NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DE-DESIGNATION REPORT

***President* (Riverboat)**

Designated: December 20, 1989

Location: Scattered over two acres in three separate locations around St. Elmo, Illinois

Owner: David Campbell (217) 493-9056
17866 N US HWY 45
Effingham, Illinois 62401

SHPO Contact: Anne Haaker (217) 785-5027
Deputy SHPO
Preservation Services
#1 Old State Capitol Plaza
Springfield, Illinois 62701-1507

Justification for Withdrawing Landmark Designation:

During the spring of 2009, the *President* was dismantled at its mooring location in Alton, Illinois and moved by truck to a temporary holding area in St. Elmo, Illinois. It took over 100 semi-trailer loads to transport the 65 foot high, 300 foot long and 84 foot wide riverboat. The owner plans to reassemble the boat on a small lake in St. Elmo for use as a hotel and conference center. It will be placed upon concrete piers in a newly dug pit near the lake. The pit will be flooded after the reconstruction to give the appearance that the riverboat is on the water. The *President* has already suffered from neglect and earlier alterations to accommodate gambling. Both the earlier gambling alterations and the present actions taken to relocate the ship have removed all aspects of integrity from this National Historic Landmark. The *President* has ceased to meet the criteria for designation because the qualities which originally led it to be designated have been destroyed [36 CFR 65.9 (b)(1)].

Significance of the Landmark:

The *President* was built in 1924 as the steam packetboat *Cincinnati*. In 1933, it was converted into an excursion boat. More stringent safety requirements of the time encouraged John Streckfus, the new owner, to rebuild the entire superstructure of steel. The boilers were moved from the main deck to new positions in the hull below decks. The boat was stripped and rebuilt from the hull up. The new superstructure took the same general form as the old but replaced two decks of cabins with a two-deck high Grand Salon (ballroom). A band stand was placed to one

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side of a large wooden dance floor. Art Moderne ornamentation and styling replaced the Victorian Steamboat Gothic of *Cincinnati*. Streckfus Steamers renamed the boat *President* and advertised it as "the New 5 Deck Luxury Super Steamer, Biggest and Finest On The Upper Mississippi."

President traveled during the majority of the year and went to New Orleans for the winter months when low water and cold weather made operation difficult. The ship travelled north as the winter ended, following the warm weather, with no definite schedule. *President* would stop at any port where it could take on passengers and hold performances. By August the boat had travelled upriver to St. Paul and then gradually worked its way back south again.

The mode of propulsion was changed in 1978. The great length and huge area presented to the wind by *President* made her difficult to maneuver, even with independent sidewheels. The sidewheels were removed and replaced by 1000 horsepower diesel engines. The new propulsion units made the boat much safer and fit unobtrusively into the wheelhouses. The boilers and steam engines were retained but no longer operated.

Condition of Landmark:

At the time of its designation as an NHL, the *President* was docked in St. Louis, Missouri, where it served as a local cruise ship. In 1990, it moved to Davenport, Iowa and was converted to a floating casino. The *President* retired from duty permanently in 1999. After that it was moored briefly in Mississippi, Tennessee and, most recently, in Illinois. During the spring of 2009, the *President* was dismantled at its mooring location in Alton, Illinois and moved by truck to a temporary holding area in St. Elmo, Illinois. The current owner plans to reassemble the boat on a small lake in St. Elmo for use as a hotel and conference center.

Recommendation:

The property no longer retains its historical integrity and, therefore, National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation should be withdrawn. The Illinois State Historic Preservation Office concurs with this decision to de-designate the *President* and also in removing the property from the National Register of Historic Places.

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United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Midwest Region
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha Nebraska 68102-4226

RECEIVED
SEP 28 2009
Preservation Services

Anne Haaker
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
1 Old State Capitol Plaza
Springfield, IL 62701-1512

Dear Ms. Haaker:

The National Historic Landmarks (NHL) Survey Program would like to finalize the dedesignation of the *President* NHL, a riverboat, which has been moored in St. Louis, MO., Davenport, IA., Yazoo, MS, Memphis, TN, and most recently Alton, IL. As NHL coordinator for properties located in the State of Illinois, it falls to me to write the initial report of dedesignation. Staff with the NHL Program in Washington, D.C., will revise the report as needed and prepare the final documentation for submission to the Advisory Board.

The *President* was originally designated as an NHL on December 20, 1989. The riverboat was built in 1924 as the steam packetboat *Cincinnati.* In 1933, it was converted into an excursion boat. During the spring of 2009, the *President* was dismantled at its mooring location in Alton, Illinois and moved by truck to a temporary holding area in St. Elmo, Illinois. The current owner plans to reassemble the boat on a small lake in St. Elmo for use a hotel and conference center. Already suffering from neglect and earlier alterations to accommodate gambling, these alterations have removed all aspects of integrity from this National Historic Landmark.

