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# Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation

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June 20, 2013

## History

### Early Steamboats On Pecatonica River Part 12 of 15

Next was the Eureka Club and boathouse, still below the bridge. It owned a large boat, which was sold to be used below the dams and in its place bought one of Charles Klein's boats. This boat capsized in high water just below Harlem Bridge with six men aboard, three of whom drowned –Kaiser, Sweeney and Cramer. A man named Schmedes floated ashore hanging on to a beer keg-he couldn't swim a stroke! Charles Klein built a number of boats and gasoline engines. One of his larger boats was the "Hiawatha".

The Cedarville Bridge, built in 1886, was an "institution". People thronged on it to view the river at flood stage. The rivets on the inclined ends served as ladder steps for barefoot boys to climb to its top. It was 200 feet long and spanned a river as wide – one on which a sizable powerboat could easily turn or maneuver.

George Yoder's boathouse was on the south bank 100 feet above the bridge. It was reached with a flight of steps down from the Illinois Central right of way. He had a large raft and rented canoes to young couples. Next on the same side were the boathouses of Charles Musser, Brown and Holmes. Across the river west of the bridge was a boat club. A Mr. Martin, a member, built an aqua plane out of a bicycle. The waterworks were next on the west side and Balles Ice House was on the east side. These gentlemen bought a new boat from Charles Klein and when asked what they planned to name it, replies "Damn if I know." The name stuck – "Damfino" was it.

Emil Molter and Allie Temple had a launch built at Racine in 1901 called "El Capitan." They operated it for two years and then sold it. Then joined by Robert Lamb they purchased a larger Racine boat called the "Mosquito" which they operated for several years. In 1903, George Siefert, uncle of the Molters, built a twenty-foot boat in his carpenter shop powered by a three HP gasoline engine built by Charles Klein. Siefert operated this boat about six years and sold it for use below the dam. About this time Richter Brothers built a boat, about twenty feet long, which was docked near the Rambler and Eureka Clubs. It was used at least ten years.

The area above Balles Brothers icehouse was the favorite swimming hole for boys who also hunted clams in the mud. Upstream was A. M. Hoover's slaughterhouse, Fosselman's Ice house, and up stream west of present Route 26 was Hartman's rendering works. There were many pleasant pastures and wooded areas to tie up a boat for a picnic. The entire river bottom area was a wonderful place for a growing boy to both amuse himself and learn about many things made in various shops, or industries of the river area.

Continued.