, and the day before, 1,100 emigrants departed on a 25-car train. The editor of the Buffalo paper added, "Notwithstanding these immense numbers, which are daily passing through our city to the great West, their presence is scarcely noticed, so quickly are they transferred to our steamers, and sent on their way west."<sup>2</sup> (Five of my immigrant ancestors arrived in New York that year, then settled in Minnesota—quite likely among the throngs of others, who may have considered a transfer in Buffalo as we would a stopover at O'Hare.)

The year 1854 is also when an accounting ledger was kept of 80-plus ships sailing into or out of the port of Buffalo, New York. Turned into a scrapbook some twenty years later, its pages are obscured by picture cards; the most readable lines showed names of boats and dates. Much of the handwritten text is hard to interpret, being filled with cryptic abbreviations and numbers. Names of cities can occasionally be deciphered, along with some companies and individuals. Deposits of checks and currency were noted, but what the payments were for remains a mystery.

Take an entry for *Bucephalus*, for example. Named for the famed war horse of Alexander the Great, this 169-foot-long propeller was built in 1852 at Perrysburg, Ohio, to carry nearly 500 tons. Three Buffalo businessmen owned shares in this craft.<sup>3</sup> The Scrapbook ledger has readable entries for this propeller, for May 20 (pictured) and November 23, 1854. In June 1854, while stranded on a beach at Lake Huron, all the corn and flour aboard got soaked.<sup>4</sup> After being dry-docked in Detroit, the *Bucephalus* resumed its duties.<sup>5</sup>



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Mechanical breakdowns, collisions, and shipwrecks were common, the latter of course being the impetus for sea chanties and paperback novels. The *Ogontz* (whose namesake was reportedly a Chippewa Indian<sup>6</sup>) plowed into *Undine*, an Erie Canal boat, at 4 A.M. on September 1,<sup>7</sup> but the newspaper didn't mention whether this was due to a sleepy pilot or the lack of light. The captain of the steamer *Ocean* advised the *Cleveland Herald* that no light was functioning at Point au Pelee.<sup>8</sup> Events such as these may have prompted the U.S. House of Representatives to consider and/or pass appropriations bills for improving harbors. One proposal budgeted between \$10,000 and \$28,000 for each of the following Great Lakes cities: Ashtabula, Cleveland, Conneaut, Fairport, and Sandusky, Ohio; and Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, and Sheboygan, Wisconsin<sup>9</sup> —all ports mentioned in the Scrapbook ledger.

**PORTS LISTED IN SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S "SCRAP BOOK OF PICTURE CARDS"**

(Words in square brackets [ ] indicate information deduced or estimated from other or adjacent entries.)

<b>CANADA / ONTARIO</b>	<b>ILLINOIS</b>	<b>MICHIGAN</b>	<b>NEW YORK</b>
Canada (general), Dunnville, Port Dover, [Port] Rowan, Port Stanley	Chicago, Waukegan	Detroit, Grand Haven, Monroe	Chippewa [Chippewa Bay?], New York [City]
<b>OHIO</b>	<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>	<b>WISCONSIN</b>	
Ashtabula, Cleveland, Conneaut, Fairport Sandusky, Toledo	Erie	Green Bay, Kenosha, Milwaukee, Port Washington, Racine, Sheboygan	

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One steamship frequently cited in the Scrapbook ledger, *Queen of the West*, made regular trips from May to October between Buffalo and Cleveland with passengers and freight. Considered a favorite, the Buffalo newspaper reporters described it as "always a beauty, look[ing] as handsome as ever," "comfortable and elegant," and "thoroughly maintained."<sup>10</sup> They weren't biased, however, when a Canadian craft pulled into the harbor one morning. "A stranger, the steamer *Plough Boy*, Capt. HOLLYWOOD, from Port Stanley, . . . is a fine trim looking craft."<sup>11</sup> The Scrapbook ledger has seven entries for *Plough Boy* (or *Plow Boy*).



