



Vermont's Steamboat Pioneer: Captain Jahaziel Sherman of Vergennes

With the launch of Phoenix I in 1815, Captain Jahaziel Sherman brought a new era of steam navigation to Lake Champlain. A man gifted with practical skills as a mariner, business acumen and connections, and relentless drive, for the next two decades he ensured that the full potential of the latest steamboat technology was achieved and that the traveling public was adequately served by fast, reliable, commodious vessels.

By KEVIN CRISMAN, CAROLYN KENNEDY, AND GEORGE SCHWARZ

Known as the “Green Mountain State” for its rugged upland landscapes, Vermont seems an unlikely place for developing a new maritime technology. Such was the case, however, with the adoption of the steamboat in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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KEVIN CRISMAN is a Professor of Nautical Archaeology in the Anthropology Department at Texas A&M University. He is co-author of *When Horses Walked on Water: Horse-Powered Ferries in Nineteenth-Century North America* (1998) and editor of the contributed-chapter book *Coffins of the Brave: Lake Shipwrecks of the War of 1812* (2014).

CAROLYN KENNEDY is currently completing her Ph.D. in nautical archaeology at Texas A&M. Between 2014 and 2016 she co-directed the archaeological study of Jahaziel Sherman's steamboat *Phoenix II* and three other steamer wrecks sunk at Shelburne Shipyard on Lake Champlain.

GEORGE SCHWARZ is an underwater archaeologist for the Naval History and Heritage Command based at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C. He directed the study of Jahaziel Sherman's first Lake Champlain steamboat, a project recently published in the book *The Steamboat Phoenix and the Archaeology of Early Steam Navigation in North America* (2018).

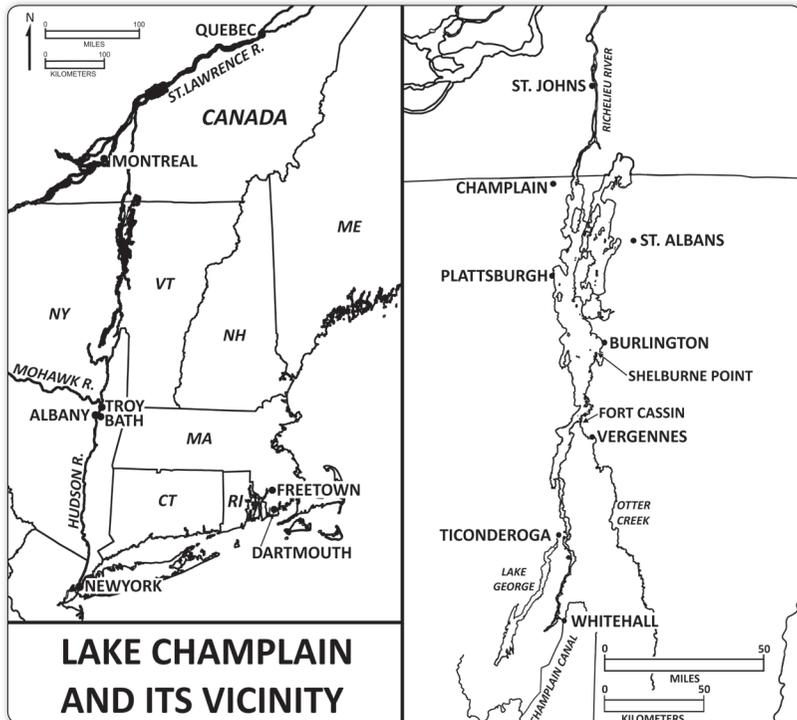
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The state's early participation in the era of steam navigation was due to the presence of a defining geographical feature: Lake Champlain. Bordered by Vermont to the east, New York to the west, and the Canadian province of Québec to the north, the 120-mile-long by 12-mile-wide (193 km by 19.3 km) lake was a regional connector. To the south was the Hudson River and the cities of Albany and New York, and to the north the St. Lawrence River and the cities of Montreal and Québec. Until the development of railroads and automobiles, Lake Champlain served as the principal route for travelers and trade passing through the interior of northeastern North America.

Archaeologists and historians researching the heyday of the lake's commercial navigation invariably encounter one individual at the forefront of the steamboat revolution: Captain Jahaziel Sherman of Vergennes, Vermont. Sherman moved to the Champlain Valley in 1813 to command the first boat of the Lake Champlain Steamboat Company and he remained a central figure in the region's transportation system over the following three decades. Six of the boats built on Lake Cham-



Map of Lake Champlain and Its Vicinity. Map by Megan Hagseth.

plain during steam's earliest years were assembled under his supervision. (see Table 1, below) Sherman was too expansive a force to be contained on one lake and his involvement with steamboats extended to

Name	Year Finished	Where Built	Length	Breadth	Depth	Tonnage	Cost	Horse Power	Speed per hour	For Whom Built	Master Carpenter	Continuance In Service
<i>Ticonderoga</i>	1814	Vergennes, VT	120	24	8	185	\$22,000	-	-	LCSC/USN*	John Lacy	1 year. Laid up 1815, abandoned 1825
<i>Phoenix I</i>	1815	Vergennes, VT	146	27	9 1/4	336	45,000	45	8	LCSC	Edward Roberts	4 years. Burnt 10 m. N. Burlington, Sept. 5, 1819
<i>Champlain</i>	1816	Vergennes, VT	90	20	8	128	18,000	20	5	LCSC	John Winans	1 year. Burnt at Whitehall, Sept. 1817
<i>Congress</i>	1818	Vergennes, VT	108	27	8	209	30,000	34	8	LCSC	Jonathan Gorham	17 years. Condemned 1835
<i>Phoenix II</i>	1820	Vergennes, VT	143	27	9 1/2	346	45,000	45	8	LCSC	Alex. Young & Jon. Gorham	16 years. Condemned 1837
<i>Franklin</i>	1827	St. Albans	132	22	9	257 ^{3/4} / ₆₅	50,000	75	10	CTC	---Collins	16 years. Condemned 1838
<i>Water Witch</i>	(1831) [†]	Fort Cassin	162	22	9	312 ² / ₆₅						
	1832	Fort Cassin	80	17	7 1/2	91 ³ / ₆₅	17,000	40	8	J. Sherman	Samuel Wood	3 years. Converted to schooner 1836

**Ticonderoga* was built for LCSC/USN, finished as a 17-gun schooner

[†]*Franklin* was upgraded with a false bow in 1831 by J. Sherman at request of CTC

Table 1. Steamboats built on Lake Champlain under the supervision of Jahaziel Sherman. *Ticonderoga* was framed as a steamboat, but completed as a schooner for the U.S. Navy. Table prepared by Megan Hagseth.

nearby waterways: the Hudson River, Lake George, and the St. Lawrence River.

In his day Sherman was recognized for his talents as an innovator, a manager of steamboat building and outfitting, and as the very model of an efficient, organized steamboat captain. His many accomplishments were noted in local and regional histories, but paradoxically little is known about the man himself. To date no collections of Sherman's personal papers, business papers, steamboat log books, or steamboat plans have turned up. A detailed account of his activities must be compiled from short biographies and testimonials written by his colleagues, from newspaper accounts and advertisements, a few published travelogues of the era, and from a limited number of business and government records. There is not much else to go on.

In recent decades a previously overlooked record of his life's accomplishments has been discovered in the form of wooden shipwrecks. The remains of four of Sherman's vessels have been found, including the first and the last steamer hulls built under his supervision on the lake (*Ticonderoga* and *Water Witch*), as well as two of the most famous boats ever to paddle the waters of Champlain (*Phoenix I* and *Phoenix II*). All have undergone intensive study by archaeologists, and all have added much to our understanding of the design, construction, and operations of early steamers.¹ Study of the wrecks has provided an incentive to delve further into the life and times of Jahaziel Sherman and to better define his role in the transportation revolution that transformed the culture, landscape, and waterways of North America in the nineteenth century. This article summarizes what we have learned about the ubiquitous captain and his role in the development of steam navigation on inland waters of the northeast.

Jahaziel Sherman was born on July 28, 1770, the fifth son of his parents Prince and Sarah, in the town of Dartmouth, Massachusetts.² A coastal settlement located in the southeastern corner of the state, Dartmouth was home to the four generations of Shermans who preceded Jahaziel (his great-great grandfather John moved there in the 1670s). Not much is known about Jahaziel's youth, except that as a boy he and his family endured the uncertain years of the American Revolution, when harbors near their home were described as "a great rendezvous for privateers."³

The many sailors residing in Dartmouth likely provided young Jahaziel with role models, for as he reached adulthood he also chose to be a mariner. There was one important difference, however: He turned his back on the sea and instead answered the call of a river. In 1793, at the

age of twenty-three, he moved to Bath, New York, across the Hudson River from Albany, to begin his half-century of work as a freshwater sailor. We do not know why Sherman chose this career path, but it is possible that his decision to sail always within sight of land stemmed from his marriage in 1795 to Freetown, Massachusetts, native Nancy Winslow. His new wife surely appreciated having a sailor-husband whose absences from home could be measured in days or at most weeks, rather than the months or even years common to high-seas mariners.⁴

Sherman must have acquired experience as a sailor before leaving the Massachusetts coast, for his first employment on the Hudson was as the captain of a vessel called *Favorite* belonging to the Bath merchants William and Jeremiah Clarke. At this time the freight and passenger trade between Albany, at the head of navigation, and New York City, at the river's outlet, a 150-mile (241 km) distance, was almost exclusively the domain of small, shallow-draft sloops. Jahaziel found life as a river captain sufficiently satisfying and profitable to stay in the business for the next nineteen years, during which he owned and commanded a succession of sloops. The first of these was the *Anna*, which he sailed until 1805. Late in 1802 he entered into a partnership with Silvanus P. Jermain of Albany, and in 1805 they replaced *Anna* by building the *Oneida Chief* at New Baltimore, N.Y., a "celebrated" sloop later described as the largest and finest on the Hudson in its day. Jermain and Sherman jointly managed this boat for the next five years.⁵

The Hudson is a complicated waterway for vessels depending solely upon the wind for propulsion. Under ideal conditions a New York City-Albany passage under sail might be completed in a day, but this was a rarity. More often, contrary winds required much tedious, time-consuming tacking up or down the narrow channel. When there was no wind at all sloops were left becalmed, sometimes stuck in one place for days at a time. Most passages on a Hudson River sloop averaged about three days to a week, but much longer trips occurred regularly. Sherman was evidently a competent river captain, for the high reputation of *Oneida Chief* allowed it to sail exclusively—and lucratively—as a passenger packet.⁶

The Sherman family grew during this time. After their marriage Jahaziel and Nancy did not tarry long in Bath but moved across the Hudson River to Albany, where their first child, a son named Richard Winslow Sherman, was born in 1797. Over the next fifteen years they had five more children: Jahaziel Blossom (b. 1801), Walter Winslow (b. 1804), Sarah Ann (b. 1807), Charles Lee (b. 1810), and James (b. 1812).

