

A rare photo of the two original Buckeye Lake sternwheelers on the lake at the same time.



History of the Famous Queen of the Lake Tour Boats

The original sternwheeler on Buckeye Lake was built in 1950, when Fred Taylor and his son of Millersport, decided the lake needed a large passenger boat. Fred built the boat in a channel off of the lake. The builder christened the



The Original 1950 Sternwheeler The "M. M. Taylor"

boat the "M. M. Taylor," but when purchased by Gratziano and Carlin, the boat name was changed to the "Queen of the Lake" and became very popular under that name. With a capacity of 150 passengers, the boat was 60 feet long and 20 feet wide. "Mae West" life preservers were onboard and the Queen was powered by a 43 horsepower gasoline engine. The paddlewheel at the stern was turned by a chain drive. There were regular cruises scheduled each day and it could be chartered for special events.

Hebron High School Graduation Class of 1954 chartered the Queen for their last "fling" following their prom. They enjoyed the double decker boat with the wheelhouse on the top deck. There was a small dance floor and the original piano from the Queen is in the Buckeye Lake Historical Society Museum. There was also a snack bar where you could buy treats.

Unfortunately, the Queen sank twice. The first time was in 1957. A large hole was created in the stern when the paddlewheel picked up a log and rammed it through the wooden hull. The boat was about 1,000 yards from shore near Harbor Hills. All on board were safe as the boat settled down in about 6 feet of water.

A second sinking came in May of 1961 when the "Queen" became a challenge for some students of Denison University. They chartered the boat with a small band and started out near the Buckeye Lake Park for the ride. Not too far from shore, the unruly crowd began to rock the boat, running from one side to the other, until they were taking on water. With continued effort, they managed to sink the Queen in about 5 feet of water.

Local historian, Donna Braig saw it all happen. She remembers it this way. "I saw this affair happen and watched as newspaper reporters came to the scene with photographers. They began to take pictures and each one got a bit more dramatic until the students were jumping back in the water, thrashing about as cameras clicked. The next day's headlines read, 'Students saved From Drowning or Students Swim for their Lives.'" She said, "That was another lesson of don't believe everything you read the paper."



"The Queen of the Lake II"

has become what she set out to be. The tours are a wonderful way for many people to enjoy an afternoon, reminiscing about the glory days of Buckeye Lake Park. They enjoy the many vintage cottages, as well as the recently built stately homes, while watching the sun set on the waters of Ohio's Oldest State Park.

Call for tour information Memorial Day – Labor Day

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In 1957, Ed Taylor launched the J. B. Taylor, as a new sternwheeler that weighed 106 tons and cost \$50,000. This ship was powered by a 225 hp diesel engine and attained speeds of 21 m.p.h. The paddle wheel was 13 feet across. The original boat was named for Mr. Taylor's daughters, Jodelle and Becky. There were several other names as the ownership changed hands. The boat had a snack bar and a ballroom in the 106-foot interior of the boat and was



The 1957 Sternwheeler The "J. B. Taylor"

a double decker with a Captain steering the boat from the third deck. A ride cost 75 cents. The last trip for this boat was made in August of 1972 when its guest list included the Licking County Historical Society and The Buckeye Lake Chamber of Commerce. She was sold to Big Cypress Enterprises and moved to Jefferson, Texas, but was destroyed by fire in 1990.

In 2006, the Greater Buckeye Lake Historical Society decided to try to bring back a tour boat to Buckeye Lake. Building another sternwheeler was not economically possible so the search began for a large pontoon boat. One was found at Salt Fork State Park in eastern Ohio. The boat is 45 feet long and 15 feet wide and can hold up to 40 passengers. The boat was purchased by a member and donated to the society.

Becoming a community investment, many groups came together to help get her in the water. Bill Ours, of Ours Garage and Wrecker Service, volunteered his time and staff to transport the boat to the Buckeye Lake Marina. There, Dave Levacy, marina owner, set the boat up in dry dock and the needed renovations began. Volunteers of all ages came forward to paint, clean and get her ready to launch. Local native, Eddie Fisher, of Fishers Marina donated the Evinrude engine and the boat was ready to go.

This beautiful newly renovated tour boat was christened the Queen of the Lake II, keeping an historic tradition alive. The first shoreline public tour was a reality on September 4, 2006. Since then, she has taken out over 20,000 visitors around scenic Buckeye Lake, cruising the shoreline, with a captain and crew pointing out the homes, islands and special landmarks, which make Buckeye Lake so unique.