Present at the Creation

Freemason Stevens Rogers and the Dawn of the High Technology Age

John Laurence Busch on Freemasons among the first steam vessel pioneers

At the dawn of the 19th century, humanity remained largely where it had been for millennia. To wit, if a person wanted to move from one place to another, he or she had a limited number of choices: on land, one could walk, ride upon a beast of burden, or ride in a wagon or cart pulled by a beast of burden; on water, one could paddle or sail; and in the air, one might be able to float—briefly—in a balloon, but only go in the direction dictated by the prevailing wind. In each and every case, the method of practical movement was based upon natural power.

There was no reason for anyone in the year 1800 to believe that humanity's lot would ever be any different. Deference to the power of nature was an obvious fact of life.

But in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, two great movements had broken the surface and were just beginning to blossom. One was a Political Revolution, which, after a centuries-long gestation in the British Isles, had ignited in the form of the American Revolution. Central to this movement were the principles of individual liberty, free enterprise and limited, transparent self-government. The other was an Industrial Revolution, which, again, after a decades-long gestation, had accelerated in the form of a vastly improved, more powerful steam engine, first in Britain, and then slowly spreading elsewhere in Europe and the Americas. Central to this movement was the idea that humans could create an artificial power that could replace and replicate natural power to a degree never before imagined.[1]

By the first decade of the nineteenth century (or near the end of the so-called "long eighteenth century"), these two epic revolutions were about to give birth to a third revolution that would alter the human dynamic just as much as the first two. And in the case of this third revolution—this High Technology Revolution—Freemasons would play important, trailblazing roles.[2]

In the late summer of 1807, the American innovator Robert Fulton successfully ran the first commercially successful steam-powered vessel in history, from New York City to Albany, in the State of New York.[3] In so doing, Fulton's so-named *North River Steam Boat* proved that it was possible to create a form of artificial power that allowed people to alter to practical effect where they were, and when they were there, faster than by natural

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means. Such a result had never before been accomplished by the human race, and accordingly, steam-powered vessels may be considered the first high technology in history.

Robert Fulton could not accomplish this great feat alone. He had an important legal and financial partner named Robert R. Livingston. This patriarch of a wealthy upstate New York landed family was far more than just a financial partner to Fulton. He was the epitome of the newly-independent United States of America, having risked his life and property to help found the country.[4] Livingston's contributions were both notable and substantive.

In 1776, Livingston had been named to the "Committee of Five" which drafted the Declaration of Independence. (The other members were Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania.) For daring to be so intimately involved in the Declaration, British troops responded by burning Livingston's house to the ground in 1777.[5]

From 1781 to 1783, Livingston had served as United States Secretary of Foreign Affairs under the Articles of Confederation.

In 1788, with independence won and the need

Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813), founding father and partner of steamboat pioneer Robert Fulton.

Stevens Rogers, sailing master of the *Savannah*, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

for a more cohesive central government apparent, Livingston had been chosen as a delegate to the New York State Convention tasked with considering ratification of the new federal Constitution. Along with fellow delegates Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, he convinced the skeptical convention to ratify the document, by the narrow margin of 30 to 27.[6]

And in 1789, Livingston had administered the oath of office to George Washington, upon his first election to the Presidency.

But Robert R. Livingston had distinguished himself in another way during this period of revolutionary turmoil: he had become a leading member of the Freemasons. In fact, the year after the American Revolution came to an end (with the signing of the Treaty of Paris), Livingston had been exalted to Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York, an honor which he held from 1784 to 1800.[7]

Yet Livingston's distinguished career of public service still was not over. In 1801, newly-inaugurated President Thomas Jefferson named him to serve as the U.S. Minister to France. In that post, Livingston played an instrumental role in the negotiations to purchase the Louisiana Territory from the revolutionary government of Napoleon Bonaparte.

It was in Paris that Livingston met fellow American expatriate Robert Fulton. Both men had previously tinkered with the idea of a boat propelled through the water by means of a steam engine.[8] The incorporation of the Louisiana Territory into the United States created a new imperative: find any means available to link this distant western land with the rest of the country. The most logical means of doing so was clearly through the Mississippi, Ohio and Missouri Rivers. A "steamboat"—if it worked—held the potential to do so like no other technology. It should be able to transport passengers and cargo not only downriver, but upriver, creating two-way traffic and strong, multi-dimensional economic bonds between the old States and any newly-admitted States out west.

