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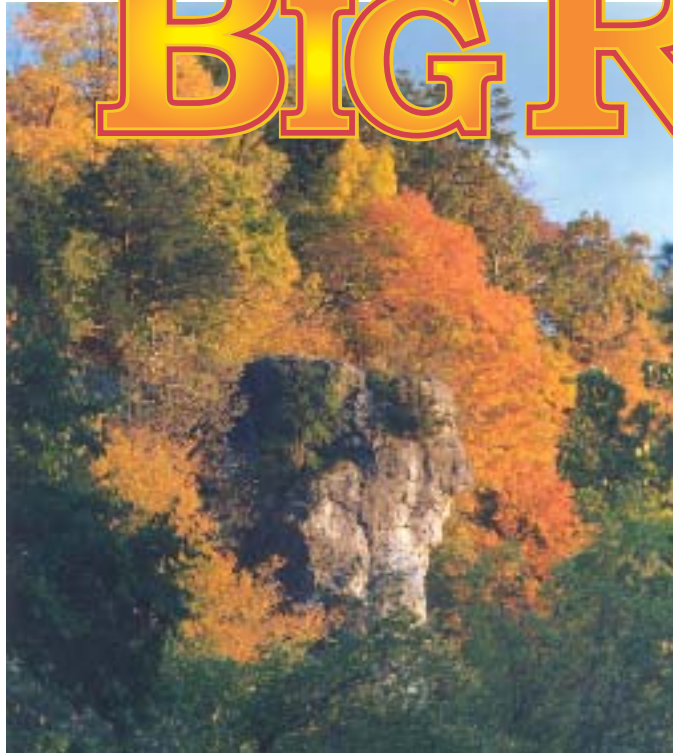
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# BIG RIVER™



September-October 2006

## DEPARTMENTS

- 5** **From the Riverbank**  
Celebrating successes where you find them  
*By Reggie McLeod*
- 7** **Know Your River:  
Paddlewheels: Faux and Real**  
*By Pamela Eyden*
- 9** **River News**  
One Less Bridge, River Leaves Town.
- 45** **River Calendar**  
Watermelon Days, River Roots Music Festival.
- 47** **Advertiser Index**  
Where did I see that ad...?
- 56** **River People**  
Ralph DuPae: Steamboat Photo Sleuth  
Extraordinaire  
*By Pamela Eyden*

## FEATURES

- 19** **A Quieter Refuge: the New Plan**  
*By Reggie McLeod*
- 20** **Restaurant Review  
Confluence**  
Where comfort and creativity converge  
*By Pete Beurskens*
- 22** **Restaurant Review  
Huck Finn's on the Water**  
Good food among the boating crowd at a busy marina  
*By Pamela Eyden*
- 24** **Creative Spirits Left Their Mark**  
Looking for ways to leave your mark on the world? Check out Dickeyville, Fountain City and Cochrane, Wis., for inspiration.  
*By Pamela Eyden*
- 26** **Mussel Team**  
Endangered Higgins eye mussels get hands-on help.  
*By Reggie McLeod*
- 30** **Life on a Floating Photo Studio**  
John P. Doremus was an adventuring photographer on the river in the 1870s.

- Cover: *Cormorants Over Brady's Bluff* (Robert J. Hurt)
- Above: *Twin Sisters in Palisades State Park, Savanna, Ill.*  
(Savanna Tourism)
- Below: *Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden* (Pamela Eyden)





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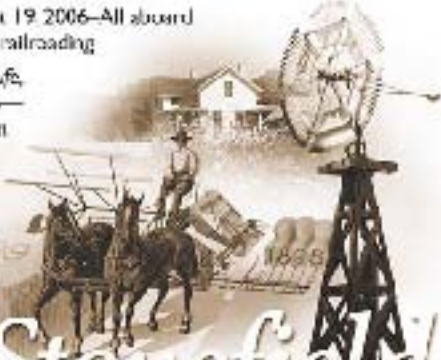
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# From the Riverbank

Reggie McLeod  
Editor/Publisher

## RIVER REMODELING LOOKS GOOD

I went fishing on the Lock and Dam 5 dike, near Buffalo City, Wis., late in the day recently. I also wanted to check out the new EMP (Environmental Management Plan) work on Spring Lake (see "Pool 5 Extreme Makeover" and "From the Riverbank," Sept.-Oct. 2005).

I wasn't too tough on the local fish, but I did catch a stunning sunset over a beautiful new backwater area that was busy with flocks of Canada geese circling overhead and what I imagined were fat, lazy, largemouth bass rolling around in lily pads just beyond my reach. The newly built islands looked great. New vegetation had sprung up on the islands and in the water. In a couple of years, as trees grow on the islands, it will be hard to tell that it wasn't always like this.

The problems that were fixed here have become common in many parts of the Upper Mississippi since the locks and dams were built, especially just upriver from the locks and dams. Islands have eroded and disappeared, while channels and deep spots have filled in, resulting in a large, open expanses of shallow water with few plants, birds or fish.

Last year contractors bustled around Spring Lake, building islands and dredging channels. At the same time a drawdown in the pool brought back a lot of the plant life along the shorelines. Many of the new islands and channels were built where old is-

lands and channels were before the lock and dam were built. These islands stand higher above the water than the originals, so they should hold up better to the higher water behind the lock and dam. This year contractors put the finishing touches on the project, and there was a second, shorter drawdown.

EMP projects are put together by the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey and departments of natural resources from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. These folks seem to be getting better at this, because they collect a lot of data on each project to measure what's working and what's failing.

As great as these projects are, it's hard to say whether the big picture is improving. The locks and dams are still holding back a lot of sediment that fills in backwaters instead of moving on down to maintain the Louisiana delta. We are probably losing good habitat on the river faster than we are restoring it. On the other hand, we are restoring habitat more often and more effectively than just a few years ago.

I wish we were solving the problems that cause the damage, rather than just repairing some of the damage, but we should celebrate the successes. Maybe successful projects like this one will lead to broader solutions. ☞

## Big River™

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Sept 16, 2006 - River Park Cruisers Car Show  
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# Paddlewheels: Faux and Real

By Pamela Eyden

In the 19th century, most Mississippi River boats were not showboats with calliopes and gingerbread trim; they were working boats that hauled freight and travelers. Some pushed log rafts. They had flat-bottomed hulls, no keels and could float in less than two feet of water. Tall smokestacks carried heat and sparks up away from the cargo. Their most distinctive characteristic was the paddlewheel, mounted at the stern (sternwheelers) or on each side (sidewheelers).

The largest paddlewheeler on the river today, the *American Queen*, operated by the Delta Queen Steamboat Company, stretches 418 feet with a paddlewheel 28 feet in diameter that dips just two-and-a-half feet into the water. It has propellers, too, partly because they couldn't build a paddlewheel big enough to move such a big boat. The paddlewheel is powered by steam heated by diesel fuel, while the propellers are powered by electricity from generators. The propeller units, called "Z-drives," can point in any direction, which gives the *American Queen* a lot of maneuverability — it can even pull alongside a levee, stop and "sidestep" to the dock.

The *Mississippi Queen* and the *Delta Queen*, two smaller Delta Queen Steamboat boats, depend entirely on their paddlewheels.

Paddlewheelers steer well in reverse, unlike towboats, which have a separate rudder for that purpose, explained Dick Karnath, retired Delta Queen Steamboat Company captain, who has piloted both. Steering is affected by the position of the rudder. On paddlewheelers, the rudder is in front of the paddlewheel. On propeller-driven towboats, the rudder is behind the propeller.

"Another difference is that paddlewheelers cause a lot less vibration than propeller boats do," Karnath said.

All three *Queens* have paddlewheels with the blades, called buckets, on one side offset from those on the other. The staggered buckets smooth out the ride even more.

Although all boats have their own steering characteristics, Karnath said that if he stood at the helm of a boat and had no knowledge of it, he prob-

*"On a paddlewheeler the [pilothouse] windows are open — you can smell the campfires on shore and hear the birds. Besides, it's like being a part of history. Everything Mark Twain and George Merrick said about steamboats — it's true!"*

ably couldn't tell if he was steering a paddlewheeler or a propeller-driven boat. Karnath definitely prefers the chunk-chunk-chunk of the paddlewheel to the constant grinding roar of a towboat engine "that will rattle your fillings out."

The *Julia Belle Swain* excursion boat out of La Crosse drives its paddlewheel with a 1915 steam engine. It's much smaller than the *Queens*, with a much smaller paddlewheel, and it handles differently.

"There's less room for error on a paddlewheeler," said Carl Henry, who piloted the *Julia Belle Swain* for



A big red paddlewheel pushes the Delta Queen. (David A. Berg)

many years and now pilots towboats for Southern Towing. "You don't have as much power and you're more affected by the wind." But piloting a paddlewheeler is a lot more fun, hands down, he said.

"On a paddlewheeler the [pilothouse] windows are open — you can smell the campfires on shore and hear the birds. Besides, it's like being a part of history. Everything Mark Twain and George Merrick said about steamboats — it's true!"

Some paddlewheels are strictly decorative. In fact, according to Ike Hastings, of Freeport, Ill., fewer than half the sternwheel boats on the Upper Mississippi have working paddlewheels.

"You can tell if it's a working paddlewheel if you look at the wake. A working paddlewheel leaves a big wake. If there's no wake, it means the current is just pushing the wheel around," Hastings said.

Hastings, 82, is building his fourth paddlewheeler in a small marina a few miles upriver from Savanna, Ill. He sold his previous boat, the *Lilly Belle*, to the Audubon Society's Upper Mississippi River Campaign. It is now called the *Audubon Ark*.

"I just like the way they look, and I like the flop-flop-flop sound of the wheel in the water," Hastings explained. "Besides, they're efficient."

His new boat has a 100-foot alu-

*(Paddlewheels continues on page 43)*



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# River News

## Big Hatch

**La Crosse, Wis.** — An extra large mayfly hatch on the last day of June covered street lights and business signs around La Crosse with the mating insects. Bridges were piled with drifts of mayfly carcasses. People looking at Doppler weather radars at the time saw what looked like an odd, slow-moving storm cell arise just after 9 p.m. and continue floating upriver until early the next morning, when it dissipated.

Sizable mayfly hatches are a sign of river health.

## Beach Closings

**Washington, D.C.** — Bacterial contamination forced five percent more beaches along the East Coast, West Coast, Gulf Coasts and Great Lakes to close in 2005 than in 2004. Beach closings and health warnings across the nation increased for three years in a row.

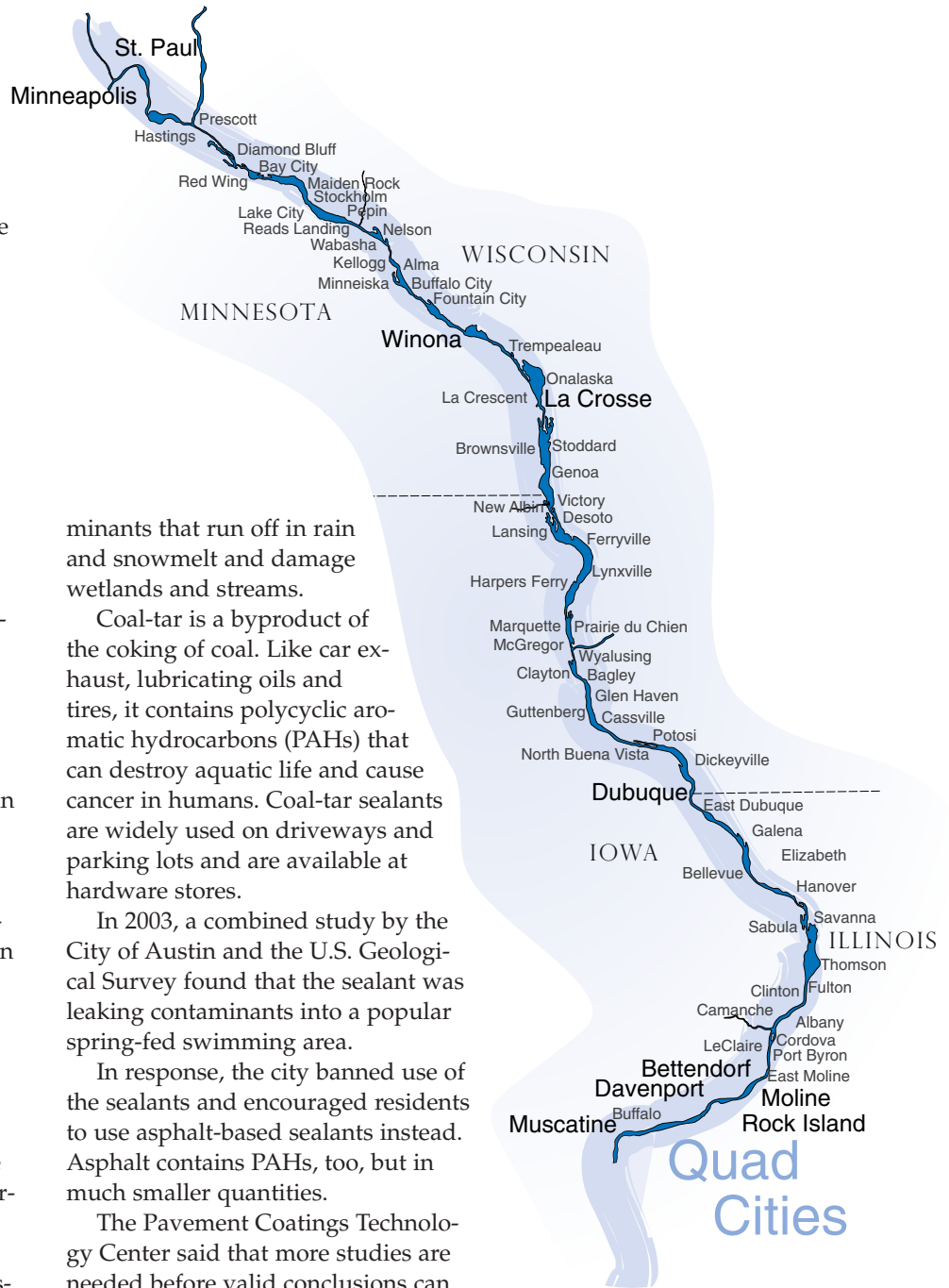
The increase is partly due to improved monitoring in 29 coastal states, but is also due to ongoing development of the coastlines. Pollution comes from sewers, septic systems and stormwater runoff from roads and buildings.

