

Virginia Bennett, Collection, 1860-2013 (KCPL 33)

Kenton County Public Library  
Local History & Genealogy Department  
Covington, KY

Processed by Ann Wuertemberger  
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KCPL 33 Virginia Bennett (1924-2013) Collection, 1860-2013

### **Introduction:**

The Virginia Bennett Collection is comprised of photographs, scrapbooks, subject files, articles, books, video cassettes, assorted memorabilia, and miscellaneous material related to the inland river industry along the Ohio River in the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area. The materials were collected by Virginia "Harbor Mother" Bennett during her lifetime of work with riverboats, towboats, and other inland vessels.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

Virginia Bennett (1924-2013) was born May 16, 1924, in Campbell County, Kentucky, to Elmer H. and Alene Bennett. Her father, Elmer, was paymaster for the Green Line Steamboat Company. Virginia worked her entire life in the inland river industry, starting at the age of 20. She worked as an office and pay clerk for the Green Line Steamboat Company and as an assistant purser aboard the Delta Queen. In later years she worked as an office clerk, dispatcher, and paymaster for Columbia Marine Services, where she earned the name "Harbor Mother." It was said that she greeted every marine or excursion boat that passed by and welcomed them to Cincinnati.

Bennett worked for BB Riverboats from 1983 until her retirement in 1991. She was also involved in the planning of the first Tall Stacks Festival in 1988 and served as the Grand Marshal of the 2003 Tall Stacks parade of boats. The U.S. Coast Guard honored Ms. Bennett by erecting the Virginia Bennett Light on the south bank of the Ohio River immediately below her Covington apartment. Virginia died December 4, 2013 her funeral was held on the BB Riverboat's Belle of Cincinnati where her ashes were set afloat near the navigation light that bears her name (mile 471.5).

### **Scope and Content Note:**

The Virginia Bennett Collection includes photographs, scrapbooks, subject files, correspondence, business records, articles, video cassettes, assorted memorabilia, and miscellaneous material pertaining to the inland river industry on the Ohio River in the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area. The collection is divided into 10 different series detailing various aspects of the inland river industry and the life and career of Virginia Bennett. The series are Towboats, Steamers, Dredges, and Barges; The Greene Line; Motor Vessels, Steamers, and Other Boats; The Ohio Valley Improvement Association (O.V.I.A.); River People; Rivers, Floods, Dams, Cities, and Companies; Museums, Tall Stacks, and Miscellaneous; Virginia Bennett; Audio Visual; and Oversized.

## Folder List:

**Box 1****Series I: Towboats, Steamers, Dredges, and Barges**

- f. 1 Scrapbook: Towboats, 1920 through 1980
- f. 2 Scrapbook: Towboats, 1980s-2005
- f. 3 Photograph Album: Towboats, 1900s-1996
- f. 4 Photograph Album: Towboats, 1920-1980
- f. 5 Today and Yesterday Towboat Album, 1976, published by the Union Mechling Corporation
- f. 6 Towboats: Newspaper and Magazine Articles, 1936-1969
- f. 7 Towboats: Newspaper and Magazine Articles, 1970-1986
- f. 8 Towboats: Newspaper and Magazine Articles, 1987-1992
- f. 9 Towboats: Newspaper and Magazine Articles, 1993-2006
- f. 10 Towboats: Newspaper and Magazine Articles, no date
- f. 11 Towboats: Newspaper Columns, Sarah MacDuff Austin, Joseph Garretson, Chuck B. Firestone
- f. 12 Towboats: Images
- f. 13 Towboats: Big Wows
- f. 14 Capt. Reese Lloyd photos: many Illinois River & M/V W.W. Marting Henry S. Sturgis North Star. Scrapbook containing predominantly photographs of and articles about the boats that Henry S. Sturgis operated in Illinois
- f. 15 Bob McCann Boat Photograph Album, no date
- f. 16 Scrapbooks: Packets, Art Miscellaneous, Index Inside, 1860 –1940.
- f. 17 Photograph Album: Dredges including St. Genevieve, 1956-1990s.
- f. 18 Dredges, Barges, and Information about Henry M. Shreve

