

A GUIDE TO
THE ROSE BARGE LINE COLLECTION

P-30

Copyright 2011

The St. Louis Mercantile Library Association

St. Louis, Missouri

Project Staff

Director: John Neal Hoover

Curator, Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library: Sean Visintainer

Researcher: Monica Coffey

INTRODUCTION

The Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library

The Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library was established in 1985 with major funding from the Herman T. and Phenie R. Pott Foundation, a foundation with special interests in education and the preservation of river heritage. The Pott Library is an important national resource for scholars, river aficionados, and students of America's rivers because of its unique and extensive literary, archival and photographic collections of inland waterways materials.

Archival materials in the Pott Library do not circulate, but may be used by researchers at the library during reading room hours. Researchers may arrange for copies of documents and photographs from the curator of the Pott Library for a fee, according to the St. Louis Mercantile Library's Image and Price List.

The St. Louis Mercantile Library Association owns the publication rights to the unique materials in the collections of the Pott Library. Any materials from this collection used or quoted for publication should be quoted as follows:

[Item description including date], Rose Barge Line Collection, Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library Archives at the St. Louis Mercantile Library – UM St. Louis.

For additional information, please see the St. Louis Mercantile Library's copyright policies webpage.

ROSE BARGE LINE COLLECTION

The Rose Barge Line Collection at the Herman T. Pott National Inland Waterways Library contains photographs of the vessels of the Rose Barge Line as well as other companies' vessels. There are also photographs dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Betsy, taken along the banks of the Mississippi River around the New Orleans area.

The photographs in the collection are dated from circa the 1960s. The Hurricane Betsy photographs are from right after Betsy made its second U.S. landfall, on September 9, 1965. The collection consists of one half-size record box totaling 0.5 linear feet. It is subdivided into two series; series one, vessels and series two, Hurricane Betsy. Series one consists of photographs of Rose Barge Line vessels; vessels photographed include barges and tow boats, some named, some numbered, and some unidentified. Most photographs are exterior shots, but some are interior shots of tow boats. Series Two consists of photographs of the damage incurred along the Mississippi River by Hurricane Betsy. This series contains photographs of Rose Barge Line vessels as well as others, and the photographs are concentrated around the New Orleans area.

Materials in the Rose Barge Collection are listed according to Folder ID and Folder Description. The folder number consists of two numbers, which represent series number and folder number. Thus, the folder 2-19 represents Series 2 (Hurricane Betsy) and Folder 19 (Avondale Shipyard – NOLA). The Rose Barge Line Collection is designated as P-30 (Pott 30).

History of the Rose Barge Line

Early Years:

Rose Barge Line Incorporated (RBL) made its debut in 1952 as a transporting towing company on the waterways of St. Louis. Founders and brothers, Earl C. Rose Jr. and Joseph W. Rose saw a future for themselves as major contributors in inland waterway transportation on the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. Due to budget constraints, Earl and Joe initially operated a 400 hp. towboat, the *Barry Dean*, the only transport between Joliet and Chicago, with the brothers as the only crew members. Demand for the tow operations increased allowing for company expansions within a year. The brothers added an 800 hp. towboat, *the J.W. Rose*. The vessel became a fixture at the St. Louis Shipbuilding and Steel Company and cruised between St. Louis and the upper Illinois River in the oil trade. Success continued for RBL as another tow, the 1,600 hp. *Cindy Jo* came on the scene in 1956. Things were going so well, the brothers developed plans for more barges and towboats.

The 1960's:

In the early part of the decade, RBL decided to focus on dry bulk goods – such as grain – and move away from the oil business. Regular routes to the Gulf Coast became common place. This meant the purchase of even more barges. Between 1961 and 1966, RBL acquired 117 hopper barges. Then during 1966 to 1967, RBL decided to replace all existing boats with more up-to-date models. The new line began with the *American Beauty*, a 5,000 hp. tow designed by St. Louis Ship, based in Caruthersville, MO. In 1969, there was a follow-up sister ship, the *Crimson Glory*, described as a state of the art vessel for inland waterways. Also at this time, RBL secured *White Dawn* and *White Night*, both Illinois River tows rebuilt to 3,200 hp.

The 1970's:

By 1972, RBL employed approximately 260 people and provided service along a 1,400 mile route between Chicago and New Orleans. Besides towing service, RBL had barge repair and maintenance lines at centrally located areas, along with a fleeting operation in the New Orleans harbor.