The National Resources Defense Council, a nonprofit organization, has sued the Environmental Protection Agency for failing to modernize its standards and methods of measuring health safety at beaches, a move that was ordered by Congress in 2000. The Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act required the EPA to revise its standards by October 2005. The agency said it will not finish the revision until 2011.

## Seal of Disapproval

**Austin, Tex.** — Recent studies show that coal-tar sealants may leak conta-

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minants that run off in rain and snowmelt and damage wetlands and streams.

Coal-tar is a byproduct of the coking of coal. Like car exhaust, lubricating oils and tires, it contains polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that can destroy aquatic life and cause cancer in humans. Coal-tar sealants are widely used on driveways and parking lots and are available at hardware stores.

In 2003, a combined study by the City of Austin and the U.S. Geological Survey found that the sealant was leaking contaminants into a popular spring-fed swimming area.

In response, the city banned use of the sealants and encouraged residents to use asphalt-based sealants instead. Asphalt contains PAHs, too, but in much smaller quantities.

The Pavement Coatings Technology Center said that more studies are needed before valid conclusions can be reached about the sources of PAHs in urban waters. (Madison, Wis., *Capital Times*, 6-14-6)

## River Leaves Town

**Epsom, N.H.** — Heavy rains caused heavy flooding on many rivers in New England in May. But while residents of the town of Epsom sandbagged the dams near the mill and a few other points to contain the Suncook River, the high water started re-

ceding. Then it started flowing backward until it drained away entirely. The river had created a new channel, cutting cross country to rejoin the old bed, leaving the town of Epsom high and dry.

What happened is still under discussion. One theory is that too much material was moved and removed from a gravel pit near the river, causing the river to drain off that way, following the path of least resistance.

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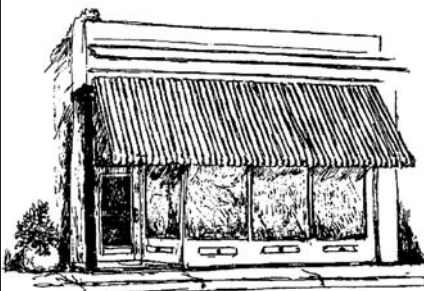


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What to do is still under discussion, too. Some people, especially campgrounds and other river-related businesses, want the river back. Others are wary of how much this might cost and think it might be best left where it is. (*New York Times*, 5-25-6)



*Red-shouldered hawks in pools 9, 10 and 12 successfully raised more young this spring than in any year since 1983. (Larry Stone)*

## Red-shouldered Success

**McGregor, Iowa** — Success is hard to figure out sometimes. John Stravers, research coordinator for the Audubon Upper Mississippi River Campaign, has studied red-shouldered hawks since 1983. He's watched the birds, greeted their arrival in the spring, kept track of nesting pairs and climbed trees to check on young ones. Even he does not know why the birds in his study area had such a great year in 2006.

Working in pools 9, 10 and 12, and a few tributaries, Stravers documented 13 nesting attempts, 12 of which were successful and produced 33 young hawks that reached fledging age. That's a 92.3 percent rate of successful nests, producing an average of 2.75 young per successful nest — quite a bit higher than the cumulative average of between 62 and 67 percent, with 2.0 nestlings per nest.

Red-shouldered hawks hunt among the trees in some of the river's most inaccessible floodplain forests. Studying them during nesting season requires determination, hard work and high boots.

Between 1983 and 2005, Stravers and his team watched for the hawks along 495 miles of river (between river miles 317 to 812), and documented them at 63 sites. The all-time low (33 percent) during this period was during the flood years of 1993 and 2001, but the cumulative average of nesting success has always been between 62 and 67 percent, until 2006. Stravers

suspects that this year's mild spring weather, a short high-water period, and a good supply of frogs and other prey may have contributed to their success.

The research project was funded by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Audubon Upper Mississippi River Campaign.

## New Roost for Eagle Center

**Wabasha, Minn.** — The National Eagle Center is scheduled to begin construction in September on a new 15,000-square-foot building near the river in the center of town. Mary Beth Garrigan, Eagle Center director, said the center has raised \$3.5 million of its \$4.2 million goal and, "The new center is a go!"

A state grant would have expired at the end of the year if the center had not started construction.

The new building, designed by LHB of Minneapolis, will have aviaries for five eagles, along with expanded office space, public exhibits, meeting rooms, classrooms and a glass wall overlooking the river.

Watching eagles from inside on blustery February and March days should appeal to many visitors, Garrigan said.

## Expanding Excursions

**Cassville, Wis.** — If you're looking for ways to get out on the river, check out the following new opportunities:

Mississippi River Outfitters is lo-



cated in a historic building in Cassville. The Male family owns and operates the new venture, guiding visitors on short and long trips to scenic, out-of-the-way spots. They'll even drop you off at an island beach with a picnic lunch and pick you up again a few hours later. The boat holds a maximum of six guests. Call or drop in for reservations.


Another new option is the River Wildlife Cruise offered by the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa. The 90-minute cruise on the *Mississippi Explorer*, a pontoon boat, takes visitors up Catfish Creek to the Mines of Spain and to other the backwater areas.

Owner Jack Libby said the cruise reminds people of a jungle trip because of the cliffs and dense vegetation. "We have everything but hipopotamuses," he said. A museum naturalist accompanies the cruise.

Cruises run through October. Tickets are sold at the museum box office.

The paddlewheel excursion boat, *The Pearl of the Lake*, now docks at the Willows condo-resort on the upriver end of Lake City, Minn. Owners Larry and Nancy Neilson said they bought and refurbished the boat because for years visitors have asked, "Where can I get a boat ride out on the lake?"

For reservations call the Willows or see their website.

In its second year docked at the Port of Dubuque, the riverboat *Twilight* (a sister boat to the *Julia Belle Swain* of La Crosse, but without a paddlewheel) takes people out on short and long cruises. Some are two-day cruises, with guests staying overnight at a hotel on shore. Call for reservations or visit their website. 

## Dam Lights

**Rock Island, Ill.** — Engineers and administrators from both Davenport and Rock Island have been trying out different color schemes for the lights that will soon illuminate Lock and Dam 15. Blue lights alone, blue lights accented by yellow lights, or blue with white are the colors of choice so far. Lighting designer David Raver

explained that blue was the only "safe" color. It's soothing and it stands out. Besides, it doesn't interfere with red and green river navigation lights.

The project is part of the 2004 River Vision redevelopment effort on the Davenport and Rock Island riverfronts, and was funded by a grant from the Riverboat Development Authority.

## New Bronze

**Prairie du Chien, Wis.** — A new sculpture joined the Mississippi River Sculpture Park on St. Feriole Island this summer: a larger-than-life size bronze of Dr. William Beaumont and his son Israel. It was created by Spring Green, Wis., artist Florence Bird, who also created the sculpture of Sauk chief Black Hawk, which was installed last fall. Eventually, 26 of Bird's sculptures will be donated to the city for the park.

Dr. Beaumont was an Army surgeon at Fort Crawford, in Prairie du Chien, during the 1820s and 1830s. He was a pioneer of medical physiology. According to the press release about the unveiling, "His extensive experiments on one man, Alexis St. Martin, formed the basis for most of our knowledge of the human digestive system."

## Pesky Pesticides

**Washington, D.C.** — The Environmental Protection Agency is recommending new restrictions on thousands of uses of food-crop pesticides because of their harmful effects on public health. The agency's 10-year study focussed on 231 chemicals known as organophosphates and carbamates, long implicated and controversial for their roles in causing illness.

About 3,200 uses of pesticides will be disallowed, and 1,200 others will be modified.

Most, but not all, uses of the pesticide carbofuran, a nematicide used on corn, rice, tobacco and other crops, will be cancelled. This pesticide has had a deadly effect on bald eagles, hawks and migratory songbirds. The EPA estimates that as many as two



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million birds a year have been killed by ingesting carbofuran.

The pesticide lindane can no longer be used to treat seeds, although it may continue to be used as a flea- and lice-dip on pets and livestock.

## Belle II Sold

**Clinton, Iowa** — The *Mississippi Belle II*, a cruising riverboat casino docked on the Clinton riverfront, has been sold to Wild Rose Entertainment, an Iowa-based gaming company, for \$46.3 million. Wild Rose opened its first casino in Emmetsburg, Iowa, in June. The *Mississippi Belle II* will stay where it is for now, but will move to an undisclosed location on the west edge of Clinton in late 2007.

Wild Rose plans include 650 new slot machines, a 45-room hotel, sports bar, buffet and meeting space.

## Testing Nestlings

Biologists working for the National Park Service's Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network (GLKN) in

Ashland, Wis., tested the blood and feathers from about 50 eaglets from 35 nests earlier this summer.

The biologists are looking for heavy metals, such as mercury and lead; organo-chloride pesticides, such as DDT; and a range of other chemicals, such as PCBs and fire retardants. The toxins can build up to high levels in eagles, which feed on fish and other potentially contaminated species.

The study area includes the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) and other Park Service sites, including the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, the Apostle Islands, Isle Royale, and other Great Lakes region sites. The Park Service partnered with the MNRRA and Audubon Minnesota, which helped locate the nest sites in the MNRRA.

To collect the samples, a climber ascended a nest tree, carefully placed the eaglets into specially designed bags, then lowered them or hand delivered them to technicians below. After the samples were taken, the

climber returned the five- to nine-week-old birds to their nests.

"The parents make a lot of commotion, swooping around and calling a lot," said GLKN biologist Bill Route, "but they never come closer than 30 feet, and they eventually just leave the nesting area and come back later."

They plan to collect additional samples next spring. Lab results from this year's testing may be available by then.

## Sacred Space Saved

**Mendota Heights, Minn.** — Mde-wakanton people and nature lovers can rest easier now that some high ground has been preserved in Mendota Heights.

Pilot Knob, a hill with views of the Minneapolis skyline, historic Fort Snelling, and the Mississippi and Minnesota river valleys, is also a tribal burial site. In December, a partnership made up of Dakota County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the city of Mendota



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## Chasing the Good Life

**Prescott, Wis.** — It provided covering fire for troops landing at Utah Beach during the Normandy invasion. The big D-Day storm could not sink it. German planes strafed it and tried to bomb it.

It menaced U-boats with depth charges. Now, perhaps one of only two such wooden boats left intact, the 115-foot World War II-era submarine chaser *USS SC1342* rests peacefully in St.



*Some neighbors don't like looking at the USS SC1342, a wooden World War II submarine chaser docked at Prescott, Wis. (Cindi Beurskens)*

Croix Lake on the St. Croix River, just above its confluence with the Mississippi at Prescott.

Peaceful except for a few folks unhappy that the boat, the year-round home of its savior Richard Lindsey, has sat in the same section of the river for three years. Since authorities determined that Lindsey is not breaking any laws or causing any problems, things have simmered down.

"We're easy to get along with. I moved the boat out of the line of sight," of most riverbank homes, he said, explaining that some residents regard the boat as an eyesore because it needs paint and minor repairs. "Ninety-nine percent of the people who approach me about the boat now are positive."

The ship was hauled back to the United States on a freighter after the war. Someone tried to restore it and then dumped it in the St. Croix near North Hudson, Wis. In 1976 Lindsey,

out fishing, saw the hull sticking out of the water. He bought the salvage rights, and by 1979 the repaired boat was afloat. Lindsey has not restored the boat, but has built houseboat style living quarters on it. After living on it for 28 years, he is ready for

a change, and hopes to sell the sub chaser to someone, possibly with the money to do an historical restoration.

For now, though, Lindsey, who works as operations manager at the Steamboat Inn in Prescott, enjoys life on the water. He likes the natural setting and living simply and inexpensively on the river, without having to buy pricey land and pay property taxes.