As the *President* no longer retains historical integrity, it should be dedesignated as an NHL. To finalize our petition before the Advisory Board, the NPS requests that you concur with our determination that the *President* be dedesignated. Your concurrence can be addressed to me and I will forward it with the entire package of supporting materials to the NHL Survey Program.

We regret the loss of this rare resource, but must recognize its lack of historical integrity and its inability to demonstrate the characteristics for which it was designated. Please contact me at (402) 661-1912 if you would like to discuss the proposed dedesignation of the *President*. Thank you very much for your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

Stephen C. Rogers
Architectural Historian

CONCUR
By: Anne E. Haaker
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 9/29/09

cc: Patty Henry, NHL Program, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240

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TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

By Tony Reid, Herald & Review, Decatur, Ill.McClatchy-Tribune Regional News

Apr. 13, 2009 - ST. ELMO -- The President is going to pieces.

The question now is, can all the President's men put her back together again?

For gung-ho mega-movers such as Jeremy Patterson, it's a total no-brainer. So what if the President is a former Mississippi River cruise ship being shifted overland in so many pieces he's forgotten how many there are, exactly? Or that the 1,000-ton vessel, when fully assembled, occupies an area equivalent to five football fields stacked one on top of the other, its multidecks rising to a height of 65 feet and measuring 300 feet long and some 84 feet wide?

Most of the presidential chunks are now sitting in St. Elmo, of all places, awaiting the inflamed kiss of Patterson's magic welding torch as he and his crew put this mother of all metallic jigsaws back together again. Patterson owns Jeremy Patterson House Moving Inc. of Washington, Iowa, and last year shifted the largest building in the world yet moved by men, a condo in downtown Des Moines.

"I'm an aggressive person in life," says Patterson, 33, who doesn't let mega-moves intimidate him. "Most of what we do is small stuff (average-size family homes). We do the big stuff for the fun of it."

The President, however, was just too big to be hauled along the highway intact, hence its controlled disintegration while moored in its former port at Alton. Having cut it up for ease of transportation, Patterson's job now is to reassemble it on 20-acre Tower Lake in St. Elmo. That's the location for a $10 million project that will see the big boat morphed into a floating hotel and conference center, perhaps with a water park and other goodies to follow.

Allowing for delays caused by the stormy investment waters whipped up by the current recession, the riverboat is due to embark on its new suite life by summer 2010.

"OK, it's like a giant jigsaw puzzle now," says Patterson, who plans to start reconstruction within the next few weeks and claims you won't be able to see the joins when he's done. "It'll look brand-new," he added. "It'll look fabulous."

The man at the helm of this dream, President owner and Effingham businessman David Campbell, is a captain of industry

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blessed with a sense of optimism even more buoyant than Patterson's. He runs his own printing business but had longed to navigate a course both dramatic and different through the uncharted seas of entrepreneurship. When he found the President in 2004, Campbell knew he'd discovered the star that would guide him home.

Other people just think he's nuts. But facing the project's critics head-on, Campbell sounds like Christopher Columbus dismissing fears that he will sail right off the edge of the known world.

"The naysayers say it will never happen, that we'll never get it back together," says Campbell, 48, talking as he picks his way amid fresh-cut segments of his boat, some as big as a school bus and everything white-iced by a surprise spring snow shower.

"But once we get that hole dug -- the boat will be sited in a giant pit next to the lake, which then gets flooded -- and we start rebuilding it, they'll realize this project is really starting to come together."

The President wound up in St. Elmo because the city of Effingham, which several years ago had leadership that Campbell said lacked vision, didn't want it. A bunch of cities, including Danville and Vandalia, then clamored for the boat to head toward them, but it was little St. Elmo, pledging some $1 million toward infrastructure costs such as roads, water and sewer lines, that became the landlocked port of choice in 2008.

Due to be painted in an eye-catching white color scheme with red accents, the vessel will sit close by Interstate 70 and present itself to startled drivers like a surrealist vision.

"People are going to say 'What the heck is that?' says Ken Thomason, who does double duty as president of the St. Elmo Industrial Commission and the town's police chief.

"We hope it brings excitement and visitors from all over the world, because that's what we want. This is about the most exciting thing to happen in St. Elmo since forever."

The boat also will feature a museum to tell its sea shanty of a story, which has many chapters. Built in 1924 for the then fabulously expensive price of $417,000, it was named the Cincinnati and worked moving goods and occasional passengers, including President Hoover, on the Ohio River.