## LEE FAMILY CONNECTIONS

As mentioned in the "Journey" and "Lee Ancestry" chapters, George Waith Lee's father, Franklin (Frank) Lee, as well as his uncles Charles H. and James Lee, and first cousin once removed, Uriah D. Lee, were all part owners in various vessels. The firm Lee, Abell & Co., comprised of Frank Lee and his

brother-in-law, William H. Abell, handled freight, such as butter, potatoes, cheese, eggs, and pork products. They also apparently booked passage on propellers for the Buffalo, Sandusky and Toledo Line, which had daily runs, as well as the People's Line<sup>12</sup>, which had tri-weekly runs between Buffalo, Milwaukee, and Chicago. Not surprisingly, the names of the vessels in those shipping lines frequently appeared in the Scrapbook ledger.



## VESSELS AND RAILROADS MENTIONED IN SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY'S "SCRAP BOOK OF PICTURE CARDS"

Boat *A. Noxon*

Steamer *Buckeye State*

Buffalo & Niagara Falls Railroad

Boat *C. B. Andrews*

Brig *Castalia*

Propeller *Charter [Oak]*

Steamer *Crescent City*

Propeller *Bucephalus*

Propeller *Buffalo*

B & S L [Buffalo & State Line] Railroad

Boat *C H Lee*

Propeller *Cataract*

Steamer *Clifton*

Boat *D. K. Neal*

Schooner *Dahlin*  
Propeller *Detroit*  
Steamer *Dover*  
Boat *F. Babcock*  
Schooner *Fair Wind*  
Propeller *Fintry*  
Propeller *Gem*  
Propeller *General Taylor*  
Boat *Geraldine*  
Steamer *Golden Gate*  
Schooner *H. F. Jones*  
Boat *Hiram*  
Propeller *Illinois*  
Boat *J. Ketchum*  
Boat *Jas Noxon*  
Boat *Jesse Hoyt*  
Boat *Lp Bauhydt*  
Steamer *May Flower*  
Propeller *Milwaukee*  
Boat *N. N. Halstead*  
Propeller *Nile*  
Steamer *Northern Indiana*  
Steamer *Ocean*  
Steamer *Ohio*  
Propeller *Oriental*  
Schooner *Pearl*  
Propeller *Plymouth*  
Propeller *Pocahontas*  
Steamer *Queen City*  
Boat *R. L. Williams*  
Schooner *Rebecca*  
Boat *Rosamond*  
Steamer *Saint Lawrence*  
Steamer *Southern Michigan*  
Propeller *Toledo*  
Boat *U. D. Lee*  
Boat *W McGraw[?]*  
Propeller *Westmoreland*

Boat *David Dows*  
Steamer *Diamond*  
Steamer *Empire State*  
Propeller *F. W. Backus*  
Propeller *Falcon*  
Schooner *G S Williams*  
Steamer *General Scott*  
Boat *Geo Lewis*  
Boat *Gertrude*  
Boat *H. McBride*  
Schooner *Helen Kent*  
Steamer *Hudson*  
Propeller *International*  
Boat *J. B. Herrick*  
Propeller *Jefferson*  
Schooner *Lewis Cass*  
Propeller *May Flower*  
Steamer *Michigan*  
Steamer *Mississippi*  
Propeller *Niagara*  
Schooner *North Star*  
Propeller *Northern Michigan*  
Propeller *Ogontz*  
Propeller *Omar Pasha*  
Steamer *Oxford*  
Steamer *Plough Boy*  
Steamer *Plymouth Rock*  
Schooner *Puritan*  
Steamer *Queen of the West*  
Boat *R. S. Herder*  
S\_\_\_ *Rich<sup>d</sup> M*\_\_\_\_  
Boat *S Beckwith*  
Propeller *Sciota*  
Brig *Sultan*  
Propeller *Troy*  
Boat *W. K. Belcher*  
Steamer *Western World*

