



# LAST *of the* “WALKING BEAMS”

The S/S Ticonderoga, high and dry on the beach, stands as a monument to the excursion steamer, a familiar sight during years past

The fires are dead. The engine room, once the noisy scene of honest toil, is still. The quiet is almost deafening. The scrape of a shovel, the gurgle and hiss of steam, the ker-plunk of pumps and the rhythmic sounds of the main cylinder forcing the walking beam up and down are gone forever. On deck, happy excursionists no longer are found. The big wheel in the pilot house is deserted and the upper deck which was the province of steamer chair addicts is now just a passageway and lookout point for visitors. For this is the S/S *Ticonderoga*, high and dry on the beach at the Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont, the last surviving example of the walking beam powered, paddle wheel excursion steamer in the United States, if not in the world.

The *Ticonderoga* was built in 1906 at Shelburne Harbor, Vermont, on the shores of Lake Champlain, by the Champlain Transportation Company. The completed vessel cost \$170,000 (estimated replacement price today \$2,700,000). Her statistics are:

Length	220 ft.
Beam	57½ ft.
Depth	11½ ft.
Draft	6½ ft.
Engine	W. & A. Fletcher Co., one cylinder; 9 ft. stroke × 58 in. bore.

The engine is extremely interesting inasmuch as it is of a type which has completely disappeared from the shipping scene. The big piston which activated the “walking beam” weighs three tons. Steam pressure of 50 pounds with vacuum of 28 inches was maintained by two hand-fired scotch boilers rated at 750 horsepower, which burned approximately two tons of coal per hour. The bunkers had sufficient capacity to run the vessel for about 11 hours, more than enough for her daily run.

Propulsion was supplied by the two Morgan paddlewheels 25 feet in diameter. Each wheel has ten buckets (feathering type) 30 inches wide by 9 feet long. At full throttle, these paddlewheels turned at 28 r.p.m., giving the ship a speed in excess of 15.5 knots. Cruising speed, however, was maintained at roughly 14.4 knots, for economy reasons. It is interesting to note that Fletcher engines, similar to the one aboard the *Ticonderoga*, were superbly built machines. It was not uncommon to have a ship wear out long before its Fletcher-built power. More than once, Champlain Transportation Company executives reluctantly scrapped a vessel since doing so meant the end of a fine, expensive engine.

At the Shelburne Museum, the *Ticonderoga* serves to preserve excursion steamboat lore. She is beautifully restored and splendidly maintained. The engine controls



on the main deck shine just as they did when the steamer was making her daily runs. Brass gleams and furniture shines. Everything about her is shipshape; as if she were ready to cast off at a moment's notice. A veritable fortune in marine prints of all types adorn the bulkheads in her enclosed section. Even a stateroom has been restored so that visitors can see what accommodations were like for an overnight trip in a bygone era. She is a splendid memorial of the type of vessel which was a common sight on the rivers and lakes of the eastern United States just after the turn of the century.

Getting her to the basin, the ship's final mooring place, was a major project. It entailed dragging the vessel over 9,200 feet on specially built tracks from lakeside to the Museum property. Work began in September, 1954 and was concluded with the *Ticonderoga* safe in her berthing basin, early in April 1955. The story of this movement is a saga by itself; an adventure story in the great traditions of the sea. Suffice to say the actual movement, after all pre-

paration was made, took 65 days, 20 hours and 20 minutes. It entailed crossing fields, a highway, swampland, a racing stream, up a 4% grade across a busy mainline railroad and the temporary removal of power lines, all in the dead of a frigid northern Vermont winter.

Visitors, and there are many of them, enjoy a tour of the *Ticonderoga*. To more than a few it recalls happy memories of younger days when a trip on her or a vessel like her was an adventure. They cannot help experiencing a feeling of nostalgia while aboard this excellent example of America's contribution to steamboat travel. It's a good thing for the future that the vessel is preserved. Coming generations of ship enthusiasts can study her as a type important in design and motive power to the overall picture of inland waterway passenger transportation. Resting in her “snug harbor” under the loving, watchful eyes of the Shelburne Museum Curators, she represents the passing of an age, a slower moving, more leisurely time when a day's excursion was a happy experience to young and old alike.