

# Shipbuilding and the Nascent Community of Greenpoint, New York, 1850-1855

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*Plusieurs constructeurs de navires connus et plusieurs jeunes charpentiers de marine ont été forcés de quitter la ville de New York en raison de l'augmentation excessive de la population et parce que le développement industriel n'était pas réglementé. Ils se sont réinstallés de l'autre côté de l'East River, sur les rives de Greenpoint, sur un site rural qui est rapidement devenue une communauté urbaine. Des jeunes charpentiers de marine tels que Eckford Webb et Edward F. Williams ont ouvert des chantiers navals près de ceux des éminents constructeurs de navire tels que Samuel Sneden, William Collyer et Jeremiah Simonson qui y avaient également déplacé leurs chantiers. Étant en exploitation pendant une période de croissance économique, ces chantiers ont mis à l'eau, pratiquement les uns après les autres, tant navires à vapeur qu'à voile. En moins de cinq ans après leur arrivée, la population de Greenpoint avait pratiquement décuplé.*

Virtually unknown until shipbuilders began opening yards there in 1850, the tiny hamlet of Greenpoint grew from a population of a few hundred to almost five thousand in the short span of five years. Shipbuilding was the largest of the industries that accounted for this remarkable growth. The shipbuilders enjoyed great initial success at their new locations in Greenpoint. However, rapid technological changes in their industry soon diminished demand for their wood-hull vessels and made their particular skills obsolete. This is a brief chronicle of their accomplishments in those years.

Situated on the western end of Long Island, on the shore of the East River, Greenpoint is the northernmost community of Brooklyn, one of the five boroughs that comprise the modern city of New York. Because Greenpoint was never an incorporated municipality, its boundaries were never officially described. The community's generally accepted borders are the East River on the west; Newtown Creek on the north; the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway on the east; and Bushwick Creek on the south, the original course of which is today partially traced by North 14th Street.

For much of its first two centuries as a European settlement, Greenpoint had

*The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord*, XVI No2, (April 2006), 15-52.

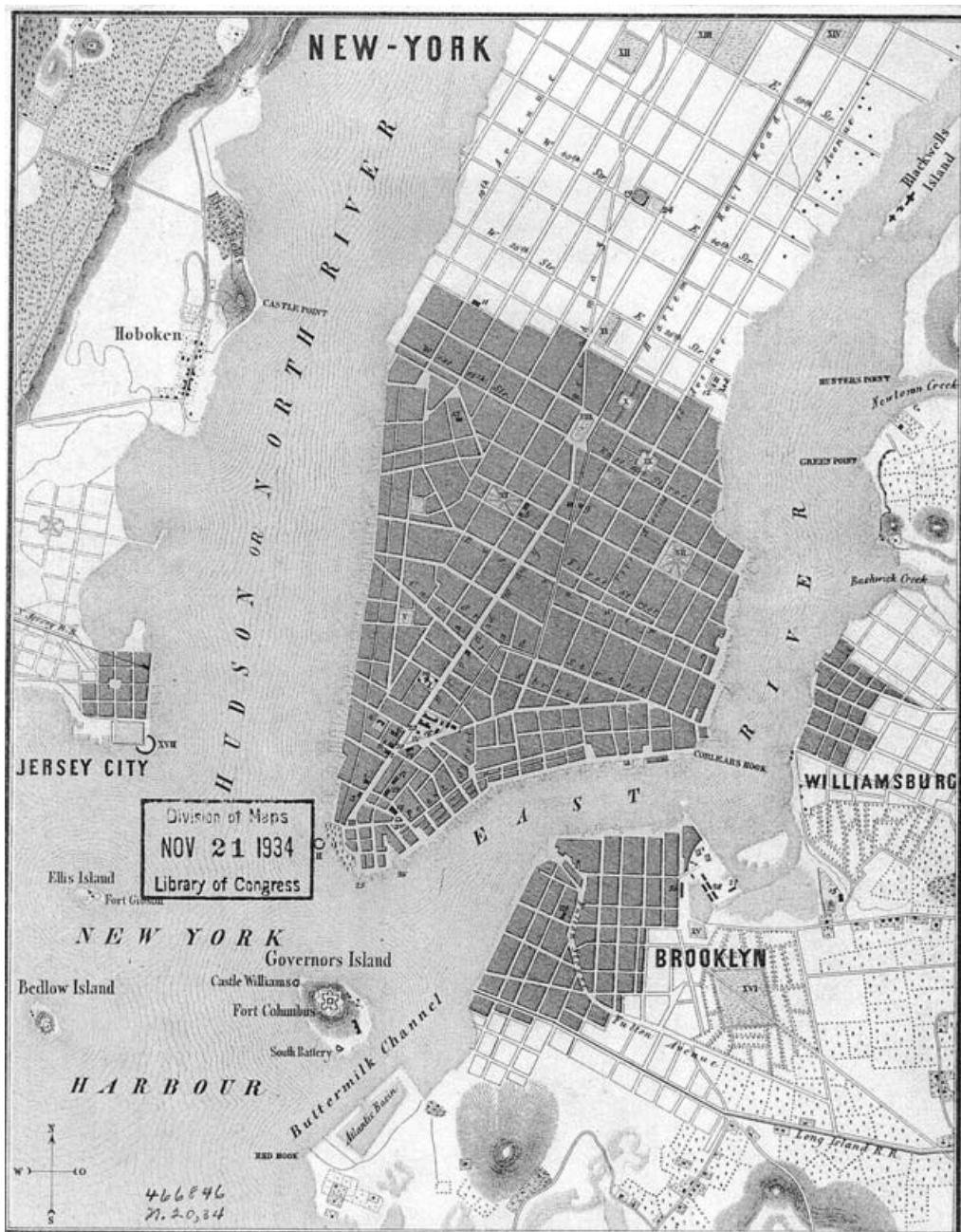


Figure 1. Although this map of New York City and environs is dated 1851, and while it accurately depicts locations of the various communities, it does not show the bridge over Bushwick Creek that was built much earlier to link Greenpoint and Williamsburgh, nor subsequent development. *Original in the Library of Congress. Digital enhancement by Robert V. Schwemmer and Jessica Barnes.*

been the preserve of five farming families of Dutch and French Huguenot descent.<sup>1</sup> Early in the 1830s, the area's location across the East River from the booming metropolis of New York attracted the interest of Nezhiah Bliss, a Connecticut Yankee and former Ohio River steamboat captain, and the eminent Reverend Dr. Eliphalet Nott, president of Union College at Schenectady, New York. Dr. Nott was an amateur inventor who had established the Novelty Iron Works at the foot of East 12th Street, where he was experimenting with marine steam boilers fuelled by anthracite coal. Bliss was his marine engineer. Both were beguiled by the apparent success of the developers of Brooklyn Heights and Williamsburgh, where huge profits were being realized through rampant land speculation.

Williamsburgh was a prospering incorporated village bordering Greenpoint on the south; the two communities were separated by acres of salt meadows through which Bushwick Creek followed its meandering channel to the East River. Nott and Bliss made their first investment in Greenpoint real estate with the purchase of thirty-five acres of farmland in 1831. More land was acquired, and in the succeeding years, they surveyed much of Greenpoint for streets and house lots. A bridge was constructed over Bushwick Creek, and some homes and businesses were built. But without dependable steam-ferry service across the river to New York City, Greenpoint's development stagnated and remained only a land developer's dream.<sup>2</sup>

Growth had to wait until unrelenting pressures created by industrial development and a burgeoning population in New York City forced businessmen to look beyond the rivers that hemmed in the island on which the city stands. Among these entrepreneurs were the shipbuilders who made New York the country's leading shipbuilding locale and whose legendary transatlantic and coastal packets were key to making that city the nation's economic centre. Following a plan to redevelop the East River shore, the city government was steadily constructing bulkheads and wharves to accommodate the growing number of merchant vessels coming into the port. These projects forced the relocation of shipyards situated below Corlears Hook to points uptown, or out of the city entirely.<sup>3</sup>

Shipbuilder Jabez Williams moved his yard across the East River in 1845. Originally from Connecticut, he had been constructing vessels in New York since at least 1821, when he launched the steamboat *United States*.<sup>4</sup> When he relocated his shipyard, however, he moved not to Greenpoint but to neighbouring Williamsburgh, which at that time had a population of over 11,500 people and was considered soon to be a rival to the city of Brooklyn, on its southern border. Unlike Greenpoint, Williamsburgh was blessed

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<sup>1</sup> Marcia Reiss, *Greenpoint Neighborhood History Guide* (Brooklyn, NY, 2001), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Codman Hislop, *Eliphalet Nott* (Middletown, Conn., 1971), 349-359; Henry R. Stiles, *History of the City of Brooklyn*, 3 vol. (Albany, NY, 1860, 1870), II:146-151, 413; Peter Ross, *A History of Long Island*, 3 vol. (New York, 1902), I:345-347, 352.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Greenlaugh Albion, *The Rise of New York Port [1815-1860]* (New York, 1939), 287ff. New York *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, 5 January 1854, page dated 30 December 1853, col. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Census of the State of New York for 1855*. I am grateful to George J. Weinmann, of the Greenpoint-Monitor Museum, for a copy from microfilm of the Jabez Williams family entry. Fred Erving Dayton, *Steamboat Days* (New York, 1925), 37.

with reliable ferry service to New York City, from where many shipyard workers commuted.<sup>5</sup>

Though the Williams yard prospered at its new location, Greenpoint was beckoning – not only to Jabez Williams but to others as well. New York shipbuilder Samuel Sneden and machinery builder James Cunningham, in association with Jabez Williams and his son John T.,<sup>6</sup> purchased a large parcel of land in Greenpoint, at the junction of Bushwick Creek and the East River. The purchase “was consummated on the 1st of June, 1848.”<sup>7</sup> They soon began the work of improving the property.

Covering the equivalent of more than ten city blocks and costing some \$220,000, the development was a huge project for its time. Early in 1850, the *New York Journal of Commerce* reported:<sup>8</sup>

Green Point – Just across the East River, in a northeasterly direction from the upper portion of this city, may be observed a large excavation, on what is generally known as Green Point. A considerable number of men have been employed for some time past in cutting down the hill and conveying the soil out into the stream, by means of rail cars, where it has been thrown behind a large bulk head. The effect is to form about 500 building lots, having a dock front of something more than 1000 feet, from which it is expected to realize a handsome sum.

Constructing a shipyard was unusual for the period. Typically, a shipbuilder selected a clear piece of waterfront land that had a suitable angle of slope into water of sufficient depth to float the vessels he contemplated building. The building ways would be laid right on the beach, and when the vessel was completed, stops would be knocked away, and the vessel would slide into the water. Typically, time of launching was the hour of high tide. “[O]ne great advantage in building vessels at Green Point, is the great depth of water there, it being over 25 feet deep at low tide, by which they will thus be enabled to launch a steamer or packet ship at almost any hour of the day.”<sup>9</sup> That Greenpoint attracted the interest of shipbuilders well beyond the New York City area is attested by the fact that famed clipper-ship builder Donald McKay, of East Boston, Massachusetts, and his brother Laughlin acquired property in a waterfront block between Eagle and Freeman Streets in 1849.<sup>10</sup> It may never be known if the acquisition was for speculation

<sup>5</sup> *New York Herald*, 26 August 1845 (page 2, col. 4), hereinafter rendered as (2/4). Benjamin F. Thompson, *History of Long Island* (1849) (4 vol., 3d ed. New York, 1918), III:379, 381-83, IV:87. In 1849, Thompson wrote only the following about shipbuilding in Williamsburgh: “Ship-building has also been introduced and is now prosecuted to a great and profitable extent.” The corporate name of the village ended with an ‘h’; over time, this last letter was dropped.

<sup>6</sup> John T. Williams was the eldest son of Jabez. They are shown as part owners under their individual names on a number of registers and enrolments for vessels built by Jabez Williams. Contemporary reports on shipbuilding occasionally refer to the firm as Jabez Williams & Son, e.g., *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine*, XVI, No. 5, (May 1847), 534.

<sup>7</sup> *New York Daily Tribune*, 2 November 1850 (2/2).

<sup>8</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 18 February 1850 (2/2-3). *Detailed Estate and Old Farm Line Atlas of the City of Brooklyn . . . from Official Records* (Philadelphia, 1880), VI.

