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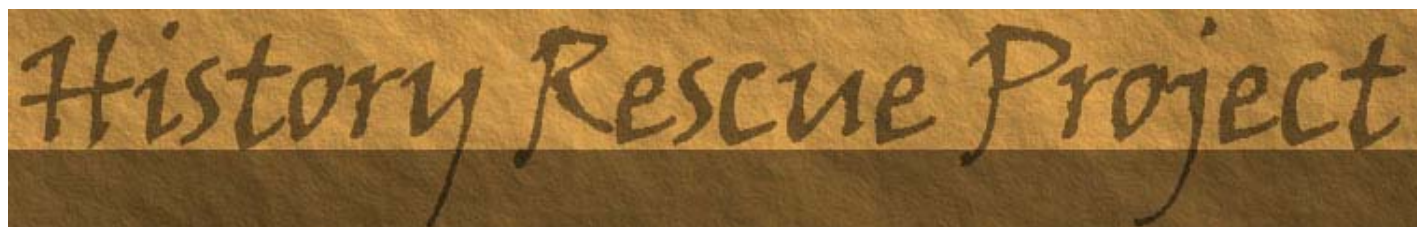
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### [Madison's First Shipyard \(http://www.mjcp.org/historyrescue/records/madison-s-first-shipyard\)](http://www.mjcp.org/historyrescue/records/madison-s-first-shipyard)

Boat-building in By-Gone Years. Interesting Reminiscences of Old Times and Old Timers.

Madison Courier, December 31, 1884

An article by "Phelix Adair" Adair's questions and remarks are in Italics

*I recently visited Fulton, the suburb to this city that suffered so severely in the great flood of February last, in company with Capt. A. M. Connett, who spent the greater part of his life in that locality, and in talking with him about boat building in old times he gave me this information for the readers of the Courier.*

"Phelix" the Captain remarked, "you want to know something about boat building at the old shipyard in early days in Madison. Well, I do remember something about the upper shipyard as far back as 1838. The yard was located in what is now called Fulton. The upper limits were about where the west line of the City Water Works property now is, and extended west about two hundred yards to the east line of Lozier's foundry lot. The foundry stood on the ground in which the lard house attached to the old Mammoth Cave pork house was located. The "mold loft" building stood in the centre of the yard, and was, to my eyes, then a huge structure, though, probably, not so large as the one now at the Marine Railway yard. The blacksmith shop was located at the upper end of the mold loft building, the shop being about 15 feet square and built of pine slabs. The mold loft and blacksmith shop was about all there was in the ways of buildings."

*What boats were built there that you can remember?*

"Well, let me see. When I came here there were three boats on the stocks, the steamers Robert Fulton, Governor Morehead, and the John Armstrong. The Armstrong was built and owned by the veteran boatman, Captain John Armstrong, well known to all river men, who was a brother-in-law of the late Addison Marshall of this city. The Governor Morehead was run in the Kentucky River trade, and the Robert Fulton, if I remember right, was built for the old Mail Line Co. These boats were all side-wheelers, about the size of the Maggie Harper. The engines, boilers and other machinery were built at the Lozier foundry, adjoining the shipyard. The Robert Fulton's keel was laid parallel to the river and was launched side ways instead of stern on—something new at that day. The Armstrong and Governor Morehead were launched late in the fall of 1838; the Fulton the following spring. In the spring of 1839 the keel of another steamer, the "New Argo" was laid, and she was completed and launched sometime during the summer of '39."

*Was there much interest manifested by the citizens of Madison in those days when a boat was to be launched?*

"Oh, yes. It was considered a big thing then but now-a-days the Madison Marine Railway Co. completes a boat and launches it, & our citizens hear nothing about it until the fact is mentioned in our city paper. A steamboat launch 56 years ago was an important event—equal to a circus or camp meeting—everybody was present. Timely notice was given thru the weekly papers—there were no dailies then—and everybody came & brought their families."

*Was there anyone allowed on board when a boat was launched?*

"Oh, yes. A limited number of ladies and gentlemen who had the nerve were allowed to go on board and launch with the boat. Sometimes when the "Trippers" were knocked out—lashings were not used—the vessel failed to start from being "Ribbon bound" or other causes; then those on deck struck up a dog trot fore and aft and in a few minutes time, from the concussion caused by the tramp of many feet, the vessel would start and glide gracefully to her natural element."