**Box 2**

- f. 19 Scrapbook: old photos, Suspension Bridge, river businesses, old packets, n.d. Includes photos of the suspension bridge, various river boats, and articles primarily from *Waterways Journal*. Also contains a menu from the Steamer Ed Richardson dated 1879
- f. 20 Scrapbook: Showboat Majestic, Mayo Boats, More Recent People, and Miscellaneous, 1950 and 2000
- f. 21 Showboat Majestic Subject File
- f. 22 Scrapbook: Corps of Engineers & Coast Guard Light House Service Vessels, 1900-2005
- f. 23 Steamboat Postcard Album, n.d.
- f. 24 Streamer Belle of Louisville Scrapbook, c. 1930-1990
- f. 25 *Belle of Louisville* by Alan L. Bates, Howell-North Books, 1965
- f. 26 Belle of Louisville Clippings and Brochures, 1968-1999
- f. 27 Scrapbook: Photographs of Belle of Cincinnati and Natchez, 1990-2005
- f. 28 Scrapbook: Streamer Island Queen 1 & 2; Coney Island Fire 1 & 2; Old Coney Boats.
- f. 29 Scrapbook: Streamer J.M. White & Very Old Photos, 1860s-1900
- f. 30 Photographs Albums (2): steamers and barges and river people, 1980s-2000s.
- f. 31 Photograph Album: steamers and barges, 1980s and 1990s

**Box 3:****Series II: Greene Line Boats**

- f. 32 Scrapbook: Steamers Delta Queen, Mississippi Queen, and American Queen
- f. 33 Mississippi Queen: *The Steamboat in Times*, Sept. 12-14, 2005
- f. 34 Photograph Album: Delta Queen, c. 1950s-1997
- f. 35 Delta Queen Photographs, 1926-2000
- f. 36 Gordon C. Greene Meets Delta Queen Manuscript by Robert McCann, 1947
- f. 37 Letter to the Delta Queen by Passenger Mrs. Orving Garrett, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1953
- f. 38 Confirmation of Berth Assignment on Delta Queen, May 1953
- f. 39 Delta Queen Passenger list, Mardi Gras Cruise, February 12, 1955
- f. 40 Photographs of Delta Queen Bridge, Greenville, Miss., c. 1950-1960
- f. 41 Delta Queen Article, *Murray Tube Bulletin*, v. 12 no. 4, 1959
- f. 42 *The S.S. Delta Queen's Historic Steam Calliope* Booklet, 1960
- f. 43 The Delta Queen by Virginia Bennett, 1991
- f. 44 *The Engine of the Delta Queen*, 1994
- f. 45 Delta Queen Newspaper Articles 1947-1958
- f. 46 Delta Queen Newspaper Articles 1958-1982
- f. 47 Delta Queen Brochures, Mailings, Photographs, and Miscellaneous, 1997
- f. 48 *The History of Delta Queen Steamboat Company* by Frank Prudent, n.d.
- f. 49 Delta Queen Bell Information, n.d.
- f. 50 *Steamboat Delta Queen: Last of the Overnight Paddlewheelers* by E.J. Wojtas, n.d.
- f. 51 Delta Queen Steamboat 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Material, 1990
- f. 52 Delta Queen Steamboat Co. 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Stationary
- f. 53 *The Legendary Delta Queen Magazine*, 1997
- f. 54 *Steamboat in Times*, May 9, 2003 and May 6-16, 2004; Delta Queen Survey, n.d.
- f. 55 "Steamboat Bells & Whistles" [speech?], Cosmopolitan Club, February 6, 1967
- f. 56 "How Greene is Our Valley," *Dimension Cincinnati*, March 1965
- f. 57 Photograph Album: Greene Line Steamers 1920s-1940s  
Includes Photographs of the Chris Greene, the Tom Greene, the Betsy Ann, the Cary Bird and the Greenland.
- f. 58 Greene Line Steamers Stationary and Business Cards of Letha C. and Gordon C. Greene
- f. 59 Greene Line: I.C.C. Report 1960 Str. Delta Queen & Cinti Wharfboat; Payroll Records of the Delta Queen as compiled by Virginia Bennett, 1960
- f. 60 Clipping File, Steamers Chris, Tom, & Gordon C. Greene Clipping File
- f. 61 Invoices for Work on Cincinnati Greene Line Boats, 1938
- f. 62 Steamer Chris Greene Invoices, 1941
- f. 63 Photograph Album: Steamer Tom Greene [1920-1960?]
- f. 64 Scrapbook: Steamer Chris Greene, c. 1915-2000
- f. 65 Clipping File, Steamers Chris & Tom Greene, 1950-2000
- f. 66 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Large Photographs, 1931-1952
- f. 67 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Smaller Photographs, c. 1936
- f. 68 Steamer Gordon C. Greene Photographs, Views from the Boat, 1944
- f. 69 Steamer Gordon C. Greene Photographs, Party on Boat, 1944
- f. 70 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Photographs, Entertainment, 1944
- f. 71 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Photographs, Rumpus Room on Main Deck, 1944