<sup>9</sup> Albion, 293; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 15 November 1850 (2/1).

<sup>10</sup> Registrar, Kings County, NY, Book of Conveyances, Block 2502.

or if McKay was contemplating establishing a yard on the site. The McKay's relinquished their Greenpoint holdings in 1856.<sup>11</sup>

Spring of 1851 was the time when Williams and Sneden were expected to open their respective new yards. Along with the shipyards, the development was to have included an "extensive foundry . . . designed for the construction of heavy marine engines and boilers. The buildings are to cover ten entire lots of ground, and, together with the fitting up, will cost upwards of \$100,000." For reasons not yet discovered, this particular promise of heavy industry for Greenpoint was not fulfilled.<sup>12</sup>

For all their early planning, however, the Williamses and Sneden were not the first shipbuilders to open a yard in Greenpoint. That distinction went to George Collyer and Eckford Webb – " \_ of the eminent shipbuilders of the same names" – who opened their new yard at the foot of G Street (Green Street today) in August 1850.<sup>13</sup> George Collyer was one of six shipbuilding brothers from the Hudson River community of Sing Sing, New York (today known as Ossining). He had already built a number of vessels in New York City – the more notable of them being the Hudson River steamboats *Rip Van Winkle* in 1845 and *Francis Skiddy* in 1848.<sup>14</sup> Eckford Webb was a younger brother of noted New York shipbuilder William H. Webb, who had assumed proprietorship of the shipyard at the foot of East 6th Street upon the premature death of his father, Isaac Webb, in 1840. Both William H. and Eckford had apprenticed in their father's yard, as did other shipbuilders of note, among them Donald McKay and John W. Griffiths.<sup>15</sup> (Isaac Webb had apprenticed under famed shipbuilder Henry Eckford and later managed operations at the Eckford yard. He named his youngest son Eckford, in honor of his mentor. After Henry Eckford's untimely death while in Turkey in 1831, Webb acquired the Eckford yard.)

The fledgling firm of Collyer & Webb started operations with a contract to build "a small steamer, about 100 feet in length, for the purpose of experimenting with a new variety of steam engine ... for Messrs. Howland & Aspinwall."<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, newspaper reports of her launching are vague and none gives her name. There are disagreements on the date of her launching (one newspaper says 17 December, another

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<sup>11</sup> Registrar, Kings County, NY, Book of Conveyances, Block 2502.

<sup>12</sup> *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 2 November 1850 (2/2); *New York Journal of Commerce*, 15 November 1850 (2/1).

<sup>13</sup> *New York Herald*, 1 September 1850 (2/3). This was not the first industrial enterprise established in Greenpoint; a coal yard opened in 1843 (Ross, I:352) and a porcelain factory in 1848 (Reiss, 12). William L. Felter, *Historic Green Point* (Green Point Savings Bank, [ca. 1918]), 32, and Reiss, 7-8, both date the beginning of shipbuilding from 1840 but neither names a shipyard nor identifies any vessel built in the 1840s. There is every likelihood that skiffs and small periaguas were being built at Greenpoint from the earliest days of its settlement, possibly by itinerant boat builders and residents who were adept at boat building, but my research has not documented the existence of a true shipbuilding enterprise before 1850.

<sup>14</sup> Dayton, 394-395; *New York Herald*, 16 July 1845 (2/2), and 31 December 1852.

<sup>15</sup> John H. Morrison, *History of New York Ship Yards* (New York, 1909), 94-95. Edwin L. Dunbaugh and William duBarry Thomas, *William H. Webb: Shipbuilder* (Glen Cove, NY, 1989), 19, 22-23, 29-30. Dunbaugh and Thomas erroneously state that Eckford Webb's first association was in Greenpoint in 1843 with Nathaniel Bell, under the firm name of Webb & Bell. The firm of Webb & Bell was not formed until 1856, with George W. Bell, Morrison, *Ship Yards*, 149.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 30 August 1850 (2/2).

the 28th) and the type of engine to have been installed (oscillating or rotary).<sup>17</sup> She very likely was the *Honda*, finally completed in August 1851, when she departed New York harbour for Barranquilla, Colombia. The long delay could have been caused by machinery problems, the rotary engine being experimental at the time, if this was truly the type of engine originally intended for her.<sup>18</sup>

In February of 1851, Eckford's brother William H. awarded the pair a subcontract to build three schooners destined for the Mexican revenue service. They were the *Antonia*, *Cayetano*, and *Benita*, each of 76 tons. (W. H. Webb's primary contract called for the building of five schooners. The other two were subcontracted to William Foulks, who "has recently hired a plot of ground at the foot of 18th street [New York], where he intends to carry on the shipbuilding business." Foulks was destined to end his shipbuilding days in Greenpoint, becoming a bank director in his retirement.) Prior to the launching of the three schooners in May, George Collyer left the partnership. Eckford Webb continued building on his own, and before the revenue cutters were completed, he received another subcontract – this one for a 310-ton steamer, also for the Mexican government. Named *Edgar*, she was launched on 23 July.<sup>19</sup> Eckford subsequently started construction of a steamer, reported to be 120 tons, for the Pennsylvania Coal Company.<sup>20</sup>

Jabez Williams remained at his yard in Williamsburgh until he launched the 1222-ton clipper ship *Eclipse* on 30 November 1850, after which he began the move to Greenpoint. A newspaper report characterized the first vessel he was to build there as a "Monster Ship" to be launched in the spring.<sup>21</sup> The work of preparing the new yard went

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<sup>17</sup> New York *Herald* says *oscillating* engine in the 1 September 1850 (2/3) and rotary engine, launched 17 December, in the 1 January 1851 (2/1) editions; the *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 3 January 1851 (2-3), says launched 28 December "and she is now lying at the works of Messrs. Hogg & Delamater, receiving her machinery."

<sup>18</sup> New York *Herald*, 28 August 1851 (2/5). Henry R. Stiles, *History of the City of Brooklyn*, 3 vol. (Albany, NY, 1860, 1870), II:415, says the *Honda* was constructed in 1850, the first vessel built by Eckford Webb in Greenpoint, but does not mention his partnership with Collyer, nor any of the other numerous vessels built at Greenpoint in the early 1850s.

<sup>19</sup> *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 1 March (2/3) and 1 May (2/2), 1851; Felter, 7; New York *Journal of Commerce*, 26 May 1851 (2/1); New York *Herald*, 23 July 1851 (2/3). In the registers issued for the subcontracted vessels – Sail Registers No. 294, No. 295, and No. 296, all dated 19 June 1851, for the *Antonia*, *Cayetano*, and *Benita*, respectively; Steam Register No. 35, dated 27 August 1851, for the *Honda*, and No. 39, dated 31 October 1851, for the *Edgar* – William H. Webb is shown as the master builder and the place of build is given as New York City rather than Greenpoint. (Unless otherwise stated, all vessel registers and enrolments cited herein are in the customhouse copies of documents issued at the Port of New York in the US National Archives, Washington, DC, Record Group 41, Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, hereinafter referred to as RG 41.) Unless otherwise indicated, tonnages given in this work are the registered tonnages found in the customhouse copies; in Forrest R. Holdcamper, compiler, *List of American Flag Vessels That Received Certificates of Enrollment or Registry at the Port of New York 1789-1867*, Special List No. 22 (Washington, DC, 1968); and in William M. Lytle and Forrest R. Holdcamper, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States 1790-1868*, "The Lytle-Holdcamper List" (Staten Island, NY, 1975). These tonnages frequently differ from those appearing in news articles, which were typically published at the time of construction, well before the vessels were officially measured by customs officers.

<sup>20</sup> New York *Daily Tribune*, 27 December 1851 (7/5) – the name of the steamer is not given.

<sup>21</sup> *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 2 December 1850 (2/3); New York *Journal of Commerce*, 25 December 1850 (2/2). Felter, 32, erroneously writes that "'honest old Jabez Williams,' . . . transferred his

on through the winter. In April 1851, Williams laid the keel of the propeller steamship *South Carolina*, lauded as “the pioneer steamer for direct trade from Southern ports” to Liverpool, England. She was to run from Charleston, South Carolina, and was launched on 11 October. (Departing on her maiden voyage on 7 April 1852, the *South Carolina* wrecked her propeller on the Charleston Bar. Proving too expensive to repair, she was converted to sail.)<sup>22</sup> The Williams yard was also busy constructing the *Tornado*, the first clipper ship to be built in Greenpoint, the keel of which had been laid in June.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, Samuel Sneden was ending his partnership with Herbert Lawrence, who was retiring from business and with whom Sneden had been associated for some years. As 1851 began, Lawrence & Sneden had three vessels on the stocks at their New York yard – the 500-ton steamers *Calhoun* and *Gordon*, to run between Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, and the *Susquehanna*, a barge of 356 tons. The steamers were launched in January and the barge in February.<sup>24</sup> Precisely when, or at what location, Samuel Sneden started building his first vessel in Greenpoint is not entirely clear. A September 1851 newspaper report states that he “opened a yard . . . where he has commenced a steamer for a company in Charleston.” This was the 344-ton *Florida*, launched on 23 October.<sup>25</sup> Earlier in October, he had started construction of the steamer *General Concha*, reported as being 370 tons and destined for a Cuban company.

She was launched on 9 December.<sup>26</sup> When the year ended, Sneden had on the stocks the steamboat *City of Hartford*. Though Sneden still maintained an office in New York City at 26 Corlears, his yard was now well established in Greenpoint, where he had also moved his household.<sup>27</sup>

Some time during 1851, the new firm of Lupton & McDiarmid began operations next to the yard of Eckford Webb. The principals were Edward Lupton and John McDiarmid. Lupton’s career went back to the late 1830s. He was “the principal

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yard about 1866 from . . . New York, to Green Point.”

<sup>22</sup> *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 1 March (2/3) and 1 May (2/2), 1851; *New York Herald*, 10 October (2/5), and 12 October (2/5), 1851; Carl C. Cutler, *Queens of the Western Ocean: The Story of America’s Mail and Passenger Sailing Lines* (Annapolis, Md., 1961), 290.

<sup>23</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 26 June 1851 (2/1).

<sup>24</sup> *New York Herald*, 1 January 1852 (3/2), clearly states that the 500-ton steamers were launched from his “late yard” in New York City. Progress of their construction is reported in the *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 2 December 1850 (2/3). Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia, S.C., 1988), 323, incorrectly says the *Gordon* was built by “Lawrence Sneden, [sic] Greenpoint.” The *Herald* report implies that the *Susquehanna* was built in Greenpoint; however, Sail Enrollment No. 211, 12 April 1851, states that she was built at New York “per Certificate of Lawrence & Sneden (Master builders).” Though the *New York Journal of Commerce* of 15 November 1850 (2/1) reports that both Lawrence and Sneden were to move to Greenpoint, no conclusive evidence has been found to indicate that the Lawrence & Sneden partnership did so.

<sup>25</sup> *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 3 September 1851 (1/10); *New York Herald*, 24 October 1851 (1/5). *The Lytle-Holdcamper List*, 74, incorrectly says this *Florida* was built in New York.

<sup>26</sup> *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 4 October 1851 (2/3), *New York Herald*, 1 January 1852 (3/2), and *New York Journal of Commerce*, 12 February 1852 (2/3). No government record of a *General Concha* of 1851 has been found. This was probably the *Creole*, 316 tons, built in Greenpoint in 1852 by Samuel “Snider,” per Connecticut Ship Database, 1789-1939, <http://www.mysticseaport.org/library/initiative/CuCustoms.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 12 February 1852 (photocopy in the Lawesson Collection, South Street Seaport Museum Library); *Doggett’s New York City Directory 1851-52*.