*Was there any ceremony attending a launch in those days?*

"Ceremony! I should say so, and it was the most interesting part of the launch. It was customary then to christen new boats. Some young lady, usually the Captain's daughter, or some near female relative or friend of the owner, was selected to do the christening, who, taking her position on the fore-castle, would break a bottle of wine, when she touched the water, at the same time proclaiming her name and wishing her success."

*Do you remember any other steamboats built at the Fulton yard?*

"No: but previous to the establishment of that yard there was a large side-wheel steamer named "Chancellor Livingston" built further down the river, just below what is now Ferry Street. I believe this boat was built by Emerson & Barmore. Afterwards, probably in 1837 or '38, the yard was removed to Fulton, and was managed by Howard & Barmore. Mr. Howard was a son-in-law of Mr. Barmore, and father of the well-known boat-builder of Jeffersonville, Ind. Mr. Barmore was the Father of Capt. D. S. Barmore, also of Jeffersonville. The boats used for carrying the stone for the construction of the Louisville Court House and the locks on the Kentucky river were built at this yard. They were simply large flats, strongly built and heavily decked. The rough stone as it came from the quarries was rolled on the deck of the boats until a sufficient load was obtained, when they were towed to their destination by a steamer. The Fulton yard was abandoned, I think about 1841 or '42. But in 1843, Captain Lober, of Mobile, Alabama, attracted here, no doubt, by the superiority of the oak timber around Madison for boatbuilding, contracted with Howard & Barmore for the building of a steamer to be used on the waters of Mobile Bay and the Gulf, to be called the

Montezuma. She was built and launched at a point where the branch running from the hill down back of Ross' tan-yard empties into the river, and a few hundred feet east of where the steamer Chancellor Livingston was built. A large sycamore tree, probably the last of the forest trees on the bank of the river within the city limits was cut down to give room to lay the Montezuma's hull. She was a novelty in boatbuilding at that time, being very deep and extraordinarily strong, with a high bulwark all around and gangways like all sea-going vessels. There were other details in her makeup not used in steamers now-days that would be too tedious to enumerate."

*Who were the men employed in building the Montezuma? Are any of them still living?*

"Well, let me see. Yes a few of them are living, but the most of them are probably dead. Of those now living of the joiners or cabin-builders I call to mind Joseph Todd, the dairy-man, one of the best workmen that ever shoved a jackplane in these parts, who built the pilot-house and wheel; Wm. Hurley, the tanner; the venerable John Greyble, now with the McKim Furniture Co. and George Whedon, father of the late Marsh Whedon, Moses Williams, brother of William Wallace Williams, employed at the J. M. & I. depot, assisted in rigging the steamer Montezuma. Mr. Williams was a descendant of David Williams, one of the three patriot captors of Major Andre during the Revolutionary War. There may be others living, but their whereabouts are unknown. Of those now dead who worked on her cabin I remember Joseph Parrent, a Mr. Fleetwood, Isaac Kyle and William H. Connett, all well known carpenters and builders in Madison forty years ago. Howard & Barmore's foreman in the cabin building department was the late Joseph Shipley of Cincinnati. He lived in a two story frame house on East Second street, opposite the new residences of the Gibbs brothers. Shipley lost his son, Joseph by drowning. The little fellow was in swimming at the bar at the foot of Ferry street, and getting in the "suck" of the eddy was lost before assistance could reach him. The body was recovered in about an hour, and extraordinary exertions were made under the direction of Dr. Jos. H. D. Rogers to resuscitate him, but without success. He was buried in the old cemetery on Third Street."

