

New Albany Within the Shadow of Louisville

Victor M. Bogle*

Nineteenth century promoters of New Albany exhibited considerable ingenuity in deriding the pretensions and countering the claims of Madison, Evansville, Indianapolis, and other rival towns within the state. Yet all the while they were aware that New Albany's true rival, the one standing as a colossus before their designs, was their cross-river neighbor, Louisville.¹ From the beginning the odds were very much in favor of the Kentucky city. In fact, so overwhelming was Louisville's relative situation that some hundred years later it is a little difficult to see how and why the New Albany promoters ever believed that their town could become supreme in the Ohio Falls area. But there was optimism among New Albany leaders, and viewed in the light of the general situation in the middle part of the past century this optimism becomes somewhat understandable.

Of the multiple factors which might influence the growth and success of a town in this area of the Middle West in the past century, the major one was the degree of success with which it could fit into the over-all pattern of transportation and trade. In 1830, and even by the middle of the century, this pattern was still highly flexible. And though far behind Louisville in total population and general development, New Albany did possess important commercial advantages. Chief among these were its growing role as a trade mart for a large agricultural section of southern Indiana and its favorable location near the lower end of the Falls whereby it was, potentially at least, as good a transshipment point as Louisville. Added to these was its prominence as a center

* Victor M. Bogle is a staff member of the history department of Tougaloo Southern Christian College, Tougaloo, Mississippi. This article is a revised chapter of his Ph.D. dissertation at Boston University, written under the direction of Warren S. Tyron. Previous articles in the series are: "Settlement of New Albany," *Indiana Magazine of History* (Bloomington, 1905-), XLVIII (1952), 277-288; "New Albany as a Commercial and Shipping Point," *ibid.*, 369-378; "New Albany, 'A Flourishing Place,'" *ibid.*, XLIX (1953), 1-15; "A Society Develops in New Albany," *ibid.*, 173-190; "New Albany's Attachment to the Ohio River," *ibid.*, 249-266; "New Albany: Reaching for the Hinterland," *ibid.*, L (1954), 145-166.

¹ "We are saluted with the 'generous shadow of the outstretched wing of Louisville'! Rather a Upas poison, or Anaconda embrace, devouring everything it can feed upon." *New-Albany Gazette*, June 3, 1836.

for boat building. Although this feature proved to have limited influence on New Albany's later development, it contributed a large share to the general optimism prevailing in the town at midcentury.

In presenting their case as a worthy rival of Louisville, the New Albany leaders consistently emphasized these advantages, and to some degree they tried to formulate a program for development in line with them. Perhaps they overstressed current and obvious advantages while they failed to interpret those trends in urban development which would be more important determinants in the future. Whatever the reasons for New Albany's losing out in the contest, the rivalry was sustained for many decades, and during the middle third of the nineteenth century there was little indication that the Hoosiers would ever concede victory to the town across the river.

The successful completion of a canal around the Falls on the Kentucky side of the river in 1831 added immeasurably to Louisville's advantages over its neighbor.² But the idea of an Indiana canal to circumvent the Falls on the northern side of the river continued to be a lively issue. Proposals to have this canal built appeared time and again throughout the next forty years; it was the best talking point to bolster the hopes of New Albany and Jeffersonville that they might someday overcome the domination of their powerful rival.

Louisville people, well satisfied with the Louisville and Portland Canal as it was, did not improve it until they were finally constrained by the threat that the long discussed Indiana canal might become a reality. This Kentucky canal was a gilt-edged investment for those who were fortunate enough to own stock. In addition to several thousand smaller boats, about 14,000 steamboats passed through from 1831 to 1843, netting more than \$1,200,000. Tolls were charged according to the rated capacity of the vessel, not the weight actually carried. Since by 1850 the average steamboat had a capacity of about 350 tons, at 50¢ per ton each boat paid about \$175.00. For the twelve-year period, 1831-1843, the federal government's share of the profits was \$258,378.00, which was \$23,378.00 more than its original investment.

² Logan Esarey, "Internal Improvements in Early Indiana," *Indiana Historical Society Publications* (Indianapolis, 1895-), V (1911), 65-69.

