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## Steamboating on the St. John's

Hampton Dunn

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# Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



## STEAMBOATING ON THE ST. JOHN'S

By HAMPTON DUNN

PALATKA --- She's kinda sad, wallowing there on the banks of the St. John's River at Hart's Point here, rotting away, quietly, secretly final burial on the banks of the beautiful river where she once so proudly sailed.

It's The Hiawatha, last and finest of the Hart Line steamboats that many years ago plied the St. John's and the Oklawaha Rivers, as well as the Silver River, transporting excited visitors from the North to get their first peak of Silver Springs.

(Photo shows The Hiawatha several years ago when it was in better condition than it is today. The remains are berthed on private property and boaters on the river can hardly see the famed vessel because of the thick foliage and growth that obscures her).

Steam navigation of the Oklawaha began shortly before the Civil War, but grew in popularity in the post-bellum days when the Northerners first "discovered" Florida as a tourist attraction. Stepping in to provide the steamboats was a former Vermonter, Capt. Hubbard L. Hart, who developed a whole fleet of ships for the duty.

The Hiawatha didn't come along until 1904, and was the largest and finest of the fleet. It had an enrolled length of 89 feet and accommodated 80 first-class and 10 deck passengers. Capacity was maximized by high beam-to-length ratios—29:100 on Hiawatha, 25:100 average on the seven major boats.

The Hiawatha was built in the same style as two other Hart liners, the Okeehumkee and Astatula. She boasted a small fantail deck abaft the upper cabin and carried two stacks placed abreast on the forward part of the upper cabin roofs. Ten staterooms on her saloon deck and 18 on her upper, made her a first class passenger boat. Her dining room was on the saloon deck forward, just beneath the pilot house, Communication between the two cabin decks was effected by a staircase in the after part of the saloon.

According to Ella Teague DeBerard, author of "Steamboating in the Hyacinths," The Hiawatha left Palatka at 12:45 P.M. and arrived at Silver Springs before noon the following day.

