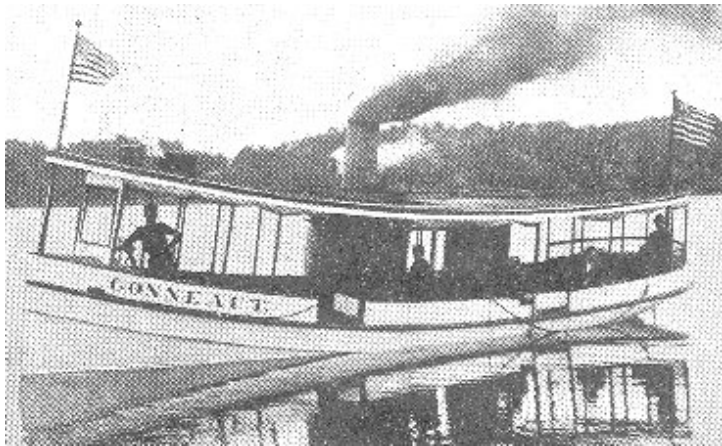


## The Conneaut: 1885 –1913



Walter Whelpley, who owned a boat factory in Town, brought the Conneaut from Erie, PA, in 1885. At about 50 feet (15.4m) in length, she wasn't the largest boat on the Lake, but she was one of the more colorful.

She went thru several configurations in her life. Images earlier than 1902, show her with simpler lines, a

shorter roof and looking, somehow, much smaller. She must have had some speed, for she was criticized in her early years for running much too fast and presenting a clear danger to other boats on the Lake. She was, no doubt, competing against the larger Iroquois and Pittsburgh. She did, eventually, run down a rowboat and, while not common, this type of accident became typical of the mishaps that occurred with increasing boat traffic on the Lake. Image from page 79 of the 1902 Conneaut Lake Directory reprint.

Whelpley moved on to Cambridge Springs, PA. By 1902, the Conneaut was captained by Wallace Keller (Kellar) who had taken over Whelpley's factory, operated a boat livery, and owned the "Florence," a large sailboat for hire. Keller didn't seem to have the best of luck with the Conneaut; Around 1:00am, Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1902, she mysteriously caught fire while sitting at her dock. The flames began near her bow and were quickly extinguished, but damages were severe enough to put her out of commission. The uninsured Keller placed his losses at \$1,000 (\$20,000 in the year 2000).

But her owner was no quitter. Later ads described the Conneaut as; "Newly rebuilt and enlarged. Fastest and finest boat on the lake."

Pictures provide the proof that Keller did her up right. She certainly looks proud of herself, all fitted out as a modern Lake steamer.

The Conneaut was 26 years old in 1911, when this postcard was mailed. By 1913, just shy of her 30<sup>th</sup> year, she was rotting at her dock north of Town. Post card courtesy of Don Hilton.

