

The Steamboat *Maid of Iowa*: Mormon Mistress of the Mississippi

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Early in the autumn of 1842 a little steamboat christened the *Maid of Iowa* made her first appearance on the Mississippi. She had been built at Augusta, Iowa, an important landing on the Skunk River, and had been launched principally to compete in the trade conducted on the smaller rivers emptying into the Mississippi.

At the time the *Maid* entered the western river trade, steamboat merchandizing had reached an enormous volume. Indeed, the rivers of the Mississippi Valley proved to be the country's busiest commercial highway for the greater part of the nineteenth century. It is estimated that from 1825 to 1850 alone, more than half of the products grown or manufactured in the United States were carried by steamboat along the Mississippi and its tributaries.¹

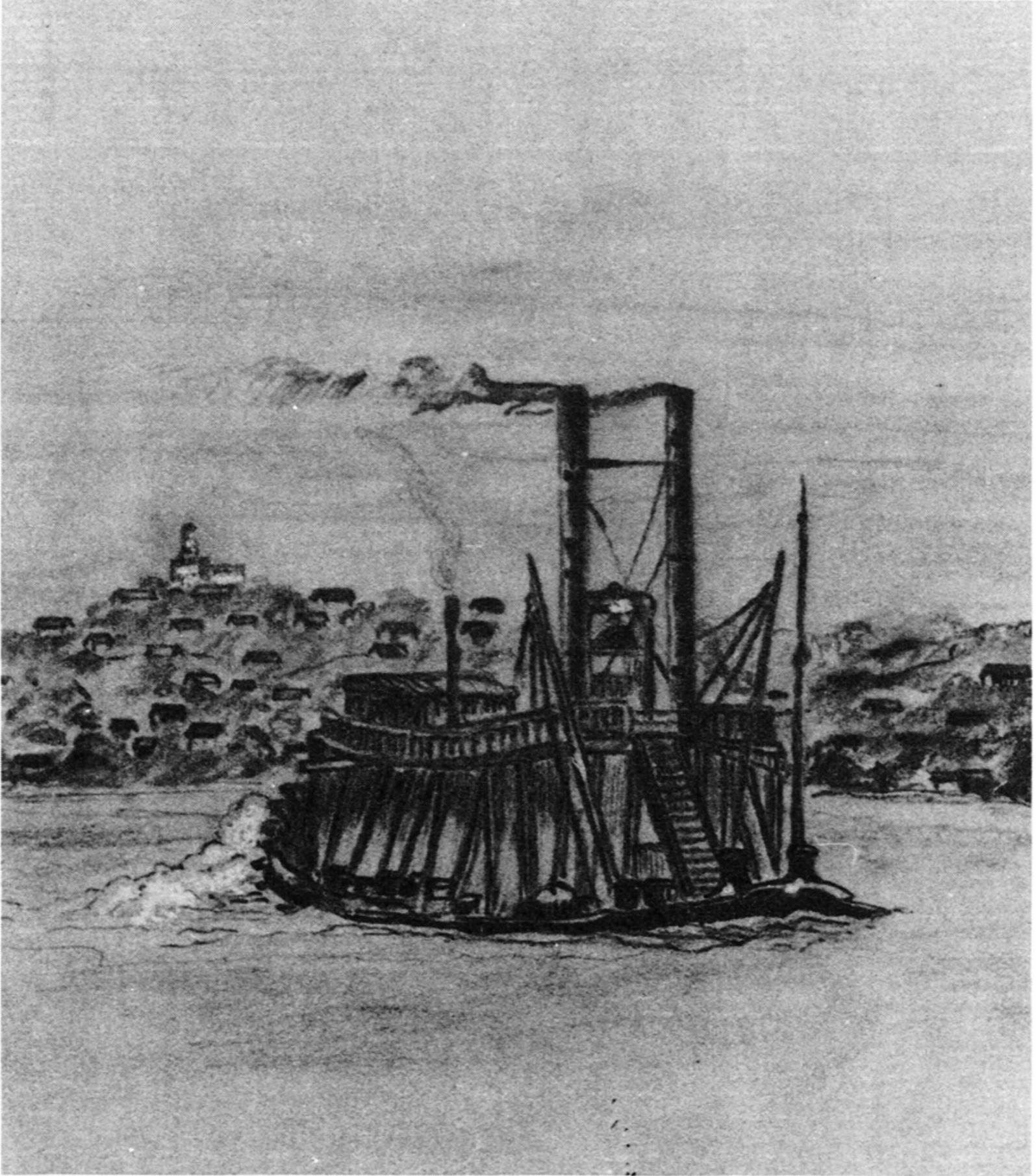
During that quarter century more than 350 different steamboats were operating above the Des Moines Rapids, the point on the Upper Mississippi generally considered the terminus of unobstructed navigation. Although a few were very large, having a gross weight capacity for boat and cargo of over 400 tons, the displacement of the average steam vessel plying that portion of the river was 168 tons.²

