

The Pleasure Cruisers Who Sailed Past Buchanan

Gerald Nadeau, Transcript

“There was a fair number of steamboats on that river, I think a larger number than most people realize. And at points in time they had summer steamboat outings that took people from Pembroke to Swisha [Des Joachims], and brought them back for a charge. Like they have those cruises now, only this cruise would last overnight. People seemed to prepare a long time in advance. It was a big thing in life to get a trip on a steamboat. It was what later became a trip on a train. If you had fancy clothing, it was a place to show what you had, and if you had any wealth it was a place to show it. That’s why people came on there with what looked to be, as the old people said, ‘dressed into Eaton’s.’ And that was pretty high class, if you were dressed into Eaton’s. And not considered poor. So I guess the fancy hats and dresses everything that went with it was prepared well ahead of the trip. If you could afford to go as a passenger, you’d have to be not the poorest person to do it, you know? And it was a chance to show wealth. I guess it’s like if people went to a fancy ballroom dance. You’d probably have the same feelings if you got on a steamboat. But it was for a few years part of the income for those steamboats was to carry people for pleasure, as well as the freight.”