
Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation

July 18, 2013

History

Early Steamboats On Pecatonica River Part 13 of 15

The Freeport Motor Boat Club built a clubhouse and dock just west of the Cedarville Bridge on the north bank after Geo. Yoder's boat dockage across the river was short of space about 1911. They built a twenty by thirty foot clubhouse with clubroom, kitchen and locker room. This structure was built on posts so as to be above high water. They also had a floating dock and the space between the posts was used to store smaller boats in the winter. This was boarded up with doors on the front. The boats were launched or pulled out of the water by means of tackle hung from the bridge. The clubhouse was the scene of many parties for the members and their families. In the winter skating parties were held, ice permitting. The club also had a cabin about seven miles upstream for camping and picnics. In 1927 the building was moved upstream to the bend about one quarter of a mile. By 1930 the club disbanded as most of the members owned autos and lost interest in river boating and their boats were getting old. The clubhouse was sold and is still used as a residence. Members in early years included: Fred Altmeier, Otto Altmeier, Clarence Bolsar, Leonard Carter, Edward Engelhaedt, William Engelhardt, Ira Law, James Lilley, George A. Martin, William J. Martin, Edward Memsenkamp, Clarence B. Molter, Julian L. Molter, and Charles Ott.

The club members owned several boats, which were at times sold and replaced. They were fifteen to twenty feet long and were powered with various sizes of inboard gasoline engines. The largest boat was built and owned by William J. Martin. It was powered with a twelve HP two cylinder two-cycle engine and was named the "Disturber." The next largest was the "Restless" which was powered with a Gray engine of eleven HP – two cylinder – two cycle, built with a reverse gear, owned by Clarence B. Molter. This was one of three boats owned at different times by this man. The first was a Mullins steel boat with a three HP Ferro engine, afterwards sold to another member and then sold for used below the dam. It was traded back to another member and finally again sold below the dam where it capsized, drowning the owner. After the Restless was sold it was replaced by another Mullins steel boat. These steel boats were named "Mosquito I and Mosquito II. The Mosquito II was the last inboard boat to run on the river after the dam went out in 1931. Due to rusting out of the hull and so many broken propellers caused by striking bottom and snags and debris cleaned out of the river.

The motorboat club made many trips to the Farmers' Picnic held in those days at Phillip's Grove at Damascus. Some of the boats went up the river to Fisher's Dam above McConnell when water was not too low. Edgar Eelis, who lived in Winslow at the time, owned a steam powered launch could run from Fisher's Mill dam to Martintown dam. The names of some of the other boats in the club were Babs, Bunny, Disturber, Gypsy, Comfort, Nimrod, Never and Marine. Other persons who had motor boats on the river at various times were Thomas Rockey, Edward Bushelie, Sr., Robert Eberie, John A. Clark, Red Haines, Martin Kroer, and the Balles Brothers who owned the largest boat built by Charles Klein, named Damfino.

Continued.