Sarah Ann and James did not survive beyond their first year, but Sherman's three oldest sons all reached adulthood.⁷

The year 1807 was significant for Hudson River sloop owners and captains, Sherman among them. In August the *North River Steamboat of Clermont* completed its first upriver passage from New York City to Albany in just thirty-two hours. Built and outfitted by inventor Robert Fulton and businessman Robert Livingston, it was the first steamboat in history to achieve simultaneously both mechanical and commercial success. For untold millennia large watercraft had relied on the wind for propulsion, but now it was possible to burn fuel to power a mechanism that advanced a vessel through the water. It was an extraordinary achievement, and *North River* heralded a new era in river, lake, and ocean navigation around the world. More immediately, steamboats also promised to be potent future competitors for Hudson River passenger sloops like *Oneida Chief*. As Fulton complacently observed after his first passage in *North River*: "I overtook many sloops and schooners beating to windward and parted with them as if they had been at anchor."⁸

One of the sloops *North River* likely overtook on its maiden voyage was Sherman's *Oneida Chief*. The shift in public patronage from sail to steam is perfectly illustrated in the account of Helena Burrows Breese, who traveled on both types of vessels in 1810:

We staid two days in Albany, then went to the dock to see the great wonder, the steamboat Robert Fulton—thousands of people were there to look at her, crowds as far as the eye could reach. We went down the river on the sloop called the *Oneida Chief*, two days and two nights going down. After a week's visit ... we returned to New York, and took passage on the *Robert Fulton*—we went on board at 12 o'clock—the docks were crowded with people to see the steamer—cannon were fired—it was still so great a wonder; at West Point cannon were fired, flags hoisted; and at all the principal villages and towns the docks were filled with spectators. The fare was then seven dollars, the same on the sloop *Oneida Chief*. . . . considered the finest on the river.⁹

Helena Breese's passage to New York City on *Oneida Chief* may have been one of the last the sloop made under Sherman's co-ownership. In 1810 he and Jermain dissolved their partnership and sold the boat. Sherman subsequently purchased another sloop, *Lion*, which he kept in service for two more years, but he was already shifting his attention from sailing a sloop to commanding a steamboat.¹⁰

The problem for Sherman and other would-be Hudson River steamboat operators was how to enter the business legally. Beginning in 1787

the New York legislature passed a series of acts to encourage the development of steam propulsion by awarding successful inventors with a statewide monopoly on all forms of steamboat navigation. Having secured that monopoly in 1807 with *North River*, Fulton and Livingston persuaded the legislature to pass another act in 1808 confirming their control over all steamboats in state waters. The law stipulated that any interlopers who operated without permission would forfeit both their hull and engine to Fulton and Livingston.¹¹

In 1810 a consortium of twenty-one Albany-based manufacturers and lawyers resolved to challenge the monopoly—and the state’s right to confer monopolies—by putting their own steamers on the river. The Albany Steamboat Company built two vessels, *Hope*, commanded by Elihu Bunker, and *Perseverance*, commanded by Jahaziel Sherman. Both were steaming between Albany and New York City by the summer of 1811. The Albany boats immediately ran afoul of the monopoly, which counter-attacked in both the courts and the press, denouncing *Hope* and *Perseverance* as “Picaroon [i.e. rogue] Steamboats” and declaring, “Perhaps a more infamous attempt has never been made to pirate patent rights, and invade the property of inventive and useful citizens.” A lower court initially found in favor of the Albany Company, but this was overturned by the state appeals court, which upheld Fulton and Livingston’s rights. The court’s ruling on September 15, 1812, mandated that *Hope* and *Perseverance* be retired. Their engines and boilers were subsequently removed for use in other vessels.¹²

The Livingston-Fulton monopoly did make one concession to the Albany investors by granting them permission to build and run a boat on the New York waters of Lake Champlain. The Lake Champlain Steamboat Company (LCSC), a consortium of seven former Albany Steamboat Company investors and four Vermont businessmen with a combined operating capital of \$100,000, was chartered by the State of New York on March 12, 1813. Jahaziel Sherman was engaged by the company to be the general manager of the building and outfitting, and to serve as captain of the steamboat. The LCSC also retained the engine and boilers from the short-lived *Perseverance* to install in its new vessel.¹³

The Champlain Valley region was rapidly growing in population and commercial activity in the early nineteenth century and offered fair prospects for profitable steamboat operations, but in 1813 it also had two potential complications for the LCSC. First, there was already another boat paddling up and down the length of the lake. This vessel, *Vermont*, belonged to the brothers John and James Winans, who built

and launched it at Burlington, Vermont, in 1808-1809; because the boat was owned in Vermont and not New York, its existence was not successfully challenged by the Fulton-Livingston monopoly. The Winans' steamer had a reputation for being slow and unreliable but was a competitor nonetheless.¹⁴ The second and perhaps more dire threat to the LCSC was the state of war between the United States and Great Britain since June 1812, a conflict now known as the War of 1812. The United States-Canada border at the northern end of the lake was closed to travel and commerce; worse yet, all vessels on Champlain ran the risk of capture or destruction during British raids.¹⁵ It was hardly an ideal time to start a new enterprise on the lake.

War or no war, Sherman and the Steamboat Company set to work, establishing a shipyard at LCSC Director Amos Barnum's hometown of Vergennes, Vermont. The place was small, with a population of less than 1,000, but was located six miles (9.65 km) up the Otter Creek from Lake Champlain and was therefore less susceptible to surprise attacks than lakeshore towns. Vergennes had another advantage: It was built around the lowest waterfall on the river and several industries were situated around this power source, including sawmills and the Monkton Ironworks. Timber, ship fastenings, and other ironwork were thus readily available. Sherman secured a plot of land along the eastern side of the basin below the falls to serve as the Steamboat Company's shipyard and hired shipwright John Lacy to build the hull.¹⁶

Late in 1813 Lacy prepared the building ways alongside the Otter Creek and commenced construction. The design of the new boat reflected lessons derived from practical experience. The earliest steamers were lightly constructed, with a flat bottom, hard angles (or "chines") where the bottom met the sides, and a length-to-beam (LB) ratio that exceeded 9:1. Wooden hulls of this description lack longitudinal strength and easily succumb to the unequal forces of buoyancy and gravity: They hog (the ends droop) and sag (the middle bends). Fulton's *Paragon*, built in 1811 with a more moderate LB ratio of 6.5:1, nevertheless developed an "obviously wavy" deck later in its career. By 1813 steamboat builders recognized the shortcomings of the earlier style and were shifting to a beamier form with a rounded turn of the bilge rather than a chine.¹⁷ The framing of the LCSC's first hull fit this description and its dimensions (120 feet [36.57 m] length and 24 feet [7.31 m] beam) gave the vessel a sturdy 5:1 LB ratio.¹⁸

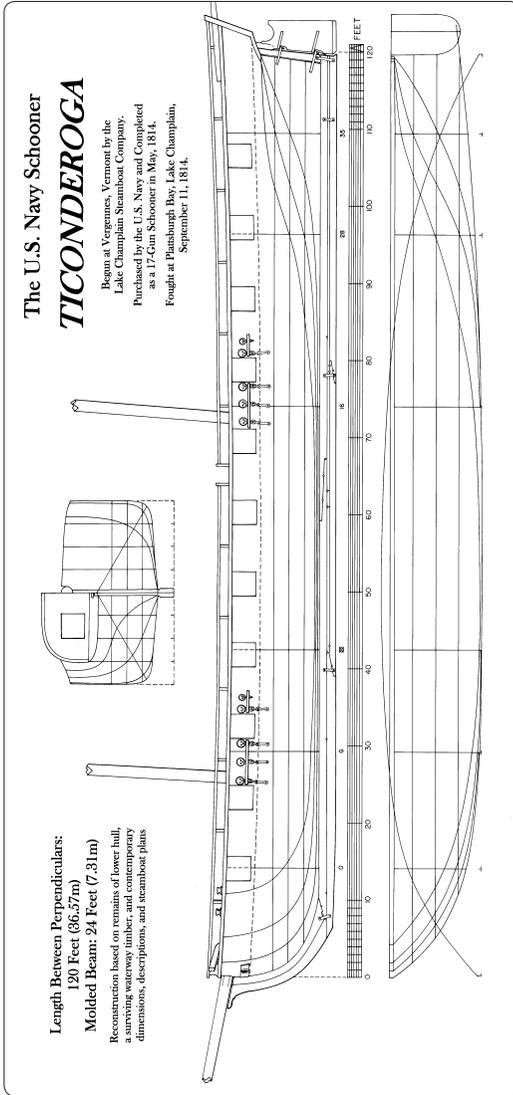
The LCSC's boat was partially completed when the war intruded. In December 1813, Commodore Thomas Macdonough moored the United States Navy's flotilla of four sloops and four gunboats in the Otter

Creek at Vergennes and set about enlarging his forces. After two years of small-scale naval encounters on Champlain, the active building by both sides that winter presaged a violent year on the lake in 1814. The naval presence made Vergennes a tempting target for the British, a development that no doubt concerned Sherman and the LCSC's directors. At the same time, the proximity of the two construction projects offered potential benefits for both the company and the navy. When word of the LCSC's hull reached Secretary of the Navy William Jones in Washington in February 1814, he authorized Macdonough to purchase the vessel and finish it as an armed steamboat. Macdonough was initially uninterested, believing that the warships that his shipwright Noah Brown was assembling were sufficient for 1814.¹⁹

The LCSC directors, meanwhile, jumped at this chance to stay off the lake during a risky year and at the same time profit from their boat. The company embarked on a sales offensive, enlisting New York Governor Daniel Tompkins to write the navy secretary a letter that extolled the advantages of a steam-propelled warship and indicated the company's terms: \$15,000 to \$17,000 for the unfinished hull and its machinery. Somewhat naïvely, the company stated that they were prepared to "convey a right of running her under their exclusive privilege," in other words, the LCSC expected the navy to pay a fee for operating a government-owned steamboat under the terms of a private commercial license. Governor Tompkins's letter also makes it clear that the company intended to buy the steamer back from the navy once the war was over.²⁰

In April Macdonough changed his mind about the LCSC's hull and decided to add it to his squadron as an additional warship. He and Noah Brown thought the steam and paddle machinery too complex and unreliable, and too vulnerable to enemy shot, and instead chose to complete the vessel as an armed schooner. They estimated that the unfinished hull was worth only \$5,000, took possession, and completed it in early May as the seventeen-gun *Ticonderoga*.²¹

Macdonough and Brown's lowball valuation of the hull and their decision to finish it as a schooner left the LCSC high and dry as far as profits were concerned, and the company sought compensation by submitting an invoice for \$22,000 for the hull and for the loss of "anticipated profits in running the boat." Macdonough considered this amount "extraordinary" and observed to Secretary Jones: "there appears a great inconsistency in their wishing so anxiously to dispose of their vessel, to their own loss, as they wish to make it appear."²² Whatever the merits of the claim, when Jahaziel Sherman went to Washington as the



A reconstruction of the US Navy Schooner Ticonderoga. Begun in 1813 as the first boat of the Lake Champlain Steamboat Company, the unfinished hull was purchased by the navy and converted to a 17-gun warship. The long, narrow form and near-flat-bottomed amidships section are good indicators of its steamboat origins. Reconstructed by K. Crisman from the lower hull exhibited at the Skenesboro Museum, Whitehall, N.Y.

LCSC's representative in June, he and the navy secretary settled on the sum of \$12,000 to be paid by the government for *Ticonderoga*.²³

Soon after the LCSC's sale of its first hull to the navy, the company hired master carpenter Edward Roberts to build a replacement and fulfil the stipulations of its New York State charter of 1813. Roberts had recently labored alongside Noah Brown in the United States Navy's

construction campaign, and thus was familiar with the shipbuilding resources of Vergennes.²⁴ Jahaziel Sherman served as the overseer of the work (a role he would often reprise) and undoubtedly had a significant role in designing this new boat as well. Construction commenced at the steamboat company's Otter Creek yard over the winter of 1814-15, the hull was completed and launched the following summer, and the recycled *Perseverance* engine and boiler were installed amidships. The vessel was christened *Phoenix*.²⁵

Phoenix was substantially larger than the first hull the LCSC built at Vergennes, measuring 146 feet (44.5m) in length and 27 feet (8.23m) in beam, with a 9 foot, 3 inch (2.82m) depth of hold and a displacement of 336 tons. The vessel was propelled by a low-pressure steam engine and crosshead machinery arrangement delivering forty-five horsepower, theoretically making it much faster than its competitor *Vermont*. Much like its

predecessor *Ticonderoga*, *Phoenix* combined substantial construction with the imperatives of a steam propulsion system. Compared to earlier Hudson River craft, LCSC's first operational steamboat featured a deeper draft and the moderate LB ratio of 5.4:1, which helped achieve the seaworthiness desired for safe, durable, and comfortable navigation of the open lake. *Phoenix* was solidly constructed of white oak, chestnut, cedar, and yellow and red pine. The keelson was notched on its underside to fit over the frames, a feature that required considerable labor to cut and fit, but which likely yielded greater strength and resistance to hogging. A pair of stringers bolted to the bottom of the hull provided additional longitudinal reinforcement, while stout bed



A contemporary woodcut advertising the Lake Champlain Steamboat Company's Phoenix I and Champlain. Although the image is crude and unscaled, it corresponds with written descriptions of these boats and is probably a reasonable likeness. From the Christian Messenger (Middlebury, Vt.), 30 April 1817. K. Crisman collection.

timbers installed in the engine space supported the weighty cast iron cylinder and associated paddle machinery.²⁶

