

The Story of the Steam Launch “Stella-Marion” by Ron Collins

Acknowledgements: Much of the following story is based upon the research work of Jane Ramsay, the article “Recalling the Stella-Marion” by Nelson Adams that was published by The Enterprise, August 21, 1991, and a personal recollections of Rodney Adams collected by Dr. Howard Oedel in July 1975.

The “Stella-Marion” was not the first commercial boat on Newfound Lake. In early 1865 commercial boating began on the lake when Captain George W. Dow launched the “Pioneer” which only saw service for one year before catching fire.

In the 1870’s there was a barge of 12 feet by 40 feet that held 300 passengers called the “Cardigan” which was probably towed around the lake by the steam boat that Edward Drake launched in 1878 and described in the Bristol Enterprise as being 56 feet by 21 feet. Drake’s boat made its maiden voyage on July 4, 1878. The Enterprise states that this new boat was a replacement for Drake’s old boat.

Drake used his boat to tow log booms from the Cockermonth River in Hebron to the foot of the lake and to give tours of the lake. On one tour in 1878 aboard Drake’s boat a Mr. “Wesley Barnard of Hebron was shooting at a loon in Hebron waters. His revolver accidentally discharged rendering a flesh wound in the left hand.” It is said that this accident happened near what is today called “Loon” island. Perhaps that is how the island was named.

In the summer of 1883 A. L. Woodman of Concord brought a steam boat to the lake aboard a train. It was hauled from the depot in Bristol to the lake by a team of horses and launched as the “Lady Ellen.” Within a month of her launch she too burned. Though never proven, the fire that claimed the “Lady Ellen” was suspected of being arson.

In the early 1880’s power boats of one and two horsepower made by local craftsmen started to become popular. These were used primarily for the new sport of trolling for fish.

Captain Samuel Hentall started his first commercial boating venture on the lake in 1895, and in 1898 brought two motor launches to the lake.

But by far the most popular boats to ever commercially ply the waters of the lake were the Stella-Marion I and II.

The story of the Stella-Marion began in the early 1890’s.

During the winter of 1893-94, Joe Adams, received several letters from Edward S. Wilson founder of Camp Pasquaney, asking about a steam launch, a light freighter suitable for transport on Newfound Lake, probably thirty-five to fifty feet long.

Wilson wanted to know “Would it be less expensive to buy a second hand boat or build a new one?”

Wilson had decided to locate a summer camp on the property known as Owl's Head (now owned by Phil & Betsy Twombly), which was practically inaccessible except by boat.

Joe Adams was sure he could build a 50-foot craft cheaper than one could be bought.

Joe had worked at the Laconia Car Shop, building railroad passenger and freight cars, and had occasionally helped a boat builder on Lake Winnepesaukee. He was for many years in charge of construction and maintenance at Camp Pasquaney.

During the 1880s, he had built several twelve and fifteen-foot rowboats in LaForest Ballou's blacksmith shop at the foot of Newfound Lake. These were of “lap streak” design, with planking of strips of thin, narrow spruce over ribs steamed and shaped on a mold.

Ambrose Adams, Joe's brother, had purchased the Emri Ball farm on Tenney Hill (now owned by Poulos) and started catering to fishermen on Newfound Lake. He and his brothers were born in Gaspé Bay Canada near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Ambrose

was the youngest of nine brothers all boat enthusiasts. However, he did not have an interest in boats to any degree, and was always more interested in his farm.

However, he caught the boat fever and thought a power boat would be in keeping with the times. So, in 1897, Ambrose and Joe decided to build a boat. They modified plans they had for a boat to include a fantail stern, three-quarter cabin enclosure, and more seating.

Their older brother Nicholas discovered a “deformed” oak tree on Ambrose’s property which became the stempost, changing the design of the prow so that it acquired the appearance of a battle ship.

The oak was cut and taken by dump cart, with five or six men, to Bristol, to be cut and shaped with a band saw.

Much of the select oak logs for the hull and other lumber were cut on Ambrose’s property and a neighbor’s property on Tenney Hill. The logs were sawed at a steam mill in Groton near Sculptured Rocks and at Jones Mill, which was located on Route 3A about 1000 feet north of the old East Hebron School.

By the spring of 1900 Ambrose, with the occasional help of three of his brothers, had built the hull which was 49 1/2 feet long and 10 feet wide. The largest boat on Newfound Lake at that time.

Ed Wilson, at Camp Pasquaney, was very encouraging. He foresaw this steam boat carrying Pasquaney camping parties to Sanborn's Point, Hornets' Cove, Crescent Beech (Wellington), and Whittemore Point.

The idea of a steam boat on the lake must have been considered an important development as several articles about it appeared in the Bristol Enterprise:

Feb. 1, 1900. p. 2. col 3. East Hebron: Ambrose Adams is building a boat named “Stella-Marion,” which he expects to launch when the lake opens. The boat is 49 1/2 feet over all, 10 feet wide; built of the heart of oak, planked with 2-inch strips, 1 inch thick fastened with gal. steel nails; will have enclosed cabin forward of engine room, and an open one aft; will be propelled by a Sterling Marion engine, 7 x 8 inch cylinder; boiler will be submerged tube vertical Marion boiler 42 x 62 inch built under U. S. government test. Joseph Adams; who understands the business, is assisting about the building of the boat.

Building the Stella Marion took about two and a half years. Ambrose had a shop north of his dwelling, along the George Road, on Tenney Hill, adjacent to the old “Range” road. With a steam engine powering a shingle mill and a cutoff saw, Ambrose operated a small shingle business; pine came from the place.

