

BULLETIN  
OF THE  
CANADIAN RAILROAD HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION



Number 5

May, 1938.

Chateau De Ramezay  
Montreal

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A SHORT HISTORY OF  
THE CHAMPLAIN TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

by

D. A. Loomis

with additional notes by Robert R. Brown

Mr. Daniel A. Loomis, a honorary member of the Association entered the service of the Champlain Transportation Company on July 12, 1886, and remained with that company for 51 years until April 1st, 1937 when it was sold by the Delaware and Hudson to other interests. For the last 34 years of these, he was General Manager of the Company. He continues as an officer of the Delaware and Hudson as General Manager of the Lake George Steamboat Company.

Lake Champlain was discovered by the early French Explorer, Samuel de Champlain who came onto the lake in 1609. The lake was not commercially in use until after the French and English wars about 1760. Major Phillip Skene in that year established a large colony at the mouth of Wood Creek, called Skenesboro, now Whitehall in the State of New York and in 1770 to accommodate the business which was springing up on the lake built a sloop and opened communications with the settlements on the borders of Lake Champlain and with Canada. This sloop was the first vessel built for the purpose of trade. In 1772 Ira Allen, who had settled in Burlington built a sloop called the "Liberty" and established trade with lake ports and Canada. The navigation of Lake Champlain was confined to sail vessels until 1809. Robert Fulton's steamboat, the "Clermont" built in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., commenced operation on the Hudson River on September 4th, 1807. John and James Winans, who had worked as ship carpenters on the "Clermont" went to Burlington and in 1808 commenced the building of a steamboat called the "Vermont" and it was the third commercially successful steamboat in the world, (see Footnote). It was built at the foot of King Street, in Burlington, under an oak tree, launched sideways, was stuck in the sand, but finally was floated and commenced service in June 1809, between Whitehall, N.Y., and St. Johns, Lower Canada. The vessel cost \$20,000., it is reported to have been 120 ft. long, although this seems to have been a bit of an exaggeration, 20 feet broad, depth of hold 8 feet, and it displaced 167 tons. The engine was 20 H.P., the maximum speed about 6 m.p.h. and sailing vessels, with a fair wind, could easily pass her.

An advertisement which appeared in the Vermont Centinal, published in Burlington on June 30th, 1809 stated: "The 'Vermont' steamboat has been built and fitted up, at great expence, for the convenient accommodation of Ladies and gentlemen who wish to pass Lake Champlain, with safety and dispatch. She will make the passage of the lake, 150 miles, in the short time of 24 hours and her arrival and departure has been so arranged as to meet the Southern Stage at White Hall, and complete the line to St. Johns, L.C. The Steam Boat will sail from St.

ful career and continued the service up to 1835. The Lake Champlain Steamboat Company through various disasters continued their operations and built the "Phoenix II" at Vergennes, Vt. in 1820. This vessel continued in operation until 1837. The Champlain Canal, connecting Lake Champlain with the Hudson River, was completed in 1823 which provided a direct water connection between Lake Champlain and the Hudson River.

In 1824 a second corporation was formed called The Champlain Ferry Company which started the building of a steamboat called the "General Greene" built at Shelburne Harbor, near Burlington, in 1825, operating between Burlington, Vt. and Port Kent, N.Y. until 1833 when she was converted into a sloop. A third Company was formed called The St. Albans Steamboat Company, chartered by the Vermont Legislature in 1826 to operate steamboats between St. Albans, Vt. and Plattsburg, N.Y. This corporation built the steamboat "MacDonough" at St. Albans Bay in 1828.

The Lake Champlain Steamboat Co. through opposition became financially involved and finally a new corporation was formed called The Champlain Transportation Company which received its charter from the State of Vermont in October, 1826 and this corporation took over by consolidation all of the steamboats of The Lake Champlain Steamboat Co, The Champlain Ferry Company and the St. Albans Steamboat Company and today is the oldest incorporated steamboat company having a continuous service under its corporate name.