Physical limitations of the canal also caused dissatisfaction among Cincinnati and other up-river shipping people. The locks were only 182 feet long and 49½ feet wide, while a bridge spanning the canal was only 52 feet above the water line.³ These various limitations automatically increased freight rates on boats customarily making trips on both sides of the Falls, further standardized the practice of dividing the packet trade at Louisville, accelerated the volume of the transshipment business in the Falls area, and prevented most of the new and improved steamboats of the 1850's from even entering the canal. In the eyes of river men, the canal had in no sense eliminated the hazard of the Falls but had instead supplied an additional barrier which could profit nobody but the canal owners and their allies, the transshipment men. But Louisville interests were content to allow the situation to continue because they had just enough of a canal to increase the importance of their city as a commercial focal point on the Ohio River system.

Plans for an Indiana canal furnished a kind of solace to the people of New Albany who thought that their town was an eligible rival for Louisville. Eventually, they felt, the time would come when the idea would be carried out and Louisville would finally be toppled from its lofty position as the chief Falls city. There were those in New Albany who sought immediate execution of the proposal. In 1836 James Collins, the New Albany representative in the general assembly, joined his colleague from Jeffersonville in presenting to the legislature a petition "praying for an act incorporating a company to construct a Canal around the Falls, commencing at Jeffersonville and terminating at New Albany."⁴ The editor of the *New-Albany Gazette*, a brother

³ The Louisville and Portland Canal began above the Falls at Louisville and ended below the Falls near the small town of Portland. Archer B. Hulbert, *Waterways of Westward Expansion* (Cleveland, 1903), 204-205; this is vol. IX of the *Historical Highways of America* series. *Wheeling Bridge Case* (Saratoga Springs, New York, 1851), xxxi, 386-387; James Hall, *The West: Its Commerce and Navigation* (Cincinnati, 1848), 82; *House Executive Documents*, 28th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 54 (serial no. 442). It is presumed, in the light of the increased river traffic in the Falls area throughout the middle years of the century, that the Louisville and Portland Canal toll receipts increased substantially. One indication of this increase is figures supplied in the Clay "memorial," summarized in the *New-Albany Gazette*, May 6, 1836.

⁴ *New-Albany Gazette*, January 29, 1836; *Indiana House Journal*, 1835-1836, p. 234.

of Collins and also a stanch advocate of anything resembling an internal improvement, lent his full support to the measure. "It involves an immense interest," he wrote in 1836, "and is calculated to reduce a large and respectable class of our citizens, as well as those of other states, from, what may be termed, oppression." He added: "The state owes it to her own citizens, if not to the citizens of other states, to furnish them a safe way, to pass the Falls with their produce, and we know of no better."⁵

The prospect that the Indiana canal might be built at this time prompted Louisville to counter with a proposal for the federal government to buy all the stock of the Louisville and Portland Canal and operate it as a toll-free enterprise. Henry Clay presented a memorial embodying this proposal to the United States Senate early in April, 1836, but no definite action was taken. The Indiana congressional representation joined those from Ohio and other interested states in forming a bloc against the proposal.⁶

By 1838 thousands of Indiana and Ohio citizens had forwarded petitions for an Indiana canal to Washington. They pleaded with the federal government to support the newly chartered "Jeffersonville and New Albany Canal Company" in the form of "United States lands, subscription of stock, or donation, as may be deemed proper."⁷ Ohio, however, was the prime mover in the agitation to get action on the Indiana canal. Cincinnati was the chief sufferer from the "oppression" of the Louisville and Portland Canal, and the influence of the Cincinnati merchants and shippers was the major force behind the Indiana canal proposals all during this period. Indiana graciously followed along because, after all, it was to be a Hoosier canal.

The idea of an Indiana canal as the remedy for the shippers' woes did not gain sufficient momentum after 1836 to bring about tangible results. In 1848 Indiana chartered a new company which was given seven years to complete the

⁵ *New-Albany Gazette*, January 29, 1836.