Figure 2. Portion of an unidentified street map of New York City and environs, probably dating from the late 1850s. The streets are depicted largely as they are today, with exceptions due to some never having been dedicated and others having been condemned. Orchard Street and Union Avenue have been realigned into today's Manhattan Avenue, Greenpoint's main thoroughfare. Quay Street is the unnamed street bordering Bushwick Creek (now filled in) on the north. Box Street is incorrectly labeled "Fox." *Private collection; used by permission. Digital enhancement by Robert V. Schwemmer and Jessica Barnes.*

designer" for noted New York shipbuilder William H. Brown and drafted the steamship *Kamchatka*, built of the Russian government. The firm of Lupton & McDiarmid may have included Edward's brother Samuel. Both Edward and Samuel Lupton are listed in *Greenpoint and Bushwick Directory* but the firm of Lupton & McDiarmid is not, nor is John McDiarmid. Lupton & McDiarmid's first vessel was the *Eastern City*, a 616-ton sidewheel steamer to run between Boston, Massachusetts, and Calais, Maine. She was



launched in the following spring.<sup>28</sup>

Two questions arise: Where did the workers in the four new shipyards of Greenpoint live, and how did they get to work? The 1850 census reports a total population (including women and children) of only 3,739 in the entire Town of Bushwick, of which the hamlet of Greenpoint was part. Surely, many workers commuted by horse-drawn omnibus from the neighbouring village of Williamsburgh, which had a population of 30,780, considerably more than double its population in 1845.<sup>29</sup> Omnibuses of the Knickerbocker Line originated at the Fulton Ferry in Brooklyn, followed a route around the Brooklyn Navy Yard, traversed Williamsburgh, and crossed a bridge over the marshland of Bushwick Inlet to Greenpoint. (The bridge had originally been built in 1838 as a “foot-bridge.”)<sup>30</sup> Shipyard workers living in New York City could have crossed the East River on the Fulton Ferry, or taken the ferry to Williamsburgh and boarded the Knickerbocker omnibus along its route.

On 21 May 1851, a newspaper reported on a direct route from New York City to Greenpoint: “The steamer *Lewis Depau* commenced running yesterday, between Green Point and the foot of Tenth street . . . landing at Williams’ Dock.” The fare was four cents. Apparently, the *Lewis Depau* did not run for long because a letter to the *Journal of Commerce* complained about the need to travel from Greenpoint “through the length of Williamsburgh” to get a ferry to New York City.<sup>31</sup> An 1853 newspaper item equated a ramble through the clean, fresh air of bucolic Greenpoint to one through “London, Paris, or Versailles . . . attainable for a few cents . . . for the weary artisan and laborer, far more agreeable and refreshing than a mere walk through a park.” It was precisely because Greenpoint was sparsely populated that made establishing regular ferry service a risky business venture. Finally, in mid-1853, a franchised ferry began regular, dependable service between Greenpoint and 23rd Street in Gotham.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> New York *Herald*, 1 January 1852 (3/2); Howard I. Chapelle, *The Search for Speed Under Sail 1700-1855* (New York, 1967), 383; *Reynolds’ Williamsburgh City Directory For 1853* (Williamsburgh, NY, n.d.), in which the *Greenpoint, Bushwick, and North Brooklyn Directory* appears as an appendix (entitled *Greenpoint and Bushwick Directory* in the next edition); New York *Daily Times*, 26 May 1853 (6/1); *Hunt’s*, XXIX, No. 6 (December 1853), 753; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 5 January 1857 (2/2). In addition to William H., there were other New York shipbuilders with the family name of Brown: The brothers Adam and Noah Brown, and David Brown, Noah’s adopted son, who succeeded them. William H. served his apprenticeship under Adam and Noah, but he was not related (Albion, 288, 291; *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 31 October 1855 [2/4]). No information about the earlier career of McDiarmid has been found.

<sup>29</sup> Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse, NY, 1972), 31. In New York State, a “Town” is a subdivision of a county, designated a “Township” in other states. Greenpoint was an unincorporated Town of Bushwick.

<sup>30</sup> Ads in the *Williamsburgh Daily Gazette* announced omnibus departures; a typical one in the edition of 1 July 1852 (1/4) announces a Knickerbocker omnibus leaving “FULTON FERRY for GREENPOINT every 7 minutes”; Ross, I:352.

<sup>31</sup> New York *Herald*, 16 October 1851 (7/3); New York *Journal of Commerce*, 21 May 1851 (2/1), and 12 May 1852 (2/3). Diligent research has failed to find a single vessel document for a *Lewis Depau*. It was not unusual for a vessel engaged in ferrying without a city franchise to carry a false name; see New York *Herald*, 9 July 1850 (3/6): “Many of the boats running, have on their wheel house, and bills of advertisement names different from that to which they are entitled making in some instances considerable confusion.”

<sup>32</sup> New York *Daily Times*, 30 June (3/4), 25 May (3/5), and 23 July (8/3), 1853; Brian J. Cudahy, *Over and Back: The History of Ferryboats in New York Harbor* (New York, 1990), 86.

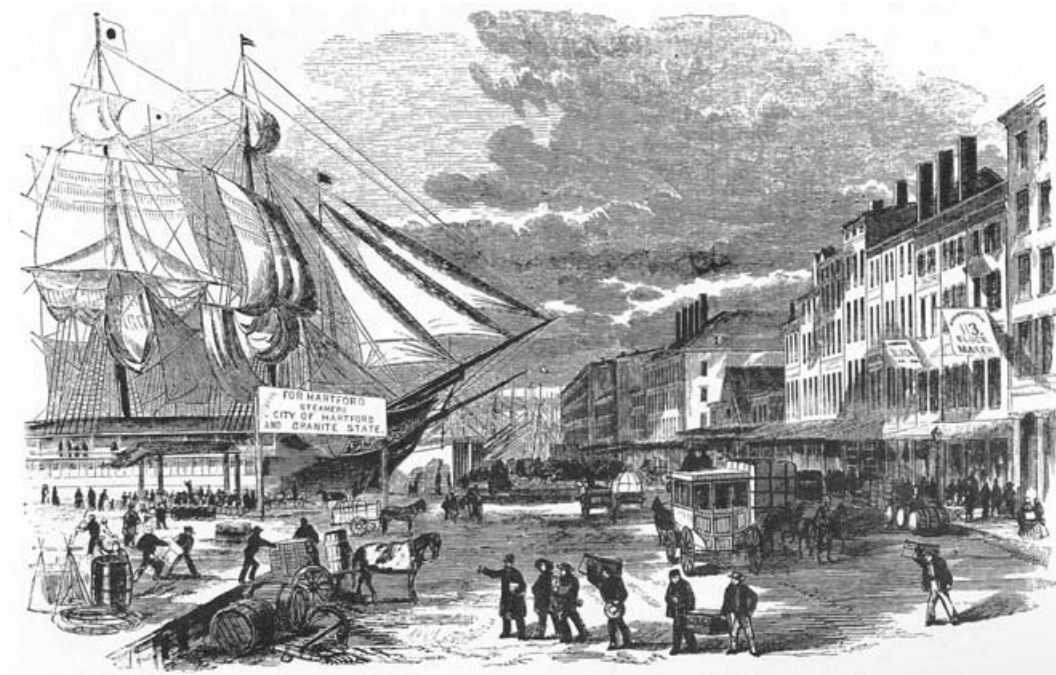


Figure 3. In this period advertisement depicting their South Street, New York, pier, the Greenpoint-built Long Island Sound steamboats *City of Hartford* and *Granite State* (vessels not depicted) are prominently announced *Private collection; used by permission.*

For Samuel Sneden, 1852 was a banner year. He completed and launched the sidewheelers *City of Hartford*, 814 tons, and *Granite State*, 887 tons, to run between New York City and Hartford, Connecticut, and the *Island Belle*, 295 tons, for service on the Connecticut River. The 266-ton steamer *Eagle* was built for ferry service out of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and another (name not known) was built for ferry service in Puerto Rico. There was the 462-ton steamship *Amory*, launched on 7 July and also sold foreign, and he constructed the 477-ton *Carolina* for service out of Charleston. (During the Civil War, she became the Confederate blockade runner *Kate*.) In addition to the new vessels launched, he lengthened by twenty-five feet the steamer *Admiral*, originally built by the Lawrence & Sneden partnership in 1847. Sneden ended the year with the coastal steamer *Daniel Webster* on the stocks.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Hunt's*, XXIX (1853), 753; Melancthon W. Jacobus, *The Connecticut River Story* (Hartford, Conn., 1956), 70-73, 94, 113; Wise, *Lifeline*, 307; *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 12 February 1852 (Lawesson Collection); *New York Daily Times*, 8 July 1852 (3/3); *New York Herald*, 1 November 1852 (4/5); Eric Heyl, *Early American Steamers* (Buffalo, NY, 6 vol., 1953-1969), I, 1, and V, 97; he incorrectly says the *Eagle* was built by Lawrence & Sneden.

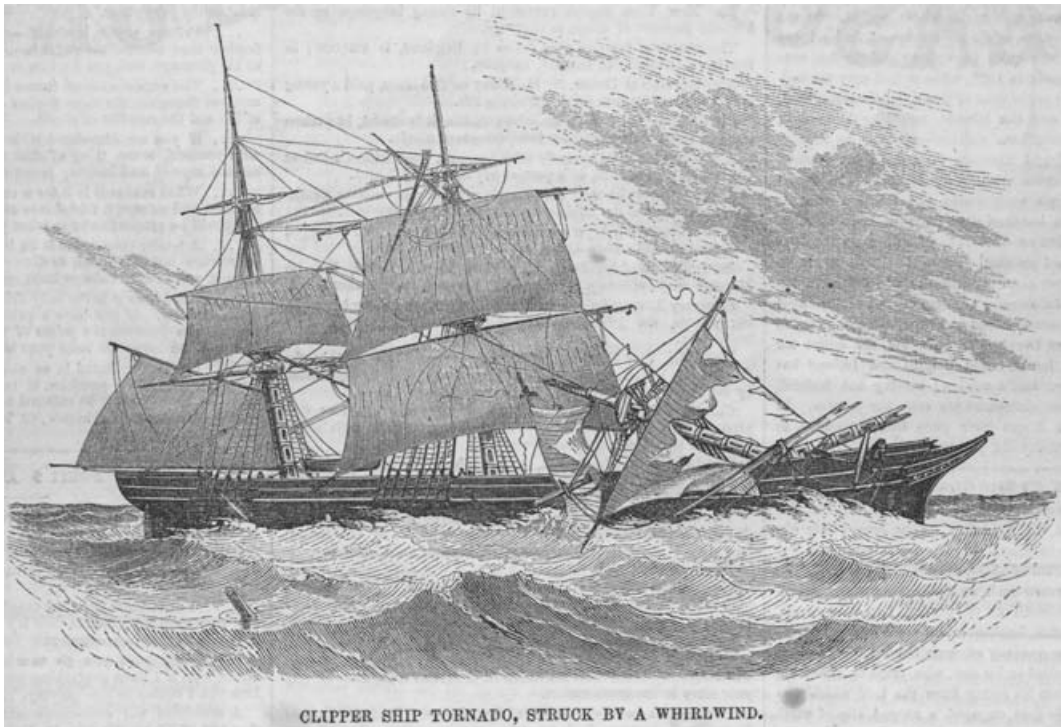


Figure 4. The 29 January 1853 edition of *Gleason's Pictorial* published this artist's rendering of the clipper ship *Tornado*, depicting the damage caused by a "whirlwind" at sea during the return passage from San Francisco. The storm "did not open a seam in the noble ship, showing she was most faithfully built." *Courtesy of The Huntington Library.*

Jabez Williams and son John launched Greenpoint's first clipper ship, the *Tornado*, in early January 1852.<sup>34</sup> Very likely this was the "Monster Ship" of the earlier news report. At 1801 tons register, the *Tornado* was exceeded in size that year only by the clipper ships *Challenge*, 2005 tons, and *Comet*, 1835 tons, both built across the river by William H. Webb. Few American-built clipper ships were larger than the *Tornado*. Jabez Williams next built the 1436-ton clipper ship *Simoon*, launched on 4 December 1852.<sup>35</sup> These were his last large ships, a worthy cap to a shipbuilding career of some forty years.

<sup>34</sup> Sail Register No. 75, 17 February 1852, refers to the "Certificate of Jabez & John Williams Master Builders."

<sup>35</sup> None of the authorities on clipper ships places the Jabez Williams yard in Greenpoint at this time. Octavius T. Howe and Frederick C. Matthews, *American Clipper Ships* (2 vol., Mineola, NY, 1986), II, 576 and 666; Carl C. Cutler, *Greyhounds of the Sea* (New York, 1930), 423 and 424; and William Armstrong Fairburn, *Merchant Sail* (Center Lovell, Me., 6 vol., 1945-1955), II, 1257 and V, 2818 (*Tornado*), and II, 1260 (*Simoon*), incorrectly say the *Tornado* and *Simoon* were launched at Williamsburgh. Arthur H. Clark, *The Clipper Ship Era* (New York, 1911), 352 and 355, says the *Tornado* was built in Williamsburgh and the *Simoon* in New York. None gives the date the *Tornado* was launched. For comparison of sizes of American-built clipper ships, see Fairburn, III, 1659-1671.

