

ALLIGATOR
Crescent Lake
Crescent City vicinity
Putnam County
Florida

HAER FL-23
FL-23

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ALLIGATOR HAER No. FL-23

LOCATION: Shipwrecked, Crescent Lake, Crescent City vicinity, Putnam County, Florida
(Any remains of the vessel most likely lie on the east side of Crescent Lake, which is in Flagler County.)

PRESENT OWNER: None

PRESENT USE: Shipwreck

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: Vessel launched October 7, 1888 at Norwalk, Florida; rebuilt several times thereafter until loss by fire in November 1909

**ARCHITECT/
ENGINEER:** Unknown (most likely none)

**CONTRACTOR/
BUILDER:** C.W. Howard of Grahamville, Florida

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT: The vessel was an inboard paddle-wheel steamboat, a form nearly unique to the narrow, winding Ocklawaha River in Florida. There were never many such vessels, but for a half-century after the Civil War, they played a vital role in commerce and settlement of interior north-central Florida (the Ocklawaha watershed). Before good roads and the coming of the railroad to the region, they were a primary means of travel and freight transportation into and out of the area. In the late 1800s, they played an important role in the development of wintertime tourism in Florida, providing overnight passage on the “weird and beautiful” Ocklawaha to Silver Springs. In effect, they were the state’s first major tourist attraction. ALLIGATOR was typical of the Ocklawaha steamboats, but she also played a unique and historically significant role in being the boat Clarence B. Moore chartered between 1891-95 during his archaeological explorations on the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers.

HISTORIAN: Daniel L. Smith, 2007

PROJECT INFORMATION: Daniel L. Smith donated this report, the result of a five-year research effort, to the Historic American Engineering Record in March 2007. Justine Christianson, HAER Historian, edited the report.

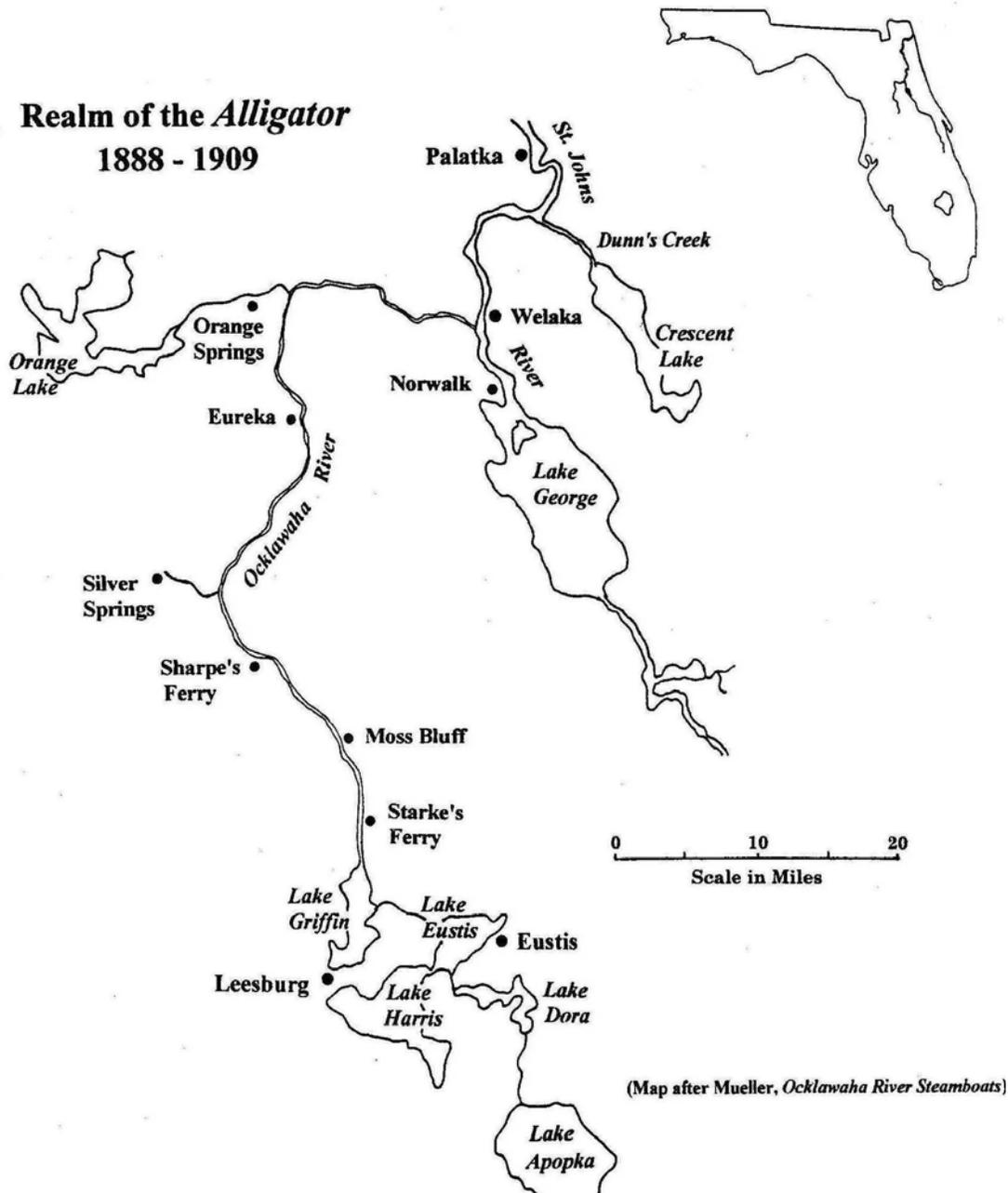
Foreward

This is the story of one Ocklawaha River steamboat. There were never more than a few of those vessels, and like most of them, ALLIGATOR was never much to look at - even though her appearance changed significantly several times over her twenty-one year lifetime. ALLIGATOR literally grew into the roles she played over the years, as did most of the steamboats. In a career exceeded in length by only one or two other of those steamers, ALLIGATOR served many masters and owners, plied the navigable length of the St. Johns and Ocklawaha Rivers, and in so doing epitomized the role of all the small steamers that worked those waters.

The Ocklawaha River is the major tributary of the St. Johns, joining it a few miles south of Palatka, in Putnam County. For about half a century after the Civil War, the St. Johns port of Palatka was the hub of operations for vessels carrying passengers and freight into and out of the hinterland of north-central Florida. Those vessels were steamers mostly, but there were deep water lumber schooners as well as other sailing ships. Until improved roads were built and the railroad arrived, the Ocklawaha was the primary avenue for moving people, produce and other freight southward (upriver) about 150 river miles to developing settlements in areas such as Lake County. A nearly unique form of small steamboat evolved to serve that purpose. Said to have "more bends than miles," the narrow and winding Ocklawaha itself determined the size, shape, and even the motive power of those boats.

The author's interest in the ALLIGATOR stemmed from Clarence B. Moore's use of the steamer during his investigations into the mounds and shell heaps along the rivers. This report is an expanded version of an Appendix prepared by the author to an annotated and illustrated transcription of Moore's 1891 field journal. While ALLIGATOR's story serves to exemplify and shed light on the lives and times surrounding Ocklawaha steamboating, what makes her unique is the historic role she played in Moore's archaeological work, beginning in 1891.

I am deeply indebted to many for their assistance and support with this effort. Foremost, author, steamboat historian, and friend Edward Mueller first stimulated my interest in the Ocklawaha boats, then became a font of knowledge to guide my own research. To my amazement, Suzanne Dewberry of the National Archives and Records Administration in Atlanta uncovered and provided a virtually complete set of papers for ALLIGATOR. Mary B. Davis at The Huntington Free Library in the Bronx, New York, made available film copies of C.B. Moore's 1891 journal. Jerald T. Milanich (University of Florida) provided encouragement along with a critically important early image of ALLIGATOR. Rick Reed, director of the Leesburg Heritage Society, helped uncover other photographs, along with additional information. Janice Mahaffey at the Putnam County Library guided me to old Palatka newspapers and the important - if all too scarce - items contained there. Jim Vearil, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville, Florida, shared his knowledge of the Ocklawaha as well as historical records related both to the Ocklawaha River and Crescent Lake. Local historians in the Crescent City area, Stella Wells and Margary Neal Nelson, provided the clues that led to finally unraveling what I am sure is *Alligator's* final resting place. My thanks to all of them, and to others unnamed.



The St. Johns and Ocklawaha River areas where the steamer ALLIGATOR operated between 1888-1909.

Introduction

The earliest and most detailed history of steamboats on the Ocklawaha River in Florida was written by C. Bradford Mitchell. His work was based on the discovery of materials from the family of Hubbard L. Hart, the most prominent of the owners and operators from the period around the Civil War until his death in 1895.¹ The steamboats generally operated out of the town of Palatka on the St. Johns River. Edward Mueller expanded and masterfully illustrated Mitchell's history while adding some important new information.²

There were never more than a few steamboats on the river, but during the closing decades of the nineteenth century they carried passengers and freight 150 miles up and down the narrow and winding river to the area of the headwater lakes in north-central Florida. They were an early means of shipping citrus northward, providing impetus to a burgeoning industry that would soon define the state. H. L. Hart and others encouraged tourists to discover the Ocklawaha, which for most of its course winds through still-dense forest and swamps. As railroads absorbed the other trade by the 1880s, tourists became the main source of revenue for competing steamboat operators. A popular destination for the steamers was Silver Springs, an overnight river trip from Palatka. Magazines of the day such as *Harper's Weekly* often carried articles rich with praise for the "weird and uncanny" natural wonders to be seen on and along the river - especially at night when magnified by the light from glowing fires atop the pilot house.³ By 1920 the steamboats were no more, but along the Ocklawaha River in the 1870s and 1880s they helped plant the roots of wintertime tourism in Florida.