⁶ *Ibid.*, May 6, 1836. The Clay memorial eventually became a Senate bill which would have enabled Kentucky to buy all the shares in the canal, including those of the federal government, so that the canal could be operated almost toll-free. The bill failed to get through the House. See *Congressional Globe*, 24th Cong., 1st Sess., 316, 400-401, 416, 417, 427, 447, 460, 461, and 463.

⁷ *House Executive Documents*, 25th Cong., 3d Sess., No. 206 (serial no. 347).

canal. It was formed for "the purpose of opening and constructing a canal navigation, with suitable locks, docks and basins, including the water power, around the falls of the Ohio river, within the State of Indiana."⁸ The charter included the following clause which shows that New Albany's part in the proceedings was an important one: "It is and shall be necessary for said company, before they construct said canal, to procure the consent of the mayor and council of the city of New Albany, as to the location of said southern or lower terminus of the same: . . . said mayor and council shall not have the right to require the southern or lower portion of said canal to terminate at a point on the Ohio river which may be deemed impracticable."⁹

When the corporation was reorganized in 1849 this clause favoring New Albany was stricken out, but of the three possible routes later proposed, one was highly favorable to the town. This proposed route began above Jeffersonville, crossed Silver Creek into Floyd County, skirted around the back of New Albany, and passed into Falling Run Creek on the northwest side of the town. A canal built along this route would have been 7.2 miles long and cost \$2,973,642.00.¹⁰ It would have brought the great flow of Ohio River traffic to New Albany's doorstep; what it might have done for the future development of the town can only be imagined.

By 1850 the people of New Albany were apathetic about all Indiana canal proceedings because—according to the editor of the *Ledger*—they feared she would lose the advantages of her position as head of steamboat navigation for large boats as well as part of her steamboat-building business. Nevertheless, he pointed out, a canal was going to be built because Cincinnati and Pittsburgh were determined to remove the obstruction of the Falls. The immediate concern was its location, on the Kentucky side or on the Indiana side of the river; if on the latter, the best of three possible routes was that around the city with the exit near Falling Run. The editor appealed to readers to discuss the subject in the columns of his paper in the hope of eliciting the truth.¹¹

⁸ *Local Laws of Indiana, 1848-1849*, pp. 94-101; *Charter and Organization of the Indiana Canal Company* (Cincinnati, 1850), 3. Two New Albany and five Jeffersonville men were on the list of directors, but one of the three Cincinnati directors, James C. Hall, was chosen president. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁹ *Charter and Organization of the Indiana Canal Company*, 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9, 22-23.

¹¹ *New Albany Daily Ledger*, January 12, 1852.

Within the next few years the truth was elicited, but it was a kind of truth with so many facets that nobody knew what to do about it. The proposed New Albany-Falling Run channel came to be considered less and less favorably because the town's new railroad would have been forced to cross a one-hundred-foot drawbridge. Furthermore, the canal "would make a serious inroad into the lots and valuable property in New Albany and its vicinity, while the large locks would not have a suitable site at the mouth of the Falling Run."¹²

As the popularity of the New Albany channel dimmed, the town's interest in the whole scheme lagged even more. Although efforts were not abandoned to keep citizens informed of the benefits that an Indiana canal, wherever dug, would bring, they met with little success. Meanwhile Cincinnati interests labored to keep the issue alive and by 1853 had subscribed \$70,000 toward the construction of the canal.¹³ No doubt some New Albany people agreed with the *Muncie Messenger* that Cincinnati's role in the enterprise was a bit too conspicuous: "Is it not Cincinnati almost entirely alone? and is not Indiana overlooking her own interests by aiding in . . . a great work for Ohio."¹⁴

By July, 1853, it began to look as though the efforts of everybody except those in Kentucky had been in vain. A report circulated that federal engineers investigating all possible means for eliminating the Falls had supported an enlargement of the old Louisville and Portland Canal. Apparently "the jealousy of Louisville will always interpose obstacles to the free navigation of the Ohio."¹⁵ But in its report of 1856, the Indiana Canal Company still maintained that a canal and sluiceway on the Indiana side was the best alternative, an opinion which was shared, at least officially, by the New Albany Board of Trade in 1857.¹⁶ But both the Indiana and Kentucky factions awaited federal financial aid, and nothing happened on either side of the river to execute any of the many plans. With the coming of the

¹² *Ibid.*, February 24, 1852.