While the *Simoon* was on the ways, Jabez's sons John T. and Edward F. were launching their own independent shipbuilding careers. It is likely that Edward F. stayed on at his father's yard when his apprenticeship ended and was now a master shipwright. He started work on the 269-ton schooner *Eclipse*. John T. laid the keel of the 92-ton schooner yacht *Julia*, for the noted New York merchant Moses H. Grinnell. Interestingly, John T. Williams was a part owner of the *Eclipse* schooner that his brother was building. What trade she first went into has not been ascertained.<sup>36</sup> Before the year was out, Edward F. launched the 319-ton schooner *S. J. Moyer* for Dollner, Potter & Co. She became part of the Hurlbut Line, sailing between New York and the southern ports of Mobile, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana.<sup>37</sup> On the ways at the close of the year was a large 348-ton schooner "for the Richmond [Virginia] and New York line . . . to be called the Plow Boy, and commanded by Capt. Lambkins."<sup>38</sup> (This vessel was registered as the *Tennessee*.<sup>39</sup>)

It was in this year 1852 that Eckford Webb truly came into his own. In May, he commenced building three East River steamboats for the Catherine and Bridge Streets Ferry Company. They were the *Abbie*, *Agnes*, and *Lydia*, each of 299 tons. At about this time he launched "Mr. Barrow's steamboat" – a small, 34-ton vessel named *Rotary*. He finished the year with the 410-ton sidewheeler *Metropolis*, for the Wall Street ferry.<sup>40</sup> Eckford Webb's business continued to thrive into 1853, opening the year with two more sidewheelers on the stocks for the Catherine Street ferry – the *Ellen* and the *Louise*, both of 341 tons. They were launched on 1 February and 10 March, respectively. On 24 May, he launched a steamboat (name not known), reported in the press as being 315 tons, for the Hudson River Railroad Company, for use as a ferry between Albany and Greenbush, New York.<sup>41</sup>

Some time during this year he built a small steamer that went unnoticed by the press. Similar in measure to the *Rotary*, this was the 31-ton *James H. Elmore*. Her purpose is not known, and she remained without an official document until 1855, when she was enrolled by a Frederick Dunning (or Durning), who was her owner and master.<sup>42</sup> For Spofford, Tileston & Co., managing owner of sailing ships and steamships, he built the powerful steam tug *Leviathan*, 537 tons, for towing the company's vessels in and out of port. The largest of her type, the *Leviathan* earned Eckford Webb the plaudits of John W. Griffiths, a pioneer of modern naval architecture, who at the time was the senior

<sup>36</sup> Sail Register No. 274, 2 June 1852 (*Eclipse*), and Sail Enrollment No. 582, 16 September 1852 (*Julia*).

<sup>37</sup> RG 41, *S. J. Moyer*, Sail Enrollment No. 668, 27 October 1852; Cutler, *Queens*, 486, 513, 560.

<sup>38</sup> Williamsburgh *Daily Gazette*, 24 November 1852 (2/2).

<sup>39</sup> *Tennessee*, "whereof Anderkin B. Lambkins is at present Master" – Sail Register No. 106, 9 February 1853.

<sup>40</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 31 May 1852 (2/2); *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 4 June 1852 (Lawesson Collection); Steam Enrollment No. 66, 23 August 1852, for *Rotary*, "Ebenezer Barrows is . . . Owner" – List of Patents issued by U.S. Patent Office: "Ebenezer Barrow [sic] . . . for improvements in rotary engines. Patented in England, July 5, 1851." *New York Daily Times*, 14 February 1854 (2), ProQuest; *Metropolis*, built at Greenpoint "per Certificate of Eckford Webb" – Steam Enrollment No. 72, 29 July 1853; *Hunt's*, XXIX (1853), 753.

<sup>41</sup> *New York Daily Times*, 13 August 1853 (6/3); *New York Herald*, 29 December 1853 (3/2). The *Times* report gives the Hudson River steamboat's name as *New-York*; this is not supported by *The Lytle-Holdcamper List*. Her name is not given in any news report found.

<sup>42</sup> Steam Enrollment No. 84, 27 June 1855, built in 1853 "per Certificate of Eckford Webb."

editor of the *Nautical Magazine*. He published the *Leviathan*'s lines and called her "one of the swiftest sea-steamers yet built in the United States."<sup>43</sup>

On 3 January 1853, the Sneden yard launched the 766-ton *Daniel Webster*, a sidewheeler to operate between Portland and Bangor, Maine, as a connecting steamer on the Boston to Bangor railroad route. "One of the best fitted steamers on the New England coast," her main salon featured an oil portrait of the Massachusetts senator for whom she was named. She quickly gained a reputation for speed and acquired the sobriquet *Expounder*. She was chartered by the War Department during the Civil War. Sold foreign in 1872, she ended her days as a Canadian St. Lawrence River towboat with the name *Saguenay*.<sup>44</sup>

The major repair of a steamboat at Sneden's yard attracted the notice of newspapers: "On Wednesday next . . . he will haul up the steamboat Connecticut, for repairs on temporary ways laid down for that especial purpose. [The *Connecticut*] is the largest craft ever hauled up in that manner." Three months later, the *Connecticut* was "launched in fine style [after being] taken high and dry . . . without removing an article of either machinery or furniture – a feat which, we are informed, was never before accomplished in this country." (Lawrence & Sneden had built this vessel in 1848.) The 312-ton propeller *Westchester*, for service on Long Island Sound, was being built concurrently with the ongoing repair work and was launched on 31 March.<sup>45</sup>

In early 1853, Elisha S. Whitlock joined Sneden to create the firm of Sneden & Whitlock. While the family name Whitlock was prominently associated with New York shipping in the mid century, Elisha's connection to the family has not been found, nor has information about his shipbuilding experience prior to joining Sneden. Work was started on the largest steamboat to be built to that day – the 2108-ton *Metropolis*, to run between New York and Fall River, Massachusetts.<sup>46</sup> While the press was attracted to the mammoth *Metropolis*, the construction of some vessels escaped notice in news reports. One such was a small sidewheeler of only 138 tons, the *Isabella*, built by Sneden some time during the year. No report of her launching or information about her service has been found.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the 341-ton propeller *Osprey*, reported as having been launched in September for the New York and Providence [Rhode Island] Line, was featured in the *Nautical Magazine*. Remarking that the *Osprey* "has gained a reputation for satisfactory performance," Griffiths says she embraced "correct principles of elementary design" and expounds on the criticality of correct trim in a screw steamer for

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<sup>43</sup> New York *Daily Times*, 26 May 1853 (6/1); New York *Herald*, 29 December 1853 (3/2); New York *Journal of Commerce*, 5 May 1856 (2/2); *The Monthly Nautical Magazine and Quarterly Review*, II, No. 3 (June 1855), 202-207; the name of this periodical was changed to *The U.S. Nautical Magazine and Naval Journal* with the October 1855 edition.

<sup>44</sup> New York *Herald*, 29 December 1853 (3/1); Heyl, I, 125-126.

<sup>45</sup> *Morning Courier & New-York Enquirer*, 24 February 1853 (Lawesson collection); Steam Enrollment No. 22, 1 June 1848; New York *Daily Times*, 18 May 1853 (8/2); New York *Herald*, 1 October (6/2) and 29 December (3/1-2) 1853.

<sup>46</sup> New York *Daily Times*, 26 May 1853 (6/1).

<sup>47</sup> Information on the *Isabella* was found in RG 41, Steam Register No. 29, 7 November 1853, referring to the "Certificate of Samuel Sneden master builder"; the wording in this register is misleading concerning where built, but it is unlikely that Sneden was also operating a shipyard in New York City. *The Lytle-Holdcamper List* says the *Isabella* was built in New York.

optimum efficiency of the propeller.<sup>48</sup> (Both the *Osprey* and the *Westchester* became fleet mates on the Providence route.<sup>49</sup>)



**SHIPPED** in good order and well conditioned, by Providence Tool Co.  
 on board the *Propeller* called the *Osprey* — whereof  
 Kenney is Master, now lying in the port of PROVIDENCE,  
 and bound for New York. —

34. — PACKAGES MERCHANDISE,  
 being marked and numbered as below and to be delivered in like good order and condition, at  
 the aforesaid port of New York (danger of the seas only excepted,) unto  
 the persons named below, or to their assigns. Freight for said Goods is paid by the shippers,

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the master of the said vessel hath affirmed to three Bills of Lading of  
 this tenor and date; one of which being accomplished, the others to stand void.  
 Dated at PROVIDENCE, the 7th. — day of April 1854. —

Packages.	To be delivered as directed.	
14 Kegs	Smith & Hammond — Richmond Va. — by first vessel from N.Y. —	2170 <sup>n</sup>
11 Kegs	Smith & Roberts — Richmond Va. — by Prisms line packets. —	1705
8 Boxes	E. Corning glo. 81 John St. N.Y. —	2220
1 Keg	Smart & Storr Pearl St N.Y. —	155
	\$250 <sup>n</sup> = 74 \$4.37 W. H. Varny	

Figure 5. An 1854 bill of lading for 34 packages of merchandise carried on the *Osprey*. Steamers facilitated a lively trade between southern New England and New York City, where much merchandise was transhipped to other ports—note items to be sent on to Richmond, Virginia. The *Osprey* was on the Providence route until reregged to a barge in 1880. *Private collection; used by permission.*

<sup>48</sup> New York Herald, 1 October (6/2) and 29 December (3/1-2), 1853; *Nautical Magazine*, II, 248-249.

<sup>49</sup> *Ship Registers and Enrollments of Providence, Rhode Island* (Providence, 1941), entries 2594 and 3552.

The shipyards of the various Williams family members were situated next to each other. Edward F.'s yard was at the foot of Quay Street, adjoining that of Jabez to the north. John T. appears to have shared Jabez's yard, adjoining which on the north was Sneden & Whitlock, at the foot of Calyer (Clinton?) Street.<sup>50</sup> At the start of this year 1853, the Williamses were turning out schooners. Edward F. completed the *Plow Boy* (registered *Tennessee*). On 27 May Jabez launched the 290-ton clipper-schooner *Surprise*, for the Virginia trade. In that same season, son Edward F. launched the 91-ton pilot boat *Ellwood Walter*, and eldest son John T. was getting ready to begin work on a large schooner for the coastwise trade.<sup>51</sup>

**C A R D.**

**MR. VERMILYEA'S**

**DINING & OYSTER SALOON**

**IN FRANKLIN STREET,**

**3 Doors from Cor. Clinton-st.**

**Near William's Ship Yard,**

**GREENPOINT.**

☞ Meals, Segars, &c. from 5 in the morning till 1 at night.

Figure 6. Appearing in the 1853 *Greenpoint Directory*, this ad for Vermilyea's Dining & Oyster Saloon in Greenpoint gives the Williams shipyard on "Clinton Street" as a landmark. *Private collection; used by permission. Digital enhancement by Robert V. Schwemmer.*

What was likely the last vessel built by Jabez Williams under his own name was launched on 23 October – the 363-ton schooner *Fanny*, for the New York, Charleston, and Savannah trade.<sup>52</sup> On 15 December 1853, John T. sent the 470-ton three-masted schooner *Kate Brigham* down the ways for Dunham & Dimon's New York and Savannah line. This is reputed to have been the first three-masted schooner built in Greenpoint and the first tern schooner rigged with all three masts of equal length. "The evolution of the three-masted schooner rig was completed . . . when the . . . yard . . . launched the . . . *Kate Brigham* with all her masts of equal length." The three-mast rig was becoming more

<sup>50</sup> Williamsburgh *Daily Gazette*, 24 November 1852 (2/2); the 1853 *Greenpoint Directory* places both Jabez Williams and Samuel Sneden at the foot of Clinton, probably on opposite sides of the street (but this street does not appear on the maps consulted); Whitlock is placed at the foot of Oak in the 1854 edition.