The steamers were driven by a paddle wheel inside the boat at the stern. The enclosed paddle wheel was not unique to the Ocklawaha River, but nearly so. Hart and others quickly discovered its benefits in the hyacinth-choked river. Another common feature of the boats was their small size, which was defined by the narrow, twisting river itself. Little more than 20' wide, if that, the boats frequently had to squeeze between overhanging trees, so passing alongside each other was tricky at best. A side-wheeler was out of the question. The inboard paddle wheel also shortened the boat, which was helpful in navigating tight turns. Their names often evoked locale or history: OKLAWAHA, OSCEOLA, OKEEHUMKEE, ASTATULA and TUSCAWILLA. But while those and other boats such as MARION, EUREKA and METAMORA have received some attention, one steamer remains a shadowy figure on the Ocklawaha stage: ALLIGATOR. She has been too long overlooked, and her story is a saga worth exploring to shed more light on the important role these steamers played in Florida history.

¹ C. Bradford Mitchell, "Paddle-Wheel Inboard: Some of the History of the Ocklawaha River Steamboating and the Hart Line," *American Neptune* 7, no. 3 (1947; reprint, Providence, RI: The Steamship Historical Society of America, 1983). This was originally published as a two-part article in *American Neptune*. The design of the steamers' paddle wheels inspired the title of the Mitchell's history.

² Edward Mueller, *Ocklawaha River Steamboats* (Jacksonville, FL: Mendelson Printing Company, 1983; rev. 1997).

³ Kirk Munroe, "A Trip over Crooked Water," *Harper's Weekly* 27 (April 7, 1883): 209.

Voyage of the ALLIGATOR: The Story of an Ocklawaha Steamboat and Some of the History of the Lucas Line

Few published references mention ALLIGATOR, and those few that are available offer little insight aside from linking her to Clarence B. Moore, a wealthy amateur archaeologist from Philadelphia, and his early archaeological work in Florida.⁴ The general assumption is that Moore owned and perhaps built ALLIGATOR, but neither was the case, although he did use it for several years. Beginning in 1891 in Florida at the age of 40, C. B. Moore embarked on what would be a life-long passion for collecting Native American artifacts along rivers in the southeastern United States. Steamboats were an important part of his yearly field operations because they allowed him to cover more territory, provided housing and space for his equipment and artifacts, and served as floating laboratories. Today, Moore's field methods may be questioned, but there is general agreement that without his early fieldwork, meticulous documentation and careful preservation of artifacts, much that we now know about Native American cultures in the Southeast would have been lost to looters of their middens and shell mounds as well as developers who found the mounds to be a ready source of road-building material. Thus, a connection to Moore, which will be explored in more detail below, is reason enough to further document the steamboat ALLIGATOR.

ALLIGATOR was built for Capt. C. W. Howard of Grahamville, apparently to compete with the well-established Hart Line for passenger and freight business on both the Ocklawaha and St. Johns rivers.⁵ Hart, operating out of Palatka, would no doubt have been keenly interested in any potential competition, so it is not surprising that information would have reached him concerning a new boat. Early historian of the ALLIGATOR, C. Bradford Mitchell, did not reference specific sources for all of the information he included in his *American Neptune* article, but he clearly had access to the reports that were made to Hart regarding ALLIGATOR's construction. From those he quoted:

Howard's boat was a thoroughly home-made job, accumulated rather than built. He [Howard] put her hull together at Norwalk, some miles from Palatka.

Norwalk is (or was) on the west bank of the St. Johns River, just north of Lake George and about 20 miles up the northward flowing river from Palatka, near the point where the Ocklawaha joins the St. Johns River. The report to Hart indicated that ALLIGATOR was launched on October 7, 1888, and a week later the hull was floated down the river to have her engine installed at Palatka. Hart was further advised:

⁴ In addition to Mitchell's and Mueller's work, see for example Cynthia Cerrato, "C.B. Moore on the Ocklawaha River: No Place for a Gopher," *The Florida Anthropologist* 49 (December 1996): 265; and Charles E. Pearson, et al., "An Aptly Named Steamboat: Clarence B. Moore's Gopher," *Southeastern Archaeology* 19 (Summer 2000): 83.

⁵ Mitchell, "Paddle-Wheel Inboard," 46. The following two quotes come from the same source and page.

She is about 60 ft. long and 18 ft. wide on deck. She has two skegs ... under her transom on her rake under the stern, and he is going to put a propeller wheel between them. It will go all right until it hits a log.

Shortly afterward ALLIGATOR steamed back up to Norwalk for installation of the deck.

No photograph has been found to reveal how ALLIGATOR originally appeared, nor are the origins of her name known, though it can be assumed that it probably came from the creatures that are still ubiquitous in the local rivers and lakes.⁶ Mitchell described ALLIGATOR as a patchwork of parts from other steamboats, and he indicated she "... hailed from Jacksonville throughout her fifteen years' service as an 'Inland Passenger' steamer."⁷ We know now that although her papers were always taken out at Jacksonville, the steamer hailed at various times from Jacksonville, Palatka, and Leesburg. As were many of the other Ocklawaha vessels, she was significantly modified - at least three times - during her twenty-one year period of service (not fifteen years as Mitchell indicated). Although she was not as frequently photographed as some of the other boats, several images of ALLIGATOR have been found and they reveal her in at least three distinctly different configurations.⁸

It may seem ALLIGATOR was crudely built, but the same might be said for most of the Ocklawaha steamers, and ALLIGATOR survived longer than most of them. She had many owners over the years, and she was rebuilt as necessary to be more suitable for her intended service. The rebuilding probably prolonged her life in the process. Unfortunately, the record is largely silent regarding just how she was used through most of those years. ALLIGATOR worked on both the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers, and she spent her later years on the upper Ocklawaha, mainly in the headwater lakes in what is now Lake County. In spite of what may have been the intent when she was built, she appears to have seen only limited use in the passenger business, at least in competition with Hart's Line on the Ocklawaha. While a great deal about the work ALLIGATOR did may not be known, a virtually complete set of her official Certificates of Enrollment still exists. From those papers important details about the vessel's construction can be found, her several owners and masters identified, and inferences made about her operations.⁹

⁶ Given Hart's tendency to use names related to the Seminole history of the area, it is possible Captain Howard followed suit and chose the name white settlers had given to the important Seminole chief Halpatter Tustenuggee in the early 1800s.

⁷ Mitchell, "Paddle-Wheel Inboard," 47. On the same page Mitchell provides both the vessel's registration number and her measurements as built.

⁸ The differences are so striking that some, including both Mitchell and Mueller, have suggested there may have been more than one ALLIGATOR.

⁹ Suzanne Dewberry of the National Archives and Records Administration in Atlanta, Georgia, located and provided copies of the papers, as well as other relevant information.

Certificate No.

11

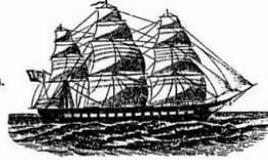
OFFICIAL NUMBER.

106623

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Sec. 4319, Rev. Stats.

Catalogue No. 538.



CERTIFICATE OF ENROLLMENT.

ENROLLMENT. In conformity to Title L, "REGULATION OF VESSELS IN DOMESTIC COMMERCE," of the Revised Statutes of the United States,

Charles B. Wade of Gasport City, Putnam County, Florida
having taken and subscribed the *oath* required by law, and having *sworn* that he
owns it together with Tony J. Wade, Jr., of
same place
and are

ship or vessel called the *Alligator*, citizens of the United States, *and* sole owners of the
C. B. Wade of *Jacksonville*, whereof
is at present Master, and is a citizen of the
United States, and that the said ship or vessel was built at *Jacksonville, Fla. in 1885 and is*
built on (and) damaged in the year 1889, as appears by
Surveyor's Certificate
and said Certificate

having certified that the said ship or vessel has *one* deck and *two* masts, and that her length is *Twenty one and* *two* feet, her breadth, *Eighteen and* *two* feet, her depth, *Three and* *two* feet, her height, *and* *two* feet, that she measures *thirty six* and *thirteen* tons, viz:

	TONS.	100THS.
Capacity under tonnage deck	26	85
Capacity between decks above tonnage deck		
Capacity of inclosures on the upper deck, viz:	39	86
Gross Tonnage	66	21
Deductions under Section 4153, Revised Statutes, as amended by Act of August 5, 1882	20	08
Net Tonnage	46	13

that the following described spaces, and no others, have been omitted, viz:

and that she is a *Steam wheel (recessed) Ste*, has a *Beam* head and a *Square* stern, and *is* sufficient security having been given, according to the said Title, the said SHIP or VESSEL has been duly ENROLLED at the port of *Jacksonville*

Given under my hand and seal at the Port of *Jacksonville*
in the District of *St. Johns*, this *21* day of
January, in the year one thousand eight hundred and *ninety*
No *Charles B. Wade*
Naval Officer. Collector of Customs.

* Insert here the name of the person, with his occupation and place of abode, by whom the oath or affirmation is to be made.
† If more than one owner, insert the words "together with," and the name or names, occupation or occupations, place or places of abode of the owners or owners, and the part or proportion of vessel belonging to each owner.
‡ Have descriptive previous document.
§ Insert here the particular kind of vessel, whether ship, brigantine, sloop, schooner, sloop, or whatever else.
|| In every original Enrollment insert the following: "the said _____ having agreed to the description and measurement above specified, and."