¹³ *Ibid.*, July 11, 1853.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1853.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 29, 1853.

¹⁶ *Report of the Indiana Canal Company, on the Improvement of the Falls of the Ohio* (Cincinnati, 1856), 12; New Albany Board of Trade, *Commercial and Manufacturing Advantages of New Albany, Indiana* (New Albany, 1857), 23.

Civil War, all the programs were shelved, and when they were brought out again after the war the choice fell to Louisville.¹⁷

Thus did New Albany pass up another chance of pressing through advantages that might have appreciably altered its relative position around the Falls. Its indecision might in part be explained by its unavowed interdependence with Louisville, which spoke more loudly than all the claims of local editors that Louisville was its natural rival.

The editors of New Albany newspapers might have been laboring under a misconception when they emphasized the differences between rather than the mutual interests of their town and Louisville, but this situation in no wise lessened their determination to publicize their point of view. When Benjamin Cassedy wrote in his *History of Louisville* (1852) that "the pre-eminence which it [Louisville] has already gained over the neighboring towns forbids all hope of rivalry on their part, and compels them to unite their interests with those of Louisville,"¹⁸ it is evident that he was not accustomed to reading the New Albany journals. Nobody could pick up a *Gazette* of the 1830's and 1840's or a *Ledger* of the 1850's without discovering that, however forbidden, "all hope of rivalry" was far from dead.

In the years from 1830 until after the Civil War, New Albany people wanted no more transportation ties with Louisville than were necessary. Ferryboats were accepted because they were, in part at least, owned and operated by New Albany citizens and did nothing really to eliminate the mile-wide river barrier that served as New Albany's wall of security against complete economic penetration by Louisville. A bridge was a different matter. Should one be built, the people thought, it would be but a matter of time till Louisville would reach across to secure for itself many of the advantages that were properly the possession of the Indiana towns. The unceasing efforts of these towns to supply themselves with links to the interior would be all for nought if Louisville were allowed to step in with a bridge and gain all the benefits.

In 1836 it looked as though this was just what Louisville promoters planned to do. This date coincides with that

¹⁷ Hulbert, *Waterways of Westward Expansion*, 205.

¹⁸ Benjamin Casseday, *The History of Louisville, from its Earliest Settlement till the Year 1852* (Louisville, 1852), 209.

of the inauguration of Indiana's elaborate internal improvements program, and Louisville merchants clearly planned to bid for their share of the trade that would come as the neighboring state was developed. At this time Louisville "economic expansionists" had three immediate objectives: (1) to prevent construction of a bridge from Cincinnati across the river to Kentucky, at Covington; (2) to obtain their own bridge across to Indiana so they could make use of the proposed Hoosier railroads; and (3) to establish Louisville as the terminal of the Charleston, South Carolina, railroad that was to be built from the southeast.¹⁹ Thus Louisville would be a veritable crossroads of midwestern river and rail traffic. The factors which prevented Louisville from carrying out all of this program are properly a part of the history of that city; but the Indiana bridge proposal and the attitude of New Albany toward it are a significant part of the history of the Indiana town.

In the contest over anything as important as an Ohio River bridge the citizens of New Albany of 1836 had no really potent weapons. But they had one advantage: projects of such proportions were uncommon, and any attempt to complete one was fraught with countless difficulties. Lack of co-operation and ridicule were the best strategy.

Apparently Louisville promoters resented New Albany's attitude, for in June, 1836, the editor of the *Louisville Journal* wrote: "The stock is taken; the funds are ready . . . so that our goodly sister New Albany, if she has any objection to living hereafter in close proximity with Louisville, and reposing under the generous shadow of her outstretched wing, cannot pack up and be off down the river or into the interior a moment too soon."²⁰ The *New Albany Gazette* replied: "We think the fishes of the Falls may rest assured that they are to have yet many years of sweet repose before they will be disturbed in their watery beds by this great 'enterprize,' crossing the River."²¹

Some of the initial work on the bridge had gotten under way by September, 1836, and the editor of the *Louisville*

¹⁹ This program was summarized in the *New-Albany Gazette*, January 22, 1836. See also Albert L. Kohlmeier, *The Old Northwest as the Keystone of the Arch of American Federal Union* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1938), 22-30; and R. Carlyle Buley, *The Old Northwest, Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1950), II, 311-312.

