

## Some Diamond Jo Vignettes

The Diamond Jo Line steamboats that William C. Handy sang about in his *St. Louis Blues* were a far cry from the early boats of this famous and historic line. The *Sidney*, the *St. Paul*, the *Dubuque* and the *Quincy* were palatial vessels that, while somewhat smaller, compared favorably with the magnificent craft that plied the Ohio and Lower Mississippi. It would be a mistake, however, to discount the impact that the early boats made in moulding the Diamond Jo Line into a powerful corporation. A few brief vignettes of these pioneer craft will clearly demonstrate the vital role they played in laying the foundation of the Diamond Jo Line.

### *Diamond Jo*

The second boat in the Diamond Jo Line was named *Diamond Jo* for her owner—Joseph Reynolds. She was a 242-ton stern-wheeler built at Woodman on the Wisconsin River during the winter of 1862-1863. The *Diamond Jo* was designed by Captain Hudson Porter, a ship carpenter, from a model he himself had made. She appeared in the grain trade with Captain William Flemming of Lansing in command. Although performing yeoman service, the *Diamond Jo* was a

difficult boat to control. Captain E. H. Thomas, who piloted her while in the Davidson Line, declared the *Diamond Jo* was "slow and hard to handle," a fact which George B. Merrick observed "did not speak well for her designer and builder."

As already noted, the *Diamond Jo* was brought out to carry grain for Joseph Reynolds after the latter found he had been double-crossed by the Minnesota Packet Company when they charged his boats a higher tariff than their own. Once more the Minnesota Packet Company promised to deal fairly with Joseph Reynolds but when it was absorbed by Commodore William F. Davidson's North Western Union Packet Company, the agreement with Reynolds was again broken by the new corporation. Reynolds accordingly bought back the *Diamond Jo* and her two barges—the *Conger* and the *Flemming*. It was at this time that Joseph Reynolds captained his namesake for a few short trips, but probably with the aid of his mate—John Killeen—who doubtless was the real commander because of his knowledge of the river and his skill in handling steamboats.

The *Diamond Jo* was plagued with the usual steamboat accidents. In 1869 she was snagged and sunk just above Dubuque. Three years later, in 1872, she hit some rocks and sank just below Keithsburg, Illinois. In each case, she was raised and repaired. Finally, around 1880, her machinery was taken out and placed in the *Josephine*, a craft

that was destined to ply the Mississippi for many years.

### *Josephine*

The *Josephine* was a 244-ton stern-wheeler built at Dubuque in 1878 by the Diamond Jo Line. She had the machinery of the *Diamond Jo* and was named for the wife of L. D. Richardson, who for many years was the commercial representative of the Diamond Jo Line in Chicago. After about fifteen years in the passenger, freight, and excursion business, the *Josephine* was sold to Quincy interests who failed to meet their financial obligations. The boat accordingly was retrieved by the Diamond Jo Line. After being associated briefly with the Quincy-Burlington-Davenport area, the *Josephine* was dismantled at Dubuque in about 1896. Her machinery was stored at the Diamond Jo Boatyards until acquired by the Streckfus Company in 1911 when it was sold for junk.

### *Jeanette Roberts*

The *Jeanette Roberts* was a 145-ton stern-wheeler built at Rock Island in 1857. She was named for Captain Louis Robert's daughter, Jeanette, known in literature by her pen name—"Wenonah." In the spring of 1870 Captain Robert sold her to Captain Ed Campbell of Durand, Wisconsin. On May 5, 1870, the *Jeanette Roberts* was advertised to run in connection with the Diamond Jo Line Steamers at Reads Landing and

Wabasha. Her association with the Diamond Jo Line was brief—a single season.

