American Innovation: Steamboats and the Age of Industry

National Association of Scholars Webinar
Tuesday, August 23, 2-3 p.m. ET
Dr. Kevin Crisman
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Practitioner of Steamboat Archaeology
Since 1980
Lake Champlain: A Good Place to Study
The Development of Inland Steam Navigation
Lake Champlain’s Century of Steamboats: Twenty-Nine Built Between 1809 and 1905
Twelve of the Twenty-Nine Still Exist and Have Been Identified

Of Particular Interest: The Six Wrecks of Lake Champlain Steamboats Built Before 1850
The Earliest Extant Steamboat Wreck: Lake Champlain’s *Phoenix I* (1815-1819)
The Flaming Demise of the *Phoenix*  
September 5, 1819
Archaeologically Recorded in 1980, 2009-2010
The Missing Paddle Wheels Found in 2020
The Location of Three Pre-1850 Steamboat Wrecks!

The Steamboat Graveyard at Shelburne Point, Vermont Archaeologically Studied 2014-2016
The Economical Equine Alternative to Steam: Horse-Powered Boats
The Horse Ferry Wreck at Burlington Bay, Vermont
North America’s Western Rivers Famous for Their Steamboats

Steamboat Wreck
The Western River Steamboat Wreck in the Red River, Southeastern Oklahoma
The Sidewheeler *Heroine*, 1832-1838
Remnants of Boilers and Paddle Wheels Allows Reconstruction of Machinery
Steamboat Design And Assembly Rapidly Evolve and Diversify

Great Lakes

Developments are Poorly Documented in Earliest Decades

Eastern Waters

Western Rivers

Early Steamers
Manufacture of Engines and Boilers Leads to Growth of North American Iron and Steel Industries
The Development of Steam Engines More Art Than Science
Steamboats Frequently Explode or Burn

Steamboat Disasters the First U.S. Public Safety Crisis
Steamboats Have Profound Influence on Concepts of Time and Distance

They Also Become the Great ‘Meeting Place’ of the American Public