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Certificate of Enrollment for ALLIGATOR, January 1890.

All of the available enrollment papers for ALLIGATOR, issued at the Port of Jacksonville, District of St Johns, are numbered and dated. For boats in commercial trade, a new certificate was issued while the old certificate was surrendered to the collector of customs at the nearest port (Jacksonville in ALLIGATOR's case) each time a vessel changed ownership, underwent a significant rebuild, was renamed, or changed the type of trade or home port. Each certificate indicates the home port of the vessel, her owner and master, year and place of construction, length, width, depth and capacity (tonnage), and other details. When a certificate was surrendered, the customs collector annotated that document with the date and reason for surrender, and the number of the new certificate, if one was issued. Those annotations allow researchers to verify that existing documents are consecutive and comprise a virtually complete set of papers for ALLIGATOR.

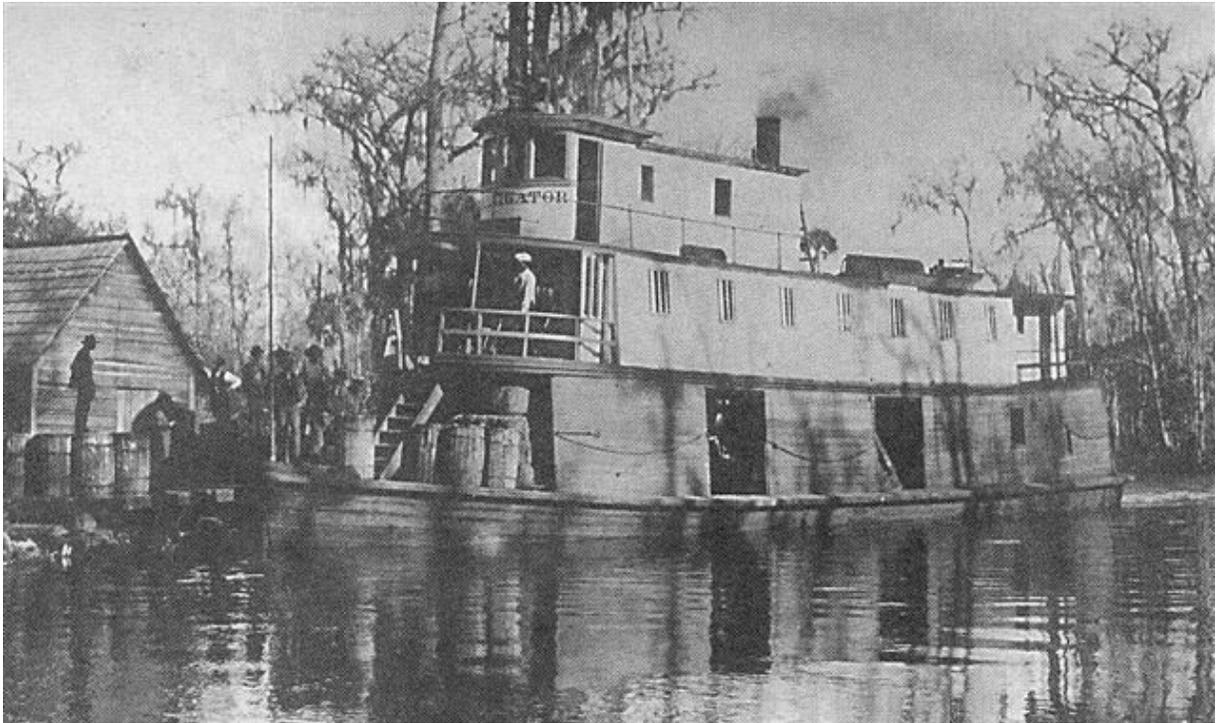
The enrollments enable the history of ALLIGATOR to be pieced together, even if reasonable guesswork is still required to determine for the most part in what activities she was engaged while sailing under them. The initial papers presumably issued to Captain Howard following her construction late in 1888 are missing, but it can be assumed they existed and were the source used by Mitchell when he cited both her registration number (106613) and her measurements: 57' long, 18.7' wide, 3.5' deep, and 24.71 gross tons. The first Certificate of Enrollment available is dated January 21, 1890 and was issued for the purpose of registering brothers Charles B. Wade of Crescent City and Benjamin Wade as new half-owners. Those papers (and subsequent enrollments) show that ALLIGATOR was built in 1888 at Norwalk and rebuilt and enlarged at the same place in 1889. The 1890 papers may have served to record both the 1889 rebuild and the change of owner (the Wades perhaps being responsible for the modifications), but that information is not specifically indicated. ALLIGATOR was now registered as having one deck and measuring 71' x 18.7' x 3.5'. She was 66.21 gross tons and driven by a recessed stern wheel, not a propeller. The boat was enrolled as "*Alligator* of Jacksonville."

Further confirming the Wades' purchase of the steamer is a list of conveyances, or documents of sale, recorded at Jacksonville. First on the list is the sale of the boat by C. W. Howard to the Wade brothers on September 9, 1889. The sale would appear to confirm speculation in the reports about her construction that:

All he [Howard] wants to do is to get speed enough to sell her ... He thinks he is going to get a good deal of speed out of her; but I think she will probably be just about the same speed as [Hart's] *Astatula*.¹⁰

Launched in October 1888, the boat could not likely have gone into much service before the beginning of 1889. She was sold to the Wades nine months later after a considerable rebuild. The skepticism expressed to Hart regarding the suitability of ALLIGATOR's propeller seems to

¹⁰ Mitchell, "Paddle-Wheel Inboard," 46.



This early view of ALLIGATOR is from a stereoview card of around 1890. The boat appears after her first rebuild and conversion to an inboard paddlewheel steamer.
(Photograph courtesy of the State Archives of Florida.)

have been well based. She may have been both underpowered and poorly equipped to navigate the weedy river, resulting in her being quickly refitted with a more conventional (for the Ocklawaha) recessed sternwheel. Lengthening the boat from 57' to 71' accommodated the inboard paddle wheel, if not other modifications as well. Without an identifiable photograph of the original boat it is difficult to identify other structural changes, but by 1890 she appeared similar to the three Hart boats then in service on the Ocklawaha and lower St. Johns – ASTATULA, OKEEHUMKEE, and OSCEOLA.

A year later, Joseph Edward Lucas of Palatka bought ALLIGATOR and owned her most of her life. In 1891 he and his brothers operated several vessels out of Palatka, primarily on the St. Johns River, as well as being involved in other marine operations including bridge building. His small steamer EUREKA was built at Silver Springs and seems to have spent most of her time in the local freight business. Ed Lucas would eventually provide the Hart Line with its stiffest competition on the Ocklawaha, but that was a few years in the future. When he acquired ALLIGATOR, however, it may have been because he was already thinking about just that.



ALLIGATOR mired in hyacinths at Palatka, around 1892, as she appeared soon after purchase by Ed Lucas. Note her name prominently displayed and the opening at the stern which indicates an inboard paddlewheel.¹¹ (From the author's collection.)

The sale to Lucas was recorded on April 23, 1891, and the necessary Certificate of Enrollment was issued the next day to document change of ownership. The enrollment indicates George W. Rosignal was master, and no further changes were noted on the certificate for "*Alligator* of Jacksonville." Interestingly, the April 23 conveyance recording the sale identifies William H. Hatly (not the Wades) as grantor to Mr. Lucas. This could suggest an intermediate sale, not registered as required, or perhaps Mr. Hatly simply served as an agent for the Wades. With ALLIGATOR, Lucas would adopt the convention Hart used for advertising his boats - her name would be prominently displayed on her sides. Perhaps that, too, was a signal of the competition to come. No photographs have been found to show he ever did the same for EUREKA.

As it happened, Lucas had acquired ALLIGATOR just as the tourist season was ending for the year and just at the time Clarence B. Moore arrived on the scene in search of a boat. A deal was quickly struck and, beginning in 1891, Moore would continue to use Lucas' steamer on his annual expeditions to the St. Johns River and its tributaries for several years. Moore's detailed journals thus provide an account of ALLIGATOR's day-to-day operations, at least during the months he chartered the steamer. The middens and shell mounds that primarily interested Moore were located near rivers and streams, and his plan was to use a steamboat as a floating "base of

¹¹ Lucas became actively involved in efforts to clean the St. Johns River and its tributaries of troublesome water hyacinths, which by the 1890s had become a major problem. In 1896, he traveled to Washington to appeal for help from the Corps of Engineers, carrying with him a photograph of three of his vessels stuck in the pesky weeds. This is a cropped version of that picture. The government responded, but not everyone appreciated the federal efforts. The poison that was used also killed cattle who ate the hyacinths. See George E. Buker, *Jacksonville Riverport-Seaport* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 85.

operations” to facilitate travel to and from as many sites as possible in the few months each year he spent in the field.