For reasons practical more than ecological, he has fitted the boat out to make it "probably the greenest thing on the river." He makes biodiesel from discarded vegetable oil from the restaurant, reducing his reliance on fossil fuels by 75 percent. He has installed a 4,500-watt solar system on deck, and only uses a minimal off-boat electricity. Sewage is dumped properly, and a gray-water system with a settling pond returns clean water to the river. ☰

## Land Returned

**Red Wing, Minn.** — The Mdewakanton Band of Eastern Dakota on Prairie Island regained 1,290 acres of land from the Army Corps of Engineers in May. Although about 800 acres lies under water, the transfer still is significant because the tribe considers the land sacred. In the 1930s, burial

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Heights, and the Trust for Public Land purchased 8.5 acres atop the hill for \$1.97 million.

The site opened to the public this spring, following years of negotiations. Prior to the public purchase, a developer had proposed a 157-unit residential development on the site. (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 2, 2006)

mounds and ceremonial and village sites were submerged by water held behind the newly built Lock and Dam 3.

The dry portion of the land cannot be used for human habitation or building projects unless authorized by the federal government, and no gambling facilities may be constructed. The tribe plans to leave most of the land in its natural state to honor its sacred status. The Mdewakanton are considering re-establishing some native vegetation, growing feed for the tribe's buffalo herd and planting wild rice. The Corps will manage the land in matters of navigation, while the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will continue to regulate one of the natural lakes. (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 11, 2006)

## River School

**West St. Paul, Minn.** — Some Twin Cities students will use the Mississippi as a classroom, if the proposed River's Edge Academy is granted charter high school status. West St.

Paul is the most likely location of the academy, according to Dawn Clawson, planning director.

Clawson, a retired St. Paul Central High School biology teacher, explained that the purpose of the school is "to build up in students concern and stewardship for the river through prolonged exposure to it."

The organizers of the proposed public school believe the Mississippi can be a tool for learning in all disciplines, including math, science, art, literature and history. "The river provides a rich social history of our area," Clawson said.

The school would emphasize hands-on learning, outdoor adventure, and connection to community. Students would work on outdoor projects several times a week, so the group is seeking a location near the river and close to public transportation.

A number of organizations are supportive of the proposed school, including the Audubon Center of the North Woods, which has agreed to be

the group's sponsor; the Audubon Mississippi River Campaign; and the Large River Study Center at Winona (Minn.) State University.

Clawson hopes to open the school in September 2008 with an enrollment of at least 75 students in 9th and 10th grades. The 11th and 12th grades would follow, with total enrollment topping out at fewer than 200 students.

## One Less Bridge

**Inver Grove Heights, Minn.** — Soon one less bridge will span the Mississippi. The bridge, between Inver Grove Heights and St. Paul Park, has become a safety hazard, a security threat (the bridge road runs through the Marathon Petroleum Refinery) and a visual blight. All involved agree it would be too costly to repair, considering that the Interstate 494 bridge is only a couple of miles up-river.

When the bridge, formerly called the Rock Island Bridge, began service in 1895 it had one deck above for



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This carving by Leo and Marilyn Smith is among the collection of local and regional art at the museum. (Minnesota Marine Art Museum)

## Safe Harbor for Art

**Winona, Minn.** — Winona's commercial harbor is a busy, crowded place, with towboats moving barges, trucks unloading corn and soybeans, and piles of salt and coal awaiting shipment. It's hardly the place you'd expect to find an art museum. But when the Minnesota Marine Art Museum opened late this summer, the harbor itself seemed to be part of the exhibits.

The Minnesota Marine Art Museum occupies six acres at the edge of the commercial harbor on Riverview Drive, just west of the Interstate Bridge. The new museum was built to resemble a typical waterfront building from the late 1800s. Three spacious galleries hold the three collections — marine paintings and historic artifacts; the carvings of con-

temporary folk artists Leo and Marilyn Smith; and photos by Henry Bosse, picturing the Upper Mississippi from 1883 to 1891.

Outside the museum, just above the riprap, a concrete pad awaits the Army Corps of Engineers dredge *Thompson*, a historic boat scheduled to become part of the museum complex after it is decommissioned in 2008. 🇺🇸



Three collections of art are housed in the new Minnesota Marine Art Museum on Winona's waterfront. (Minnesota Marine Art Museum)

trains, and one below for automobiles, horse-drawn wagons, and pedestrians. Boats passed through the middle section of the bridge, which swung open. No traffic has crossed the bridge since 1999, although locals use it as an informal park.

Washington and Dakota county officials met in July to discuss taking down the bridge, which is currently owned by the state. (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 6, 2006)

## Bottomlands Restored

**Red Wing, Minn.** — Thirty acres of silted-in Mississippi River bottomland is being restored this summer — benefiting waterfowl and cerulean warblers and other species. The work

will be accomplished with \$15,000 raised by the Red Wing Wildlife League (RWWL) and a matching grant from Xcel Energy.

The project is the first of many in a plan developed for RWWL by engineering firm Bonestroo and Associates, to restore portions of the the group's 2,800 acres upstream from Red Wing, according to Tom Olson, RWWL president.

The plan is based in part on aerial photos from the 1930s, when the land included large areas of open water up to six feet deep. The plan aims to reduce siltation and restore bottomland using excavation, berming, plantings and spillway maintenance, according to John Smyth of Bonestroo.

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“The silted-in areas have become covered with monotype and invasive plant species,” he said, “and increasing the plant diversity will help game and nongame species.” An inventory of sensitive natural areas within RWWL land will help nurture plant and animal species. For example, an eagle’s nest was moved and warbler habitat was identified, so it could be preserved and expanded.

The Coon Slough Dam project is the first to be implemented. The cost of the entire plan is expected to exceed a million dollars, which will require funding from major sources, such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Army Corps of Engineers, corporations and foundations.

The 800-member league opens the land to local residents for many outdoor activities. ☺

## Fired Up for Hydropower

**Rock Island, Ill.** — A hydroelectric power plant built in 1912 on the Rock River in Rock Island, Ill., may soon provide a good deal of that city government’s electrical needs. The plant was closed in the 1960s, but was purchased by Mitch White in 1981 under the name White Hydropower Company. It has been providing energy since then to the regional supplier, Mid-American Energy.

The idea came about after White was appointed to a Rock Island task force, the Advanced Technology and Sustainable Consortium. Tom Ayers, chief building official for the city says that the city and White are “in synch” and possibilities are being explored.

The plant now generates about 600 kilowatts, which is enough to power about 300 homes. Rock Island would help the plant more than double its capacity to 1,500 kilowatts by expanding from two to five hydropower turbines and generators. Eventually the city would take over ownership and be the sole consumer, while White would continue running the facility. At present, White, his wife and one part-time employee operate the plant. The only times the turbines



More creative than the average cornfield, this crop art is a maze in the shape of a catfish. (Kyle Vesperman)

stop are when the river is high, which eliminates the necessary elevation drop over the dam, and a couple days when the river starts to freeze.

“There is a complicated process that should be and will be followed,” Ayers said, “but we may have an extraordinary opportunity here that may be too good to let slip away.”

“Wouldn’t it be cool,” he adds, “if the city could get 80 percent of its electrical power needs from a non-polluting, renewable resource?”

## Maize Maze

**Lancaster, Wis.** — Aerial surveyors and visitors from outer space will probably wonder what that big catfish is doing on the ridge above the river in southwestern Wisconsin. It’s as big as a cornfield. In fact, the catfish is cut into a cornfield — it’s a corn maze.

“We wanted to tie in with the big catfish exhibit at the National River Museum in Dubuque,” said Kyle Vesperman of Vesperman Farms.

Corn mazes grow up in a season. People pay a few dollars to enjoy an afternoon (45 minutes to two hours) wandering through and, at the end of the season, the corn can be harvested.

This year’s catfish design was cut into the corn in June, based on the specifications of international maze designer Adrian Fisher, of England, who also designed last year’s steamboat maze. The maize maze opens on Labor Day and closes at the end of October. For more information see the Vesperman Farms website. ☺

## Dock, No Dock

**LeClaire, Iowa** — The citizens of LeClaire have not given up their goal to ban new commercial docks from

(River News continues on page 36)

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# A QUIETER REFUGE: THE NEW PLAN

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS) has spent the last couple of years updating the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, trying to find a balance between human activities and the needs of wildlife. Its new plan, introduced in July, sketches out how humans on the refuge will be managed for the next 15 years. The plan is scheduled to take effect in August.

One big change will shift “no-hunting and avoidance” areas to favor migrating waterfowl. The other big change creates “slow, no-wake” areas or “electric-motor” areas in 13 backwaters to protect wildlife and quiet activities.

The refuge encompasses 240,000 acres from Wabasha, Minn., to Rock Island, Ill. The planning process began in August 2002, including 46 public meetings attended by 4,500 people in the four states bordering the refuge.

Hunting changes, motor restriction areas, and phase-out of permanent waterfowl hunting blinds drew the most ire at public meetings. In response, the F&WS adjusted the proposed plan, but many new features remained in the final draft. A 25-shot-gun-shell daily limit for waterfowl hunters, 100-yard spacing between hunting parties, restrictions on camping, a launch fee and several other proposals were dropped.

## Slow Boats Only

Watercraft powered by internal combustion engines will be banned from five electric-motor areas, which are in backwaters that are generally not very accessible and favored by canoeists, kayakers and wildlife. Previously the refuge contained only one electric-motor area — Mertes Slough, near Winona, Minn.

### *The electric-motor areas:*

- Island 42 at river mile 749, in Pool 5, near Buffalo City, Wis., 459 acres.
- Snyder Lake at river mile 735, in Pool 5A, near Minnesota City, Minn., 181 acres.
- Mertes Slough at river mile 726, in Pool 6, across the river from Winona, 222 acres.
- Browns Marsh at river mile 709, in Pool 7, on the Black River between Trempealeau and Midway, Wis., 827 acres.
- Hoosier Lake at river mile 623, in Pool 10, near Bagley, Wis., 162 acres.

From March 16 to Oct. 31, watercraft must travel at no-wake speeds and hovercraft and airboats are banned from eight “slow, no-wake areas.”

### *The slow, no-wake areas:*

- Nelson-Treveno at river mile 762, in Pool 4, across the river from Wabasha, 2,626 acres. This designation will not take effect until March 16, 2009.
- Denzers at river mile 733, in Pool 5A, near Minnesota City, 83 acres.
- Black River Bottoms at river mile 709, in Pool 7, across from Dakota, Minn., 1,165 acres.
- Blue-Target Lake at river mile 697, in Pool 8, near La Crescent, Minn., 1,834 acres.
- Root River at river mile 695, in Pool 8, across from south La Crosse, Wis., 695 acres.
- Reno Bottoms at river mile 680, in Pool 9, across from Genoa, Wis., 2,536 acres.
- Nine Mile Island at river mile 573, in Pool 12, downriver from Dubuque, Iowa, 454 acres.
- Princeton at river mile 506, in Pool 14, upriver from Princeton, Iowa, 327 acres.

Together, the electric-motor areas and slow, no-wake areas make up about eight percent of the refuge’s water area.

### **More R&R for the Birds**

Avoidance and no-hunting areas were adjusted to close large gaps on the river for migrating waterfowl to rest and feed. Earlier proposals would have banned fishing and motors in the closed areas. Those provisions were dropped or softened in the final plan. The total acreage of waterfowl hunting closed areas was slightly reduced, although the number of areas was increased.


No changes will be implemented before this fall’s hunting season, but at the end of the season hunters must remove permanent hunting blinds from Pool 12 (Dubuque to Bellevue, Iowa). Permanent blinds will be phased out in pools 13 and 14 after the next two hunting seasons.

The new hunting closed areas will be posted by the fall 2007 season. The electric-motor areas and slow, no-wake areas will also be marked with signs and buoys in 2007, explained Don Hultman, refuge manager.

Other rules, including banning glass containers from beaches, will also take effect next year.

F&WS conservation officers will enforce the new regulations, as will Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois conservation officers. Wisconsin conservation officers can only enforce state laws, so provisions of the new plan will have to be added to state laws before Wisconsin officers can enforce them.

Some parts of the plan, such as land acquisition, new trails and observation platforms, will await funding. Implementation of the plan will cost about \$228, according to F&WS. About \$177 million of that would be spent directly on habitat improvements and land acquisition.

Documents with details of the new plan are available on the web, in public libraries in communities adjacent to the refuge and in refuge district offices in Winona; La Crosse; McGregor, Iowa; and Savanna, Ill. 

# confluence

## Where Comfort and Creativity Converge

By Pete Beurskens

Where the Mississippi and the St. Croix rivers meet at Prescott, Wis., aerial photos show a sharp delineation between the dark, earthy Mississippi water and the clear St. Croix. Prescott also lies on the confluence between the expanding Twin Cities metropolitan area and the rustic, rolling dairy land of the Driftless Area.

This is also where upscale urban dining meets “sincere, unpretentious service in a friendly, small restaurant,” as Confluence restaurant chef and owner Mark McGraw put it. “People walk by outside and peer in, wondering whether they are dressed too informally, and I’m like, ‘Get in here!’”