*John C. Gault*

The *John C. Gault* was a 61-ton twin-screw propeller steamboat built at Savanna, Illinois, in 1866 and purchased by the Diamond Jo Line in 1867. The *Gault* was used primarily in towing grain barges from upper river points to Prairie du Chien between 1868 and 1872. Captain Joseph B. Wilcox served as master, Joe Gardapie as pilot, and J. W. Porter as engineer. The *John C. Gault* was sold to New Orleans interests and used on Lake Pontchartrain. She was still in this trade in 1896, after thirty years of service.

*Ida Fulton*

The *Ida Fulton* was a 284-ton stern-wheeler built at Cincinnati in 1864. Four years later, in 1868, she was bought by the Diamond Jo Line. In 1869, 1870, and 1871, the *Ida Fulton* was in command of Abe Mitchell, with Stephen Hanks, pilot, and William H. Simpson, clerk. Several notable Upper Mississippi steamboatmen served on the *Ida Fulton* prior to her sale to Captain Charles H. Meeds in 1875. During the next ten years she continued in the grain towing business. After twenty successful years, the *Ida Fulton* was rebuilt at Dubuque and rechristened the *Glenmont*. Her measurements as a raftboat were far different from those of a steamboat, shrinking from 284 tons to 92 tons.

The following incident involving the *Ida Fulton* is well worth recording—namely the mid-winter excursion tendered citizens of the St. Croix Valley by Captain Meeds at Stillwater, Minnesota, on January 1, 1878:

The steamer *Ida Fulton* will leave the elevator dock today, January 1, 1878, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon. Will run up and down the lake [St. Croix] touching at the landing near the elevator every hour during the day until about 4 o'clock p.m. The Stillwater Cornet Band and the Germania Orchestra will accompany the excursion. Fare for round trip, 50 cents. Dancing and meals extra.

One further digression must be made to tell the story of the *Glenmont*. After two others had owned her, she was acquired by the Van Sant Navigation Company in 1892 and paid for herself the first season. The following year, in 1893, the *Glenmont* crashed into the railroad bridge at La Crosse and sank in 18 to 24 feet of water, turning over on her side. Fortunately the raft boat *J. W. Van Sant* was close at hand, nosed alongside, and permitted the passengers and crew perched on the hurricane deck of the *Glenmont* to reach safety. It cost \$3,500 to put her afloat again, the work being done at the Wabasha, Minnesota boatyards.

The *Glenmont* continued as a rafter until 1906 when she was given a new hull at the Dubuque boatyards. According to Captain Van Sant:

This work was done by Captain John Killeen, and he

did a fine job. Captain Killeen is noted the whole length of the Mississippi River as a thorough steamboatman and took great pride in rebuilding this boat for us. When this was done she was owned by the Iowa & Minnesota Navigation Company. The stockholders of said company were Captain Elmer McCraney, M. J. Scandrett and myself. When the boat came out new from the boatyard many old-timers pronounced her the very best raft boat in the business. She certainly was a fine craft. She was renamed the *North Star*.

During her remaining years as a rafter, the *North Star* was "very successful, always making good time and good money, and never meeting with any accidents." On October 14, 1911, the *Waterways Journal* declared:

The fine sternwheel raftboat *North Star*, purchased by the Burlington Railroad Company from Captain Elmer McCraney and ex-governor Van Sant, will leave in a few days for Metropolis, Illinois, where she will be used in the building of the Burlington bridge at that point.

Her work done, the *North Star* was offered for sale. The *Merchant Vessels of the United States* (1916) listed that her home port was Chicago, but did not indicate her owners. The *North Star* had seen 50 years of service since the *Ida Fulton* was launched at Cincinnati in 1864, and rebuilt into the *Glenmont* at Dubuque in 1885. Thus, with new hulls, but the same engine, we find the *Diamond Jo* steamboat *Ida Fulton* gave over fifty years of service to her several owners.

*Bannock City*

The *Bannock City* was a 150-ton stern-wheeler built at Le Claire, Iowa, in 1865. A small, light-draft boat, the *Bannock City* was in command of Erastus Carleton in 1865. Two years later she was running out of Galena. In 1871 she was in command of Captain Jerry Wood, who chartered her to the Diamond Jo Line for a short time. A bill of lading of the *Bannock City* dated June 18, 1870, shows her carrying five barrels of linseed oil from Cassville to Dubuque at 50 cents per barrel.

