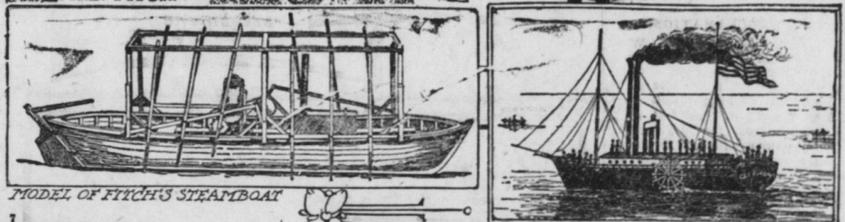


# Who "Invented" the Steamboat?



MODEL OF FITCH'S STEAMBOAT

THE CLERMONT (AFTER AN OLD PRINT)



THE "TUG FIRE CANOE" ON THE MISSISSIPPI

**W**HO "invented" the steamboat? Ask ten Americans that question and the chances are that nine out of the ten, remembering a few outstanding names in their school histories, will answer "Robert Fulton," thereby proving once more what a strange jumble of fact and fiction is the average American's conception of the history of his country. For the question of who deserves credit for "inventing" the steamboat has recently started another of those controversies over historical matters, which sometimes results in clearing up certain disputed points in the annals of our nation. More often it does not, principally because the partisans never seem able to agree upon a strict definition of terms, without which it is virtually impossible to settle such disputes conclusively.

In this particular case the word "inventor" is the crux of the situation. While popular opinion accords that distinction to Robert Fulton, and in 1900 he was elected to the Hall of Fame at New York university as "the inventor of the steamboat," being the first inventor and the ninth American chosen to membership among "America's Immortals," his right to that title has been challenged on behalf of no less than eight other Americans. Outstanding among these claimants is that of Lieut. John Fitch, who, it is asserted, made a successful trip on the Delaware river in a steamboat which he had designed more than 20 years before Fulton's historic voyage up the Hudson in the Clermont.

Fitch's right to the title of "inventor" is supported by his descendants who are members of the Fitch Family association. They have nominated his name for inclusion in the Hall of Fame at New York university with the demand that either the name and bust of Fulton be removed or that those of Fitch be added. They are planning a nation-wide celebration in 1935 to mark the one hundredth and fiftieth anniversary of "the invention of the steamboat by Fitch in 1785," and they ask that this celebration be given recognition by the government and that public agencies and national patriotic societies co-operate in it as they did in the Hudson-Fulton celebration of 1907.

They base their contention that Fitch rather than Fulton was the "inventor" of the steamboat upon certain official acts of the government, the chief one being that both houses of congress by a unanimous vote, approved on February 12, 1920, an appropriation of \$15,000 for a suitable monument to Fitch as "the first in the world's history to successfully apply steam propulsion of vessels through water." This memorial was unveiled May 27, 1927, in the public square in Bardonia, Ky., where Fitch died July 2, 1798, in poverty and despair of proving to an unbelieving world the practical value of a steamboat.

They point out, too, that the labels on the models of steamboats in the Smithsonian institution bears out their contention that he was the "inventor." These labels read as follows:

**JOHN FITCH'S STEAMBOAT**—Designed by John Fitch, built in Philadelphia in 1786, and first tested on the Delaware river July 27 of that year, when a successful public trial was made. Equipped with a steam engine which, connected by geared machinery, sprocket wheel and chain, operated six oars placed vertically in a frame on each side of the boat.

In 1788 Fitch completed his first commercial boat for carrying passengers, and it was driven in a similar manner. This boat was 60 feet long and 8 feet wide. She made a trip from Philadelphia to Burlington, about 20 miles, in July, 1788, the longest ever made by any steamboat up to that date. October 12, 1788, the boat took 30 passengers from Philadelphia to Burlington in 3 hours and 10 minutes, a speed of over six miles an hour. In 1790 Fitch built another boat which attained a speed of eight miles an hour and continued to run on the Delaware river, carrying passengers and freight, for three or four months.

**RUMSEY'S STEAMBOAT**—"Propelled by jets of water forced out through the stern. Tested on the Potomac river at Shepherdstown, Va., 1787."

**STEAMBOAT CLERMONT, 1807**—"Designed by Robert Fulton, built in the city of New York, and made its first trip from that city to Albany in August, 1807."

