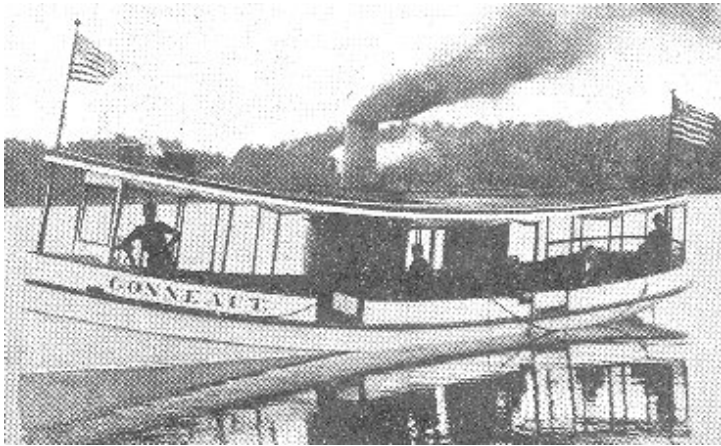


The Conneaut: 1885 –1913



Walter Whelpley, who owned a boat factory in Town, built the Conneaut in 1885.

At about 50 feet (15.4m) in length, she wasn't the largest boat on the Lake, but she was one of the more colorful.

She went thru several configurations in her life.

Very early images of the boat show her with simpler lines, a shorter roof and looking, somehow, much

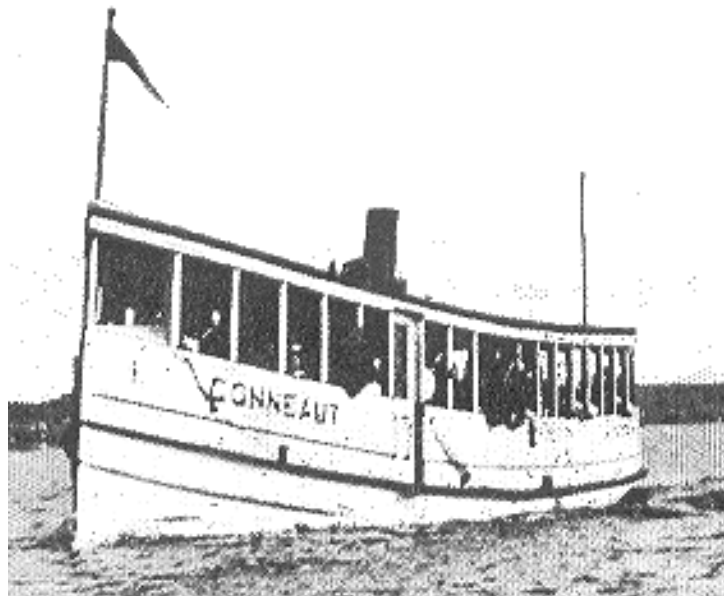
smaller. She must have had some speed, for she was criticized in her early years for running much too fast and presenting a clear danger to other boats on the Lake. She was, no doubt, competing against the larger Iroquois and Pittsburgh.

She did, eventually, run down a rowboat and, while not common, this type of accident became typical of the mishaps that occurred with increasing boat traffic on the Lake. Image from page 79 of the 1902 Conneaut Lake Directory reprint.

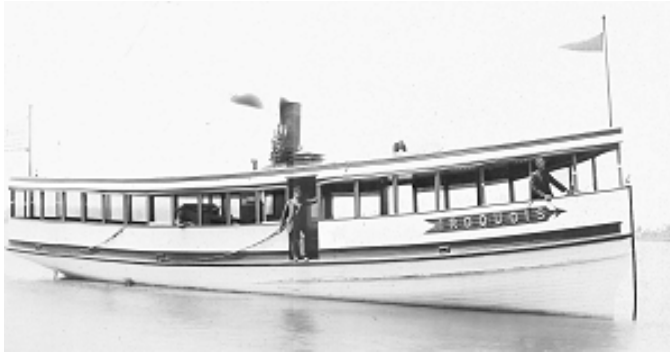
In 1903, the Conneaut is advertised as run by Wallace Keller (Kellar), who also ran a boat livery, owned Whelpley's factory, and the "Florence," a large sailboat for hire. The ad brags up the Conneaut as being "newly rebuilt and enlarged. Seating capacity 125. Fastest and finest boat on the lake." Remember that exaggerations were fairly common in ads of the day – how little things have changed.

Later pictures, like this one, show a very different boat. She looks as if she was stripped to the hull and had new gunwales, a more modern roof, and maybe windows added. She looks proud of herself, all fitted out as a modern Lake steamer.

The Conneaut was 26 years old when this postcard was mailed in 1911. By 1913, just shy of her 30th year, she was rotting at her dock just north of Town. 1911 post card courtesy of Don Hilton.