The Steamboat "Washington" was built at Essex, N.Y. in 1827, the "Winooski" built at Shelburne Harbor in 1832 and the "Water Witch" built at Fort Cassin, Vt. also in 1832.

The new corporation, The Champlain Transportation Company, built their first boat called the "Franklin" at St. Albans, Vt. in 1827. By pooling the interests competition was avoided

and The Champlain Transportation Company continued successful operations. In 1837 they built at Shelburne Harbor, Vt. the steamboat "Burlington" which was at that time the most notable steamboat in the world and was praised most highly by Charles Dickens in his "American Notes". The "Burlington" was followed by a steamboat called "Whitehall" built at Whitehall, N.Y. in 1838. The Champlain Transportation Company continued the service and prospered and built the Steamboat "Saranac" at Shelburne Harbor in 1842.

The success of The Champlain Transportation Company invited competition and Peter Comstocks of Whitehall, N.Y., who had large interests in the Adirondack Mountain of New York State, started the building in 1844 at Whitehall, N.Y. of a steamboat to be called the "Francis Saltus" which came into possession of The Champlain Transportation Co. in 1848. This Company built at Shelburne Harbor in 1847 the "United States" which was so much better than the steamboat "Francis Saltus" was the reason why the "Saltus" was sold to the Company. A steamboat called the "Ethan Allen" was built at Shelburne Harbor in 1847 by a corporation called the Steam Tow Boat Company.

The boats of The Champlain Transportation Company were sold to the Rutland and Burlington Railroad and operated by that Company in 1853 and 1854, the Company retaining their charter. The operation of steamboats by the Railroad was not successful and The Champlain Transportation Company took back their steamboats in 1855. Two boats were being built at Whitehall, one called the "America" built in 1851; the other called the "Canada" built in 1853. These boats were bought by the Champlain Transportation Co. which again controlled exclusively the operations of steamboats on the lake.

A steamboat called the "Montreal"

was completed at Shelburne Harbor in 1856 and during that year The Delaware & Hudson Railroad Company came into possession of the controlling interests of The Champlain Transportation Company and during the Civil War from 1861 to 1865 there were four steamboats in operation the "United States", the "America", the "Canada" and the "Montreal". Between 1856 and 1867 there were no boats built on the lake. The "Adirondack" built in 1867 at Shelburne Harbor, was at that time one of the finest vessels in the country. The "Vermont II" was built at Shelburne Harbor in 1871 and was the largest vessel ever built on Lake Champlain.

The Rutland Railroad ending at Burlington desired a connection with the Plattsburg and Montreal Railroad at Plattsburg and built the "Oakes Ames" at Marks Bay near Burlington in 1868, using her as a car ferry between Burlington and Plattsburg. The Delaware & Hudson Railroad having obtained control of the Montreal & Plattsburg Railroad bought the Steamer "Oakes Ames" and transferred her to The Champlain Transportation Company, renamed her the "Champlain". This boat was wrecked near Westport, N Y in 1875. This left only the "Vermont" and the "Adirondack" operating the service of The Champlain Transportation Company between Rouses Point and Whitehall. The "A. Williams" was built by Andrew Williams and Warren Corbin at Marks Bay near Burlington in 1870, was sold to The Champlain Transportation Company in 1874, operating in the ferry service between Burlington, Port Kent, Plattsburg and St. Albans. The "Chateaugay", which was the first steel side-wheel steamboat on Lake Champlain, was built at Shelburne Harbor in 1888.

The St Johnsburry & Lake Champlain Railroad for a connection with the terminus of their railroad at Maquam Bay to operate between their terminal and Plattsburg, N Y built the "Maquam" in 1881. This boat operated until