Phoenix awed contemporary observers with its size and “superior” appointments, although by the standards of later steamboats the vessel had a spartan simplicity.²⁷ The flush main deck was surrounded by an open rail and protected from the weather by a light wooden framework that supported canvas awnings. Other deck features included a small, six foot by ten foot (1.82 by 3.04 m) house on the afterdeck that covered the staircase to the passenger cabins below; a single smokestack amidships; one mast rigged with a square sail; a capstan at the bow to hoist anchors; paddlewheels covered by protective boxes; and short guards (outboard extensions of the main deck) that began at the bow and terminated about twenty-five feet (7.62 m) abaft the paddlewheels. Crew and passenger berths were located below, with the finely furnished gentlemen’s and ladies’ cabins abaft the engine room (the ladies’ cabin was the aftermost compartment). Other amenities included a saloon beneath the stairs, a barber shop, a smoking lounge, the luggage compartment, a firewood storage area, and a galley and pantry, all snugly situated outside the prodigious engine room, which claimed one-third of the hold.²⁸

Phoenix began its career in mid-August 1815, when it steamed first from Vergennes to Whitehall, N.Y. at the southern end of the lake, and thence to St. Johns in Canada (now Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Québec), where the boat took in its cabin furniture. At the end of August Sherman advertised the boat’s schedule in regional papers: a weekly round trip starting from Whitehall every Wednesday and departing from St. Johns every Sunday.²⁹ Each passage included a one-hour stop in Burlington. The cost per passenger was \$10 (equivalent to about \$150 U.S. dollars in 2016), servants were half price, dogs and other animals no larger than a sheep cost one dollar, and freight could be transported at various prices per barrel.³⁰

Phoenix, Captain Sherman, and the LCSC were off to a good start, and their prospects improved after the competition sank itself that fall. On October 21, 1815, the Winans brothers’ *Vermont* was steaming up the Richelieu River when the crankshaft “became deranged and beat out her bottom,” causing the boat to sink in shallow water. Passengers and crew were safely evacuated and the machinery salvaged, but the hull was abandoned.³¹ To prevent the Winans from building a replacement, the LCSC bought *Vermont*’s engine and hired the brothers to construct a small steamer in which to install it, the 90 foot (27.4 m) long by 20 foot (6.09 m) beam *Champlain*. Begun during the winter of 1815-

16 at Vergennes, the vessel entered service in early July 1816.³² *Champlain* was upgraded in the spring of 1817 with the somewhat more powerful original engine of *Phoenix*, but its career was notably brief, for on September 6 the boat caught fire and burned at the dock in Whitehall. Some sources attributed the fire to the faulty installation of the boiler, but Sherman publicly declared that it was the work of an arsonist.³³

The next steamboat to navigate Lake Champlain was built in 1818 by four members of the LCSC—Sherman and Amos Barnum of Vergennes, Guy Catlin of Burlington, and Tunis Van Vechten of Albany—but was an entirely separate enterprise. After *Champlain* went up in smoke most of the LCSC directors were unwilling or unable to invest in a replacement, but Sherman and his three colleagues were certain that *Phoenix* alone could not meet the demand for steamers on the lake. Sherman and Barnum purchased timber for their new boat early in 1818 and shipwright Jonathan Gorham launched it from the Vergennes yard late in November.³⁴ *Congress* was small, only 108 feet (32.9 m) in length and 27 feet (8.23 m) in beam. Intended principally for freight, it had limited accommodations for passengers. It was powered by the engine salvaged from the burned *Champlain*, which before that served on *Phoenix* and the Hudson River's *Perseverance*. The venerable cylinder and its components must have been upgraded at some point, for under the command of Jahaziel's oldest son, Richard W. Sherman, *Congress* set a record in the summer of 1819 for the fastest steamboat passage from St. Johns to Whitehall.³⁵

During these years *Phoenix* firmly established Jahaziel Sherman's reputation as an efficient and obliging steamboat captain: His boat was the centerpiece of Lake Champlain navigation, providing reliable service for thousands of people passing through the region. One high point in the career of the boat and its captain was U.S. President James Monroe's visit in July 1817. When Monroe's overland arrival at Burlington was delayed for two days, Sherman and Amos Barnum offered the restless throng of waiting "strangers and other gentlemen" a free excursion on *Phoenix* to pass the time. Their boat's moment of true glory came two days later when, on the morning of July 25, Monroe boarded the vessel and departed for Vergennes amidst the roar of cannon firing a salute. The passage that followed was described as "romantic and delightful . . . the President remained on deck and expressed himself highly gratified with the scene." After a brief stopover in Vergennes, Monroe slept aboard *Phoenix* that night, inspected new fortifications at the United States-Canadian border the next morning, then proceeded in

the steamer to Plattsburgh, New York, where he debarked amid the booming of more salutes.³⁶

Jahaziel Sherman was clearly hitting his stride as a promoter of steam navigation at this time, too, for in addition to commanding *Phoenix* and building *Champlain* and *Congress* at the Vergennes yard, he took on related projects elsewhere in the region. Early in 1816 his business connections north of the border led to a partnership with iron founder Joseph Lough and two Canadian investors in the Montreal Air Furnace. This enterprise was producing stoves by early 1817 and castings for steam machinery the following year, but also ran up a considerable debt with Lough owing Sherman close to £1,000. Sherman recovered £500 from the new owners of the foundry in 1822, but the Montreal Air Furnace was not one of his more successful ventures.³⁷

Over the winter of 1816-17 Sherman supervised the building of the first steamboat on New York's Lake George, a thirty-two-mile-(51.5 km)-long waterway paralleling the western side of lower Lake Champlain. In May 1817 Sherman and the Winans brothers launched *Caldwell*, another small vessel powered by the decrepit engine that propelled *Vermont* for seven years and the ill-fated *Champlain* for one year. Luckily, speed was not a requirement for this boat. Lake George carried little of the through traffic between the Hudson River and Canada, so *Caldwell* worked as an excursion steamer for tourists, making one weekly trip up and down the lake.³⁸

Jahaziel Sherman and his family met with a series of disasters and tragedies between 1819 and 1822. The first occurred in the early morning of September 5, 1819, when *Phoenix* caught fire while steaming from Burlington to Plattsburgh. Jahaziel was not aboard—he was home with an illness—and his twenty-one-year-old son Richard commanded in his stead. Most accounts say that Richard did a magnificent job of evacuating passengers and crew into the two small boats. A panicked passenger cut the second boat loose before it was fully loaded, however, leaving the captain and ten others stranded on the burning hull. Richard tossed furniture into the lake to provide flotation, but six of the eleven people left behind drowned before they could be rescued. Young Sherman was found later that morning, unconscious but afloat atop a table leaf. The cause of the fire was never determined; a candle left unattended in the boat's pantry was said to be the likely culprit, but rumors of arson by competing lake shippers also circulated.³⁹

The loss of *Phoenix* left the Steamboat Company temporarily boat-less, a deficiency that was remedied by the sale of *Congress* to the LCSC, as well as by the building of a replacement steamer at the ship-

yard in Vergennes. The company wasted little time in getting started, as Amos Barnum put out a call for ship timber at the end of October.⁴⁰ *Phoenix II*, as the new boat was called, “resembled its self-perpetuating mythological predecessor in more than name only,” as it metaphorically rose, like its avian namesake, from the ashes of a previous version.⁴¹ The new *Phoenix* was 143 feet (43.6 m) long, 27 feet, 3 inches (8.3 m) wide, with a 9 foot, 6 inch (2.9 m) depth of hold, and had a capacity of 346 ⁴⁹/₉₅ tons.⁴² Its builders, Jonathan Gorham (who also built *Congress*) and Alexander Young, laid out the second *Phoenix* in the same way as the first, though the resulting steamboat was three feet (0.9 m) shorter according to the enrollment papers.

Though *Phoenix II* was similar in dimensions to *Phoenix I*, Young and Gorham used somewhat different construction techniques than those used by Edward Roberts. *Phoenix II*'s construction was slightly heavier than its predecessor. The principal structural timbers such as the keel and keelson, as well as every fourth lower frame timber, were cut from the preferred white oak, northern cedar was used for the rest of framing timbers, and soft pine for the engine bed timbers. Like *Phoenix I*, both the ladies' and gentlemen's cabins were located in the hold, along with the boilers; however, after *Phoenix II*'s construction, the guards were altered to extend all the way around the hull, substantially increasing the area of the main deck over *Phoenix I*'s short, half guards.⁴³ Builder's plans for *Phoenix II* have never been located, and possibly never existed.⁴⁴

The engine built in 1817 by Robert McQueen in New York City for the first *Phoenix* was salvaged from the burned wreck and installed into the new *Phoenix* in 1821.⁴⁵ The crosshead beam engine had a forty-two-inch (1.06 m) cylinder and a four-foot (1.22 m) stroke, giving the engine forty-five horsepower and a resulting speed of eight miles per hour (12.8 km/h). *Phoenix II* was declared to be the “fastest boat in the world” when it came out under the command of Sherman in 1821.⁴⁶

The construction and outfitting of *Phoenix II* at Vergennes were beset by a series of three misfortunes for Jahaziel Sherman. On August 7, 1820, forty-seven-year-old Nancy Sherman died of consumption in Vergennes. After twenty-five years of marriage the loss of his wife must have been a severe blow to Jahaziel.⁴⁷ Two months later, on October 5, the LCSC storehouse on the Vergennes waterfront was consumed by fire, destroying an estimated \$5,000 worth of timber and other materials stockpiled for the new boat. A disgruntled shipyard employee was suspected of setting the fire, but there is no record of anyone being prosecuted despite the substantial \$500 reward offered for information

leading to an arrest.⁴⁸ The run of bad luck did not end there, for on June 24, 1821, the youngest of Sherman's four surviving sons, eleven-year-old Charles, drowned in the Otter Creek. He was buried near his mother in the town cemetery.⁴⁹

The launch of *Phoenix II* in November 1820 was something of a turning point for the Steamboat Company, for Jahaziel Sherman, and for Vergennes. This was the last vessel to be built by the LCSC, and the last steamboat to be constructed at the shipyard below the falls on Otter Creek. In 1820 the company established a new facility for maintaining its boats at Shelburne Point, a promontory on the lake located south of Burlington. A contemporary source claimed the move to Shelburne was for practical reasons: It thawed sooner and froze later than the river, thus extending the navigational season. This may have been true, and yet the Shermans would continue to overwinter steamboats at Vergennes for many years after 1820. The same source also noted, cryptically, that the LCSC had "other reasons" for moving the yard. Did the other directors consider Sherman a little too independent when it came to building and managing the company's vessels? Or perhaps the Burlington-based directors felt Sherman and Amos Barnum were too invested in the primacy of their hometown as a lake port. The nature of the "other reasons" remains murky, but the results were clear: Vergennes's brief reign as the center for Lake Champlain steamboat construction and operations was coming to an end.⁵⁰

The new *Phoenix (II)*, advertised by its owners as "in point of elegance and convenience ... not exceeded by any one in America," began service in mid-May 1821, under the command of Jahaziel Sherman.⁵¹ The LCSC put the boat on a two-round-trip-per-week schedule, carrying only passengers, running day and night, and making a limited number of stops between Whitehall and St. Johns. This was the company's express boat. *Congress*, captained by Richard Sherman, was the freight boat, making only one round trip on the lake per week but running mostly during daylight hours and stopping at more places along the way to facilitate the pickup and delivery of cargoes.⁵² Both steamers were occasionally scheduled for special excursions, such as tours of the ruins of Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point or the site of the 1814 naval battle at Plattsburgh Bay, Methodist revival meetings, or celebratory Fourth of July cruises.⁵³

Jahaziel Sherman's era of bad tidings was not over yet, for in 1822 he faced a crisis that threatened the operations of *Phoenix II*, the profits of the LCSC, and his own livelihood and reputation. The blow-up stemmed from a sideline occupation of some of his steamboat crew, the smug-

gling of contraband goods into Canada in violation of Canadian revenue laws. The practice was evidently commonplace, shrugged off as inconsequential by the Captains Sherman (the crew of *Congress* also smuggled goods), and was mostly ignored by the revenue officers at St. Johns (some of whom likely profited by their indifference). In October 1820 this morally relaxed arrangement was upset by the arrival of a new and honest Custom House officer, Bartholomew Tierney. Despite the lack of encouragement from colleagues, Tierney began to enforce the laws, making numerous confiscations of goods on *Congress* and *Phoenix II*. Matters reached a head on August 25, 1822, when Tierney seized ten packages of crapes and silks hidden in a locker on *Phoenix II* and then proceeded—as the laws prescribed—to seize also the vessel carrying them. Disagreeably surprised by this new tactic, Sherman first offered a bribe, and when that did not work he went ashore to sort out the problem with Tierney's superiors. In his absence *Phoenix II*'s crew disarmed the two British soldiers placed aboard as guards, got up steam, and made a successful dash for the border.⁵⁴

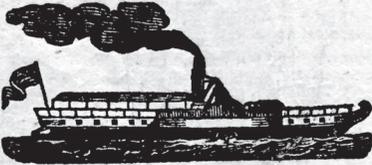
The repercussions of the affair were immediate and not good for anyone involved. It was bad publicity for Sherman, since he appeared to be either abetting smugglers or lax in his oversight of *Phoenix II*'s crew. His defenders loudly asserted his innocence, with one declaring “no one could be more astonished than Capt. Sherman, who had not

the most distant idea that there could be contraband articles in the vessel.”⁵⁵

Phoenix II was safely out of reach of the Canadian legal system, but could no longer enter Canadian waters; for the remainder of

Vergennes, July 25, 1827.

