

Notes on G.W. Atchison, steamboat captain

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July 2017

Clippings, going back in time

Quad-City Times (Davenport, Iowa)

24 Nov 1929, Sun

As a steamboat patronymic Keokuk was the most popular, but the boats named for Dubuque had the most eventful history. Built at Pittsburgh in 1835, the first Dubuque bore the name of a two-year-old mining community, the first Iowa town to be so honored. No doubt the chief credit for this distinction was due to John Atchison and **George W. Atchison** of Galena, Illinois, who with George B. Cole and James M. White of St. Louis were owners of the ill-fated craft.

Quad-City Times (Davenport, Iowa)

30 Mar 1888, Fri

DAVENPORT, IOWA, FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 1888.

ENTERED PORT ETERNAL.

A letter from New Orleans, received by Capt. Lon Bryson, yesterday, gives account of the death of the oldest commander, since the death of Capt. James May, that ever steamboated on the upper Mississippi river. He was Captain **George W. Atchison**. He was a native of Vermont. In 1830 he enlisted in the U. S. army, and in '31 his regiment was sent from New York harbor to Fort Armstrong on Rock Island. They made the journey by river, canal and lakes to Chicago, and marched from Chicago to the Fort on the Mississippi. The Captain served with his regiment through the Black-Hawk war—and at its close was honorably discharged because of disability. The steamer Winnebago came from St. Louis to Fort Armstrong with supplies in the fall of '32, and Captain Atchison secured a clerkship on

the boat. The next summer he commanded her himself, and ran her in the St. Louis and Galena trade. In the season of 1834 he commanded the Iowa for three months, and the Dubuque the balance of the year—both in the upper river trade. The next year found him on the lower river, commanding the Belle of Missouri, which he built in the winter of '34-'35. She was sunk on her first trip south by collision with another steamer. This was the beginning of enough bad luck to discourage a saint. In 1835 he built the steamer George Collier; she was too large to pass through the locks at Louisville, Ky. In 1838 he built the steamer Gov. Dodge; she sunk at island 21 that fall. He then built the steamer Corsican; she was sunk above Baton Rouge by throwing her fly-wheel through her bottom. He then built the steamers Glaucus and Ione for the upper Mississippi river; he sold the Glaucus to Capt. Spencer Field. He then built the steamer Amaranth for the Missouri river. In 1847 he built the double-engine steamer Amaranth for the New Orleans trade. In 1851 he

for the New Orleans trade. In 1851 he purchased the Missouri; she burnt up at St. Louis. In 1853 he built the steamer Belfast; he sold her to Capt. James Goslee; she sunk in Tompkins' bend. Capt. Atchison, after the sale of the Belfast, retired to a fine farm he owned in Missouri and at which place he died a few years ago.

Capt. Atchison was the owner of 20 lots in Davenport, the original survey—and sold them in 1840 to Antoine Le Claire and George Davenport.

Newton Daily Republican (Newton, Kansas) • 06 Apr 1888, f

THE death is announced of Capt. **George W. Atchison**, the oldest Mississippi river steamboat captain. He commanded two boats named the Amaranth, from which comes the name of the unlucky steamboat in the play of the "Gilded Age."

The Times-Picayune (New Orleans, Louisiana)

05 Jun 1856, Thu

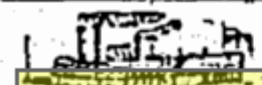
STEAMER BELFAST, G. W. Atchison, master.
FOR ST. LOUIS, CAIRO, AND ALL
intermediate landings—The swift running
and splendid passenger packet **BELFAST**,
George W. Atchison, master, will leave as follows—
Leave New Orleans on **SATURDAY, June 21.**
Leave New Orleans on **SATURDAY, July 12.**
Leave New Orleans on **SATURDAY, July 31.**
For freight or passage apply on board, or to
Jes J. F. ALLEN, 15 Poydras street.
The Belfast offers great inducements to families
going North or West, as her cabin, state rooms and pas-
sages are all large and airy. A plan of her cabin can be
seen and state rooms engaged on application to the agent.