²⁰ *New-Albany Gazette*, June 3, 1836.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Journal invited his colleague in New Albany to accompany him to the project to prove to him that a bridge was actually being built. The editor of the *Gazette* accepted: "We will take the trip with pleasure, if our friend of the *Journal* will accompany us to the spot and point out the work, for if any thing has yet been done, it must be under the water, where it will very likely remain."²²

A few days later "a vast multitude of people" gathered to witness the laying of the foundation stone of the new bridge. There were imposing ceremonies and an "appearance of earnestness" in this project, but the editor of the *Gazette* remained skeptical: "Surely under existing circumstances, the most sanguine cannot hope for its *completion*.—A vast amount of *wind* has been expended in blowing the project into its present standing, and after some little inquiry we have not been able to ascertain that any thing more than WIND work has been done in the matter."²³

As it turned out, "wind work" was not enough to get the bridge built, and the skepticism of the *Gazette* editor proved valid. This early attempt to construct a bridge to span the Ohio at the Falls was abandoned, not to be taken up seriously again for almost forty years.²⁴ In the meantime, New Albany's attitude toward bridge building was to undergo considerable change. As shipping on the Ohio steadily increased, the mercantile interests of Louisville became ever more aware that their ambitions were hampered because Louisville was in reality a city above the Falls. By the middle of the century the wharf at Portland, at the lower end of the Falls, had become an integral part of Louisville's shipping pattern, but there was still the threat that New Albany would draw into its port a sizeable share of the lower river trade. Northern produce could be shipped from New Albany directly to New Orleans and other southern points without the delay and expense incurred if it were hauled from Louisville down to Portland. Thus farmers who wished to ship produce southward or westward might be attracted to the New Albany markets because the buyers there, exempt

²² *Ibid.*, September 2, 1836.

²³ *Ibid.*, September 9, 1836.

²⁴ *History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties* (2 vols., Cleveland, 1882), I, 280.

from additional drayage charges, could give them a higher price than the Louisville merchants.²⁵

By 1850 much of this threat was still only theoretical, but interests on both sides of the river surmised that it might some day be more than this. A Greenville, Indiana, resident summed up this view in a letter to the *New Albany Daily Ledger* in 1850: "If position have any effect on the future greatness of a city,—which no one will for one moment doubt — . . . the prospects are brighter for New Albany to become a great city than for Louisville Her influence is already beginning to be felt, and all the efforts of Louisville to keep her down, will be as fruitless as they would be to reverse the course of the Ohio In fifteen years, she will be the superior; and men of judgment and experience in such matters, from both places, have predicted the like result."²⁶

It was the construction of the New Albany and Salem Railroad that really awakened the Louisville people to the fact that they had a serious commercial competitor in New Albany, and they obviously decided that the best way to turn this threat into a boon was to improve road facilities on the western outskirts of their city. Thus the Indiana farmers and merchants would be encouraged to pass through New Albany, cross the river to Portland, and proceed to Louisville to carry on their business. The editor of the *Louisville Democrat* advised that "a plank road to some suitable point below the Falls, would, without doubt, bring to Louisville the trade of a large extent of country on the Indiana side, which, for the want of this facility and transportation, is now centered in New Albany."²⁷

Like other roads in this section of the country, the Louisville-Portland road had to be repaired time and time again in order to fulfill the demands placed upon it by the heavy drayage traffic. In 1850 plans were actually carried through to plank it, but by 1852 evidence of this improvement had almost disappeared. The editor of the *Louisville Courier* advised that anyone traveling the road "had better take a life preserver along."²⁸ By 1859 a horse railroad had been placed between the two Kentucky ports, and it served

²⁵ The *potential* New Albany market is what the Louisville merchants really feared. Their greater capital and volume of business enabled them to buy higher and sell lower than their competitors in New Albany, but they foresaw the day when the New Albany merchants would be able to make full use of their position below the Falls.