- f. 72 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Crew Photographs, c. 1940s. Includes photographs of Bob McCann who worked as a purser on the Gordon C. Greene.
- f. 73 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Photographs, Various Cabin, c. 1940s.
- f. 74 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Various Photographs, c. 1940s-1950s
- f. 75 Steamer Gordon C. Greene Sinking in St. Louis, Missouri, 1967, and Wreckage, January 2003
- f. 76 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Newspaper and Magazine Articles, 1930s-1940s
- f. 77 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Newspaper and Magazine Articles, 1950-1997
- f. 78 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Miscellaneous, Photographs, Menus, Articles, and 1951 Report on Number of Passenger, Miles Covered, Gallons of Fuel Oil Purchased, etc.
- f. 79 Steamer Gordon C. Greene, Christmas Cards, 1935-1938

**Box 4:****Series III: Motor Vessels, Steamers, and Other Boats**

- f. 80 M.V. (Motor Vessel) Mississippi Trip, June 25-28, 1999. Material from and about a trip that Virginia Bennett took and wrote about in *Waterways journal* in 1999
- f. 81 Photographs of June 25-28, 1999, Trip Onboard the M.V. Mississippi
- f. 82 M.V. Mississippi Miscellaneous Papers, 1960-2006
- f. 83 Steamer Wakerobin (later first U.S.S. Nightmare), 1987-2005
- f. 84 William S. Mitchell, Spirit of America, Benji-B, n.d.
- f. 85 Steamer Charles F. Robinson, 1984-1994
- f. 86 Photograph Album: Steamer Harry Lee, n.d. Photos taken by Bob McCann during a trip on the Steamer Harry Lee down the Mississippi to New Orleans
- f. 87 Cincinnati Union Bethel, 1940-1987
- f. 88 M.V. Dickhoner, Flier from the Christening, 1979
- f. 89 M.V. C.J. Queenan (Campbell Transportation Co.), October 25, 2004
- f. 90 M.V. Capt. John Reynolds (AEP/Memco), *Waterways* Article, December 15, 2003, and Correspondence from John Reynolds to Virginia Bennett, December 8, 2003
- f. 91 Towboat Mary Ellen Jones (Madison Coal and Supply Co.), April 18, 2005
- f. 92 M.V. E. Bronson Ingram (Ingram Barge Co.), 2004
- f. 93 M.V. Erna E. Honeycutt (Ingram Barge Co.), 2005
- f. 94 Towboat Marty Baskerville (Ingram Barge Co.), 2005
- f. 95 L.S.T. (Landing Ship Tank) Vessels: J.S. Lewis World War II Exhibit
- f. 96 Frisbie Engine Machine Company, Articles and Essay Written by Tom Schiffer in 2006
- f. 97 *Louisville and Cincinnati River Packet Trade: Heart of a Region* by Frank X. Prudent, n.d.
- f. 98 Accidents: Towboat Bob Labdon, Cannelton Lock, Spring 1995, John O'Bryant, photographer
- f. 99 Accidents: Towboat Linda L. Tolen at Markland Lock and Dam January 21, 1996, Jack Hyder, photographer
- f. 100 Accidents: Towboat Sandy Drake (Crounse Corporation) March 12, 1998, Ohio River, Right Bank, Opposite Bellevue, Kentucky
- f. 101 Accidents: Miscellaneous Articles, 1936-2003
- f. 102 *The Waterways Journal*: Vessels Renamed during the Last 12 months, etc. 1988-2003
- f. 103 Americana River Boat Poster by Hammermill Paper Company, n.d.

