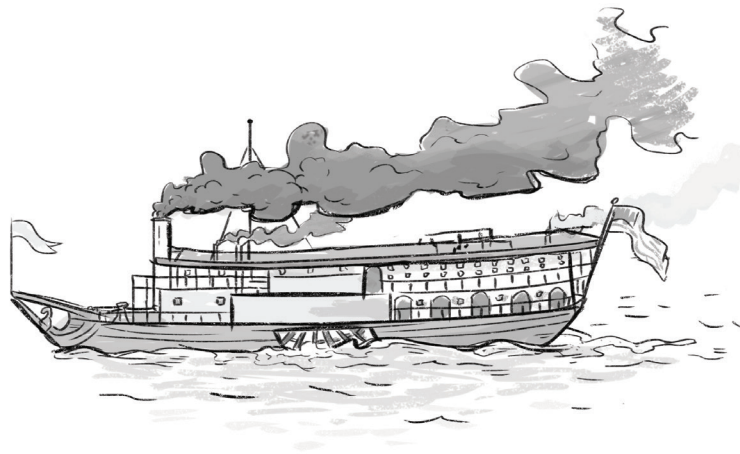


Adventures on the American Frontier

Pioneers on the Early Waterways

Part Five

Shipwrecked by a Buffalo



A Royal Fireworks Production

Royal Fireworks Press
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“One more lift and we’ll be through it!” called the captain of the steamboat *Nimrod*.

The *Nimrod* was far up the Missouri River, for the day had come when steamboats were so light and strong that they could make their way up that wild river. Now the *Nimrod*, which belonged to a fur-trading company, was in a part of the United States that was still largely unsettled.

For hours, the crew had been working to get the boat over a sand bar.



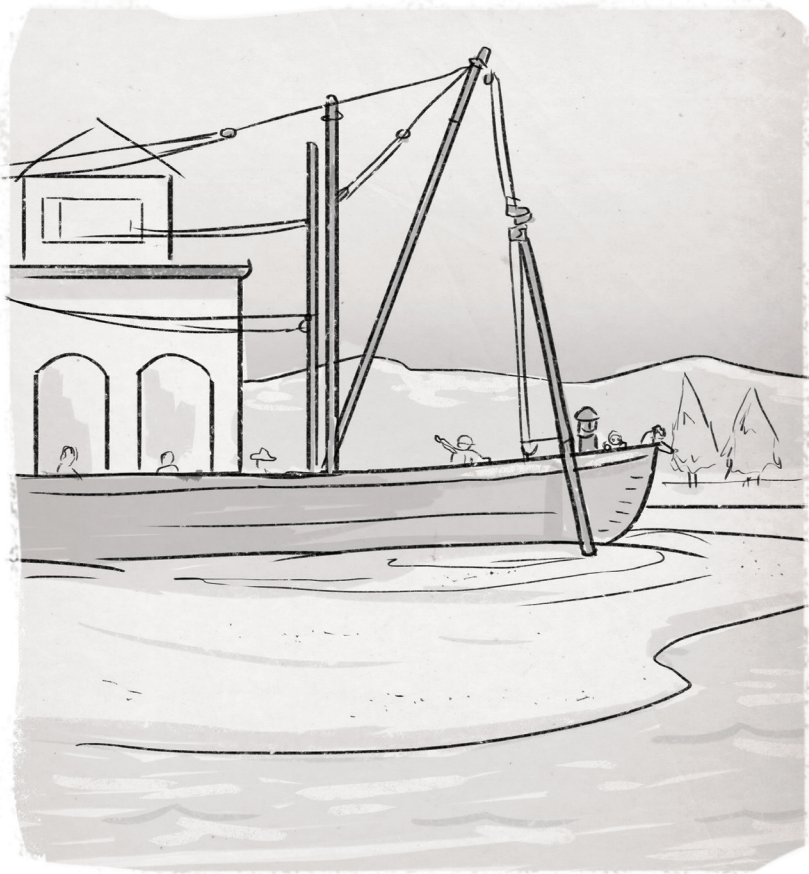
The men on the forward deck of the steamboat worked the ropes and pulleys until they could lower two big, long beams of wood called spars into the river. When they had one on each side of the boat set in place, the captain called, "Wind her up!"

Three of the men turned the capstan—an object like a big spool. As they turned it, the rope wound around it and pulled tight. The boat lifted and moved forward.

"She's floating!" called the captain.

"Pull in the spars, and we'll be on our way."





He waved a signal to Pilot Joseph LaBarge in the pilothouse. Joe signaled the engineer on the deck below with his signal bells, and the engineer started the engines. At last the *Nimrod* was moving forward in the river under steam power.

They had reached a place in the Missouri River where no boat could get through without “grasshoppering.” That’s what they called lifting the boat on the spars, for the spars were like two giant grasshopper legs.

Every Missouri River steamboat carried spars on her forward deck, and almost always there was some place they had to be used on the long trip upriver.

John Durack, mate on the *Nimrod*, stepped into the pilothouse to talk to Pilot Joe LaBarge. Joe was glad to have the



company of the young man who had come to America from England not long before.

“I never thought the Missouri River could be so low,” said John. “Back in St. Louis, the Mississippi was over its banks. Yet here, the water is lower than normal.”

Joe smiled. “Well, John, you don’t know much about this big country of ours yet. This year of 1844 may go down in history as the year of the big flood in St. Louis, but out west here, it can be dry as a bone. That’s not much like England, is it?”