



There was nothing ornate about the little stern-wheeler Searchlight. Built in 1903, she was the last steamboat launched on the river and she lasted about five years. This drawing was made from a photograph of her crew and passengers taken about 1905

the officer who commanded the escort aboard the *General Jessup* gathered dust for a century.

The third steamboat on the river was the *Colorado*, a 120-foot stern-wheeler which came out in 1855; she ran until 1872 when she was dismantled and her machinery went into a slightly larger, new steamboat of the same name, built at Yuma.

Not only were there two steamboats called *Colorado*, which is the sort of thing that makes trouble for historians, but there were two named *Mohave*; best known was the second one, a 149-footer built in 1876 and in use until the turn of the century. She had two boilers and two smokestacks set athwartships like a Mississippi steamboat, and her pilothouse was set atop a texas which contained the officers' quarters and the "de luxe" passenger accommodations. Best known of her skippers

—and her owners—was Capt. Jack Mellen, a spry and jovial little man with an enormous gray moustache, who came to the river about 1864.

Although the big *Mohave's* accommodations were on the posh side compared with those of the smaller river boats, it would be inaccurate to call any of them floating palaces. Their boiler decks were open, the cabin on the main deck was small and of austere construction and, with no refrigeration of any kind, the cuisine was somewhat short of a gourmet's dream. Except in cold weather, they say, the butter was served from a large tin can rather than a plate, for the heat kept it always in a liquid state. The bunks were small, the ceilings low, the windows tiny. And the mosquitoes—wow!

Navigation itself tended to be rugged, and while traversing the swifter parts of the river, lines frequently were taken

ashore and secured to a convenient tree—if one could be found. Then, with the capstan, a strain was taken on the line to assist the flailing stern-wheel, and she more or less lifted herself upstream by her own bootstraps. Pay-scales were ludicrous; they tell of a young deckhand who went to work on the *Cochan* in 1899 for fifty cents a day, and the only thing that governed the maximum number of working hours a day was that there are only twenty-four of them available. He got his food free, however, which is all right if you don't mind a steady diet of liquid butter and beans.

The *Cochan* was owned jointly by Mellen and by Isaac Polhamus—one of the river's famous pilots. ~~It was his~~ fact, who taught pilotage to Mellen, a striking figure, with his white Santa Claus beard, his broadbrimmed hat and his big cigar, he was known for his skill