ALLIGATOR provided accommodations for Moore, his crew of workers, and the friends who often accompanied him, and housed equipment and the artifacts collected. In 1891, Moore was just beginning his work, and the suitability of a steamer was yet to be demonstrated. Thus ALLIGATOR’s unique role was to serve as Moore’s successful “proof of concept,” even though she was not his first choice. Moore arrived in Palatka on January 21, 1891, having made arrangements to charter one of Hart’s boats. He was surprised the boat Hart provided was OSCEOLA, which was not up to Moore’s expectations. Regardless, after some quibbling over costs (\$30 per day, plus \$2 for a cook), the boat was loaded and the expedition was underway. Moore’s interest that year was on the upper St. Johns River. All this and a daily description of what followed was recorded in his journal for January and February 1891, which he titled “Cruise of the *Osceola*.”¹²

In February Hart recalled OSCEOLA. No evidence from Moore’s journal indicates if the recall may have been anticipated; he simply noted on February 22 that having arrived at Sanford, on Lake Monroe, he “received notice this evening that the *Osceola* was needed at Palatka for her regular route on the Ocklawaha.” He delivered her the next day to Hart. The next journal entry (March 5) begins a page in the same notebook titled “Cruise of the *Alligator*.” Moore describes arriving in Sanford by train from Palatka that day and finding “the boat which we had chartered, the *Alligator* awaiting us at the wharf.” He sheds no light on how he arranged to shift his operations so quickly to Lucas’ boat, but ALLIGATOR may simply have been a vessel of opportunity. Moore completed his field work that year on April 7. Lucas’ purchase of the boat was recorded two weeks later on April 23, 1891. ALLIGATOR may have been available to Moore because Lucas was in the process of purchasing her during March and April, and neither he nor the Wades had committed her to any other use. Hart would have known about Lucas’ purchase of ALLIGATOR, no doubt, and it may have been he who steered Moore to Lucas, with the hope of forestalling any competition from ALLIGATOR for the remainder of that season, at least. The fact that ALLIGATOR was at Sanford suggests she had been employed that year on the St. Johns.

Moore had not found OSCEOLA overly spacious for all his equipment and entourage. His journal makes no mention of it, but ALLIGATOR would have been no improvement. Similar in overall appearance, OSCEOLA was 12’ longer and 2’ wider than ALLIGATOR and probably had more - or more spacious - cabins. Unfortunately, no information has been found that reveals

¹² Mary B. Davis, *Field Notes of Clarence Bloomfield Moore’s Southeastern Archaeological Expeditions, 1891-1918: A Guide to the Microfilm Edition* (1987), available at Huntington Free Library, Bronx, New York. The author is indebted to Ms. Davis for her efforts in cataloging and filming Moore’s field notes and for making them available to researchers via interlibrary loan.

his digging expeditions in Florida. And as long as he's alive I suppose he'll keep right on at the same old game. He's rich enough, so I shan't stop him.

The *Alligator* is a small-sized edition of an Ocklawaha steamer, about sixty feet long and twelve feet wide. She was built expressly for the Doctor and only draws a foot and a half of water, loaded.

Swift was not the only one who erred in referring to Moore as “doctor,” and he misjudged ALLIGATOR’s size as well - she was 81’ long at that time. Although Mitchell questioned Swift’s accuracy, it is probably this passage more than anything else that has led to misunderstanding about ALLIGATOR’s ownership. It also gave rise to the thought in Mitchell’s mind that there may have actually been two ALLIGATORS, when in fact there was only one.¹⁵

The Jacksonville *Florida Times Union* reported twice on Moore’s activities with ALLIGATOR in 1895. In a story on March 23 (datelined Sumterville) “Professor” C. B. Moore and “a company of gentlemen from the Academy of Natural Science, located at Philadelphia” were reportedly exploring Okahumpka Run for Indian mounds. On May 20 the newspaper reported that “... *Alligator* came up the river from Mill Cove” where “... the men have been at work for Dr. Moore, the explorer, for the past six weeks.” Moreover, “Fully a thousand skeletons were unearthed, ... and things considered of great value by Dr. Moore were discovered.” The press somewhat overstated the case regarding the human remains.

The ALLIGATOR of 1895 was significantly different from the boat first used by C. B. Moore in 1891. Sometime after Moore returned ALLIGATOR to Lucas in 1893 the steamer was rebuilt, documented by a Certificate of Enrollment dated January 13, 1894. The boat was lengthened to 81.4’ and gross tonnage increased to 69.60. Other dimensions were unchanged, but the steamer now had an enlarged cabin deck running the full length of the boat above the boiler deck. On the deck above were the pilot house and an enlarged captain’s cabin. Joseph E. Lucas was still owner of the vessel, registered now as “*Alligator* of Palatka.” Why the modification? Clarence Moore no doubt would have welcomed a larger boat, and he may even have played some part in the rebuild, but more likely it was because Lucas now planned a greater role for ALLIGATOR in the passenger business. He was about to take on the Hart Line’s near monopoly of the tourist business to Silver Springs.

To compete Lucas needed a new boat, and she was to be METAMORA, which he had built in 1893 at Palatka. Some consider her to have been the finest of all the Ocklawaha steamers, and she was the largest in terms of gross tonnage. METAMORA came out in time for the 1894 season. Most of the Ocklawaha passenger steamers, including ALLIGATOR, grew over the years through frequent modifications to serve the trade, but METAMORA was purpose-built to

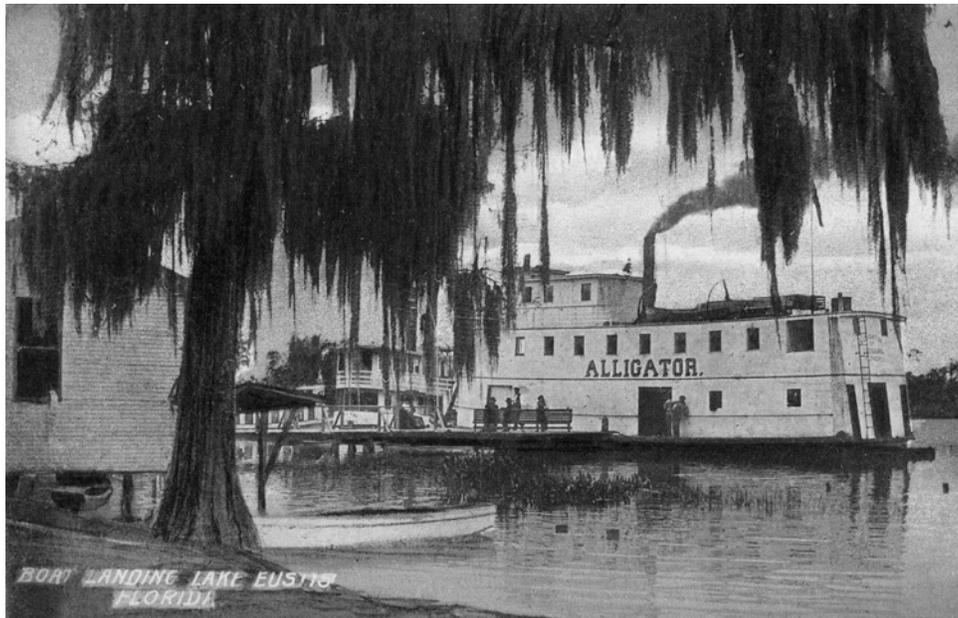
¹⁵ Mitchell, “Paddle-Wheel Inboard,” 47.

provide what Lucas proudly advertised as first-class accommodations for passengers on the Silver Springs run. To drive home the point that he was introducing a new line of Silver Springs steamers - not to be confused with the well-known Hart Line - "Lucas' New Line" was prominently displayed in bold letters along METAMORA's sides.¹⁶ It was probably at this time that ALLIGATOR's name appeared along her sides as well.



Ed Lucas' METAMORA of 1893. Considered perhaps the finest of the Ocklawaha steamers, she lasted only ten years. (Photograph courtesy of the State Archives of Florida.)

¹⁶ But not at first. The phrase headlined Lucas' advertising brochure for METAMORA's second season in 1895 (and probably in 1894), but the brochure's paragraph of the boat showed only the steamer's name along her side, which followed the fashion used by Hart on his vessels. Another early photograph shows only "Lucas' Line" on the side.



Postcard view of ALLIGATOR at Lake Eustis, as she appeared after her rebuild in 1893. “City of Leesburg” appears on the steamer’s transom, indicating this image was made after her purchase by Gibson and Dozier late in 1905. (From the author’s collection.)

Hart quickly responded to this new threat from Lucas. Across the river he undertook extensive renovations in 1893 to his aging OKEEHUMKEE, adding a second deck of cabins. In 1894 he also enlarged his other primary boat, ASTATULA. OSCEOLA was taken out of service in 1894, and she burned the following year at Eureka on the Ocklawaha. The challenge had been accepted.

The competition between Lucas and the Hart Line would be fierce, but it had only just begun when early 1895 saw the hardest freeze anyone could remember.¹⁷ It was a disaster for citrus growers, one of whom was Hart himself. Tourism suffered as well from the cold. Faced with economic ruin, Hart proposed a consolidation with Lucas. In no better shape himself, Lucas agreed, and the deal was finalized in December 1895. Only days after the agreement, however, Hart died accidentally in Atlanta. His brother-in-law, R. H. Thompson, assumed Hart’s leader-

¹⁷ See Mitchell, “Paddle-Wheel Inboard,” 51-52 for a discussion of the competition as well as insight into the economic situation of the time.

ship role and provided the finances to maintain the new operation.¹⁸ On December 6, 1895, *The Palatka Times Herald* announced the consolidation with the following item:

CONSOLIDATION OF THE FAMOUS HART AND LUCAS LINES.

The Ocklawaha Navigation Company, Colonel H. L. Hart's well known line, and Captain J. E. Lucas' new line have been consolidated on the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers. The well equipped boats on both lines are being renovated and put in first-class repair.