**Series IV: The Ohio Valley Improvement Association (O.V.I.A.)**

The O.V.I.A. was organized in 1895 to work towards the “canalization and improvement of the Ohio River and provide a navigable channel for uninterrupted commerce.” It ultimately worked with the federal government and the Army Corps of Engineers to erect forty nine locks and movable dams on the Ohio between Pittsburgh and Cairo, Illinois.

- f. 104 Ohio Valley Improvement Association Scrapbook, 1914-2008  
Scrapbook containing photos, clippings, and some original documents regarding the Ohio Valley Improvement Association dating from 1914-2008
- f. 105 Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Ohio Valley Improvement Association, 1908
- f. 106 Albert Bettinger Letter and Newspaper Clipping Concerning the O.V.I.A., 1918
- f. 107 *A Statement of Facts Relating to the Ohio River Improvement* Pamphlet, 1922
- f. 108 Ohio Valley Improvement Association Bulletin, June 15, 1925
- f. 109 *Boat Service Between Cincinnati, Ohio and Points Along Ohio and Kanawha Rivers*, 1929
- f. 110 Forty-first Annual Convention of the Ohio Valley Improvement Association Program, October 15-16, 1935, Wheeling, West Virginia
- f. 111 Ohio Valley Improvement Association, Newspaper Clippings 1940-1952
- f. 112 Ohio Valley Improvement Association Convention Photographs, Hall of Mirrors, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1956
- f. 113 Greater Science in River Transportation Speech, by C.R. Horton, Jr., Annual Meeting of the Ohio Valley Improvement Association, Pittsburgh, PA, October 15, 1958
- f. 114 Photographs of Ohio Valley Improvement Association Convention, Hall of Mirrors, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1971
- f. 115 Slack Barrett Family Cemetery Lot Information, Evergreen Cemetery. Information gathered by Virginia Bennett on the cemetery lot of Slack Barrett, one of the founders of the Ohio Valley Improvement Association
- f. 116 “O.V.I.A. makes new year’s resolution,” *Falls City Engineer*, Chuck Parrish, 1983

**Series V: River People**

- f. 117 Scrapbook: River People from Very Old Album, 1900-1960. Photographs of people who worked on the river from roughly 1900 to 1960, particularly with the Green Line Steamboat Company
- f. 118 Scrapbook: The Old Str. Greenwood, Chris Greene 1 & 2. 1920-1945. Photographs of Captain Chris Greene, his wife LaLie, Harold Hood and others
- f. 119 Photograph Album: Boats of G.L.S. [Greene Line Steamers] and Greene Family, c. 1900-1990
- f. 120 Scrapbook: Miscellaneous Delta Queen People, Photos from Older Albums; New Year’s 1950s; One of the Sections of Helen Prater, Capt. Harry Loudon, “Doc Hawley” & others, 1950s-2002
- f. 121 Photograph Album: Str. Golden Eagle and Roustabouts, c. 1937. Photographs taken onboard the Golden Eagle on a trip down the Mississippi
- f. 122 Greene Family Memorabilia, 1906 and n.d. Christmas card sent to LaLie Greene in 1906 and business cards that were carried by Captain Chris Greene before he died
- f. 123 *Capt. Mary B. Greene* Biographical Sketch, Author Unknown, n.d.