“The hardest thing to get across to people who haven’t been in, is that Confluence is a casual restaurant — playful, upscale, but essentially casual, without contrivance, but with linen tablecloths.”

McGraw laughs and speaks with enthusiasm. Maybe his cheerfulness flows from another confluence of sorts, the way he has fashioned his place to satisfy his desire to spend time on the rivers and with friends and family, while succeeding in the restaurant business, but without the stress it traditionally demands.

The restaurant is small. He only serves an evening meal. It is open no more than five days a week, and he has kept the overhead low. He did virtually all of the remodeling himself, which involved gutting the for-



Confluence in Prescott, Wis., was formerly a bakery. (Cindi Beurskens)

mer bakery in downtown Prescott, while he lived in an apartment in the rear of the building for over a year before opening in September 2004.

Don’t assume living a sane lifestyle means McGraw doesn’t serve a superb meal. He does. And it is afford-

*The night we visited, we sat at the only available table. Relaxed laughter and conversation transformed the formal-looking room.*

able, at \$22 a plate for any entrée. The wine, from a growing offering of 60 to 70 mostly California small-winery labels, starts at around \$7 a glass.

McGraw bills his food as “new American cuisine” and defines this as “comfort food of a high quality,” so that diners find items on the menu that are familiar yet distinct, “very American but perhaps with French or Asian characteristics. I like good food, and I like to keep eating it until I am full,” he says.

One of the most popular dishes exemplifies — even in its name — Mc-

Graw’s playful, “fine-comfort” hybrid. The evening we dined there, my wife ordered “Pancakes and Bacon,” featuring succulent pork tenderloin slices, rubbed with lavender, in a blueberry gastrique. Two delicate and earthy “pancakes” of wild rice and cornmeal provided

a nice textural counterpoint to the meat. The comfort of blueberry pancakes and bacon is ingeniously worked into an original and delightful contemporary dish.

My entrée, salmon stuffed with thin avocado slices, rested on a base of lemon mashed potatoes, with a mango salsa tumbling down one side. A mildly spicy coating on the fish blended perfectly with the sweet salsa.

The cheese and dessert samplers only confirmed the pleasant comforts of the evening. Of the three cheeses, each presented with its own sauce and garnish, the goat cheese with a dollop of honeycomb was particularly nice. The three desserts — French Toast (lemon-cardamom pound cake with blueberry-Riesling sauce), Molten Chocolate Cake with vanilla bean crème Anglaise, and Ginger Crème Caramel with candied ginger and cream — were lovely, and more than met McGraw’s goal of seeing that his diners’ feel full at evening’s end.

McGraw frequently changes his menu as fresh ingredients — local or international — become available. Typical items include: braised rabbit with parsnip mashed potatoes and





Chef-owner Mark McGraw

butternut squash; seared duck breast on warm spinach salad with pancetta-balsamic dressing, white figs, walnuts and Spanish cabrales; and vegetable chowder with bacon, cauliflower, parsnips, leeks, and sweet corn. Toto, I don't think we're in Prescott anymore. Oh, but we are!

Confluence is pleasant and comfortable. The old wooden floor of the bakery has been refinished, but still retains marks of a century of use, while the exposed ceiling joists, painted black, counter the homeliness of the floor with their suggestion of urban loft décor. Three large, brightly colored contemporary paintings hang

on otherwise plain white walls, while mirrors and vertical strips of beige fabric add to the effect.

The night we visited, we sat at the only available table. Relaxed laughter and conversation transformed the formal looking room. Our server was prompt and attentive without seeming rushed, though she was kept busy all evening.

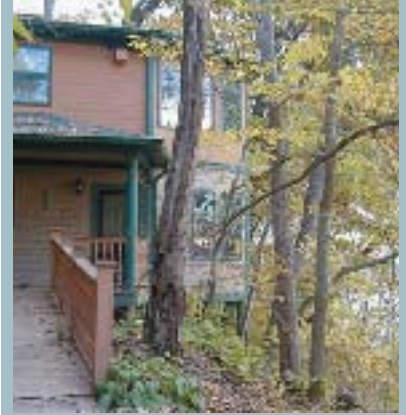
The next time you hunger for fine, filling food, just follow either the Mississippi or the St. Croix until the two meet, where you'll find Confluence at 211 Broad Street North, Prescott. In summer it opens at 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, and is closed Sunday and Monday. Call (715) 262-5700 for reservations, or visit the website. 🐱

*Pete Beurskens is a writer based in River Falls, Wis. This is his first story for Big River.*

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# Huck Finn's on the Water

By Pamela Eyden



**D**o you spend the cold months dreaming of sunlight flashing off bright white boat hulls and blue water rippling in the breeze? If you're looking for an airy, bright restaurant on the river with good food, drinks and a place to dock your boat or look at other peoples' boats, Huck Finn's on the Water, on French Island, near La Crosse, Wis., is your spot.

From the bar and dining room inside or the deck outside, you can keep an eye on the boat slips of North Bay Marina surrounding the restaurant, the wooded island across the bay and the busy channel of the Black River beyond that. Just south of the marina, tows push barges around in the commercial harbor. In the distance you can see the bluffs that keep La Crosse from spreading too far from the river.

When we arrived early one weekday evening, the jolly crowd on the deck sipped drinks while two musi-

cians played pop tunes. Many of the celebrants looked like they just stepped off a boat. They were generally younger and clustered in larger groups than the diners inside, who preferred air-conditioned comfort to the heat and sun.

The 80-seat dining room at Huck Finn's is spacious, with an angled

*We stabbed the spicy, tender tidbits with toothpicks and swirled them in a bowl of spicy sauce. They were so good I could have made a meal of them alone.*

ceiling and nearly floor-to-ceiling windows on three sides. The fourth wall is hung with old photographs of paddlewheelers. There isn't a bad seat in the house.

The menu offers a solid selection of appetizers — haystack onions, arti-

choke dip with baguette, breaded calamari. We chose Huck's Chislics, tiny beef tips marinated and deep fried. We stabbed the spicy, tender tidbits with toothpicks and swirled them in a bowl of spicy sauce. They were so good I could have made a meal of them alone.

The menu ranges from soups and salads to roasted chicken, fish, pasta and a variety of steaks. This isn't a big range, and there's nothing particularly imaginative about it, but who wants to spend time puzzling through the menu when you can be enjoying the view?

I chose the Lake Michigan Perch, lightly breaded and pan fried. The four tasty little filets came with a fresh salad, a mound of garlic mashed potatoes and a helping of summer vegetables cooked just right — an attractive plate. I liked my fish very much, dipping every other bite into a pool of lemon butter.

My companion ordered the



Sawyer's Salmon Oscar, with Caesar salad, vegetables and garlic mashed potatoes. Two shrimp and a light sauce embellished the modest portion of salmon, which was grilled just right. The shrimp, too, were tasty.

We were too full to consider dessert. Our bill came in at just under \$50, without the tip.

By the time we left, the deck outside was full, the music was in full swing and the outdoor grill cooks were busy flipping burgers. At Huck Finn's, you can enjoy the marina atmosphere without the expense of owning a boat.

This is the restaurant's fourth summer. It is owned by Skipperliner, which also owns the marina and builds and sells boats. Skipperliner also owns the South Bay Marina and operates the *Island Girl* and *La Crosse Queen* excursion boats in La Crosse. Huck's caters for both boats.

Don Reich, restaurant manager, said the Black Angus steaks and artichoke dip are his favorite items on the menu. "We do almost everything

from scratch."

The restaurant aims to please a broad variety of diners, from slip holders returning from a day on the river to couples out for a nice dinner, he said.

French Island is a large island separated from Onalaska and north La Crosse by the Black River, which joins the Mississippi just below the island. Lake Onalaska, to the north of the island, was formed when Lock and Dam 7 flooded a small farming community and backwaters there. Now nearly half of French Island is taken up by the La Crosse Municipal Airport, but many of the homes on the island front the river, lake or backwaters.

If you're not a local or in a boat, Huck Finn's might be a bit difficult to find. To get there from Interstate 90, take the airport exit on French Island and turn south (the opposite direction from the airport) on Dawson Ave. Follow Dawson, which becomes Bainbridge St., and continue past Clinton St. (the street that links French Island

to La Crosse), at which point you will start seeing signs for the restaurant. Huck Finn's is a block farther on your left, behind the massive Skipperliner building.

From downtown La Crosse, take Fourth St. north until it becomes Rose St. Turn left at Clinton St. (near the old locomotive) and drive across the bridge to French Island. Turn left on Bainbridge St. and continue about a block. It's on the left.

In a boat, get directions to North Bay Marina, which is just upstream from downtown, on the Black River.

Huck's opens at 11 a.m. for lunch; Sunday brunch is from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and lunch starts at noon. Dinner is served from 5 to 9:30 p.m. on weekdays, 5 until 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Sunday. The lounge and deck are open until at least 11 p.m. on weekdays and midnight on Friday and Saturday. For reservations call (608) 791-3595. ☎

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Dickeyville and other  
river sites,*

# Creative Spirits Left Their Mark

*Story by Pamela Eyden*

*Photos by Pamela Eyden, except where  
specified*

An appealingly outlandish red and pink fence pops up out of the cornfields surrounding the grounds of the Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden, which is visible from Highway 35-54 south of Cochrane, Wis. It and the sculptures on the grounds are the work of Herman Rusch, retired farmer and self-taught artist, who died in 1985 at age 100. In his "ten comandments of how to live a long and joyful life," the sixth was, "try and create some hobby. As doing nothing causes boredom. Bordom kills more people then any other cause [sic]."

Rusch did just that. He was 73 when he began creating what now stands as the Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden at Cochrane, Wis. Over 16 years he did all the work himself, from hauling stone out of a hillside quarry to mixing cement with pigments and cutting iron wheels into arches.

Prairie Moon museum also houses the miniatures of another local self-taught artist, Fred Schlosstein, who devoted his retirement years in the 1930s and 1940s to creating animal sculptures and stone replicas of Cochrane buildings. He arranged them in a village and set the village into a landscape in his back yard. His and Rusch's works were restored

*(Art continued on page 53)*



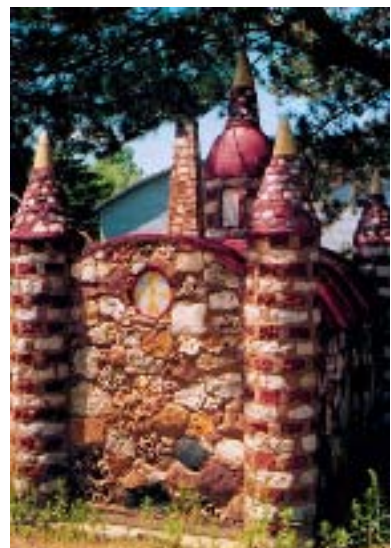
*A seal, bear, dinosaur and snake are among the wild things residing at Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden, which was featured in a "Naives and Visionaries" exhibit at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in 1974.*



*Neighbors were skeptical of Rusch's artwork until he finished a 260-foot fence made of wheel rims, cement, hand-hewn stone, paint and glass. (RJ and Linda Miller)*



*This planter was Rusch's first sculpture. It and the castle at right hold up fairly well to the seasons, although other pieces need yearly maintenance.*







*In this sculpture, Rusch used the same motifs and materials as in his fence. The grounds are colorful with sculptures and the flowers maintained by Friends of Prairie Moon volunteers.*



*Rusch posed with his self-portrait. (Molly McGuire)*



*This hillside rock garden, built in the 1930s, is on private property, but visible from State Highway 95.*



*In the 1930s and 1940s, Fred Schlosstein lovingly created a whole village in miniature, including animals and replicas of buildings in Cochrane. Schlosstein's artwork, which is now housed inside the Prairie Moon Museum will soon be permanently displayed outside.*



*Remnants of the work of another inspired rock artist sit near the highway in Fountain City, Wis.*





*Cleaned, one-year-old, multi-colored Higgins eyes will be placed in a fresh cage and put back in the river to grow for another year or so. (Gary Wege)*

# Mussel Team

## Endangered Higgins eye pearly mussels get hands-on help from river biologists

By Reggie McLeod

A hatch of mayflies careened through the hot, humid air as a small team bustled about a Lake Pepin beach piled high with empty cages. A young woman rinsed the muck and sand from a jumble of mussels and mussel shells as a couple of men in flop hats picked out live mussels and dropped them into a bucket. A guy in a wet suit with a snorkel and another wearing a baseball cap carried an algae and slime-covered cage from the lake. Another woman sorted mussels nearby.

This is the hands-on part of a project restoring mussels to areas of the river where they were wiped out by pollution nearly a century ago. It's a

seat-of-the-pants operation, in which river biologists have had to figure out the science of a little-known species at

*A mussel bed is the foundation for a complex community that includes algae, insects, crawfish and fish... Mussel beds are often good fishing spots.*

the same time that they are developing the technology for producing thousands of the federally endangered Higgins eye pearly mussels.