*Do you remember the ship-carpenters then employed by Howard & Barmore?*

"Yes, many of them. There were working in the upper yard when I came here Maynard and Caldwell Roll; William Potter, father of William, John and Taylor Potter; the venerable Elias Phillips, now living on South Main street near the river, and almost a centenarian; the late John F. Moore, one Beckwith, Ben Wyatt, Mark Hill, Prime Emerson, Sylvander Nutting, Duncan and John Martin, uncle of Luther Martin, Manager of the telegraph office in this city. Solomon Evans was the Blacksmith, and the rapidity with which he could make spikes was wonderful. He could keep six to eight rods in the fire, working them alternately. Five blows of the hammer were sufficient to complete a perfect spike—one to set up the end for the head and one each to bevel the four corners. Evans went to Jeffersonville with Howard. Prime Emerson went to St. Louis sometime in the forties and became a prominent boat builder there, Mark Hill went to Galena, Illinois, where he was interested in a lead mine and probably died there."

*Boat building then was harder than it is now with the advantages of machinery, wasn't it?*

"Yes, it was hard work then to prepare the timber for the construction of a steamboat. The lumber for planking, ribs and floor timber, was all whipped to form by the broad-bladed ship ax. Matched stuff for the hurricane and boiler decks was cut from broad boards by the splitting gauge and tongued and grooved by hand. The Orrill brothers, John D., Philip, and Thomas, did all the whipsawing. They were all large, muscular men, and could convert the logs into boards very rapidly. When the steamer Montezuma was completed Thomas Orrill went to Mobile on her, but again returned to this city. He now resides on West Second street, in the house adjoining Johnson & Son's new warehouse. John D. Orrill is now a resident of Louisville, Ky., and when last heard from Philip Orrill was in Chicago. Another important factor in the yard was James Craig, who furnished the motive power for removing the huge logs and timber in the shape of ten yokes of mighty oxen, and his 'Gee whoa, haw' could ever be heard echoing from the hills like the blast of some mighty trumpet."

*Where are the houses that were occupied by Messrs. Howard & Barmore when they resided here?*

"Old Captain Barmore lived in a double hewed log house that stood on the ground now occupied by the buildings of the Madison Brewing Co. and Capt. Howard lived in a one-story frame house on what is now Ohio street, built and owned by John DeWitt of Salem, Washington County. The house stood there for almost a half a century and until February last, when it was washed away by the great flood."

*Do you know where the old graveyard was located, the first one Madison ever had?*

Certainly I do. I was present when it was wrecked. During the summer of 1839 Ferry street, the one just east of the Madison Brewing Co's establishment, was opened and graded from the river to its intersection with the Lawrenceburg road (now East Second St.) cutting through the first graveyard in Madison. A few of the graves were left, two or three, I think in the corner of the lot where the Fulton School-house now stands, and one or two on the brink of the ravine on the west side of the street. The remains taken from the other graves were all put together in a huge coffin for old Gabriel to sort out on that great day, and were buried in the old cemetery on Third street. The condition of some of the remains exhumed gave rise to much speculation among the curious of that day. One coffin was found in comparatively sound condition, but contained a lot of poplar shavings and only enough bones to construct about one-half of the human anatomy; the skull and some of the large bones were wanting. Another, far gone in decay, contained the skeleton complete, but the skull was at the foot of the coffin, while the remaining portions were properly disposed. About where High street intersects Ferry street, the skeleton of an Indian chief was exhumed. He was found in a sitting posture, where the old brave had been patiently waiting to be conveyed to the happy hunting ground. A pipe, some arrow-heads and a few copper trinkets were found near the old chiefs' remains.

*Such is an imperfect sketch of the Howard & Barmore shipyard and its surroundings forty-six years ago. There is now scarcely anything remaining in the locality to remind one of the busy times of long ago. Two or three houses that were then there are still standing intact and others are tottering with age and gone to ruin. Phelix Adair*

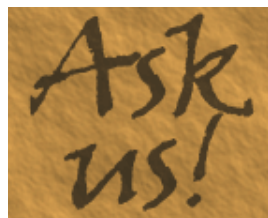
## Index Information

This article appeared in the Madison Courier, December 31, 1884.

## Related Records

- [The Blackmore Bonanza \(http://www.mjcpl.org/historyrescue/records/the-blackmore-bonanza\)](http://www.mjcpl.org/historyrescue/records/the-blackmore-bonanza)

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## History Rescue News

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- [June: New funeral home and marriage records \(http://www.mjcpl.org/historyrescue/news/june-new-funeral-home-and-marriage-records\)](http://www.mjcpl.org/historyrescue/news/june-new-funeral-home-and-marriage-records)