

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 96000202

Date Listed: 3/13/96

TECUMSEH (towboat)
Property Name

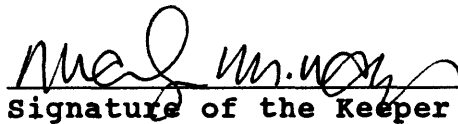
Orleans
County

LOUISIANA
State

N/A

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for 
Signature of the Keeper

9/24/96
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section No. 5

This nomination is amended to reclassify this boat from an object to a structure.

This change has been discussed with the Louisiana SHPO.

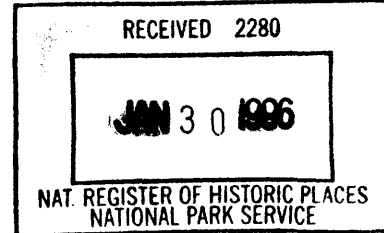
DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tecumseh

other names/site number Cotton Blossom

2. Location

street & number Toulouse Street Wharf N/A not for publication

city or town New Orleans N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Orleans Parish code 071 zip code 70130

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Jon Fricker 1/25/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Jonathan Fricker, Deputy SHPO, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism Date
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:) _____
Signature of the Keeper Ann J. M. Way Date of Action 3/13/96

Tecumseh
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
1	_____	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

transportation/water-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

transportation/water-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

other: towboat

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____

walls steel

roof _____

other steel

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Period of Significance

1928 - 1945

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Builder: Charles Ward Engineering Works

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Tecumseh
Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property N/A

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	5	7	8	3	5	6	0	3	3	1	7	2	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing											
2															

3															
Zone	Easting			Northing											
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date October 1995

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name New Orleans Steamboat Company

street & number 2 Canal Street, Suite 1300 telephone (504) 586-8777

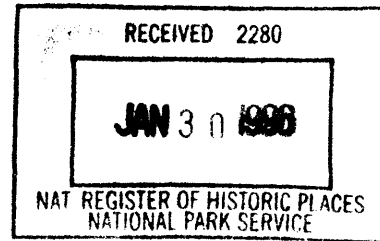
city or town New Orleans state LA zip code 70130

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Tecumseh, Orleans Parish, LA

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The towboat *Tecumseh* was built by the Charles Ward Engineering Works of Charleston, West Virginia in 1928 for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. It was used by the Corps to tow (push) barges, pontoons and derricks on the Ohio, Kanawha and Scioto rivers. It features a steel hull, a partially riveted steel superstructure and sternwheel propulsion powered by a diesel engine. The *Tecumseh* was purchased by the New Orleans Steamboat Company in 1973 for use as a harbor excursion boat. Renamed the *Cotton Blossom*, it is now docked at the Toulouse Street wharf in New Orleans. Despite various alterations over the years, including some made when the boat was converted for a private yacht, the *Tecumseh* is a strong Register candidate because of the rarity of the type.

A historic photograph exists to show the vessel's original appearance. In addition, as part of this application process, the *Tecumseh* was inspected by the LA SHPO Register staff and employees of the New Orleans Steamboat Company thoroughly familiar with the boat and changes made since 1973.

Like others of its type, the *Tecumseh* was built with a broad shallow hull designed to accommodate the calm waters and mud flats of the American western rivers. Indeed, it has as little as two feet of free board below the gunwales. Originally the squared off prow culminated in a pair of forward projecting "push-knees," vertical steel bars which extended to approximately six feet above the lower deck. These were used to engage barges or other non-powered vessels and push them (hence the term "push boats" in the early days). The push-knees, and a portion of their fittings below the bow gunwale, were removed, probably when the boat was converted for a private yacht. The bow also features a large steel cleat stamped with "Ward, 1927." The hull structure itself and all of the lower steel decking is original. The stern paddlewheel structure is largely original; this includes the "spiders" (steel wheels and hubs) and the shafts that hold the paddlewheel in place. Most of the wooden paddle planks have been replaced over the years. Also, at one time the paddlewheel was turned by a chain drive connected to a diesel engine in the aftward engine room. This has been replaced by a hydraulic drive mechanism which is actuated by a newer diesel engine in the same location. The twin rudders and the massive steering arms are original, although the hydraulic system of controlling them from the pilot house has been replaced.

All of the present enclosed cabin space on the lower deck is original as evidenced by the historic photograph and the copious riveted bulkheads. A portion of the lower deck superstructure forward of the engine room has been removed for a breezeway. Also removed was a ship's ladder leading to the upper deck. The cabin area forward of the breezeway was originally used for the crew's mess and quarters. A few of the doors and windows have been replaced

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Tecumseh, Orleans Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

and/or moved. In addition, the interior of this space is completely modern in character. The only other original features on the lower deck worthy of note are large steel cleats set periodically along the side gunwales. The lower deck is currently surrounded by a safety railing. Originally it had no rails.

Most of the steel decking on the upper deck is original; however, most of the superstructure has been replaced. Originally there was a large elevated pilot house reached by a stair with a small cabin aft. Most likely this small cabin served as the captain's quarters. All that remains from this are the side walls of the stair well and the stair itself. A new larger range of cabins has been added where the base of the pilot house and the aft cabin once were. This range encompasses approximately twenty percent more of the length of the vessel than did its predecessor. It is surmounted by a third deck which gives access to the new, somewhat smaller pilot house. In addition, aft of the new range of cabins is a system of steel rods supporting canvas canopies which shed the aft portion of the old upper deck.