These cages have served as nurseries for Higgins eyes since spring of 2005, when about 30 three-to-five-inch largemouth bass were put into each cage. Each bass carried Higgins eye larvae, called glochidia, on its gills. Within a few weeks the glochidia, nourished by the fish's blood, grew enough to survive independently and dropped onto the sand at the bottom of the cage. After about a month in the cage, the bass were released, and the tiny mussels remained inside the protective cage, safe from carp, sheepshead and other fish that like to eat small mussels, explained Mike Davis, a river ecologist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Re-



sources, Lake City office.

After the muck and sand are rinsed from each cage's contents, most of what is left are zebra mussel shells and live zebra mussels. The workers find between 30 and 90 live Higgins eyes in each cage and often one or two dead ones. The year-old mussels are about an inch to an inch-and-a-half long. Many are encrusted with zebra mussels. Because the cages are so mussel friendly, a variety of other mussel species have grown in them, too.

"We found a bluegill today, about that big," Davis said as he held his index fingers about seven inches apart. "It grew up in the cage."

The crew will clean up the Higgins eyes and the cages, put fresh sand into the bottoms along with about 300 Higgins eyes per cage. Then the cages will be carried back out in the lake and their position among the other cages will be mapped. Altogether about 250 cages sit under two to three feet of water in an area marked with buoys. About 100 contain the class of 2005. In September 2008 this class will be harvested and planted in several places, probably from below Lock and Dam 1, in the Twin Cities, to just above Lake Pepin. About half the females begin producing larvae during their third season.

"We've raised about 11,000 and stocked out about 7,000," said Dan Kelner, a fish biologist with the Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District.

The planted Higgins eyes are marked with colored super glue. The 2003 class has two dabs of black glue. Numbered tags are glued to a few of them after they are measured, so they can be tracked more closely. If they are ever recovered, researchers will be able to determine whether they have moved and how much they have grown, Kelner explained.

Later in the week, when the team processed cages containing mussels from a strain that originated in the St. Croix River, they found 1,400 Higgins eyes in a single cage, many contained more than 1,000. The first time they tried it, in 2000, they got three mus-



*Above: Biologists haul a mussel cage from Lake Pepin. The half-inch screen is nearly closed by slime and algae. (McLeod)*

*Right: The team cleans and sorts mussels. (McLeod)*

*Bottom right: Higgins eye mussels, zebra mussels and other mussels along with mud and an occasional fish emerge from the cages. (McLeod)*



**In September 2008 these mussels will be harvested and planted in several places in the Mississippi above Lake Pepin.**





Higgins eyes from the class of 2003 were marked with two dabs of black glue. (McLeod)



Top: These black sandshells grew in the cages with other kinds of mussels. (McLeod)



Above Zebra mussels cling to a fat mucket from lower Pool 4. (Mike Davis)

## Cherish the Mussels

Davis holds out a hand full of Higgins eyes. "Did you notice the different colors?" Some are yellow, some green and others reddish.

To most people mussels aren't very charismatic, but Davis finds them pretty interesting. In addition to his work reintroducing them to their former habitat, he and another DNR biologist explore St. Croix mussel beds at various times of the year and at night studying mussel behavior and taking photographs.

He is often asked to defend their importance, so he has a ready response:

- **They are sentinels of river health**, because they don't move around much. They can live 100 years, and even after they die their shells remain intact for thousands of years. Dead

shells indicate what species lived in an area in the past. Because mussels add a new layer to the inside of their shell each year, those layers preserve a record of the environment, including contaminants, from year to year.

- **A mussel bed is the foundation for a complex community** that includes algae, insects, crawfish and fish. Fish often hang out near a healthy mussel bed because of that richness. Mussel beds are often good fishing spots.

## History on the Halfshell

You can read human history on the Upper Mississippi in mussel shells. Huge collections of shells on islands and shores mark sites where Indians harvested mussels over many seasons, perhaps thousands of years ago. All the shells in some piles are perforated with holes from a half inch to

an inch across, where button blanks were drilled out for pearl buttons a century or so ago. For nearly all of the 20th century the stretch of river from Minneapolis to the head of Lake

*More than a thousand zebras sometimes attach themselves to a single mussel, suffocating it.*

Pepin was nearly devoid of living mussels or fish, because sewage depleted the water of oxygen.

A new threat to native mussels in the Mississippi arrived recently, when ships carried zebra mussels across the ocean and into the Great Lakes, where they found their way into the canal linking Lake Michigan with the



Illinois River, which carried them into the Mississippi. Tows spread them up the river to the Twin Cities, and pleasure boats carried them into many tributaries and lakes in the Upper Midwest. Zebra mussels attach themselves firmly to boat hulls, snags, water intake pipes and everything else in the water, including bigger mussels. More than a thousand zebra sometimes attach themselves to a single mussel, suffocating it.

Recently, biologists began a new chapter to that history. By 2000, when replacement of the antiquated sewer system in the Twin Cities was about 90 percent complete, young mussels started appearing again in the urban river. About 26 species have returned to the Twin Cities stretch, where about 42 species used to live.

Then, in 2000 the Army Corps of Engineers' "Upper Mississippi River-Illinois Waterway Navigation Feasibility Study" and the zebra mussel invasion provided an opportunity for the Higgins eyes. Biologists claimed that by bringing zebra mussels upriver on barges, river shipping "jeopardized the continued existence of the species," recalled Gary Wege, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist.

The situation required the Corps to pursue "reasonable and prudent alternatives" to establish populations of the mussels out of harm's way. To do this it organized the Mussel Coordination Team, a joint effort of the Corps; F&WS; U.S. Geological Sur-

vey; National Park Service; the Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin DNRs; Iowa State University; and the University of Minnesota. The Corps is spending between \$200,000 and \$300,000 a year on the project.

In 2000 biologists moved about 200 adult Higgins eyes from the river at

*"I don't think anyone, in their wildest imagination, thought we'd be this successful."*

Cassville, Wis., to sites just upstream from St. Paul's Hidden Falls Park and just below Hastings, Minn., and started figuring out how to produce the thousands of mussels needed to repopulate the river.

"I don't think anyone, in their wildest imagination, thought we'd be this successful," Wege said.

The populations they planted above Lake Pepin appear to be thriving, but it's too early to determine whether they are spreading naturally. Higgins eyes were found last year in Iowa's Wapsipinicon River for the first time in many years, following the release of fish infested with glochidia. It appears to be another success story, but it will take more study to say for sure, cautioned Wege.

Genetic studies may also solve some mysteries. For instance, their breeding stock of Higgins eyes from the St. Croix River and the Mississip-

pi at Cassville, Wis., and Cordova, Ill., appear to be genetically the same, but the St. Croix stock was more than 10 times as productive as the other two lines.

The next candidate for reintroduction may be the winged mapleleaf. It used to be found in 14 states, but until recently the only known population was just below Taylors Falls, Minn. Now a few have turned up in Arkansas and a couple other sites.

"This species is entirely different," Wege said.

It took a year or two to discover that blue catfish and channel catfish are hosts for winged mapleleaves. Then researchers discovered that the females produce glochidia in the fall, and the glochidia stay attached to their hosts through the winter and drop off in the spring. This promises to make growing winged mapleleaves a more complicated task.

## Baby Mussels

Mussel mating is a solitary affair. The male mussel releases sperm cases into the water. When a female breathes one in, her fertilized eggs

*(Mussels continues on page 34)*



Right: These packages of glochidia are disguised as tasty worms. (© M. C. Barnhart)

Below: When a female Higgins eye is ready to release glochidia, she wiggles lures on her lips that look like small fish, complete with an eye spot, fin and tail. (Mike Davis)





The *Success* was accompanied by a covered skiff, the *Lady Annie*. Doremus' family sometimes joined and helped him on the river. John P. Doremus with his wife, sons and daughters, at home in New Jersey.

## Life on a Floating Photo Studio

John P. Doremus was a stereographic photographer who plied his trade from a riverboat in the 1870s. As his diaries show, he had lots of competition.

*Diary and photographs by John P. Doremus*

*Introduction by Pamela Eyden*

In the late 1800s, stereograph photographs were like DVDs are today — a popular medium that lets people sit comfortably in their living rooms and view the wider world. By the 1870s, photographers ranged over the countryside taking pictures to satisfy the public demand. Some, for a fee, took pictures of families, farms and businesses.

In the 1870s John P. Doremus spent three summers on the river, taking stereographic photos and sending profits back to his family in New Jersey. In those days photography required careful handling of cumber-

some glass negatives and elaborate chemical and printing processes. Doremus worked on a custom-built floating photo studio-houseboat named *Success*, and negotiated all the ups and downs of river life, from floods and leaks to breakdowns, thefts and running the rapids.

Thanks to the efforts of Ralph DuPae (see "River People," this issue), all that remain of Doremus' 4,000 photographs, along with his diary, which DuPae transcribed by hand, are now included in the Special Collections of Murphy Library on the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus. Most of the images in this story are single frames from his stereographic views. (*Lady Annie* is a skiff that accompanied *Success*.)

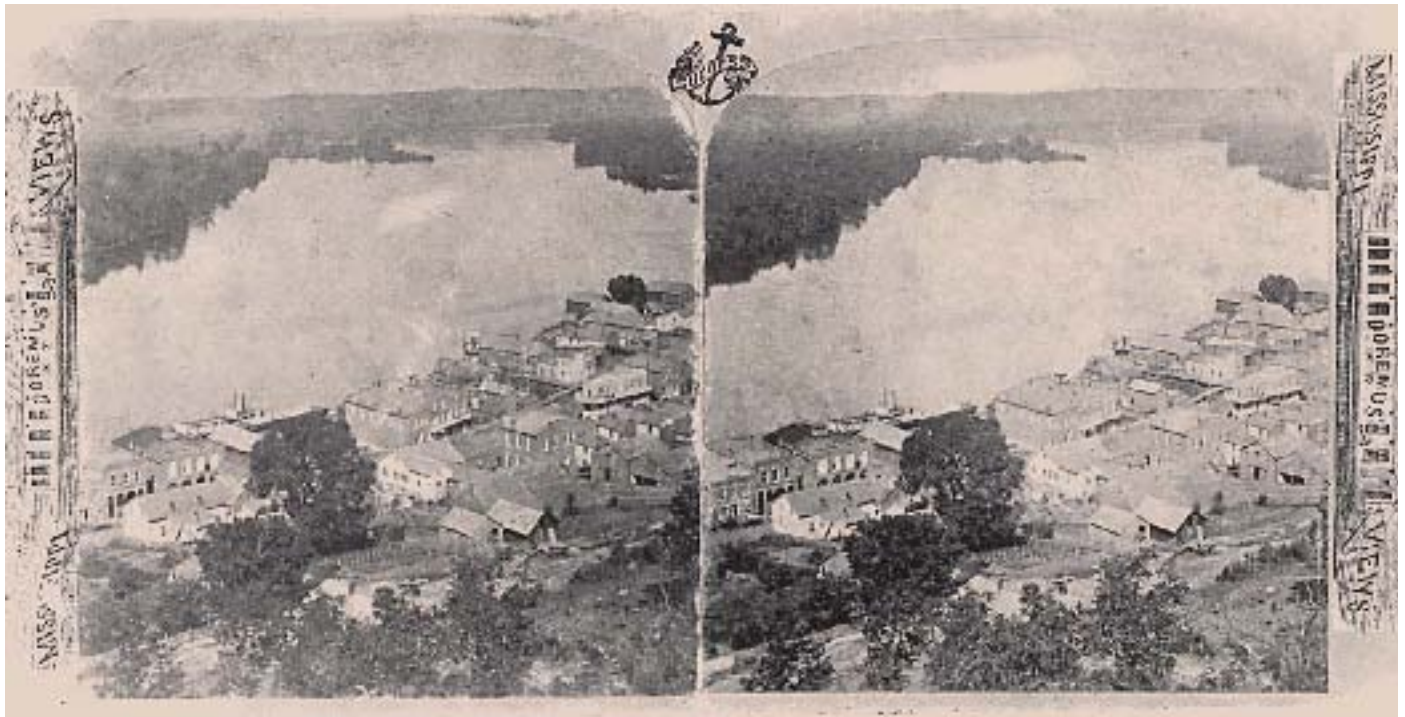
### THURSDAY, MAY 11, 1876

Went up Beef Slough yesterday morning. It is six miles above here. Got breakfast as soon as I arrived and went to work taking views of the works. I received great assistance from the clerk, Fred Rowe. Came back this morning with eleven good negatives. The company is formed for the purpose of receiving and sorting the logs that come down the Chipewa and making them into rafts. Over 200 men are employed.

### WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 1876

Have been doing pretty well at Trempealeau and there is prospect of a fair business. I start for home today.





Doremus hauled his photo equipment up many high bluffs to take pictures of the towns below, such as Fountain City, Wis. Note the words and engravings

on the frame of the photos: "Mississippi Views," Doremus's floating photo studio, and in the center at top, the boat's name, "Success" adorns an anchor.