It was this patriotic desire—along with the prospect of expanding the Livingston family fortunes to the West—that led Robert R. Livingston to agree to a steamboat partnership with Robert Fulton. That Fulton's *North River Steam Boat* of 1807 actually worked—to positive and practical effect—meant that from that year forward, the human race's relationship with time and space would never be the same again.

Robert R. Livingston's participation in Freemasonry was hardly unique among the founding generation. Without a doubt, the most famous Freemason of the entire American Revolution was none other than George Washington. Once he was elected President, Washington took ample advantage of his public position to promote the cause of Freemasonry.

The most visible example of this promotion took place in 1793, when President Washington laid the cornerstone for the Capitol building in newly-created Washington, D.C. The President wore his Masonic apron to the ceremony, as did many other officials who also were Freemasons. Even the engraved plate onto which the cornerstone was laid noted the participation of Freemason lodges from the States of Maryland and Virginia.[9]

Such conspicuous participation by Freemasons in the erection of the very building in which the national legislature would meet, led by the

Freemason Chief Executive, could not help but impress upon the American public that Freemasonry appeared to be a positive force for progress. Unsurprisingly, the formation of Freemason lodges began to grow rapidly.[10] With the death of George Washington in 1799, the desire of young American men to emulate this Founding Father grew even stronger. It could be argued by some that there was no better way to declare your love of country, and progress, than to join the Freemasons.

Lots of people interested in Fulton and Livingston's new-fangled "steamboat" came to New York to see it. Skeptics could be excused for declaring that the vessel would not return to service after the winter of 1807-08. Such had been the outcome of numerous experiments with steam-powered vessels in the past.

But this time, it was different. After taking the *North River Steam Boat* to Livingston's Clermont estate along the Hudson River for the winter, Fulton practically re-built it. The re-registered *North River Steam Boat of Clermont* did indeed return to service in the spring of 1808, and broke the psychological barrier for good, at least as far as running such contraptions on protected rivers was concerned.[11]

Among those who had seen the *North River* in 1807 was a Connecticut sailing sloop captain by the name of Moses Rogers. So entranced was he by this revolutionary craft that Rogers quickly sought to transfer his base of operations from his native New London to the New York Bay port of New Brunswick, New Jersey. Once there, Rogers maneuvered himself into getting hired in 1809 by Fulton and Livingston's nearest steamboat rival, Colonel John Stevens of Hoboken, New Jersey.[12]

Colonel Stevens and Robert R. Livingston had a long and deep relationship. The two men had studied together at King's College (now Columbia University). Livingston had then married the Colonel's sister, Mary Stevens. And John Stevens had in turn named his first-born son Robert Livingston Stevens. The Colonel had been experimenting with steamboats for decades, but could never get any of his prototypes to work effectively. John Stevens' experiments had inspired Livingston to try to build his own steamboat (which failed, just like all the others), and gave him the idea of using such vessels to try to overcome the currents of western rivers.[13]

Moses Rogers quickly proved his worth to the Colonel, maneuvering the Stevens-built steamboat *Phoenix* down the storm-wracked New Jersey coast in June of 1809, from New York City to Philadelphia, thereby completing the first ocean voyage by a steam vessel in history. Once there, Captain Rogers ran the *Phoenix* on the Delaware River, from the City of Brotherly Love to Trenton, New Jersey.[14]

This "new mode of transport," as steamboats were sometimes called, quickly began to spread. Within a few years, steamboats were in operation on a number of rivers in the United States. By 1812, a Scotsman named Henry Bell began operating the first commercially successful steamboat in all of Europe, on the Clyde River in Scotland. In short order, the British quickly caught the same "steamboat fever" that their American cousins had contracted just a few years prior.[15]

From Fulton and Livingston's *North River Steam Boat* to John Stevens' *Phoenix* onward, American steamboats possessed a number of unusual—indeed, revolutionary—characteristics beyond their

steam power. Traditions in the maritime realm were often centuries old, and deviating from them required some form of excusable rationale. Steam power—and its inherent imperative to be seen as an acceptable means of transport—provided just such an excuse to do things differently.