**LAKE
Champlain
STEAM BOATS**



PHOENIX & CONGRESS,

WILL commence running their NEW LINE on Saturday, the 28th inst. and will from that time continue to leave WHITEHALL every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, at 9 o'clock, A. M. and SAINT JOHNS every Monday and Thursday, at 8 o'clock, A. M. and every Friday, at 2 o'clock, P. M. For all further particulars, refer to the former advertisement for this season.

Whitehall, July 25, 1827.

A newspaper advertisement for the Lake Champlain Steamboat Company's Phoenix II and Congress. The two boats dominated passenger traffic on the lake for most of the 1820s. From the Vergennes Vermont Aurora, 2 August 1827. Bixby Library Newspaper Collections, Bixby Library, Vergennes, Vt.

the 1822 season Sherman had to transfer passengers to and from *Congress* (which continued to cross the border without hindrance), or to use the border town of Champlain, New York, as the landing for Canadian travelers. It was all terribly inconvenient. Tierney's diligence put his superiors in the government in an awkward position: He was following the letter of the law, but the disruption to trade, public conveyance, and longstanding cross-border ties was immense. Expediency eventually won out over the law and institutional loyalty: In the spring of 1823 all threats of legal action against the boat were quietly dropped, *Phoenix II* resumed its trips to St. Johns, and in September the hapless Tierney was summarily dismissed from government service.⁵⁶

It is not certain how much, if any, lasting damage was done to Sherman's reputation by the smuggling affair. He continued as the captain of the *Phoenix II* through 1823, making the usual twice-weekly passages from one end of the lake to the other.⁵⁷ This year—his ninth season on Champlain's waters—was significant, however, for it marked the end of his employment as a full-time steamboat captain. For a variety of reasons, both business and domestic, Jahaziel thereafter spent less time commanding boats and more engaged in other pursuits.

One significant distraction in the mid-1820s was his growing second family. Sherman remained a widower for one and one-half years after the



Jahaziel Sherman (above) and Harriet Daggett Sherman (right). These oil portraits, recently loaned by their owner to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Basin Harbor, Vergennes, Vt., were probably acquired from the estate of the Shermans' granddaughter Mae Frances Darling in the early twentieth century. From the collection of Danny Cahill III, Mill Valley, Calif.



death of his wife Nancy, then in December 1821 he married twenty-nine-year-old Harriet Daggett of Freetown, Massachusetts.⁵⁸ Over the next seven years they had three children, Sarah Ann (b. 1822), Charles Winslow (b. 1823), and Benjamin Daggett (b. 1828).⁵⁹

Promoting the steamboat careers of his three older sons was another of Jahaziel's missions at this time. Richard, as previously noted, commanded boats by 1819, won popular acclaim for his heroism during the *Phoenix* fire, and continued as captain of *Congress* afterward. A series of much larger and more prestigious commands followed over the next two decades, during which Richard's renown as a steamboat captain in many ways eclipsed that of his father.⁶⁰ His sons Jahaziel B. and Walter also got into the steamboat business as soon as they were old enough to do so. Early in 1823 Jahaziel Sr. wrote to business acquaintance John Molson in Canada seeking a place for twenty-two-year-old Jahaziel B. on a St. Lawrence Steamboat Company vessel. Molson replied in March, offering the command of *New Swiftsure* with the annual pay of £120:

We should have hesitated on account of your son's youth had not we been well acquainted with your own reputation and integrity and also that of your other son [Richard]—which together with your good advice will without doubt make us feel well satisfied with his conduct and management.

Jahaziel B.'s term as *Swiftsure's* captain lasted for two years, but ended in October 1824 when the boat was damaged in a collision with the rival *Richelieu* as the two raced up the river. Young Sherman left the St. Lawrence for Lake Erie, where he commanded the steamboat *Superior* in 1825. By 1827 he was the owner of *Superior*, working in partnership with his brother Walter.⁶¹

Jahaziel Sr. also expanded his business interests at home. By the mid-1820s he was firmly established in Vergennes. Alongside the former steamboat yard on the east side of Otter Creek, Sherman owned the wharf and three warehouses that served the city's waterborne commerce. One of the buildings, a large brick storehouse, rented out space to the retail emporium and freight forwarding firm Parker & Daggett, a company co-owned by Harriet Sherman's younger brother Nathan Daggett. Sherman's house was situated across the street from the wharf. During these years Jahaziel invested heavily in other property—including buildings, farms, and lake and river frontage—in Vergennes and in surrounding parts of Addison County, Vermont.⁶² In 1823 a major public works project and engineering marvel brought profound economic and cultural changes to the Champlain Valley as a whole and to lakeside ports like Vergennes in particular. The completion of the Northern or



Detail from the 1853 Wall & Forrest Map of Vergennes. This map was prepared nine years after Jahaziel Sherman's death in 1844. Sherman's wharf and the houses and property inherited by his wife 'Mrs [Harriet] Sherman' and his second son Jahaziel Blossom Sherman are shown in the upper center of the map. From the collections of the Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.

Champlain Canal by the State of New York that fall opened a sixty-mile (96.5 km) navigable waterway between the head of the lake at Whitehall and the head of Hudson River navigation at Waterford, New York. Almost overnight a substantial part of the region's trade swung 180 degrees on the compass, from Canadian markets to the north, to Albany and New York City to the south. The drastic lowering of shipping costs increased the profitability of timber, iron, quarried stone, manufactured goods, agricultural commodities, and other Champlain Valley products. The new canal proved a tonic for the manufacturing and commerce of Vergennes, and as the owner of the city's principal wharf Sherman was in an ideal position to take advantage of the upswing in trade.⁶³

For Sherman and his like-minded business partners, capitalizing on the canal boom took many different forms, a significant part of which was creating a fleet of canal boats. Built to very specific dimensions to pass through the canal's locks and channels, these narrow, shallow-draft vessels were built by the hundreds in the decades after 1823. Most canal boats had no means of propulsion other than mules on the canal or

steam towboats on the river and lake, but some were equipped with a retractable centerboard and folding masts to enable them to sail on open waters. Vergennes quickly became a center for the building and ownership of canal boats.⁶⁴

Other investments in the shipping business of Vergennes included the construction of a towpath on the eastern side of the Otter Creek in 1824 to enable mules to tow canal boats, rafts, and sailing vessels between the city and the river's outlet into the lake at Fort Cassin. In the spring of 1825 Sherman, Amos Barnum, and several colleagues founded a forwarding company to offer efficient shipping of cargoes via the canal. The city's steamboat connections were hampered by its distance from the lake (it took too long to steam up and down the Otter Creek), so Sherman purchased land at Fort Cassin to serve as a convenient lakeside steamer landing. Here he erected storehouses for shipments bound to or from Vergennes, as well as a hotel, Fort Cassin House, for passengers. Finally, to ensure speedy transportation between the city and the landing, he put the mule-towed packet boat *Fort Cassin* into service on the Otter Creek.⁶⁵

It was at this time, too, that Sherman briefly experimented with a radical new approach to constructing wooden ships invented by naval architect and British émigré William Annesley of Troy, New York. Annesley's system discarded the traditional plank-on-frame method in use for hundreds of years, and instead produced frameless vessels by laminating three to five layers of planks over a mold and securing the planks with treenails. The result was a wooden shell that was lighter, shallower, more capacious, and cheaper than a framed hull, if not as rigid. Sherman first used the system in 1823 to build the centerboard-fitted canal sloop *Ethan Allen*. In 1824 he built a laminated-hull steamboat for Lake George, the 100-foot-long by 16-foot-beam (30.5 by 4.9 m), 125-ton *Mountaineer*; the experiment proved that Annesley's method worked for steamers, too, although *Mountaineer* was said to alarm its passengers by exhibiting a writhing motion when under way. Despite the apparent technological success of laminate craft, boat owners and the public remained skeptical and Annesley's system did not catch on at this time.⁶⁶

Sherman returned to the Hudson River in 1824 to supervise the building of more traditional steamboats. This project originated with the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Gibbons vs. Ogden* case, wherein the legitimacy of government-bestowed steamboat monopolies was challenged. On March 2, 1824, Chief Justice John Marshall and his colleagues delivered their judgment: State-granted transporta-

tion monopolies impeded interstate commerce and were therefore not legal. The decision created a rush of new steamboat enterprises. One of them, the Hudson River Steamboat Association, resolved to put three boats into operation as quickly as possible to gain a share of the traffic. The Troy, New York-based directors hired Jahaziel Sherman to oversee the building of their 300-ton *Chief Justice Marshall* at New York City. The vessel was launched on August 21, just six months after the court's decision.⁶⁷

Outfitting the new vessel with its engine and machinery and completing the interior work required another six months and it was not until March 15, 1825, that the *Chief Justice Marshall* departed on its maiden voyage up the river. Jahaziel's son Richard was in command. The steamboat advertised a three-round-trip-per-week schedule between New York and Troy, and was hailed in the newspapers for its speed and innovative passenger amenities: a reading room on the main deck, a wash room with running water, and a net barrier around the deck rails to keep children from falling overboard "in their playful moments."⁶⁸ On November 3-4, the *Marshall* played a prominent role in the "Wedding of the Waters" procession of steamboats down the river from Albany to the

sea to celebrate the opening of the Erie Canal. Extensively decorated, packed with over 200 dignitaries and passengers, equipped with a band that played martial music, and towing the canal boat *Niagara* astern, *Chief Justice Marshall* was reportedly the belle of the parade. Richard further ensured his boat's popularity by loading a plentiful supply



The Hudson River steamboat Chief Justice Marshall, built under the supervision of Jahaziel Sherman in 1824-25 and commanded by his son Richard Sherman from 1825-27. View of the Hudson River Highlands Plate, Enoch Wood & Sons, Burslem, England, circa 1825, Transfer-printed earthenware. From the collections of the Albany Institute of History & Art, Bequest of C. Otto Von Kienbusch, 1977.21.28.

of rockets and saluting-gun ammunition to discharge en route to the sea.⁶⁹

Jahaziel Sherman remained on the Hudson River for slightly over two years. He returned to Lake Champlain in 1826 to supervise the assembly of yet another steamer, but this time not for the LCSC.⁷⁰ During his absence a consortium of Burlington businessmen founded the Champlain Transportation Company (CTC), receiving their charter from the state legislature on October 26, 1826. The CTC's directors were determined to see their inaugural boat outshine the LCSC's aging *Phoenix II* and *Congress*, and so hired Sherman, fresh from the Hudson and "conversant with all the improvements which had been made . . . in machinery, models, and finishing," to superintend the building at St. Albans Bay, Vermont.⁷¹

Built by a shipwright named Collins, the 132-foot-long by 22-foot-beam (40.2 by 6.7 m), 257⁵²/₉₅-ton *Franklin* was slightly smaller than *Phoenix II*, but reflected all of the latest advances in steamer design and passenger comfort. The improvements included boilers mounted outboard on the main deck's guards rather than in the hold, a safety feature intended to protect both passengers and the hull in the event of an explosion. Sherman followed the newly fashionable practice of placing the ladies' cabin on the main deck, where its occupants enjoyed more light and fresh air than was provided by a cabin in the hold; this also allowed for an increase in the size of the below-deck gentlemen's cabin (altogether there were eighty-four berths). The vessel was covered over its length by an upper promenade deck, permitting passengers to enjoy the scenery from a higher vantage point, or, in the event of inclement weather, to remain comfortably sheltered on the main deck.⁷²

Under Sherman's supervision *Franklin's* construction proceeded apace: The boat was launched on July 30, 1827, fitted with a seventy-five-horsepower engine, boilers, and paddle machinery, and made its maiden voyage on September 29. Jahaziel commanded during October and November, but that was the extent of his service as a CTC captain. He was placed holding for Richard, who wrapped up a three-year stint on *Chief Justice Marshall* at the end of 1827 and returned to Vermont to serve as *Franklin's* captain in 1828.⁷³ Richard commanded this boat for the next nine years. The CTC directors were evidently pleased with Jahaziel's work on *Franklin*, for he was elected to the governing board at the first stockholder meeting in January 1828.⁷⁴

