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Red Wing
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Ron Haines of Lantana, Fla., arrived in Red Wing by canoe Wednesday. Haines began his Mississippi River journey in Itasca, Minn., and hopes to complete the voyage in New Orleans. — staff photo by Erika Hahn

Canoeist impressed with Red Wing area

BY ERIKA HAHN
Staff Writer

A dedicated paddler appreciated many aspects of this river town Wednesday as of part his journey south to New Orleans.

"I'm impressed with Red Wing — it takes full advantage of the riverfront," said Ron Haines of Lantana, Fla.

The canoeist began his voyage July 23 down the Mississippi River in a 30-year-old, 17-foot canoe at Itasca State Park where the mighty river begins. He initially hoped to complete his trip in three months, ending in New Orleans. Now his goal is to conclude the excursion by the later part of November.

After docking at Levee Park, Haines walked to the library and checked his e-mail, went grocery shopping

and made use of the nearby post office.

He said it was convenient being able to get so much done within walking distance.

"I'm impressed with the help I get," Haines said of the people he has met in Red Wing and in other Minnesota river towns. Near Bemidji, for instance, the water level was so low that Haines had to hitchhike to town. Two willing men loaded his gear in their truck and brought him to a hotel.

Getting a chance to observe people along the river was one reason he decided to take the voyage. Also, as a member of the Sierra Club, Haines hopes to gain more interest in environmental issues.

"It was always a temptation to get out in the current and

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just let it rip," Haines said of his younger years when he lived on the Mississippi River in Iowa. "Now I'm able to do that."

The paddler travels seven to eight hours per day before setting up camp on islands or primitive campgrounds where he cooks noodle dishes and canned foods daily. He said that if the wind's against him, he covers 15 miles per day, and if the wind's with him, he can achieve 20 to 25 miles.

Haines camped overnight near the bridge on the Wiscon-

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RON HAINES

Canoeist from Florida

sin side of the river and continued his voyage this morning — making his way to the next river town.

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