²⁶ *New Albany Daily Ledger*, December 4, 1850.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1850.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, December 1, 1852.

as a vital connection between the two places. The railroad company ran omnibuses from the New Albany-Portland ferry landing on the western end of the line, and from the eastern end at Twelfth Street in Louisville omnibuses carried passengers to any place in the city.²⁹ Many years were to elapse before the towns on the northern side of the river were to have similar transportation facilities to bind them together.

Not only did Louisville merchants want and get improvement of road facilities below the Falls, but they desired the construction of an additional wharf below Portland at a point more nearly opposite New Albany. The *Louisville Journal* recommended this step as another means for the city to gain the increased business that should follow the completion of the New Albany and Salem Railroad. The editor warned that Louisville would be "‘blind indeed if she fails to reap the full advantage of the enterprise that is constructing a railroad from New Albany through some of the richest portions of Indiana up to the lakes.’"³⁰

New Albany could hardly be expected to acquiesce in these attempts. The plots of Louisville were adequately exposed day by day in the *Ledger*. The editor greeted the plan for a wharf at "West Louisville" thus: "[This plan] exhibits, plainly, the designs of Louisville upon the legitimate business of New Albany—business which it has cost them, individually and collectively, much of their means and efforts to secure—and which, we are satisfied, they will use ever proper effort to retain. It shows that no exertion will be spared by Louisville to secure to herself the fruits of our labor and enterprise, to which she has no more claim or right than has a town in the island of Japan."³¹

There is no way to measure the degree of success achieved by Louisville merchants in gathering the increased business that came with the building of the southern Indiana railroads. But though as yet no bridge spanned the Ohio, it is obvious that much northern produce found its way to Louisville markets and was further dispersed from its wharves. How much was to be channeled through the Indiana ports and how much was to be allowed to escape across to Louisville was the crux of this commercial rivalry that lasted as long as New Albany retained its status as a shipping point on the Ohio.

²⁹ *History of the Ohio Falls Cities*, I, 319.

³⁰ *New Albany Daily Ledger*, September 2, 1850.

³¹ *Ibid.*, July 23, 1850.

A growing sand bar in the river between New Albany and Portland supplied a theme for heated editorial debate. During the summer months this obstruction appeared invariably, and protestation of innocence of ownership appeared just as invariably in the contesting papers. New Albany called it the "Portland bar," Louisville called it the "New Albany bar," and the two passed it back and forth like a hot potato; however, it did more damage to Louisville's shipping business than to New Albany's. When the water was at its lowest, down-river boats could come up only as far as New Albany, where they were required to load or unload much of their normal Louisville cargo. The following excerpt from the *Ledger* shows how Louisville's misfortune played into the hands of New Albany: "A little incident which occurred yesterday, and which will occur every day, will show the public the respective advantages of New Albany and Louisville as shipping points. The packet *Fawn*, which is a very light draught boat, took in her Louisville freight at the New Albany wharf. The freight—a portion of it bagging and rope—was drayed from Louisville to Portland, ferried across the river, and from the ferry again drayed to the wharf, to be placed on the boat. This has occurred at the very commencement of the low water season. All know that last summer and the previous one, the St. Louis packets could not get to Portland, but conveyed their passengers to New Albany in hacks at the expense of the boats. They will be compelled to do the same this year. Indeed, nearly every boat which attempts to go to or come from Portland, gets aground."³²

In order to fulfill their obligations to customers down the river, some of the Louisville merchants were compelled in 1853 to buy their goods in New Albany and ship them at a great loss from its wharf. The editor of the *Louisville Journal* admitted that his city was likely to suffer permanent injury from this state of affairs unless a remedy could be found. He suggested the development of port facilities at "West Louisville," five miles down the river, and construction of roads adequate to care for the heavy summer traffic to that point. The *Ledger* editor, however, sneered that the West Louisville humbug had long been exploded, but that some people still clung to it as drowning men caught at straws.³³

New Albany river men could amuse themselves by

³² *Ibid.*, June 18, 1853.