Of these labels, the one on Fitch's model is the only one which uses words "successful public trial." If, then, a "successful public trial" is proof of "invention," it would seem that there is no doubt as to the right of Fitch to be given the title of "inventor of the steamboat." However, there are those whose definition of "invention" is a vastly different one and they assert that no one person can claim the credit for the invention of the steamboat.

Of the other "inventors" of the steamboat, the volume "The March of Commerce" by Malcolm Keir in the Yale University Press, "Pageant of America," has this to say:

"Samuel Morey of New Hampshire, who began experimenting with a steamboat in 1790, built a paddle-wheel steamer which in 1794 ran from Hartford to New York at a speed of about 15 miles an hour. This boat had the paddle wheel at the stern. A later boat of Morey's, built at Bordentown on the Delaware, was operated with two side paddle wheels. Others who were seized with the 'steam mania,' as it was derisively called at the time, were William Longstreet of New Jersey, whose boat made five miles an hour against the current of the Savannah river in 1790, and Elijah Ormsbee of Connecticut, who made paddles to imitate ducks' feet and operated them by steam in a boat that he nav-

igated from Cranston to Providence and Pawtucket and return.

"Oliver Evans, who invented the high-pressure steam engine and tubular boiler, applied it to moving boats as well as highway wagons and mills. Steam dredges built by him, such as the Orukter Amphibolos, operated in 1804 through the water under their own power. Robert R. Livingston, afterward associated with Fulton, built a steamboat and ran it on the Hudson. John Evans of Hoboken, N. J., experimented with a half-dozen different steamboats after 1791, and eventually hit upon the idea of the screw propeller in place of the more usual setting poles, paddles, oars, or paddle wheels. Stevens himself, however, soon discarded the screw propeller in favor of paddle wheels, and it was not until years later—in 1839—that the screw propeller received further attention.

"Benjamin Franklin, who had a finger in nearly every pie that was cooking during his lifetime, was a member of an association headed by James Rumsey, a native of Maryland, that proposed to try Franklin's idea of propelling a boat by sucking in water at the bow and ejecting it at the stern. A boat was built and run on this principle by Rumsey in 1787, a steam pump being the means of ejecting the water. Rumsey had in 1784 exhibited a steamboat before General Washington at Bath, Va. In this earlier boat the power had been steam applied by cranks to a series of setting poles. Fitch, who had applied for state monopolies over steamboats, contested Rumsey's invention, so Rumsey took his ideas to London but died there in 1792, before they became practical.

In mentioning the men who contributed to the success of the steamboat there is one name which cannot justly be omitted. Fitch, Fulton and the others had built steamboats which would operate on gently-flowing bodies of water in the East, but it remained for another man to tame the swift waters of the West. Fulton and Livingston tried it and failed. But Henry M. Shreve, whose name is perpetuated in the city of Shreveport, La., succeeded.

Shreve called his boat the Washington and in it he made two round trips between Louisville, Ky., and New Orleans, making the return trip in the then unbelievably fast time of 25 days or less than a fourth of the time it took the bargemen and keelboat pole men to make the same distance. From that time on steamboats went everywhere, no matter how swift the current they had to buck.

(© by Western Newspaper Union.)

## A Few Little Smiles

**LOOKED QUEER**

The Bride (Indignantly)—I never was so embarrassed in my life!  
The Groom—Why, whassa matter, dearie?  
The Bride—All through the wedding ceremony you had your eyes glued on the side door marked "Exit," and the best man actually started two or three times to grab you as if he thought you were going to make a dash for it.

**AN ACCIDENT**

He—"Did that girl who was so determined to marry George get him?"  
She—"No, she did not." He—"Did he die of accident or disease?"

**From a Rear Seat**

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
On the vaudeville stage afar!  
I wonder how you'd look if I,  
With glasses up, were sitting nigh?

**Carry On**

Pat, who was moving, had asked one or two of his friends to carry his chicken-house round for him.  
They found this a very strenuous job, but struggled on. About halfway they set the coop down to have a rest when one of them suddenly exclaimed: "Why, where's Pat?"  
"I'm all right," came a voice from inside the house, "I'm carrying the perches."—Exchange.

**Godspeed!**

"Let me take \$10 will you? I left my wallet at home."  
"Sorry, but I can't. I'll put you in the way of getting it, though."  
"Thanks, how?"  
"Here's a dime for carfare. Run home and get your wallet."