In the spring of 1900 it was hauled on skids by eight oxen (in those days four yoke of cattle) to the lake about a mile away and put in the water at Kimball Beach within a few yards of where the Newfound Lake Marina now stands, and after christening ceremonies the new boat was named for Ambrose’s two daughters Miss Stella M. Adams and Mrs. Marion (Adams) Heath both of whom became teachers and resided in New London, N. H.



Photo Of Stella (X) , Marion (XX) and Ambrose Adams on right. Taken in 1907

The boat was then taken to the East Hebron Bay (now called Sanborn Bay or Sleepy Hollow) and finished at a cost of \$1,250.00. There the steam power, fired by wood, was installed and the cabin built. Beneath the floor of the cabin were rocks for ballast (one is now owned by Donna Esty) and under the cabin seats were life preservers which were always taken out each spring and cleaned, but were never used during the 16 years of her service on the lake.

The Stella-Marion was launched at Kimball's beach in May 1900. The following Bristol Enterprise articles clarify the launch date:

May 3, 1900. p. 2. col 3. East Hebron: Ambrose Adams has moved his boat "Stella-Marion" from his house to the lake shore. It required six yoke of oxen to draw it. He intends to launch her on Wednesday of this week.

May 5, 1900. p. 3, col. 2. Local Happenings: Tuesday the new steamer belonging to Ambrose Adams was launched on Newfound lake. This is one of the largest and best steamers ever seen on these waters. It accommodates about fifty passengers and has been inspected by the United States government.

May 31, 1900. p. 2. col 5. East Hebron: While Ambrose Adams was out on trial trip with "Stella-Marion" the first of the week he pulled in a six pound trout.

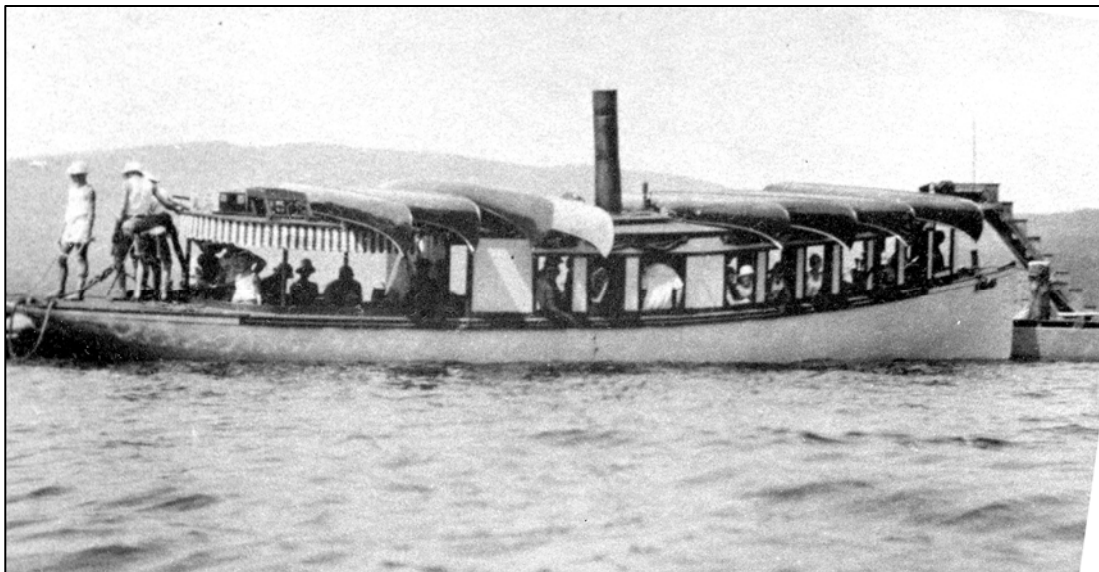
June 7, 1900. p. 3. col. 1. Local Happenings: Ambrose Adam's new steamer "Stella-Marion" makes occasional trips on our lake. Its interior is not fully completed, but those who have seen it are united in their praises of the boat.

June 28, 1900. p. 2. col 5. East Hebron: "Stella-Marion" will run regular trips on the lake Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

*July 12, 1900. p. 3. col 4. "On the Lake" (A feature story-excerpt;)
(Summary paragraph of trip taken by Editor of Enterprise, Richard Musgrove).
The "Stella-Marion is a new and attractive boat. It is the largest on the lake, being fifty feet long, ten-foot beam, with an engine of twenty-horse power, and a boiler of thirty. It has a capacity of forty passengers, and has been duly inspected and licensed by state officials. It is run by competent men, who have also been licensed as to their knowledge of steamboat navigation. Ambrose Adams is captain, Alfred Adams pilot and Chas. Sanborn mate. The boat was built by the first named gentleman, and is an excellent testimonial of their abilities in that direction. It can be engaged for day or evening excursions, by addressing Ambrose Adams, East Hebron, or by telephone to John W. Sanborn, East Hebron.*

Earlier camping parties from Camp Pasquaney traveled in row boats, often so heavily loaded that sudden squalls could cause problems.

After 1901, the Stella Marion had the canoes stacked across the canopy, and the row boats, with tents, duffle bags, and food, towed behind, all safely reaching the camping area without major incident.



Stella-Marion with canoes and campers of Camp Pasquaney

One camper, with camera, trying to take a picture of the unloading; he was advised to be cautious, but, after setting up his plate camera, he managed to step off into 10 feet of

water, camera and all. Joe Adams took the unit apart, dried it out, cleaned and oiled the moving parts.