A contemporary biographer tells us that Jahaziel "retired from the lake" after the completion of *Franklin* and his election to the CTC.⁷⁵ This may have referred to his retirement from commanding steamers,

but it also marked a four-year lull in his steamboat-related activities. We do not know with certainty why he chose to ease off on the throttle at this time. As we have seen, in the fifteen years since arriving at Vergennes, Sherman was continually engaged in steamboat, shipping, real estate, and manufacturing enterprises. By 1828 he was fifty-eight years old and surely feeling the weight of a relentless schedule and accumulated years. This was also another time of hard luck in his life. His five-year-old daughter Sarah Ann died on January 31, 1827, just as he was beginning work on *Franklin*. Sherman suffered a major property loss the following year, on July 6, when Don A. Parker, Nathan Daggett's partner in the store on the Vergennes wharf, set the building on fire while attempting to fix a leaky turpentine barrel in the basement. The barrel exploded into flames that spread so rapidly that nothing could be saved, including \$8,000-\$10,000 of merchandise, wool, and grain belonging to Parker & Daggett, \$3,000 of silver plate and furniture that

Richard Sherman had stored in the building, and a "considerable quantity" of merchandise in Jahaziel Sherman's office. Only by the narrowest margin were two adjacent buildings saved. Newspaper accounts noted that Sherman allowed the insurance on the building to lapse a few weeks earlier, making it an uncompensated loss.⁷⁶

The second half of the 1820s saw a tripling of the steamboat fleet on Lake Champlain. From a single steamboat company in the first half of the decade—the LCSC with its two boats—four new enterprises appeared. Three were ferryboat companies, each of which built a small steamer for cross-lake service as well as for occa-

Lake Champlain

*Fare reduced to \$5,
THROUGH THE LAKE.*

THE BOATS on Lake Champlain will run in the following order, through the season:

The FRANKLIN,
Capt. R. W. SHERMAN,

Will leave Whitehall, and St. Johns,
TUESDAY, MONDAY,
every THURSDAY & every WEDNESDAY &
SATURDAY, FRIDAY,

AT ONE O'CLOCK, P.M.

The CONGRESS,
Capt. G. LATHROP,

Will leave Whitehall, and St. Johns,
EVERY MONDAY, & EVERY TUESDAY &
FRIDAY, SATURDAY,

ABOUT ONE O'CLOCK, P.M.

She will run for passengers, and receive on board freight to be landed at all her usual landing places.

Burlington,
24th June, 1829.

Broadside advertisement from June, 1829 for the 'collaborating rivals': the Champlain Transportation Company's Franklin and the Lake Champlain Steamboat Company's Congress. From the collections of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Basin Harbor, Vergennes, Vt.

sional canal boat and timber raft towing. The principal competitors in the lucrative St. Johns-to-Whitehall run were the CTC with its new and stylish *Franklin*, and the LCSC with *Phoenix II* and *Congress*. Neither could dominate the route and rather than engage in a price-cutting war the two companies agreed in late 1828 to share the through-lake traffic of passengers and freight by operating one boat apiece. This collaborating-rivals arrangement continued for the next four years, during which there was a change of LCSC ownership. Faced with mounting costs, the original directors bailed out of the business and auctioned everything in 1830. Their assets (two steamboats and the Shelburne shipyard) passed to one owner, the longtime LCSC director Isaiah Townsend of Albany.⁷⁷

Jahaziel Sherman's recess from Lake Champlain steamboat affairs ended in November 1831, when the CTC contracted with him to upgrade *Franklin* by adding a false bow. This work, to be performed "according to the most approved method, adopted on Steamboats navigating the Hudson," reflected the discovery by steamboat designers and builders that increasing the length-to-breadth (LB) ratio resulted in a substantial increase in speed. The CTC contract specified that Sherman was to haul the vessel out of the water at his Fort Cassin property, splice on the new bow, and have the hull ready for caulking and painting by March 1, 1832. His upgrade added 30 feet (9.14 m) to *Franklin*, giving the boat an overall length of 162 feet (49.3 m), raising its capacity to 312 ²/₉₅ tons, and increasing its LB ratio from 6:1 to a sleeker 7.36:1.⁷⁸

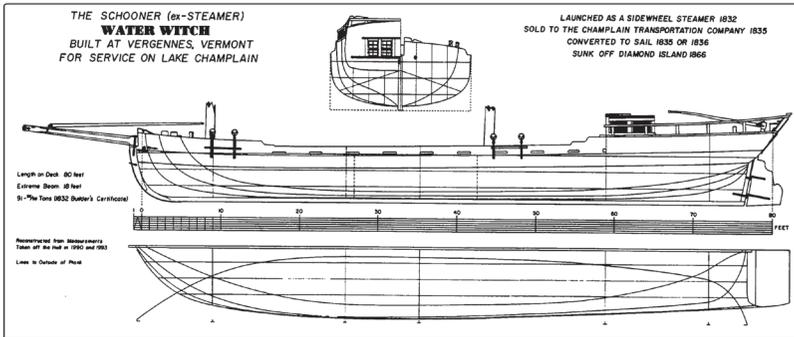
At the same time that Sherman was engaged in the *Franklin* work he began construction of a new steamboat, hiring shipwright Samuel Wood and preparing a set of ways at Fort Cassin. This was the only steamboat that Sherman ever built and operated entirely on his own account. His reasons for constructing the vessel are a bit of a mystery, but evidence suggests he was, in part, responding to the failure of the CTC and LCSC to maintain adequate steamer service to Vergennes. This boat would open a direct connection between the city and Whitehall that was independent of outside business interests. The year of its construction is probably significant, for the growth of industry and shipping in Vergennes, fueled by the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823, had largely fizzled out by 1832, leaving the place in a depressed economic condition.⁷⁹

The new steamer did not amount to much when compared to the large and well-appointed vessels previously built under Sherman's supervision. Enrollment papers list it as 80 feet in length, 17 feet in beam, with a depth of hold of 7 feet, 4 inches (24.4 by 5.2 by 2.2 m), and a capacity of 91³²/₉₅ tons. A contemporary described it as "a small boat, poorly arranged for passengers, but still of power and capacity enough

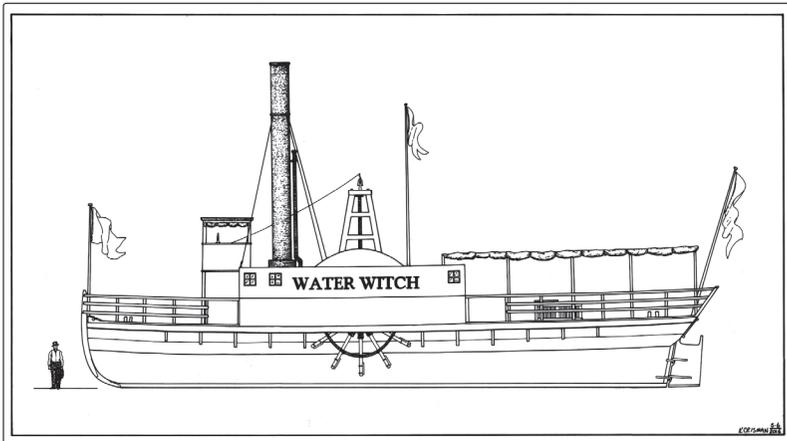
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to tow.” It was equipped with a modestly sized forty-horsepower engine from John C. Langdon’s Steam Engine Manufactory of Troy, New York, and was capable of making eight miles per hour (12.9 kph) when under way.⁸⁰ Sherman named the boat *Water Witch*, a moniker likely inspired by the title of a recently published popular novel by James Fennimore Cooper.⁸¹

When *Water Witch* began service later that summer Sherman quickly ran afoul of former colleagues in the CTC and LCSC, who considered his boat an intruder. The nature of their response is not known, but we can presume that every effort was made to shut him out of all freighting and towing between Whitehall and Vergennes. Sherman responded in October by going on the offensive and running *Water Witch* as a White-



Jahaziel Sherman's last steamboat on Lake Champlain, the 91-ton Water Witch, as a schooner at the time of its sinking in 1866 (above, lines taken from the wreck), and a conjectural reconstruction of its original steamboat profile 1832-1835 (below). Drawings by K. Crisman.



hall-St. Johns “opposition boat” that steamed slightly ahead of the LC-SC’s *Phoenix II* and offered passengers a greatly reduced fare. As a retaliatory measure it was effective. On November 7, 1832, Captain Gideon Lathrop of the *Phoenix II* vented his anger and frustration to company owner Isaiah Townsend:

The Water Witch still continues to run in our days and every Friday goes to St. Johns. She manages to leave in the morning ahead of us about four hours and gets a good many passengers by being ahead. Last Saturday we left St. Johns with and keep ahead of her all the way and prevented her getting any passengers on the passage. He got about half the emigrants from St. Johns by carrying them very cheap, and I took them for one dollar a head, the usual price is \$2.50. This is opposition indeed.

What shall I do? Silently submit to let that Boat play pirate or put her down in every movement. I . . . cannot think she ought to be quietly allowed to run to Canada.⁸²

At a meeting with the directors of the CTC in early November the “pirate” captain from Vergennes offered his competitors two options and a threat: buy him out, allow him a share of the towing business, or expect more opposition on the St. Johns-Whitehall run. A letter to Isaiah Townsend by business associate Timothy Follett of Burlington described the showdown:

Capt. Sherman made a statement at length in regard to the Water Witch, the termination & substance of all which was, that he wished the companies to take the boat off his hands & pay him therefore the sum of \$10,000. He gave the Co. to understand, in reply to a question distinctly put to him, that he felt himself at liberty to put the Boat on the lake another season as a passage Boat, provided he found insufficient encouragement to keep her in the business of towing boats.

Follett reported that the directors told Sherman his answer must await the CTC’s annual winter meeting, “But this postponement was only intended for a single object, & that to keep the old man in suspense, for not a Gentleman of that Co. to my knowledge, will consent to listen for a moment seriously, to his proposal.” Follett was dismissive of the threat posed by *Water Witch*:

We may now expect opposition—& it is reported I generally believe that the Capt. [Sherman] will add something to the length of his Boat, & otherwise alter & perhaps improve her, before another season—all his energies will be directed to our injury. On the whole I contemplate the case with no fear as to its result, & think in the end it may be well for us—for we may sometime expect opposition, & I prefer to have it from Capt. Sherman, than from any other quarter. If we meet it in the true spirit & run him and his Boat off the Lake, as we certainly can, it will probably give us for a number of years thereafter, the quiet enjoy-

ment of the business, unmolested. But if we purchase this opposition, we may always be prepared to purchase Boats, more particularly if these boats are failures.⁸³

Sherman's offer to sell tells us that providing reliable steamer service to Vergennes was only part of his motivation for building *Water Witch*; he was equally happy to turn a profit by forcing the CTC and LCSC to buy a boat they did not need. There was a successful precedent for this ploy on Lake Champlain. In 1828 Henry Ross and Charles McNeill put their 134-ton steamboat *Washington* to work as a St. Johns-Whitehall opposition boat instead of employing it as a ferry at the Essex, New York-Charlotte, Vermont, crossing, whereupon the CTC purchased the vessel with company stock and brought Ross and McNeill into the company as directors.⁸⁴

As Follett predicted, the CTC directors took a harder line with Sherman and the *Water Witch*. In 1833 they did buy out a rival, but it was Isaiah Townsend and his Lake Champlain Steamboat Company, complete with the *Phoenix II*, *Congress*, and the Shelburne Shipyard, for \$47,000 worth of company stock. The acquisition gave the company ownership of four of the lake's seven steamers, making it the dominant transportation business in the region.⁸⁵

Sherman subsequently made good on this threat. When the lake thawed in 1833 he again ran *Water Witch* between St. Johns and Whitehall and again charged only one dollar per passenger. It was not sustainable, however, for at this low rate he must have been hard-pressed to meet his expenses. The well-funded CTC with its commodious boats and reliable schedules simply matched the fare and waited him out. It worked. Sherman pulled out of the competition by mid-summer and sought other employment for his boat. Follett crowed to Townsend on August 2: "Our boats on the Lake are doing a good business—the *Water Witch* is towing rafts. We think the opposition is nearly used up. We are all fully of the opinion that the course adopted to put her down, was the true & most effectual one. The public are with us, & the old man is sensible of it." As a final indignity, *Water Witch* was rammed and sunk by another vessel in 1833; whether the collision was accidental or deliberate is not known, but the expense of the subsequent salvage and over-haul could not have been welcomed by Sherman.⁸⁶