**Education Something Fierce**

"Why did you leave your last place?" asked the mistress of a fashionable home of the prospective negro maid.  
"Dey was too highbrow for me," she answered. "Dey was always fightin' an' fussin', an' it sho' kept me busy runnin' from de keyhole to de dictionary, so Ah got mad an' quit."

**Nerve**

"What's this extra charge for oil?" demanded the motorist.  
"That's for the oil we left on the upholstery," explained the garage man.

**HIS OWN GAME FIRST**

She—"Do you ever give any consideration to our foreign relations?"  
He—"Can't say I do. My poor relations get all I have to give."

**Economics**

The old experience comes again  
To all the conscientious lands,  
With many striving to explain  
What no one clearly understands.

**Even Split**

Angry Mistress—"In the time it takes me to tell you to do the work, I could do it myself."  
Housemaid—"Yes'm, and in the time it takes me to listen to you, so could I."

**Foolish Chance to Take**

"George was killed going to pay a debt."  
"There! That is what comes of wanting to pay one's debts."—Stray Stories.

**Education's Costs**

"Since you gave your son a car has he kept his promise to do more studying at college?"  
"I'm certain of it, because he writes home much oftener now for money for books."

**Trained Caddy**

The Collier—Loafing as usual?  
The Terrier—Nope. I gotta job. I get a pork chop just for retrieving that little ball and dropping it somewhere near the hole.

**Italy Unable to Check Movement From Villages**

Italy's efforts to check the flow of population to the cities apparently have not been successful. This is especially true in the Alpine districts. The rapid depopulation there in recent years has been causing anxiety to the Italian government, which two years ago authorized the expenditure of \$100,000 upon the construction of highways, the sanitation of mountain areas and other improvements. Afforestation laws, designed to create new opportunities for woodmen in the Alps areas, were also passed. The attractions of the cities of the plains have continued, however, to prove too strong for many of the old mountaineering stock, and the fall in the population of Alpine towns and villages has not been appreciably checked. Some villages have lost from half to two-thirds of their population in less than half a century.

**Wax-Work Show Mystery**

Among the wax figures at Mme. Tussaud's in London, there are many of prominent politicians of today, and in one of these an old-fashioned hat-pin was discovered embedded up to the head. It was removed, but next day two others were discovered in the same position. At one time, when those who practiced "black magic" wished to destroy anyone, they made a wax figure in his likeness and stuck pins into it. This was supposed to have the effect of unmaking the person concerned fall ill, and unless something happened to break the spell, the illness would have a fatal termination.

**Static Forecasts Favored**

Static should be forecast along with weather reports for the benefit of radio fans. This was one of the ideas being offered of the International Geodetic survey's section on earth magnetism and electricity, which will be held at Stockholm, Sweden. The daily reports would include those on possible magnetic disturbances, so that the listener would know what sort of radio reception to expect.

**Premium for French Babies**

The French have a sliding scale of beneficiaries for the parents of larger and better families. The first-born draws a prize of 120 francs, the second 300, and from them on a 540 a head until the total reaches an even dozen, at which time there is a general payoff bonus and everybody starts all over again. M. Desire Ferry, the minister of public health, has transmitted orders to that effect to the prefects.

**Gull Made Gift of Fish**

Henry Pester was fishing in Long Island sound off Mayville, L. I. A sea gull frisked greedily about his catch. He kept chasing it away. Just to show that there were no hard feelings, the gull darted at the water, caught a one-pound weakfish, dropped it squarely in Mr. Pester's lap and flew away.

**Record for Motherhood?**

Senora Leoncio Chavarria of Tuxtle Gutierrez, Mexico, is supposed to be Mexico's most prolific mother. In 40 years she has borne by one husband 37 children—23 boys and 14 girls. There were 18 pairs of twins.

**Matter of Gender**

Little Girl—I wonder why they say "Amen" and not "Awomen."  
Her Brother—Because they sing hymns and not hers, stupid.—London Answers.

**Especially the Blues**

Clarence—Doctor Fixum says paw-paws will cure dyspepsia.  
Jack—Paw-paws will cure most anything if they have money enough.

Isn't the world rich enough to have cotton napkins that it can throw away instead of paper ones?

## Summer COLDS

Almost everybody knows how Bayer Aspirin breaks up a cold—but why not prevent it? Take a tablet or two when you first feel the cold coming on. Spare yourself the discomfort of a summer cold. Read the proven directions in every package for headaches, pain, etc.



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