Flanking the new pilot house is a pair of cylindrical exhaust stacks. Originally these vented the diesel engine through an elongated system of pipes, but today the stacks serve no function. When the vessel was converted by the New Orleans Steamboat Company for excursion use these stacks were fitted with decorative feathered caps and an ornamental system of tiebars. The overall intent of these alterations was to evoke the appearance of a nineteenth century passenger steamboat on the Mississippi River. Acting on advice from the LA SHPO and to enhance the property's Register eligibility, the company removed these features, thus returning the stacks to their original functional towboat appearance.

Assessment of Integrity

Although some of the above changes are admittedly noteworthy, it should be stressed that the boat still retains the bulk of its historic fabric and features. Very importantly, the profile of its current superstructure is very similar to the original. Finally, boats of this type are exceedingly rare. What is remarkable is that the boat has survived at all and retains as much of its original appearance as it does.

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Tecumseh, Orleans Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

The *Tecumseh* is of national significance in the area of transportation within the context of the Mississippi River system as a very rare example of a historic towboat, a distinctive maritime resource type associated with freight transport on the American western rivers. Indeed, during the latter decades of the nineteenth century this type dominated riverine freight transport.

Towboats were designed to transport bulk items such as grain, coal, iron, etc. by pushing multiple barges which were lashed together. This mode of transport developed almost by accident during the heyday of steamboating on the western rivers. "Towing" started when steamboats lashed barges or "lighters" alongside during periods of low water to reduce their draft. Off-loading cargo in this manner enabled a steamboat to float higher in the water. However, the practice was considered hazardous and was discouraged, particularly by insurance companies which often declined to assume risks on cargo held in towed barges. Indeed, in 1850 the Cincinnati Board of Underwriters took a strong stand against towing because of attendant hazards. The towing business developed when boats carrying no passengers pushed barges of coal and iron from Pittsburgh, Kentucky and West Virginia. But for a long time towing was only a small part of riverine commerce.

Instead, it was the steamboat that dominated river traffic. In the decades prior to the Civil War, sometimes called the heyday of steamboating, steamboats carried passengers and cargo of all types. Some were luxury steamers with grand salons and elegant staterooms. Others were packet boats which carried both freight and passengers. Period photographs show steamboats piled to the top deck with cotton bales so that one could scarcely see the superstructure.

Steamboating experienced a steady decline in the decades after the Civil War. Visiting the St. Louis riverfront in 1882, Mark Twain noted only five or six "half asleep" steamboats docked, whereas thirty years before there would have been half a mile of "wide awake" steamboats. This decline continued into the twentieth century, until finally a steamboat on the Mississippi River system was a rare sight.

This decline was caused by an overall change in transportation systems. The large-scale post-war construction of railroads lured passengers away from steamboats. Railroads were several times faster than even the fastest boats. In addition, whereas steamboats were limited to the routes of navigable rivers, railroads could go anywhere, also an important consideration in the transport of freight. The towboat supplanted the steamboat as the principal vehicle for transporting riverine freight because it proved to be more economical. Although the maneuvering of fleets of barges was more awkward on the treacherous Mississippi River system than piloting a steamboat, this problem was mitigated and indeed solved by the federal

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government, which instituted the first system of aids to navigation in the region. During the heyday of steamboating no aids to navigation existed. The government also embarked upon active programs to dredge sandbars and remove snags. By the turn of the century it was clear that towboating was the wave of the future. Indeed, barge fleetings remain today the principal form of freight transport on the Mississippi River system.

As towboating developed as a separate industry, a specialized type of vessel emerged. The sternwheel towboat was the workhorse of the towing industry during most of the historic period. These boats, with rudders set forward of the paddlewheel, provided the very best means of "flanking," or backing, large numbers of barges around sharp river bends. In the twentieth century propeller driven boats began to replace the earlier generation of towboats powered by paddlewheels. Although the Charles Ward Engineering Company pioneered the construction of propeller boats, it continued to build the time-tested sternwheelers well into the twentieth century. One of the last such boats to be launched was the *Tecumseh*, built in 1928 for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. During the period 1940-1955 the *Tecumseh* continued to serve the towing industry for several private owners who used her to push coal, construction and salvage barges. In the late 1960s the *Tecumseh* was remodeled by a West Virginia coal operator for a private yacht, and in 1973 the vessel was purchased by the New Orleans Steamboat Company for use as an excursion boat.

The *Tecumseh's* role during the historic period as a towboat (1928-1945) is very significant. The vessel survives as an extremely rare example of the early generation of towboats which had sternwheel propulsion. It is almost the sole representative of a major phenomenon in the history of riverine transport. It is generally conceded that only two or three other examples survive. The average life of ships is about thirty years, after which they become obsolete and too expensive to maintain, and are generally scrapped. This is particularly true of utilitarian work boats.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Foster, Kevin. Maritime Historian, National Park Service. Phone conversation with LA SHPO staff, 6/22/94.

Hawley, Clarke. Mississippi River historian with New Orleans Steamboat Company. Historical sketch on *Tecumseh* and towboats on the western rivers. Copy in National Register file, LA SHPO.

Historic photos of the *Tecumseh*, copies in National Register file, LA SHPO.

Boundary Description: The vessel now known as the *Cotton Blossom*, historically known as *Tecumseh*, moored at the Toulouse Street wharf, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries were chosen to include the historic vessel only and not its surroundings.