<sup>51</sup> New York *Daily Times*, 28 May 1853 (3/6); Sail Enrollment No. 437, 30 June 1853 (*Surprise*), and Sail Enrollment No. 391, 14 June 1853 (*Ellwood Walter*); New York *Herald*, 29 December 1853 (3/2).

<sup>52</sup> Cutler, *Queens*, 467, 482, 555; Sail Register No. 676, 16 November 1853, for the *Fanny* (referencing the "Certificate of Jabez Williams"), says that she was built in New York, as does Culter, but contemporary newspaper reports say Greenpoint; New York *Herald*, 1 October (6/2) and 29 December (3/2) 1853; New York *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, 5 January 1854, page dated 30 December 1853, col. 3.

widely used as schooners increased in size, and vessels so rigged were soon referred to as “tern” schooners. By year’s end, John T. had a bark on the stocks nearing completion, while Edward F. continued work on three schooners and a bark.<sup>53</sup>

In July, another shipbuilder – perhaps shipbuilder by proxy would be more accurate – came on the Greenpoint scene. This was John W. Griffiths, the noted naval architect (reputed to have designed the first true clipper ship) and soon-to-be senior editor of *The Monthly Nautical Magazine*. Backed by the financial resources of William Norris, a Philadelphia railroad magnate, Griffiths announced that he intended to construct a sidewheel steamer of his own radical design capable of crossing the Atlantic from Newfoundland to Galway, Ireland, in six days. The keel was laid at Sneden’s yard.<sup>54</sup> In October, the New York *Herald* commented:<sup>55</sup>

It is stated that in proportion to her displacement, her power will be more than double that of vessels of her class, and that she will travel nearer the speed of her wheel than any vessel afloat, on account of her extreme lightness and perfection of model. We cordially wish them success.

Named *William Norris*, but commonly referred to as “The Six Day Steamer,” the vessel attracted a good deal of notoriety during the period of her construction.

With the opening of new shipyards and other industrial enterprises, Greenpoint was becoming firmly established as a community. Reliable ferry service was begun: “From the foot of Tenth-street, a steamboat called the *Kate*, runs to Green Point for three cents. The occasional ferry between Twenty-third-street and Green Point will soon be regularly established.” Hills were levelled and roads graded and paved. The Francis Metallic Life Boat Company began construction of its noted galvanized iron lifeboats and life cars. The New York *Daily Times* described the community’s rise:<sup>56</sup>

It is astonishing to witness the rapid strides with which Green Point is progressing toward a populous business town. But a year since, scarce a house was visible in the neighborhood of Francis’s Life Boat Manufactory. But since that establishment has gone into operation, and the Green Point Ferry was commenced, splendid four-story brick houses have sprung up not only fast, but thick. . . . [A]t present several hundred men are at work digging down “Bliss’s Hill,” in order to carry Franklin-street . . . through it, and otherwise improve the ground for building purposes. Already have the Messrs. Wolcott in course of erection and nearly complete, some twenty-five four-story brick buildings . . . and

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<sup>53</sup> Cutler, *Queens*, 557; W. J. Lewis Parker, *The Great Coal Schooners of New England 1870-1909* (Mystic, Conn., 1948), 30; Sail Enrollment No.17, 7 January 1854, says built at Greenpoint “per Certificate of John T. Williams.” Regarding the word “tern” to describe the three-masted rig, an item entitled “A New Name for Three-Masted Schooners” appears in the *Nautical Magazine*, II, No. 5 (August 1855), 395.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, 65; *Nautical Magazine*, I, No. 6 (March 1855), 459; *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1934), XIII:555-556; New York *Times*, 14 July (6/20) and 23 July (6/4) 1853.

<sup>55</sup> 1 October 1853 (6/2).

<sup>56</sup> New York *Daily Times*, 25 April (8/6), 25 May (3/5), and 23 July (8/3) 1853. Neither the *Kate* nor “the Messrs. Wolcott” could be positively identified.



they are making arrangements for the commencement of some thirty or 40 others . . . .

**VALUABLE PROPERTY**  
**FOR SALE,**  
**AT HUNTER'S POINT AND GREEN POINT.**

The Subscribers offer for sale, either for Dwelling, Manufacturing, Ship Building or Dry Dock purposes, the most extensive Water Front ever in possession of any one Company in the vicinity of New York.

They will have, when their plans are matured, not less than three miles of water front, including the East river and both sides of Newtown creek, with about 440 acres of land, suitable for Building Lots, Docks, Basins, &c.

About 1000 Building Lots are now graded and ready for sale. Also one Ship Yard on the East river ready for use, either for sale or to lease for a term of years. The front north of the Ship Yard is intended for putting down ways, it being well suited for that purpose. The land in the rear is now graded.

The proprietors are confident that they can make it an inducement for those engaged in ship building in the vicinity of New York, to establish themselves on this location.

**CRANE & ELY,**

Office cor. Franklin and J Streets, Greenpoint.

Figure 7. This real estate ad appears in the 1854 *Greenpoint Directory*. Crane & Ely were associated with Eliphalet Nott and Neziah Bliss in the purchase of property in Greenpoint and Hunters Point. By agreement, they took over ownership of the Greenpoint holdings while Nott retained the Hunters Point property, for which the pair continued to act as agents. Bliss developed still other property in Greenpoint. *Private collection; used by permission. Digital enhancement by Robert V. Schwemmer.*

Also under construction was “a Gas house, for the manufactory [*sic*] of coke gas . . . to light the village throughout with gas.” Those deciding to settle in Greenpoint enjoyed a number of options. The Williams-*et al.* development included 500 building lots. In addition, streets and lots on parcels adjacent to that development had been plotted by land developer Neziah Bliss, and the real estate firm of Crane & Ely was promoting lots and parcels along the curve of the point and the shore of Newtown Creek. Recognizing this phenomenal growth, the publishers of *Reynolds’ Williamsburgh City Directory For 1853* included a Greenpoint directory as an appendix, page 42 of which gives Greenpoint a population of “about 3,500.” Greenpoint attracted the attention of a railroad as well: “Flushing Railroad.—On Tuesday afternoon the first ground on the Flushing Railroad was broken in Newtown, one mile and a half from Flushing. The road is to be completed to the Greenpoint ferry on the 1st of March, 1854.”<sup>57</sup> This railroad line never reached Greenpoint, terminating instead at Hunters Point, north of Newtown Creek.

As the year 1853 progressed, Henry Barclay opened a yard in Greenpoint. Previously, he had been a partner in the firm of Barclay & Townsend, of Hoboken, New Jersey. Among the vessels they constructed were the 139-ton steam-ferry *Sunswick*, the 673-ton trans-Atlantic packet ship *E.Z.*, and the sloop-yacht *Viper* of 23 tons. Now Barclay was on his own. At year’s end, he had under construction a “schooner of 150 tons, tons, for the Spanish government.”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> New York *Journal of Commerce*, 18 February 1850 (2/2); New York *Daily Times*, 19 May 1853 (6/3).

<sup>58</sup> Steam Enrollment for *Sunswick*, 8 December 1848; New York *Herald*, 7 January 1849 (2/3) and 29 December 1853 (3/2). The schooner “for the Spanish government” may have been the *19th of Marzo*, 144 tons, Sail Register No. 475, 15 July 1854. This register says the vessel was built at Williamsburgh, which is not surprising in that many persons erroneously thought Greenpoint was a section of that adjacent city. The New York *Daily Times* of 30 November 1852 (6/3); 18 May (8/2) and 3 October (1/6) 1853; and 26 May 1854 (6/2), reports Greenpoint shipbuilding under the head of “Williamsburg [*sic*] City.”

Noted shipbuilder William Perine also struck out on his own. Since 1845 he had been the senior member of the firm of Perine, Patterson & Stack, which had relocated from New York City to Williamsburgh in 1846 and five years later moved to the site vacated by Jabez Williams. Now the partnership was dissolving, and Perine opened his own yard, “220 feet on the river, by 500 feet deep,” where “he has erected a number of fine buildings.” December found him with three ships and a brig on the stocks.<sup>59</sup>

Of Lupton & McDiarmid, a February 1853 newspaper report states that they “have in progress a steamboat for the ‘Hudson River Eliptic [*sic*] Wheel Co.’ . . . She is to be fitted up with Crocker’s patent elliptic [*sic*] wheel, and elegantly finished.” It was to be “a first-class steamer for the purpose of testing” the new invention. Unfortunately, no further information has been found that identifies the “first class” vessel or the results of the test. (An 1859 advertisement for “Capt. M. A. Crooker’s [*sic*] Newly Invented Paddle-Wheel” claims that this “valuable invention has been fairly tested, and proven.” Was this the “elliptic” wheel?) Concurrently, they completed the 243-ton sidewheeler *James Christopher* for a ferry company in Perth Amboy.<sup>60</sup> “William W. Vanderbilt’s steamer of 700 tons, for Lake Pontchartrain,” Louisiana, was launched in November, and on 20 December, they launched the 734-ton sidewheeler *Adelaide*. Originally intended for service in California waters, the *Adelaide* was purchased by the Calais Steamboat Company of Maine and taken to the New England coast. She had a long career that included service on the Chesapeake Bay for the Old Bay Line, interrupted by charters to the Union’s War Department during the Civil War, and a return to New York City to run between there and Long Branch, New Jersey, during her last year of service. After a collision on 19 June 1880, she was abandoned.<sup>61</sup>

The year 1853 closed with the sounds of shipbuilding reverberating in all of the Greenpoint yards. It was a busy year for shipbuilders in general, having been one “of unusual profits to Ship-owners, a large business having offered at rates much above the ordinary average. This has given an impulse to Ship-building.” Greenpoint had gained three new shipbuilders and more were expected to relocate there. There was every reason to expect that shipbuilding activity in 1854 would continue strong.<sup>62</sup>

Early in 1854, another Collyer brother, William (an elder of George, formerly of Collyer & Webb) moved to Greenpoint. After a number of years building some notable vessels in New York City, including the sidewheelers *Black Warrior* and *Cahawba*, William relocated his yard to the foot of Huron Street.<sup>63</sup> On 20 May, he launched his first Greenpoint-built vessel – the sidewheel steam tug *R.L. Mabey*, 137 tons, and on 15 June, another sidewheel tug, the *Mercury*, 187 tons.<sup>64</sup> The *Mabey* had a long career, including

<sup>59</sup> New York *Herald*, 1 October (6/2) and 29 December (3/1) 1853; New York *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, 5 January 1854, page dated 30 December 1853, col. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 24 February 1853 (Lawesson Collection); New York *Daily Times*, 26 February (6/5), 25 April (3/6), 13 August (3/3) 1853, and 21 January 1859 (3/6).

<sup>61</sup> New York *Herald*, 1 October (6/2), 20 December (4/3), and 29 December (3/2) 1853; New York *Daily Times*, 13 August 1853 (3/3); New York *Journal of Commerce*, 7 August 1854 (2/2); Heyl, III, 1. William W. Vanderbilt has not been identified nor has the name of the vessel built for him been ascertained.

<sup>62</sup> New York *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, 5 January 1854, page dated 30, December 1853, col. 2; New York *Journal of Commerce*, 16 March 1854 (2/3).

<sup>63</sup> Heyl, V, 29, and VI, 29; *Brooklyn Directory 1856*, Eastern District.