**SHIPPING STATISTICS FOR  
SELECT PORTS IN THE UNITED STATES<sup>13</sup>**  
*Fiscal Year ending 30 June 1851*

**TONNAGE SHIPPED**

<u>District</u>	<u>Coasting Trade</u>	<u>Aggregate Tonnage</u>	<u>Steam Navigation</u>
<b>Buffalo Creek</b> (Buffalo, NY)	43,603.13	43,603.13	19,983.56
<b>Chicago, IL</b>	23,103.45	23,103.45	706.79
<b>Milwaukee, WI</b>	2,946.10	2,946.10	286.80
<b>Cuyahoga, OH</b> [Cleveland]	36,070.50	36,070.50	11,355.36
<b>Sandusky, OH</b>	4,858.38	4,858.38	73.35
<b>Detroit, MI</b>	40,319.46	40,319.46	21,944.17
<b>Michilimackinac, MI</b> [Mackinaw]	1,409.34	1,455.40	--

**AMERICAN AND FOREIGN VESSELS  
CLEARED FROM EACH DISTRICT FOR FOREIGN COUNTRIES**

		<u>Ships</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>	<u>Crew</u>	(men and boys)
<b>Buffalo</b>	<i>American:</i>	207	28,121	2,016	
	<i>Foreign:</i>	<u>459</u>	<u>70,859</u>	<u>5,248</u>	
		666	98,980	7,264	Total
<b>Cuyahoga</b>	<i>American:</i>	142	16,501	835	
	<i>Foreign:</i>	<u>88</u>	<u>10,197</u>	<u>546</u>	
		230	26,698	1,381	Total
<b>Sandusky</b>	<i>American:</i>	14	2,219	85	
	<i>Foreign:</i>	<u>11</u>	<u>1,669</u>	<u>76</u>	
		25	3,888	161	Total
<b>Detroit</b>	<i>American:</i>	47	5,932	283	
	<i>Foreign:</i>	<u>416</u>	<u>42,822</u>	<u>3,469</u>	
		463	48,754	3,752	Total
<b>Michili- mackinac</b>	<i>American:</i>	13	1,323	82	
	<i>Foreign:</i>	<u>16</u>	<u>2,280</u>	<u>229</u>	
		29	3,603	311	Total
<b>Chicago</b>	<i>American:</i>	8	2,093	82	
	<i>Foreign:</i>	<u>1</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>9</u>	
		9	2,308	91	Total

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Fergus, compiler, "Thurlow Weed's Account," *Chicago River-and-Harbor Convention: An account of Its Origin and Proceedings*. (Chicago: Fergus Printing Company, 1882), 167 and 169.

<sup>2</sup> *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N.Y., Thursday, 25 May 1854, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>3</sup> "US Enrolments: Bucephalus," *Maritime History of the Great Lakes*, (<http://www.hhpl.on.ca/GreatLakes/scripts/enrolment/Enrolment.asp?EventID=5305> : accessed on 8 October 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Propeller Ashore, "Marine Intelligence," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N. Y., Saturday, 24 June 1854, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>5</sup> "Marine Intelligence," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N. Y., Saturday, 1 July 1854, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>6</sup> "Heman Oviatt," Rootsweb.com (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.co/~randall/html/nti02538.htm>: accessed on 11 December 2009).

<sup>7</sup> *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N. Y., Friday, 1 September 1854, p. 2, col. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N. Y., Saturday, 22 July 1854, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>9</sup> "River and Harbor Bill," *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N. Y., Friday, 14 July 1854, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N. Y., Monday, 15 May 1854, p. 2, col. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, N. Y., Thursday, 24 May 1854, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Advertisements published in *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo, New York, Tuesday, June 20, 1854, page 4, columns 6 and 7.

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<sup>13</sup> John Hayward. *A Gazetteer of the United States of America* (Hartford, CT: Case, Tiffany and Company, 1853), 837, 840-841.