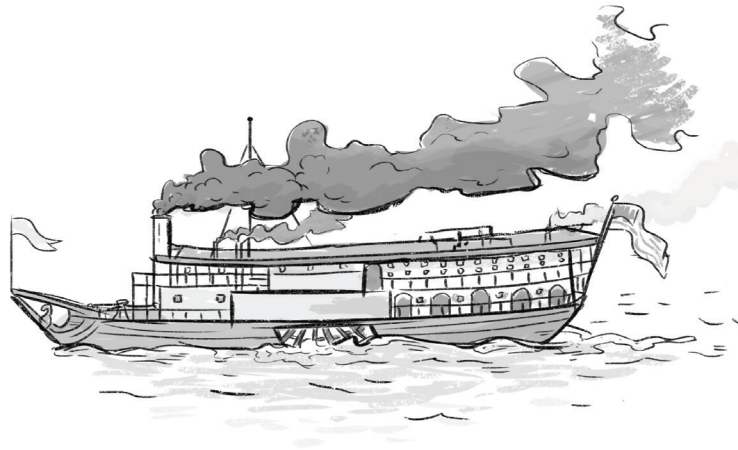


*Adventures on the American Frontier*

# Pioneers on the Early Waterways

Part Two

Steam Fights the River



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It was almost midnight one night in October 1811 when strange sounds reached the sleeping town of Louisville, Kentucky. All over town, people jumped from their beds to see what was the matter.

They ran to their windows. For a long time, there had been a comet in the sky, but the people had not seen the bright ball with its tail of fire for some time. All seemed well.

Suddenly someone shouted, "The comet has fallen into the river!"



Heads turned toward the Ohio River. Sparks seemed to be flying from the river in a cloud of dark smoke. The sparks and smoke and those horrible sounds—that hissing and banging—were coming closer!

People all over the frontier town hurried into their clothes and ran from their homes. But as they ran toward the river, their fear left them.

“The comet hasn’t fallen! Don’t worry! It’s just that new kind of boat! That steamboat of Nick Roosevelt’s is coming in



to the landing!”

The people did not go back to bed. They went down to the riverfront to see the boat come in. The puffing and hissing and banging were softer now. The fires were being slowed to coals, and the great paddlewheel was stopping.



“What a noisy thing it is!” said a woman.

“It looks like the ships that go on the ocean,” one man said. “It’s much too big for rivers.”

“The whole boat was shaking when the engines were going. With all that noise and those sparks flying from that great smokestack, I don’t see why anyone would want to ride on it!” said another man.

But there were others who said, “It’s a wonderful thing! It takes only a few



men to run it, and they don't need poles or cordelles."

"That may be so," agreed one man, "but it'll never go up a river. Steam isn't strong enough to push a boat against the current. Mr. Roosevelt is wasting his money building it."

At last everyone went back to bed, and Louisville was quiet again. But the next day, everyone went back down to the river to see, in the daylight, the first steamboat to come down the Ohio River.