Having been only recently renovated, neither OKEEHUMKEE nor ASTATULA probably needed major repairs, but just two years after her launch METAMORA was given the only significant rebuild she was to receive. An advertising brochure for her 1895 season features a photograph showing passengers crowded on a walkway extending the length of the boat alongside her narrow upper cabin. Later pictures show the upper cabin expanded to the full width of the deck. Altered windows and access openings along the sides of the main cabin and the machinery decks imply internal changes as well. After these modifications METAMORA's name was displayed prominently on the upper cabin and "Lucas' New Line" appeared in even larger letters alongside the main cabin deck. The latter hints that despite the combined operations, Lucas wanted to insure that no one would lose sight of the fact there was a new line of steamers on the river.

The joint operation was not a merger, but rather an agreement to cooperate in order to maximize profits for each company. An 1896 pass, good for travel on the "Combination Line," carried the names of both the Ocklawaha Navigation Co. (Hart Line) and the St. Johns & Ocklawaha River Line (Lucas' Line). Just how long the agreement lasted is not clear. As late as the 1899 season a brochure advertised "Hart's Line - Lucas' Line, Consolidated," and indicated that both of the "finely equipped steamers, *Okeehumkee* and *Metamora*" featured "26 neatly furnished State Rooms and can accommodate 60 first-class passengers."¹⁹ There are indications, however, that by then the two lines had already resumed largely independent operations.

ALLIGATOR probably saw little use on the Ocklawaha during the time of combined operations. The three larger boats would probably have been easily sufficient for the trade. Even before the joint venture, Lucas' advertising hailed the new METAMORA as "Queen of the Ocklawaha River," but made no mention of ALLIGATOR. Because of her small size (69.6 tons after her 1893 rebuild, compared to METAMORA's 165 tons) and her 18' beam she would certainly have carried fewer passengers with tighter accommodations than the other boats. Nevertheless, she would have remained important as Lucas' only backup vessel. Late in 1897 a railroad guide contained this item:

¹⁸ Mueller, *Ocklawaha River Steamboats*, 15.

¹⁹ Mueller, *Ocklawaha River Steamboats*, 113.

St. Johns and Ocklawaha River Steamboat Company. Strs *Metamora* and *Alligator* will leave Palatka daily starting January 1, 1898 12:30 noon for Silver Springs, arriving there about 9 a.m. Return leaves Silver Springs at 10:30 a.m. arriving Palatka the next morning.

At some time Captain Lucas had mortgaged METAMORA and some of his land holdings to Charles H. Leonard. He did the same with ALLIGATOR on November 16, 1895, shortly before the agreement was reached with Hart (Thompson) for combined operations. Their arrangement is probably further indication of just how hard-pressed Lucas was economically.²⁰ Nevertheless, he remained owner and master of *Alligator* as shown by an enrollment certificate on May 21, 1897, for the purpose of replacing the previous papers which had been “lost or mislaid.” New papers were again issued to Lucas on January 22, 1901, for the same purpose of replacing lost papers (the May 1897 enrollment). The vessel remained “*Alligator* of Palatka” during this period, and she continued her role as second boat in Lucas’ Ocklawaha operations.

The “season” on the Ocklawaha ran generally from January until April, during which months winter visitors thrilled to the sights and sounds encountered on the overnight runs to and from Silver Springs. Although the peak years of the business may have been over by the mid-1890s, evidence in the form of images of the boats and messages on postcards, as well as the popular stereo-view images dutifully recorded for passengers by Palatka photographers after the voyages, attest to the popularity of the trips well into the twentieth century. Such images of METAMORA and the Hart Line boats are common, but the relative lack of such material showing ALLIGATOR suggests her role was probably always minimal. During the “off season,” however, Clarence Moore was not the only out of state visitor who put ALLIGATOR to work.

In its May 30, 1897 edition, *The New York Times* reported that Cdre. A. J. Root of Cohoes, New York, and his friend James A. Moore of New York (no apparent relation to C. B. Moore of Philadelphia) were hunting and fishing on the upper reaches of the St. Johns, using ALLIGATOR - and apparently not for the first time. The *Times* article noted in part:

Together they form the “Alligator Brigade,” and scarcely a year passes but they take a trip to the Upper St. John’s [sic]. It has gotten so now that even the alligators, when they hear the shrill whistle of their little boat, the *Alligator*, move from their haunts on the well-traveled rivers and keep out of sight until the Commodore and his tourist friends leave.

The steamer they use is an ideal one for this purpose. It is flat-bottomed with a wheel in the stern, is about 50 feet long, draws but 28 inches of water, and is something on the style of a Mississippi River boat.

²⁰ Just as was the Hart Line. It was a mutual struggle for survival.

It was made clear in the article's lively description of the expedition just why the 'gators and other wildlife had every reason to run and hide! Although ALLIGATOR's dimensions were again underestimated, it is clear from other references she was Lucas' boat. For example, it was reported the party "discovered" several lakes and named them "Root Lake, Moore Lake, Lake Rosignall, and Lake Ferris, in honor of the party." George W. Rosignall was master of the ALLIGATOR in 1891, and we might assume he was still associated with Lucas, perhaps as master again during this expedition.²¹

The years following 1895 were not easy for either Lucas' Line or the Hart Line. Mitchell described their short interval of joint operations as "starving under consolidation," and he noted their parting of the ways was "the signal for a new bitterness of antagonism which extended to personal animosities, and left a bad flavor long after the competition had died."²² Those are strong words, especially in light of subsequent events. Mitchell had access to extensive material from the Hart Line, much of which appears to have been lost to today's researchers, making it difficult to explore the interactions of Lucas and Thompson more thoroughly. It is certain, however, that 1903 was an eventful year that changed everything on the Ocklawaha.

The first of several major events occurring in 1903 happened on March 19. It was around 3:30 in the morning, while rounding a sharp bend in the Ocklawaha near its mouth at the St. Johns, that METAMORA suddenly lurched to port, shipped water and quickly settled in 20' of water, swamping her cabins on the second deck. The boat was returning to Palatka from Silver Springs with twenty-eight passengers and seventeen crew members aboard. In spite of harrowing accounts from passengers, amazingly none of them were injured, although two of the crew who were asleep below decks drowned. It was the most significant wreck ever on the Ocklawaha, and the cause was never satisfactorily determined.

Speculation was the boat struck a snag, a common enough event, but it seemed more likely the sinking resulted from improperly loaded firewood that shifted and unbalanced the boat as she rounded the bend. The swift current did the rest. It was even suggested rather blatantly by *The Florida Times-Union* in a report the next day that poor construction and maintenance of the vessel led to her sinking. The paper cited an unnamed source who claimed such knowledge. Ed Lucas addressed both the balance and maintenance issues in a written deposition he signed

²¹ The same *Times* article reported the group investigated Indian mounds, which could be an indication Commodore Root was inspired by C.B. Moore's well-publicized explorations in the scientific and popular press in the North. If he and his entourage followed in the same fashion to charter ALLIGATOR in the years subsequent to Moore's use of the boat, perhaps others did the same. It is also tempting to wonder whether Moore's original plans for using a steamboat in Florida might have been influenced by the knowledge of possible adventures of the same kind *prior* to 1891.

²² Mitchell, "Paddle-Wheel Inboard," 57.

shortly after the accident, strongly arguing the vessel was sound.²³ No real evidence was found to the contrary.

Captain Lucas went to work immediately to restore his operations. *The Palatka News and Advertiser* noted in its April 3, 1903 edition:

The work of raising the *Metamora* was begun this week. When raised it will be towed to this city and put in first-class shape. You can't lose Capt. Ed Lucas. He may be hit hard but you can't lose him.

Even as the newspaper updated readers the following week on Lucas' salvage work, it also reported on April 10 "the Hart Line of Ocklawaha Steamers closed the season on Monday after a very successful business." The lack of competition from Lucas at the end of the season no doubt helped the Hart Line's bottom line, but Lucas, too, had probably been having a good year. His METAMORA had carried nearly fifty passengers upriver the day before the accident, so many the captain had to give up his stateroom.²⁴ A further indication that business was still good and competition lively was the announcement just two weeks after METAMORA's sinking that a new boat "particularly designed for the Ocklawaha river trade" had been launched. It was WILLIAM HOWARD, built in Palatka by Capt. J. Hatten Howard, brother of the man responsible for building ALLIGATOR.²⁵ That was the second major event on the river in 1903.

Lucas did soon raise METAMORA, but ultimately the wrecked steamer really was "Lucas' New Line." Her sinking was a hard blow, particularly since ALLIGATOR was in no condition to contribute by herself to the bottom line at this point. For a few months Lucas probably tried his best to restore METAMORA while at the same time dealing with the investigation surrounding the accident, but the mortgage some years before to Charles Leonard would be his undoing. Leonard now called in his note, resulting in a foreclosure sale being ordered in July, to be held October 5, 1903, in front of the court house door in Palatka. Notices were duly posted around town and in the newspaper. The sale was to include the steamers METAMORA and ALLIGATOR, "together with all and singular [their] boilers, engines, tools, fixtures, appliances and furniture of every kind and description whatsoever to said steamboat[s] belonging or in any wise appertaining." Also to be sold at auction was the waterfront property associated with Lucas' operations.²⁶ It appeared the end was at hand for Lucas' New Line.

The Hart Line was not inactive during this period. Taking advantage of Lucas' predicament, and perhaps also in response to Captain Howard's new boat, the Hart Line seized the opportunity in

²³ Details of events surrounding the sinking are from *The Florida Times-Union* [Jacksonville, FL], March 20, 1903.