The CTC seemingly won, but Sherman must have signaled his willingness to run opposition again, for on November 21, 1833, he and the company signed an agreement for the following year. In it, Sherman agreed to "use and employ & confine his steamboat, called the *Water Witch* at his own charge & expense for and during the coming season ...

in towing vessels, Canal boats, rafts and transporting freight, to and from Whitehall in the State of New York, to Fort Cassin at the Mouth of Otter Creek.” Sherman promised not to go north of this location “so as [not] to interfere with the regular business” of the CTC. In return, the CTC ceded to him all towing work between Whitehall and Otter Creek, unless *Water Witch* was disabled and could not fulfill its obligations. With this contract Sherman secured an unimpeded Vergennes-Whitehall steamboat link, and thus achieved at least one of his aims in building the boat.⁸⁷

Water Witch’s 1834 season passed without any noteworthy incidents, but was the last under Sherman’s ownership. In January 1835 the CTC completed its acquisition of the remaining boats on the lake by purchasing the Champlain Ferry Company’s 226-ton *Winooski*, the St. Albans Steamboat Company’s 138-ton *Macdonough*, and Sherman’s *Water Witch*. Under the sale terms Sherman received 160 shares of CTC stock (valued at \$8,000) and \$2,000 in cash (his asking price in 1832), as well as renewed membership on the CTC’s board of directors. *Winooski* and *Macdonough* were incorporated into the CTC fleet, but *Water Witch*, considered superfluous, was converted into a schooner and sold to private owners.⁸⁸

Jahaziel Sherman was probably ready to sell his steamboat, for it was just one of many irons he had in the fire at this time. Over the next ten years—the final decade of his life—he was involved in a remarkably diverse range of activities and enterprises, including politics, manufacturing, banking, real estate, farming, and transportation. Much of it revolved around his hometown. In 1835 and 1836 Sherman served as the representative for Vergennes in the Vermont state legislature, residing in Montpelier during the two autumn sessions; four years later, in 1840, he presided over the Vergennes Whig Party convention that enthusiastically endorsed William Henry Harrison for United States president. In 1834 he and a group of local businessmen founded a glassmaking venture in the city, and a few years later he was a partner in a substantial lumber mill in Whitehall, New York. Sherman’s banking interests included shares in three separate institutions, and in 1841 he served as president of the Bank of Vergennes. In addition to his ownership of the Vergennes wharf and the Fort Cassin steamboat landing, he possessed a substantial commercial block in downtown Burlington and three farms in Ferrisburgh and Starksboro, Vermont, that altogether comprised well over one thousand acres of land with assorted livestock and a flock of about 300 sheep.⁸⁹

Transportation remained a focal point of Jahaziel’s later years. He

was quick to recognize the potential of railroads to revolutionize overland travel in the region and invested accordingly, heading a consortium that sought to establish a line between Vergennes and Bristol, Vermont, in 1835. Eight years later he was part of a more ambitious venture, the Champlain and Connecticut River Railroad Company, which aimed to build a rail line across the entire state.⁹⁰ Sherman continued to invest in canal navigation, too, and by the early 1840s he was the owner of the canal boat *Middlebury* and half owner of five other boats. These included the Vergennes & Buffalo Line packets *J. Sherman* and *Garland*, which carried westward-migrating New Englanders and other travelers swiftly and “agreeably” between the two cities via the Champlain and Erie Canals.⁹¹

Sherman never lost interest in steamboats. His three-year feud with the CTC and its directors was evidently forgotten (or at least politely overlooked) in the aftermath of the *Water Witch* imbroglio; he remained a director for the rest of his life and CTC stock comprised a significant part of his wealth after 1835. His son Richard’s fame as steamboat captain reached its apogee in the decade that followed the completion of the CTC’s large and fast *Burlington* in 1837, a vessel widely hailed as the most luxuriously appointed and efficiently run steamer on North American waters.⁹² Jahaziel himself directed one final steamboat construction project, the building of the *William Caldwell* for service on Lake George; he started work on the vessel at Ticonderoga in 1837 and had it launched and ready to paddle up the lake by June 1838.⁹³

Jahaziel Sherman died in Vergennes on October 31, 1844, at age seventy-four and three months.⁹⁴ He left behind his fifty-two-year-old widow Harriet and five sons whose ages ranged from forty-seven to sixteen. A crowd of the captain’s business associates attended the funeral, with those from Burlington coming (appropriately enough) in a specially chartered CTC steamboat.⁹⁵ He was interred in the Vergennes Burying Ground, between his first wife Nancy and son Charles, and memorialized by a block of marble topped with a massive stone urn. His identity as a mariner and commander of steamboats is evident in the inscriptions carved into his monument and Nancy’s gravestone: On both he is “Capt Jahaziel Sherman.”

Sherman was eulogized by his peers for achievements in business and steam navigation, as well as for his personal qualities. One obituary written shortly after his death lauded him as “an upright and honest man,” and noted “we never heard an unkind word from his lips.”⁹⁶ A local history published four decades later considered him “a man of great dignity of presence, of courteous manners, of great method and system

in his business affairs, and universally respected for his probity and high sense of honor.”⁹⁷ If we now see something of a disconnect between these nineteenth-century encomiums and questionable moments in his career when he was ready to overcharge the government for an unfinished hull, smuggle goods, bribe a customs officer, or force colleagues to buy an unwanted steamboat, we must also recognize that the expansive, winner-take-all business culture of that era often showed rough edges. Captain Sherman was reliably a man of his time, place, and station in life: a businessman eager to advance his own commercial and transportation interests, a patriarch always prepared to support the careers of his sons and extended family, and a civic leader ready to promote the well-being of his hometown.

Jahaziel Sherman’s greatest career achievement was unquestionably in his promotion of steam navigation during a crucial time of development. Historical studies of early North American steamboats tend to focus on Robert Fulton and other inventors like John Fitch, John Stevens, and James Rumsey, and on their efforts to build the first working steamers. The contributions of these individuals were indeed vital, but we often overlook the equally important next stage. Once the breakthrough was achieved with Fulton’s *North River Steamboat* in 1807, it was entrepreneurs like Sherman—a man gifted with practical skills as a mariner, business acumen and connections, and relentless drive—who ensured that the full potential of the new technology was achieved and that the traveling public was adequately served by fast, reliable, commodious boats. One commentator on the lake’s shipping, writing in the late 1850s, saw this clearly and credited Captain Sherman both for bringing steamboats to Lake Champlain and for “establishing the thorough system of discipline and government” on the vessels he commanded: “His experience in the transportation of passengers ... made him familiar with what was necessary for their comfort, and, being a man of energy and decision, he instilled it into all around him.”⁹⁸

NOTES

¹ Kevin J. Crisman, “Lt. Cassin Says There Is A New Boat Near Vergennes: The US Schooner *Ticonderoga*,” in *Coffins of the Brave: Lake Shipwrecks of the War of 1812*, ed. Kevin J. Crisman (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 247-270; Kevin J. Crisman, “Sails on an Inland Sea: The Evolution of Lake Champlain’s Sailing Merchant Fleet,” in *The Philosophy of Shipbuilding*, eds. Frederick M. Hocker and Cheryl A. Ward (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 137-162; George Schwarz, *The Steamboat Phoenix and the Archaeology of Early Steam Navigation in North America* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018); Carolyn Kennedy, “Shelburne Shipyard Steamboat Graveyard: The Identification of Four 19th-century Steamboats in Shelburne, Vermont,” *Institute of Nautical Archaeology Quarterly* 42 (Fall 2015): 12-17.

² The decision to name Jahaziel after an obscure Levite prophet in the Hebrew bible was entirely in keeping with the Sherman family’s predilection for odd given names. Besides his father Prince, Jahaziel had an Uncle Fortunatus and an Aunt Experience, and his five siblings included older brothers Zoeth, Prince Jr., and Jireh. He also had an older brother Butler and a younger sister Syl-

via. "Ancestry.com: Prince Sherman," accessed February 2016, http://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/prince-sherman_42106106.

³ "The Sherman Family Tree," accessed February 2016, <http://www.sherman-roots.com/sherman/bio/10-sherm-jabez.html>. George H. Tripp, "The Town of Fairhaven in Four Wars," *Old Dartmouth Historical Sketch No. 6*, Proceedings of the Summer Meeting of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, Fairhaven, MA, 29 June 1904.

⁴ Abby Maria Hemenway, ed., *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, vol. 1 (Burlington, VT: Published by Miss A.M. Hemenway, 1867), 706.

⁵ *Ibid.*; *Albany* [N.Y.] *Register*, 6 May 1803, 12 April 1808.

⁶ Paul E. Fontenoy, *The Sloops of the Hudson River: A Historical and Design Survey* (Mystic, CT and Kingston, NY: Peabody Museum Press, 1994), 42-49. An advertisement for the Hudson River packets *Oncida Chief* and *Alcides* noted, "They will sail in ballast only, and every attention will be paid to the convenience of passengers," see: *Albany* [NY] *Gazette*, 14 April 1808.

⁷ https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/jahaziel-sherman_42117859, accessed December 2017.

⁸ Fontenoy, *Sloops of the Hudson River*, 47-49; John H. Morrison, *History of American Steam Navigation* (New York: Stephen Daye Press, 1958), 23.

⁹ Edward E. Salisbury, "Breese Family Monograph," Part 4 (1885), 495-502, accessed August 26, 2016, http://www.breeseusa.org/Bk_Monograph_part%204.htm; Elisha W. Keyes, *History of Dane County Biographical and Genealogical*, vol. 2 (Madison, WI: Western Historical Association, 1906), 848. Fulton and Livingston had two steamers operating on the Hudson River in 1810, the original *North River Steamboat of Clermont* and the *Car of Commerce*; clearly Helena Breese confused the name of the steamboat she boarded with the name of its inventor and owner; see: Jean B. Marestier, *Memoir on Steamboats of the United States of America* (Mystic, CT: Marine Historical Association, 1957), 48.

¹⁰ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 706; the dissolution of the Jermain-Sherman partnership is noted in the *Albany Gazette*, 19 February 1810.

¹¹ New York State Legislature (NYSL), Laws of 1787, Chapter 57; NYSL, Laws of 1798, Chapter 55; NYSL, Laws of 1803, Chapter 94; NYSL, Laws of 1807, Chapter 165; NYSL, Laws of 1808, Chapter 225; "Steamboats on the Hudson: An American Saga," accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/mssc/steamboats/toc.htm>. Steamboat inventor John Fitch was the beneficiary of the 1787 law, while Robert Livingston in 1798 and both Livingston and Fulton were the beneficiaries of the subsequent acts.

¹² *Columbian* [New York], 21 August 1811; *Public Advertiser* [New York], 16 May 1811; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 706.

¹³ The LCSC's new directors included: Tunis Van Vechtin, Abram G. Lansing, Isaiah and John Townsend, J. Ellis Winne, Samuel T. Lansing, and Joseph Alexander of Albany; Cornelius P. Van Ness, Moses and Guy Catlin of Burlington, and Amos W. Barnum of Vergennes, Vermont. Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 687-688. According to the terms of the Lake Champlain concession, the LCSC had to have a new boat operating within eighteen months of the termination of the War of 1812. Rebecca Davison, ed., *The Phoenix Project* (Burlington, VT: The Champlain Maritime Society, 1981).

¹⁴ David J. Blow, "Vermont I: Lake Champlain's First Steamboat," *Vermont History* 34 (April 1966): 115-122. Vermont's perceived infringement of the rights of the Livingston-Fulton monopoly is discussed in a memorandum by Robert R. Livingston, "Livingston and Fulton vs. Lake Champlain Boat," 12 October 1810, in the Fulton Account Book 1809-1814, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

¹⁵ Allen S. Everest, *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 88-92, 123-139.

¹⁶ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 687-688; H. P. Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason and Co. Pub., 1886), 665-666, 672-673, 675-676; Victor R. Rolando, *Two Hundred Years of Sweat and Soot: The History and Archeology of Vermont's Iron, Charcoal, and Lime Industries* (Burlington, VT: Vermont Archaeological Society, 1992), 93-96. Lacy is identified as the LCSC builder in Macdonough to William Jones, 21 May 1814, Entry 147 (Commanders Letters), Record Group 45 (RG 45), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC (NARA).