The *Maid* was built by Levi Moffit and Dan Jones. The former was a businessman of Augusta and the latter an experienced riverboat captain. Recognizing the lucrative potential of the river trade, the two commenced a partnership and put up the capital to have the steamer built. The cost to Levi Moffit and Dan Jones to get the boat built and moderately outfitted was just over \$4,000. Most steamboats on the Upper Mississippi were not as well equipped or furnished as the larger year-around ones of the lower river, and the *Maid of Iowa* was no exception. On her deck were located the engine room, the cargo and storage areas, the dining

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¹William J. Peterson, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1968), pp. 227-38.

²*Ibid.*, p. 235.



Pencil Sketch, *Maid of Iowa*, Nauvoo in the Background.

Courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department

room, and cabin accommodations for approximately thirty people. Atop these was the hurricane deck through which protruded the boat's two smokestacks. The pilot's cabin was located on the hurricane deck. Though she was basically a freighting vessel, passengers nonetheless found her accommodations comfortable. Carpeted floors, unusual to most western river steamboats, were a luxury enjoyed by cabin passengers on the *Maid*.³

The *Maid of Iowa* was a stern wheeler, powered, like most western steamboats, with a high-pressure engine developed specifically to challenge the fast-moving rivers of the Mississippi Valley. Compared even to the smaller boats, the *Maid* was a dwarf, weighing but 60 tons and measuring only 115 feet in length.⁴

Her small size made her easily identifiable wherever on the rivers she went. Contemporary sources reveal that her journeyings were extensive, that many times she traversed the Mississippi from New Orleans to La Crosse, Wisconsin. She navigated lengthy distances of the Ohio, Missouri and Red rivers and traveled many lesser tributaries, such as the Illinois, Iowa, Skunk, Des Moines, Black, Fever, Fox, and Wisconsin. Not only did the *Maid* carry freight and passengers along most of the navigable rivers of the Mississippi Valley, she also served at intermittent periods as a ferryboat, an excursion boat, a military boat, a meeting place for church services, and a vehicle for transporting Mormon converts to and religious and political missionaries from Nauvoo.⁵

Jones, the experienced boatman, assumed command of the *Maid of Iowa* at her completion. Becoming master of this sleek little vessel was a step up for the Welshman, his former captaincy having been with a very small steamer, the *Ripple*, which at 38 tons was one of the tiniest steamboats registered on the Upper Mississippi. Jones, in his early thirties, was short of stature though wirey and powerfully built, and was an impulsive fellow of extreme energy, characteristics which suited him well for the rigorous task of commanding a steamboat. Born in Flintshire, Wales, of devout middle-class parents, he was reared in pious surroundings. His father was a church elder, and a brother attained a great reputation as a Baptist preacher. Dan Jones himself was college

³"Steamboat *Maid of Iowa*," Whitney Collection, Box 5, folders 10-15, Special Collections of Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁴"Enrolment, *Maid of Iowa*, Port of St. Louis, 1844," National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵*Maid of Iowa* Card File, copy at Nauvoo Restoration, Incorporated, Salt Lake City.

educated, having been trained for the ministry. He was recognized as a "fluent, rapid, intelligent speaker in both Welsh and English" who had an "astounding power to touch the emotions and hearts of his audience." Though spiritually sensitive, he was also adventuresome, and in his youth had developed a great love for the sea. As a young man he apparently saw much of the world, sailing around the Horn as well as to India. In 1840 he emigrated to the United States with his wife Jane, stopping in New York for a few months before moving on to the Upper Mississippi River.⁶

