THE Calliope

DELTA QUEEN STEAMBOAT MAIL

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Heading South For Winter Dry-Dock

Successful '73 Season Nears End

The steamboat DELTA QUEEN will soon be heading south for the winter as the 1973 cruise season draws to a close.

During this past year America's last overnight passenger, paddlewheel steamboat enjoyed a successful nine-month season. Passenger occupancy again bettered the 90 percent figure for all 62 cruises combined.

Cruises were made to almost all possible inland ports. Cruises were offered at Little Rock, Nashville and Peoria in addition to the regular stops along the major inland routes of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. With the exception of Chattanooga and Muscle Shoals, all 110 cities were visited by the DELTA QUEEN.

In addition to the thousands of Americans who took one or more cruises this season, the DELTA QUEEN was host to group charters such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Friends of Kenmore and the Women's Association of the St. Louis Symphony Society. In early November the DELTA QUEEN will host the National Historical Society of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and the Early American Society.

The DELTA QUEEN will winter in New Orleans. An extended winter lay-up is scheduled.

On another front the DELTA QUEEN was equally successful. The antique steamer gained another special Act of Congress to exempt her from the Safety at Sea Law for another five years (See related story below.)

Another important event which occured during the year was the signing of a shipbuilding contract for a new paddlewheel steamboat. The new vessel is scheduled for completion in the Spring of 1975 (new boat details appear on page three).

The DELTA QUEEN will depart from St. Louis on October 26, headed for New Orleans and the shipyard.

An extended winter lay-up will begin early in November and will not end until the 1974 Cruise Season begins on March 1.

At the shipyard the DELTA QUEEN will be dry-docked (taken completely out of the water). Major renovations and improvements are planned. Both passenger areas and crew quarters will be renovated. Some passenger cabins will be upgraded to include shower and toilet facilities in the room.

Engineering work is also scheduled. Studies are being made to determine the feasibility of installing a bow thruster on the 285 foot long vessel. A bow thruster will enable greater maneuverability on the water and aid docking procedures.

In general, much work will be accomplished aboard the vessel that could not have been justified without the recent five-year reprieve.

Crew quarters, an area of the vessel which has gone without substantial renovation and upgrading, will be vastly improved.

Improved ventilation is planned for boilers and engine rooms. The burners for the big boilers will be converted to function more efficiently with No. 2 Diesel Oil instead of the vessel's traditional Bunker "C" fuel.

Electrical output will be increased for both passenger and crew areas. Ventilation in passenger cabins and areas will be upgraded. This work will also aid the DELTA QUEEN's air conditioning and cooling system. Cooling for potable water will also be upgraded.

With the vessel in dry dock, work on the triple-galvanized steel hull will also be accomplished.

Throughout the vessel a general painting and "sprucing up" will take place.

Tentative plans to rearrange the galley are being studied. It is hoped the work in the galley can be streamlined and made more efficient, thus providing even better dining room service for the DELTA QUEEN's future passengers.

Nixon Signs DELTA QUEEN Exemption, Five More Years

The DELTA QUEEN will continue plying the inland rivers of the United States for at least another five years.

That word came from Washington D.C. recently after President Richard M. Nixon signed a bill passed unanimously by both the House and Senate to exempt the steamboat from the Safety at Sea Law.

"Without the letters of support and petition signatures from the hundreds of thousands of Americans, the DELTA QUEEN may not have been so fortunate," said William Muster, President of Greene Line Steamers, owners and operators of the historic riverboat. "We are deeply grateful to those many Americans who took the time and made the effort to write their congressmen in behalf of the DELTA QUEEN."

President Nixon signed the bill two weeks after the Senate acted on the measure to keep the DELTA QUEEN operating until November 1978. The House of Representatives voted on the bill in mid-July.

In all, more than 70 members in the House sponsored or co-sponsored DELTA QUEEN exempting legislation. The Senate sponsors and co-sponsors numbered 25.

"These next five years will be very important years for Greene Line and the DELTA QUEEN," Muster said. Most importantly, the DELTA QUEEN will have a new "traveling companion" in just two years, he said, referring to the new $15.5 million steam paddlewheeler now under construction near Louisville, Ky. "That means Greene Line will be growing a lot, offering river cruises to many more travelers."

During the next five years the DELTA QUEEN will also celebrate her 50th birthday and also participate in the bi-centenial celebration of the founding of the United States.

Senate action came during the last week of July, just before the summer Congressional recess. Earlier that week, the Merchant Marine sub-committee of the Senate Commerce Committee heard testimony from the U.S. Coast Guard's Rear Admiral William F. Rea, III, that the DELTA QUEEN represents an "unacceptable risk with regard to fire-safety."

Testifying in behalf of the steam-powered paddlewheeler were William Muster, Betty Blake, Greene Line Vice-President and General Manager; and Oliver Jensen, Editor of "American Heritage" Magazine.

The DELTA QUEEN should be "permanently exempted," Muster told the Committee members, but added, "a five year reprieve will meet our immediate needs."

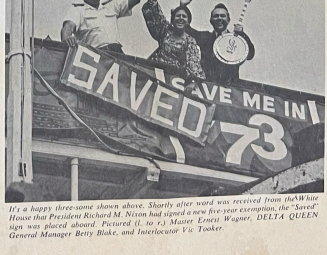
The DELTA QUEEN's "historical importance should alone justify this exemption," Muster said. In addition, the social value of the DELTA QUEEN is high while the risk factor of the vessel is zero, based on the 80-year perfect safety record of the company.

The legislation will not only reprieve the DELTA QUEEN, "but also assure the success of a new generation of riverboats," Muster said, referring to a new $15.5 million, steam-powered paddlewheeler now under construction by Jeffboat, Inc. near Louisville, Ky.

Muster added the reprieve will permit Greene Line to "offer career opportunities to steam engineers, masters, mates and pilots. The old-timers are disappearing. Only the DELTA QUEEN provides the engineering and navigation experience required to operate the new boat."

Miss Blake said that "nearly three-quarters of a million Americans ride foreign vessels on ocean cruises. Only two U.S. flag passenger vessels compete for this trade. With the DELTA QUEEN and our new vessel we expect to keep home many thousands of Americans who would otherwise cruise aboard foreign ships," Miss Blake said. "We know that the increasing trade from foreign and American cruise passengers will help improve our balance of trade."

American Heritage editor Jensen reminded the Committee members that "many of our great buildings are rubble," and "much of our railroad system is scrap. In just three years we will reach our long-anticipated two hundredth birthday. Let us hope there will be some vestiges of old America left to celebrate."



It's a happy three-some shown above. Shortly after word was received from the White House that President Richard M. Nixon had signed a new five-year exemption, the "Saved" sign was placed aboard. Pictured (l. to r.) Master Ernest Wagner, DELTA QUEEN General Manager Betty Blake, and Interlocutor Vic Tooker.

What's In Store For '74...? See Page Four, Spring Schedule And Itineraries!