<sup>64</sup> *Nautical Magazine*, I, No. 1 (October 1854), 51.

service in Georgia and Florida waters. She burned at Brunswick, Georgia, in 1897.<sup>65</sup> The ocean-going tug *Mercury* was heavily timbered and fitted with an independent steam pump and equipment to conduct salvage work. The practicality of the pump was proved within a year, when she went to the assistance of a schooner sinking in the East River. The *Mercury* was taken into the Union Navy during the Civil War and remained a naval vessel until 1873, when she was sold to the Wyeth Bros. of Washington, DC. No information on her subsequent career has been found.<sup>66</sup>

Also in this year, shipwrights Stephen Hathaway and Joel Bloomfield established a yard at the foot of Freeman Street, where they specialized in building lighters.<sup>67</sup> By November, under the firm name of Hathaway & Bloomfield, they had launched the 48-ton sloop-lighter *China*. A year-end newspaper-report on shipbuilding states that on 16 December, they launched a “clipper schooner (name not known) of 350 tons, for a Spanish house” and had another lighter on the stocks.<sup>68</sup> While little information concerning Hathaway has been found, more is known about Joel Bloomfield. In the 1840s and until his move to Greenpoint, he had operated a marine railway at the foot of Bridge Street in Brooklyn, where he repaired vessels and built a number of lighters. His name appears in the list of wealthy men of Brooklyn. In Greenpoint, at the foot of India Street, he established another marine railway, which he operated under the name of Bloomfield & Co. Whether this was a newly constructed marine railway or a relocation of his Bridge Street facility has not been determined. Hathaway does not appear to have been a principal in the marine railway operation.<sup>69</sup>

“Mr. Geo. Friend has in frame a pretty yacht of 18 tons, for Mr. McClennan, of Greenpoint,” the New York *Herald* states in a report on Greenpoint yards. “She is 36 feet long on deck, 13 feet 3 inches beam, and 4 feet deep.”<sup>70</sup> The name of the yacht has not been ascertained and little information about Geo. Friend has been found. The Greenpoint directories list ship carpenters James G. and John Friend, apparently related because they share a common address. The directories also list two gentlemen with the name McClennon: John and Charles, proprietors of an unnamed “public house” and of the Greenpoint Hotel, respectively. Either could have been the “Mr. Clennan” for whom the yacht was being built. (Friend appears to have remained active in building small vessels at least until 1856, when the 71-ton sloop lighters *Lotus* and *Onota* were built by “Friend & Bloomfield.”<sup>71</sup>)

Hathaway & Bloomfield and George Friend were not the only firms specializing

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<sup>65</sup> Edward A. Mueller, *St. Johns River Steamboats* (Jacksonville, Fla., 1986), 207.

<sup>66</sup> New York *Journal of Commerce*, 15 June 1854 (2/1) and 30 April 1855 (2/1); *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, Series II, 4 volumes (Washington, DC, 1921-1922) I, 141. For reasons unknown, the *Mercury* is not listed in the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 8 vol. (Washington, DC, 1959-1981).

<sup>67</sup> *Brooklyn Directory, 1856*, Eastern District.

<sup>68</sup> *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 22 December 1854 (Lawesson Collection); New York *Herald*, 26 December 1854 (3/4); RG 41, Sail Enrollment No. 814, 2 November 1854, for the *China*. No record has been found for the “clipper schooner.”

<sup>69</sup> John Lomas and Alfred S. Peace, *The Wealthy Men and Women of Brooklyn and Williamsburgh*. . . (Brooklyn, NY, 1847). Brooklyn city and Greenpoint directories 1848-1857.

<sup>70</sup> 9 October 1854 (3/1);

<sup>71</sup> RG 41, Sail Enrollments No. 637 (*Lotus*) and No. 638 (*Onota*), both dated 10 October 1856.

in building lighters and other small vessels. Thomas, Parsons & Co. constructed the 42-ton sloop-lighter *Mary Elizabeth*, which was enrolled on 1 November 1854.<sup>72</sup> This is the only vessel constructed by the firm that has been found in the customhouse copies of enrolments and registers. The yard was situated at the foot of Huron Street. Over the years, this enterprise continued to be listed in the Brooklyn city directories under various names, and the yard very likely engaged in repair work and in the construction of very small vessels for operation within the limits of the bay and rivers, neither of which work would be reflected in federal records. Nor would such mundane work have attracted much attention and only rarely would have been included in the shipbuilding reports periodically published by the New York newspapers.

Supplying an important component of passenger vessels was the Francis Metallic Life Boat Company, which had begun operations in Greenpoint in early 1853. The *New York Journal of Commerce* reports, "Francis's patent life-boat establishment, at Green Point, is employing from 40 to 60 men. Boats for the Amazon and Oronoco rivers, have recently been sent off; also boats for the coast of Africa, and . . . to assist in exploding rocks in the St. Lawrence River. A full set of first class life-boats has been completed for the new iron steamship 'New York,' building at Glasgow, on the Clyde." In addition to lifeboats, the company manufactured "life cars" – small, decked-over boats that were designed to be hauled through the surf to transport persons from stranded vessels to the shore. "The coast is being lined with metallic surf-boats, to rescue persons and property from wrecks." In a subsequent edition, the newspaper states:<sup>73</sup>

It is a fact worth noticing, that some of the finest English steamers are being furnished with "Francis' Metallic Life Boats," – constructed of galvanized iron, imported from England. The immense iron steamship New York, which is now nearly ready for sea, at Glasgow, is to be furnished with boats of this description, and of larger capacity than even those furnished the Collins line; as they will be capable of carrying 400 passengers. They are to be taken out in the steamship "Glasgow," on the 7th inst. The last named vessel is also being furnished with these American boats, throwing aside the wooden ones.

The increasing use of iron in shipbuilding and related industries was a portent of the future that New York and Greenpoint builders of wood-hull ships were studiously ignoring.

For all the apparent activity at the Greenpoint yards, the rate of shipbuilding at the port of New York was less than in previous years. The national economy was in a slow decline that was proving detrimental to shipbuilding.<sup>74</sup>

The first casualty was John W. Griffiths. He was forced to give up all interest in his six-day steamer when financing was interrupted because of reverses suffered by his financial backer, William Norris. All work on the vessel was stopped, and on 17

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<sup>72</sup> RG 41, New York Sail Enrollment No. 804, 1 November 1854 issued for the *Mary Elizabeth*.

<sup>73</sup> 28 July (2/2) and 4 August (2/2) 1854.

<sup>74</sup> *New York Herald*, 9 October (3/1) and 26 December (3/3) 1854.

February, she was seized by the deputy sheriff “on executions amounting to about \$57,000.” Such was the short career of the Norris & Griffiths shipyard. Apparently, Griffiths was not the hands-on builder but had contracted with one of the Williamses



Figure 8. Although John W. Griffiths relinquished all claims to "The Six Day Steamer" in early 1853, he continued to monitor the work being done to complete her. In the March 1855 issue his *Nautical Magazine*, he published this hand-colored rendering of his original design concept of the vessel, now known as the *Ocean Bird*. Courtesy of the San Francisco National Maritime Park Library. Digital photography and enhancement by Robert V. Schwemmer.

(probably Jabez) and Samuel Sneden to construct the vessel. Griffiths wrote to Norris for funds “to pay the workers” and explained how his reputation had suffered because of the “repeated postponements of time of payment to Messrs. Smeden [*sic*] and Williams.”<sup>75</sup> Griffiths subsequently published a “card” stating that while he was solely responsible for the design of the vessel, “he incurred *no* financial responsibility.” The unfinished vessel was sold at auction in April.<sup>76</sup> After launching on 7 June, the hull was taken to the New York side, where construction was completed to a new design, and she was officially named *Ocean Bird*.<sup>77</sup> The six-day steamer appears to have been the last vessel constructed

<sup>75</sup> New York *Journal of Commerce*, 13 July 1853 (1/3) – “Snedden [*sic*] & Co. . . . are . . . to lay the keels of two steamships . . . to be placed on the Galway, Ireland, trade” – and 2 March 1854 (2/3); New York *Herald*, 10 March 1854 (4/4); draft of a letter dated 13 March 1854, in the John W. Griffiths Collection, Department of Transportation, National Museum of the History of Technology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

<sup>76</sup> New York *Daily Tribune*, 31 March (7/4) and 11 April (6/2) 1854.

<sup>77</sup> New York *Herald* (4/4) and New York *Daily Tribune* (6/6), both of 8 June 1854; Cedric Ridgely-Nevitt, *American Steamships on the Atlantic* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1981), 217-218, says that shipbuilders C. & R. Poillon completed her construction. However, no contemporary information has been

by Jabez Williams (though his apparent association is revealed only in Griffith's correspondence). While Jabez was so involved, his sons were busy with their own shipbuilding endeavours. On 10 January 1854, John T. launched the bark *Mary Dunham*, of 595 tons, for the firm of Dunham & Dimon. The *Mary Dunham's* career was short for she foundered in the North Atlantic in January 1856, caught in a winter gale while on a voyage to Glasgow. Before the *Dunham* sank, the officers and crew were taken off by a passing vessel.<sup>78</sup>

The *Mary Dunham* was the last vessel built by John T., after which he appears to have turned his attentions to ship owning. Some time during the year, his yard was "purchased by Dorence Davis, Treasurer of the Ship Timber Bending Company, to which Company it has been leased, and who has erected thereon several large buildings with steam power." This was the advent of a new industry in Greenpoint – the machine bending of timber into shapes needed in the construction of wooden hulls. As the supply of naturally bent ship timber for knees and futtocks grew scarcer, prices steadily rose, and the cost of building wooden hulls crept steadily higher. Thus a situation was created for the application of machine-bent timber to shipbuilding. A leading advocate of this

process was naval architect Griffiths, and he used a pair of machine-bent futtocks in his six-day steamer. Griffiths was a director of the new company, as was his colleague, Jabez Williams, who appeared to be retired as an active shipbuilder.<sup>79</sup>

The vessels under construction at the E. F. Williams yard when the year began came off the ways at a seemingly desultory pace. All were destined for trade with the Southern states. The 258-ton schooner *Franklin Nickerson*, for the Palmetto Line to



Figure 9. Jabez Williams in his later years. After retiring from shipbuilding, he took a position as marine surveyor and in 1859, it was announced that he "will act in the future exclusively for" the American Lloyds. *Courtesy of A. William Alesbury, Acton, Massachusetts, and Robert J. Alesbury, Bethesda, Maryland.*

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found that conclusively identifies who prepared the hull for launching at Greenpoint.

<sup>78</sup> RG 41, New York Sail Register No. 481, 18 July 1854; New York *Herald*, 26 December 1854 (3/4); New York *Journal of Commerce*, 21 January 1856 (3/7).

<sup>79</sup> New York *Daily Times*, 21 August 1854 (8/3); *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 22 December 1854 (Lawesson Collection); Morrison, *Ship Yards*, 151. The American Timber Bending Co. is listed in *Smith's Brooklyn City Directory for the Year Ending May 1st, 1856* (Brooklyn, NY: William H. Smith, 1855). Smith's directories are divided into two parts – Western District and Eastern District; Greenpoint locations are listed in the Eastern District part.

Charleston, was launched in early spring and enrolled in May. The 277-ton schooner *S.R. Allen*, to run between Boston and Richmond, Virginia, was not launched until 17 June. Toward the fall, another vessel for the Palmetto Line went down the ways – the 756-ton bark *Almena*, enrolled in October. The last Williams-built vessel of the year was the 295-ton schooner *Fannie Currie*, launched on 21 November, for owners in Richmond. Under construction when the year ended were a bark and “a pilot boat for Mobile.”<sup>80</sup>

Eckford Webb’s first launching of 1854 was on 26 May – the 244-ton sidewheeler *Union*, for the Fairhaven Railroad Co., of New Bedford, Massachusetts. His last of that year was the 335-ton bark-rigged Havana packet *Albertina*, on 28 October, for Moses Taylor & Co. In between, he launched his only clipper ship – the 843-ton medium clipper *Stingray*, on 3 June, for Wakeman, Dimon & Co. On 31 July, the *Stingray* departed for San Francisco on a round-the-world voyage via China. She reached San Francisco on 8 December, making the passage in a respectable 130 days, equalling the time of the prestigious clipper ship *Celestial*, which departed New York on the same day. This was deemed an “even race”; in her design, the *Celestial* was considered the sharpest ship when she was launched from elder brother William H. Webb’s yard in 1850.<sup>81</sup> On the night of 9 January 1856, while on her return from China, the *Stingray* stranded on Fire Island as she approached New York harbour under the charge of a pilot. The crew reached shore safely, and much of her cargo was salvaged, but the *Stingray* was a total loss within just fifty miles of completing her globe-circling maiden voyage.<sup>82</sup>

Snedden & Whitlock came into the year with the “mammoth steamer” *Metropolis* on the stocks. They launched her on 20 April for the Fall River Line: “The largest steamboat ever built was yesterday launched . . . at Green Point, Williamsburg [*sic*].” With diagonal iron straps bracing her wood hull, the *Metropolis* was built as strongly as an ocean-going steamship. She was hailed by one newspaper as inaugurating “a new era in the history of our ‘floating palaces’.”<sup>83</sup> Preceding her down the ways in late March was the luxurious 303-ton sidewheeler *Nelly Baker*, built to ferry the elite across Massachusetts Bay between Boston and the posh summer resort of Nahant. Another sidewheeler for Massachusetts waters, the 395-ton *Metacomet*, to run between Fairhaven and Martha’s Vineyard, was launched on 24 June.<sup>84</sup> In late July, work was progressing on four more sidewheelers – the *Eagle’s Wing* (laid down as *Young America*), 409 tons, for service Fairhaven to Nantucket, Massachusetts; the *Cuba*, 604 tons, to run between New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama; the *River Bird* (launched 19 October as *Yankee*), 527 tons, for service in China; and the *Elm City*, 760 tons, launched on 2 November, to run between New York and New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>80</sup> RG 41, Sail Enrollment No. 346, 16 May 1854, for the *Nickerson*, and Sail Enrollment No. 747, 18 October 1854, for the *Almena*, and Sail Register No. 758, 2 December 1854, for the *Fannie Currie*, all issued at New York; Cutler, *Queens*, 471; *New York Herald*, 26 December 1854 (3/4).

