

Loose logs and rafts were landed at the river bottom below the high cliffs. Ed Krakan was an artist who in 1913 completed an oil painting of High Bridge which featured thirty rafts tied up along the river.

There was a need for many rafts as the J.D. Huges Lumber Company who operated there had one of the largest bandsaws in the Eastern United States. Laten Soaper was a timber buyer for the Huges Company and every fall he would go up to the headwaters of the Kentucky and spend the winter buying and branding logs to send down to the mill. The bottom was prone to flooding so the sawmill had to be built atop the cliffs.

Getting the logs to the top of the cliff was quite a trick. Colonel Chinn said, "They had tracks down to the river to carry the sawlogs up, you know." Other men called the tracks a 'chute'. Using 'Skid Tongs' which looked like oversized ice tongs, men drove each tong into the side of a log. A signal was given and a steam engine at the top of the cliff spun a drum which wound a chain that pulled the log up the chute.

Once while at High Bridge with my friend Priscilla Sims and her grandchildren I ran into Ken Houpp who I knew slightly. Ken told of one of his aunts who as a young girl finding a log in the river. She took it down to the mill to get the reward for the log and being afraid the men at the bottom of the chute wouldn't tell the company she'd found it she rode the log to the top of the chute.

The workers at the bottom of the chute attaching the tongs were drenched by water from off the logs all day long. In the winter months the men had a shanty type shed they could warm themselves in if they got a break. Earl Lowery told me they were living with his grandfather along Dick's River when his grandfather was working on the chute. Earl was a young boy but remembered his grandfather coming home in the winter. "Grandpa would undress in front of the fireplace and when he stepped out of his overalls they would stand up on their own. The overalls were stiff because of the ice on them.

The rafters and sawmill workers often had disagreements that could lead to violence. Earl told me that his grandpa and a rafter had a shootout at the sawmill. Each man hid behind a pile of lumber and first one would shoot and then the other. One had a shotgun and the other a pistol; neither man was hit and the workers at the mill managed to get the two men to quit shooting before anyone was hurt.

After the installation of the locks and dams the tow-boat 'Mary Dee' traveled the river bringing logs down to the mills. She doubled as a 'social boat' offering river tours when there was a lack of logs to be brought to the mill. The 'Onward' also operated at High Bridge as well as on the Green River in slack times. The Indiana Tie Company

operated the 'Onward' which worked out of the area as well as the Green River.. The mostly Black tie-loaders were said to have "sang and chanted as they worked and heaved-hoed."

The Kentucky River flows past High Bridge and runs 52 miles past three counties before reaching Frankfort in Franklin County. In all that distance there is not one logging or rafting story. Unbelievable numbers of trees had been cut over the years to provide fuel for the steamboats boilers but I could not find one story telling of the men who had cut the cordwood. There are stories of Indians, pioneers, flatboat men and of course endless steamboat stories. As the Kentucky River approaches Frankfort the towering cliffs, called Palisades, come to an end and the river has the character of a mid-western river; it's wide, slow and rather dull when traveling over it.

The Little Shepherd Raft had run all night and "before the sun rose, the hills had grown smaller and smaller and the glimpses between them more frequent and, at last, far down the river Chad saw a column of smoke and all the men on the raft took off their hats and shouted. The end of the trip was near, for that black column meant the state capital."

"Chad trembled on his feet and his heart rose in his throat, while Caleb Hazel seemed hardly less moved. His hat was off and he stood motionless, with his face uplifted, and his grave eyes fastened on that dark column as though it rose from the pillar of fire that was leading them to the Promised Land."

"As they rounded the next curve, some monster swept out of the low hills on the right, with a shriek that startled the boy almost into terror and, with a mightily puffing and rumbling, shot out of sight again. The school-master shouted to Chad, and the Turned brothers grinned at him delightedly:

"Steam-cars!," they cried, and Chad nodded back gravely, trying to hold in his wonder.

"Sweeping around the next curve, another monster hove into sight with the same puffing and a long 'ho-o-t.' A monster on the river and moving upstream steadily, with no oar and no man in sight, and the Turners and the school-master shouted again. Chad's eyes grew big with wonder as he ran forward to see the rickety little steamboat approach and, with wide eyes devoured it, as it wheezed and labored-upstream past them-watched the thundering stern-wheel thrashing the water into a foam far behind it and flashing it's blades, water dripping in the sun-watched it till it puffed and wheezed and labored out of sight."

"About the next bend, more but thinner columns of smoke could be seen, with little green wheat-fields dotting them, and as the raft drew a little closer, Chad could see

houses on the hills-more strange houses of wood and stone, and porches, and queer towers on them from which glistened shining points." He was told they were lightening rods.

"The haze over the town was now visible and soon swept past tall chimneys puffing out smoke, great warehouses covered on the outside with weather-brown tin, and, straight ahead-heavens what a bridge!-arching clear over the river and covered like a house, from which people were looking down on them as they swept under. There were houses, in two rows on the streets, jammed up against each other and without any yards. And people! Where were so many people come from? Close to the river and beyond the bridge was another great mansion (The Terraces), with tall pillars; about it was a great yard, as smooth as a floor, and negroes and children were standing on the out skirting stone wall and looking down on them as they floated by. And another great house still (Liberty Hall) and a big garden with little paths running through it."

"Below this bridge was another bridge, but not so high, and while Chad looked, another black monster on wheels went crashing over it."

"Tom and the school-master were working the raft slowly toward the shore now, and a little further down, Chad could see more rafts, tied up rafts, rafts, nothing but rafts in the river, everywhere! Up the bank a mighty buzzing was going on, amid a cloud of dust, and little cars with logs on them were shooting about amid the (screaming) of many saws, and, now and then, a log would leap up from the river and start up toward that dust-cloud with two iron-teeth sunk in one end and a long iron chain stretching up along a groove built of boards-and Heaven only knew what was pulling it up."

"Then the raft slipped along another raft, Tom sprang aboard it with a grapevine cable, and the school-master leaped aboard with another cable from the stern."

"The raft slowed up, creaking-straining--- and stopped. The trip was over."

The second of Fox's rafts, that of Big Tom, approached the end of their trip and Fox wrote, "At dusk that day we ran slowly into the little Kentucky capital; past distilleries and brick factories with tall smoking stacks and under the big bridge and wonder of wonder, past a little sternwheeler wheezing upstream." After securing the raft at the boom, "We climbed the bank into town." The morning after the landing of the raft Fox "saw Big Tom passing the train station on foot." Big Tom's companions, "had taken his things and gone by train," to their homes. Fox shook hands with Big Tom and then watched as the Mountain man set out on a 200 mile walk to his "girl in crimson homespun who was waiting for him back in the hills."

The old rafter Wash Noble had several raft stories to tell. "Capt. Roper steered a raft

