At first the boat was used to carry passengers and fishing parties. These were busy days on the lake. Some days three trips were made around the lake. In the evening moonlight runs were made. It was soon found more capacity was needed so in the spring of 1902 a barge was built that would carry a hundred persons. Sometimes the Bristol Band played on the barge, usually with George Bucklin leading, and then the idea of dancing on the barge was created.

June 18, 1903 Advertisement: Stella Marion is the largest and safest boat on Newfound lake, licensed to carry with safety 75 persons. Steamer Stella Marion began running regular trips June 7. It will run every Sunday if weather permits starting from East Hebron at 12:30, running around Rogers' Camp, stopping for passengers wherever signals along the shore, leaving foot of lake at 2 sharp for return, will return to foot of lake about 4:45.

It was also used to haul cord wood and sawed lumber to Bristol. At this time the Mason Perkins Co. was doing a thriving paper business in Bristol and hundreds of cords of pulp wood were cut in Hebron and Groton and run down the Cockermonth River and Bog Brook. Rafts of pulpwood and saw logs were made. When they were needed Ambrose towed them to Bristol with the boat.

In the late spring when the Stella-Marion was released from her winter shelter in dry dock on the shore of Sanborn Cove, she became active in the transportation of cord wood. The barge, firmly hitched to the steamboat, and loaded with many cords of wood, was towed to the foot of the lake. From there woodsmen hauled their wood to buyers in the area.

In winter thousands of poplar, spruce, and other trees were cut for the making of pulp and paper products. When ice in the rivers thawed, the logs were hurtled down to the mouth of the Cockermonth river where boom logs were chained together end to end and stretched across the river to receive the oncoming logs. When the boom was filled (the largest on record being 1,100,000 board feet and covered four acres of lake surface) it was towed down the lake. On occasion the waters would become rough and the boom would tend to encircle the boat, a most dangerous situation.

There was no TV nor radio in those days, only newspaper weather predictions, as well as "weather eye" conclusions by the Adams men, determined the date of the towing.

With a cord and a half of stove wood aboard, a rowboat secured to the roof, and food enough for three days for himself, his son Rodney, who often sailed with him, his brother Alfred, who was the licensed pilot and Charles Sanborn who worked for Ambrose, they would cast off. They would make tea and coffee by steam. Alfred Adams was at the helm, with Ambrose firing the boiler, minding the engine, and keeping a watchful eye on the sky, as well as, on the great egg-shaped raft, the Adams brothers weighed anchor and the Stella-Marion started the long trip down the lake. Rodney Adams later said "I guess these night trips were not to my liking: the cold nights on the water, the hissing of the steam and the constant rhythm of the engine for hours on end cooled my interest as a boatman."

By night the shoreline and the waters darkened and the clouds sailed by in the moonlit sky. There was only silence except for the chugging of the engine, the whispering of the breeze, the lonely call of a loon. Deep and serene was the communion these men had with

the forces and beauty of nature. By day, neighbors climbed to hilltops to watch for a while the slow steady progress of boat and raft.

The most strenuous service provided by the Stella-Marion was the hauling of these log booms. This was also the most dangerous with many anxious moments when unexpected winds would bring the logs alongside or pull the boat off course.

Arriving at the foot of the lake, the raft was secured to trees. Horse-drawn vehicles transported the logs to Train, Smith and Co. pulp mill located near where the old Boston and Maine railroad station stood. From that mill the pulp was hauled to the Mason, Perkins paper mill on the bank of the Newfound river where the pulp was converted into various kinds of paper products. Wood was also delivered to Merrill's Sawmill at the foot of the lake.