One such new feature was the flying of a coachwhip pennant from one of the steamboat's back-up sailing masts. Coachwhip pennants, which are very long, thin triangular flags, had been used for centuries to denote a publicly-owned vessel. In the English-speaking world, the only craft to fly such flags were warships and other government-owned vessels, such as post office sailing packets.[16]

Fulton, Livingston and Stevens—recognizing that they needed to attract as many skeptical passengers as they could—hoisted coachwhip pennants on their steamboats from the earliest days of service. The message was clear: even though these steamboats were privately-owned, the proprietors considered them to be a form of public vessel. In other words, if you could pay the fare, then you too could ride the steamboat.[17]

The other new feature introduced by Fulton, Livingston, and Stevens on steamboats was a separate large cabin for the ladies. Sailing vessels had long been notorious among the fairer sex for their lack of privacy. The first entrepreneurs for this new mode of transport quickly realized that if their steamers were to be successful, they needed to attract female passengers in substantial numbers. With the certainty of departure time and the near-certainty of arrival time achieved, the next logical feature to offer women was a sanctuary from overly-polite males. So from the first generation onward, ladies-only cabins were a novel—and very welcome—feature on many steamboats.[18]

Coachwhip pennants on the outside and ladies cabins on the inside sent a powerful message to the public about these new steamboats: open to all, comfortable for all. It was, one could argue, emblematic of the new kind of egalitarianism that the Americans were in the process of creating with their new country.

Once the Napoleonic Wars (including the so-named War of 1812) were over, steamboat production really took off. While the British were building half-a-dozen to a dozen steamers per year from 1815 onward, the Americans were constructing even more. In 1818 alone, the United States built upwards of three dozen steamboats, from New England to South Carolina in the East, and from Louisiana to Pittsburgh in the West.[19]

Taking these vessels out on the ocean was, in minds of most mariners, extremely ill-advised. Their paddlewheels, made mostly of wood, and their steam machinery simply could not withstand the forces to be found at sea.

One steamboat captain who did believe it was possible was Moses Rogers. Having completed the first successful ocean voyage by a steam vessel (from New York City to Philadelphia, in 1809), he proceeded in 1815 to complete his second ocean transfer of a steamboat from one market to another (this time, from Philadelphia to Baltimore). He did it again, between those same two cities, in 1816. No other steamboat captain could claim such a degree of success with this new technology out on the ocean.[20]

It was, no doubt, because of this experience that Captain Rogers was recruited by the newly-formed Charleston Steam Boat Company of Charleston, South Carolina to take command of

their first steamboat, in late 1817.[21] In December of that year, Rogers inaugurated the first voyage of the company's steamboat *Charleston*, from its home port to Savannah, Georgia. This was not a one-time steamboat transfer, but rather the beginning of regular passenger service between the two cities.[22]

At first, Rogers ran the *Charleston* on the inland passage, exposing her to the ocean only at a few select bays and inlets. But soon thereafter, in early 1818, he took the Charleston on the "outside," and in the process tested his steamboat's performance on the ocean, off the coast of South Carolina.[23]

Moses Rogers' intrepid testing—of both his craft and his passengers' willingness to accept a short ocean passage on a steamboat—caught the notice of a number of merchants in Savannah. Among them were shareholders of the Steam Boat Company of Georgia, which ran steamers on the Savannah River up to Augusta and back.[24] Together, Rogers and these experienced steamboat entrepreneurs determined that it was time to make the great leap, and prove to the world that a steam vessel could do more than overcome the winds and currents on rivers, lakes and bays; their vision was to show that a steamer could cross an ocean, safely and expeditiously.

To do so, Moses Rogers proposed the creation of a new kind of steam vessel. It would be not a "steamboat," but rather a "steamship."[25] The difference between the two words was far more than semantic.

In the English language, a "vessel" was the generic term that had been used to describe any craft that floated upon the water.

