

THE LODOR PROPOSAL

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In November 1833 a small handbill began appearing in local taverns and meeting places of the Hamilton area. It promised a "NEW STEAM VESSEL" to the "enterprising inhabitants residing in the vicinity of the Head of Lake Ontario". More to the point, it solicited the attention of "those who have Twenty-five Pounds to invest in this enterprise."¹

In the fall of 1833, the promoter, Job Lodor of Ancaster, had many reasons to be confident of the success of this work. The population of Hamilton and its lakefront neighbours, Oakville and Wellington Square (later Burlington), was growing rapidly. So was the hinterland, with Dundas, Ancaster and Brantford all experiencing a boom associated with the flood of emigration from Great Britain in the past two seasons.²

Like others near the head of the lake, Lodor had been interested in improvements to navigation for a number of years. Both the Burlington and the Desjardins canals were ambitious local projects designed to facilitate local shipping connections. Now, after years of setbacks, the Burlington project could be considered complete, while work had begun again on the Desjardins canal. In 1825, local capitalists had taken a small stake in the *Canada*, which would make only irregular local calls. Since 1830, Lodor, Allan MacNab and others had been promoting the *Constitution*, a vessel which they had hoped would provide a daily connection between Hamilton, Wellington Square, Oakville and York.

But the appearance of the *Constitution* in September 1833, had not been without controversy. MacNab had effectively taken control of the vessel and would run her the following spring from Hamilton to York, and then on to Cobourg and Rochester.³ The *John By*, which had been brought up the Lake from Kingston to fill the gap, was wrecked near Port Credit in early November.⁴ A vessel partially built by the spring of 1833 by the Desjardins Canal contractor, David Gibb, seems to have sunk from sight.⁵ But both Lodor and William Chisholm of Oakville were entering the local field by offering to construct new steamboats.

How did a miller and merchant like Job Lodor come to the business of steamboat promotion? One local historian held up Lodor as "A Bright and Shining Example". Why? Because some years after fleeing his debts in Sussex County, New Jersey (where he was a millwright and house-builder), Lodor is supposed to have returned and paid his creditors the full amounts owing, with interest.⁶ Certainly the Board of Claims for War of 1812 losses were not prepared to endorse this

"shining example". They disallowed his claim for £156 in losses, claiming that he had always eluded Militia duty. Moreover, during the war he had made "a considerable sum of money by distilling and trading".⁷ He had kept a tavern at Turkey Point in the Long Point settlement as early as 1803, and turned his hand to mill construction throughout that district. About 1820, according to Ancaster's local historians, Lodor bought the Union Mills, and made his home in that village.⁸

Storekeeper, miller, distiller: Lodor knew how to make money. Indeed, the story is recorded of Lodor's response to a question about his steamboat scheme. "Make a success of it?" replied the intrepid Job. "Did you ever know me to undertake anything in this country that I did not carry to a successful issue?"⁹ Indeed in his flyer Lodor would make the same claim. "If this Stock does not turn out profitable, it will be the first plan that I ever projected which did not yield an income to all parties concerned."

Lodor had had some previous experience in steamboat investment. In 1825, like several others at the head of the Lake, Lodor purchased a share in Hugh Richardson's *Canada*.¹⁰ In June of 1831, the *York Courier* reported that "a Gentleman from Ancaster", (probably Lodor) was on his way to Montreal "to obtain estimates, and receive proposals" for a new steamboat.¹¹ That September, a committee of management for what would become the *Constitution* was struck at a public meeting. It included Allan N. Macnab, William Chisholm of Oakville, C. C. Ferrie, and Job Lodor.¹² Both Lodor and Chisholm were elected directors of the company the following spring.¹³

The break appears to have come with the appointment of the *Constitution's* captain in the summer of 1833. The *Montreal Gazette* published the scoop.

"Some unfair play in the appointment of a person to command the new steamer *Constitution*, it is probable, will add another Boat to the Ontario trade. A subscription is now circulating by Captain Philo D. Bates, the gentlemen whom the publick were led to believe was to have charge of the *Constitution*, but who it appears is supplanted by some salt-water mariner, lately cast on our shores. Mr. Bates has succeeded in disposing of almost one-half the stock, and we have no doubt the remainder will be taken up immediately, as considerable feeling in favour of Mr. Bates seems to exist."¹⁴

NEW STEAM VESSEL.

