

Two old-timers remember the steamboat 'Florence' ...

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Clarence Phillips points to the location of the forgotten steamboat.

Two Old Timers Remember the Steamboat "Florence"

By Brice N. Stump

(Periodically the Marylander and Herald will have stories concerning the historical past of Somerset County. To bring the past alive and present it with interest we consult people who were there, who saw history being made in the late 1800's and the turn of the century. Clarence Phillips and E. Walton Pusey reach back into years long gone to tell of the only steamboat that worked the Manokin River.)

"She was a regular steamboat, only smaller," reflected E. Walton Pusey. "My grandfather Frank Pusey took me to the old wharf on the Woolford farm and that was one of the few times I remember seeing Florence on the river. I was just a boy then. Pusey was born in 1885 and figures he may have been 10 years old then, remembering too that the steamboat Florence "had a whistle, I remember that."

Pusey is one of the few people living that

carried a few passengers...if you wanted to go to Deal Island to Princess Anne she took you. Now you can even row a rowboat up that river now," Pusey stated.

Perhaps the most unique feature of Florence was that she was the only steamer to spend enough time on this part of the Manokin that she became a familiar site, bellowing gray smoke and piercing the hot summer air with her shrill whistle.

"In the 1800's" Pusey explained, "big bugeyes and schooners could make their way up that river, but Florence was well known. Her captain was Bill Price."

Pusey remembers Captain Bill as being "fairly stout, weighing a couple of hundred pounds. He was getting up there in the years, but he was a good old fellow." Also serving on the steamer were William Dashiell, the Purser and Dan Bailey, the first mate. It was the pursers job to keep

remembered seeing this steamer at work. Because within a few short years after that trip to the wharf, Florence was never to run another trip.

"I can't recall ever seeing her anywhere but where she was tied up to die," said Clarence Phillips, soon to be 89. Phillips got out of his car at the old steamboat wharf near the site of the sewage treatment plant for Princess Anne. A dirt road extends to the river and curves along the bank. Phillips couldn't recall watching the steamboat work at the wharf, but he was sure he could remember where she was tied up, and eventually sank.

Phillips walked a short distance along the bank, his way hampered by thorns and overturned trees. He couldn't get through. "She is over there near that point," Phillips stated with excitement, pointing toward a cluster of reeds on the south bend of the Manokin River.

"I guess they docked here in there because she'd gone bad or they had no more use for her." Phillips brushed tangling vines from his face, hoping to catch some sign of the steamer that had almost sank out of view years ago. "I know she is there, and I remember seeing another boat, a one-master sunk right by her."

This wooden boat that Phillips recalls, is one believe to have been built by the builder of Teackle Mansion. Phillips nor Pusey have any knowledge as to when the wooden vessel sank, but both men agree that it would have to be pretty old for neither to have heard of her background.

"I know she was the Florence," Pusey interjected. "And that she was a side wheeler." Pusey gave a nod of confidence in his own statement as he continued his story. "She was nothing compared to the other steamboats that worked the bay."

Florence went from Deal Island to Princess Anne, she freighted from steamers that came to Deal Island. And Florence took freight from other wharfs in between. She worked every day but Saturday, Pusey said. Phillips and Pusey have pieced together their knowledge of Florence from older people telling of the steamer. "I think her main job was freight. Maybe she

record of freight and keep account if she had passengers."

Phillips and Pusey believe Florence was built before the Civil War. Pusey added, "I've heard that she was privately owned when she started running up and down this river, but I don't know where she came from."

Florence had a side paddle, and when she got to the wharf near Princess Anne, she churned the waters and turned around at a point near the wharf. The site she was later to be forgotten.

Toward the end of the 1800's Florence was tied up and abandoned. Over the years she started sinking in the mud, and boys would use the end of her diving into the Manokin, until finally rust and reeds as but hid Florence in the mud. During the late summer only her smoke stack remained to mark her presence. Today a few parts can still be seen, all that is left of the miniature side wheel steamer whose brass shone in the sun and the whistle that greeted folks at the wharf. The Manokin's only steamer of the late 1800's all but forgotten.

Volleyball Leagues Are Forming

On Tuesday night, September 28 there will be an organizational meeting for both men's and women's volleyball leagues in Princess Anne. This meeting will be held at the Washington High School Library at 7:30 P.M. All persons 16 years of age or over, who are interested in organizing or playing on a team are invited to attend.

The volleyball leagues, which were a tremendous success last year, are once again being sponsored by the Somerset County Recreation & Parks Commission. For this league to be successful once again, public response and participation is urgently needed.

For any additional information, call Mike Miller at the Recreation & parks office at 651-0749.

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Description

Newspaper clipping of an article titled "Two Old Timers Remember the Steamboat "Florence"" by Brice N. Stump for the Marylander and Herald, published September 30, 1976. The article describes two men, Clarence Phillips and E. Walton Pusey, who describe the Florence as they remember it.

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Transcript

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[Photograph of a man standing at an old dock]

[Caption] Clarence Phillips points to the location of the forgotten steamboat.

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[Left column]

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