A "boat" (again, in English) had been generally defined—for centuries—as a vessel to be used in protected waters.[26] There were some exceptions to this definition, "lifeboat" being an obvious one, but lifeboats were—hopefully—only to be used temporarily on the ocean, if at all. Otherwise, the "protected waters" definition held. This is precisely why Fulton and Livingston's first commercially successful steam vessel had been officially registered at the New York Custom House as the *North River Steam Boat*; it was clearly a fragile vessel that needed to be used in protected waters.[27]

Captain Rogers knew that if he attempted to cross the Atlantic Ocean in a "steamboat," everyone would think he had simply gone insane—no mariner in their right mind would do such a thing. So instead, he proposed to the leadership of the Steam Boat Company of Georgia the construction of a new kind of steam vessel, with the complete rigging of a "ship."

What did this mean?

A "ship" in the English language was defined at that time as a vessel with three masts which deployed its sails on horizontal poles (or yards) lashed to the masts at right angles to the keel (when looking straight down at the vessel). The deployment of sails at right angles to the keel created, in schematic terms, a series of 90-degree corners, like that of a square. Accordingly, shipbuilders and mariners referred to such vessels as being "square-rigged." And any vessel that had three masts, square-rigged, was, by convention, called a "ship." (Vessels with two masts, square-rigged, were, by contrast, called "brigs.")

Rigging a steam vessel as a ship had never been attempted before, let alone crossing the ocean in one. Captain Rogers and the Savannah merchants determined that such an effort needed to be organized as a completely new endeavor, distinct from any existing steamboating activities.

So in May 1818, they announced the formation

of the Savannah Steam Ship Company, the very first "steam ship" company in history. The founders of this new venture had two goals in mind: first, to conduct what they called "a laudable and meritorious experiment," to prove to the world that it was indeed possible to cross the ocean using the artificial power of steam; and second, to initiate regular steam packet service between the United States and the United Kingdom.[28]

With the money raised (which alone was quite a feat), Captain Moses Rogers traveled to the birthplace of the new mode of transport—New York City—and proceeded to hire a team of contractors to build this revolutionary vessel. Among those he decided to recruit was a very distant cousin of his by the name of Stevens Rogers.[29] Steve (as his family and friends called him) would help to oversee the construction of the back-up sailing rig, as well as serve as the first mate and sailing master on the Atlantic crossing.

The summer of 1818 proved to be an extremely busy one for the Rogers cousins. They had to line up a hull builder, hire three different steam engine contractors, and coordinate the fabrication process for the hull, the sailing rig and the steam apparatus. By early August, the hull (which had been laid down in the spring) was nearing completion, and the launching of it into the East River was set for later that month, on Saturday the 22nd.

The launching of the hull of a large vessel was always a cause for celebration, and certainly the first "steamship" in history justified a substantial ceremony. Numerous members of the extended Rogers clan of New London County, Connecticut made plans to visit New York City to witness the event. For his part, Stevens Rogers returned to his home near New London to help the family coordinate their travel.[30]

But Steve had another reason for returning home. On Saturday, the 15th of August 1818—precisely one week before the launch of the first steamship was scheduled to take place in New York—Stevens Rogers attended a private ceremony of the Union Chapter № 7 of Freemasons in New London, Connecticut, where he was "Exalted to the Most Excellent Degree of Royal Arch Mason."[31] Witnessing the ceremony and signing Steve's Royal Arch Mason certificate were three fellow Freemasons, all prominent members of the greater New London community: Coddington Billings, a Stonington merchant and sailing vessel owner (who had hired Moses Rogers to captain one of his schooners a dozen years prior);[32] Samuel Green, publisher of the *Connecticut Gazette*, one of New London's most widely-read newspapers; and Lyman Law, a New London lawyer who had previously served in both the Connecticut and U.S. House of Representatives.

These officers of the Union Lodge who signed Steve's certificate certainly were men of accomplishment within New London County.

But what about Stevens Rogers? How did he fit in with these prominent local leaders, and the Freemasons of early nineteeth-century America? In a phrase, Steve was part of a new generation of Freemasons, following in the footsteps of George Washington.