- f. 124 Green Line Steamers Letterhead with Arthur J. Schlechter Home and Away Addresses, c. 1930
- f. 125 Guestbook From the funeral of Vernon L. Stickel, Captain of the Steamboat Chris Greene, c. June 1930
- f. 126 Allen Wood Letter to Robert McCann, July 22, 1955
- f. 127 W.J. Devine Scrapbook: Photographs, Newspaper Clippings, Christmas Cards, Letters and Poems Written and Sent by W.J. Devine
- f. 128 Dick Lemen Photograph Album, 1930s. Photographs taken by Lemen when he was a Steersman on the Chris Greene
- f. 129 Harlan Hubbard Subject File, 1980s-2000s. Newspaper Articles, newsletters, and correspondence between Ms. Bennett and Harlan Hubbard
- f. 130 *When I Was a Boy* by Jim Hausman, 1976, Centennial Press
- f. 131 Dr. Carl R. Bogardus Subject File: *Glimpses into the Past* Clippings, articles, finding aid, and miscellaneous, 1970s-1990
- f. 132 *Shantyboat* by Carl. R. Bogardus, 1959
- f. 133 *The First Steamboat Voyage on the Western Waters* by Carl R. Bogardus, 1961
- f. 134 *Sounds in the Night* by Carl Bogardus, 1967
- f. 135 *Jim Bludso of the Prairie Bell* by John Hay, 1963
- f. 136 *River Stories* by James Tandy Ellis, 1988
- f. 137 Photograph Album: Mostly Newer River People, c. 1960s, 1990s-2000s.

**Series VI: Rivers, Floods, Dams, Cities, and Companies**

- f. 138 "Barchfeld's Great Speech: Pittsburgh Congressman Talks on the Ohio River," *Madison Courier*, 1916
- f. 139 "Romance May be Gone But River Traffic is Booming," *Cincinnati Times-Star*, May 12, 1928
- f. 140 "Ohio River Flows Into Atomic Age," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 18, 1954
- f. 141 Photograph Album: Docks Along the River & Scenes, c. 1920s-1960s
- f. 142 Scrapbook: Ice, 1905, 1917-1918, 1935, 1940 ; Fire, 1922, photographs of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers on occasions where each river froze; photographs and article depicting the November 4, 1922 fire that destroyed several steamers, including the Island Queen and the Chris Greene
- f. 143 1936 Flood Photographs
- f. 144 Virginia Bennett Diary, 1937. Includes Narrative of the Flood of 1937
- f. 145 Photographs of the 1937 Ohio River Flood taken by Virginia Bennett and others depicting Newport and Northern Kentucky
- f. 146 E.H. Bennett Flood Zone Permit, 1937
- f. 147 *Photo Story Greatest Flood of the Century Ohio Valley – Pittsburgh to Cairo – January, 1937* published by Harry H. Hamm to commemorate the 1937 Ohio River Flood
- f. 148 *Cincinnati Post*, February 13, 1937
- f. 149 *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 31, 1937 Gravure section
- f. 150 U.S. Weather Bureau Daily Weather Map and Daily River Bulletin, January 26, 1937
- f. 151 1937 Flood Notes by Virginia Bennett
- f. 152 *Remember 1937?* Article, 1940
- f. 153 1937 Flood Miscellaneous
- f. 154 "The 1937 Flood: Our Katrina," *Kentucky Post*, January 13, 2007

- f. 155 Historic Floods in the Ohio River at Cincinnati by W.B. Schlomer
- f. 156 Photographs, Flood 1996: during the Ohio River Flood of 1996 primarily in Newport and Covington, Kentucky
- f. 157 Photographs of the 1997 Ohio River Flood taken primarily by Gregory Thorpe
- f. 158 U.S. Corps of Engineers Subject File: articles and brochures, c. 1940s to the 2000s
- f. 159 Photograph Album: Corps of Engineers Book 2 Locks and Dams, c. 1961
- f. 160 Photograph Album: Markland Lock & Dam Construction, 1960-1963, by Harry Loudon. Markland Dam is located on the Ohio River between Gallatin County, Kentucky and Switzerland County, Indiana
- f. 161 Newport, Kentucky, "My Home Town," Clipping File, 1980s-2005.
- f. 162 Covington, Kentucky, Subject File, c. 1980s
- f. 163 Covington & Licking River Data from Chuck Eilerman, n.d.
- f. 164 Cincinnati, Ohio, Subject File, 1971
- f. 165 Ludlow, Kentucky, Historic Home Subject File, 1988-1995
- f. 166 Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Postcard Album, 1980s-1990s
- f. 167 Photograph Album: "Let's Take a Harbor Trip," c. 1980s-1990s

**Box 6:**

- f. 168 American Commercial Barge Line Subject File, c. 1990s
- f. 169 American Electrical Power, 1970s-1980s
- f. 170 American Waterways Operators *Weekly Letter*, October 19, 1946
- f. 171 Chevron Phillips Chemical Co., Marietta Plant Dock Port Facility, correspondence on the construction of the Marietta Plant Dock Port Facility of the Chevron Phillips Company, 1997
- f. 172 Crouse Corporation Brochure
- f. 173 *Dravo: Afloat, Ashore, Underground*, Summer Edition, 1940
- f. 174 *Dravo News*, March 1977
- f. 175 Dravo: Blueprints for M/V James H. Carey & William F. Plettner, 1981
- f. 176 Dravo: *Waterways Journal* articles, 1981-1982
- f. 177 Union Barge Line, "Welcome Aboard Union Barge Line," employee booklet, n.d.
- f. 178 *Union Barge Line List of River Terminals and Distances with a Schedule of Equipment and Services*, 1940
- f. 179 *History of Union Barge Line Corporation, 1928-1964*, no author
- f. 180 Ashland Oil: articles, 1949-1988
- f. 181 Marathon Ashland: articles, 1986-2005
- f. 182 Marathon Ashland: Captains' meeting photographs, 2003-2004
- f. 183 Marathon Ashland: Captain David Smith correspondence, 2000-2004
- f. 184 Marathon Ashland: Boats, n.d.
- f. 185 Marathon Ashland Newsletter, December 2002-June 2003
- f. 186 Marathon Ashland Calendar, 2002 (partial) and 2003
- f. 187 Ingram Marine Group *News Beam*, v. 12, nos. 1 & 3, 2003; v. 13, nos. 1 & 3, 2004
- f. 188 Jeffboat: plan sheet and advertising
- f. 189 Midland *Channels*, 1997-2002
- f. 190 Midland *River Lines*, 1999-2000
- f. 191 Verdin Bell and Clock Museum, 1992
- f. 192 Verdin Bell Company, Newspaper Clippings, 1993-2003



- f. 193 Verdin Company Annual Report, 2002
- f. 194 Buckeye Bell Foundry, Photograph and Handwritten Account, c. 1970
- f. 195 Boat Bells: Erastes Wells, R.R. Springer, Tom Dodsworth, the Grey Eagle, Francis J. Torrance, Weber W. Sebold, 1983-1985
- f. 196 Bells: Miscellaneous Articles, 1984-2003
- f. 197 Marietta Manufacturing, 2001
- f. 198 Companies, Neare Gibbs and Channel Fueling Service. Miscellaneous

**Series VII: Museums, Tall Stacks, and Miscellaneous**

- f. 199 Golden Eagle River Museum, St. Louis, Missouri, 2004
- f. 200 Point Pleasant, West Virginia River Museum, 2003-2004
- f. 201 River Heritage Museum, Paducah, Kentucky, August 2003
- f. 202 Center for Maritime Education, Paducah, Kentucky
- f. 203 Tall Stacks 1988 Planning Documents, 1984
- f. 204 Tall Stacks 1988, Newspaper and Magazine Articles
- f. 205 Tall Stacks 1988, Photograph Album 1
- f. 206 Tall Stacks 1988, Photograph Album 2
- f. 207 Tall Stacks 1988, Photograph File 1
- f. 208 Tall Stacks 1992, Miscellaneous File
- f. 209 Tall Stacks 1992, Calendars
- f. 210 Tall Stacks 1992, Photograph Albums 1 and 2
- f. 211 Tall Stacks 1992, Photograph Album 3
- f. 212 Tall Stacks 1995, Photograph Album
- f. 213 Tall Stacks 1995, Calendar
- f. 214 Tall Stacks 1999, Correspondence, Volunteer Manual, *Castle Comments* Article, 1999
- f. 215 Tall Stacks 1999, Photograph File
- f. 216 Tall Stacks 1999, Photograph Album
- f. 217 Tall Stacks 2003, Photographs and Negatives
- f. 218 Tall Stacks 2003, Planning Documents
- f. 219 Tall Stacks 2006, Memorabilia
- f. 220 Tall Stacks 2006, Newspaper and Magazine Articles
- f. 221 Tall Stacks 2006, L.S.T. 325 (Landing Ship Tank)

**Box 7:**

**Series VIII: Virginia Bennett and Family**

- f. 222 Master Licenses and other documents, 1840s-1950s.
- f. 223 Correspondence, Edward J. Smith to Wife, January-April 1863, April and December 1874, and April 7, 1884
- f. 224 Edward J. Smith, Master of Steam Vessels Certificate, 1875
- f. 225 Edward J. Smith, Master of Steam Vessels Certificate, 1876
- f. 226 Edward J. Smith, Captain Log Book, Steamer Anna, January-April 1872
- f. 227 Edward J. Smith, a Record in Memoriam, Funeral Guestbook, March 22, 1906, Newport, Kentucky
- f. 228 Virginia Bennett, Park News, May 1933, published by the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Park Avenue School in Newport, Kentucky
- f. 229 Virginia Bennett, Cub Pilot License Application, August 31, 1937

- f. 230 Virginia Bennett: Autograph Book from the crews of the Steamers Chris, Tom, and Gordon C. Greene, c. 1936 and 1937
- f. 231 Virginia Bennett, *Waterways Journal*, correspondence, submissions, and articles, 1937, 1985-1997
- f. 232 Virginia Bennett, *Waterways Journal*, article and correspondence, August 3, 1957
- f. 233 Virginia Bennett, "Civil War Letters Tell of Man's Love for Family," *Kentucky Post*, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1982
- f. 234 Virginia Bennett, typewritten copies of Edward J. Smith correspondence and logbook of Steamer Anna
- f. 235 Virginia Bennett, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1980s-1990s
- f. 236 Virginia Bennett, "D.P.C.'s of World War II," n.d.
- f. 237 Virginia Bennett, Mississippi Queen whistle pull and photographs of Captain Lawrence Keeton, donated 1990
- f. 238 Virginia Bennett, Correspondence, Behringer-Crawford Museum River Heritage Room Edward J. Smith Exhibit Installation, 1995
- f. 239 Virginia Bennett: Photographs from the Behringer-Crawford Museum River Heritage Room, Edward J. Smith Exhibit Opening, April 4, 1998
- f. 240 Virginia Bennett, Commentary, Edward J. Smith Exhibit Opening, Behringer-Crawford Museum, April 4, 1998
- f. 241 Virginia Bennett, My Greene Line Display at the Howard Steamboat Museum, Jeffersonville, Indiana, May 2002
- f. 242 Virginia Bennett, Correspondence, 1994-1996, and Oral History Transcript, interviewed conducted by Charles E. Parrish, November 29, 1995
- f. 243 Virginia Bennett, Oral History Transcript, interview conducted by John Boh, December 1, 2000 and January 29, 2001
- f. 244 Virginia Bennett, Oral History Project Transcript, Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2004, Chapter 1, pages 1-37
- f. 245 Virginia Bennett, Oral History Project Transcript, Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2004, Chapters 2-3, pages 38-77
- f. 246 Virginia Bennett, Oral History Project Transcript, Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2004, Chapters 4-5, pages 78-114
- f. 247 Virginia Bennett, Oral History Project Transcript, Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2004, Chapters, 6-8, pages 115-167
- f. 248 Virginia Bennett, Oral History Project Transcript, Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2004, Chapters 9-10, pages 168-216
- f. 249 Virginia Bennett, Oral History Project Transcript, Kentucky Oral History Commission, 2004, Miscellaneous
- f. 250 Virginia Bennett, Greetings from Virginia Bennett, Post from Steamboats.org, (<http://www.steamboats.org/talkshop/messages/12.html>), November 4, 2001
- f. 251 Virginia Bennett, "My Adventure to Gilligan's Island, 'No but to Wheeling Island'" May 2003 on Steamer Delta Queen
- f. 252 Virginia Bennett, Kentucky Historical Society Exhibit *A River Runs Through Us* Material, November 6, 2004-December 31, 2005
- f. 253 Virginia Bennett, "'Harbor Mother' Spent Her Life Along and on Ohio River," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 22, 2008
- f. 254 Cincinnati Bicentennial Planning Committee, 1984