<sup>81</sup> *New York Herald*, 4 June (4/5) and 26 December (3/4) 1854 and 4 January 1855 (24 [*sic*]/4); *New York Journal of Commerce*, 31 July 1854 (3/9); *Nautical Magazine*, I, No. 5 (February 1855), 51; Howe & Matthews, I, 53.

<sup>82</sup> Howe & Matthews, I, 635; *New York Daily Tribune*, 12 January 1856 (5/3).

<sup>83</sup> *New York Herald*, 21 April 1854 (4/4) – this news report implies that Greenpoint was a part of Williamsburgh; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 18 August 1855 (2/2).

<sup>84</sup> *Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, August 18, 1855, 108; Heyl, II, 143; *Nautical Magazine*, I, 52; *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 22 December 1854 (Lawesson Collection).

As busy as the yard was in the summer of 1854, Sneden & Whitlock took on the job of reconstructing the huge clipper ship *Great Republic*. Built the previous year at East Boston by Donald McKay, this four-masted vessel “was the largest merchant sailing ship ever constructed in the United States,” with four decks, each ’tween deck with a height of eight feet. On the night of 26 December 1853, while at her South Street pier in New York harbour, loaded and being readied to depart on her maiden voyage, the vessel was set ablaze by burning embers blown aboard from a raging fire that had erupted in a bakery on shore nearby. Efforts to extinguish the conflagration having failed, she was scuttled but the water being too shallow, her upper works burned away, except for the portion forward of the fore chains. The burnt hull was raised and towed to the yard of E. F. Williams in Greenpoint, where it remained until July, when sold at auction to Nathaniel B. Palmer, a sailing ship captain of long experience in the China trade. He contracted with Sneden & Whitlock to rebuild her.<sup>85</sup>

Reconstruction continued through the summer, but Sneden & Whitlock did not restore the *Great Republic* to her original design.<sup>86</sup>

Mr. Sneden has between 90 or 100 men constantly employed on the clipper “Great Republic,” removing the burned timbers, preparatory to rebuilding. She is spoken of as having been too heavily rigged, and furnished with too much deck-hamper, so that now she is expected to be made into a better ship than she was originally.

Departing on her maiden voyage in February 1855 was “the second Great Republic” – rebuilt to a new design.<sup>87</sup> Though reconstruction costs exceeded more than sixty percent of her original value, for reasons unknown she is described on her new register, issued to new owners Abiel A. and Josiah O. Low, as having been built in Boston, and reference is made to her original register issued at that port. (Before Captain Palmer sold the *Great Republic*, he removed her eagle’s head figurehead.)<sup>88</sup> The rebuilt clipper ship is generally identified in the historical record as McKay’s *Great Republic*. That ship never sailed under canvas; it was Sneden & Whitlock’s *Great Republic* that earned the accolades for whatever record passages were made.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Howe and Matthews, I, 253-255, write: “There were really two *Great Republics*”; *New York Herald*, 3 March (1/5) and 29 June (2/5) 1854; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 6 July (1/6) and 19 July (1/1) 1854.

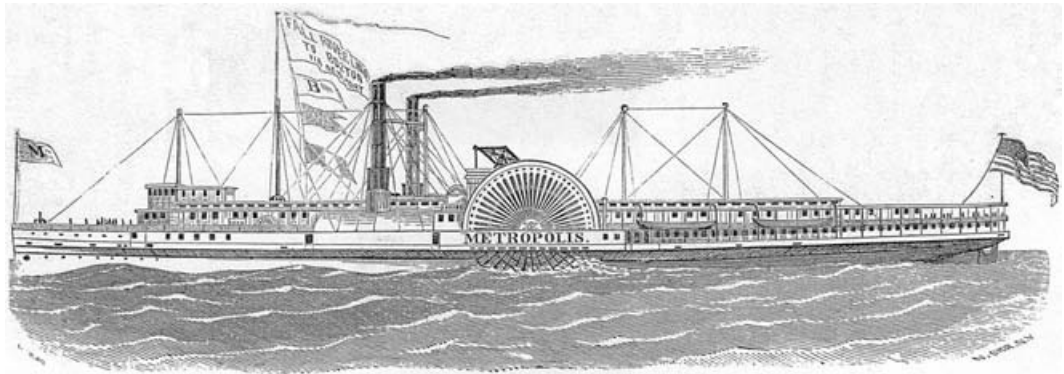
<sup>86</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 28 July 1854 (2/2).

<sup>87</sup> Howe and Matthews, I, 255.

<sup>88</sup> *Sail Register* No. 124, 21 February 1855, states that she had a billet head. For many years, the carved eagle head resided in the Stonington, Conn., home of Palmer’s niece, Mrs. Richard Fanning Loper. My thanks to Robert V. Schwemmer for finding this item in the Palmer-Loper Family Papers, Library of Congress, and sharing it with me.

<sup>89</sup> *New York Daily Tribune*, 2 April 1856 (6/6); Alexander Laing, *American Ships* (New York, 1971), 255, in commenting on sailing records, includes the *Great Republic* as one of “five McKay ships”; he does not mention her redesign and rebuilding by Sneden & Whitlock. Nor does E. A. Woods in his article “Great Republic” in *Sea Breezes*, XXIII, No. 226 (September 1938), 213, for a series entitled “This Ship Made History.”





**NEW-YORK AND BOSTON DAILY LINE.**

Figure 10. The July 1855 *Nautical Magazine* describes the steamer *Metropolis* as "the first . . . constructed with diagonal iron truss-work . . . which adds probably 200 per cent. to the longitudinal strength of the hull. . . To Mr. Sneden belongs the credit of introducing this new . . . mode of construction." *Private collection; used by permission. Digital enhancement by Robert V. Schwemmer.*

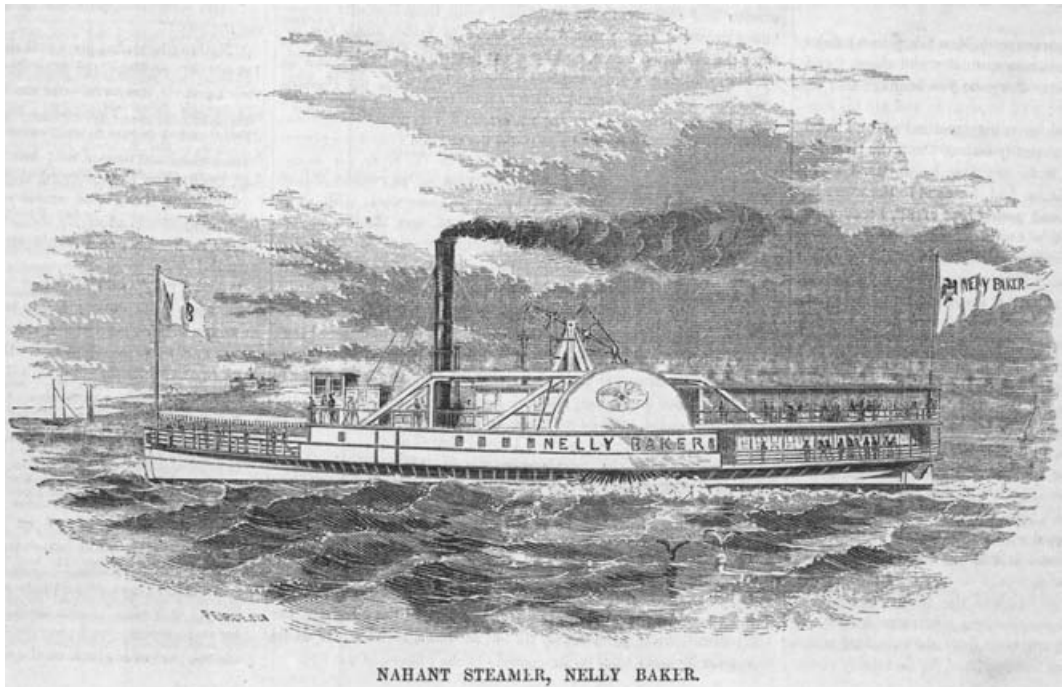


Figure 11. The virtues of the steamboat *Nelly Baker* are extolled in the 18 August 1855 issue of *Ballou's Pictorial*, which describes her as "an admirably built boat, of elegant model, strong, substantial, seaworthy and fast," indispensable for the "frequent rough water" she would encounter. *Courtesy of The Huntington Library.*

Lupton & McDiarmid continued to be active, starting the year with the launch of an unnamed “steamboat, of 125 tons, for the Catskill ferry” on 20 January. In April was launched the 69-ton towboat *E. Morris*. Before the end of August, they had completed a Delaware & Hudson Canal barge (variously reported as the *Nonsuch* and *None Such*) and the 594-ton bark *North Sea* for Funch & Meincke’s North Europe trade. Before year’s end, McDiarmid left the firm and went into the lumber business. On 17 December was launched “from Green Point, L.I., the clipper brig *Balear*, designed and built by Mr. Edward Lupton for her commander, Capt. Filleti.” Griffiths described the 194-ton *Balear* as a hermaphrodite, intended for the Tampico trade, and praised her lavishly for design, strength, and a “grand display of taste” in her ornamentation and “rich carved work.” Lupton closed the year with a “bark . . . of 800 tons, in frame.”<sup>90</sup>

William Perine started the year off with the launch on 7 January of the 349-ton brig *Ciudad Bolivar*, for Harbeck & Co., for the South American trade. On 2 March, he launched the 724-ton ship *Sunny Side*, for the general freighting business of Calvin Adams, Esq.<sup>91</sup> The 954-ton Havre packet ship *J.H. Ryerson* was scheduled for launching in the next week, to be followed in April by the 714-ton ship *Henry Harbeck*. In addition:

. . . Mr. P. is about commencing a ship of 1,400 tons for E. D. Hurlbut, and another of the same dimensions for Nesmith & Sons; also, two of 1,100 tons each for Capt. Sagory. The inadequate size of the yard is all that prevents the commencement of two or three more.

The *J.H. Ryerson* for E. D. Hurlburt & Company’s Antwerp line was launched on 15 March. On 6 April, Perine launched the *Henry Harbeck*. “She went off of the stocks in good style, but after getting afloat keeled over on her beam ends, in consequence of the shifting of the ballast.” Swinging around, “she struck an adjacent dock, carrying away a large portion of her main rail and shaking up the guests who were on board . . . for the launch, with no broken bones but an abundance of fright for a time.” The newspaper report laconically concludes, “The vessel was slightly damaged.”<sup>92</sup>

At the end of May, the Perine yard had “six vessels in the course of construction, “each of about 1,000 tons measurement.” In July, he was hailed as “the largest ship-builder in the country, with one or two exceptions.”<sup>93</sup> While the claim was somewhat extravagant, Perine was certainly among the top ranked, and in the last five months of the year, he completed six large sailing ships. The *Francis A. Palmer*, a 1425-ton sailing

<sup>90</sup> *Nonsuch* was probably the 153-ton barge *Ann Tench*, see Sail Enrollment No. 592, 10 August 1854, Charles Wolgate, owner and master; for the *North Sea*, see Sail Register No. 551, 31 August 1854; *The Brooklyn City Directory, for Year Ending May 1st, 1860* (Brooklyn, NY, 1859); *New York Herald*, 18 December 1854 (1/3) and *Nautical Magazine*, II, No. 2 (March 1855), 385-389, for *Balear*; *New York Herald*, 26 December 1854 (3/4), for vessels launched by Lupton & McDiarmid during the year.