The Iroquois: 1893 – 1928



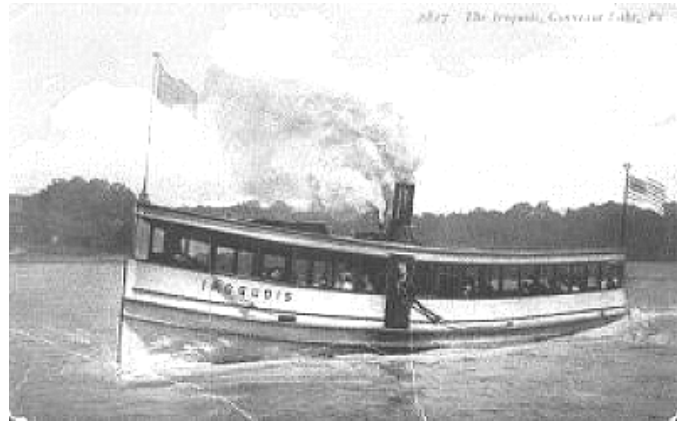
The Iroquois (Ear-Koi) took her first public run May 29, 1893. She was owned by Amos Quigley, the builder of the Midway Hotel, and C. Niece, who had connections to the smaller boats Swan and Trilby.

Constructed at a time when hotel owners ran boats with the specific purpose of impressing potential customers, she had to look good and perform well. The

Iroquois did both. At 66 feet (20.3m) long and 13 feet (4m) wide, she competed with the other steamers for the hotly contested title of the "fastest" passenger boat on the Lake throughout her long life. Calculations show her top speed would have been close to 16 mph (25 kph, 14 knots).

She was one of those rare boats that start out well and seem to get better with age. A large part of her appeal was due to the Quigley family understanding her importance. They kept her up-to-date even as she grew older. She was the first to carry electric lights and among the first to be enclosed with windows against the weather. 1897 image courtesy of the Hilton family.

The Quigley family ran her until the early 1900s. She then served another quarter-century with the Navigation Company, during which time she was often crewed, in part, by one or more of the Shearer boys.

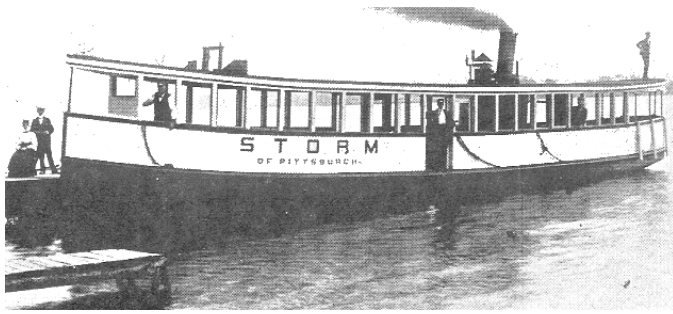


Her bow shape changed slightly with time, from an elegant "S" shape seen in earlier photos to a blunter, vertical prow as shown in later postcards and pictures.

She was well-liked, but despite her hard work, or because of it, she was never really considered very glamorous. Like her rival the Pittsburgh, she was upstaged by the larger and more popular excursion boats. Images from her later years are hard to come by. She can sometimes be found with her sisters, but hardly ever alone.

Like all of us, time finally caught up to the Iroquois. Replaced by the twins, Outing and Redwing, she sat idle for a year. Then, in late June of 1928, this final survivor of the Lake's pre-Navigation era was set afire and sunk. At 35 years old, she was laid to rest in Ice House Bay, out from the docks of the Navigation Company, where she lays with the Helena by her side. Her original pilot, Harry Quigley, died 7 months later. 1917 post card image courtesy of Kate Hilton.

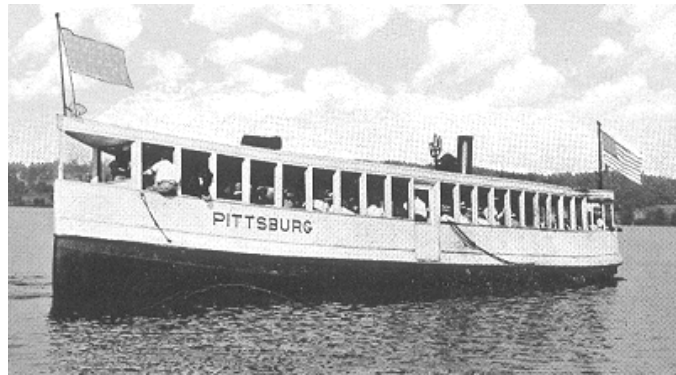
Storm of Pittsburgh: 189? – 192?