- f. 255 Cincinnati Bicentennial Newsletter, 1984-1988
- f. 256 Cincinnati Bicentennial (1788-1988) Material, 1988
- f. 257 United States Flag Information, 1923-1970
- f. 258 Poetry, Newspaper Articles, Notices, Nick Clooney's Story of Christmas
- f. 259 Miscellaneous Ohio River Material
- f. 260 1980 Steamboat Calendar
- f. 261 *99 Miles of River: Along the Ohio*, 1964
- f. 262 *99 Miles of River: Along the Ohio*, 1965

**Series IX: Audio Visual**

- VHS Tape *The Greene Line, 1938-1942, and the Delta Queen, 1991*
- VHS Tape *Tall Stacks '92 Official*
- VHS Tape Parade of Tall Stacks 1992
- VHS Tape Last Day of Tall Stacks 1992
- VHS Tape Tall Stacks 2003, tape 1
- VHS Tape Tall Stacks 2003, tape 2

**Box 8:**

**Series X: Oversized**

- f. 263 Photograph Album: Towboat PPM Diesel, c. 1990s
- f. 264 High Water in the Mississippi, Currier and Ives print
- f. 265 The Great Race on the Mississippi from New Orleans to St. Louis, Currier and Ives print
- f. 266 Loading Cotton on the Mississippi, Currier and Ives print
- f. 267 Greene Line Steamers, Accounting information and papers collected by Mike Frye
- f. 268 "Greene Line Willing to Cooperate," *The Waterways Journal*, September 12, 1936
- f. 269 Greene Line Steamers Personal Log Sheets and Other Mementos, c. 1940s
- f. 270 Death of Captain Chris Greene, May 17, 1944, material and Grandma Bennett's Tribute, October 20, 1944
- f. 271 *Aboard the Gordon C. Greene: a Modern "Mark Twain" Steamer*, n.d.
- f. 272 Greene Line Steamers Mementos for 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 1965
- f. 273 Gordon C. Greene oversize pictures, no date
- f. 274 Delta Queen: Rock Island Trip Breakdown, September 11-30, 1954. Includes original passenger list and copies of the *Paddle Wheel Rag* (the onboard Delta Queen newsletter).
- f. 275 Miscellaneous Boats, circa 1900-1960, and photograph of the crew of 1916 crew of the Steamer Homer Smith
- f. 276 Photographs of Steamer City of Louisville, Steamer City of Cincinnati, Steamer Indiana, 1900 and 1950
- f. 277 Boats built Howard Shipyard, Jeffersonville, Indiana, circa 1800s-1900s
- f. 278 Boats built at Howard Shipyard 2, Jeffersonville, Indiana, circa 1800s-1900s
- f. 279 Virginia Bennett, Scrapbook, 1940s-1990s
- f. 280 *The Fountain Speaks* scripts for WCKY, 1947
- f. 281 Dravo Corporation *Towboats*, 1958
- f. 282 "Civil war letters tell of man's love for family," Kentucky Post, March 24, 1982
- f. 283 "Virginia Bennett a part of Tall Stacks since the beginning," *The Prime Edition*, October 1995
- f. 284 Kentucky Colonel Commission, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1990

- f. 285 Thirty-First Annual Ohio Valley Improvement Association Convention, October 6-8, 1925
- f. 286 Tall Stacks, 1988
- f. 287 Tall Stacks, Newspaper Articles, 1988
- f. 288 Tall Stacks, 1992
- f. 289 Tall Stacks, Newspaper Articles, 1992
- f. 290 Tall Stacks, 1995
- f. 291 Tall Stacks, Calendar pages, September 1997
- f. 292 Tall Stacks, 1999
- f. 293 Tall Stacks, 2003