In October 1842, when the *Maid of Iowa* entered the river trade on the Mississippi, there were approximately 7,000 Mormons living in a dozen or more settlements on both sides of the river near the Des Moines Rapids. Nauvoo, the chief gathering place, was located on a beautiful bend of the great river at the head of the rapids; it contained a population of approximately five thousand. Its citizens were keenly aware of the advantages Nauvoo's position offered for development of water power and river trade. Emigration continued to increase the population of Nauvoo at a phenomenal rate until, by December 1845, there were within the city limits 11,057, making Nauvoo one of the two largest communities in the state. Consequently, steamboats played an ever-increasing role in Nauvoo's development, transporting passengers and freight to and from its wharves and contributing to its social, religious and political environment.⁷

Many steamers made regular runs between St. Louis and the Northern Mississippi, making scheduled stops at various towns along the way. The 1839-1841 steamboat register for the port of Warsaw, a major landing at the foot of the Des Moines Rapids, reveals, however, that only 28 percent of the boats stopping there continued on above the rapids because navigating north of this generally hazardous obstacle increased considerably the likelihood of mishap.⁸ As communities above the rapids grew in number and size, more boats began ascending the rapids, and Nauvoo enjoyed the benefits of the increased traffic. In a single five-day period during the peak of the 1845 season, twelve steamers tied-up at Nauvoo docks.

⁶Rex LeRoy Christensen, "The Life and Contributions of Captain Dan Jones" (Master's thesis, Utah State University, 1977), pp. 4-6.

⁷James L. Kimball, Jr., "Nauvoo Population Study," in progress.

⁸*Warsaw Signal* (Illinois), 1839-1841.

In spite of this increasing activity, Nauvoo Mormons felt a "good deal abused" and imposed upon by the riverboats and contended that the boats levied higher than normal freight charges, delayed shipments, and harassed converts attempting to book passage to Nauvoo.⁹

Steamboats were a lifeline for Nauvoo as they were to all communities in that part of the country, carrying to and transporting from its wharves the large volume of merchandise needed to sustain it and to strengthen its economic growth. Every item imaginable for home and commercial use was carried by the hundreds of boats which plied the rivers, including flour, lumber, dry goods, furs, agricultural implements, farm produce, newspapers, the U.S. mail, military stores, foreign imports, iron and "Galena Cotton" (lead).

Additional numbers of boats entered the river trade each year. In 1832 the "tonnage of vessels" registered at New Orleans was 233,065. Ten years later, when the *Maid of Iowa* made her debut on the river, the figure had risen to 521,644, nearly 120 percent increase.

That the *Maid*, alone, was incapable of handling the city's needs is indicated by the number of steamers docking there each week. For example, from the *Potasi* came a "splendid stock of New and Genuine GOODS" just received "direct from the city of New York and Philadelphia"¹⁰ and other U.S. cities.

Accounts of the *Maid's* travels reveal that coal from Iowa, lumber from the northern Mississippi River region, military stores from northwestern Missouri, wheat, corn, and pork from Illinois, lead from Wisconsin, and sugar from Louisiana were just a few of the commodities the *Maid* carried during her service as a Mormon boat.¹¹

In March 1843, Elders Parley P. Pratt and Levi Richards, having just landed in New Orleans with about two hundred British converts, sought to charter a steamer to take their group up river to Nauvoo. Contact was made with Captain Dan Jones, of the *Maid of Iowa*, who had spent the winter on the lower river in the bayou trade but who was then advertising for passengers and

⁹*Nauvoo Neighbor*, 10 May 1843, p. 2; *Maid of Iowa* Card File.

¹⁰"Steamboat *Maid of Iowa*," Whitney Collection.

¹¹Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 12 April 1843, Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives.

freight destined for the Upper Mississippi. Though steamer captains were often reluctant to aid the Mormons, Captain Jones accepted their request, having previously carried Mormons and Mormon freight to good satisfaction. On 12 April the little vessel, loaded to her limits, "hailed up at the Nauvoo House landing," where she was met by a crowd of joyful Saints. The journey from St. Louis had been particularly difficult, requiring eleven days because of delays brought on by ice still flowing in the river.

