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**SOME REMINISCENCES OF THINGS
MARITIME BY TIMOTHY
KELLEY, SR.**

The following is in part the paper prepared by Timothy Kelley, Sr., read before the meeting of the Manitowoc County Historical Society at the library on Wednesday evening of last week:

In complying with the request for some reminiscences of my early days of navigation of the lakes and of early local shipping, I am making a maiden effort in the line of preparing a paper of any kind, and am with many misgivings reluctantly putting aside a natural aversion for the task. Not that I do not want to talk about marine matters. That is about all that I can talk of with any assurance. I make no pretensions to knowledge of very early history of the city for there are many happily still among us, whose recollections of early day persons, places and events go back 15, or even 20 years, before mine. But my memory of things connected with navigation may be more trustworthy than that of one who was not so directly connected with it. In writing now I desire to merely rapidly sketch things which I think striking, to avoid the narrator's personal history as much as possible, and also that which is universally known or has been recorded in local histories. It is written entirely from memory but is nevertheless, I think, fairly accurate.

My earliest recollections of the Great Lakes and craft thereon began in April 1858 when I came from Milwaukee to Manitowoc, and landed on the 7d North or K. K. Jones pier, from the steamer Cleveland, of the occasion of my parents settling here in Manitowoc. Living here when a youngster and near the harbor gave me an excellent opportunity to satisfy my great delight in going on board of every craft that showed itself in the river or at the piers on the lake. At this time the river was nearly in its natural condition. Each bank was fringed with a strip of marsh. On the south

side from 8th street eastward there was swamp land filling the space between Quay street and the river. At about the foot of south 7th street a pier was built through this swamp from Quay street to the river channel. On the north side the marsh extended from Commercial street to the river, west of 7th street, widening gradually and taking in the whole peninsula where the Soo Line yards are. Besides the small pier through the marsh, I think the only river improvements were small docks the width of the street at north 6th and north 7th streets. Otherwise the river was still in its original condition, an idea of which can be gotten from viewing any unimproved river with a strip of marshland on each side. There was another improvement, if it can be called that, consisting of a couple of cribs at the mouth of the river, which are now under the Goodrich ware-house. These, I presume, were the results of the abortive effort to build a harbor in 1852. They were of no use for any purpose except for boys to dive from. Although history may be to the contrary, there was not an artificial channel of 12 feet in the river at this time nor for many years after. At this period, and up to the time the government harbor was built in the early '70s, although schooners came into the river to receive cargoes at certain seasons, it was uncommon and they never could do so with over eight feet draught and then only under favorable conditions and only up to 10th street. When schooners did come into the river it was rarely that the bar across the mouth would permit a full cargo to be taken inside, and the loading would be completed from one of the two bridge piers jutting out from the beach into the lake, or in case of their crowded condition, which was usual, from skows in the lake. It was a common sight in the '50s and '60s to see a half dozen schooners at anchor in the bay being laden from skows with shingles, posts or lumber. It was at times quite a difficult job to get into the river even with a very light draught before the harbor was built.

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Sand bars would form that completely blocked the mouth of the river, and I have walked across from where the Goodrich Dock is now to where the C. & N. W. ferry slip is, on dry land. I remember once a little schooner came in as far as she could when the river was in such a condition and landed alongside the old cribs I have mentioned, and she laid there until the captain came with a shovel and dug a drain from the river to the lake about 20 feet and the water in the river being higher than in the lake, soon wore a channel wide and deep enough for the schooner to get inside. The steamer Michigan was fast on this bar all one winter in the early '60s. The freshest in the spring furnished water to get her inside and her machinery was put in the new Goodrich boat Orion. The only bridge obstruction in 1856 was one at 8th street consisting of two wooden platforms that tilted up, something like the modern bascule at Grand Avenue, Milwaukee. Such was the river but some convenience, of course, was necessary for mooring craft for loading and unloading and the two bridge piers, Jones's at Chicago street, and Hubbard's at Franklin street, met this necessity. These two piers were in use when we arrived here. The light house in 1856 was the old tower at 5th and York streets perpetuated by the postal card publishers. It had then a fixed light, changed a few years later to a revolving flash light.

