

History of the Mississippi Pin Trading Club's
River Boat Series
By Walter Johnston

The Mississippi Pin Trading Club was organized at the Mississippi state convention in Natchez, Mississippi in 1983. The club decided to feature Mississippi riverboats, as it's first series of pins. Since the organizational meeting was in Natchez the steamboat Natchez was chosen as the first pin. There were eight different Steamboats named Natchez the seventh participated in the famous steamboat race with the steamer Robert E Lee in June 1870 from New Orleans to St Louis with the Robert E Lee winning. The MPTC's pin depicts the excursion steamer Natchez built in 1975 and operating in New Orleans, Louisiana. I recall taking an excursion on the Natchez while attending the Lions International Convention in 1986.

The Steamer Sprague the object of the second pin in the series was the largest stern wheel steam towboat ever built to serve on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Built in 1901 the Sprague set numerous towing records for coal and oil. In 1948 it was retired to Vicksburg, Miss where it became a museum and theater for the long running Melodrama Gold in the Hills. It burned in 1974.

MPTC's third pin is the New Orleans. The original New Orleans was the first steamboat to navigate the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Built in 1811 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania it proved the feasibility of using steam power on the Mississippi River. No one knows exactly what the original New Orleans looked like. This pin depicts a facsimile built for the centennial celebration of the first voyage of the original New Orleans in 1911.

Fourth in the series, The Delta Queen Spent many years on the Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers in the overnight excursion business between various cities along these rivers. The Delta Queen was built in Glasgow Scotland and reassembled for service on the Sacramento River in California between San Francisco and Sacramento.

The US Navy requisitioned it during World War II for use in San Francisco Bay. In 1948 She was purchased by the Green Line of Cincinnati, Ohio and was towed through the Panama Canal to begin regular passenger service on the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Because it did not meet Coast Guard Standards for overnight passenger vessels it was retired in 2008 and moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee to serve as a floating hotel.

The fifth pin in the riverboat series is the Mississippi Queen. This vessel, a sister ship to the Delta Queen was built in 1976 for passenger trade on the Mississippi River. At the time she was the largest paddle wheel driven steamboat ever built. The economic depression of the 2000's put this beautiful boat out of business and it was scrapped in 2011.

The Pelican number six in the series is an unusual steamboat. It was a railroad transfer ferry boat built to transport railroad cars and engines across the Mississippi river before bridges were built for to accommodate railroad traffic. I believe this boat originally transported trains across the Mississippi River at Vicksburg, Mississippi until the Bridge was completed in the 1920's. I am told that it waded to Helena, Arkansas to ferry trains at that location. The story goes that it was converted to diesel but the diesel engines were not capable of providing adequate power. It must have been retired when the bridge at Helena was built. I can find no records of its fate.

The Steamer Mississippi was an inspection boat and towboat built for the Mississippi Valley Division of the US Army Corp of Engineers in 1927 served until 1961. It was the third of five vessels Named Mississippi owned by the US Army Corp of engineers. These boats have been used for towing Barges and making inspection trips on the Mississippi River. Mississippi III was converted into a museum then a restaurant before sinking in 2010.

The Robert E Lee number eight completed the series of Mississippi River boats in 1991. Built in 1866 and named in honor of Confederate General Robert E Lee this was one of the most luxurious packet boats on the Mississippi River. In 1870 it beat the Natchez in a race from New Orleans upstream to St Louis Missouri. Its record really has never been

beaten by commercial vessel. It suffered the fate of so many other Mississippi River boats and burned on September 30, 1882.

For the 25th Anniversary of the Mississippi Pintrading club a Series of miniature pins was started to match the original series. Of the eight pins planned four have been released. Picture of all eight the original and released anniversary pins may be seen at

<http://www.litpc.org/MississippiPTCPins.pdf>