*Arkansas*

In 1872 the Diamond Jo Line was augmented by the purchase of two large steamboats—the *Arkansas* and the *Tidal Wave*. Both these boats were double the size of the earlier Diamond Jo Line craft.

The *Arkansas* was a 549-ton stern-wheeler built at Pittsburgh in 1868. She ran on the Lower Mississippi until purchased by Diamond Jo Reynolds at New Orleans in 1872. The *Arkansas* was a powerful steamboat capable of towing four to eight grain barges with ease and safety, the number depending on the stage of the river. Captain Joseph B. Wilcox was in command of her in 1873. Adam Carlyle clerked on the *Arkansas* in 1873 and William H. Simpson did likewise in 1875 and 1876. Both their signatures appear on bills of lading in the author's possession. Among

the pilots who steered the *Arkansas* we find the names of Sherman Brown, Stephen Dolson, William Tibbals, and Henry Ryder.

The *Arkansas* seemed to be blessed with good luck while under the aegis of the Diamond Jo Line. At any rate, she struck no snags or bridge abutments and never exploded a boiler or collapsed a flue. She was sold to Peyton S. Davidson of La Crosse in 1878 who took her around to the Missouri River for two years before returning her to the Mississippi. It was then that good fortune left her. The *Arkansas* was sunk by ice at St. Louis in 1884 and proved a total loss.

#### *Tidal Wave*

Despite her impressive name, the *Tidal Wave* was not a gigantic boat. Actually, she was considerably smaller than the *Arkansas*. She was, in fact, a 476-ton stern wheel passenger and freight boat that had been built at Pittsburgh in 1870. Merrick declares she was rebuilt from the New Orleans cotton carrier *Texarkana*. Captain Alexander Lamont commanded the *Tidal Wave* in the spring of 1873, and was succeeded by Captain Abe Mitchell. In April of 1877, the Diamond Jo Line sold the *Tidal Wave* and the *Arkansas*, with the barges *Jerry* and *Jeanette*, to the Yellowstone Transportation Company, of which Peyton S. Davidson was the leading spirit. This company had a contract to transport government stores to the Upper Missouri. It was a dangerous



assignment because of the bloody Indian wars that had reached a climax with "Custer's Last Stand" at the Little Big Horn in June of 1876. That the trip was a success is attested by the safe return of the *Tidal Wave* to St. Louis from the mouth of the Yellowstone on July 2, 1877.

At the expiration of their contract, the owners of the *Tidal Wave* brought her back to the Upper Mississippi and rebuilt her into the *Grand Pacific* at the La Crosse boatyards. This magnificent 800-ton craft was lost on April 27, 1884, when, while attempting to run the Burlington bridge, she was caught by a sudden gust of wind that sent her crashing into the drawbridge pier, the impact breaking her in two, and sinking her in twenty feet of water. Only the hurricane and Texas decks of the *Grand Pacific* remained above water, affording a refuge for passengers and crew until taken off by the Burlington ferryboat.

#### *Imperial*

One of the best known work horses of the Diamond Jo Line was the *Imperial*, a 222-ton stern-wheeler that was built at Pittsburgh in 1865. The *Imperial* towed grain under the Diamond Jo aegis from 1873 to 1881. In contrast to the sluggish and unpredictable *Diamond Jo*, the *Imperial* was so powerful, that her pilots agreed she was inclined to "run away" unless she had eight loaded barges in tow to serve as a ballast. The *Imperial* was brought to the Upper Mississippi in 1866 to

run with Captain John Robson's *Tiber* in his Red Collar Line out of Winona. Designed as a freight boat with no accommodations for passengers, the *Imperial* was so low between decks that an ordinary man had difficulty standing upright in her staterooms. It is said that Fred Bill, who served as clerk on the *Imperial*, had to cut several inches off the legs of his stool in order to prevent his head from bumping on the ceiling of his office.