Born in 1789, Stevens Rogers had been raised on a farm at a place called Goshen Point, which was directly south of the port of New London and right at the mouth of the Thames River (pronounced "Thaymz" by the local populace). With a fine view of Long Island Sound and the river's mouth, Steve

had practically a front-row seat in the theater that was the entry and exit point for all vessels that patronized the Port of New London. With so many members of the extended Rogers clan having gone to sea, Steve decided he would do likewise.

But Stevens Rogers' parents forbade him to become a mariner. Steve was their eldest child, and only son. His place in the world was fixed: he was to inherit the family farm, and carry on accordingly.[33]

By the time Steve was twenty years of age (in 1809), he could bear the burden no longer. He trekked into New London and sought employment on any sailing vessel that would take him. After a series of rejections, he spied a brig named *Connecticut* tied up nearby, and climbed aboard to find the captain.

Find him, he did. The man's name was Hosea Blin, and this captain knew Steve's father. Captain Blin agreed to hire Steve, but only on the condition that his parents approved.[34] Realizing that their son was determined to go to sea, Steve's parents relented, hoping that one hard voyage would alter his romantic notions of life on a rolling deck.

Crew lists—required by American law to be deposited in the local custom house for any voyage to a foreign port—followed a clear order of seniority. The captain's name came first on the list, followed by the first mate (and then a second mate, if there was one), and then followed by the seamen, from most experienced to least. The cook's name almost always came last.

For Steve's first voyage on the brig *Connecticut*, his name on the crew list of ten men appeared just above the cook. This was—given his complete lack of experience—perfectly logical.[35]

But just one year later, the *Connecticut's* crew list looked very different. Captain Blin saw fit to


The Most Enlightned East
To all the Enlightned Passed Raised & Exalted
under the Canopy of Heaven.
Greeting.
We the Presiding Officers of Union Chapter No 7
R. A. M. held in the City of New London and State of Connecticut
Do hereby make known that our worthy & well beloved Companion
Stevens Rogers hath been Exalted to the Most Excellent
degree of Royal Arch Mason, having taken all the several degrees
necessary to be taken by those who attain this Most Excellent Order.
We do therefore recommend him to the notice & protection of all our
well-beloved Companions where ever dispersed.
In Testimony whereof, we having first caused our
said Companion to sign his name in the margin hereunto
set our hands & caused the seal of our said
Chapter to be affixed this 15th day of Aug in the year of
our Lord 1818 & of Masonry 5818
Stevens Rogers
Samuel Greene
Coddington Willows H.P.
Lyman Law K.
Theusha M. S.

The Royal Arch patent of Stevens Rogers, dated August 15, 1818. Private collection.

place Steve not at the bottom of the list, but rather in the fifth position. That was quite a jump on a ten-man crew in just one year's time, and it spoke volumes: clearly, Steve was a quick learner.[36]

It was not much longer before Stevens Rogers was elevated to the rank of mate, which made him the junior officer on a merchant vessel, and responsible for not only overseeing—but training—the less experienced seamen on board.

When the second war with Britain broke out in June 1812, Steve was at sea. His vessel was quickly captured by the Royal Navy, and Steve was interned in England. He was just as quickly released in one of the many prisoner exchanges that took place early in the war.[37]

Back in the United States, Steve was in need of work, so he returned to what he knew best, and that was the sea. He signed up to serve as the mate on a

schooner named the *Favourite*, whose commander was attempting to sneak from port to port along the East Coast, evading the Royal Navy warships attempting to enforce their declared blockade.[38]

In April 1813, the *Favourite* made a sortie from Plymouth, North Carolina with an intended destination of Eastport, in the District of Maine. But while silently slicing through the waters off Long Island, New York, the schooner ran right into the massive HMS *Valiant*, a 74-gun ship-of-the-line on blockade patrol. The *Favourite* and her crew made every effort to escape, but after a two hour chase, they accepted the inevitable. HMS *Valiant* sent over an officer and four armed tars, who directed the *Favourite* to sail to Halifax, Nova Scotia.[39]