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 1876

About noon took some views of the steamer *Arkansas* with four barges in tow. Took dinner with Capt. Wilcox. He offered to tow me down, so on we went past Brownsville where Scott's small floating gallery had been, past Bad Axe where Proctor's floating gallery built in imitation of mine was lying, and on to Victory where Capt. Wilcox resided, arrived there about dusk.

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 1876

Arrived at Harpers Ferry this morning. The small gallery has been ahead of us, also a portable gallery, so we kept on and anchored to save the boats from going on a sand bar five miles above McGregor, Iowa. We were very much shaken up by the upward bound packet.

## TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1876

Went with *Lady Annie* in tow of the little steamboat *Vigor* to Glen Haven, Wisconsin three and a half miles up on the other side of the river. Took 4/4 views of the town from a sandbar in the river and rowed back after putting up notices that I would arrive next Saturday.

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1876

Went to Sabula this morning and took some negatives of the pork packing establishment. Will came in a hurry to tell me there was 16 inches water in the hold of the boat, so I walked back leaving him to bring the things by the train. Have got the ferry pump in and a man pumping her out now at 10:30 p.m.

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1876

The boat leaked very badly last night. Had Clark pumping some today.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1877

Have been at home nearly two months. Have had a thousand small pamphlets printed describing my Mississippi trip for gratuitous circulation. Bought stock, printed a lot of stereos and 4/4 views and last Tuesday morning left Patterson, New Jersey for my boat.

## WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 1877

Took negatives from the tower of the Clinton water works in the forenoon and of the bridge in the afternoon. Lost my Dalmeyer stereo tubes (\$80) in the river. Offered a re-

ward of five dollars and got them again.

## MONDAY, JULY 16, 1877

The steamboat which was to tow us to Davenport having stopped running, forced us to start down the rapids on our own hook this morning. We pulled across the river and got along very well until after dinner when the wind rose and we tied up. I swung the hammock on shore under some crabapple trees and the rest of them, Al, Hattie, and Lizzie set up the arches and commenced playing croquet. After supper we started again. We kept a little too close to the Iowa shore for fear of being blown to the other side and ran on some rocks which projected under the water letting the hull of the wannegan go over but raking the top. It knocked down all the shelves on that side and took out the same corner that was taken out last year. There was the greatest rattling and cracking I ever heard as the side crushed in. The things on the shelves came rattling down. We got to Davenport and tied up at half ten.



*To create log rafts, workers in Beef Slough near Alma, Wis. construct chutes. Log rafts could be more easily pushed downriver to sawmills.*



*A survey crew poses for a portrait.*



*Like this umbrella maker, many people made their livelihood by selling their wares up and down the river.*



*A rope ferry carries a horse and buggy across the river at Fort Snelling, Minneapolis.*



## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1877

Took in \$3.00 this morning as I told the people that I was going away immediately at noon. Proctor's gallery came along and we tied all the boats together and floated down in a big fleet reaching New Boston, Illinois about dark. Proctor has his wife and four girls and one boy and also a young man George S. LaDare along. We had a merry time all afternoon and evening. As we were starting from Port Louisa, a man called out to know if we wanted help, as he wanted to work his passage down. I told him to jump on. His name is James Williams.

## WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 12, 1877

Found that our new man James Williams has decamped during the night taking the old *Lady Annie* which we lately called the *Mattie*. He took plenty of food and a new rubber coat belonging to me and some clothing belonging to Al. I telegraphed to Keokuk, Iowa to have him arrested if going down the river and sent postal cards to Iowa towns down the river. Took some negatives of Burlington, Iowa before dinner. We started about sundown and got about 6 miles down the river.

## TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1877

Word came tonight that the canal was to be closed for repairs so as we were below the first lock, we had to haul out pretty quick. I have engaged a pilot to take us over the rapids tomorrow if the wind will allow. While at Montrose, Iowa, Al took a 1/4 group negative of Frank Davis and was paid three dollars for it. The afternoon of the day I arrived here I was waited upon by a constable who said he had a states warrant for me. I was very much puzzled but he read the warrant signed by Mrs. L. Davis stating that I had obtained three dollars on false pretenses. As I had the picture ready, it having been finished within a half hour, I handed it to him, but had to pay a fee anyway.

## TUESDAY, MAY 21, 1878

Waited until 3 p.m. for customers but none came, so we floated down

to Fruitland Landing, seven miles. Got my boats in good shape, so I thought, but about bedtime the steamboat *War Eagle* came rushing along, broke the biggest spar and threwed all three boats high on shore.

## WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 1878

About midnight last night the *War Eagle* came up and sent such a swell as to fill the small wanegan and send it across the bow of the *Success*. After trying to secure it, I went astern and found the big wanegan gone. We had the *Lady Annie* but no oars, so we took poles and went after it. We found it about a quarter of a mile down on a big drift pile. We secured it and rowed back.

## FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1878

The *War Eagle* caused such a wave last night as she went by that the hog chains of the after guard gave way and I went down with it. The boat looks now as if a quarter of it was gone. I will have to get a new guard all around at Grafton, Illinois.

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1878

Went about two miles in the country to take some views for a Mr. Glendenin. On returning the horses ran away. The reins broke and Mr. Glendenin and Frank partly fell and partly jumped out. I remained in for about half a mile, the horses going a full run from side to side of as rough a country road as I ever saw. As we were nearing a steep hill I got out over the back of the wagon, but hurt my back and tore my clothes pretty badly. The horse, wagon, and my things landed in a heap at the bottom of the hill. My new camera worth nearly forty dollars smashed as well as all my bottles, dark tent, etc. ☹

*Photographs courtesy of the Special Collections and Area Research Center, Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.*

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(Mussels continued from page 29)

develop into glochidia in her gill chambers.

When biologists infest fish with glochidia, they first use a syringe to gently flush them out of the female mussel's gill chambers. Then they put a few small fish in a bucket of water with glochidia in it, and give

*Female mussels have evolved a fascinating variety of strategies to attract a host fish.*

them a few minutes to clamp onto the fish gills. The infested fish spend a few weeks at the hatchery before they are moved to the cages in Lake Pepin for about a month.

Getting the glochidia into its host is more complicated and ingenious in the wild. Most native mussel larvae depend on one or a few species of host fish for the first part of their journey to adulthood. Female mus-



Left: This snuffbox has caught a log perch by the nose and is pumping glochidia into it. (M. C. Barnhart)

Below: A black sandshell is probably mimicking helgremites, the aquatic larvae of the dobson fly and a favorite food of bass. (Mike Davis)



sels have evolved a fascinating variety of strategies to attract a host fish. A female Higgins eye with a load of larval mussels twitches a pair of lures on her lips that look like minnows, complete with fins and an eye spot. When a walleye, large-mouth bass or smallmouth bass goes for the bait, she squirts a cloud of larvae at it. Each larva is like a tiny mussel with its shell wide open. When one comes into contact with salt or the blood in a fish's gills, it

snaps shut. If it hasn't clamped onto gills, it opens up and drifts around, ready for another chance.

Walleyes, smallmouth bass, large-mouth bass and, probably, saugers are all hosts to Higgins eyes. Channel

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Mike Davis holds three-month-old Higgins eye pearly mussels by their byssal threads. Some mussels make these threads and use them to attach to objects in the river. (Gary Wege)

catfish are hosts to winged mapleleaves and washboards. Largemouth bass are hosts to muckets, fat muckets and black sandshells. Flathead catfish are hosts to pistol grips. Log perch are hosts to snuffboxes.

Some mussel species package larvae into “Trojan horse” containers that look like blood worms or insect larva that the host fish eats. They release the containers when the matching insect larvae is hatching. If a feeding fish bites one of the Trojan horses, glochidia squirt out into its gills.

“Mussels learned to match the hatch millions of years before fly fishermen,” observed Davis.

The female snuffbox mussel mimics a stone. Its host, the log perch, hunts for food under stones. When a log perch tries to flip over a snuffbox, the snuffbox catches its small host by the snout, and holds it captive while it pumps glochidia into its mouth.

Researchers are just discovering many of these strategies.

“We think some may exude a scent to attract catfish, like a stinkbait,” Davis said.

When a lucky glochidia attaches itself to the gills of a host fish, the fish forms a cyst around it. The larva will live and grow almost as part of the fish until it burrows out of the cyst and drops to the river bottom. The host fish is apparently unharmed by the experience. In fact, fish that have hosted glochidia appear to gain im-

munity to new glochidia and many parasites.

If a larva attaches to the gills of a fish other than its host species, no cyst will form, and the glochidia will eventually fall off.

The Genoa (Wis.) National Fish Hatchery does much of the current research on mussel reproduction in the river. The Fairport Biological Station, a few miles upriver from Muscatine, Iowa, which was the center of the pearl button industry for decades, did much of the original research on mussel reproduction early in the 20th century, when the clamming industry was depleting the supply. Fairport, too, used Lake Pepin for its mussel nursery.

Many young mussels are eaten by fish, especially sheepshead (freshwater drum), which have teeth in the back of their mouths used for chewing up young mussels. Muskrats are the major predator of adult mussels, though raccoons and otters also eat them, said Davis.

The invasive zebra mussels are native to Eurasia, and probably are more suited to living in lakes than rivers. They do not need a host fish. Females release larva into the water and they drift with the current and eventually settle down. This makes it nearly impossible for them to spread upstream, unless they can hitch a ride on a boat or barge hull. That may be one of the reasons why they are not more plentiful upstream from Lake Pepin.

As the team continues to restore mussels to their former habitats, they will also expand our knowledge and appreciation of these ancient river dwellers. They have discovered new displays for attracting hosts, which along with new DNA research, has changed the understanding of how related mussel species should be grouped. As they help the mussels, the mussels will help us to better understand the complex workings of the river. 🌿 🐟

Reggie McLeod is editor of Big River.

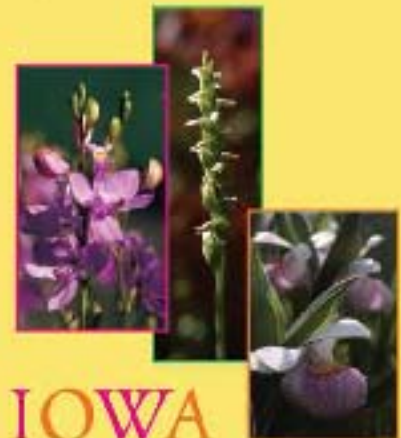
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*(River News continued from page 17)*

Canal Shore Drive, a primarily residential section that runs along the river under the I-74 Bridge.

They have been fighting this battle for some time. Originally, the LeClaire Hotel Group sought to moor a 120-foot long barge near the new Holiday Inn Express-LeClaire, which citizens also opposed. The barge would have provided docking space for the *Celebration Belle* and transient boaters.

The city council denied that plan but two weeks later approved a permit for the installation of four finger docks that could hold up to 80 boats. That was after the Planning and Zoning Board had voted unanimously to deny the permit.

In late July, however, Thomas and Linda Kamp filed a lawsuit against the city in opposition to the docks. The suit claims numerous city ordinances concerning parking, setbacks and other concerns were violated by issuing the permits.

The suit was partially prompted by the city's refusal to release the legal opinion it had received about the project, citing attorney-client privilege. The Kamps, who live on Canal Shore Drive, feel the opinion should be made public.

Another concern is that the distance between the shore and a lateral dam that runs downstream through the area is less than 500 feet, and the slips would protrude 110 feet into the canal, which is marked as a no-wake area. Many recreational boaters and Corps of Engineer work boats use the canal to approach the auxiliary lock at Lock and Dam 14.

The city administrator, Edwin Choate, did not respond to a request for information for this article.

### Progress, Good and Bad

**Keithsburg, Ill.** — The town of Keithsburg has been seeking a new marina since 1995. The project has stalled four times.

Five times may be a charm, however. Now a Peoria, Ill., man plans to go ahead with a \$600,000, 87-slip marina that would include a fuel dock.

The Army Corps of Engineers has renewed the city's three-year permit for the project

The developer, Guy Brenkman, has introduced both business and controversy to town. He has been involved in a new hardware store and an arcade, and is renovating a building he hopes will become a branch office for a bank. He brought a caboose to town as a tourist attraction and plans to also bring a train engine.

However, he generated some controversy in the community when he opened Bikini Bar and Grill on the riverfront last March, which had topless servers until recently.

### Waterfront Campus

**Moline, Ill.** — Western Illinois University is located in Macomb, Ill., but has held classes in the Illinois Quad Cities over 35 years. The current enrollment at the WIU-QC Campus is about 1,200.

In June, the WIU Board of Trustees approved a master plan for a new riverfront campus on a 20-acre site of the former John Deere Technology Center, across the street from the popular Ben Butterworth Parkway. The new facility will provide space for 3,000 students.

John Deere donated the land to WIU in 2003 for this purpose. In January, the state of Illinois released \$2.4 million to plan the project.

The plan will meet energy and environmental design certification standards. The goal is to build an "aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sustainable campus."

### Under-served Minority

**Davenport, Iowa** — Citing the needs of an under-served minority, a Quad City developer proposed a multi-story, luxury condominium project on the Davenport Riverfront for the "most wealthy 10 percent" of area residents.