Joseph Smith, President of the Church and mayor of the city, was the first aboard the boat and "could not refrain from shedding tears" at the privilege of again greeting old friends and welcoming the new arrivals.¹² So appreciative was the Mormon Prophet of Captain Jones' service that when Joseph came face-to-face with him he laid his hand upon the captain's head and said, "Bless this little man."¹³ This touching encounter was the beginning of an affectionate friendship between the two, and it soon led to the Welshman's conversion to Mormonism and, in behalf of the Church, to Joseph Smith's arranging a partnership with the captain in the steamboat trade. Within a month Captain Jones was baptized, and the Prophet began the purchase of half interest in the *Maid of Iowa*, buying Levi Moffit's share of the boat for \$1,375.¹⁴

In 1842 central and western Iowa were opened to white settlement as a result of the government's acquiring the "Black Hawk Purchase" from the Sac and Fox Indians. Newspapers along the Mississippi published descriptive accounts of the mass of land-seekers headed to the new "El Dorado." Newspapers reported that "very large" numbers of immigrants, with "farming utensils, furniture and every necessary article," were expected to gather there. Since many were traveling by land and would need to be ferried over the river in order to get themselves, their baggage, and their livestock to Iowa, Nauvoo was in a wonderful position to benefit from the immigration if it could establish a ferrying service capable of luring large numbers of the travelers to its river landings.¹⁵

Joseph Smith and Dan Jones must have felt that the timing of their partnership was opportune, for even before the Mormon leader had finalized arrangements with Levi Moffit to assume his

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴"Steamboat *Maid of Iowa*," Whitney Collection.

¹⁵*Warsaw Message* (Illinois), 19 April 1843.

interest in the boat they put the *Maid* to work as a ferry between Nauvoo and the Iowa side of the river.

That "such a mode of conveyance has long been needed"¹⁶ in that vicinity of the Upper Mississippi was generally acknowledged. Consequently, the enterprise received much encouragement, even from out-of-town newspapers.¹⁷ For a number of weeks, commencing 17 May 1843, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* gave notice that a "splendid Steam Boat" would operate as a ferry at that city. Her "conveniences" were described as "great," and her "passage sure."¹⁸ Rates for using the ferry were set by the City Council, and, as noted by her bill of tolls, foot passengers, people on mule or horseback, those driving teams, and a wide variety of livestock and freight were expected to take advantage of the service.¹⁹

FOR DES MOINES RIVER.



THE Light Draught Steamer
MAID OF IOWA, D.
JONES Master, will run up the
Des Moines River, as soon as navigation opens
in the spring. She will take freights or pas-
sengers at Warsaw, at the lowest possible rates.
March 29, 1843. n12 if

Regular Packet.

Existing pages from the *Maid of Iowa's* log and an account book from Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store, the establishment from which a good part of the boat's stock of supplies came, reveal an interesting pattern of activity for the vessel during 1843. Though serving as a ferry in the late spring and early summer, and again in the fall, she also frequently transported freight and passengers up and down the river.²⁰

A separate log for ferrying services for the *Maid* has not survived; therefore, it is uncertain how lucrative the ferry business was for Dan Jones, Joseph Smith, the Church or Nauvoo. Even

¹⁶*Nauvoo Neighbor*, 17 May 1843, p. 2.

¹⁷For example, see *Iowa City Standard*, 10 April 1842.

¹⁸*Nauvoo Neighbor*, 17 May 1843.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 14 June 1843.

²⁰"Steamboat *Maid of Iowa*: Entries from Joseph Smith's Day Book," study by Rowena J. Miller, Nauvoo Restoration, Incorporated, Salt Lake City, 8 pp.

the town's news sheets commented little about the amount of ferry traffic drawn to the city to seek passage across the river. The fact that the *Maid* did not return to ferry duty a second season,²¹ however, does suggest that there was more to be gained in the river trade, a duty certainly more satisfying to the seasoned and adventuresome riverboat captain, Dan Jones.