The constant traders here, nearly all belonging to merchants of the town, were the schooners Traveler, Capt. Jesse Wright; Joe Vilas, Capt. Albright; Gertrude, Capt. Edwards; Wayne, Capt. Nelson; Celt, Capt. Simpson; Clipper City, Capt. Edwards; A. Baensch, Capt. Fulton; Gesine, Capt. Fred Schuette; El-Tempo, Capt. Hughes; Col. Glover, Capt. Kochler; Transit, Capt. Hoag; Belle, Capt. Humphrey; Two Charlies, Capt. Minsky; Jane Louisa, Capt. Jarr. When we saw these men standing on the quarter deck sailing into the narrow entrance of the river in a breeze of wind it was the delight of us boys all of whom hoped that some day we might occupy like positions. It required courage and skill to do the

work that these men did; to come down the lake with a breeze of wind and quite a sea on and make for a hole in the sand and get into the river, keeping all sails on to jump the vessel over the bar and get her inside. It was a sight never to be forgotten. Sometimes they missed the mouth of the river and several of the schooners went ashore on either side of the mouth. It happened to the Gesine once. Perhaps Capt. Fred Schuette remembers it, but he was not Captain of her at that time. Capt. Jim Donovan was sailing her then. When they came to Manitowoc Bay and thought it was not advisable to try to get in they came to anchor outside until the breeze subsiding and the sea going down would enable them to get inside or alongside the piers to load. This frequently kept them out in the bay at anchor for several days getting a shaking up. These schooners were not enough to carry the freight offered and there were several outside vessels from Chicago and Milwaukee constantly trading here, so one can imagine the amount of coarse freight that was handled in the early days.

The first vessels that I saw launched were the "El Tempo" built about where the grocery department of Torrison's store is now, the "A. Baensch" built just where the north end of Main street bridge now is, and the "Belle" just west of the present dry dock up the river, all in 1857.

The first steamboat built here, I think, was the propeller "Union" about where the Electric Light plant is now. It was built for Capt. Goodrich. He also had the steamer "Victor" (name changed to "Sunbeam") built in the same place. That was the Bates ship yard. The "Sunbeam" was built with screw wheels on the sides with independent engines for each wheel, but this arrangement was not a success, and they were soon removed and the regular paddle wheels and a beam engine substituted. The "Sunbeam" was lost on Lake Superior with all hands except one man. That was the beginning of the Goodrich fleet that was built here. Afterwards were built here for Goodrich the Orion, North West, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Chicago, DePere, Corona,

Musregon, Oconto, Navarino, Menominee, City of Ludington, City of Racine, Indiana and now the Alabama. The schooners Nabob and Sea Gem were also built on the same ground as the Sunbeam. Another ship yard was started below 8th street bridge and between 7th and 8th streets. There the barque "Chicago Board of Trade" was built in 1862. She was one of the largest vessels on the lakes then, having a capacity of about 28,000 bushels of grain. I was a boy on her in the season of 1865. I must mention the numerous sailing crafts that were built along in the seventies, at the several ship yards of Rand & Berger, Hanson & Scove, Butler & Windiate, and Peter Larson, who all built some of the best and smartest vessels that were ever built on the lakes. I remember there were 16 vessels built here in 1873 and eleven in 1874 and most all of them of modern size at that time, and some of them the largest on the lakes, viz: Geo. Murry, G. Pfister, J. I. Case, C. C. Barnes, H. C. Richards and David Vance. My own sailing began in the little schooner "Ellen" in the fall of 1862, the year of the famous Indian scare. Capt. Jim Stephenson, Levi Beardsley and myself comprised the crew. The skipper had it all planned that when the redskins got too close for our comfort we were to sail out into the lake. However they got no closer to us than Minnesota.

The craft trading here in the '50s and '60s might be roughly classified like this:

1. Local passenger steamers
2. Line package freighters on the Chicago-Buffalo route
3. The various types of sailing craft.

The steamers always tied up at either one or the other of the two bridge piers. All steamers were then wood burners and Manitowoc was a fixed, regular "wooding-up" place for the Buffalo-Chicago line boats. The piers were always piled with this steamboat fuel ready for delivery. Many immigrants came to Manitowoc via these line propellers from Buffalo although perhaps not as many as by rail to Milwaukee and thence by steamer to Manitowoc. The local passenger steamers were in the early days all

side-wheelers of the same general type as the ones still running although smaller craft. These line propellers of old days were a distinct type of passenger and freight steamer which has now almost disappeared from the lakes. There is nothing resembling them to be seen on the lower lakes. The big outside arches on the Nyack and the Goodrich Company's Georgia are relics of one of their striking features. Their Buffalo crews contained some tough characters who occasionally livened up things in the village streets. Of the sailing craft I wish I could write as I would like to but it would be perhaps technical, uninteresting and serve no good purpose. In them I grew up and spent most of my youth and young manhood. I will briefly sketch the various kind. It must be remembered that in the time of which I speak a steamer was only an occasional thing the sailing boat an every day affair; the steamers few, the windjammer legion. I recall counting in the early '60s fifty-five sailing boats in sight from the mouth of the river. How these craft are classified, irrespective of their size, by the manner of the rigging of their sails and masts, any encyclopedia or even a dictionary will inform you. In early days on the lakes the vessels were mostly square rigged on the fore mast. The early sailors coming up from salt water of course brought their ideas with them and rigged the vessels accordingly. There were also several full rigged brigs, square rigged on both fore and main masts. One was the Robt. Burns and another the Oleandor, and I remember one full rigged barque, the D. V. Morgan. That rig soon proved to be too expensive and not practical for the lakes and the three masted schooner soon followed which remained until the end of the schooners usefulness; they being supplanted by the steamer and tow barges.