For the second time, Stevens Rogers found himself a prisoner of war of the British. He was nevertheless part of another prisoner exchange, landing at New York later in 1813.[40]

One might excuse Steve if he had decided to wait out the rest of the war before venturing out to sea again. But he did not do that. Instead, in December 1814, he signed up as the third mate on the ship *Armata*, which was going to risk sailing from Philadelphia to Amsterdam as rumors of peace were beginning to circulate. Peace treaty or no, such a foray right through the Royal Navy blockade was a danger most captains and crew would not take.[41]

Thankfully, a peace treaty there was, signed at Ghent, Belgium, and this final voyage of the war passed without incident. Even so, by 1815, the war-at-sea experiences of 26-year-old Stevens Rogers put him on a very different level from the vast majority of American merchant mariners, let alone the strapping-yet-green 20-year-old Steve who had gone to sea in 1809.

This was precisely the kind of ambitious young American that the Freemasons of the early 19th century were looking to accept into their brotherhood.[42] By hard work and self-improvement, Steve was very much the epitome of Freemason Benjamin Franklin's ideal of a productive citizen. And by literally upholding the belief in "sailor's rights" before and during the War of 1812, he was carrying on the struggle for individual liberty that Freemason George Washington had endured during the Revolution, and sought to protect during the earliest years of the American Republic.

Stevens Rogers' exaltation to Royal Arch Mason precisely one week prior to the launching of the first steamship in history was, in all likelihood, not a coincidence. Everyone in New London and the vicinity who was paying any attention at all knew that the Rogers clan was heavily involved in this epochal effort. Moses Rogers was well-known as one of the first steamboat captains, and Steve's exploits were also common knowledge to New Londoners involved in the sea trade. Whether intentional or not, Union Lodge Nº 7's ceremony on Steve's behalf certainly gave the impression that his fellow Freemasons recognized the importance of exalting one of their own, who would soon embark on a voyage into the unknown.[43]

Construction of the steamship *Savannah* continued through the autumn of 1818 and into the winter of 1819. By March, the vessel was complete, and underwent trials in New York harbor. Once Moses and Steve were satisfied with the steamer's performance, they took her down the coast to Savannah, Georgia. After a quick trip up to Charleston, South Carolina and back, the *Savannah* and her crew were finally ready to go in May of 1819.[44]

Departing the Port of Savannah on May 22nd (which would later be proclaimed National Maritime Day in the United States[45]), the *Savannah* steamed and sailed across the Atlantic Ocean, arriving at Liverpool, England on the 20th of June 1819.[46] In so doing, Moses and Stevens Rogers and the crew of the *Savannah* had achieved something historic: they had broken yet another psychological barrier, proving that humans could indeed cross the ocean in a steam-powered vessel. More broadly, they also had proved that their species could create a technology that possessed the artificial power necessary to alter where a person was faster than they could do so by natural means, on a global scale. That was truly epic.

American Freemasonry, one could argue, had traveled quite far in the space of less than half a century. In 1776, when the American colonies declared their independence, Freemasons in those colonies were, by and large, men of some substantial wealth or station in society. To be sure, there were many members who came from humble backgrounds, and practiced humble professions for a living. But many American Freemasons were prominent leaders in their local communities. Certainly the revolutionary leadership boasted a substantial number of Freemasons.[47]

Among them, there were arguably few Freemasons who could claim the multitude of accomplishments of Robert R. Livingston of New York. He was a founding father who contributed far more than the average founder, and suffered more for it, too. His family's immense wealth made him what might be called the stereotypical example of the well-to-do, well-connected Freemason of the very early American Republic.

But Livingston was also, like many other Freemasons, a man of vision who was not afraid to dream. His participation in the Continental Congress alone proved that. But it extended to his recognition of the immense potential of the Louisiana Purchase, as well. And even further still was his belief that steam vessels would change the world, at a time when the conventional wisdom believed that he and the few others who claimed such things were delusional fools.

And why should people not think that?

After all, never before had the human race been able to create a technology that in turn created the means of overcoming the power of Nature, and altering a person's relationship with time and space simultaneously. This was beyond radical, and beyond revolutionary; it was mind-altering.

