

# **Guide to the Contents of the Pott Library Curator's Office**

**By Porsche Schlapper, Curator**

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*The Mercantile Library believes in sharing as much of our collections with the public as possible. As part of this mission, you will see much of our art & ephemera on display throughout the building at any given time.*

*The curator's office is no exception!*

*This informal guide is designed to give you an idea of the sorts of materials you might see when you visit the Pott Library. Whether you plan to visit physically or digitally, we hope you enjoy your stay!*



**FRONT WALL (outside the glass)**

1. *M.V. United States Model*: After several years of service under operation of the federal government, the Federal Barge Line on the Mississippi-Missouri and Warrior Rivers was acquired by the St. Louis Shipbuilding & Steel Co. in 1853. This name might be familiar to patrons of the waterways collection: it was owned and operated by none other than Herman T. Pott himself. The line became known first as St. Louis Shipbuilding – Federal Barge Lines, Inc., and later as Pott Industries, Inc. (1967.) Seen here is a model of the *M.V. United States*, a very powerful towboat built by St. Louis Shipbuilding – Federal Barge Lines, Inc., not long after the change of ownership.
2. *Various Steamboat Ephemera*: From among the Streckfus Collection, you can see here various storage tins, a life preserver, a lamp, and of course the beloved wooden captain, with whom many a child took their picture aboard the Streckfus steamers.
3. *Susie Hazard Pilot Wheel*: One of the first acquisitions of the newly formed Waterways Collection in the 1980s, the Susie Hazard's pilot wheel was donated to the Mercantile Library by acclaimed river historian and friend of the library, Ruth Ferris. The first dedicated Waterways curator, John Hoover, was tasked with moving this wheel from the Missouri Historical Society to the Mercantile Library's original location downtown, which meant maneuvering the mighty wheel up several flights of stairs. Thankfully, there were carpenters on site helping with an expansion of the Barriger Collection and, in an early showing of a now well-established relationship of teamwork between the two transportation libraries, the carpenters carefully carried the wheel up to where it stayed until the library's move to the UMSL campus
4. *Susie Hazard Model*: In this small scale model, you can gain perspective on the type of boat the pilot's wheel came from. The *Susie Hazard* was a tugboat owned by Streckfus Steamers and serving the St. Louis harbor, until 1958, when she was scuttled.
5. *Father of Waters Map*: This facsimile of Willard Glazier's "The 'Father of Waters'" shows the Mississippi River from Glazier's believed source - Lake Glazier, to the Gulf of Mexico. The original map was produced by Glazier in 1887. This is a small sample of the large map collection of the Pott Library, which includes many early, rare, and otherwise unusual maps from throughout river history. A limited number of facsimiles are available just outside the curator's office for visitors to take home as a souvenir – be sure to check for one yourself when you visit!

6. *Mooring post*: 1850, from the St. Louis riverfront. This is one of many items in the Pott Library that comes to us from actual use in a river. Mooring posts are what boats are secured to stop free movement. Riverboats usually weigh several hundred tons, so keeping them in place is no small feat!





**FRONT WALL (inside the glass)**

7. *Dining cart:* Located just behind the Susie Hazard model, this cart, the sort that once delivered meals on steamboats, contains many smaller but just as interesting treasures from the Waterways Collection, including (but not limited to):
  - a. A silver pitcher & goblet set gifted to Captain Robert Caldwell Scanland as a thanks for his work transporting troops during the Civil War, as well as
  - b. Navigation sidelights from a ship. First required during nighttime navigation in the U.S. by an act passed in 1838, the colors of the lights help other ships determine angle and location. Red indicates the port side (the viewer's left side) and green indicate the starboard side (the viewer's right side)
  - c. A porcelain washing pitcher and basin
  
8. *Keno set, cards, and bell:* Next to the dining cart atop a chest of drawers, there is an assortment of ephemera. Keno was (and still is) a popular lottery-like game involving selecting numbers and waiting for them to be drawn from a bingo-like device (seen here.) Next to the keno set is a commemorative card deck from the Federal Barge Lines, a small hand bell from the USS Baltic, and a small, decorative pilot wheel.