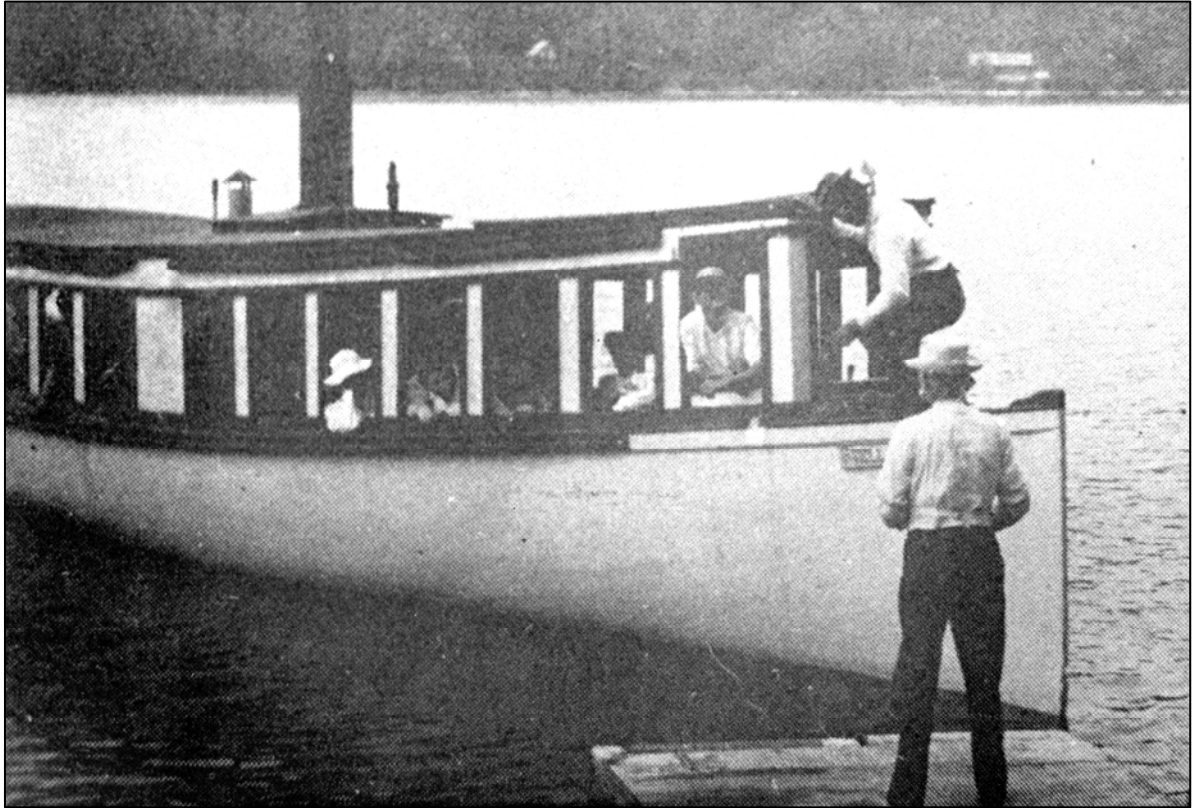
Log boom in Hebron Bay

At that time two men and the boat commanded \$1.00 an hour. Once the Stella-Marion towed 500 cords of wood for seven miles for \$16.00.

In 1906 a mail route was established on the lake. On July first of that year the Steamer carried the Mail for the first time.

July 26, 1906: Ambrose S. Adams received the first mail Contract to deliver mail around Newfound lake in his steamer, the Stella-Marion. Contract is amount of \$4.00 round trip. Quote John Ray. "Mailboxes on piers, on floating buoys and some rowed out to meet him." Movements of buoys made delivery awkward sometimes.

Passengers traveled around the lake and mail was delivered, to boxes attached to docks or floats.



Unloading passengers at the Hillside Inn

Her published sailing schedule was : “Stella Marion will make regular trips around Newfound lake with U. S. mail till Sept. 15th. Time tables Leaves wharf foot of lake 1:25, East Cottage City 1:45. E. P. Lindsey 1:55, Brookside Inn 2:25, Camp Idlewild 2:30, Camp Pasquaney, E. S. Wilson's 2:45, Hillside Inn 2:55, Camp Paradise 3:00, Camp Rogers 3:15, Pasquaney Nature Club 3:25, W. Cottage City, Jackson's Wharf 3:30, Nuttings Beach Landing 3:35, Follansbee Cottages 3:55. Arriving at Foot of lake 4:30. Moonlight excursions a specialty. The mail team conveys passengers to steamer and returns daily”

The *Stella-Marion* had 15 good summers on Newfound Lake. In 1911 a new twin cylinder was installed, providing more power and speed. The engine was made in Lynn, Massachusetts, by a machinist who was a summer fisherman. He presented it to Ambrose, along with the shipping charges. The new engine was a compound steam engine which was quite efficient because one “blast” of steam was used twice—first on a large piston and then on a smaller one. A new boiler made by the Lukacs Company in Ohio was installed when the second engine was installed. Soon after, coal burning grates were installed; coal was taken aboard in sacks, requiring far less time, effort, and space than did wood.

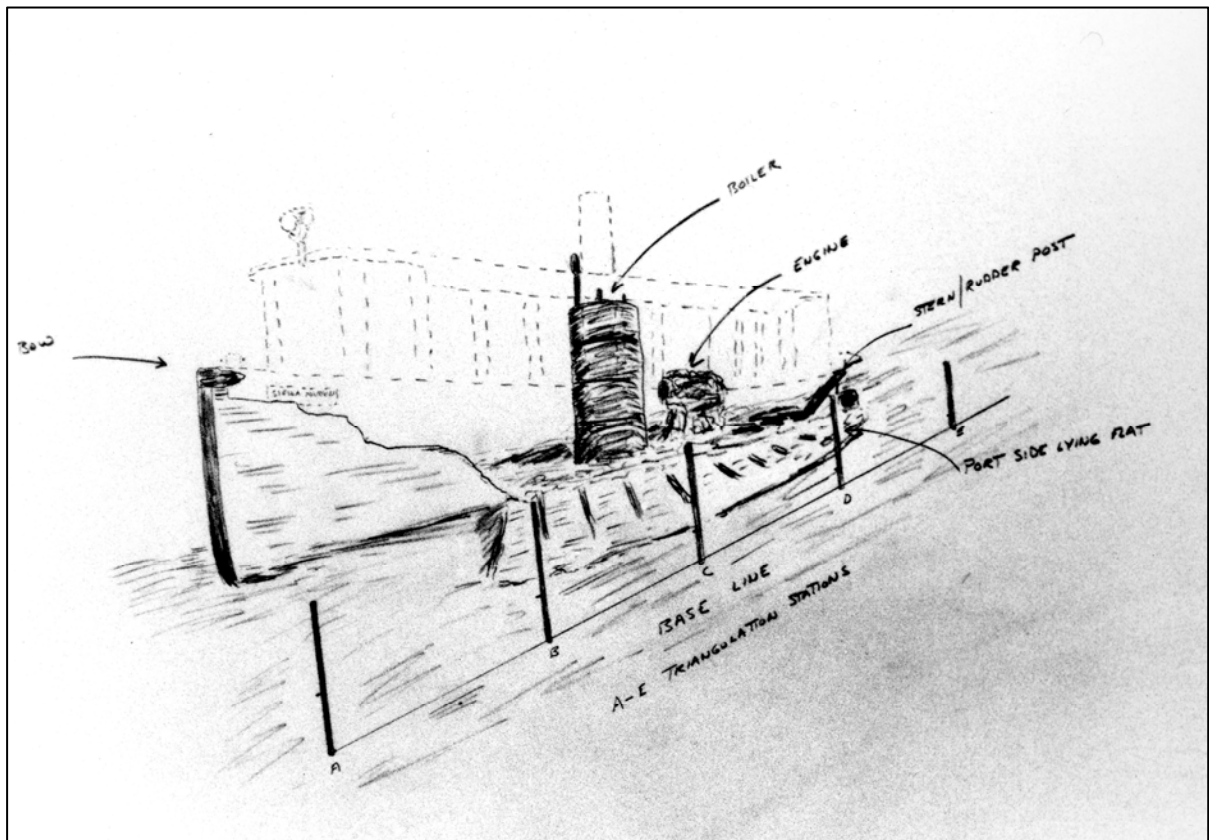
With the coming of the automobile Ambrose saw that the Steamboat days were limited so in 1912 the boat was sold to Lawrence Blake of Bristol who operated her for another few years.

