

From Paddle Wheels to Propellers: The Howard Ship Yards of Jeffersonville in the Story of Steam Navigation on the Western Rivers. By Charles Preston Fishbaugh. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1970. Pp. xiii, 240. Illustrations, notes, tables, figures, appendices, index. \$6.50.)

Fishbaugh's *From Paddle Wheels to Propellers* is another book on steamboating on the western rivers. The book is, however, unique in one respect. While other efforts have related the story of steamboating, Fishbaugh's work is the first attempt, to this reviewer's knowledge, at putting down the story of building steamboats.

According to Fishbaugh *From Paddle Wheels to Propellers* is "concentrated on the story of the Howard Ship Yards as they reflect the economic history of steam navigation of the Western Rivers" (p. vi). The book accomplishes its objective reasonably well. It offers along the way numerous interesting and testable hypotheses about developments in steamboating on inland rivers. Of special interest to business and economic historians are some of the data which Fishbaugh has gathered and presented, much of which was integrated from a large collection of over 265,000 manuscripts on the Howard Ship Yards and Dock Company and appears for the first time in published form.

From Paddle Wheels to Propellers does have some flaws. For one, the book is too superficial. The author spends too much effort developing the story of steamboating on the western rivers and not enough effort on the story of the Howard Ship Yards. The story of steamboating has long been skillfully documented and analyzed by others, such as Louis C. Hunter in *Steamboats on the Western Rivers* (1949). Consequently, Fishbaugh, who relies heavily on Hunter's work, offers nothing new in the way of major findings. There is still a need, however, for a study on the economics of steamboat construction on the firm level, and this is where Fishbaugh might have made a major contribution with the remarkably large collection of manuscripts which he had on hand.

In some sections of the book incomplete research leads the author to draw conclusions which are not fully supported by his evidence. For example, Fishbaugh argues that the Howard Ship Yards prospered between 1834 and 1850 because it could build better hulls than its numerous competitors (p. 33). As evidence for this assertion he points out that steamboats on the western rivers had an average life-span of five years while boats built by the Howard Ship Yards had a seven year life expectancy. This assertion may not be warranted. In a recent unpublished dissertation at Purdue University, "Ohio and Mississippi River Transportation, 1810-1860" (1969), Erik

Haites calculates the lifespans of steamboats between 1810 and 1860 using the "Lytle List." Haites found that the averages for *all* western steamboats ranged between 4.9 and 5.0 for the years 1830-1849. On the other hand steamboats which operated between Louisville and New Orleans had lifespans of 5.3 to 6.5 years for the same decades. Haites concluded that it was safer to operate a steamboat on the lower Mississippi River than on the shallower tributary rivers. From Appendix A of Fishbaugh's book it appears that most of the boats built by the Howard Ship Yards operated on the lower Mississippi and hence could be expected to have longer life expectancies. Therefore, while the Howard Ship Yards might well have produced better steamboats than its competitors, Fishbaugh's evidence for such an assertion is somewhat insufficient.

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The Ohio Canals. By Frank Wilcox. Selected and edited by William A. McGill. ([Kent, Ohio]: The Kent State University Press, 1969. Pp. x, 106. End maps, illustrations, bibliography. \$15.00.)

Fort Wayne during the Canal Era, 1828-1855: A Study of a Western Community in the Middle Period of American History. By Charles R. Poinsette. *Indiana Historical Collections*, Volume XLVI. ([Indianapolis]: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1969. Pp. xi, 284. Illustrations, notes, maps, appendix, index. \$5.00.)

Two books more dissimilar in purpose, format, scope, and value than the two listed above are difficult to imagine. Their common feature is the Wabash and Erie Canal, although it is not central to either and no new information about the canal itself is offered by either. The Wilcox volume is quite clearly a vehicle for eighty-odd sketches, drawings, and water color paintings made by the late artist-author several years ago. The paintings are remarkably handsome and vibrant, and all depict Ohio canal scenes; some are recreations of the days of bustling activity at a canal lock or port; others are more contemporary evocations of neglected locks and sites. Historians are indeed fortunate to have the Wilcox paintings, some of which are now in private collections, reproduced and made generally available. A leading member of the "Cleveland School," Wilcox taught at that city's Art Institute for many years. This and a previous publication reveal not only his fondness for rural America but also his extraordinary talent as a watercolorist.

Readers who come to this book, however, expecting something resembling a history of the Ohio canals, which served primarily as early and vital links between Lake Erie and the Ohio River, will be