1897 and was sold to The Champlain Transportation Company

The "Vermont III" was completed at Shelburne Harbor, Vt. in 1903, the "Ticonderoga" was completed at Shelburne Harbor in 1906 and that is the last side-wheel steamboat to be built on Lake Champlain up to the present time. In 1936 a Diesel engine ferry boat called the "City of Burlington" was built to operate a competing line between Burlington Vt. and Port Douglass, N.Y. The entire capital stock of The Champlain Transportation Company with its boats, real estate, franchise and all its interests was sold April 1st, 1937 to an organization headed by Horace W. Corbin as President and Manager, continuing the operations of The Champlain Transportation Company. In 1937 a second Diesel engine ferry boat called the "City of Plattsburg" was built and commenced operation. The Company burned wood as fuel up to and including the year 1857 and commencing in 1858 coal was substituted for wood and this was continued up to the present time. The two ferry boats with Diesel engines used a crude oil for fuel but the side-wheel steamboats of the Company are still using coal as fuel. The operation of the early boats between St. Johns, Canada and Whitehall, N Y. continued from 1809 to 1851, between Rouses Point and Whitehall from 1852 to 1874, between Rouses Point and Fort Ticonderoga in 1875 and between Fort Ticonderoga and Plattsburg from 1876 to 1932. The distance between St. Johns and Whitehall is 143 miles, between Rouses Point and Whitehall 120 miles between Fort Ticonderoga and Plattsburg 81 miles and between Fort Kent and Burlington ten miles. The thru line service operated by The Champlain Transportation Company was entirely discontinued at the close of the season of 1932. The "Vermont III" and the "Chateaugay" were not operated during the year 1937. The "Ticonderoga" was used to carry excursions and the ferry service for automobiles a

passengers was taken care of by the two Diesel engine streamline ferries mentioned above.

The advent of the automobile, the motor bus, train service on both sides of the lake forced the

Company to abandon the through line service which had been maintained, except for the war period, 1812-14, from 1809 to 1932, one hundred and twenty-four years of service.

Footnote: Below are listed some of the world's earliest steamboats. The numbers signify the accepted order in which they were built.

1. 1543 Built at Barcelona, Spain, by Blaxo de Garay. Probably propelled by means of a steam jet.
2. 1784 A small experimental boat operated on the Potomac River by James Rumsey.
4. 1788 A small steam yacht built for Patrick Millar to run on Loch Dalswinton, Scotland. It was a catamaran with one paddle wheel between the hulls. Engine built by Alex. Symington. Speed 5 m.p.h.
14. 1807 "Clermont" The first commercially-successful steam-boat. Built by Robert Fulton, engines by Boulton and Watt. Ran between New York and Albany. Rebuilt in 1808 and renamed "North River".
15. 1807 "Pheonix" Built at Hoboken by Col John Stevens and taken by sea to Philadelphia. Was the first steamboat on the high seas. It ran for many years between Philadelphia and Trenton.
16. 1808 "Vermont" Built at Burlington, Vt., by John and James Winans. First steamboat on Lake Champlain and the first to operate in Canada.
17. 1809 "Accommodation" First Canadian steamboat. Built at Montreal for John Molson. Hull by John Bruce and engine by John Jackson. Ran between Montreal and Quebec. Replaced by a larger boat in 1812.

#### NEWS OF THE ASSOCIATION

##### Resumés of the Minutes

N.B.: Unless otherwise stated, it is to be understood that the meetings were held in the Chateau de Ramezay with the President acting as chairman.

Meeting of February 9th: It having been decided to prepare a new crest for the Association, members were asked to submit designs at the next meeting. Mr Samuel Insull, Jr., of Geneva, Ill. was elected an out-of-town member. The evening's lecture, "Railway Engineering Problems" was delivered by Professor

Wood, Department of Civil Engineering, McGill University.

Meeting of March 9th: Some attention was given to the possibility of building up a comprehensive file of magazines relating to railway affairs. Designs for the new crest were submitted by Mrs. Bevington, Mr. Loye, and Mr. Nicholls. After a lively discussion, the design of Mr. Loye was approved subject to certain changes. Mrs. Bevington, the Association's Treasurer, read a paper, entitled "Across Canada,

June 28th, 1886". Mr. McClure, as chairman, introduced the early business of the meeting.

