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# Friends of the Pecatonica River Foundation

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Oct. 18, 2012

## History

### Early Steamboats On Pecatonica River Part 4 of 15

It should be observed that the good boating on the Pecatonica enjoyed during the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was possible only because those interested were willing to spend long hours patrolling the stream and removing the many obstructions in the form of trees, limbs, etc. found therein. This often had to be done with block and tackle at the expense of considerable effort but the result was a clear navigable channel free of debris and silt. John Ellis Jr. played an important part in this work.

August 28, 1968

### **Motor Boating on the Pecatonica River**

Prior to April 1931 when the Goddard Dam was washed out the Pecatonica River was rather good for powerboats. The boat owners cooperated in pulling snags and cutting loose trees, which had fallen in the river. The boaters through trial and errors had found a clear channel and up to 1931 could go to Damascus even in low water without much difficulty.

There were several boats operating below the dam but our activities were mostly upstream from Goddard's Dam.

As we recall it, Mr. Leo Ellis sold the Columbia to two railroad men, the Taylor Brothers, and they operated it for about a year or two and then shipped it to Wisconsin.

Mr. Charles Klein built several powerboats and also made the gasoline engines for them in the old Klein Wagon shop on North Van Buren Avenue, now part of the validated parking lot.

Among the early boats at the turn of the century were the Ramblers (built in 1899 or 1900). It was about thirty-five feet long, powered by a single cylinder gasoline engine, which was made at the Illinois Central shop. This boat was owned by the Ramblers Club and docked at their clubhouse on the south bank of the Pecatonica River opposite Josel's Island. (Head of Winnebago Avenue). The club also had a camp at the cut off about eight miles upstream. Some of the members were Harry Burkhardt, Wm. (Mike) Arndt, John Fletcher, Ed Mensenkamp, Joseph Goeke and John Fosselman. The Rambler made several trips to Winslow in very high water. Removing the canopy top to clear the bridges.

The Eureka Club had a large boat, which docked just down stream from the Rambler. They afterwards sold it to be used below the dam and bought one of Charles Klein's boats. The boat capsized in high water just below Harlem Bridge with six men aboard. Three of who drowned. The boat was never recovered. Continued.