Built of Pittsburgh steel by Lewis Caldwell, she ran the three rivers as the "Oriole of Pittsburgh." Captain Tom Sullivan brought her to the Lake late in the 1800s. Keeping her beam of 12 ½ feet (3.8m), he increased her length to 66 feet (20m) by placing a new section across the middle of her hull. Image from page 75 of the 1902 Conneaut Lake Directory reprint.

Sullivan renamed her the "Storm of Pittsburgh," aligned himself with the Oakland Hotel, and ran his boat for all she was worth. The Storm of Pittsburgh and the steamer Iroquois came to represent the essence of competition between passenger boats on Conneaut Lake. The 1902 Conneaut Lake Directory advertises both as the "second largest" boat on the Lake. In fact, the boats were 66 feet (20.3m) long. Compared with the larger Nickel Plate/Bessemer, they shared the title of second largest. The Iroquois was, in fact, a bit wider, but Sullivan was probably a little shy of claiming "second longest and third widest."

She's known as the Storm, the Storm of Pittsburg(h), or, simply, the Pittsburg(h). In some sources, she's the Story, or Story of Pittsburg(h). Adding to the confusion, her name-sake city also changed its spelling, at first dropping, then re-adding, the final "h." Mid 1920's post card image courtesy of Kate Hilton.



She did get into a scrape or two. In the late evening of July 8, 1908, the Pittsburgh collided with a rowboat holding Exposition Park Hotel employee Miss Myrtle Smith and Frank Barr (said to be her male cousin). Pilot Jack Shellito dove to the rescue. Newspapers gave him credit for the save, though noted Miss Smith's calm demeanor and "inflated skirt" made the task much easier. The male cousin? Why, he saved himself, of course.

Mr. McMasters, a banker from Jamestown, PA, 15 miles (24km) to the southwest, bought the Pittsburgh from Sullivan in April, 1903, for \$6,500 (\$125,000 in the year 2000). Oddly enough, S.A. Harshaw had a business partner from Jamestown who was named McMasters. Between them, they owned the Bessemer, the Lake's biggest boat, and the Pittsburgh, one of the Lake's fastest boats - all just 7 months before the Navigation Company was formed.

The Pittsburgh was outlived a few years by her perennial wooden competitor, but met the same fate. Taken from service in the 1920s, she was laid to rest under the water she had sailed for so long. Her exact location is a bit of a mystery. Some have her offshore of her first home at the Lake, about halfway between Midway and Oakland. Others note she's at the bottom of Ice House Bay.

The Steamer Marie: 1901 – 190?



One of several fine steam launches owned and operated by individuals looking to turn a buck or two, this little launch started service the week of June 26, 1901. She was a year old when this photo was published and looks pretty cute in her valance that runs 'round her roof.

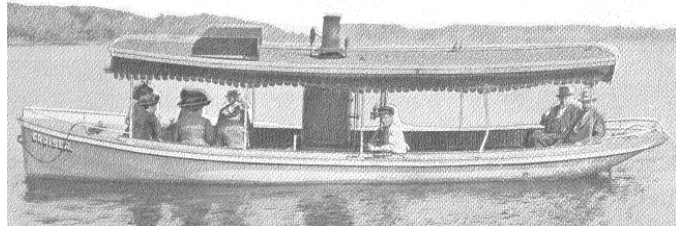
Owned and operated by Fred and Josiah Pearse (Pierce), she was docked at the Park end of the Lake and hired for passenger service and private parties. Powered by a boiler from the Phoenix Iron Works of Meadville, PA, she is a reminder that even a small steam engine can demand an engineer.

She represents the end of the period when anybody could get into the boat business. Once the Conneaut Lake Ice Company and Navigation began building a monopoly of passenger boat service, nobody was able to run a boat for hire without their permission.

In 1903, just before the Navigation Company became a legal entity, the Ice Company sued Fred and Josiah for trespass, probably to keep them and their Marie off the Lake. This move foreshadowed the coming battle over the rights of individual boat owners on the Lake, and probably damped the plans of all but the most determined would-be captains. Image from page 70 of the 1902 Conneaut Lake Directory reprint.

The Cruiser: 190? – 191?

The tiny Cruiser ran clean up duty for the other, larger steamers. With a capacity of just a score or so, she helped by picking up passengers between regularly scheduled runs.



She sailed the Lake from the early 1900s until at least the mid-1910s and was unique in being steered with a stern tiller instead of a wheel.

Look closely and you can see a cock-eyed roof support toward the back of the boat. It's easy to imagine some turn-of-the-century crew member getting dressed-down for bending it out of shape. Said one Conneaut Lake ferry pilot upon seeing this postcard, "One of the roof supports on the Outing was bent. Probably got too close to a dock or something. You're coming into the dock and everybody gets up and it tilts over and snags." Same accident, two different boats, fifty years apart. 1908? post card courtesy of Kate Hilton.