The Stella Marion burned at its mooring in Pasquaney Bay on August 27, 1915 at 2:10 in the morning. According to the Enterprise Sept. 2, 1915 account of the event, the solidly-built craft “would have done good service for 50 more years.

“About 2:10 Friday morning, the burning of the Stella-Marion was discovered by the occupants of Mrs. Harry Potheary's cottage. At that time, the boat, anchored in the bay, was well in flames, and the mooring having been burned away, was drifting toward shore near the cottage of Dr. J.J. Loizeaux. Word was sent to Dr. Loizeaux, and at length Lawrence A. Blake, the owner of the boat, was notified. When Mr. Blake arrived on the scene, the boat was just sinking in 50 feet of water, where it had drifted.

The cause of the fire is unknown. The fire in the boiler had been banked as usual the night before when left by Mr. Blake at 9:30, and passersby at 11:30 p.m. and 1:20 a.m. also saw nothing amiss.”

The charred remains of the Stella-Marion were accidentally discovered in the 1970's by scuba instructor Bruce Porter when his students stumbled upon the wreck. Then in 1984 by a team of student divers led by Dr. David Switzer, a history professor at Plymouth State University searched for the wreck with the help of Nelson Adams. Switzer and his team made four or five dives without finding the wreck. It was only after Bruce Porter showed him the location that he and his divers found the wreck.