*To the enterprising inhabitants residing in the vicinity
of the Head of Lake Ontario.*

Experience has taught us that in proportion to the facilities afforded for travelling and transporting property, our fine country progresses in wealth and improvement, and for the purpose of forwarding so important an object, I have undertaken, and already commenced, building a

SPLENDID STEAM PACKET,

calculated exclusively for the Head of Lake Ontario route, to ply as follows, viz: To leave Hamilton, immediately after the arrival of the Western, Niagara, York, and Guelph Stages, for Niagara, touch at the Burlington Canal, Forty Mile Creek, and at Port Dalhousie, and arrive at Niagara about daybreak—thence proceed to Lewiston, in time to meet the Stage Line about sunrise in the morning—return to Niagara. Leave Niagara for York about Seven o'clock, and York about Twelve o'clock for Hamilton—touching at Oakville and Wellington Square—from Hamilton to Dundas and return before nightfall—and perform the same each day in the week, Sundays excepted.

This Boat is intended to be built without any Promenade Deck—to draw but little water, and be propelled by two first rate Fifty Horse Power Engines. For safety, convenience and speed, I have every reason to believe she will not be surpassed by any Boat now on the Lake.

I have already received subscriptions for Stock to a considerable amount without any exertions on my part—and I now wish to give a general invitation to those who have Twenty-five Pounds to invest in this enterprise. If this Stock does not turn out profitable, it will be the first plan that I ever projected which did not yield an income to all parties concerned.

Captain Philo D. Bates, whose character and experience justly entitle him to public confidence, is to superintend the building of said Boat, and to have the command of her when finished.

Those who take Stock will see by my sealed bonds, to which they will become a party, that I am to have the sole direction of the boat—and that I am bound on my part to do and perform every thing that can reasonably be required of any individual or board of directors. Those who wish to take stock will forward an intimation of their intentions as early as possible to me at Ancaster, or to Captain Philo D. Bates, Wellington Square.

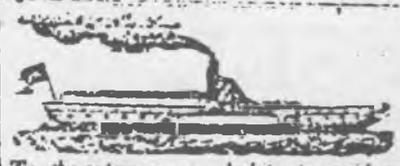
With this brief outline of my plan, I subscribe myself the public's most obedient and very humble servant,

JOB LODOR.

November, 1833.

Wyllie Smyth, Printer, Western Mercury Office.

NEW STEAM VESSEL.



To the enterprising inhabitants residing in the vicinity of the Head of Lake Ontario.

EXPERIENCE has taught us that in proportion to the facilities afforded for travelling and transporting property, our fine country progresses in wealth and improvement—and for the purpose of forwarding so important an object, I have undertaken and already commenced building a **SPLENDID STEAM PACKET**, calculated exclusively for the Head of Lake Ontario route, to ply as follows, viz. To leave Hamilton, immediately after the arrival of the Western, Niagara, York and Genesee Stages, for Niagara, to touch at the Burlington Canal, Forty mile Creek, and at Port Dalhousie, and arrive at Niagara about daylight—thence to Lewiston in time to meet the stage line about sunrise in the morning—return to Niagara—leave Niagara for York about 7 o'clock, and from thence about 12 o'clock for Hamilton—touching at Oakville and Wellington Square—from Hamilton to Dundas and return before night fall, and perform the same each day in the week, Sundays excepted.

This boat is intended to be built without any Promenade Deck—to draw but little water, and be propelled by two first rate 60 horse power engines. For safety, convenience and speed, I have every reason to believe she will not be surpassed by any boat now on the lake.

I have already received subscriptions for stock to a considerable amount without any exertions on my part—and I now wish to give a general invitation to those who have twenty-five pounds to invest in this enterprise.—If this stock does not turn out profitable, it will be the first plan that I ever projected which did not yield an income to all parties concerned.

Captain Philip D. Bates, whose character and experience justify entitle him to public confidence, is to superintend the building of said boat, and to have the command of her when finished.

Those who take stock will see by my sealed bonds, to which they will become a party, that I am to have the sole direction of the boat—and that I am bound on my part to do and perform every thing that can reasonably be required of any individual or board of directors.

Those who wish to take stock will forward an intimation of their intention as early as possible to my Agent, Ancaster, or to Captain Philip Bates, Wellington Square.

With this brief outline of my plan, I subscribe myself the public's most obedient and very humble servant,

JOB LODOR.

Editors of papers not hostile to the general interests of Upper Canada, will confer a special favor on me by noticing this projected enterprise.

November, 1833. J. L. 850

When in his handbill Lodor claims, "I have already received subscriptions for Stock to a considerable amount without any exertions on my part", the credit can almost certainly be passed to Captain Bates.