Meeting of April 13th: The special attraction of the evening was an informal lecture, entitled "Rambling Recollections of Steamboat Days on Lakes Champlain and George", by Mr. F.A. Loomis of Burlington, Vt., general manager of the Lake George Steamboat Co. and authority on early steamboats. He announced that at his suggestion the Canadian Government had dredged the Richelieu River from Ile aux Noix to the Boundary and had located off Cantic, Que., the hull of the S.S. "Vermont", first steamboat on Lake Champlain and the first to operate in Canada. Mr. Shepherd, a member, announced that he had formed a company to receive this summer steamboat service on the Ottawa River. Mr. Spriggs, the Vice-president, was chairman during the early part of the meeting.

Excursions

Plans are going forward for at least three excursions for the summer months. Early in June there will be a trip, probably by motorboat from St. Johns, or Ile aux Noix to inspect the hull of the S.S. "Vermont", in the Richelieu River off Cantic, Que. The Secretary is negotiating with an amateur diver to accompany the party! In July or August there is to be a motorcar excursion to St Albans, to visit the Central Vermont Shops, and to Richford, Frelightsburg, etc. Then in the autumn, we may pay the Canadian Locomotive Company at Kingston a return visit.

Announcements

Out-of-town members are reminded for the last time that subscriptions to the Bulletin for the current year Fifty Cents, have been due for some time. There follows a complete list of the Association's out-of-town members: Messrs. I.E. Barr, John W Coburn, E.J. Pruner, B. Thomas, Keith Pratt, F.D Hoffman, Orin P.

Maus, Harold A. Jenkins, Bruce Scot George Harris, J.O. Spreen, Eric A. Grubb, C.D Powell, Samuel Insull, J. If you wish to receive the Bulletin let us have your subscription now.

The Association's excursion by chartered bus to the D & H Colonie Shops and the B. & M. Mechanicville Yards, planned to be run in collaboration with the Railroad Enthusiasts, New England Division, on May 22nd, has had to be cancelled as far as the Canadian party is concerned. The "recession" forced the Delaware & Hudson to close their shops early this spring and they are not to be reopened for some time.

This autumn marks the 100th anniversary of steam locomotion in Nova Scotia. Mr. Robert R. Brown's authoritative history of the Albion Mines Railway will appear in the August and December issues of the Bulletin.

The new crest of the Association has been approved. It will appear on all the Association's stationery, and, beginning with the August issue on the cover of the Bulletin. Like the original crest of the Association which was based on the coat-of-arms of the Grand Trunk, the new crest closely approximates in design the seal of Canada's first railway, the Champlain and St. Lawrence. Thus the railway seal depicts in an imaginative fashion an early railway scene, a passenger train "at speed" crossing level countryside with hills in the background; the Association's crest presents what is believed to be an accurate representation of the locomotive, "Dorchester", with Mount Johnson, a familiar landmark near St. John Que., in the background. For those not "in the know", the locomotive is labelled by a drawing of its famous nameplate in the foreground. Both seal and crest are of exactly the same size. The Association is indebted to the fertile imagination and fine draughtsmanship of its President for this distinctive insignia.