Iowa State Gazette (Burlington, Iowa) • 28 Mar 1849, Wed

STEAMBOAT COLLISION—THE AMARANTH SUNK.—The steamer *Doctor Franklin* descending and the *Amaranth* ascending, came in collision at half-past 2 o'clock yesterday morning, about five miles below Clarksville, in the Upper Mississippi, by which accident the larboard hull of the *Amaranth* was stove in, causing her to sink soon after in nine feet water. The *Amaranth* was light at the time of the accident, but the *Franklin* was loaded and under a full head of steam, and struck the *A.* with such force as to turn her completely around in the river. The *Franklin* sustained little or no damage, and after the accident did not stop her engines but proceeded on her trip. Capt. Atchison, his officers and crew reached here this morning on the *Edward Bates*. It is thought that the *Amaranth* can be raised. She was on her way to Burlington for a cargo of provisions for New Orleans, and had no freight whatever. The *A.* was a large boat, and one of the finest that came to this port—was owned by her commander, Captain G. W. Atchison, and we learn entirely uninsured.—*St. Louis Union*, March 22.

February 28, 1845

Paper: Times-Picayune (New Orleans, Louisiana)

 **Steamer AMARANTH—For St. Louis and Missouri River.**—This fine light draught steamer, Capt. George W. Atchison, is now ready to receive freight, and will leave for the above and all intermediate ports on SATURDAY, March 1st, at 4 o'clock, P. M. For freight or passage, having superior accommodations, apply on board or to **JOHN R. SHAW & CO., Ag'ts.** 24 Poydras street.
F27

April 5, 1842

Paper: Centinel Of Freedom (Newark, New Jersey)

The steamer *Amaranth*, Capt. **G. W. Atchison**, left Oquaku, Ill., for this port, with a cargo of 17,000 bushels of wheat, 595 bbls. flour, and 125 bbls. pork, having two keels in tow. In crossing the Lower Rapids one of her keels, loaded with 5,000 bushels wheat, struck a rock on the lower chain, and sunk immediately. The wheat will be a total loss, but was partly insured at the Marine Insurance Co's office in this city, and the balance in New York.—*St. Louis New Era* 26th ult.

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Book mentions

Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi
by William J. Petersen

Perhaps one of the largest freights ever carried by a **steamboat** on the Upper Mississippi during this period was that of the *Amaranth* in command of Captain **George W. Atchison**. This boat left the Galena levee on May 1, 1843, crowded with passengers and with a freight of 13,000 pigs of lead amounting to 910,000 pounds or 455 tons. Since the *Amaranth* was a boat of only 200 tons burden, a trip such as this would ordinarily have brought a profit almost sufficient to pay for its original cost. Unfortunately for Captain Atchison, the freight rate on that day was only fifteen cents per hundredweight. His receipts for the lead alone amounted to \$1265 for the trip down. Two months later competition had become so intense that this immense cargo would have netted him less than \$500. On the other hand, the same cargo would have netted him \$4550 during the season of low water in 1839.²⁹⁸

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When Captains Ruled Like Kings

with the steamboat phobia. Robert Scribe, Martin Keeler, James Meeker, and even young Jackson Harris, all saw active service on the Upper Mississippi. Indeed steamboating appeared to intrigue whole families. The **Atchison** brothers (George W., Mark, and John **Atchison**) plied the Upper Mississippi during this period. Then there was D. B. Morehouse and his brother Le Grand Morehouse. Preston Lodwick and his brother, Kennedy Lodwick, also should not be forgotten. Such men as Hiram Bersie, W. H. Hooper, A. C. Montfort, Robert A. Reilly, E. H. Gleim, James Lafferty, Orrin Smith, and Russell Blakeley, were likewise prominent captains before the Civil War.⁶⁷⁷

Old Times on the Upper Mississippi: Recollections of a Steamboat Pilot
by George Byron Merrick

total loss.