Fully loaded, the *Maid* was capable of hauling approximately forty tons of freight and two hundred passengers. Twenty-five to thirty passengers could be accommodated in the boat's cabin, which was divided into male and female quarters. Other passengers were obliged to content themselves with deck passage. Once underway, the little vessel was capable of good performance. Even when heavily laden with cargo and passengers, she could make five to eight miles per hour with the current and nearly two-thirds that speed when going upstream.²²

Preparing the *Maid of Iowa* for river duty included affirming her sea worthiness, as well as placing aboard various items of equipment for emergencies, such as shafts, boiler parts, a cache of butts and screws, oils, pumps, cylinders, and lubricants. Also essential were edibles and conveniences which would provide refreshment and comfort for the crew and for the many passengers who would be taken aboard at various ports along the river. Among the many items drawn from Joseph Smith's store were 47 mattresses, 40 quilts, 94 unbleached sheets, 40 pillows and 80 pillow slips, towels, tablecloths, wooden buckets, a washtub, muffins and teas, platters and deep dishes, pitchers, sugars and creamers, and twelve chairs. Food stuffs included flour, molasses, table salt, vinegar, mustard, soleratus, coffee, sugar, and tea, as well as bacon, potatoes, meats, bread and other bakery goods, butter, and fresh vegetables. Additional items taken aboard were some calico, a bonnet, two pair of worsted stockings and one pair cotton stockings (likely for Mrs. Jones), a stove, paper, a half ledger, clothing for crew, \$69.35 worth of gunny sacks, cayenne peppers, "salts and ole [sic] for sick hand," a small globe lamp, a hall lamp, and a signal lamp.²³

During her three years as a Mormon boat, at least forty-two individuals served on the *Maid*. Normally there were sixteen or seventeen hands on deck: the captain, mate, a clerk, the pilot, the assistant pilot, three engineers, four or five deck hands, the cook

²¹Ibid.

²²*Maid of Iowa* Card File.

²³Miller, "Joseph Smith's Day Book."

and two stewards, a watchman, and a cabin boy. Mississippi riverboat captains were generally strong-minded individuals, masters of their boats. Aboard the *Maid*, however, was an additional crew member whose authority was known to take precedence over the captain's. That was Commandent-in-chief Jane Jones, the captain's devoted and intimidating wife. She jealously guarded the family's "hard earned" interest in the craft, which was not only their means of livelihood but was frequently, and for lengthy periods, their residence as well.²⁴

The *Maid's* crew being mostly Mormon must have been a novelty on the river. Their religious views drew considerable taunting from crews and passengers of other boats; their avoidance of the pleasures generally sought by river workers characterized them as a very peculiar set of riverboat men. For example, except for infrequent dissipation on the part of some hands, the *Maid of Iowa* was a "dry" boat. Barrels of whiskey, rum, beer and champagne were rolled aboard to be carried as freight to merchants along the river, but the use of alcoholic beverages by the *Maid's* crew and officers was not condoned by the captain.

The absence of strong drink was not the only luxury not aboard the boat. Chambermaids, female entertainers, women companions, gamblers, so much a part of the environment of many other steamboats, were not to be found.²⁵

Working aboard the *Maid of Iowa* was also unusual in that the crew had "tithing" for the Temple then being constructed in Nauvoo automatically deducted from their earnings. Gilbert Lyman, for one-and-a-half months' duty as a deck hand earned \$18.99, \$12.00 of which was deducted as tithing. He received one half dollar in cash, the balance being reserved for him as credit. For twenty-four days as a deck hand, S. H. Alexander earned \$9.60, all of which was "to go as tithing." However, Stephen Goddard, mate aboard the *Maid*, earned \$27.00 for eighteen days on the river, none of the earnings designated for the Temple. E. J. Repsher, the boat's cabin boy, earned \$12.50 and received as pay "one pair shirts," four yards cloth, a hat, and fifty cents deducted as tithing.²⁶

Once, when error in judgment placed an incompetent individual aboard as clerk, the kind, but firm, discipline maintained by

²⁴D. S. Hollister to Joseph Smith, 8 January 1844, quoted in *Journal History*.

²⁵Miller, "Joseph Smith's Day Book."

²⁶Ibid. See also "Steamboat *Maid of Iowa*," Whitney Collection.