The year 1972 also marked the 20th year anniversary of RBL with major additions to its fleet. This included a seventh tow along with “32 box barges each with a capacity of 1,670 tons at a nine-foot draft.” (*Waterways Journal*, Sept. 16, 1972) Beginning in October, the plan was to have St. Louis Ship construct two barges weekly to expand services for dry bulk goods for the entire Illinois and Mississippi river areas.

Also at this time, RBL services enhanced along the lower Mississippi with the powerful 7,000 hp. tow, the *Jean Gladders*. Chartered from Gladders Barge Line, Inc., it complimented other renowned tows already in place. These included the 3,200 hp. Vessels, *the Crimson Glory*, *White Dawn* and the *White Knight*. Two others were the 4,300 hp. *Ohio* and 6,600 hp. *Maba Kelce*. More new tows were expected in the future.

Three subsidiaries owned by RBL provided a solid foundation for inland waterways service. Based in New Orleans harbor was Kenner Shipyard, Inc; which comprised an underground system for gas and oxygen supplies, a 750-ton dry-docks and three tugs.

A few miles from Kenner Shipyard was Kenner Bend Fleet, a 24 hour service with fleeting facilities for 80-100 barges. KBF also had three tugs for streamlined customer service. These were the 800 hp. *Lady Suzan* and *Karen Wayne*, and the 400 hp. *Dwarf King*. In addition, KBF had barge inspections and a vessel, the *Rigger II*, that contained equipment for mobile barge repair and cleaning.

Another important subsidiary was the The Central Marine Supply, Inc, in Ottawa, IL. Central Marine Supply was a full service barge repair facility providing round the clock assistance. With five trucks, repair personnel travelled along the Illinois River offering on sight repairs for customers.

RBL had expanded beyond the founders expectations. It had grown to become one of the largest and most successful tow operations in the American inland waterways. While still doing well, the Rose family sold RBL. Afterwards, it became known as Agri-Trans Corporation. In 1978, Joseph W. Rose came out of retirement to become head of the Wisconsin Barge Line that had recently relocated to St. Louis.

Rose Barge Line Collection

Box#	Folder ID	Series	Folder Description
1	1	Vessels	Rose Barge Lines -- Barge
1	2	Vessels	RBL-208 -- Barge in dry dock
1	3	Vessels	RBL-213 -- on waves
1	4	Vessels	RBL-218 Barge
1	5	Vessels	RBL-309 Barge
1	6	Vessels	RBL-401 Barge
1	7	Vessels	Bob Benter Tow
1	8	Vessels	Esso Tennessee Tow
1	9	Vessels	Jayne Houghland Barge
1	10	Vessels	Joey Chotin Tow
1	11	Vessels	Lizzie-1 Barge
1	12	Vessels	M/V Ohio Tow Boat
1	13	Vessels	Rita Barta (Tow)
1	14	Vessels	Unidentified TowDiamond + Chemical Barges
1	15	Vessels	Unidentified Tow: Engine Room
1	16	Vessels	Unidentified M/V Tow
1	17	Vessels	Unidentified Tow: Pilot House
1	18	Vessels	Unidentified Tow: Quarters
1	19	Hurricane Betsy	Avondale Shipyard -- NOLA
1	20	Hurricane Betsy	Wreck of Tow Barry D. Rose
1	21	Hurricane Betsy	East Bank -- NOLA
1	22	Hurricane Betsy	Genevieve Lykes: East Bank -- NOLA
1	23	Hurricane Betsy	Mason Lykes Tow: East Bank -- NOLA
1	24	Hurricane Betsy	Miscellaneous Photos -- NOLA
1	25	Hurricane Betsy	MST Barges -- NOLA
1	26	Hurricane Betsy	TPC Barges -- NOLA
1	27	Hurricane Betsy	RBL Barges 101, 115, 302, 308, 321, 327, 408 -- NOLA
1	28	Hurricane Betsy	UM Barges -- NOLA
1	29	Hurricane Betsy	Unidentified Tow -- NOLA
1	30	Hurricane Betsy	U.S. Navel Ship Huntsville; East Bank -- NOLA
1	31	Hurricane Betsy	West Bank -- NOLA