Drawing of the wreck with super structure drawn in from Dr. Switzer

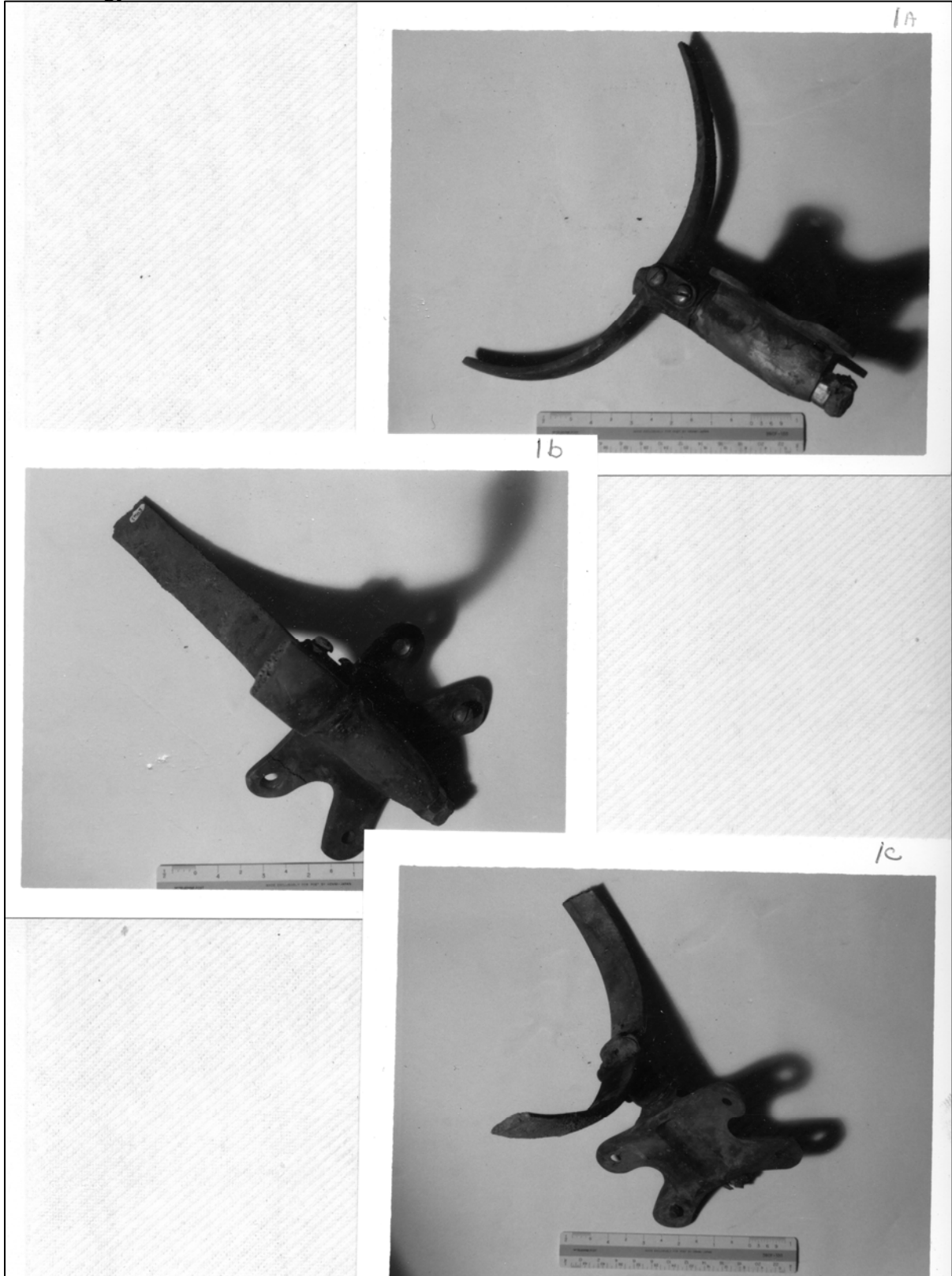


The boiler from the *Stella-Marion* on the bottom of Pasquaney Bay

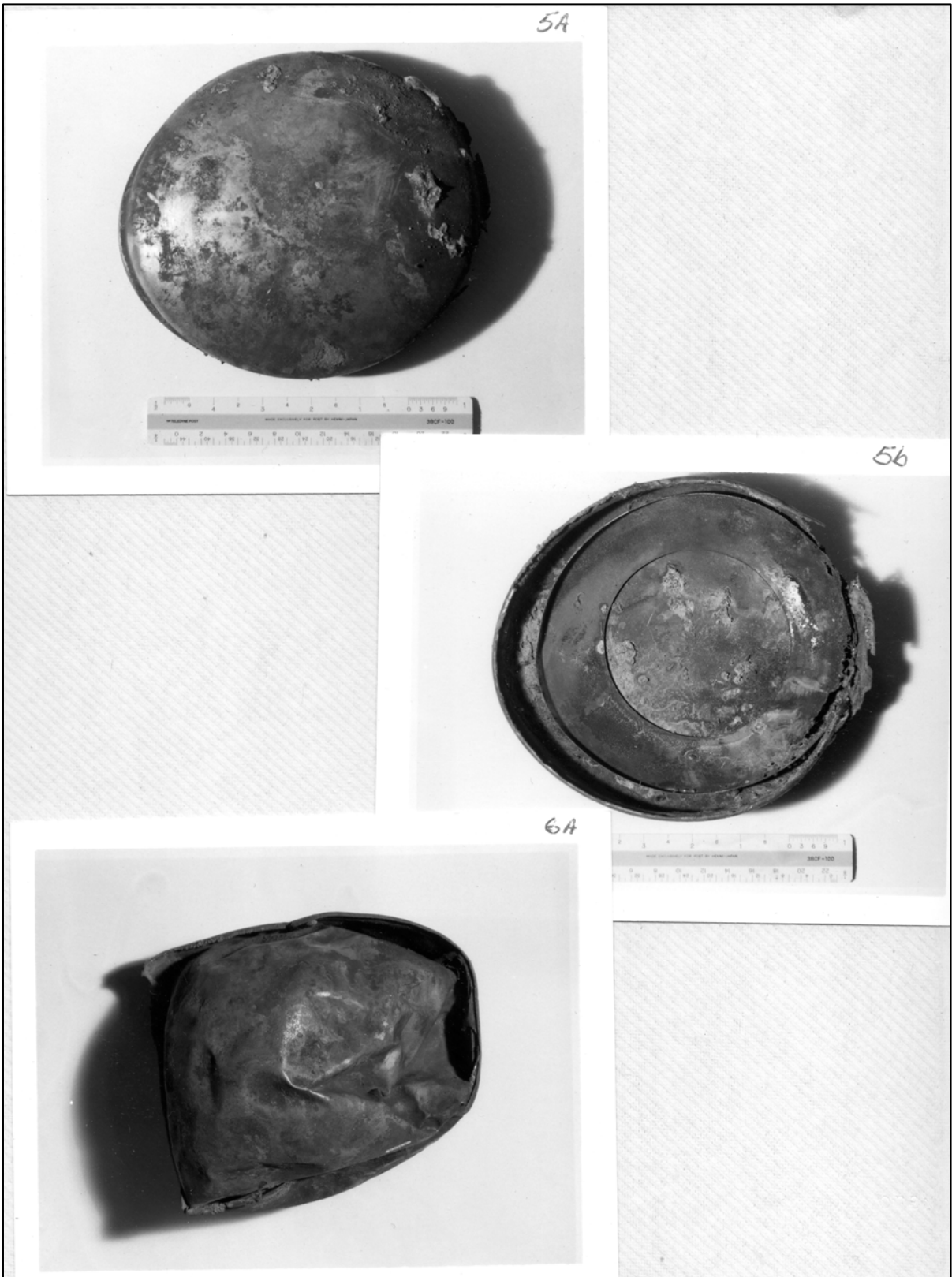


Field school students Polydora Baker (l.) and Tim Peter document the boiler of the Newfound Lake steamer *Stella-Marion*.

