

Molasses

(There are a number of minor commodities that are being shipped by towboat such as cement, phosphate rock, linseed oil, sunflower seed and oats, to mention a few. In time these may grow in importance, as has molasses, into ever-increasing importance. The Editor.)

Saul Greenstein was a man with an idea. Although an Easterner and a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Saul struck out west and settled on the Mississippi at Dubuque. He loved the mighty river that flowed by his door and he was quick to note the potential of the Mississippi as a highway of commerce. He noted, too, the need for securing tons of molasses to mix with feed for livestock. At the time, in 1953, molasses was being transported by railroad tank cars, which was both a slow and costly means of delivery. Saul Greenstein hit on the idea of molasses barges that could be towed from New Orleans to Dubuque where they would be unloaded into huge tanks. From Dubuque the molasses would be dispatched by truck to various points within a radius of 250 miles of Dubuque—in Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota.

Saul Greenstein's idea was not only unique, it was decidedly successful. Others, observing his

success, were quick to adopt it. Two molasses terminals were established in Muscatine and other molasses distributing centers were established at St. Louis, St. Paul, and at Savage on the Minnesota River. But Saul Greenstein's Inland Molasses Company must be remembered as not only the first in Iowa but also the Upper Mississippi.

At first the molasses destined for Dubuque was brought from Cuba and other islands of the Caribbean by means of sea-going tankers to New Orleans where it was loaded into barges. A downstream cargo had to be found in order to make the project pay. It was soon discovered that lard and tallow were excellent bulk commodities. While these could be obtained from several sources the Dubuque Packing Company became a major contributor to the downstream cargo.

All this time a gradual evolution in equipment was taking place. At first barges were developed that could be towed from New Orleans down the Mississippi and through the Gulf of Mexico by tugboats. When Cuba and Porto Rico were snuffed out as molasses ports, sea-going barges were developed which could bring molasses across the ocean, through the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico and up the Mississippi to Dubuque. By the same token it was possible for Saul Greenstein and his Inland Molasses Company to ship lard and tallow down the Mississippi and off to some far-away European ports where they would discharge

their cargo and head for some port where molasses could be picked up.

The growth of the molasses trade in the space of twenty years has been nothing short of phenomenal. From a modest beginning in 1953 the tonnage has increased many fold. River barges as well as sea-going barges may be seen at the Dubuque terminal discharging molasses and taking on lard and tallow. The ultimate seems to have been achieved when self-propelled sea-going barges came into use.

Coal, oil, and grain were bulk commodities that naturally gravitated to inland waterways as a means of cheap and dependable transportation. But the inauguration of molasses as an important bulk commodity in barge line traffic required a far-sighted and courageous entrepreneur. Saul Greenstein, through his imagination and never-failing drive, possessed all the ingredients for success in this unusual venture in towboating.

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