The names of Fred Bill, Adam Carlyle, John Killeen, and Joseph B. Wilcox are but a few of the many Diamond Jo employees associated with the *Imperial*. During the winter months of 1879 and 1880 the *Imperial* was engaged in towing grain downstream from St. Louis to New Orleans. She was sold to the Eagle Packet Company of St. Louis in 1881, dismantled, and her machinery placed in a new boat.

#### *Josie*

The *Josie* was a contemporary of the *Imperial*, having been built at Madison, Indiana, in 1873. She was a 237-ton stern-wheeler built by Captain John S. McCune of the St. Louis and Keokuk Packet Company. She had the engines of the *Fanny Harris*, which were originally placed in the *City of Keithsburg*, but, after shaking the *Keithsburg* to pieces, were believed more suitable for the *Josie*.

The *Josie* was bought by the Diamond Jo Line in 1875. She was taken to Dubuque where the

engines of the *Fanny Harris* were taken out and placed in the *Libbie Conger*, and those of the *Joe Gales* placed in the *Josie*, making her a still more powerful towboat. Indeed, the *Josie* is credited with frequently handling nine barges with ease and safety. The *Josie* made frequent trips to New Orleans richly freighted with grain. On November 25, 1880, she was reported frozen in at Keokuk, loaded to the guards with grain for New Orleans.

The *Josie* was sold that fall to the Eagle Packet Company and used for general towing in the St. Louis area for a score of years. In 1901 she was busy towing hardwood logs from down river ports to St. Louis. While thus engaged, the *Josie* was snagged and sunk on the Lower Mississippi, bringing a long career of almost thirty years to an end.

#### *Libbie Conger*

Diamond Jo steamboat captains appear to have had their favorite boats. At any rate, they seemed to like their names associated with a particular steamboat. Thus, John Killeen chose to identify himself as captain of the *Libbie Conger* in the *Dubuque City Directory* for 1880, and not merely with the Diamond Jo Line, a company he was shortly to head up as superintendent. The *Libbie Conger* was a 324-ton stern-wheeler whose construction was begun in 1878 at Metropolis, Illinois, but whose work was finished at the Dubuque boatyard when she received the engines of

the *Josie*—by way of the *Fannie Harris* and *City of Keithsburg*. The *Libbie Conger's* name appeared in the *List of Merchant Vessels of the United States—1892*, but had disappeared from the same publication by 1896.

#### *Mary Morton*

One of the most popular boats of the Diamond Jo Line was the *Mary Morton*, named for Diamond Jo's wife, whose maiden name was Mary Morton. This 456-ton stern-wheeler was built at Dubuque in 1880 and served the Diamond Jo Line for fifteen years. In March of 1895 she was sold to a syndicate of farmers from the St. Louis area whose avowed aim was to secure equitable rates for their products, but whose experience did not qualify them to operate a steamboat successfully. In 1896 she was plying between St. Louis and Memphis when she struck a snag and sank near Grand Tower, proving a total loss.

Had the *Mary Morton* been owned by the Diamond Jo Line in 1896 there is grave doubt in the writer's mind as to whether she would have proved a total loss—particularly with Captain John Killeen of Dubuque at the helm. Thus, while still owned by the Diamond Jo Line, the *Mary Morton* was snagged and sunk a few miles above Clarksville, Missouri. Captain Killeen promptly bulkheaded the boat, pumped her out, and had her on the ways at Dubuque eighteen days after the accident at a cost of only \$3,000—which was,

**WILLIAM TATE.**  
**PRODUCE AND COMMISSION MERCHANT, DEALER IN SALT, CEMENT,**  
**AND AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY:**