³³ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1853.

watching determined steamboats struggle to get past the "Portland bar," and laugh at Louisville's shipping perplexities. But it was this sort of "catching at straws" that stretched the city limits of Louisville far down the river, while the New Albany neighbors were prone to sit comfortably by, oblivious of the significance of this extension.³⁴

The people of New Albany had a just grievance against the Louisville papers, which were in the habit of designating their own city as the building site for some of New Albany's famous and successful steamboats. Since New Albany was proud of its steamboats, Louisville could have found no better means of annoying her neighbors than to claim the floating palaces that were the products of Hoosier industry. The following notice is but one of dozens that the editor of the *Ledger* was obliged to print during the years New Albany was a leading steamboat-building center: "The Journal and Courier of Louisville, claim the new steamer Cherokee, to which we have frequently alluded, as being built at that place! Of course the editors of these papers must have known this statement to be untrue, and so also do nearly all their readers. The Cherokee was built in this city by Messrs. Dowerman & Humphreys, cabin by Hart & Stoy, engines by Phillips, Hise, & Co., painting by Geo. B. Spurrier."³⁵

The *Louisville Journal* carried the following notice of the "Isabella": "This is the name of a new and beautiful steamer which was built here during the present season for Capt. J. B. Walker of Mobile, and designed for the Alabama river trade. . . . Her hull was built by E. & J. Howard of Jeffersonville, and her cabin by Hart & Stoy of New Albany."³⁶ The *Ledger* asked: "Will the Journal folks be good enough to tell us how the Isabella came to be 'built' at Louisville, if her hull was built at Jeffersonville and her *cabin* at New Albany? The truth is, the Isabella was completed before the Louisville folks caught a glimpse of her."³⁷

On at least one occasion the Cincinnati papers stepped in to put Louisville straight on the steamboat-building issue: "The Louisville Courier, of Saturday, is in an extatic fever about 'our mechanics' and 'our steamboats.' 'Our mechanics' and Cincinnati men, and 'our steamboats' were built at New Albany, *Indiana*."³⁸

³⁴ *Ibid.*, May 21, 1859. On the previous day ten packets were hung on the Portland bar.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 8, 1850.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, October 26, 1849.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, December 9, 1852. It is probable that many of the steamboat "mechanics" in the Falls area had come from Cincinnati.

Such persistent correction of the Louisville claims was only momentarily successful in making Louisville editors desist. When pressed to the wall, the Louisville papers responded with such statements as, "Our money built them." Then the editor of the *Ledger* really warmed to the issue: "No amount of *money* can make a boat fast unless her hull is modeled by a man of genius and experience, her timbers properly adjusted and put together, and her machinery built with the greatest precision—every part acting harmoniously and in concert. . . . What greater insult could be offered to a ship builder or engine builder, who has devoted his life to studying and experimenting on the most approved mode of building, than to tell him that all his talent and all his labor is nothing—that all is the property of his employer, whose *money* buys all?"³⁹

Several reasons might be given for Louisville's persistence in claiming New Albany's boats. Her newspapers had a wide circulation throughout the Ohio-Mississippi system and when they recorded that a boat was built "here" they felt it unnecessary to explain to a casual reader in New Orleans or St. Paul that the work was actually performed on the north bank of the river. No doubt, too, they were guilty of doing just what the *Ledger* accused them of doing—publicizing the Louisville shipyards by holding up the excellent New Albany boats as examples of the work produced there. And probably they did it also merely to get reaction across the river.

For decades the Louisville editors included in their papers items that belittled New Albany, and for decades the New Albany editors found ample sarcasm to balance the score. There were quarrels over the volume of business, population figures, the relative increase in number of houses, the condition of streets, the race question—over anything and everything that would enable the supporters of either place to slap verbally the pretensions of the other. Taken singly, most of the issues were petty. Taken together they reflect the jealousy and suspicion that these neighbors felt for each other until the day when Louisville's superiority was so overwhelming that there were no longer grounds for contest.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, May 16, 1853.