

# La Crosse Arts Board Proposal

## BACKGROUND

- A. La Crosse, Wis. Was the center of the steamboat industry in the peak years. It claims the record number of steamboat landings in the 1857 season. There were 1569 landings in La Crosse, while 1300 at Winona and only 711 at St. Paul.
- B. From 1854 to 1870, the Steamboat War Eagle was a popular boat, and well known from St. Louis to St. Paul. She was bought by the Davidson brothers and her home port became La Crosse in 1866. The War Eagle was as much of an icon as the Delta Queen is today. In 1870 the War Eagle Fire at La Crosse was one of the major events of city history. The wreck is still with us, and many artifacts remain.
- C. Collins Sign Co. Painted a mural of the War Eagle on a building near the river and along major highways, which mural was a popular landmark for the city, until the building was razed.
- D. There is little remaining evidence of the interesting and important Steamboat history of the City of La Crosse. For the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dramatic 1870 fire, a full history of the War Eagle was written and new illustrations of the boat were made.

## PROPOSAL

To commemorate the Steamboat History of La Crosse and the Steamboat War Eagle:

1. Erect a large scale portrait of the War Eagle in a prominent location in the city:
  - a. On City Hall
  - b. On the La Crosse Center
  - c. On a major approach to the City
2. Erect Portraits of the War Eagle and other Steamboats, with interpretive history:
  - a. In the La Crosse Center
  - b. In local Community Centers
3. Consider a Steamboat monument at Riverside Park, where visitors to the city can learn about the formidable Steamboat History of La Crosse, Wis.

## Images

- a. Jackie Smith has produced many color illustrations of the War Eagle and other steamboats.
- b. Murphy Library at UW La Crosse is the State Historical Societies repository for steamboat photos
- c. Images could be created in many ways for large scale posting

## Cost Considerations

If the concept is approved and a location or locations are identified, with size of image desired:

- Funding from the Arts Board would be appreciated
- Funding might be requested from the La Crosse Community Fund
- Funding might be requested from La Crosse Arts patrons
- A fund raising campaign could be started

Jackie Smith and Robert Taunt are willing to work with the Arts Board and others to see the project to completion. Jackie Smith. Robert Taunt.

Submitted August 5, 2022