In 1933, it was sold to a St. Louis company that moved it to the Mississippi River and converted it to an excursion boat with a keel-up refit. Advertising of the time proclaimed it, "The new

five deck luxury super steamer, biggest and finest on the Upper Mississippi."

Yet other advertising blurbs, which probably would need rewording for today's market, gushed: "The Wonder Ship of the Mississippi -- where life is gay, vivacious -- alive with exciting thrills -- with dancing and romancing."

Hundreds of passengers would eat, drink and be merry and then get up and boogey to bands that included performances from Louis Armstrong. In 1980, the President was reborn yet again, this time as America's first floating casino moored in New Orleans. By 2000, however, its luck had run out. Despite being registered as a National Historic Landmark -- or should be that watermark? -- it was sitting forlorn and disused until that man Campbell climbed aboard with lots of dollars and a dream.

Now it's full steam ahead, even though it won't be going anywhere. "We've searched the world over, and nobody has ever done anything like this before," says Campbell. "We've got something special here."

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ON TV

The story of the President and its piecemeal move will be the subject of the Discovery Channel show "Mega-Moves" later this year.

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Quad-City Times

ON THE RIVER

Putting the President back together again

Bill Wundram | Posted: Sunday, April 26, 2009 10:00 am

The 84-year-old bulky President steamboat — the one that grossed nearly a half-billion dollars in gambling revenue when based in Davenport — was a decrepit hulk ready for the bone yard until a central Illinois businessman and entrepreneur had a gleam in his eye.

David Campbell of Effingham, Ill., bought the boat from Bernard Goldstein, the Quad-Citian who has been nicknamed the "father of riverboat gambling."

It is Campbell's intention to convert the whale of a one-time excursion boat into a hotel-restaurant-convention center in the small south-central town of St. Elmo, which has a population of only 1,500.

The problem is that St. Elmo is inland, about 90 miles from the Mississippi River, where the President — most of its windows shattered — had been slowly going to pot for about a half-dozen years in several different dockages.

Undaunted, Campbell had professionals all but disintegrate the boat and haul it from the river at Alton, Ill., to St. Elmo, Ill., where it will come to rest in a 20-acre lake of its own.

"It's not been easy," says Campbell. "All 300 feet and five stories of the boat have been dismantled and piled on flatbed trucks. It took 100 truckloads to haul all the pieces of the boat to St. Elmo."

At the moment, hunks of the President are scattered over two acres, like something that has been hit by a tornado.

It is a jigsaw puzzle, and Tony Reid, a reporter from the Herald & Review at Decatur, Ill., recently looked it over and wrote, "The President is going to pieces. The question now is, can all the president's men (as in Humpty Dumpty) put her back together again."

Skeptics shake their heads.

"Even my wife, Peggy, told me that I was crazy to try it," says Campbell.

With the boat totally dismantled, its old pilot house stands gauntly alone, in one piece, on the ground near St. Elmo. It is an ignoble sight for a pilot house that scanned the Mississippi and Ohio rivers for decades. The boat's 300-plus window frames are helter-skelter on the ground, along with five layers of decks. Pitman rods, that drove the sidewheels, are a heap on the grass.

"Everything is apart," the new owner says.

Pipes of the calliope, that once beckoned passengers from miles away, have been stolen. Vandals have taken their turn at the old girl. Most of the controls are gone.

The President began life in 1924 as an excursion boat, making regular visits to Davenport and Rock Island.

After retiring from the excursion trade, she was docked in St. Louis for day trips. It was there that she was purchased by John Connelly, who refurbished it and brought it to Davenport as Iowa's first casino.

When the President docked on the Davenport levee as a casino on April 1, 1991 — amid much hullabaloo — she was an elegant lady, with crystal light fixtures and murals on the walls.

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During its decade in Davenport, the President's gross revenue was $570,025,795. On March 7, 2001, considered too archaic for modern gambling habits, she was pushed by a tugboat away to southern waters, awaiting a buyer. Four days later, she was replaced by the shoebox-looking Rhythm City.

Now, all the President's finery is gone. "The murals were long ago taken by someone. I don't know what ever happened to them," says Campbell.

He speaks assuredly: "No matter its recent past, there's no question that we'll have it all together, looking just about like when it was on the downtown Davenport riverfront."

To make this possible, he hired one of the nation's ace movers, Jeremy Patterson House Moving Inc. of Washington, Iowa. Mostly, the company moves houses, but occasionally tackles a big job. A year ago, his company moved a condo building in Des Moines.

He told the Decatur newspaper, "You won't be able to see the joints when it's done. It'll look brand new. It'll be fabulous." The owner is doubly confident that it will all go together because he obtained the President's blueprints from the respected Herman Pott National Inland Waterways Library in St. Louis.

But there are steamboat experts who differ that all the pieces will ever be assembled to look like a boat, no matter how long it takes and the expertise involved.

Michael Blaser, Bettendorf, one of the foremost steamboat artists in America who painted the President in its prime, is among the skeptics.

"I've visited with Clark 'Doc' Hawley, who has piloted boats like the Delta Queen and the Natchez. He says the shape of President's sheer was formed in steel under pressure. He told me it will be impossible to reassemble the boat."

The owner talks with determination, though, that all will be completed by the summer of 2010.

"We're 200 miles from Chicago. It will be a big draw for people in Indianapolis and St. Louis," Campbell says. "I've been working on this project for four years. When I bought it from Mr. Goldstein, part of the agreement was that I would never reveal the price."

No one else was seriously interested in buying the boat, even though it is registered as a National Historic Landmark.

The President, called "a beautiful floating whale of a boat" by Rock Island steamboat buff Judy Patsch, was once part of the Streckfus fleet of excursion boats.

"I was always afraid that vandals would torch the boat," Blaser says. "I can't visualize it ever can be reassembled, after being cut into so many pieces. I will still remember her as one of the proudest excursion boats of all time."

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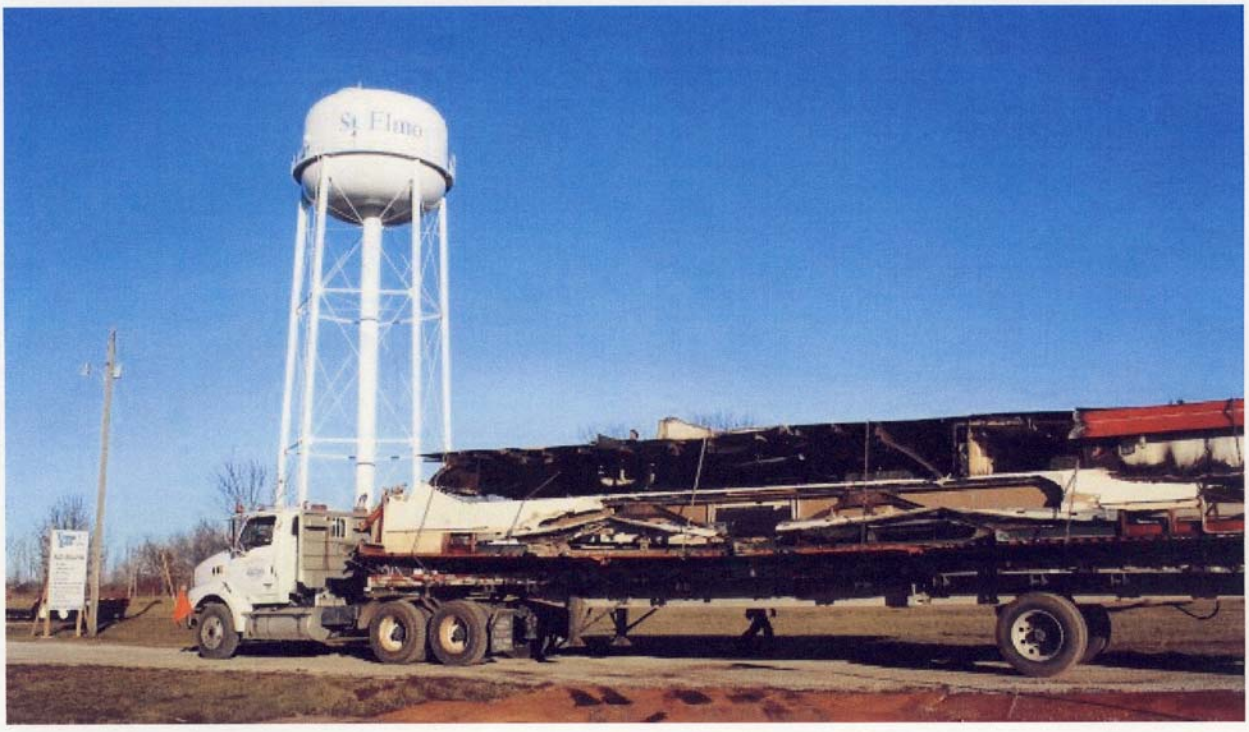
April 2009

The photo above and the following photos accompanied the online QUAD CITY TIMES article on the dismantling and moving of the Riverboat PRESIDENT.

QUAD CITY TIMES
April 2009

Dismantling and move of
Riverboat PRESIDENT

QUAD CITY TIMES
April 2009

Dismantling and move of
Riverboat PRESIDENT