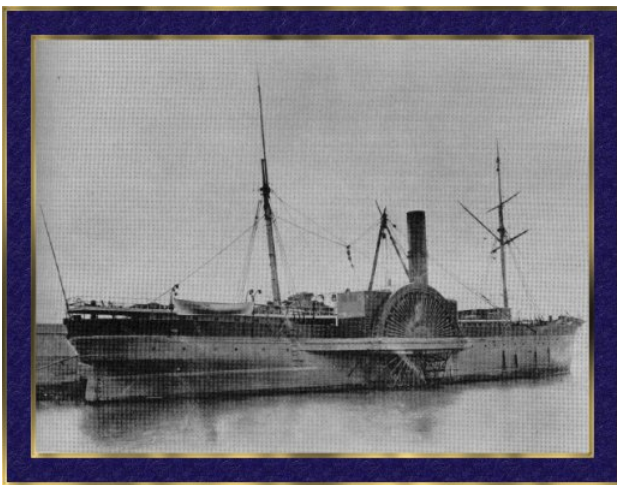


# 27th Iowa



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The Empire City

The EMPIRE CITY was a wooden side-wheel steamer, built by William H. Brown, New York, keel laid 13 August 1848, launched 10 March 1849. 1,751 21/95 tons; 238 ft 8 in x 39 ft 4 in x 24 ft 4 in (length x beam x depth of hold); 3 decks, 3 masts, round stern, dragon head; one side-lever engine built by T. F. Secor & Co; diameter of cylinder 6 ft 3 in, length of stroke 9 ft; barkentine rig; estimated cost between \$220,000 and \$300,000, of which \$62,000 was for the engine.

Modeled for speed and very strong. Said to be the first ocean vessel to have a deck house extending from stem to stern, her hurricane deck supported by stanchions from the bulwarks and forming a canopy for the promenade deck below. Her interior was the most ornate of any steamship on the Atlantic. From the stern forward, her upper deck housed a ladies' cabin or reception room, with rosewood furniture upholstered in purple and gold damask, and lined with staterooms, every stateroom door being decorated with a Hudson River scene; the galley; a "Social Hall" 35 ft long in which men might smoke; and the forecastle. On the main deck, the waiters' quarters were forward, then the dining saloon, off of which opened staterooms with two berths each, the doors to which were decorated with scenes from Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*, then the pantry, and then the after saloon, off of which opened staterooms with four berths each and large windows with glass an inch thick. Ornamental columns had gilded Corinthian capitals, and were set off by satin and zebra wood. The decks were covered with oilcloth patterned to look like carpet.

Laid down for Isaac Newton, for his service between New York and New Orleans, but sold on the stocks, in January 1849, to Charles Morgan and John and Joseph Howard (Empire City Line). 17 July 1849, maiden voyage, New York-Chagres. October 1850, came under the control of the Pacific Mail Steamship Co; early 1851, sold for \$225,000 to the United States Mail Steamship Co, which placed her in the New York-Havana-New Orleans service. Continued as part of the U.S. Mail fleet until it was disbanded in 1859, when she was acquired, at auction, for \$12,000 by Marshall O. Roberts, the last principal stockholder and managing agent of the line; Roberts carried on the service from New York to New Orleans and continued to advertise under the U.S. Mail name, even though the original company no longer existed. Chartered by the Quartermaster's Department, War Department, in 1861, for \$25,000 the job, and in 1861, 1862-1863, 1863, and 1864, at \$775 to \$1,000 per day. October 1861, transport on Admiral DuPont's expedition to Port Royal; 1862, went up the Mississippi and passed besieged Vicksburg, again as a transport; 1864, delivered men to General Butler during the invasion of the North Carolina Sounds. 27 January 1865, purchased by the War Department for \$225,000. In 1866, considered for use as a floating hospital at the New York Quarantine Station, but never put to use. Laid up at Red Hook until May 1869, and broken up sometime thereafter [Kemble, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-225; Ridgely-Nevitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-125].

As described in *Frederick Way, Jr., Way's Packet Directory, 1848-1994; Passenger Steamboats of the Mississippi River System Since the Advent of Photography in Mid-Continent America* (revised edition; Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994).