There is perhaps no better evidence of this than the words reportedly uttered by Robert R. Livingston himself while on the deck of the *North River Steam Boat* during her maiden voyage to Albany, in August of 1807. Livingston had declared to the assembled passengers that "it was not impossible that before the close of the present century, vessels might even be able to make the voyage to Europe without other motive power than steam." This prediction was too much for Livingston's brother, John, who was heard to quip, "Bob has had many a bee in his bonnet before now, but this steam folly will prove the worst yet!"[48]

While the fact that brother John soon became a convert to steamboats—and an active promoter of them—is certainly noteworthy, the greater point lay in Robert R. Livingston's own words. Even he, a true believer in this revolutionary technology, could not envision how rapidly it would advance. The first crossing of the Atlantic continuously

under steam power was not some ninety years in the future, but just thirty-one years.[49] And the first crossing of Atlantic, or any ocean, using the power of steam was only a mere dozen years away.

Unfortunately, Freemason Robert R. Livingston did not live to see how quickly his prophecy of globalized, time-and-space-altering high technology would come to pass, for he died in 1813.

But there to take up the banner of progress was a fellow Freemason—indeed, a new kind of American Freemason—named Stevens Rogers. Not born to immense wealth, but rather just a humble farm boy who went to sea as a mere "swab," Steve quickly displayed the kind of leadership that would be necessary to not only safely conduct the first steamship across the Atlantic in 1819, but also help the membership of lodges grow in the decades to come. From Livingston to Rogers, American Freemasonry had evolved through the dawn of the new century, and was growing thanks to an ongoing "egalitarianization" of the brotherhood. Surely Robert R. Livingston and George Washington would have heartily approved.

Notes

1 Lee T. Wyatt III, *The Industrial Revolution* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 2009), 199–200.

2 See John Laurence Busch, *Steam Coffin: Captain Moses Rogers and The Steamship Savannah Break the Barrier* (New Canaan, Conn.: Hodos Historia, 2010), 596, and John Laurence Busch, "'Something Trouble the Matter with the Engine': Steamboat design during the first generation," *Mechanical Engineering*, Vol. 134, No. 1 (January 2012), 36–37, as well as numerous summaries of the author's history conference presentations on www.steamcoffin.com.

3 Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 26–28, 46; also Jean Baptiste Marestier, *Memoir on Steamboats of the United States of America...*, (Paris: Royal Imprint, 1824), translated by Sidney Withington (Mystic, Conn.: The Marine Historical Association, 1957), 5.

4 George Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746–1813* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1960), 104–105.

5 Ibid.

6 Clarence D. Miner, *The Ratification of the Federal Constitution by the State of New York* (New York: Columbia University, 1921), 116, 119; Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787–1788* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 253, 342. The U.S. Constitution had already taken effect by the time New York ratified it, thanks to the earlier ratification by New Hampshire. Nevertheless, it was believed by some that the new federal government could not survive unless all of the "Big Three" States (New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia) ratified the document. New York was the last of the three to do so.

7 The Grand Lodge of New York maintains on West 23rd Street in Manhattan a major research center named "The Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library."

8 Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston*, 287, 294.

9 *The Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, 25 September 1793.

10 Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 138, 184, 187–88.

11 Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 46, 51, 73, and related source notes.

12 Ibid., 50–56, and related source notes.

13 Dangerfield, op.cit., 287. Livingston and Stevens were among a very small but growing number of entrepreneurs who were trying to make a "steamboat" work to practical effect. Among their more well-known steaming pioneers were John Fitch of Connecticut and James Rumsey of Virginia. See Andrea Sutcliffe, *Steam: The Untold Story of America's First Great Invention* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

14 National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG36, Port of Philadelphia, Inward Coastwise Manifest, steamboat *Phenix* [sic], 24 June 1809.

15 Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 168.

16 Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 277–78.

17 For detailed fares on the steamboat *Vermont*, no matter who the passenger, see *Albany Register*, 9 July 1813.

18 See *Vermont Centinel*, 8 September 1809; *New-York Spectator*, 27 March 1819; *Commercial Advertiser* (NY), 22 March 1820; *New York Gazette*, 13 July 1821.