By March 1834, Lodor was pressing other stockholders for their instalments, claiming the vessel was in full frame.¹⁵ According to one account she was under construction in Wellington Square, and was 130 feet keel, 150 feet deck and 26 feet beam.¹⁶ According to his initial description, Lodor planned a shallow-draft vessel, no doubt one that would be able to navigate the shallow Desjardins canal when it was completed. Launched in early June 1834,¹⁷ the last accounts predicted that she would be ready in the spring of 1835.¹⁸ Anticipating two 80 horse power engines, she was to be the largest steamer on the lake after the *Great Britain*.¹⁹

Could the vessel have been launched under some other name? The only Canadian steamboats launched on Lake Ontario from that point to the end of 1837 were *Oakville*, *Traveller*, *Burlington* and *Cataraqui* (the latter really a Rideau-Ottawa river steamer). All can be accounted for in ways that preclude identification as Lodor's hull.²⁰

Of these rivals, *Oakville* would have been the most critical. Intended for precisely the same route, she was launched in May 1834. For her first season the *Oakville* used the high pressure Sheldon, Dutcher & Co. engines salvaged from the wreck of the *John By*.²¹ Lodor had no engines.

Ironically, by late 1836 Lodor was deeply involved with the Toronto engine foundry of Sheldon, Dutcher & Co. This firm had moved to Yonge Street a number of years before and had ridden a roller coaster of success and failure capped by an extended legal wrangle over liability for the engines of the *Cobourg*, which had proved miserable failures. In August 1836 Lodor advertised that he had dismissed William Sheldon as his agent.²² Shortly after Thos. Postans rented the premises in the spring of 1841, the foundry burned down (taking a good portion of that section of Toronto with it) only to be resurrected as the Phoenix Foundry.²³

The potential competition from the *Oakville* probably persuaded Lodor and Bates to abandon the notion of putting an engine in the hull of their craft. But what then became of the hull? In the early 1830s master shipwrights were just beginning to move away from building sailing vessels with engines. And indeed is as a sailing vessel that the ship probably appeared. Mary and Ray Mifflin in *Harbour Lights: Burlington Bay* cite local reports that she appeared as the *Chief Justice Robinson* (which should not be confused with the steamboat of that name, built nearly a decade later). This same source suggested that she was rebuilt as the *Grampus*, and owned by E. Browne of Hamilton.²⁴ A 400-ton barque called the *Grampus* was hauling lumber down the lake in the mid-1840s. She went ashore late in 1846 east of the Oswego piers and was then completely wrecked in a second storm while under repair on George Weeks' ways.²⁵

REFERENCES

1. Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston, Collection, handbill "NEW STEAM VESSEL", [Hamilton], Nov. 1833.
2. *Patriot* (Toronto), 16 May 1834.

Ancaster, 22d November, 1833.

Sir

Your name appearing on my Books, as a Stockholder for
one Share in the new Steam Boat building under my
direction, amounting to Twenty Five Pounds, I take this
method to inform you that ten per cent. on the amount will be required on the
first day of December next, and on the first day of each succeeding month the
further sum of ten per cent. until the first day of July, at which time all
balances will be required to be paid in.

Should it be convenient for you to advance more than Ten per cent. at or
before those periods, you will be allowed interest on the surplus, and interest
will be required of all delinquents.

You will, prior to the date on which the instalment becomes due, receive
notice of the several persons authorized to give receipts.

I am Respectfully,

Sr,

Your Obedient Servant,

JOE LODOR.

Smith and Chisholm Papers, (Archives of Ontario, MU2840,
Env. 2, 22 nov. 1833

The population of Trafalgar Township (including Oakville) grew from 2580
in 1831 to 3989 in 1835. Similarly the township of Barton (including Hamil-
ton) grew from 1597 in 1831 to 3552 in 1835 (by which time Hamilton
accounted for 2155). NA, RG5, B26, Upper Canada, Returns of Population
and Assessment.