A copy of Lucas' hand-written testimony is one file at the Putnam County Library in Palatka.

²⁴ It was not uncommon by this time for passengers to make one-way steamer trips. The return trip was by train.

²⁵ *The Palatka News and Advertiser*, April 3, 1903.

²⁶ See for example, *The Palatka News and Advertiser*, November 20, 1903.

1903 to upgrade its operations. The venerable old OKEEHUMKEE, now thirty years old, again went on the ways at their East Palatka yard for another extensive overhaul, and construction was started there on the Hart Line's first new boat in twenty-three years - HIAWATHA. Completed in time for the 1904 season, she was to be the last and largest of the inboard paddlewheel steamers on the Ocklawaha.²⁷ Her construction was the third major event of 1903. Then remarkably, as if to prove that what the newspaper said of him in April was true ("he may be hit hard but you can't lose him"), Captain Lucas himself began work on a new boat. This unprecedented flurry of Ocklawaha boat building activity was reported by *The Florida Times Union* on October 15, 1903:

Two Hart Liners and One Lucas Liner Nearing Completion

The steamer Okeehumkee of the Oklawaha Navigation Company (the Hart Line), after undergoing extensive renovation on the company's drydock at Hart's Point, opposite the city, was launched. The hull of the craft is practically new, so extensive have been the repairs made to it ... The cabin and staterooms, in fact the entire superstructure, will be thoroughly repaired and placed in first-class order for the approaching season's business... Work on the new steamer to be constructed for this company has been commenced, the framing of the hull being well underway... Work is also progressing satisfactorily on the Oklawaha steamer being built for J. E. Lucas at Boyd's shipyard. Nearly all the planking is on, and a good idea of the contour of the hull may be had from what has already been accomplished. When finished the craft will be safe, swift, commodious and provided with every modern convenience and improvement.

Given his apparent financial situation, the way Ed Lucas financed a new boat is a matter of conjecture. No records have been uncovered. Could he have utilized engines and other equipment from METAMORA and ALLIGATOR? The wording of the court's sale decree ("... together with all and singular ... boilers, engines, tools, fixtures ...", etc.) would seem to preclude that possibility. Was it the insurance settlement from the loss of METAMORA? Why would that not have gone to Leonard? However he managed it, Lucas was apparently able to hold the court (and Leonard) at bay for a few months at least. The Master's Sale ordered by the court was delayed until December 7, 1903, at which time Leonard, the only bidder, purchased *Alligator* and the waterfront property for \$500 and \$1550, respectively. METAMORA was not included in that sale.²⁸

Meanwhile, Lucas' new boat, MAHNGOTAYSEE, was launched on November 24, 1903. *The Palatka News and Advertiser* reported the event on November 27, saying in part:

The good ship Mahngotaysee of the Lucas Line Ocklawaha river steamers slid into the

²⁷ Mueller, *Ocklawaha River Steamboats*, 116.

²⁸ Agreement Book D, Page 360, Putnam County Records Office, Palatka, Florida.

water on a greased track from Boyd's shipyard Tuesday morning in the presence of a large company of spectators and well-wishers. As the steamer began moving down the ways Miss Edith Merrill cracked a bottle of Mumm's Extra Dry on her stem and pronounced the name which she had previously selected.

The launching worked perfectly under the management of Capt. W.M. Boyd and his assistants, and in a minute from the time the great hull began to slide it was seen sitting gracefully in the water. Capt. Lucas was in his element. He knows that when his new boat is in commission he will have the safest, most commodious steamer that ever plied the Ocklawaha.

Capt. Boyd expects to have the steamer ready for commission by the 15th of January.

Was Lucas about to be back in business, despite the foreclosure? It seems remarkable that a boat rivaling the impressive METAMORA apparently escaped the notice of previous historians (neither Mitchell nor Mueller mentioned her), but the reason is both simple and tragic. Before she was completed and registered, an arsonist burned the MAHNGOTAYSEE. In its January 1, 1904 weekly edition *The Palatka News and Advertiser* reported:

The new Lucas' Ocklawaha steamer Mahngotaysee, which was rapidly nearing completion at Boyd's shipyard in this city, was set on fire by some unknown fire bug at an early hour Christmas morning, and long before sun-up was totally destroyed ... a large force of men [were] at work on her, rushing to get the steamer ready for the opening of the Ocklawaha season this month ...

The Mahngotaysee could not be saved. She had been too thoroughly oiled. Those first on the ground say the odor of kerosene in the fire was strong. An empty oil can floating near the boat tells the story. There is no question about the origin of the fire. It was incendiary...

Up to the time of the fire something over \$5,000 had been spent on the Mahngotaysee. Her machinery and boilers had not been placed. The boat was insured for \$3,000. The loss to Capt. Lucas is hard to estimate. The season is nearly on and he has no boat, though he claims he will have one.

So 1903 ended as it began, with crippling blows to Capt. Ed Lucas. The last would be fatal to his steamboat operations. Unless Lucas contemplated somehow acquiring use of one of the Hart Line boats, or perhaps Howard's new steamer, neither of which seems likely, it is conjecture that the boat alluded to at the end of the above news account was METAMORA. Lucas had just sold ALLIGATOR and he had no other. He probably negotiated to retain METAMORA in hope of yet restoring her to operation in conjunction with MAHNGOTAYSEE, but faced now without the latter, and apparently a significant insurance loss to further add to his financial troubles, the end was at hand. County records show the court-ordered sale of METAMORA occurred on

September 5, 1904. Charles Leonard acquired the boat for only \$300 “with all and singular her boilers, engines, tools, fixtures ...”, etc., suggesting METAMORA was in no condition to resume operations, despite what may have been Lucas’ best efforts.²⁹ What ultimately became of the steamer is unknown.

The arsonist seems clearly to have targeted the Lucas boat. Perhaps it was the same individual who had caused a fire earlier in the year in Palatka, but apparently neither crime was ever solved. It was said “Capt. Lucas has enemies, plenty of them.”³⁰ If so, whether those enemies were a result of his competition with the Hart Line, or perhaps because of his involvement in the government hyacinth control, it appears someone knew how to inflict the most harm on his business. No indication has been found that Ed Lucas ever resumed operations on the Ocklawaha.³¹

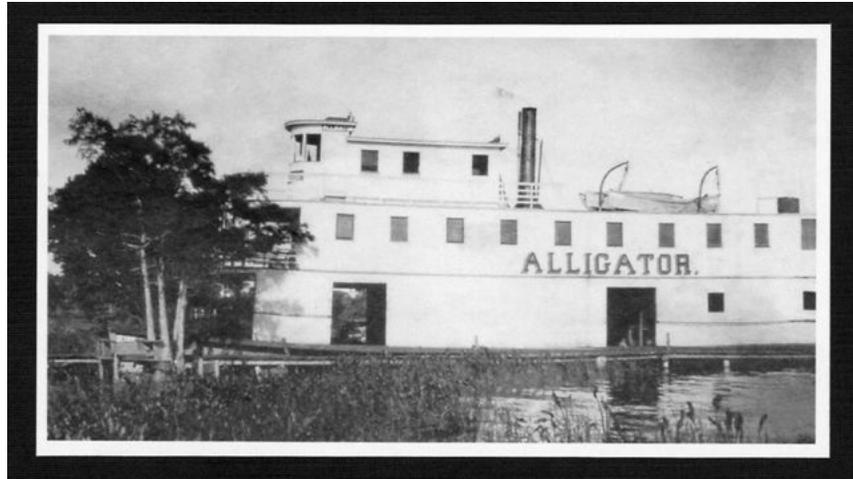
Meanwhile, ALLIGATOR sailed on. No sooner had Charles Leonard acquired the steamer than he sold her, on December 7, 1903, to Peter Cone of Palatka. Captain Cone was active in steamboat operations on the St. Johns. Whether he envisioned a role there for ALLIGATOR or saw her simply as a source of parts is unknown, but the latter is more likely because no Certificate of Registration coincided with the new ownership. Instead, six months later, on June 30, 1904, her enrollment papers (from May 1897) were surrendered, with the cause given: “Vessel abandoned.” As ominous as that sounds, it was not to be the end of ALLIGATOR. Remarkably, on November 27, 1905, nearly two years after Cone’s purchase and seventeen months after she was written off as abandoned, Cone took out new papers on a resurrected ALLIGATOR. The new papers indicated the boat had been “sunk” as well as abandoned. This enrollment coincided with Cone’s sale of ALLIGATOR, recorded just two days later, to Allen Gibson of Grahamville, Florida, and L. E. Dozier who, doing business as Dozier and Gibson of Eustis, Florida, just as quickly took out their own enrollment certificate on December 1, 1905. ALLIGATOR would now hail from Leesburg, with Gibson as master, and it appears she was to see most of her work on the upper Ocklawaha River and the headwater lakes, Lake Eustis (Eustis) and Lakes Griffin and Harris (Leesburg).

Laurence (L. E.) Dozier was a prominent citizen of Leesburg, serving three terms as mayor between 1903 and 1912. He was in the livery business and actively involved in river and lake navigation. Dozier “labored for over fifteen years to reopen the navigation through the

²⁹ Agreement Book D, Page 412, Putnam County Records Office, Palatka, Florida.

³⁰ *The Palatka News and Advertiser*, January 1, 1904. The statement was followed by a call to action on the part of Palatka citizens to find the culprit, but a search of the paper for the following six months revealed no further mention of the crime.