The \$10 million, eight-story, 35-unit structure was proposed to the Davenport Levee Commission in June. Developer J. J. Condon proposed either a land swap with the

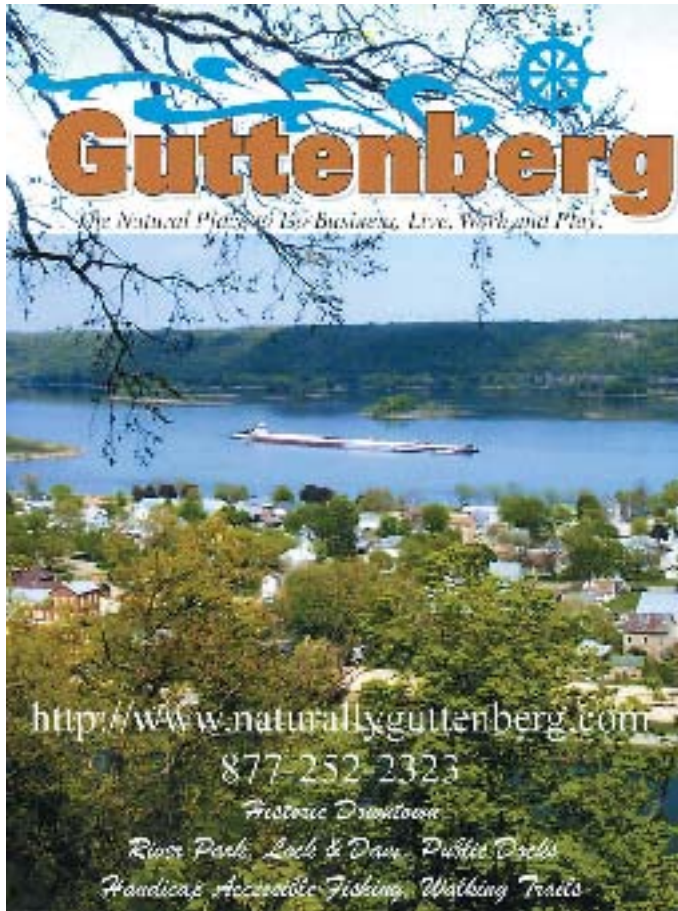
*(River News continues on page 43)*





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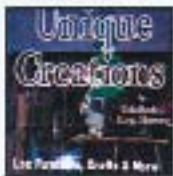
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(Paddlewheels continued from page 7)

minum hull and French hydraulic hydrostatic motors powering a split paddlewheel. Put one wheel in forward and the other in reverse, and the boat will turn on a dime. Hastings

*"I decided I want to live on the river permanently."*

plans to move aboard as soon as the new boat is ready.

"I decided I want to live on the river permanently," he said. "My new boat is big enough for all my belongings, including my Triumph Spitfire, a motorcycle and my airplane."

Hastings is a charter member of the American Sternwheel Association. There are currently more than 100 custom-made paddlewheelers in the U.S.

"My advice to anyone who's interested in building one is to go to the Ohio River Sternwheel Festival in Marietta, Ohio, over Labor Day weekend," he said. "There are usually 25 or 30 boats there, and they're all dif-

ferent. Everybody is tickled to show and tell others about their boats."

Boats may be engineered differently, but it's a good bet that the paddlewheels will all be red. Dick Karnath said they weren't always — some of the log-pushing boats had black paddlewheels.

Nancy Goodman, who co-authored *Paddlewheels on the Upper Mississippi 1823-1854*, *How Steamboats Promoted Commerce and Settlements in the West*, speculated that the paddlewheels might have been painted with the same protective red paint used to paint barns. But now, she said, "It's tradition!" ☸

*Pamela Eyden is news and photo editor for Big River. Her last story was "Letterboxing," in the July-August 2006 issue.*

Visit [www.big-river.com](http://www.big-river.com) for links to information about stories marked with the mouse .

(River News continued from page 36)

city or a long-term lease on a parking area for the site. The land swap would give the city a stretch of land directly along the river in exchange for land it owns behind the proposed structure. The area is located about twelve blocks north of a new hotel being built by the Rhythm City Casino and is between Wakeen's Family Boating Center and The Boat House Restaurant.

Some are concerned that the building would block views from other locations. An official from the city's Planning and Zoning Department says that several entities, such as the Levee Commission, the city council and perhaps the Zoning Board of Adjustments, will be involved as the project moves forward.

Another issue is planning for a 100-year flood, including access for fire trucks and an adequate sewage system. ☸

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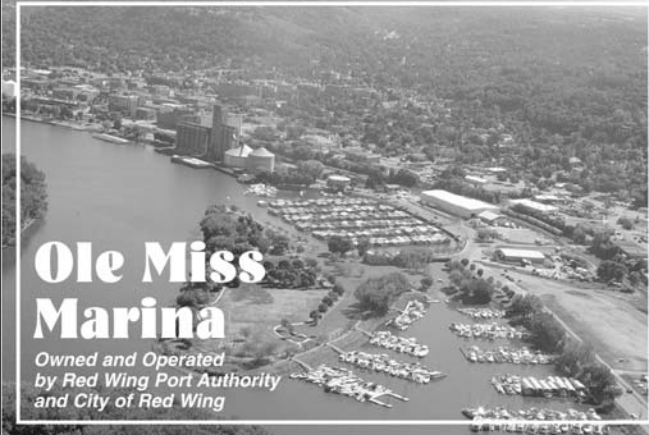
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# Enjoy Fall on the Big River

## Get Festive

### September

**2-4** Thomson (Ill.) Melon Days, "Melon Capital of the World," (815) 259-7378.



**3** Art & Music Festival, Alma, Wis., noon to 8 p.m., Alma City Beach, special host Kenny Salwey.

**7-10** Watermelon Festival, Kellogg, Minn. The sandy soil here is perfect for growing watermelons. Festival started in 1946, (800) 565-4158.

**9** Fun Day, 8-11 a.m., Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Halfmoon Landing near Kellogg, Minn. Pre-register, (507) 494-6221.

**9** Open House, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center, La Crosse, Wis. Live fish, mussels, amphibians, snakes, and other critters from the river.

**9-10** Laura Ingalls Wilder Days, Pepin, Wis. "Pepin Laura" contest.

**9-10** Villa Louis Carriage Classic, Prairie du Chien, Wis., (608) 326-2721.

**4-18** RiverWay 2006, celebrating the first railroad bridge to cross the Mississippi. Image of the original bridge will be projected over the river; steam locomotive, boat trips and storytellers, (563) 322-2969.

**15-16** Heritage Fair, Winona, Minn., 1940s Big Band Era, featuring the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra on Saturday night, (507) 454-2723.

**16-17** Crawford County Art Festival, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sugarcreek Park, Ferryville, Wis., (608) 326-6658.

**22-23** River Roots Live, River Music Experience festival, LeClaire Park, Davenport, Iowa, featuring the Black Crowes, Susan Tedeschi, Junior Brown, Bo Ramsey, and Umphrey's McGee, (563) 326-1333.

**22-24** Studio Ramble, Red Wing, Minn., and western Wisconsin.

**23** Auction of the Jewel golf course, unsold home sites and undeveloped land, 10 a.m., Lake City, Minn., (651) 345-4653 or (877) 345-4656.

**30** Spirits of the Past, 7 p.m., Wyalusing (Wis.) State Park, (608) 996-2261.

**30** Heritage Day, 3-7 p.m., North Mississippi Regional Park, Minneapolis, (763) 694-7693.

### October

**6-8** Fresh Art Tour, Pepin, Pierce and Dunn counties, Wis., (715) 672-8188.

**7-8** Johnny Appleseed Days, Lake City, Minn., (800) 369-4123.

**13-14** Historic Downtown La Crosse (Wis.) Days.

**14-15** Red Wing (Minn.) Fall Festival of the Arts.

**14-15** Fulton (Ill.) Fall Festival, Early American Crafters.

**17-22** Big Muddy River Rendezvous, Prairie Island Park, Winona, Minn., (507) 452-4930.

**18** All-day fall foliage cruise, Dubuque, Iowa, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., *Celebration Belle*, (309) 764-1952 or (800) 297-0034.

### Fall Birding

**Sept. 23-24** Hawk Watch, Effigy Mounds National Monument.

**Nov. 10-12** Rivers & Bluffs Fall Birding Festival, Lansing, Iowa.

**Nov. 11** Swan and eagle birding excursion to Alma, Wis., and Wabasha, Minn., 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., leaves from Hastings, Minn., reg. (651) 437-4359.

### September

**3, 10, 17, 24** Minneapolis Riverfront Walking Tours, Mill City Museum, 1 p.m., (612) 341-7555.

**9** Walk around Pike Island, Fort Snelling State Park, 10 a.m., (612) 725-2389.

**10-16** Pedal along rivers from Rockford to Alton, Ill., on the Great Rivers Ride. Bike the whole stretch or for just a day or two. (877) 477-7007, ext. 217.

**16** Tour de Sprawl Bicycle Ride, South Washington County, Twin Cities, 9:30 a.m., (612) 659-9124.

## River Projects Twin Cities Area

### Remove invasive buckthorn

**Sept. 16**, 9 a.m. to noon, 36th St. & W. River Pkwy, Minneapolis, (651) 222-2193.

**Oct. 7**, 9 a.m. to noon, 24th St. & W. River Pkwy, Minneapolis, (651) 222-2193.

**Oct. 7**, 8:30 a.m. to noon, Earl Street & Mounds Blvd, St. Paul, (651) 665-9500.

### Clean up the Vermillion River

**Sept. 23**, 9 a.m. to noon, C.P. Adams Park, Hastings, Minn.; Rambling River Park, Farmington, Minn.; Schaar's Bluff, Spring Lake Park Reserve, Rosemount, Minn., (651) 222-2193.

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**Oct. 4**, 5:30 p.m., collect seed

**Oct. 18**, 5:30 p.m., haul and stack brush

### Survey Vermillion River trout

**Oct. 7**, 9 a.m. to noon, (651) 222-2193.

### Restore Pine Bend Bluffs Natural Area

**Oct. 14**, 8:30 a.m. to noon, plant acorns, collect prairie seeds, (651) 665-9500 x11.

### Living Lands and Waters (309) 496-9848

**Sept. 6-9, and 15**; honeysuckle removal, Smith Island, LeClaire, Iowa.

**Sept. 10-14**, restoration work, Cassville, Wis.

**Oct. 23-27**, tree planting with Army Corps of Engineers, La Crosse, Wis.

**Oct. 28**, tree planting, Field Syke Project, Bettendorf, Iowa.

## Get Active

**16** Taming of the Slough, kayak or canoe, bike and foot race, Sylvan Slough, Moline, Ill., (563) 322-2969.

**30 and Oct. 1** O-Galena! Orienteering Festival, Witkowsky State Wildlife Area, Galena, Ill., walk or race, start times from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., (815) 858-9100.

### October

**14** Guided paddling trip through the Mississippi River Gorge from Bohemian Flats to Hidden Falls Park in St. Paul, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m., (651) 222-2193 x16. 🌊