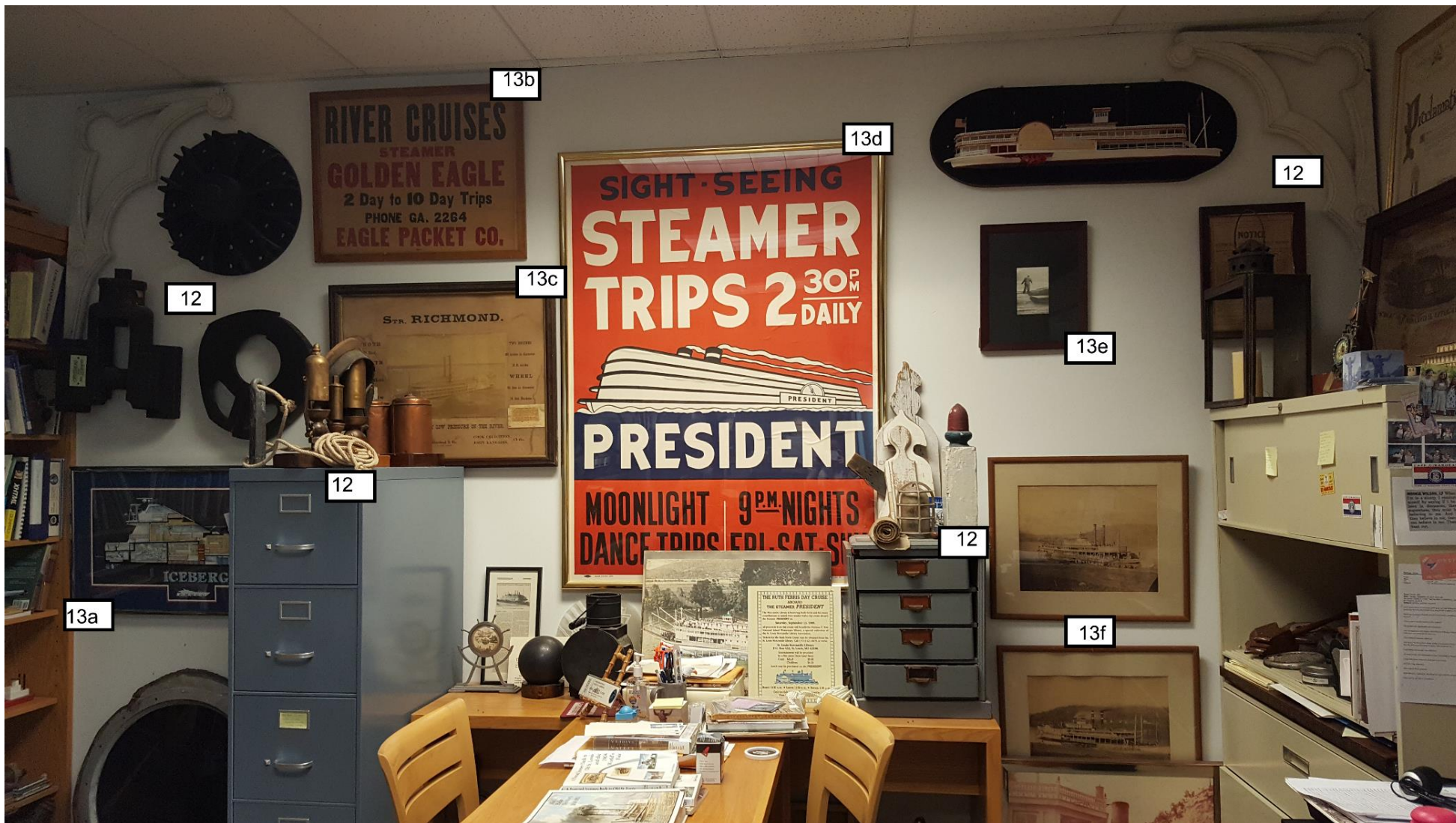




LEFT WALL

9. *Writing desk and chair*: Moving clockwise away from the drawers, you'll see a small writing desk, chair, and map drawer. These came from the *Golden Eagle*, gifted to river historian Ruth Ferris, who in turn gifted the furniture to the Pott Library. Atop the desk you may see books, folders, and maps related to projects the Pott Curator is currently working on.
10. *Bell Mop, circa 1940*: Immediately above the writing desk hangs what is thought to be the only remaining intact example of a bell mop. Bell mops hung in the boiler room of steamboat for men to wipe the grease off their hands, and decorative macramé hangers were designed and made as a hobby of boat workers. The mop strands have been removed from this bell mop, but the decorative hanger remains
11. *Bookshelf*: This bookshelf contains the curator's reference collection. If you call or email the curator for help, this is usually the first place they check for answers! Surrounding the bookshelf you'll see a variety of decorations, including a mirror, framed photographs of river scenes, model ships, and *Admiral* souvenirs.