I have mentioned the salt water sailors we had on the lakes. A large part of the crews of the big sailing boats were of this class. Every ship had its "foe's'le lawyer" whose talk to his own satisfaction at least showed a more intimate knowledge of sailor's rights than any admiralty lawyer could boast. Many of these salt water

men had a practice of returning to the coast during the winter months. Every fo'c'sle had some of them. They made AI seamen of the boys and every branch of the sailerscraft, the very existence of the details of which a landsman knows nothing, was thoroughly ground into us, not at all uncommonly with the aid of the traditional ropes end, for the deep water men and the good seamen were not all in the forward end of the boat. Even in my earliest recollections the splendid seamen that Norway has given us had begun to come. It was the delight of the boys to be on watch with one or more of these old salts. The yarns they spun of weird things in distant seas was a never ending delight to us. We knew the names and the reputations of the New York-Liverpool clipper masters who were notorious for their brutality to the seamen. We heard and believed (then) tales of wondrous things in the South and China seas. The lunches served at change of watch at night were bread and seaman's "salt horse." It was never in quantity sufficient to satisfy all hands and the boys suffered in consequence. Stories of ship wrecks and flying fish were pleasant, but did not satisfy a youngster's appetite. Many of these salt seamen did not know how to sit up to a table at meals, and some of them have told me that they had no such things as dining tables in fo'c'sles on sea-going ships. Some of them would not use a table fork, making a sheath knife serve as knife and fork. But the old time salt has now gone. We'll never see him on the lakes again. He couldn't fit into modern conditions, but his passing to give way to deck-hands, whose necessary qualification is the ability to scrub decks, took much of the Capt. Marryat-Clark Russel flavor from sailing on the lakes.

That the carrying of freights on the lakes has been revolutionized is apparent. I shall speak of that a little later. Here I mention one feature that worked a big change. Big boats now are dispatched by wire almost like trains. In my early days a telegram from owners was unknown. In Chicago with our grain in, in April, waiting for the straits to open we could not learn immediately when it was possible

to get through. So when some one of the fleet thought the weather ought to have made the passage possible away he would go out of Chicago for Buffalo and like a flock of pigeons the rest would be right after him. The rivalry between the ships as to speed was intense. No one would permit another an advantage he could prevent. The rivalry extended to the crews. There were many then famous, but now forgotten, races from Chicago to Buffalo. These early clearances were not always productive of best results. A sudden drop of the mercury and a tightening of the ice would leave the whole fleet ice bound in the straits. I remember one spring being so caught and held for twelve days when master of the schooner Thomas Howland.

Before closing I feel as if I ought to mention and bring home by some figures the marvelous changes in three things. (1) Increase in the capacity of individual craft. (2) Wonderful unloading devices. (3) The numerous aids to navigation. Steamers are now being built 600 feet long and capable of carrying 12,000 tons. It would take 200 of the schooners (60 tons) in which I began sailing to carry the cargo of one of them. And besides this the 12,000 ton boat makes four trips while our little schooner would be making one, which makes the actual carrying capacity 800 fold. The constant improvement of unloading machinery is one of the wonders of modern invention. Twenty years ago it would have taken about 12 days to unload a 12,000 ton cargo of ore at the best lake Erie docks. Now at Conneaut they take it out in from four to five hours. Ashtabula docks are nearly as fast and new ones are being built. Modern automatic coal grabs at our upper lake ports are also marvels of ingenuity and speed. As late as 1865 the deepest draught possible through the St. Clair flats, necessary to be gone through in getting from the upper to the lower lakes, and vice versa, was 12 feet. The shallowest point there now is 20 feet, due to government work. The same might be said of the Lime Kiln crossing, in the Detroit river below the city. As an illustration of the government's work upon these, and other channels, it may be mentioned that

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the government is now engaged at this point in blasting out of the rock bed a 25 foot channel, having built a coffer-dam miles long and pumped the river dry at a formerly shallow spot. What the government is doing in harbor work is familiar to all of us, and everyone knows of our great government canal at the Soo. To illustrate the constantly increasing aids to navigation I may say that off hand I can name 16 light houses on Lake Michigan alone that did not exist at all in the '60s. Besides these there have been put on that lake 5 light ships and numerous stakes and buoys all well known to every pilot.

I have reached the end of my outline and I fear have long ago reached the limit of my hearers patience!