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## Advertiser Index

5th Annual Rivers & Bluffs Fall Birding Festival .....	39	McGregor Coffee Roasters .....	41
A Place to Sew - Gather the Gals .....	39	McGregor Lodging .....	40
Accola Gallery .....	6	McGregor Marina, Beer & Brat Garden	41
Alma, Wis. ....	48	McGregor, Iowa .....	40-41
American House Inn .....	41	McGregor-Marquette, Iowa, Chamber	40
Badger State Bank .....	42	Minnesota Marine Art Museum .....	2
Barn Restaurant, The .....	37	Mississippi Explorer Cruises .....	1
Belvedere Mansion .....	57	Mississippi Explorer Cruises .....	39
Beno's Deli .....	52	Murphy's Cove Bed & Bath .....	38
Best Western Quiet House & Suites ..	58	Muscatine, Iowa, Convention & Visitor Bureau .....	37
Big River Forge .....	38	National Eagle Center .....	12
Bird-Song.com, Inc. .... inside front cover		National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium .....	13
Blooming Grounds Coffee House .....	52	Natural Gait, The .....	16
Blue Heron Coffeehouse .....	11	Naturally Guttenberg, Iowa .....	37
Bluff Country Co-op .....	44	Nola's Flowers .....	52
BNOX .....	50	Northern Breezes Sailing School .....	43
Boats & Bluegrass .....	55	Norton's Restaurant, The .....	12
Carroll County, Ill .....	8	Oar d'oeuvre Restaurant .....	55
Cassville bp Amoco-Piccadilly .....	42	Ole Miss Marina .....	44
Cassville, Wis. ....	42	Onalaska Bike Trail .....	15
Century 21 Pepin Office .....	51	On-Deck .....	51
Channel Cat & River Road Gallery .....	38	Otter Side of Nature, The .....	40
Chestnut Mountain Resort .....	1	Paper Moon, The .....	41
Corn Maze & Pumpkin Patch .....	36	Pepin, Wis. ....	50-51
Country Stop of Pepin .....	50	Pepper Sprout .....	18
Dan's Pepin Marina .....	50	Piccadilly Gallery .....	14
Docksides Mercantile .....	50	Pickle Factory .....	51
Duke Addicks Storyteller .....	16	Pieces of the Past .....	52
Dyersville National Farm Toy Show ..	15	Prairie du Chien, Wis. ....	37
Eagles Landing B&B and Winery .....	40	Prairie du Chien, Wis. Tourism .....	37
Eagles Roost Resort .....	42	Pretty Things on Third .....	52
Edina Realty .....	34	Red Geranium Gifts .....	39
Elmer's Auto & Toy Museum .....	49	Red Wing Pottery .....	11
Eric Ristey - Four Rivers Realty ..	6, 34, 57	River City Vacation Rentals .....	6
Fountain City, Wis. ....	49	River Huis Traders Antiques .....	10
Franciscan Spirituality Center .....	18	River Log House for Sale .....	36
Fulton, Ill. ....	4	River Wood Studio & Big River Buttons	38
Galena Cellars .....	8	Riverboat Twilight .....	8
German Fest - Guttenberg, Iowa .....	6	Rivers Edge Restaurant .....	38
Golden Frog Saloon .....	49	Riverview Restaurant .....	41
Great River Café .....	51	Robert J. Hurt Landscape Photographer ..... inside front cover	
Great River Harbor .....	14	Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe .....	44
Great River Organic Milling .....	49	Signatures Restaurant .....	33
Great River Road Stop & Go .....	42	Smith Brothers Landing .....	50
Gregory's Gifts & Greetings .....	52	Stoney Creek Inn .....	21
Grumpsters Log Cabin Getaway .....	41	Thornton House B & B & Mt. Hosmer Jam Shop .....	38
Hansen's Harbor .....	17	Touch of Class Interiors .....	4
Harbor View Café .....	51	Twisted Chicken, The .....	44
Hartland Log Homes .. inside front cover		Uncle Charlie's Cabin .....	38
Hawk Watch .....	16	Unique Creations .....	42
Hawks View Cottages & Lodges .....	21	University of Iowa Press .....	35
Heaven Scent B&B & Retreats .....	49	Valley Fish & Cheese .....	37
Island City Harbor .....	18	Villa Louis & Stonefield Village .....	4
KFAI .....	57	Waterways Journal .....	43
Lake City, Minn., Tourism .....	54	Wild Rose Timberworks .....	57
Lake Pepin Inn .....	51	Willows, The .....	54
Lansing, Iowa & De Soto, Wis. ....	38-39	Winona County Hist. Soc./Visit Winona	53
Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum .....	50	Winona, Minn., Downtown .....	52
LeDuc Historical Estate .....	23	Yellow Bird Art Quilt Shop .....	38
Long's Garden, Inc. ....	10		
Magnolias .....	52		
McGarrity's Inn & Suites .....	39		



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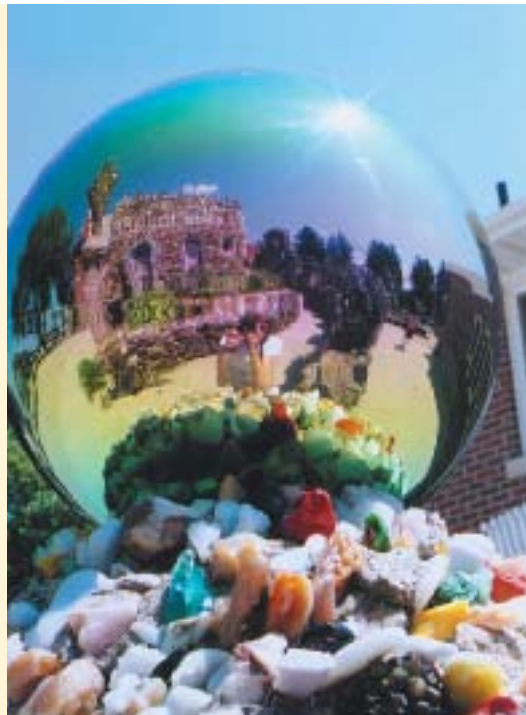


(Art continued from page 24)

with the assistance of many local volunteers and funding from Wisconsin's Kohler Foundation.

In the 1930s in nearby Fountain City, Wis., a retired farmer named Mehringer built a hillside rock garden to enchant the neighbor children, with a wishing well, a lily pool with a tiny bridge, a windmill and a birdhouse. His work is uncommonly durable because he set shards of broken colored glass endwise into concrete. Although it's visible from Highway 95, the garden is on private property, so ask for permission if you want a closer look.

The most elaborate testament to restless creativity is downriver in Dickeyville, Wis., in a small park next to the Holy Ghost Catholic Church. New immigrant Father Mathias Wernerus built the first grotto in the 1920s and dedicated it to the Virgin Mary. When visitors flocked to the site, Wernerus was inspired to build more — a Tree of Life, Sacred Heart memorial, niches for the saints, a Patriotic Shrine and a memorial to Christopher Columbus — all encrusted with



A gazing ball atop a tower of shells and minerals reflects the grounds of the Dickeyville Grotto.

seashells, ceramics, stones, marbles, minerals, toys, jewelry, tools and even small heirlooms donated by the parish. Faculty and students from the Chicago Art Institute visit every year, as do about 25,000 other people. Highway 151 was recently rerouted around the village, so watch for road signs into town. It's well worth a stop. 🏠



The Main Grotto and Christ the King shrine at Dickeyville. (Courtesy of the Dickeyville Grotto)

## Visit Winona, Minnesota



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- Celebrate Lake Pepin - June 4
- Water Ski Days Festival - June 23, 29 & 25
- Big River Musical - June 30 and July 8
- Fireworks Celebration - July 4
- Thursday Evening Street Market - July 27 thru August 31
- Forever Maid - July 31 to August 6
- Lake City Yacht Club's Sail for Leukemia - July 15 & 16
- Fireman's Dance - July 22
- Pepin Promenade Cancer Walk - August 5 & 6
- Nansense - August 18 to September 3
- Wild Wings Gallery Fall Festival - October 6 - 8
- Johnn Appleseed Days - October 6 - 8
- Twilight Holiday Home Tours - December 2

Photo by John Reiser



(Ralph DuPae continued from page 56)

never lost or damaged anything. That would have been the kiss of death."

DuPae did whatever needed to be done to find more photographs, including attending historical society meetings with local musician Eddie Allen.

"He sang and I put on a slideshow, in exchange for borrowing their pictures," DuPae chuckled.

An integral part of the story is that DuPae was supported in his efforts by his employer, Charles D. Gellatt, who was head of Northern Engraving and also on the University of Wisconsin

*"The photographs are like a wormhole to crawl into another era. It's a tremendous resource for future generations."*

sin board of regents. Gellatt funded him to work on the collections while he traveled for business, about one week a month.

DuPae and his wife of 58 years, Kathleen, recalled his dedication in tracking down photographs. Once he was going through the photographs of a family in Natchez, Mississippi, and didn't want to leave, even though the holidays had arrived.

"They fed me three meals on Christmas Day," DuPae said. "They were quite surprised that I stayed."

"Then they packed you off and said, 'Go home, where you're supposed to be,'" Kathleen recalled.

The pursuit was time-consuming and often tedious. "Once I went through 20,000 photographs in Black River Falls," DuPae said, "and only two of them were steamboats!"

DuPae describes the project like a detective might describe the solving of a mystery.

One of these was tracking down the photographs of a New Jersey photographer, John P. Doremus, who traveled the Mississippi, taking photographs in a floating studio/houseboat in the late 1870s. (See "Life on a Floating Studio," this issue.) His photographs went to his children and relatives when he died, so DuPae had to

do some genealogical sleuthing to find the descendants. He eventually corresponded with a man in New York who had some of Doremus' original diary, only to have the man die before he got permission to transcribe it. This was disheartening, but he later learned that the man had left instructions to loan him the pages.

Following other lines of the family, DuPae also eventually obtained a copy of the printed pamphlet and all that remain of the original 4,000 photographs, although he thinks there are still more in Florida, or somewhere.

Thirty-some years after he began, DuPae has been honored and recognized for his dedication and achievement. He was awarded the Wisconsin Governor's Archive Award in 2004, the Murphy Library Recognition Award and the Midwest Archives Conference President's Award in 2005. The National Rivers Hall of Fame at the National Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque, Iowa, awarded him a National Achievement Award.

"The collection of historic photographs that he gathered is unparalleled anywhere in the world," said Jerry Enzler, director of the museum. "His tireless dedication for collecting every known steamboat photograph has left us a lasting legacy which will be a boon to all historians for generations to come."

Michael Blaser of Dubuque, Iowa, a maritime painter specializing in western river steamboats, has used the collection many times as background reference for his paintings.

"The photographs are like a wormhole to crawl into another era. It's a tremendous resource for future generations of artists, researchers and writers," Blaser said.

Looking back on the successful project that absorbed him for so many years, DuPae mused, "The best part was travelling and meeting all the river people I would never have met otherwise." ☞

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# Ralph DuPae

## Steamboat Photo Sleuth Extraordinaire

By Pamela Eyden

Sometimes a picture is not merely better than a thousand words — sometimes it starts a whole new conversation. For years, steamboat buffs argued about whether the *Robert E. Lee* had been unfairly stripped down and lightened for speed when she beat the *Natchez VI* in the Great Steamboat Race from New Orleans to St. Louis in 1870. The only known photograph of the race was too blurred to settle the issue.

Then in 1981, while searching through a stereoscope card collection in New Orleans, collector Ralph DuPae came across the same photo, this one unblurred. When he saw the card he knew what he had — proof that the *Robert E. Lee* was intact when it raced.

Controversy put to rest. Mystery solved.

Finding the photograph was one of many scholarly triumphs for Ralph

DuPae, who spent more than 30 years searching out and collecting images of steamboats for the Special Collection division of the Murphy Library at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Armed with a photographic memory, a passion for collecting and the ready assistance of Edwin Hill, director of the Special Collections division of the library, DuPae started small but ended up collecting more images of steamboats than anyone imagined existed. The collection is now a priceless resource for scholars, writers, artists and anyone who is curious about the golden age of steamboats.

“It kind of took over my life — in a very pleasant way,” said DuPae, now 81 and living in the same house in La Crosse where he and his wife Kathleen raised five children.

DuPae was an industrial engineer for Northern Engraving Company of La Crosse, and already a skilled collector in the 1970s, when he met Edwin Hill, who asked him to help locate photographs of steamboats that were licensed or built in La Crosse. That was the beginning. When DuPae discovered that these early photographs were rapidly disappearing because of mishandling, fire and carelessness, the project gathered steam and urgency.

At first he and Hill estimated there were probably just 5,000 such photographs in existence. By 1977 DuPae upped that estimate to 16,000. Today the DuPae collection numbers 54,000 images.



Ralph DuPae retired but hasn't given up searching for remaining steamboat photographs, although it's much easier today with a computer and E-Bay. (Pamela Eyden)

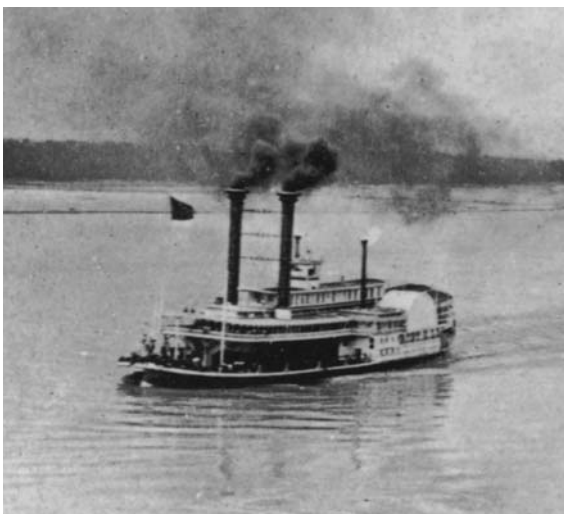
“There are other steamboat photograph collections, but Ralph's achievement was to collect images from photographs, lithographs and glass plate negatives on a national scale, on a very thorough basis, especially from private collectors who were reluctant to cooperate with libraries and archives,” said Ed Hill.

“People who have spent considerable amount of money and personal time on their collections are not always willing to share,” Hill explained. “Ralph was able to persuade them of the value of getting their collections into a publicly funded university archive, which offers as much permanence and security as any institution can. He managed to tap into a kind of public-spiritedness they didn't know they had.”

In his search, DuPae joined the Sons and Daughters of Pioneer Rivermen and the Midwest River Boat Buffs, where he met people who were the descendents of riverboat people. They got to know him, loaned him their family photographs and gave him leads that helped him find other collectors. Word spread from one riverboat man to another.

“He carried those photographs in his car from all over the country,” Hill recalled. “After they were copied, he hand-delivered them back again. We


(Ralph DuPae continues on page 55)




This historic photograph of the paddlewheel steamboat *Robert E. Lee* shows the boat was not stripped down to lighten its load. The *Lee* won the river race against the *Natchez VI* in 1870. (Courtesy of the Special Collections department at Murphy Library, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse)




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