19 See Lytle-Holdcamper List for the United States (under various titles/publishers, supplements and dates, including *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States*, 1790–1868: "The Lytle-Holdcamper List") and Field List for the United Kingdom, *British Parliamentary Papers* (1822), 6:197–202. The Field List, which was compiled in the early 1820s by the eminent English engineer Joshua Field, has been back-tested, and found to be an accurate survey of steam vessels built in the U.K. up to that time. The Lytle-Holdcamper List, by contrast, was pieced together from surviving custom house records in the National Archives and Records Administration of the United States by two archivists for whom the list is named.

20 Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 53–54, 56–69, 75–76, 81–82, and related source notes.

21 Ibid., 7, and related source notes.

22 Ibid., 8, and related source notes.

23 Ibid., 1–13, 29–31, 37–38, 85–91, and related source notes.

24 Ibid., 94–96, 98, and related source notes.

25 Ibid., 98, and related source notes.

26 See William Falconer, *The Mariner's Dictionary* (Washington, D.C.: William Duane, 1805), 23–24; there were many different types of "boats" in use, none of which were intended for extended use upon the open ocean.

27 It is worth noting that the descriptive term "steamboat" did not start as a compound word, but rather two separate words; only over time did newspapers and individuals begin to write it as one word.

28 *Savannah Republican*, 8 May 1818; *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Georgia* (Milledgeville, Ga.: S. & F. Grantland, 1818), "An Act to incorporate 'The Savannah Steam Ship Company'," assented to 19 December 1818.

29 Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 138–39, and related source notes.

30 See Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 638 for evidence.

31 Royal Arch Mason Certificate of Stevens Rogers, 15 August 1818, privately held.

32 NARA, RG26, Port of New London, Permanent Enrollment No. 50, Schooner *Experiment*, 9 May 1806. Also see Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 620–21 for additional archival material on Freemason Coddington Billings.

33 James S. Rogers, *James Rogers of New London, Ct* (Boston: The Compiler, 1902), 127, 201; New London County Historical Society, Wall Papers, 231.

34 Wall Papers, 348, 495.

35 NARA, RG36, Port of New London, Crew List, brig *Connecticut*, 5 August 1809.

36 Ibid., brig *Connecticut*, [no day/month shown] 1810.

37 Wall Papers, 348, 495.

38 For a history of the blockade, see Wade G. Dudley, *Splintering the Wooden Wall: The British Blockade of the United States, 1812–1815* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2003).

39 National Maritime Museum of the United Kingdom, NM/RUSI/116, HMS *Valiant* logbook.

40 New York Historical Society, Thomas Barclay Papers, "American POWs," Port of Halifax, 44.

41 NARA, RG36, Port of Philadelphia, Crew List, ship *Armata*, 20 December 1814.

42 Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 138.

43 See Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 104–109, 138–54, and related source notes.

44 Ibid, 226–29, 267–68, and related source notes.

45 In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt—through an Act of Congress which he had championed—proclaimed 22 May as the first National Maritime Day, which commemorates the contributions and sacrifices of America's merchant mariners. That date was chosen because it was on 22 May 1819 that the steamship *Savannah* departed on her historic transatlantic crossing. It is further worth noting that one of the shareholders of the Savannah Steam Ship Company, James S. Bulloch, was the maternal grandfather of President Theodore Roosevelt.

46 Busch, *Steam Coffin*, 285–87, and related source notes.

47 Allen E. Roberts, *Freemasonry in American History* (Richmond, Va.: Macoy Publishing, 1985), 146–61.

48 Alice C. Sutcliffe, *Robert Fulton and the Clermont* (New York: The Century Company, 1909), 211–12.

49 In the spring of 1838, two British-built steamers, the *Sirius* and the *Great Western*, raced each other to become the first to cross the Atlantic Ocean continuously under steam power. While the *Sirius* won the race, arriving in New York first, it was the *Great Western* that inaugurated the first regular transatlantic passenger service, during the latter half of that same year. See Grahame E. Farr, *The Steamship Great Western: the First Atlantic Liner* (Bristol, UK: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1974).