³¹ Lucas continued his work building and repairing docks and bridges until late 1914 (the 1910 Putnam County census listed his occupation as “pile driver”), when he sold all the boats, tools and other equipment associated with that business to the Putnam National Bank for \$1500. Lucas’ hand-written will that same year showed no assets related to steamboat operation. He died in Palatka in 1920. Information from Putnam County Records Office.



Two views of ALLIGATOR at a Leesburg landing shortly after her purchase by Gibson and Dozier in 1905. (Photographs courtesy of the Leesburg Heritage Society.)

Ocklawaha, and he originated the idea and carried to completion the opening of the canals from the two lakes [Harris and Griffin] to the town,” but his vision was even larger.³² For many years Dozier actively pursued creation of a cross-Florida waterway, using (naturally) the Ocklawaha and its headwater lakes. Clearly, he was a man in need of a steamboat, and ALLIGATOR - well known already in the Leesburg area, thanks to C. B. Moore, if not others after him - was available.

Even though ALLIGATOR had been abandoned for a year and a half, photographs taken of her on Lake Harris shortly after Gibson and Dozier purchased her show her looking surprisingly ship-shape.³³ Ethel Schaeffer Meador apparently witnessed the work to restore ALLIGATOR. While visiting Leesburg in January 1906 she walked to the dock on Lake Harris and recorded in her notebook:

Lake Harris is a beautiful lake ... We are going to take a trip across the lake to Eustis before very long. That is about 12 miles. The boats go over twice every day. They are building a new boat to run from Leesburg to Jacksonville, it will be called the *Alligator*.³⁴

³² William T. Kennedy, *History of Lake County Florida* (facsimile reproduction of the 1929 edition), (Tavares, FL: Lake County Historical Society, 1988).

³³ The Leesburg Heritage Society and Myron Leggett in Leesburg assisted in obtaining copies of the photographs.

³⁴ Item by Rick Reed in *The Daily Commercial* [Leesburg, FL], January 22, 2006.

It was not a new boat, of course, but the information she recorded - which we may assume came from the workers or others around the dock - reveals what was probably on the minds of Dozier and Gibson when they acquired ALLIGATOR.

After just a few months of operation under her new owners, at 7 a.m. on March 13, 1906, while steaming from Leesburg to Silver Springs with six passengers and a crew of five aboard, *Alligator* struck a snag and sank. There were no injuries. She carried no cargo and was uninsured, although valued at \$8000. All of that was noted in an official wreck report.³⁵ Unfortunately, the wreck site named in the report is not clear. If ALLIGATOR had sailed not long before the early morning accident, she may not have cleared Lake Griffin. A plat book published in 1965, now in the files of the Leesburg Heritage Society, contains an aerial photograph of the lake on which page someone wrote "*Alligator* is here sunk," with an arrow pointing to the east side of Bird (or Byrd) Island. That cryptic notation, made sometime after 1965, could refer to the 1906 accident, but if so the writer (using the present tense "is") seems to have overstated the severity of the event. The damage was estimated in the wreck report to be only \$500, which should not have been fatal. Indeed, ALLIGATOR soon returned to service on the lakes surrounding Leesburg.³⁶

In any case, the 1906 accident probably contributed to a new enrollment three months later, on June 9, 1906, occasioned by the change of ownership from "Dozier and Gibson" to L. E. Dozier alone (Gibson remained master). Dozier's acquisition of Gibson's half-interest was accompanied by a series of recorded conveyances ending with Dozier apparently turning control of the boat over to McClelland, Huber and Isted, brokers, on May 30, 1906, just prior to the enrollment.

It may also have been the accident - either directly or indirectly - that resulted in yet another rebuild of ALLIGATOR, one which significantly changed her appearance, but her registration papers do not indicate just when that occurred. It was certainly after her purchase by Dozier and Gibson. When they acquired the steamer she had cabins running the length of the boat, and as noted by Mrs. Meador it was their intent originally to use ALLIGATOR for overnight travel on the Ocklawaha. A transcript of a voice recording made by J. H. Howard, II, in 1957 describes his family's steamboat operations on the Ocklawaha.³⁷ He mentioned:

³⁵ Wreck reports are available at the National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁶ If the notation on the map is credible at all, it may actually refer to ALLIGATOR's location in 1904-1905, during the months Peter Cone owned her and written her off as "sunk and abandoned." If so, it is unknown how she came to be in Lake Griffin, but lying there she surely would have come to the attention of Dozier and Gibson, who soon had her back at work on the same lake. Whoever made the notation many years later seems not to have known that.

³⁷ A transcript of the recording is on file at the Lake County Historical Society in Tavares. Captain Howard appears not to have realized, or perhaps he forgot, that ALLIGATOR had been built by his uncle, Capt. C.W. Howard.

Then there was another boat run up there called the *Alligator*. She was built a good deal like the *Okeehumkee* - a lot of house on her - and Mr. Moore [...] was collecting Indian relics for the Smithsonian Institute and came up the Ocklawaha with her and she was afterwards bought and carried to Leesburg to run up there on the lakes, but it didn't last over about a year - something like that - before they gave it up.

Captain Howard's observation of the steamer having "a lot of house on her," and looking like OKEEHUMKEE, is a good description of ALLIGATOR as she appeared at the time Lucas gave her up. She had a full deck of cabins and visible on her transom were the words "*Alligator* of Leesburg," confirming her appearance at the time Dozier and Gibson purchased (and registered) her.

The accident in 1906 may have convinced Dozier that overnight operations on the Ocklawaha, let alone trips to Jacksonville, were no longer practical. The subsequent rebuild, probably in the summer of 1906, converted the boat into a vessel more suited for local freight and passenger operations. The change to ALLIGATOR was so significant that she appeared to some as an altogether different boat. Since there was no longer a need overnight accommodations, an open area extending half the length of the vessel replaced the cabin deck. The pilot house and captain's cabin were lowered to that same deck.



The steamer ALLIGATOR at Leesburg as she appeared after her last rebuild, probably in 1906. (Photograph courtesy of the State Archives of Florida.)

Dozier operated ALLIGATOR in her new - and probably last - configuration providing freight and passenger service on the area lakes. The *Eustis Lake Region* newspaper on November 30, 1906 carried the following advertisement:

STEAMER
ALLIGATOR,
E.B. WALKER, Master,

SCHEDULE:
Leaves Leesburg at7:30 a.m.
Arrives at Eustis.....10:00 a.m.
Leaves Eustis..... 1:00 p.m.
Arrive at Leesburg..... 3:30 p.m.
CONNECTS AT
ELDORADO
With Seaboard Air Line.
Good Freight Service.
L. E. Dozier, Manager, Leesburg, Fla

The railroad freight stop indicated in the advertisement confirms ALLIGATOR's route from Leesburg to Eustis was from Lake Harris via Dead River (as opposed to a Lake Griffin dock at Leesburg). Eldorado, no longer in existence, was a short distance east of Leesburg on the north shore of Lake Harris. A number of other vessels of various sizes were in similar operation around the area lakes during these years. Just how long ALLIGATOR continued is not known, but Captain Howard was probably accurate when he said, "... it didn't last over about a year - something like that - before they gave it up."

Archive records contain a *Lis Pendens* ("pending litigation") filed in Circuit Court on March 20, 1908. The nature of the litigation has not yet been uncovered, but the records also indicate a permanent license was issued on October 5, 1908 because of a change of ownership. (Similar to enrollment certificates, licenses were used for small or non-commercial vessels.) A reasonable guess is that the new owner might have been the government, and that the vessel was seized due to litigation, because a bill of sale was recorded on April 24, 1909 transferring the boat from John F. Horr, U.S. Marshal, to T. Hurd Kooker of Jacksonville. In other words, the boat was most likely bought at auction. Kooker then obtained the necessary Certificate of Enrollment on May 5, 1909, whereupon ALLIGATOR with Lewis C. Miller master, once again was recorded as hailing from Jacksonville.

In 1909 Thomas H. Kooker was a member of the Jacksonville civil engineering firm of Ellis, Curtis and Kooker. Why would he have been interested in acquiring a steamboat, a well-traveled and much made-over one at that? ALLIGATOR's remaining papers are few, but they may shed

some light on that. A wreck report dated November 20, 1909 indicates that around midnight on the 5th of that month, while laid up with no master, a fire of unknown origin broke out, and ALLIGATOR burned and sank. Two watchmen were onboard, but both were asleep and the fire was out of control when discovered. Neither man was injured. No one else was at hand to render assistance. The estimated value of the vessel was \$6500 and she was insured for \$4000, which along with the watchmen suggests the boat was still in active service. The question is, where?

20. Estimated loss or damage to vessel.	20.	\$6500 ⁰⁰
21. Estimated loss or damage to cargo.	21.	none
22. Amount of insurance on vessel.	22.	\$4000 ⁰⁰
23. Amount of insurance on cargo.	23.	none
24. Locality of casualty (giving precise point of land or other obstruction, in case of stranding).	24.	East Side Cross Cut Lake, Fla.
25. Nature of casualty (whether foundering, stranding, collision, or other disaster).	25.	fire
26. Cause of the casualty (specifying particularly).	26.	unknown

A portion of ALLIGATOR's 1909 wreck report, indicating where the vessel burned and sank.