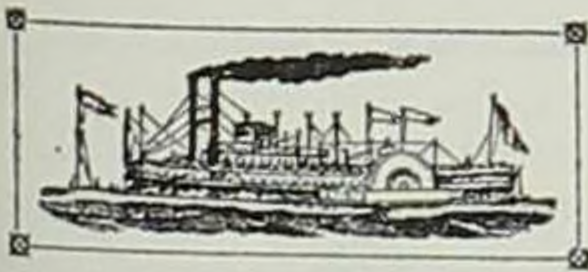
Shipped, In apparent good order, or condition noted, by  
**WILLIAM TATE,**

on account and risk of whom it may concern, on board the good Steamboat Libbie Conger  
 and barges, whereof Pullen is Master for the present voyage, now lying  
 at the Port of Glen Haven the following articles, marked or numbered as below, which are to be delivered without  
 delay, in like good order, at the Port of Pulten the unavoidable dangers of navigation  
 and fire only excepted, to R. R. Agent or assigns, he or they paying freight for the  
 same at the rate of Paris and charges, with the  
 privilege of Lighting, Towing and Re-shipping.

In Witness Whereof, the Owner, Master or Clerk of said Boat has affirmed to 5 Bills of Lading all of this  
 tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

Dated at Glen Haven, Wis., this 26 day of September 1878.

MARKS.	ARTICLES.	WEIGHT.	RATE.	CHARGES.
H IHM. Consigned to C. Kristenberg & Co Chicago for care H Ihm Guttenberg	210 Seamless Sacks Hoe Chicago Fred. A. Beck			



**HERMANN IHM,**  
 -DEALER IN-  
**Grain, Produce and General Merchandise,**  
 Proprietor Guttenberg Elevator.

GUTTENBERG, IOWA, Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 1878

Shipped, In good order, or condition noted, by **HERMANN IHM,** on board the good Steamboat  
Imperial and Barges, the property described below, which is to be delivered, in like  
 order without delay, (the unavoidable dangers of Navigation, Bridges and all other known or unknown obstruc-  
 tions, Fire, Explosion and Collision only excepted,) unto consignees as below or unto an Agent or Forwarder  
 at the Port of St. Louis Freight and Charges as specified below to be paid upon the same, with the privileges of Lighting,  
 Towing and Reshipping.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Owner, Master or Clerk of said Boat hath affirmed unto five Bills of Lading, all  
 of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

For Account of Herm. Ihm. Consignees and Marks. Crutcher & Hersman

PACKAGES.	ARTICLES.	Marks.	WEIGHT.	RATE.	FREIGHT.
146.	P. O. Potatoes	F. S.			
54.	E. O. do.	B. S.			
		J. M. Lamm			

JOHN GEIGER,  
COMMISSION & FORWARDING MERCHANT.

Dealer in DRY GOODS, GROCERIES, &c., &c., - - CASSVILLE, WIS.



Shipped, In Good Order and Condition,

By JOHN GEIGER, on account and risk of whom it may concern, on board the good Steamboat called *Imperial* and barges, whereof \_\_\_\_\_ is Master for the present voyage, now lying at the Port of CASVILLE, the following articles, marked or numbered as below, which are to be delivered without delay, in like good order, at the port of *Fulton* the unavoidable dangers of navigation and fire only excepted,—to *Railway of* or assigns, he or they paying freight for the same at the rate of *15 ct per Bushel to Chicago* with the privilege of Lighting, Towing and Re-shipping, \_\_\_\_\_.

In Witness Whereof, the Owner, Master or Clerk of said Boat has affirmed to three Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

Dated, at Cassville, this *9* day of *Oct* 18*73*.

Herald Steam Printing House—Dubuque, Iowa.

MARKS.	ARTICLES.	WEIGHT.	RATE.	CHARGES.
J. G.	100 Bags Wheat <i>etc.</i> in Bulk from <i>Fulton</i> Docks to be Returned			
<i>John Killen Capt</i>				



Shipped, In Good Order and Condition.