¹⁷ Marestier, *Memoir on Steamboats*, 7-8, 22. Other examples of early steamboats with high length-to-beam ratios include the *Philadelphia* on the Delaware River (145 feet in length by 20 feet in beam or 7.25:1) and Fulton's 1812-built *Firefly* on the Hudson River (170 feet in length by 20 feet in beam or 8.5:1), see: Kathleen A. Foster, *Captain Watson's Travels in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 302, 306. The Winans' Lake Champlain steamboat *Vermont* was

closer to *Paragon* in its LB ratio (125 feet in length by 20 feet in beam or 6.25:1), see: Blow, “Vermont I: Lake Champlain’s First Steamboat,” 117.

¹⁸ Crisman, ed., *Coffins of the Brave*, 247-270.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 251-252.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 252. The hull’s displacement was determined by Texas A&M Nautical Archaeology graduate student Megan Hagseth to be around 185 tons.

²² Macdonough to Jones, 21 May 1814.

²³ Crisman, ed., *Coffins of the Brave*, 254.

²⁴ Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont*, 668.

²⁵ George Schwarz, “Archaeology of the Early 19th-Century American Steamboat *Phoenix*,” *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 45 (2016): 119-140.

²⁶ George Schwarz, *The Steamboat Phoenix*.

²⁷ *Hampshire Gazette* [Northampton, MA], 13 September 1815.

²⁸ Schwarz, “Archaeology of the Early 19th-Century American Steamboat *Phoenix*,” 119-140.

²⁹ *Albany Gazette*, 21 August, 7 September 1815; *Hampshire Gazette*, 13 September 1815; *Cabinet* [Schenectady, NY], 25 October 1815.

³⁰ *Commercial Advertiser* [New York], 18 September 1815, 20 September 1816; “Inflation Calculator,” <http://www.in2013dollars.com/>, accessed November 17, 2017.

³¹ *Philadelphia Gazette*, 1 November 1815; *Northern Sentinel* (Burlington, VT), 27 October 1815. One commentator on Vermont’s reliability, quoted in the *Star* [Raleigh, NC], 10 November 1815, noted: “Vermont has been so much out of order the whole summer, that many persons, desirous of crossing the lake, have considered her altogether unsafe, and have selected other modes of conveyance.”

³² *Albany* [NY] *Advertiser*, 23 December 1815. According to Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 687, 692, 707, *Champlain* was built “more to sink the engine than to accommodate passengers,” in other words, to keep the Winans from resuming competition with the LCSC by building a new boat of their own. The replacement for the Winans’ vessel was initially referred to as “the new Vermont steamboat,” see: *Albany Register*, 10 May 1816. The LCSC first advertised its two-steamer schedule on July 1, see: *Albany Gazette*, 8 August 1816.

³³ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 692; Frank Mackey, *Steamboat Connections: Montreal to Upper Canada, 1816-1843* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 6; *National Standard* [Middlebury, VT], 4 June 1817. In the 13 September 1817 edition of the *Plattsburgh* [NY] *Republican*, Captain Sherman claimed of *Champlain*’s fire, “there can be no doubt of its being the work of an incendiary,” but he did not name any suspects. Sherman also claimed that the loss to the LCSC was around \$40,000, which seems suspiciously high for such a small boat, especially since the engine was salvaged and reused.

³⁴ *Northern Sentinel*, 27 February, 26 March, 20 November 1818; Mackey, *Steamboat Connections*, 236 (n48).

³⁵ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 692; *Northern Sentinel*, 7 May, 12 November 1819. The *Albany* [N.Y.] *Argus*, 19 October 1821, noted, “This boat has ample accommodations for passengers, but runs more particularly for freight.” R. W. Sherman’s fast passage was hailed in the *National Standard*, 18 August 1819.

³⁶ *National Standard*, 13 August 1817; in the article describing President Monroe’s tour *Phoenix* was described as “a well-constructed boat, elegantly finished; equal, if not superior to any in the United States.” In 1818 *Phoenix* had the honor of transporting two US war heroes, one of them alive (the War of 1812’s General Jacob Brown), and the other dead (the Revolutionary War General Richard Montgomery, killed and buried at Québec City in 1776 and recovered in June 1818 for reburial in New York City), see: *Northern Sentinel*, 21 August 1818, and Ogden Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain, 1809-1930* (Burlington, VT: Vermont Heritage Press, 1997), 30-31.

³⁷ Mackey, *Steamboat Connections*, 4-10; Walter Lewis, “The First Generation of Marine Engines in Central Canadian Steamers, 1809-1837,” *Northern Mariner* 7 (April 1997): 14.

³⁸ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 693; *National Standard*, 21 May 1817; *Plattsburgh Republican*, 13 September 1817; *Northern Sentinel*, 15 August, 5 September, 19 December 1817. *Caldwell* burned to the waterline in July 1819, see, *National Standard*, 4 August 1819.

³⁹ Schwarz, *The Steamboat Phoenix*; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 689-692; *Northern Sentinel*, 10 September 1819. *The Christian Messenger* [Middlebury, VT], 10 September 1819, pronounced the burning of *Phoenix* “the judgement of God” for operating on the Sabbath day. An eyewitness account of the fire published in the 9 March 1855 edition of the *Burlington* (VT) *Free Press* by passenger Elias Hall claimed that nine individuals died in the tragedy and that Captain Sherman did not appear on deck until after the boats had departed.

⁴⁰ *Northern Sentinel*, 5 November, 17 December 1819; *National Standard*, 7 December 1819.

⁴¹ Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 39.

⁴² *Phoenix II* enrollment, 1821, A. P. Barranco Collection, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, Basin Harbor, VT. Tonnage was an approximate measure of a ship's internal volume or cargo capacity and was also used for assessing tolls and taxes; the standard "Carpenters Measurement" formula of the early nineteenth century was: (Length x Breadth x Depth of Hold) ÷ 95, the odd divisor of 95 being found to obtain the most accurate results. See: <http://www.bruzelius.info/Nautica/Tonnage/Tonnage2.html> (accessed 21 June 2018).

⁴³ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 692.

⁴⁴ Henry Hall, *Report on the Ship-Building Industry of the United States for the Department of the Interior* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1884). In the report's "Letter of Transmittal," 30 November 1882 (page v), Hall writes: "A large number of small builders keep no accounts other than rough memoranda on a board, no copy of which is retained after the boat or vessel in hand is completed, or, at any rate, nothing better than equally rough notes jotted down in a pocket memorandum book, which are not complete when entered, and almost unintelligible in a year's time. Vessel builders trust to memory and judgment in some things to an extent hardly paralleled in any other trade, and it frequently happened that those who had completed vessels of considerable size in the census year, having no accounts, and not having charged their memories with details, were unable to tell the quantities of materials that had entered into the construction of the vessels or how much money had been paid out for labor in building them."

⁴⁵ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 692; for information on McQueen see Carol W. Pursell Jr., *Early Stationary Steam Engines in America: A Study in the Migration of a Technology* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), 36, 50-51.

⁴⁶ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 692.

⁴⁷ *National Standard*, 29 August 1820.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 October, 28 November, 12 December 1820.

⁴⁹ Charles Lee Sherman's death by drowning in the Otter Creek is noted on his gravestone. The Sherman family plot is located at the southwestern corner of the Vergennes Burying Ground near the intersection of School Street and Mountain View Lane.

⁵⁰ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 692, states that *Phoenix II* entered service in July 1820, but this is contradicted by a notice of the vessel's impending launch in the *National Standard*, 7 November 1820; the relocation of the LCSC's yard to Shelburne is described in Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 693, and possible reasons for the move are discussed in Kenneth A. Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson* (Vergennes, VT, 1996), 20. Captain Richard Sherman continued overwintering steamboats at Vergennes as late as 1834, see: *The Spectator* [New York], 14 April 1834.

⁵¹ *Albany Argus*, 18 May 1821.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 4 September 1821, 17 May 1822; *American Repertory* [St. Albans, VT], 14 October 1824. A passenger on *Phoenix II* in 1822 thought the boat "more elegantly fitted up than any I had seen," suggesting that the LCSC advertising was not all hyperbole, see: *American Repertory*, 11 December 1823; Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 41; and Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont*, 683. *Phoenix II* and *Congress* would maintain a similar schedule with no competition for the next seven years.

⁵³ *Albany Argus*, 4 September, 19 October 1821; *Christian Messenger*, 25 August 1819; *American Repertory*, 9 July 1822.

⁵⁴ Bartholomew Tierney, *A Statement of the Case of Bartholomew Tierney, Late Guager* [sic] at Port St. Johns, Lower Canada, Respectfully Addressed to the Public (Montreal, 1823). The British term "gauger" describes a customs officer who inspects shipments of dutiable goods.

⁵⁵ *American Repertory*, 3 September 1822.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 August, 17 September, 29 October 1822; *American Repertory*, 11 December 1823; *Vergennes Journal*, 28 April 1823. The embittered Tierney had the last word by publishing a well-documented account of the affair that questioned the veracity and integrity of Jahaziel Sherman, Amos Barnum, Tierney's fellow Custom House officers, and the governor of Lower Canada, see: Tierney, *A Statement of the Case of Bartholomew Tierney*.

⁵⁷ Jahaziel's command of *Phoenix* in 1823 is recorded in the *Northern Sentinel*, 23 May, 27 June 1823; George Burnham's command in 1824 is recorded in the *Northern Sentinel*, 23 April 1824.

⁵⁸ Although not a blood relative, Harriet was Jahaziel's niece: she was the third daughter of Nancy Sherman's older sister Rhoda Winslow Daggett. Freetown (MA) Birth, Marriages and Deaths Index, 1686-1844, Book 16, 73; Freetown Records, 1759-1795 Number 2, 249; Freetown Birth, Marriages and Deaths Index, 1686-1844, Book 16, 22, accessed on Ancestry.com Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988 [database on line]. According to the reminiscences of W. W. Swiney, Harriet and her older sister Nancy Daggett were living with the Sherman family in Vergennes at the time of their Aunt Nancy's death, presumably to run the household during her decline, see *The Enterprise & Vermonter* [Vergennes, VT], 8 October 1925.

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⁵⁹ Sarah Ann died in her childhood, but Charles and Benjamin reached adulthood. https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/jahaziel-sherman_42117859, accessed December 2017.

⁶⁰ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 692-693, 702-703.

⁶¹ George H. Wilson, "The Application of Steam to St. Lawrence Valley Navigation, 1809-1840" (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1961), 241. After the *Swiftsure-Richelieu* collision the latter boat's owners preferred charges and were ultimately awarded £250 in damages by the court, see Wilson, "The Application of Steam," 208. Jahaziel B. Sherman's career on Lake Erie is described in J. B. Mansfield, ed., *History of the Great Lakes*, vol. 1 (Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1899), 608-610; *Superior 1822 Steamer* enrolments on the "Great Lakes Maritime Database," <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/t/tbnms1ic?page=index>, accessed January 20, 2016. See note 84 below regarding J. B. Sherman's ownership of *Superior*.

⁶² *Vermont Aurora* [Vergennes], 2 August 1827, 14 February 1828; Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont*, 683; Wall & Forest, publishers, *Map of Vergennes, Vt.* (New York, 1853); Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 67; Vergennes Property Records, vol. 6, "Partition and Distribution of the Estate of Jahaziel Sherman," 5 October 1846, 363-374, Vergennes, Vermont, City Clerk's Office. The riverfront property apparently passed through several owners: the LCSC was building boats here from 1813 to 1820, and in 1821 one "A. Hammond" publicly offered for sale 11 acres of Vergennes property that included "The Ship Yard, at which the largest vessels of the American squadron on the lake were built. Several steamboats have also been built here," *New York Gazette*, 14 April 1821.

⁶³ *Albany Argus*, 10 October 1823; John E. O'Hara, "Erie's Junior Partner: The Economic and Social Effects of the Champlain Canal Upon the Champlain Valley," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1951), 114-115, 123-125, 131-132; Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 20-25.

⁶⁴ Arthur B. Cohn, *Lake Champlain's Sailing Canal Boats* (Basin Harbor, VT: Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, 2003), 26-64; Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 42-43.

⁶⁵ Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 24-25, 31-32, 42-43, 174-175; Walter H. Crockett, *Vermont, The Green Mountain State*, vol. 3 (New York: Century History Co., 1921), 212; *Vermont Aurora*, 8 February 1827; *Burlington Free Press*, 2 June 1892. Sherman's Fort Cassin House and the nearby steamboat landing are shown on a chart titled *Hydrography of Otter Creek from Vergennes Falls to Lake Champlain*, Surveyed and Drawn under the Direction of Brevet Major General John Newton, U.S. Army (Engineer Department U.S. Army), October 1871, U.S. National Archives, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, Hydrographic Records (RG 37).

⁶⁶ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 693, 706; Ogden Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake George* (Lake George, NY: Lake George Steamboat Co., 1932), 47-53; William Annesley, *A New System of Naval Architecture* (London: W. Nichol, 1822); John L. Sullivan, *A Commentary on the New System of Naval Architecture of William Annesley* (Troy, NY: William S. Parker, 1823); Frederic F. Van de Water, *Lake Champlain and Lake George* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1946), 286-287. Despite its elasticity, *Mountaineer's* frameless construction held together until the hull was retired in 1837, see Russell P. Bellico, *Sails and Steam in the Mountains* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2001), 300. In 1824 Sherman was asked to inspect the ferry *William Annesley*, a new laminate steamboat on the St. Lawrence River, see: Mackey, *Steamboat Connections*, 86-88 and Wilson, "The Application of Steam to St. Lawrence Valley Navigation, 1809-1840," 83-91, 258-259.

⁶⁷ *Albany Argus*, 9 March 1824; Arthur J. Weise, *Troy's One Hundred Years, 1789-1889* (Troy, NY, 1891), 108-109. The *Chief Justice Marshall* is the only new Hudson River steamboat specifically mentioned as being Jahaziel Sherman's responsibility, but a contemporary source noted that he supervised the building and outfitting of other boats as well, possibly *Marshall's* sister steamers *Constitution* and *Constellation*; see *Albany Argus*, 18 March 1825, and Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 694, 706.

⁶⁸ *New York Observer*, 25 September 1824; *Cooperstown [NY] Watch-Tower*, 21 March 1825; *Farmer's Register* [Troy, NY], 19 April 1825. Passengers did regularly fall overboard from steamboats: in two separate incidents on Lake Champlain during the summer of 1820, a US Army soldier and a 16-year-old girl toppled from the deck of *Congress* and drowned; see *National Standard*, 18 July 1820, and *Religious Reporter* [Middlebury, VT], 16 September 1820.

⁶⁹ Thomas A. Janvier, "The Evolution of New York," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 87 (June 1893): 26-28; *Albany Argus*, 8 November 1825. A committee of passengers praised Richard Sherman and his steamboat in a testimonial published after the parade, commenting, "To say that the Marshall was not surpassed by any boat in the line, high as the compliment is, would, perhaps, fall short of doing him justice," see *Farmer's Register*, 22 November 1825.

⁷⁰ Business ties between the LCSC and Jahaziel Sherman clearly did not end with the latter's involvement in Hudson River steamboats in 1824-26. *Phoenix II* overwintered at Vergennes during the winter of 1826-27, when Jahaziel published a "lost and found" list of personal effects accidentally left on the boat by passengers over the previous season. The LCSC sold its remaining property in

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Vergennes, a storehouse, workshop, and wharf, at the end of 1827. *Vermont Aurora*, 11 January, 5 April, 6 December 1827.

⁷¹ *Brattleboro* [VT] *Messenger*, 3 November 1826; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 694; Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 50-51, 162-163.

⁷² Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 694, 706-707; Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 50-54.

⁷³ *American Repository*, 4 October 1827; *Burlington Free Press*, 12 October 1827. J. Sherman laid the boat up at Vergennes for the winter on 30 November, see: *Vermont Aurora*, 6 December 1827; *Commercial Advertiser*, 17 December 1827; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 706-707. At the time of *Franklin's* launch in July the CTC and Richard W. Sherman had already agreed that he would command the boat, see *The American* [New York], 14 August 1827. On April 22, 1830, a little over two years after Richard resigned his command of *Chief Justice Marshall*, one of that boat's boilers exploded at Newburgh, N.Y., killing and badly scalding several passengers and crew; the survivors were picked up by the steamer *DeWitt Clinton*, commanded by Walter W. Sherman, see: *The Watchman* [Montpelier, VT], 4 May 1830.

⁷⁴ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 694-696. *Franklin* proved a highly successful boat: During its first full year of operation (1828) it entered the lake on April 3 and retired November 28, a total of seven months and twenty-five days, during which time it completed 213 regular passages of the lake (112 of them on 112 successive days), and steamed an estimated 34,080 miles (54,846 km), "a distance ... never traversed by any other vessel, in so short a time," *Vermont Aurora*, 12 February 1829.

⁷⁵ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 694, 706-707.

⁷⁶ Sarah Ann's death is noted in https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/jahaziel-sherman_42117859, accessed December 2017. The Parker & Daggett fire is described in *The Watchman*, 15 July 1828 and the *Baltimore* [MD] *Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 22 July 1828. Despite the lack of insurance Sherman immediately rebuilt the warehouse and Parker & Daggett reopened for business the following January, see *Vermont Aurora*, 1 January 1829. Daggett & Parker were still in a partnership four years later when they sold Jahaziel Sherman a jointly owned plot of land, see Vergennes Property Records, vol. 5, "Parker & Daggett Deed to Sherman," 29 March 1833, 177-178.

⁷⁷ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 694-695; Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 41-47, 55-56. The diary of steamboat captain Gideon Lathrop chronicles both the financial embarrassments of the original LCSC directors (18 January 1829) and Isaiah Townsend's agreement with the CTC to work in a limited partnership from 1831 to 1833 (29 January 1831), see Gideon Lathrop Diary 1827-1842, Columbia County Historical Society, Kinderhook, NY.

⁷⁸ "Contract between the Champlain Transportation Company and Jahaziel Sherman to put a false bow on the Steamboat *Franklin*, 22 November 1831," Champlain Transportation Company (CTC) Papers, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington. The improvements in North American steamboat design and performance in the 1830s are discussed in David Stevenson, *Sketch of the Civil Engineering of North America* (London: Weale, 1838), 119-124, and in Morrison, *History of American Steam Navigation*, 48-50.

⁷⁹ Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 47; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 695; Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 61, 80.

⁸⁰ Steamboat *Water Witch* enrollment, 8 August 1832, Custom House Records, Box 20, Folder 4 (January-December 1832), Henry Stevens Papers, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, Middlesex, VT; Tuttle and Gregory, *The Troy Directory for the Year 1830* (Troy, NY: Tuttle and Gregory, 1830), 70; Miller Battle to Isaiah and James Townsend, 14 March 1832, manuscript letter, Box 11, Townsend Family Papers, New York Public Library, New York, NY; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 695, 707.

⁸¹ James Fennimore Cooper, *The Water Witch, or, The Skimmer of the Seas* (Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1831). Naming ships after popular novels or plays was a common practice of the day, and at least two other *Water Witch* steamboats entered service at this time, one at New York City and the other on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, see William M. Lytle and Forrest R. Holdcamper, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States 1790-1868* (Staten Island, NY: Steamship Historical Society of America, 1975), 226.

⁸² Of the feud between Sherman and the CTC, Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 695 diplomatically stated, "[*Water Witch*] running between Vergennes and Whitehall would consequently take some of the travel, [and] thus come in conflict more or less with the business of the Cham. Trans. Co." G. Lathrop to I. Townsend, 7 November 1832 (see also G. Lathrop to I. & J. Townsend, 24 October 1832), Box 9, Townsend Family Business Papers (TFBP), New York State Library, Albany, NY. Lathrop suspected collusion between the Shermans, father and son, observing: "I cannot but believe that the Capt. of the *Franklin* is happy in every obstacle thrown in my way to prevent the Phoenix earning money."

⁸³ T. Follett to I. Townsend, 4 November 1832, manuscript letter in the collection of H. Gardiner Barnum, Burlington, VT.

⁸⁴ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 693-695; *Vermont Aurora*, 5 April, 6 December 1827; "Principal events during my years of steaming, 1828: The Washington. Capt. Snow, came out in June and run opposition to the Phoenix and other boats"; also 24 June, 2 and 14 December 1828, Gideon Lathrop Diary 1827-1842. There was a precedent for steamboat blackmail in the Sherman family as well. In 1828 Jahaziel B. Sherman persuaded a rival company to pay him \$3,000 *not* to run his steamboat *Superior* on Lake Erie, but the same rival refused to pay in 1829 and the vessel was ultimately seized by creditors, see J. Sherman to Walter W. Sherman, 4 February 1828, and 31 March, 11, 14, 17 April, 15 May 1829, and Smith & Macy to J. Sherman, 5 July 1829, W. W. Sherman Correspondence 1826-1834, New York State Library, Albany; Mansfield, ed., *History of the Great Lakes*, 608-610; *Superior* 1822 Steamer enrollments on the "Great Lakes Maritime Database," accessed January 20, 2016, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/t/tbnms1ic?page=index>.

⁸⁵ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 695; Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 56; Sale of Phoenix and Congress to Champlain Trans. Co., February 22, 1833, Carton 1, Folder 178, Champlain Transportation Company Papers, Special Collections, Bailey-Howe Memorial Library, University of Vermont, Burlington.

⁸⁶ Jahaziel Sherman's feud with the CTC baffled the *Montreal Gazette*, which commented: "[*Water Witch*] is owned entirely by old captain Sherman, and the [*Phoenix*] belongs ... to a company, composed of the same old gentleman, his son, and others" (as quoted in the *Rutland [VT] Herald*, 25 June 1833); T. Follett to I. and J. Townsend, 2 August 1833, Box 9, TFBP; "Principal events during my years of steaming, 1833: Water Witch run opposition a part of the time and towed the remainder, sunk once this season by a vessel running into her side," Gideon Lathrop Diary 1827-1842.

⁸⁷ "An agreement made between the Champlain Transportation Company and Jahaziel Sherman of Vergennes, November 21, 1833," CTC Papers.

⁸⁸ "An agreement entered into between the Champlain Transportation Company, the Champlain Ferry Company, the St. Albans Steamboat Company, and Jahaziel Sherman, January 27, 1835," CTC Papers. Although Sherman received the equivalent of \$10,000 for *Water Witch*, the boat's insurance policy in 1834 was valued at only \$7,000, Aetna Fire Insurance Policy No. 139, 24 April 1834, CTC Papers; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 695, 706.

⁸⁹ Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 88-89, 125. During his first term as a legislator Sherman introduced a bill requiring vessels operating on Lake Champlain to show a light at night, see *Vermont Gazette* [Bennington], 26 October 1835. Jahaziel ran for a third term in 1837 as the Temperance Party candidate and in a three-way race garnered more votes than his Whig and Democrat opponents, but the latter parties united for the runoff election and their candidate defeated Sherman, see John E. Roberts to John D. Ward, 11 September 1837, John Dod Ward Family Papers, MSS Collection 22391, Box 4, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library. The Whitehall lumber mill is mentioned in J. Sherman to N. Daggett, 21 January 1841, Daggett Papers, Lake County History Center Museum, Painesville, OH. Sherman's presidency of the Bank of Vergennes is noted in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 February 1841; Vergennes Property Records, vol. 6, "The Estate of Jahaziel Sherman," 363-374.

⁹⁰ Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 89; *Bellows Falls [VT] Gazette*, 16 December 1843.

⁹¹ *The Watchman*, 2 November 1840, 23 August 1844; Vergennes Property Records, vol. 6, "Partition and Distribution of the Estate of Jahaziel Sherman," 371-373; Probate Records, Sherman, Jahaziel, File No 3236-3240, 1826-1891, 104, accessed on Ancestry.com Vermont, Wills and Probate Records, 1749-1999 [database on line].

⁹² Vergennes Property Records, vol. 6, "Partition and Distribution of the Estate of Jahaziel Sherman," 371-373; Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 695-697, 702-704. Richard W. Sherman resigned from the *Burlington* and the CTC in 1847 after a disagreement with the directors; he retired to Vergennes, where he died in 1868, see Ross, *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain*, 61-69.

⁹³ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 696; Jahaziel Sherman to Philo Doolittle, 19 April 1837, CTC Papers; *Commercial Advertiser*, 6 June 1838. Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 693, identifies the 1838 Lake George steamboat as the *John Jay*, but this was the name of its successor, built in 1849.

⁹⁴ Sherman's health was evidently in decline for several years before his death. In a letter to Nathan Daggett dated 4 March 1841, he noted, "My health is very precarious & am obligd to be extremely Careful & notwithstanding My Caugh has returned upon me & the consequences are doubtful," Daggett Papers.

⁹⁵ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 706; Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont*, 673-674.

⁹⁶ *Burlington Free Press*, 22 November 1844.

⁹⁷ Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont*, 673.

⁹⁸ Hemenway, ed., *Gazetteer*, 1: 702.