BACK WALL

12. *Boat Parts*: Mounted to the back wall and across the back desk are various pieces from steamboats, both decorative and essential. You'll see white decorative wooden archways, the crosshead (an engine mechanism) from the Str. C. C. Bowyer, whistles, tins, lead lines, and lights.
13. *Framed posters / pictures*: One of the Mercantile Library's strengths are its art and image collections. The curator's offices reflect this. While framed pieces may be changed out at any time, the following list reflects what is up at the time of writing:
- a. *FryCo Design Diagram*: From the FryCo Naval Architecture Collection (P-053.)
  - b. *Golden Eagle River Cruises Advertisement*: A poster promoting river trips on the *Golden Eagle*, a popular steamer built in 1904 and in various services, both trade and tourism, until it's sinking in 1947. The Pott Library houses the collection of the Golden Eagle River Museum dedicated to this ship (P-025.)
  - c. *Str. Richmond Advertisement Poster*. An advertisement poster for this steamer, which sunk in 1870, including a photograph of the ship and information about the ship.
  - d. *Str. President Advertisement Poster*: The largest poster in the office, this advertises trips on the beloved local steamer *President*, one of the Streckfus Steamers. The Pott Library houses the collection of Streckfus Steamers (P-011.)
  - e. *Lead Line Throw*: This photograph, from the Ruth Ferris Collection (P-003), shows a roustabout measuring river depth with a lead line – the process that inspired Samuel Clemen's well-known pen name "Mark Twain."
  - f. *Steamboat Photographs*: Framed images of the *Buckeye State* and the *Bostana*.





RIGHT WALL

14. *Str. President Oars*: Another piece from the Pott Library that has come to us from service on the river

15. *Framed art and images*:

- a. *Painting of the Mollie Able*
- b. *Journalism photograph of the Great Flood of 1993*: The largest flood in the history of the United States, inundating the Midwest areas surrounding the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. This photograph shows a home and several barns under floodwater nearly to the roof.
- c. *St. Louis Last Packet North*: Painting picturing the *Str. Golden Eagle* and Ead's Bridge, by Michael Blaser
- d. *Lithograph, Celebrated Race of the Steamers Robt. E. Lee and Natchez*: This famed race happened in 1870, when the *Robt. E. Lee* raced and beat the record holding *Natchez* over the course of 3 days and nearly 1,200 miles from New Orleans to Saint Louis.
- e. *Plaques*: Commemorative plaque from the Southern Illinois University presenting the Captain Donald T. Wright Award to Herman T. Pott, and for the Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library presenting the award to James V. Swift. The library currently grants both the Donald T. Wright and James V. Swift awards every other year.
- f. *Design by FryCo*: From the FryCo Naval Architecture Collection (P-053.)
- g. *Painting of the Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer*: Two well-known boats serving tourism purposes in the Saint Louis Harbor on the Mississippi River
- h. *Lithograph of the Robt. E. Lee, Champion of the River*
- i. *Advertisement Lithograph of the Steamer Grand Republic*
- j. *Poster for the Federal Barge Line*
- k. *Poster for the Steamer Burnside and Maxwell House tours*
- l. *Sample from the dance floors of the S.S. Admiral and S.S. President*: Two popular Streckfus Steamer ships, well-known for their ballrooms and music performances. Many residents of Saint Louis partook in childhood dance recitals on the *Admiral*, and Streckfus Steamers has a long history of promoting live music in Saint Louis (including Louis Armstrong!)



**This is not intended to be a comprehensive list. If there is something in the curator's office that you are interested in learning more about, please contact:**

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**And thank you for your interest in the Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library!**