By JOHN GEIGER, on account and risk of whom it may concern, on board the good Steamboat called *Darwin City* and barges, whereof \_\_\_\_\_ is Master for the present voyage, now lying at the Port of CASVILLE, the following articles, marked or numbered as below, which are to be delivered without delay, in like good order, at the port of *Dubuque* the unavoidable dangers of navigation and fire only excepted,—to *Meyer & Degendorf* or assigns, he or they paying freight for the same at the rate of *50 ct per Bbl* with the privilege of Lighting, Towing and Re-shipping, \_\_\_\_\_.

In Witness Whereof, the Owner, Master or Clerk of said Boat has affirmed to three Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

Dated, at Cassville, this *18th* day of *June* 18*70*.

Herald Steam Printing House—Dubuque, Iowa.

MARKS.	ARTICLES.	WEIGHT.	RATE.	CHARGES.
<i>A. Smith</i>	<i>5 Bbls Lard Oil</i>			
<i>M. C. Smith</i>				

JOHN GEIGER,  
COMMISSION & FORWARDING MERCHANT,

Dealer in DRY GOODS, GROCERIES, &c., &c. CASSVILLE, WIS.



Shipped



In Good Order and Condition,

By JOHN GEIGER, on account and risk of whom it may concern, on board the good Steamboat called \_\_\_\_\_ and barges, whereof \_\_\_\_\_ is Master for the present voyage, now lying at the Port of CASVILLE, the following articles, marked or numbered as below, which are to be delivered without delay, in like good order, at the port of St. Louis the unavoidable dangers of navigation and fire only excepted, to Railway Depot or assigns, he or they paying freight for the same at the rate of 10¢ pr Bushel to Milwaukee with the privilege of Lighting, Towing and Re-shipping, \_\_\_\_\_.

In Witness Whereof, the Owner, Master or Clerk of said Boat has affirmed to three Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

Dated, at Cassville, this 24 day of Aug, 1873.

Herald Steam Printing House—Dubuque, Iowa.

MARKS.	ARTICLES.	WEIGHT.	RATE.	CHARGES.
J. G.	160 160 Bags Wheat in Bulk from St. Louis Bucks to be Returned W. Carlyle.			



Shipped

In Good Order and Condition,

By JOHN GEIGER, on account and risk of whom it may concern, on board the good Steamboat called Arkansas and barges, whereof \_\_\_\_\_ is Master for the present voyage, now lying at the Port of CASVILLE, the following articles, marked or numbered as below, which are to be delivered without delay, in like good order, at the port of St. Louis the unavoidable dangers of navigation and fire only excepted, to Railway Depot or assigns, he or they paying freight for the same at the rate of 15¢ pr Bushel to Milwaukee with the privilege of Lighting, Towing and Re-shipping, \_\_\_\_\_.

In Witness Whereof, the Owner, Master or Clerk of said Boat has affirmed to three Bills of Lading, all of this tenor and date, one of which being accomplished the others to stand void.

Dated, at Cassville, this 5 day of Sept, 1873.

Herald Steam Printing House—Dubuque, Iowa.

MARKS.	ARTICLES.	WEIGHT.	RATE.	CHARGES.
J. G.	640 Bags Wheat No. 1 in Bulk from St. Louis Bucks to be Returned Carlyle clk			



according to historian George B. Merrick, "one of the quickest and best pieces of work on record."

We have now covered thirteen boats of the Diamond Jo Line, several of which served only briefly with that company and only three of which—the *Mary Morton*, the *Tidal Wave*, and the *Arkansas*, measured over 400 tons. Of the remaining four boats, two were destined to change their names in the period between 1890 and 1911, but all four were to be absorbed by the Streckfus Company in 1911. Most of the original boats were engaged primarily in towing grain and merchandise. Passengers were of secondary importance until the *Arkansas*, *Tidal Wave*, and *Mary Morton* were acquired. In the careers of these boats we have mirrored the rise, growth, and decline of the Diamond Jo Line, the last of the great packet companies whose beginnings date back to Civil War Days.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN