

Attack's 1850 Steamboat Data

I discovered these Western River steamboat data among the manuscripts of the 1850 (Seventh) Census of Manufactures for Kentucky circa 1973. At the time, I was working as a graduate research assistant at Indiana University for Fred Bateman, James D. Foust and Thomas J. Weiss on their NSF-funded project to collect machine-readable samples of manufacturing plants from the manuscript censuses of manufactures for 1850-70 (NSF 2450 and 1456: "Collaborative Research in United States Manufacturing." See also ICPSR 4048 and 4071 and Atack and Bateman in *Historical Methods* (1999)). The Assistant Marshal for Louisville, Reuben Dawson, who was charged with collecting the required census data from manufacturing establishments in his district, failed to follow the Census Bureau's instructions for Schedule 5 and collected information from the boats tied up along the Ohio River bank, forcing the data to fit the requested categories for manufactures with some minimal elaboration. Initially, I found just 45 steamboats. These formed the basis of a term paper in Gary Walton's American Economic History class which he subsequently persuaded me to coauthor with him and his colleagues Erik Haites and James Mak. The resulting article appears in the *Business History Review* (Autumn 1975). Haites, Mak and Walton also used the data to underpin their study *Western River Transportation During the Era of Early Internal Improvements, 1810-1860*, (Johns Hopkins, 1975) which brought together their collective works on western river transportation in the age of steampower. Some of the original data are published in an appendix to that book.

SCHEDULE 5.—Products of Industry in City of Louisville in the County of Jefferson State of Kentucky during the Year ending June 1, 1850, as enumerated by me, Robert Wilson Not Marshall

Name of Corporation, Company, or Individual, producing Articles to the Annual Value of \$5000.	Name of Business, Manufacture, or Product.	Capital Invested in Real and Personal Estate in the Business.	Raw Material used, including Fuel.			Kind of motive power, machinery, structure, or motor.	Average number of hands employed.		Wages.	Annual Product.				
			Quantity.	Kind.	Value.		Males.	Females.		Average monthly cost of male labor.	Average monthly cost of female labor.	Quantity.	Kind.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
<u>Wm. S. S. S. S.</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>25,000</u>	<u>Provisions</u>	<u>11,000</u>	<u>2 Steam</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>170</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>Bright Receipt</u>	<u>38,000</u>			
<u>Wm. S. S. S. S.</u>	<u>Grain</u>		<u>Grain</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>Grain</u>					<u>Grain</u>	<u>31,000</u>			
<u>Trade</u>			<u>Grain</u>	<u>11,000</u>	<u>2 Steam</u>					<u>Grain</u>	<u>1 Month</u>			
<u>Wm. S. S. S. S.</u>	<u>Steam</u>	<u>20,000</u>	<u>Provisions</u>	<u>9,000</u>	<u>2 Steam</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>Bright Receipt</u>	<u>30,76</u>			
<u>Wm. S. S. S. S.</u>	<u>Grain</u>		<u>Grain</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>Grain</u>					<u>Grain</u>	<u>15,187</u>			
<u>Trade</u>			<u>Grain</u>	<u>8,000</u>	<u>2 Steam</u>					<u>Grain</u>	<u>1 Month</u>			
<u>Wm. S. S. S. S.</u>	<u>Grain</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>Provisions</u>	<u>6,000</u>	<u>2 Steam</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>Bright Receipt</u>	<u>24,000</u>			
<u>Wm. S. S. S. S.</u>	<u>Grain</u>		<u>Grain</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>Grain</u>					<u>Grain</u>	<u>24,000</u>			
<u>Trade</u>			<u>Grain</u>	<u>13,000</u>	<u>2 Steam</u>					<u>Grain</u>	<u>1 Month</u>			

Vessels appear in the manuscripts presumably in the order that they were moored as Assistant Marshall Dawson made his rounds. Because the Louisville-Jeffersonville ferry “Indiana” appears early in these data (page 577, line 9 and is not included among these steamboat data), I surmise that these boats were moored in the vicinity of Bear Grass Creek, the landing for the Louisville and Jeffersonville ferry (see 188 US, 385ff: LOUISVILLE & JEFFERSONVILLE FERRY CO. v. COM. OF KENTUCKY(1903))—now Bandman Park near River Road in Louisville—as six ferry boats (not enumerated here) are included among the data.

Subsequent more careful and extensive review of the manuscript census records revealed one additional steamboat that I had initially missed so the definitive dataset has 46 steamboats. These represent about 7% of the nation’s steamboats at that time and some 10% of the total tonnage. They represent the largest known collection of quantitative data regarding Western River steamboats. I was able to locate each of the steamboats in the database of steamboats of the United States compiled by William Lyle (Mystic CT, 1952) and thus match additional data regarding the vessels’ tonnage, date of construction, and the date and manner in which each ceased service. These data have been appended to the information collected from the census of manufactures in the spreadsheet available here.

Data on the ferry boats between Indiana and Kentucky intermingled among the steamboat data were not collected. Most of the vessels had two engines though two had just one. All boats except the “Uncle Sam” reported both freight and passenger revenue. For the “Uncle Sam,” Dawson attached a note that the vessel had “no cabins” (though why this translated to no passengers is not clear). Two vessels, both engaged in the Louisville-Frankfort trade (on the Kentucky River), report lockage fees among their expenses. These, presumably, were levied for passage through the locks and dams built across the Kentucky River in 1836-42 at Lockport and Gest. Interesting, none of the vessels engaged in trade both above and below Louisville via the Ohio river report lockage although the two-mile Portland canal around the Falls of the Ohio did not pass from private to public ownership until 1855 (see Paul Trescott, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 1958), presumably because these vessels were too large to pass the canal's locks.