Steamboats became commercially viable in the early nineteenth century, and by the 1830s were arguably the most popular form of long-distance travel around North America, especially on inland waterways like Lake Champlain. Due to this popularity, demand for faster, larger boats drove shipwrights to experiment with new designs that differed greatly from traditional ship construction. Unfortunately, steamboat plans from this period are mostly missing or incomplete, and therefore our knowledge of their changing shapes and features must be derived from archaeological data. A survey of Lake Champlain's Shelburne Shipyard revealed the remains of four nineteenth-century steamboats. The four hulls, labeled Wrecks 1 through 4, were recorded for comparative study during a field school that took place in the month of June, 2014. Researchers from Texas A&M University and the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum spent three weeks recording the remains in order to identify the individual boats, develop preliminary site plans for each wreck, and compare the differing construction patterns. Though Wreck 1 (A.Williams) proved to be from 1870, the other three were nearly contemporaneous, all built in the 1830s. Despite their close launch dates, Wrecks 2, 3 and 4 (Winooski [1832], Burlington [1837] and Whitehall [1838]) displayed very different construction methods. This study examines the archaeological findings of the Shelburne Shipyard steamboats along with historical background information in order to illustrate how shipwrights were straying from traditional, heavy-timbered ship designs to make lighter and longer hulls in an effort to make faster vessels.

http://hdl.handle.net/1969.1/155709

Subject
Steamboats
Lake Champlain
Construction
nineteenth century
nautical archaeology
ship design

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Citation
The steamboat Ticonderoga is one of two remaining side-paddle-wheel passenger steamers with a vertical beam engine of the type that provided freight and passenger service on America's bays, lakes and rivers from the early 19th to the mid-20th centuries. Commissioned by the Champlain Transportation Company, Ticonderoga was built in 1906 at the Shelburne Shipyards in Shelburne, Vermont on Lake Champlain.