4. Walter Lewis, "John By," *FreshWater*, v. 1, n. 1 (Spring 1986), p. 33.
5. *History of the Town of Dundas*, Part 1, Series A, p. 41. *Western Mercury*, 7
March 1833, 28 March. 1833, 20 June 1833, ad. and ed. notice.
6. E. A. Owen, *Pioneer Sketches of Long Point Settlement*, (Belleville, Ont.:
Mika Publishing Limited, rep. 1972), pp. 283-85.
7. NA, RG 19, Finance, E5a, Board of Claims for War of 1812 Losses, v. 3734,
file 4, no. 91.
8. *Ancaster's Heritage: A History of Ancaster Township* (Ancaster Township
Historical Society, 1973), pp. 38, 62, 66, 74-5.
9. Owen, *Pioneer Sketches*, p. 286
10. Hugh Richardson, *Steam Navigation on Lake Ontario*, (York: J. Carey, 1825),
following p. 18.
11. *Western Mercury* (Hamilton), 30 June 1831 quoting *York Courier*. The
Montreal Gazette ran the same quote, 16 July 1831.

12. *Canadian Freeman*, 1 Sept. 1831.

13. *Niagara Gleaner*, 14 April 1832.

14. *British Colonial Argus* (St. Catharines), 19 Oct. 1833 quoting *Montreal
Gazette*. The salt-water mariner in question was Lt. William Critchell, R.N.
who was removed at the close of the season.

15. Archives of Ontario (AO), MU 2840, Smith and Chisholm Papers, Env. 2,
Correspondence, Job Lodor to Hiram Smith, 16 Mar. 1834.

16. *Advocate* (York), 18 Jan. 1834.

17. *Western Mercury*, 19 June 1834. Quoted in *Montreal Gazette*, 26 June 1834
and *British Whig* (Kingston), 1 July 1834.

18. *Upper Canada Herald*, 20 Aug. 1834 quoting *Western Mercury*.

19. Note that the handbill had initially said two 50 h.p. engines.

20. *Oakville* was described as finally operating in the same paragraph that
described Lodor. *Western Mercury*, 19 Aug. 1834. Her dimensions are un-
known. However, two reports of her tonnage several years later (after being
renamed the *Hamilton*) record a vessel of 150 or 189 tons. Upper Canada,
House of Assembly, *Journals*, 1839-40, Public Accounts, no. V. "Statement
of Revenue arising from duties on Tonnage of British Vessels on the Lakes
from 1st January to 30th September 1839; inclusive". Province of Canada,
Legislative Assembly, *Appendix to the First Volume of the Journals*, 1841,
App. B, Public Accounts of Upper Canada for 1839 and 1840, no. 3. Detailed
Statement of Tonnage Duty Collected in 1840."

The 1840 public accounts describe *Burlington* as 90 tons, smaller yet.
Both vessels would have been significantly smaller than a vessel being
compared with the *Great Britain* (pegged at 482 tons). The *Burlington* has
also been described as having been built especially for the Desjardins canal
by Chisholm in Oakville. (*Patriot* (Toronto), 29 Aug. 1837 quoting *Hamilton
Gazette*)

Traveller was 145 feet deck by 23.5 feet beam and built in Niagara by
Robert Gilkison. NA, MG24, I25, v. 2, Robert Gilkison Diary ("Memoran-
dums connected with the science of Naval Architecture, 1838" at back of
diary). She was launched there in the summer of 1835. *Morning Courier*
(Montreal), 31 Aug. 1835 quoting *Niagara Reporter*.

Gilkison's diary also includes references to *Experiment*, *Queen Victoria*,
Gore and *Niagara*, all built by him at the Niagara Harbour and Dock
Company yard between 1837 and 1839.

21. AO, RG22, Series 390, vol. 3, file 5, pp. 255-62, Home District Assizes, 1836,
Sheldon Dutcher & Andruss vs. Wm. Chisholm. See also *Montreal Gazette*,
9 June 1835.

22. *Courier of Upper Canada* (Toronto), 27 Nov. 1836 (ad. dated 31 Aug. 1836)

23. *Patriot* (Toronto), 12 Feb., 11 May 1841. Cited by Kenneth G. Lewis, "Early
Machinists, Founders and Steam-Engine Builders of York, 1827-1840: a
Collection of Documents" (Ms, University of Toronto, Department of the
History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, n.d.)

It is worth noting that Samuel Andruss, who had worked at Lodor's mills
in Ancaster, was a partner of Sheldon, Dutcher & Co., and later a manager
of the Phoenix.

24. Mary Weeks-Mifflin and Ray Mifflin, *Harbour lights: Burlington Bay* (Erin,
Ont.: Boston Mills Press, 1989), p. 19.

25. *Chronicle & Gazette* (Kingston), 15 Nov., 26 Nov. 1845. *News* (Kingston), 8
Oct. 1846. J. Leo Finn, *Old Shipping Days in Oswego* (City of Oswego, n.d.),
p. 148.