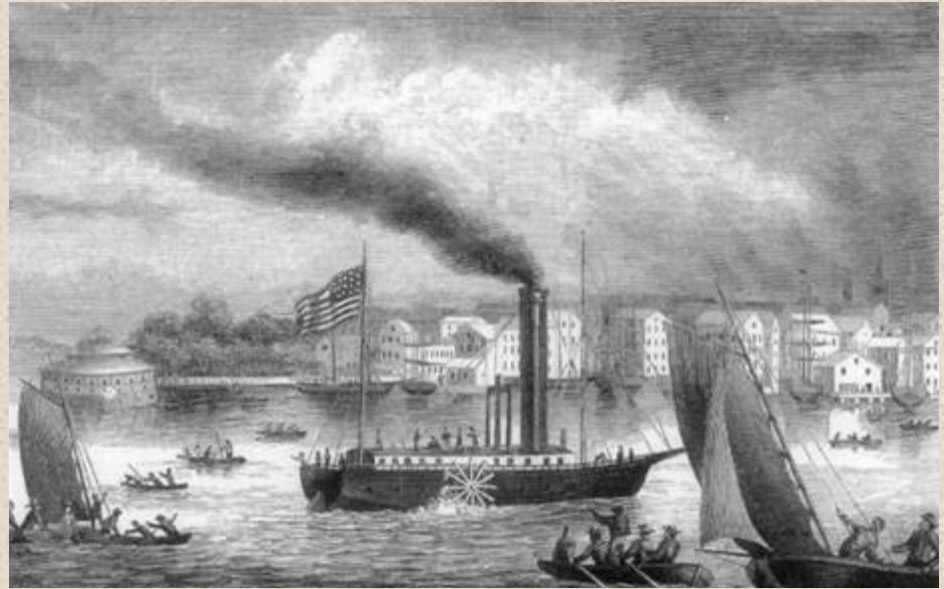


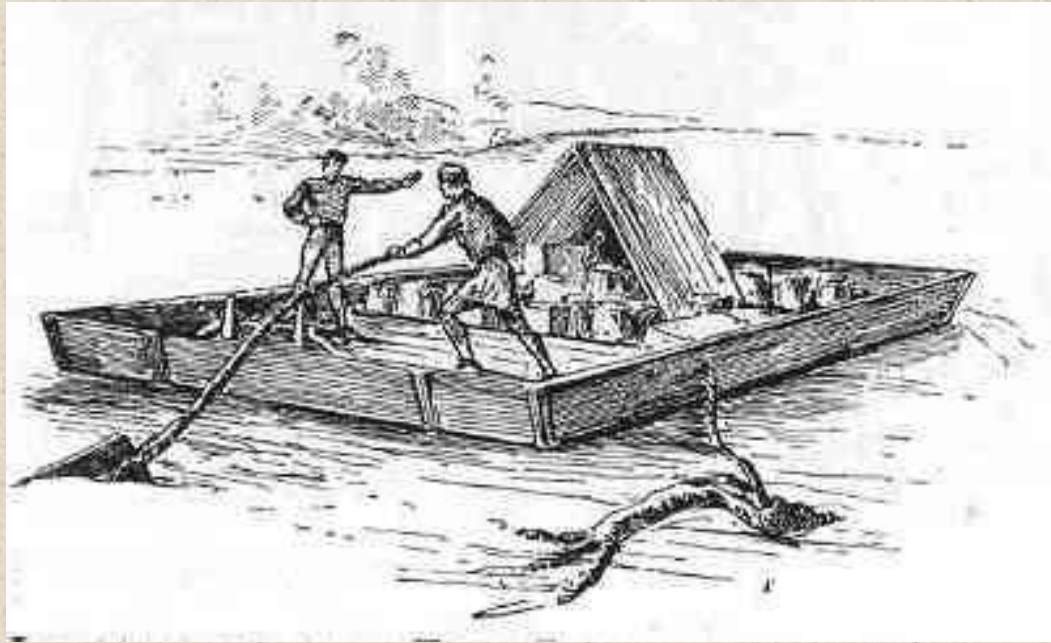
Steam

Boats



Robert Fulton's Clermont or North River Steamer

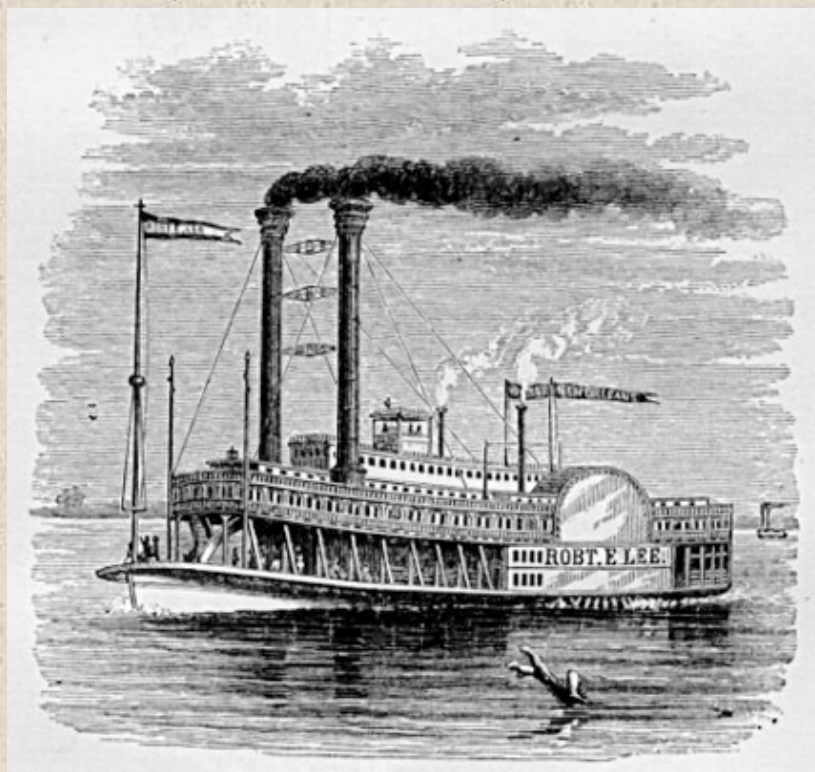
Another significant contribution to transportation technology was the use of the steam engine to power boats. Englishmen Thomas Newcomen and James Watt are credited with developing and making many improvements on the steam engine during the 18th century. By 1807 Robert Fulton had used this new technology to build the North River Steamboat (often called the Clermont). Traveling on the Hudson River, Fulton took his paddle wheeler from New York City to Albany and back in five days. He is credited with providing the first safe, regular steamboat service in the U.S.



Flatboat on the Mississippi River

Introduction of the steamboat to the Mississippi River and other rivers soon followed. Before that time, flatboats and keelboats went down the Mississippi River fairly easily, but only keelboats could make the return trip upstream. So many men were needed to pole the boat upriver that little room was left for freight or passengers. Boats were often broken up and sold for lumber and firewood at the end of the journey. Those taking a boat downstream would get home by land the best way they could. In contrast, steamboats easily moved against the current. River steamboats were also faster, they reached their destinations in one-fourth the time required by barges powered by hand or animals.

Credit: The Beginner's American History, Project Gutenberg



Steamboat on the Mississippi River

Steamboats were common on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers by the 1820s. They were also starting to replace sailing ships on the Great Lakes and across the seas. One penny was enough to ship 3 tons of cargo for a mile on a river. The same penny would ship ten tons for a mile on the Great Lakes. For most of the 19th century and the early 20th century, steamboats dominated water transport. At the peak of the steamboat era, there were 6,000 steamers competing for business on the Mississippi River alone.

Credit: A History of the Growth of the Steam Engine by Robert Thurston, 1878