Jones on boat suffered a setback. The clerk, a man named Derby, through his "dissipating . . . and incessant propensity to gambling" with the *Maid's* funds placed the owners of the boat in financial jeopardy.²⁷

Generally, employee quarters and provisions on steamboats were adequate, while working conditions were a combination of both hard labor and leisure. Work demands aboard the *Maid of Iowa* appear to have been much like those described by H. W. Sanderson, a lad from Nauvoo who worked as a deck hand on a steamer plying the Upper Mississippi. He concluded that labor was usually "not excessive though except for loading and unloading freight," which was "very heavy work." There was "other rough work to do" as well, which kept him "very busy," but he was "treated kindly" and "had better access to vituals than [he] was accustomed to."²⁸

Piloting steamboats on the rivers of the Mississippi Valley was a nerve-testing experience because the possibility of mishap was constantly present. Low water, sandbars, rapids, other boats, boiler explosions, and fires were just some of the disasters lurking on the rivers. Newspapers throughout the country carried frequent accounts of river steamboat accidents, which often took several lives.

The most dreaded calamities were fires and exploding boilers. On 15 September 1841, "the Steamboat *Louisiana* bound from New Orleans to St. Louis exploded one of her boilers, by which 18 or 20 persons were killed, and several scalded."²⁹ Newspaper accounts reflect the times; one mentioning a boat badly damaged by a bursting boiler states that "no casualties resulted, only the loss of some livestock and three niggers."³⁰

Less serious, but certainly disruptive, often to the point of ruining a business, were the losses suffered when boats struck snags, boulders, or sandbars. The steamboat *John Shaw* sunk near Nauvoo in October 1840, after colliding with submerged rock on the Des Moines Rapids. The steamboat *Illinois* suffered the same fate just opposite the Mormon city in April 1842. The *Illinois* with cargo of military stores, bound for the government post at Prairie Du Chien was a "total loss."³¹ Some distance above Nauvoo, a

²⁷Dan Jones to Joseph Smith, 8 January 1844, quoted in *Journal History*.

²⁸H. W. Sanderson *Journal*, 1843, Church Archives.

²⁹*Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo) 11 (15 September 1841):42.

³⁰*Missouri Gazette* (St. Louis), 12 May 1843.

³¹*Warsaw Signal*, 27 April 1842, p. 2.

steamer carrying "3,000 pigs of Lead" sank in only twelve feet of water, but the boat and freight were not recovered.³²

Dan Jones and the Mormons were also troubled by similar misfortune. The *Ripple*, which Dan Jones had captained prior to taking over the *Maid of Iowa*, struck a rock and sank on 24 November 1841 near Galena, Illinois,³³ and a steamboat acquired by the Saints in 1840 went down with its cargo near St. Louis.³⁴ The *Maid* herself at one time "lost her lighter, which was loaded at the time with corn and lumber."³⁵ She was frequently beset with breakdowns and expensive overhauls. A boatload of Church members experienced the frustration sometimes encountered by travelers aboard steamers when the *Maid* was repeatedly damaged and delayed during an upstream trip in 1844.³⁶ Attempting to avoid a "very swollen and muddy current," Captain Jones took the boat up "sloughs and bayous," frequently running aground, which "took many hours and hard work to get her off." At least two shafts were broken while going up the river, which necessitated sending to New Orleans for new ones. One of the passengers reflected that the "accidents were very unpleasant as the company was anxious to get to Nauvoo before Conference on the 6th of April."³⁷

Travel by steamboat was the number one mode of transportation in America of the 1840s. Although it sometimes did involve difficulties, these difficulties were infrequent. Usually steamboat travel was economical, reasonably fast, and relatively free of the difficulties and discomforts that attended traveling by land. Although prices fluctuated slightly, deck passage aboard most steamers between New Orleans and St. Louis was about \$3.00.³⁸ The distance was approximately 1,200 miles. Nauvoo, about two hundred miles above St. Louis, would generally cost an additional \$2.50.³⁹ It required ten days to two weeks to travel the distance between the two major Mississippi ports, and another four to seven days from St. Louis to Nauvoo. For those who could afford it,

³²Ibid., 12 May 1841, p. 2.

³³Ibid., 24 November 1841, p. 2.

³⁴For details of the sinking of this steamboat, the *Nauvoo*, see Dallin H. Oaks and Joseph I. Bentley, "Joseph Smith And Legal Process: In the Wake of the Steamboat Nauvoo," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (Winter 1979):39-71.

