

'SCONSIN TALES

installment 1988 by Jeannie Barroga

Now it wasn't so much that I minded taking the extra cargo in my little dinghy. I welcomed it. I could use the extra money. So what, my knees were drawn a little closer together, boxes stuffed in every available little space, my five-horsepower engine chugging along down the Milwaukee River, the water just a couple inches below the side of the boat. Sharp's loaded me pretty deep this time. I was motoring easily under the Kilbourn Avenue bridge to my destination upriver where I would deposit these precious boxes of leather scrapers for the Vogel Tanning Company only to return and deliver another boatload up the same river to the same tanning company.

And it wasn't so much that Sharp's Cutlery, doing business for years with Vogel was still honoring an age-old contract stating that "hand-operated leather scrapers to be transported upriver to the bend on the eastern edge of the first cliff," a contract made in the early 1800s before trains and trucks and semis and transportation options were baby thoughts in the minds of the first transportation entrepreneurs.

And it was even allowed that although barges that Sharp's Cutlery employed to transport said scrapers could not squeak as easily under the Kilbourn Avenue bridge as my dinghy could, they might still be used today, this fall season, if it were just four feet shorter in height..

But they weren't