WINNEBAGO—Built 1830, by Captain **George W. Atchison** and Captain Joseph Throckmorton; in Galena & St. Louis trade, Jos. Throckmorton, master; also visited Fort Snelling with government stores.

WINONA—Sideswheel; Captain J. B. Hatcher, Davidson Line

Fifty Years on the Mississippi; Or, Gould's History of River Navigation
by Emerson W. Gould

[Note misspelling]

CAPTAIN **GEORGE** W. ATCHERSON

Was one of the pioneer boatmen on the Upper Mississippi. While not the first, he was early engaged in the navigation of steamboats. The Winnebago came out in 1830, in which he was interested with Captain Throckmorton, and continued to run her on the Upper Mississippi for several years. He had three brothers, John, Mark and Samuel, all of whom were engaged on the river at later periods and under his influence and assistance.

His only child, **George** N., also followed the river as the only profession he ever engaged in, but died before his ability as a boatman was developed. The father was not a fast practical boatman, although an excellent builder and built several of the best boats then afloat. In fact the Irene, the Ione, the Glaucus, the Governor Dodge, the Amaranthe and before these, the Missouri Belle, are all

606 GOULD'S HISTORY OF RIVER NAVIGATION.

names that will revive pleasant recollections in the minds of many travelers on Western waters in the earlier years of steam navigation.

Captain Atcherson often commanded his own boats and was one of the most genial and attentive masters to his passengers that was then on the river and even up to the present day but few boats are more popular than were Captain G. W. Atcherson's.

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Miscellany

Description of Amaranth (there were two)

1. Name: AMARANTH

Type: Sidewheel, wooden hull packet. Size: 147' X 25' X 5.5', *220 tons

Launched: 1841, Sharpsburg, Pa on Allegheny R.

Destroyed: 1842, Sept. Stranded and lost, Aramanth Island, Miss. R.

Area: 1841, St. Louis-Gallena

Owners: *Capt. George W. Atchison and others

Captain: George W. Atchison

Comments: *Source *The Allegheny River* by Mrs S. Kussart, 1938,

According to this book,

side of The owners also built two barges designed to be rafted along

cargo this boat. Each was 140' X 20' X 2' with open holds, with

the boxes. They carried about 200 tons of cargo each. These were

first barges of this kind built.

Name: AMARANTH
1845-48

Comments: This list of arriving passengers at Mobile, Ala. from [The Olden Times.com](#) could be for

either this boat or the next one below.

From The Mobile Register and Journal, May 25, 1846

Per steamboat Amaranth from Wetumpka—Drs M
Estes, T P Frith, Col O Tatum, Messrs H Olcott, J Mat-
lock, J Johnson, B Smith, H M Billyer, W G McKenzie,
M B Stokries, P O Donnell, C Gough, W Cawlan, D
Suett, A C Captain, W H Wood, A W Blair, R Gaillard,
McCowan, A Tankersly, R M Williams, M H Wood, S
T Staleworth, Smith, Collins, Phillips

Name: AMARANTH
1846-52

Name: AMARANTH
1864-67

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Was in business w/Joseph Throckmorton of Black Hawk fame:

“Throckmorton bought one of his first steamboats, the *Red Rover*, on the Ohio River.^[1] Though the boat sank, it was raised, transported to St. Louis and put into service on the Galena to St. Louis trade route around 1830.^{[1][2]} The same year Throckmorton and George W. Atchison built the steamer *Winnebago* which went into service along the same Galena to St. Louis route until around 1832. As his career progressed, Throckmorton became a familiar name along the Upper Mississippi River.^[2] In 1832 Throckmorton built the steamboat *Warrior* in Pittsburgh.”

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His possible Black Hawk War record, relating to Illinois; it is known that he lived in/did trade in Galena for a time. However, newspaper account above claims he was in service in New York and elsewhere.

Name: George W Atchison
Rank: Private
Company: Bowman, J
Regiment: SP
Brigade: 1
War: Black Hawk War
War Years: 1831-1832
Service Entry Place: Jefferson County, Illinois, USA
Record Source: Illinois Black Hawk War Veterans

End