³⁵Journal History, 15 June 1844.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷William Adams Journal, March 1844, pp. 6-9, Church Archives.

³⁸Norbury L. Wayman, *Life on the River* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1971), p. 232.

³⁹Wilford Woodruff Journal, 6 July 1843, Church Archives.

cabin accommodations, which included meals and a reasonably comfortable place to sleep out of the weather, certainly made travel by steamboat more enjoyable. The fare, however, was nearly three times the amount for deck passage. Because of the cheaper fare, more than twice as many persons traveled deck passage.

Accommodations on the open deck were uncomfortable and generally dirty; passengers were exposed to the fluctuating weather and to the sparks and cinders from smokestacks. Deck passengers generally took their own food and utensils and cooked their meals on a stove provided for that purpose. They brought food that would carry with minimum spoilage, as supply sources were scant and prices exorbitant along the river. The decks were usually crowded with people and baggage, and deck passengers were prone to guard jealously the little spot of deck they reserved for sitting, sleeping, eating, and socializing for the time they were aboard.⁴⁰

Between 1841 and 1845 about 4,000 English Mormon converts were transported by steamboat up the Mississippi River. They traveled in various boats, but many traveled on the *Maid of Iowa*. During the Mormons' emigration season, which was planned to avoid the hot months of the year when cholera and the "fever" were widespread on the river, the Mormon boat made numerous trips to St. Louis and New Orleans to pick up Nauvoo-bound Saints. The *Maid*, along with other steamers, bypassed the busy port of New Orleans for fear of contracting sickness, sailing to the mouth of the Mississippi to load passengers and cargo directly from the ocean-sailing vessels.

The journey up the river to Nauvoo was filled with new sights and experiences for the immigrants, with travel on the river being both refreshing and harsh. Thomas Steed, who made the trip on the *Maid of Iowa* in April 1844, records seeing his brother-in-law slip from the boat and drown while helping to "wood up" the little vessel.⁴¹ Just a month earlier, William Adams, who had traveled the same route on the *Maid*, wrote of the persecution encountered in towns along the way. Natchez was particularly a troublesome place to tie in,⁴² he recorded. Men rushed aboard attempting to do damage to the boat, yelling out "fowl [sic] names"⁴³ at the passengers and calling them "Joe's Rats."

⁴⁰Wayman, *Life on the River*, p. 232, and *Maid of Iowa* Card File.

⁴¹Thomas Steed Journal, 13 April 1844, Church Archives.

⁴²William Adams Journal, March 1844, p. 6.

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

The boat was even set afire, and before the fire could be extinguished the side of the *Maid* was noticeably burned and several featherbeds and bedding were destroyed.⁴⁴

The Lower Mississippi was the area of greatest harassment for the *Maid of Iowa*. Large steamers, passing by, would generally give a "grand salute by cheering and laughing" and abusing it with foul language.⁴⁵ One boat attempted to run the *Maid* down but was thwarted in the maneuver by Captain Jones, who hollered from the hurricane deck of the *Maid* that he would shoot the other boat's pilot if he did not steer clear.⁴⁶

The *Maid of Iowa* was valuable to the Mormons for more reasons than bringing converts to Nauvoo. Between 1842 and 1845, numerous elders departed from the city's wharves aboard the little boat for near and distant missionary fields. Some in 1844 went "electioneering" for their Prophet leader, who in February of that year had announced his candidacy for the United States presidency. During election years, steamboats everywhere became hotbeds for political barnstorming. Tallies from two boats where votes had been cast for favorites are interesting.⁴⁷ The candidates considered were Henry Clay, Martin Van Buren and General Joseph Smith. Van Buren in both polls came out a decided loser. Clay fared little better. The General was "going it with a rush," being the decided choice on one with 71 votes to Clay's 30 and Van Buren's 12.⁴⁸ The vote on the other boat was approximately the same ratio. The real winner, James K. Polk, was not even given dark horse consideration aboard the boats, whose passengers were chiefly new disciples of the Mormon faith headed for their mecca of Nauvoo.