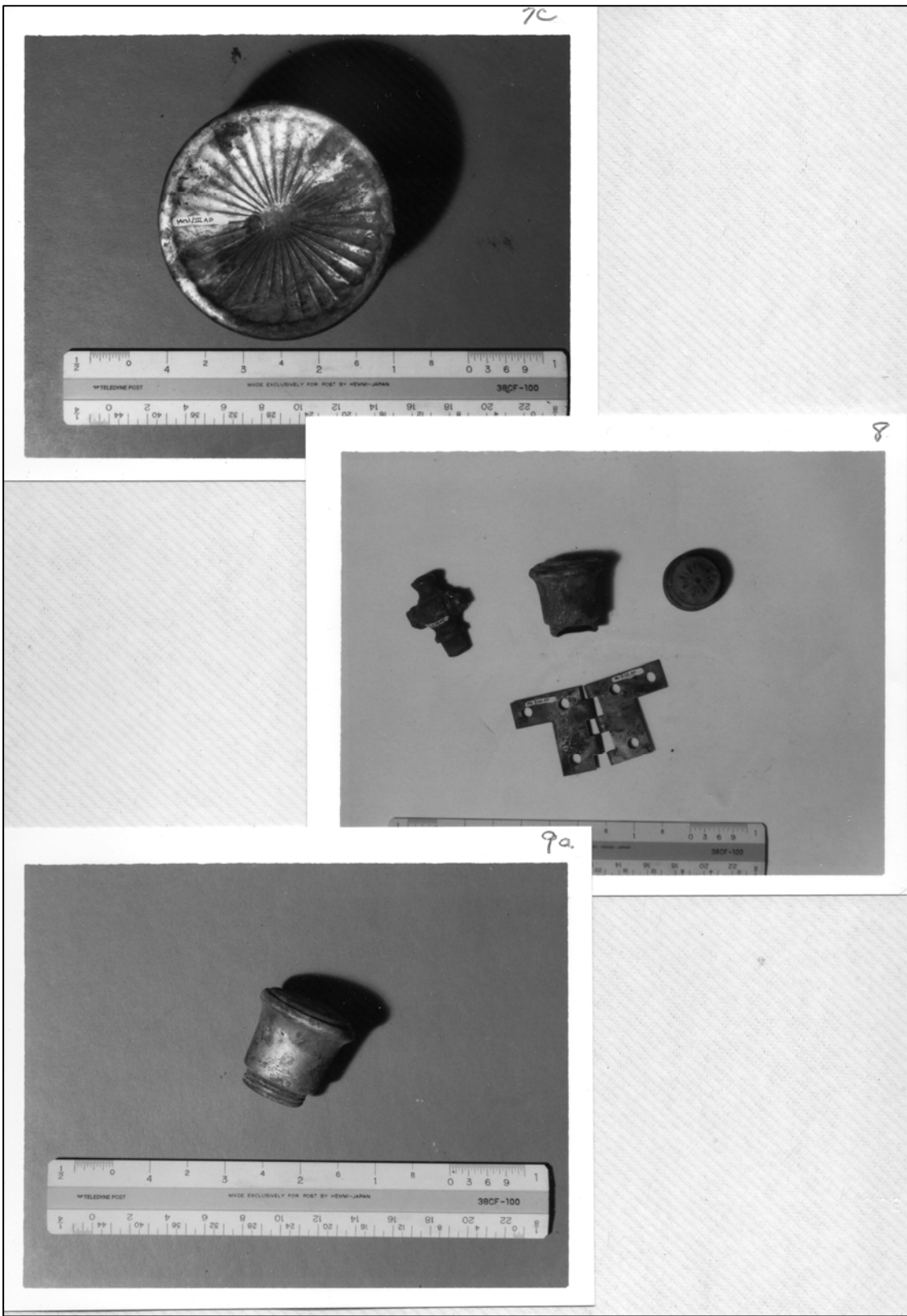
The wreck site became the basis for two Plymouth State field schools in nautical archaeology. Several artifacts were recovered from the site.



