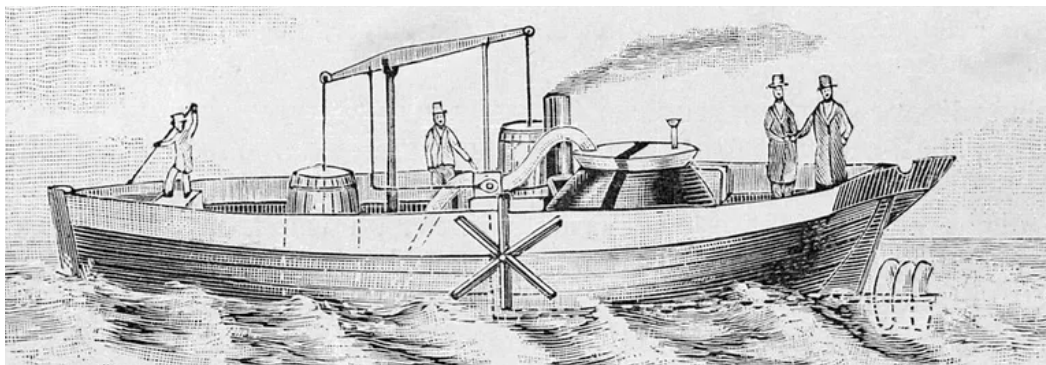




MEMORABLE DATE



STEAM-BOAT OF ROBERT FULTON

On February 11, 1809, American Robert Fulton patented the design of his vessel using steam traction. So, he has entered the history as the official inventor of the steamer.

Nevertheless, the revolution in shipbuilding referring to the use of steam energy had started long before the advent of reliable steam engines. It is believed that the first idea was put forward by the French physicist Denis Papin, who had tested a model of the steam engine in the 17th century, about 90 years before the appearance of the steam machine of James Watt. In 1707, Papin designed a vessel with a steam engine and rowing wheels, but reliable records about that are missing. According to one of the versions, after a successful test it was broken by boatmen, who were to be left without work.

The real success of inventors was achieved only in the early 19th century. In the year of 1802, a Scottish engineer William Symington demonstrated the steamer «Charlotte Dundas», and five years later, Robert Fulton built the first steamer, that started regular commercial voyages. The first Fulton's steamer, which performed its first voyage on August 17, 1807, is often called «Clermont». In fact, Fulton called it the «North River Steamboat», and Clermont was the name of the estate of his partner Livingston, located on the Hudson River, 177 km from New York, which the steamer visited during the first voyage before continuing the way to Albany. Fulton patented his steamer on February 11, 1809, and in subsequent years built some more steam vessels. In 1814, Fulton laid down the 44-cannon military steamer «Fulton I», also known as «Demoslogos»,

but did not live to see the vessel. After the death of Fulton, his name was given to his hometown of Little Britton in Pennsylvania (but it is not that city where Winston Churchill delivered his famous speech about iron curtain, that city is in the state of Missouri).

In 1813, Fulton almost became the owner of the exclusive right to build steamers in Russia: Emperor Alexander I granted him a monopoly on the operation of steamship vessels on the St. Petersburg – Kronstadt line, as well as on other Russian rivers for 15 years. But Fulton could not use the contract, because he did not fulfill the basic terms of the contract, he did not put into operation any ship within 3 years, and this contract went to the Scottish engineer Charles Baird. As a result, the first Russian steamer «Elizabeth» was built in 1815 by Baird, who owned a mechanical plant in St. Petersburg. After successful tests on Neva «Elizabeth» started voyages between St. Petersburg and Kronstadt. The report on one of these voyages was published by the «Son of the Fatherland» magazine. The author, the Russian naval officer, later Admiral Petr Rikord, publicly used the Russian term «parokhod» (steamer) for the first time.

Based on: <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2017/02/11/etot-den-v-istorii-1809-god-fulton-zapatentoval-pervyy-parohod>, <https://scientificrussia.ru/events/v-1809-g-robert-fulton-zapatentoval-parohod>, <https://www.thoughtco.com/robert-fulton-steamboat-4075444>, <http://www.victorianweb.org/technology/ships/kennedy1.html>, etc. ●