Locomotive List, II  
Continued

Dominion Atlantic Ry.  
1894-  
Continued

<u>Blt.</u>	<u>Acq.</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Cyl.</u>	<u>Driv.</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Prev.No.</u>
1894	1894	17	Yarmouth	4-4-0	14 &			
					18x24	66	Baldwin	Y.A. 5
1894	1894	18	Digby	4-4-0	18x24	66	Baldwin	Y A 6
1393	1893	19	Oberon	4-4-0	18x24	66	Baldwin	W A 15
			Titania )					
1893	1893	20	re )	4-4-0	18x24	66	Baldwin	W A 16
			Valliere )					
1894	1894	21	Fortuna	4-4-0	17x24	66	Baldwin	W A 17
1879	1894	22	W.H.Moody)				Portland	Y A 7
			re	4-4-0	16x24	66		
1895			Cerese				Fleming	W A 19
1896	1896	23	Regina	4-4-0	17x24	66	Baldwin	W A 18
1898	1898	24	Lady Latour	4-4-0	17x24	66	Baldwin	
			Pontgrave )					
1901	1901	25	Ex )	4-4-0	18x24	66	Baldwin	
			Strathcona )					
			President )					
1901	1901	26	re )	4-4-0	18x24	66	Baldwin	Gov. Cox
			Kent )					
1903	1903	27	Canada	4-4-0	18x24	66	Baldwin	
1915	1905	28	Pioneer	2-6-0	16x24	55	Portland	Sc. 1921 MID 4
1874	1905	29	Brooklyn	4-4-0	17x24	66	Rhode I.	MID 3
1883	1905	30	Windsor	4-4-0	17x22	62	G.T.R.	MID 2
1874	1905	31	Truro	4-4-0	17x24	66	Rhode I.	MID 1
1905	1905	32	Blomidon	4-6-0	20x24	66	Baldwin	
1905	1905	33	Glooscap	4-6-0	20x24	66	Baldwin	
1892		34	Gaspereaux	4-6-0	18x24	62	C. P. R.	C P 310
1892		35	Gabriel	4-6-0	18x24	62	C. P. R.	C P
1892		36	Basil	4-6-0	18x24	62	C. P. R.	C P 319
1902		37	Haliburton	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	Sc. 1935 C P 510
1902		38	Bear River	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	SZO Re Champlain C P 520
1902		39	Benedict	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	Ret.C.P. 1924 C P 522
1902	1924	39	Lescarbot	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	C P 508
			Devonshire )					
1902		41	re )	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	C P 501
			Grandfontaine )					
1902		42	DeMonts	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	C P 514
			Byng )					
1902		43	re )	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	C P 517
			Nicholson )					
1902		44	New Yorker	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady	Ret. C.P. C P 508
			Poutrincourt					

1902	45	Clementsport) re Alexander )	4-6-0	20x26	63	Schenectady		C P	503
1897	379		4-6-0	19x24	62	Baldwin	Ret. C.P.	C P	379
1897	380		4-6-0	19x24	62	Baldwin	Ret. C.P.	C P	380
1897	382		4-6-0	19x24	62	Baldwin	Ret. C.P.	C P	382
1897	384		4-6-0	19x24	62	Baldwin	Ret. C.P.	C P	384
1897	385	Grand Pre	4-6-0	19x24	62	Baldwin	Ret. C.P.	C P	385
1897	387	Cornwallis	4-6-0	19x24	62	Baldwin	Ret. C.P.	C P	387
1902	500	Membertou	4-6-0	20x26	62	Schenectady		C P	500
1902	518	Poutrincourt	4-6-0	20x26	62	Schenectady To			
1903	520	Champlain	4-6-0	20x26	62	North British	replace 44 Sc 1935	CP	518
1903	521	Halifax	4-6-0	20x26	62	North British	Ex 38	C P	520
1903	528		4-6-0	20x26	62	North British		C P	521
1903	531	Benedict ) re ) Mascarene)	4-6-0	20x26	62	North British		C P	528
1903	532	D'Aulnay Evangeline)	4-6-0	20x26	62	North British	Sc 1935	C P	531
1903	537	re ) Fronsac )	4-6-0	20x26	62	North British		C P	532
1903	544	Hebert	4-6-0	20x26	62	Saxon		C P	537
1903	545	Howe	4-6-0	20x26	62	Saxon		C P	544
1903	552		4-6-0	20x26	62	Saxon		C P	545
1903	556	Champdore	4-6-0	20x26	62	Saxon		C P	552
1904	557	Subercase	4-6-0	20x26	62	Saxon		C P	556
		530-540-555							557
		502 New Yorker							
1936	2552	Haliburton							
1900	6058		0-6-0	18x24	52	C.P.R.			
1902	6109		0-6-0	18x26	52	C.P.R.			
1905	6161		0-6-0	18x26	52	C.P.R.			
1907	6189		0-6-0	18x26	52	C.P.R.			

NOTES:

1. "Re" stands for renamed, or renumbered.
2. Numbers in the Builder Column refer to builders' numbers.
3. Rebuilt means converted from broadgauge.
4. Locomotives with numbers higher than 32 are leased from C.P.R.

MEMORANDA