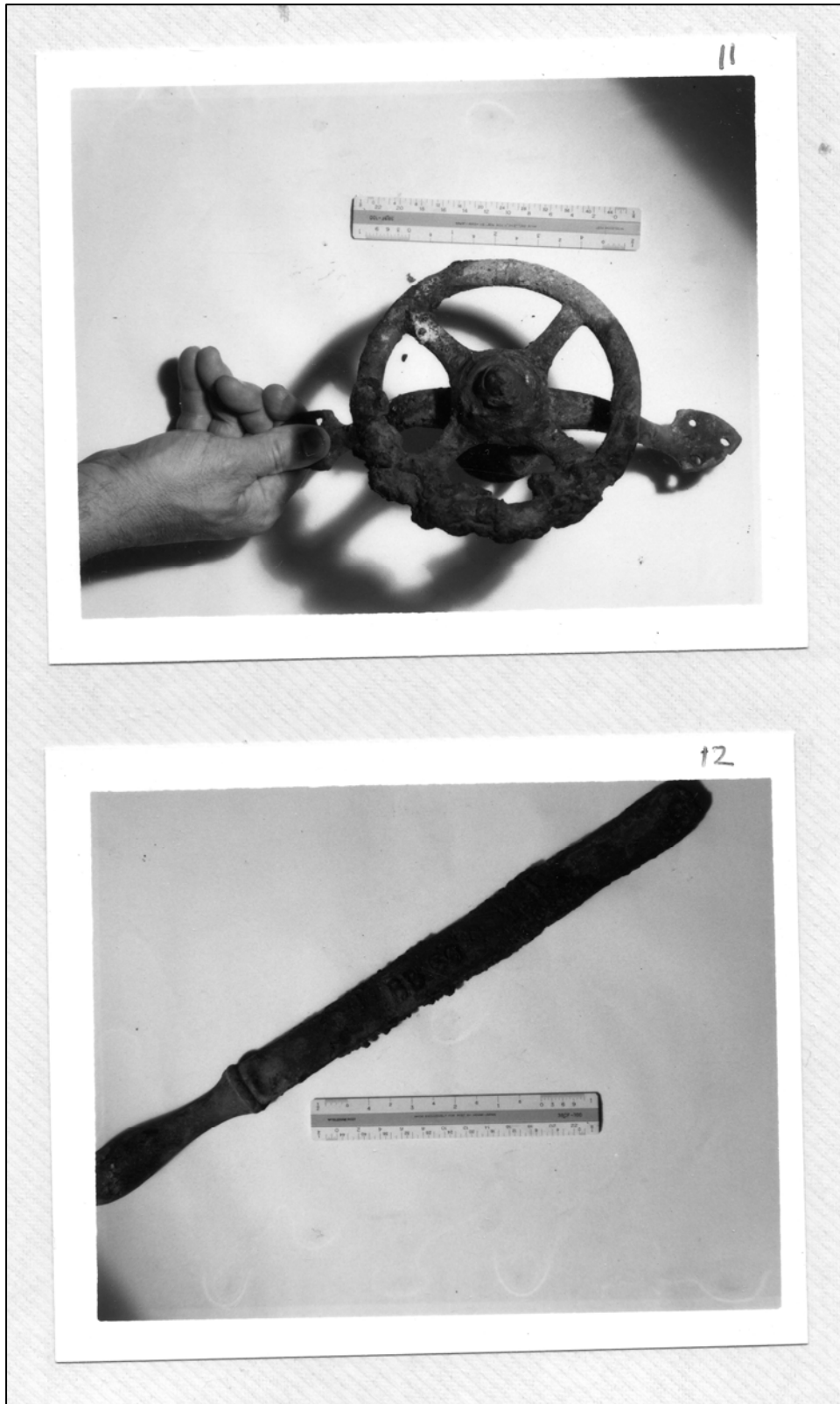
The brass swivel for the Stella-Marion's searchlight



Pieces of the searchlight from the Stella-Marion



Pieces of small kerosene lamp and other articles from the Stella-Marion



Pieces associated with the boiler of the Stella-Marion

Dr. Switzer had the long-term goal of raising the engine and restoring it. He wanted to build a replica of the Stella-Marion and install her actual engine in the replica, but the project became too expensive.

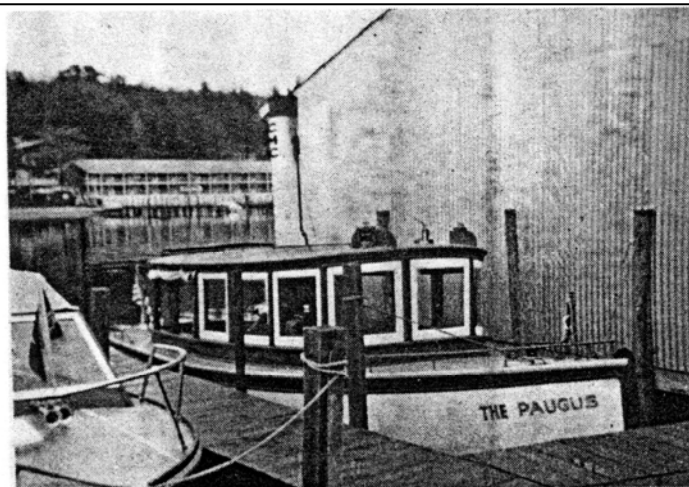
The barge built by Ambrose Adams and mentioned earlier, lasted well into the 20th century. The summer visitors and natives used to party on the barge with Chinese lanterns strung on poles and a group of boys playing music. The barge was finally scuttled in the lake by Rodney Adams who crawled down into “the slimy hold to drill holes” to sink her.

In 1916 the Stella-Marion II was built.

April 6, 1916 A new boat, the Stella-Marion, 2nd, is being built by Ambrose S. Adams and Lawrence A. Blake at East Hebron and will soon be placed on our lake. This new boat will be the largest boat of her type on Newfound lake. She will be 40 ft, over all. The decks will be of mahogany and quartered oak. A new 1916, 4 cylinder, 4 cycle, 25-35 H.P., Peerless, giving her a good turn of speed. She will have a 30-ft. cockpit with a seating capacity of 50 people

June 22, 1916 STELLA-MARION 2d. A fine New boat ready for service on Newfound. The Stella-Marion, 2d, was launched Thursday afternoon, at Kimballs beach, with public demonstration, after which lunch was served at Pasquaney Inn to invited guests.

Stella-Marion II was sold to a company on Lake Winnepesaukee owned by Mr. Tom Mooney of Center Harbor in 1921. Just before World War II she was sold to Bob Gordon who sold it to Howard Boothbay, who then sold it to Vincent Callahan of Weirs Beach who changed her name to PAUGUS. Some years later it was sold to a Canadian Company and moved to Canada where she remains today. She appeared on the cover of “Steamboats in Motion” in 1984.



Steamer PAUGUS A 30 foot craft owned by Vincent Callahan. This craft has a single cylinder engine, the boiler of which was built by Don Clements.

- 98 - Photo courtesy by David Thompson