The Latter-day Saints, though serious about establishing their "Zion," made time to enjoy life; they found their steamboat a suitable place to do so. Immediately upon acquiring ownership in the boat, Joseph Smith arranged with Captain Jones for an excursion on the river for Church and civic leaders and their families. This was the first of many pleasure excursions aboard the *Maid*. The young citizens of the community, "Temple Hands," and other select groups were invited to enjoy a respite upon the river,

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷*Nauvoo Neighbor*, 22 May 1844, p. 2; 5 June 1844, p. 2.

⁴⁸Ibid., 5 June 1844, p. 2.

with Quincy and Burlington being the favorite places of destination. Festive occasions were usually heightened by the presence of tasty foods, "a fine band of music," spirited orations, or even a "salute of cannon."⁴⁹ Some gatherings aboard the steamer were refreshing to the participants in a more sober way. When the weather did not permit the holding of religious services in the grove near the rising Temple, other locations substituted as places of worship. Willard Richards noted that on Sunday 14 April 1844, "a rainy day in Nauvoo, . . . Joseph preached on board the *Maid of Iowa*."⁵⁰

The "Little Maid," as Joseph Smith affectionately referred to the steamer, served faithfully in many capacities. A particularly tense situation for the citizens of Nauvoo occurred in June 1843. While Joseph and his wife Emma were visiting in Dixon, Illinois, an attempt was made to abduct him and take him by force to Missouri. The plan was to transport him on a steamer down the Illinois River and on to St. Louis. When rumor of the affair reached Nauvoo, the *Maid* was immediately dispatched to intercept the hostile craft. The crew's mission was to stop and search any suspected boats and to free the Prophet if he were found. In an eventful encounter with the *Chicago Belle*, the planned abductor, the crew of the *Maid* performed heroically. Word then reached the *Maid* that "Brother Joseph" was safe in the hands of friends, and the "Mormon Navy" returned to its home port.⁵¹

At her annual licensing in St. Louis, in mid-1844, Captain Jones was not aboard the *Maid* as her master. A few weeks earlier he had sold his portion of the boat to Joseph Smith, giving the Church sole ownership of the steamer.⁵² The Prophet had other things in mind for the spiritually-minded Welshman. By Christmas Dan Jones was aboard another boat, this time as a passenger, headed toward his native land to preach the gospel.⁵³

After this, the *Maid* was little used by the Mormons. The animosity and fear surrounding the death of Joseph Smith in June 1844, coupled with a shortened steamboat season brought on by an early winter, forced the *Maid* into frequent periods of inactivity. The season of 1845 had just commenced when the little

⁴⁹Journal History, 28 June 1843.

⁵⁰Willard Richards Journal, 14 April 1844, Church Archives.

⁵¹Journal History, 28 June 1843.

⁵²"Enrolement, *Maid of Iowa*."

⁵³Joseph Smith, Jun., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1932-1951), 6:601; 7:260-61, 324.

vessel left Nauvoo for the last time. The *Maid of Iowa* had been sold on 15 June by Church leaders "for what could be gotten for her"⁵⁴ to Captain Peter Hoelting of Wisconsin. For some years she would run between Greenbay and Galena, hauling freight and passengers on the Fox and Wisconsin rivers. Her last reported place of activity was in Iowa, where in 1851 Captain William Phelps was running her on Soap Creek.⁵⁵

During her service as a Mormon boat the *Maid of Iowa* sailed most of the navigable rivers of the Mississippi Valley. While so employed she traveled approximately 54,000 miles, transported some 3,000 to 3,500 passengers, and hauled nearly 2,500 tons of freight.⁵⁶ The *Maid* enriched the cultural, social, political, and economic life of the city, bringing large numbers of people to Nauvoo, hauling goods to and from its wharves, transporting official representatives of the Church and the city, and providing a place for cultural, social, and religious experiences. In summary, the *Maid of Iowa* was a symbol of Nauvoo's dependence upon the Mississippi. Perhaps her being sold and her rather sudden departure from the river near Nauvoo was a subtle omen of the departure the Mormons would also make one year later from their beloved city on the great river.

⁵⁴Journal History, 9 April 1843.

⁵⁵G. B. Merrick, *Steamboats and Steamboat Men of the Upper Mississippi* (Annals of Labor and Industry, 1938), copy located in the Crerar Library, Chicago; see also *Maid of Iowa* Card File.

⁵⁶*Maid of Iowa* Card File.