The location hand-written on the wreck report is unclear. Was the intent to indicate a "Cross Cut' Lake?" If so, an extensive search of maps has yet to turn up any such feature that would have been accessible from the Ocklawaha or St. Johns River basins. Whether a spelling error or just poor penmanship, the location was written by what appears to be the same hand when ALLIGATOR's last Certificate of Enrollment (the May 5, 1909 registration) was surrendered in Jacksonville on the same day the wreck report was filed.³⁸ Given Kooker's residence and ALLIGATOR's home port, the suspected location is on the lower St. Johns. A more likely interpretation of the script, therefore, would be "Crescent Lake," an elongated tributary lake connected to the St. Johns River by Dunns Creek, a few miles south of Palatka.³⁹

By 1909 railroads had all but eliminated the need for steamboats on Florida's rivers, but the Beach and Miller Line of steamers still operated regularly between Jacksonville and Crescent City, on the west side of Crescent Lake. Extensive citrus groves on the east side of the lake still provided opportunities for steamer traffic across the lake to deliver fruit to the railhead near Crescent City. In 1953 George Miller, Sr., a prominent citizen of Crescent City whose father co-founded the Beach and Miller Line, compiled a history of his city for a centennial edition of the

³⁸ By what is perhaps an ironic coincidence, the writer (the Customs Collector) was none other than William H. Lucas, brother of Capt. Ed Lucas.

³⁹ In any case, "east side of..." is sufficient to show that the notation in the 1965 plat book mentioned previously does not indicate ALLIGATOR's final resting place. Byrd Island is on the west side of Lake Griffin.

Palatka Daily News. He named ALLIGATOR along with several other boats which had been in operation on Crescent Lake.⁴⁰ There could have been another like-named vessel, but other activity around the lake in 1909 suggests this was the same steamer T. Hurd Kooker had acquired, and it may explain why. (Whether Kooker may have acted on his own initiative or perhaps in conjunction with his partners is not known.)

The east half of Crescent Lake is located in Flagler County. The first land boom in that county began in 1908 when about 25,000 acres were acquired adjacent to the southeastern end of Crescent Lake by the St. Johns Development Co. The land was advertised and sold in small parcels for what would be called St. Johns Park. In addition,

A three-story hotel overlooking a waterfront park was erected to accommodate the many potential land buyers who came to the area. A two story building housed the general store and post office. The company operated two boats ... which plied the lake and river waters with freight and passengers - making regular stops at Dead Lake with land buyers, mail and supplies, and picked up farm products being shipped to markets.⁴¹

Neither of the company boats was ALLIGATOR, but she would have been at home operating in just that environment since it was exactly how Dozier used her around Leesburg after her rebuild in 1906. Perhaps the timing was only coincidental, but it is tempting to assume Kooker's civil engineering firm would have been well aware of the pending boom associated with St. Johns Park, even if they themselves were not directly involved in the project. Kooker or his firm may have seen an opportunity to capitalize on the development, getting in on the ground floor as it were. Notice of a Marshal's Sale may well have appeared in the Jacksonville press.

Kooker and his associates would probably have been aware of activities around that time which would result in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Jacksonville District Office conducting surveys of the Crescent Lake area. Authorized by the River and Harbor Act in 1910, in their subsequent annual reports the corps summarized the extent of local commerce, noted developments such as St. Johns Park, and proposed plans to improve navigation on Dunns Creek to further those developments. If completed, they said, results would

... be of incalculable value to this locality, assuring present settlers and prospective settlers a ready means of transportation to get their produce to market. Numerous orange groves and fine truck farms border the lake, and all indications point to a rapid development in this country within the next few years, provided the necessary transportation is available.⁴²

⁴⁰ Edward F. Keuchel and Robin J. Sellers, *Family, Community and Business Enterprise-The Millers of Crescent City, Florida* (Tallahassee, FL: Sentry Press, 1996).

⁴¹ John A. Clegg, *The History of Flagler County* (self-published, 1976), 48.

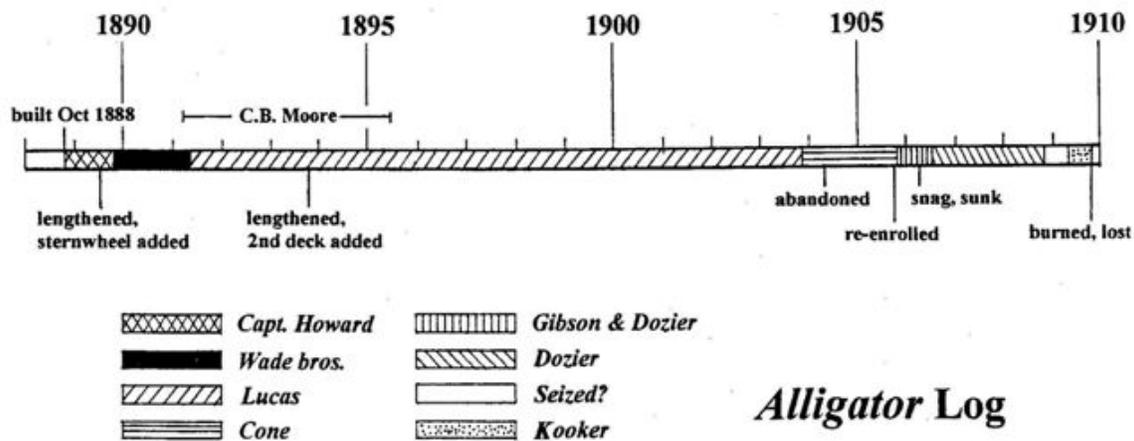
⁴² House Doc. No. 1320, 62nd Cong., 3d sess., Report of Survey of Lake Crescent and Dunns Creek, Fla., 1913, 7.

Just when ALLIGATOR arrived on Crescent Lake is not known, but it must have been not long before her sale to Kooker was registered in April 1909, if not soon after. In November of the same year she was lost. Within a few more years the other steamers were gone from the lake as well. The land boom was also short-lived. Scarcely a trace remains today of the St. Johns Park development. Given ALLIGATOR's short time on the lake it may seem surprising that George Miller would even recall the old steamboat more than forty years later. His family was involved in steamboat operations, however, and as a young man he worked on the boats himself. His work on steamboats along with the fact that ALLIGATOR's name was so prominently displayed on her sides probably helped his memory.

Colonel Hart's OKEEHUMKEE and HIAWATHA – both long out of service – were the last of the inboard paddlewheel steamboats to go when their rotting remains were burned at East Palatka a half-century ago. Today only scattered and trace remainders exist of any of that small but historic class of vessels that frequented the rivers and lakes of Florida more than 100 years ago. We may never know exactly where ALLIGATOR was lost, but the general area now seems sure. Additional research to pinpoint the location would be worthwhile.

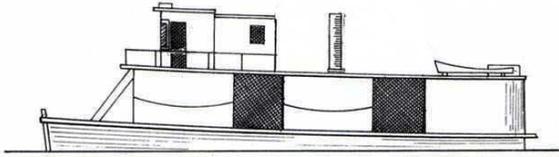
In 1892, before Clarence Moore stepped off ALLIGATOR and returned the boat to her owner at Palatka, he penned a last line in his journal for that year, and then added ...

fin de voyage

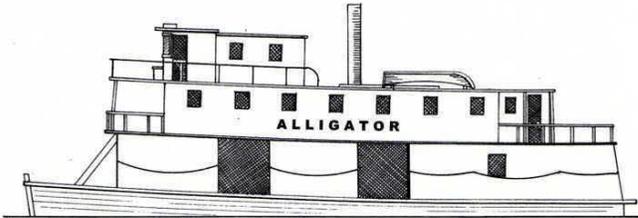


Alligator Evolves ...

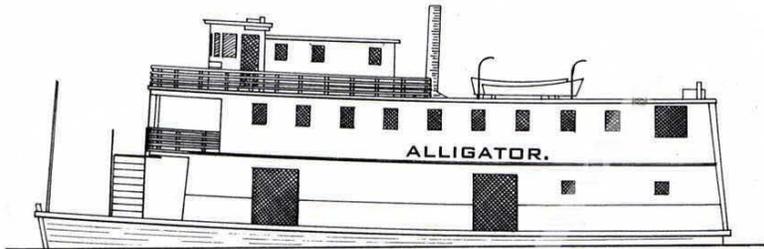
ALLIGATOR
HAER No. FL-23
(Page 30)



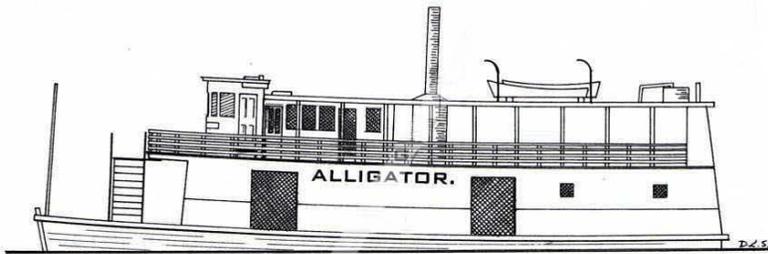
1888-1889 Length 57 ft.
A conjectural view - no image has been found to indicate *Alligator's* original appearance. Her small size (25 tons) implies minimal if any superstructure. Propellor-driven.



1890-1893 Length 71 ft.
Lengthened, converted to an inboard paddle wheel steamer with passenger cabins along most of second deck.



1894-c.1906
Length 81 ft.
Significant increase in capacity. Cabins extended full length of the second deck. Overhead increased.



c.1906-1909
Length 81 ft.
Cabins removed and converted to day-use vessel. *Alligator* lost November 1909.

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