<sup>91</sup> *New York Herald*, 8 January (8/4), 3 March (1/5), and 16 March (4/5) 1854.

<sup>92</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 2 March 1854 (2/3); *New York Daily Tribune*, 8 April 1854 (7/1); Sail Register No. 301, 5 May 1854; Morrison, *Ship Yards*, 110-111 – this account incorrectly places the Perine yard in Williamsburgh.

<sup>93</sup> *New York Daily Times*, 26 May 1854 (6/2); *New York Journal of Commerce*, 28 July 1854 (2/2).

packet for Post, Ryerson & Co., slid down the ways on 21 August. The launching was originally scheduled for 16 August, but “the ways under the ship could not be started.” That date, however, was beyond the 1 August completion date specified in the contract, when “the ship should be delivered alongside the dock afloat . . . finished and complete.” Notwithstanding the great amount of work in his yard, “Perine failed in business about the 1st of August.”<sup>94</sup> Apparently under the protection of bankruptcy statutes, he completed the vessels for which he had contracted.

## WILLIAMSBURG CITY.

**LAUNCH.—This afternoon at 1 o'clock, the ship  
Sunnyside, of 800 tons, built for CALVIN ADAMS, Esq,  
and intended for the general freighting business, will be  
launched from WILLIAM PERRINE'S yard at Green Point.**

Figure 12. This 2 March 1854 *New York Daily Times* announcement of the launching of a ship from William Perine's yard typically fails to give the street location of the yard. Placement under a "Williamsburgh City" headline creates the impression that Greenpoint was a part of Williamsburgh. *Private collection; used by permission.*

In early September, he launched the 1085-ton *Nuremberg*, and on 20 October and 24 November, he launched her sister ships, the *Johannesburg* and *Gutenberg*, all for Sagory's Line of New Orleans-Hamburg packets. The 30th of September saw the launching of the 1513-ton *City of Brooklyn* for Nesmith & Sons, for the “general freighting trade.” On 23 December, the largest of his vessels was launched – the 1736-ton ship *City of Mobile*, “a general freighter, for Harbeck & Co.”<sup>95</sup> As far as could be determined, this was the last vessel Perine built in Greenpoint and the last sailing ship he ever built anywhere. The precise location of Perine's yard is not known. He is not listed in either of the Greenpoint directories, and newspaper notices of launchings typically say “from the yard of Mr. Perine, in Green Point,” without referring to a particular street.<sup>96</sup>

In just four years since the beginning of shipbuilding there, Greenpoint was a major producer. Of the 110 vessels, totalling 81,149 tons, reported to have been launched at the port of New York in 1854, which also included the production of Hoboken, Brooklyn, and Williamsburgh, almost a third (35), measuring 24,559 tons, were built at Greenpoint by nine shipbuilders. The two largest builders were William Perine and Sneden & Whitlock, who accounted for 11,500 and 7140 tons, respectively. For all that, tonnage launched by New York-area shipbuilders was less than in any of the previous

<sup>94</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 17 August (2/5) and 22 August (2/2), 1854; *New York Times*, 8 March 1856 (12/5).

<sup>95</sup> *New York Daily Tribune*, 2 October 1854 (3/2); *New York Herald*, 26 December 1854 (3/4); Cutler, *Queens*, 413.

<sup>96</sup> *New York Daily Tribune*, 9 January 1854 (3/6), is typical. It must be noted that not a single register for the vessels built by Perine in 1853-54 identifies Greenpoint as the place of construction.

seven years. Economic and technological forces had been conspiring against them, and the year 1854 ended with shipping and shipbuilding at the port of New York in a depressed state. Freight and passengers in and out of the port had been declining in the previous years. Prices for ship timber had risen to unprecedented highs. Shipwrights and caulkers had been demanding an approximately 17% increase in wages from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per day. Consequently, shipbuilders were being squeezed between contracted prices and the rising costs of labour and materials. The builders sought to raise their prices, but with the decline in shipping, new contracts were not forthcoming. The year 1855 started with less than 20,000 tons on the stocks, and the outlook for new contracts was dismal.<sup>97</sup>

Neither the name nor the launch date of the “pilot boat for Mobile” on the stocks at the Williams yard at the close of 1854 was reported by any major newspaper. The earliest reported launch at Greenpoint in 1855 was in March – the 328-ton bark *Ricot*, built by Edward F. Williams “for a Spanish house.” Naval architect Griffiths published her lines and extolled them as “among the finest of her class.” He included her specifications and a complete list of her spars. Interestingly, Griffiths does not refer to her as a clipper type. It was not until 25 August that Edward F. launched his next vessel, the clipper-bark *Clara Haxall*, 390 tons, built to trade between Richmond and Rio de Janeiro. She was followed on 13 November by the 347-ton schooner *William H. Gilliland*, built for the Palmetto Line.<sup>98</sup> Edward F. ended the year with the bark *Lexington* on the stocks, the first vessel to be constructed with a full set of hanging knees of machine-bent timber.<sup>99</sup>

Only a single vessel was under construction at the Hathaway & Bloomfield yard. This was the 51-ton sloop lighter *Persia*, a close copy of the *China*, launched the previous November for the same owner. Sloop rigged, both vessels were built for the purpose of lightering freight and commodities from ship to shore and hauling between points over the sheltered waters of the rivers and bays. Launched in April, the *Persia* was the last vessel built by Hathaway & Bloomfield, which disappeared from the Greenpoint scene as a partnership.<sup>100</sup> Bloomfield & Co., however, continued to operate the India Street marine railway. The company may have consisted of Joel, George W., John, and Joseph Bloomfield (relationships not determined).<sup>101</sup> As did their neighbour Thomas, Parsons & Co., the Bloomfields appear to have specialized in building small harbour craft and repairing small vessels.

Edward Lupton began the year with only the 791-ton clipper ship *Black Sea* under construction, and she was not launched until 30 June. This was the last clipper ship

<sup>97</sup> New York *Daily Tribune*, 24 March 1854 (3/5); New York *Journal of Commerce*, 25 September 1854 (2/2) and 12 January 1855 (2/1); New York *Herald*, 9 October (3/1) and 26 December (3/3-6), 1854 and 1 January 1856 (4/6). The tonnages in newspaper reports are typically carpenter’s measure, not register tonnages. Thomas, Parsons & Co. was not included among the shipbuilders reported on by the *Herald* of 26 December and that company’s production is not included in the above figures.

<sup>98</sup> *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 25 August (2/5), 27 August (2/2), and 24 November 1855 (2/3); *Nautical Magazine*, II, No. 4 (July 1855), 293-296, III, No. 1 (October 1855), 55, and III, No. 4 (January 1856), 304; New York *Herald*, 1 January 1856 (5/1).

<sup>99</sup> *The Nautical Gazette*, IV, No. 87 (February 22, 1873), 273.

<sup>100</sup> Sail Enrollment No. 384, 7 May 1855 (*Persia*); New York *Herald*, 1 January 1856 (5/1).

<sup>101</sup> Brooklyn city directories 1856 to 1860.

built in Greenpoint. She went into the North Europe trade for Funch & Meincke, as had the bark *North Sea*, completed in the previous year. Also in June, Lupton launched the schooner *Henry Wolcott*, variously reported to be of 70 and 80 tons, to be “employed in the lumber trade between Albany, New York and Shrewsbury [New Jersey].” These vessels constituted the sum total of his new construction for the year.<sup>102</sup>

William Collyer, in his first full year in Greenpoint, was even less productive. His only vessel was the 59-ton schooner-lighter *Edwin Collyer*, which was launched in April.<sup>103</sup> No information has been found to indicate that he was engaged in repair work.

Elisha S. Whitlock, formerly of the firm of Sneden & Whitlock, set up shop at the foot of Oak Street. In May, he contracted to build a steamer to run between Hyannis and Nantucket, Massachusetts, to be “finished and ready to run in ninety days.”<sup>104</sup> Named *Island Home*, 481 tons, she was launched on 2 July and subsequently proved to be a sturdy vessel, though her high cost was questioned.

The “Island Home” was said to be the finest steamer of her size that had been launched at New York [harbour] up to that time. The builders had their own price, for “nobody beat them down a farthing.” All that was asked of them was to build a boat that would cross Nantucket sound [*sic*] with safety in a heavy gale, and this they did, for the steamer proved to be even more than her builders claimed.

She remained on that difficult route until sold in 1895. “[I]t is said that when she was stripped of her upper-works, preparatory to conversion into an undignified coal barge, her hull was found to be as sound as it was when she slid off the ways. . . .”<sup>105</sup>

The *Island Home* is the only vessel found to have been built by Whitlock in 1855. While the report of her launching does not specify the location of the building stocks, it appears that she was constructed at Sneden’s yard. Whitlock’s address was at the foot of Oak Street, which bordered Sneden’s yard on the north. The August 1855 issue of the *Nautical Magazine* identifies the builder as “Messrs. Sneden & Whitlock,” and a 4 July newspaper item reports a fatal accident befalling a young “ship carpenter, while engaged in assisting to launch a steamboat from Mr. Sneden’s yard . . . when she suddenly started, and not being quick enough to get out of the way, [he] was run over.” As this is the only report found of shipbuilding activity related to Sneden in 1855 and as the incident coincided with the launching of the *Island Home*, the indications are that both Sneden and Whitlock participated in the construction of that vessel and that some kind of business arrangement existed between them.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Nautical Magazine*, II, No. 5 (August 1855), 463; Howe and Matthews, I, 43; New York *Evening Post*, 5 May 1855 (2/3); 1 January 1856 (5/1). Some may claim that the 1395-ton *Blue Jacket*, built by Pine & Davis in Greenpoint in 1865, was the last clipper ship constructed at Greenpoint. According to Frederick C. Matthews, *American Merchant Ships 1850-1900*, 2 vol. (Salem, Mass., 1930), I, 52-53, she was a medium clipper model; however, her performance did not live up to that of recognized clipper ships.

<sup>103</sup> New York *Herald*, 1 January 1856 (5/1).

<sup>104</sup> New York *Evening Post*, 5 May 1855 (2/3); *Brooklyn Directory, 1856*, Eastern District; New York *Journal of Commerce*, 9 May 1855 (2/6).

<sup>105</sup> *Nautical Magazine*, II (1855), 463; Turner, 43, 52.

<sup>106</sup> New York *Journal of Commerce*, 4 July 1855 (2/5). The annual shipbuilding report in the New York

At the yard of Eckford Webb was a vessel that was to attract more than a modicum of attention. Named after her builder, the *Eckford Webb* was a 494-ton three-masted schooner for Dunham & Dimon's New York and Savannah line. Launched on 11 April, she was "painted white, and is ornamented with a head of an eagle for a figure-head, and has a small neat taffrail on the stern, with a likeness of her builder . . . in the centre." Griffiths writes that she is "one of the finest of her class . . . her lines and details of construction . . . will doubtless be examined with interest by the *connoisseur* in ship-building."<sup>107</sup> The daily press noted her sailing qualities and her reception in Europe:

American Enterprise. – The three-masted clipper schooner Ekford [*sic*] Webb . . . has made the very short run of 20 days from Charleston to Queenstown [Ireland]. Very few vessels of her class attempt the passage from here to the Continent. We learn also that she has been ordered to a port in the Baltic Sea, and we believe that she is the first vessel of this description consigned to a port in this sea with an American cargo. Her admirable sailing qualities have induced her builder . . . to construct another of the same model and tonnage. . . .

The *Eckford Webb* made numerous trans-Atlantic voyages, and was considered a unique vessel. "She was designed for the Savannah trade, but has been plying between European ports, where she has attracted great attention, on account of the peculiarity of her rig." Like the *Kate Brigham's*, the *Webb's* masts were of equal height. Her near twin – the *William L. Burroughs*, also for Dunham & Dimon – was launched in September. At the end of the year, two larger tern schooners for Dunham & Co. were in the course of construction at the Webb yard.<sup>108</sup>

While the number of new vessels constructed in Greenpoint in 1855 appeared to be enough to keep the shipbuilders in business, repair work also kept some yards busy. In May, the bark *Pioneer* came into the Williams yard for a refit. Originally built in New York in 1851 as a propeller steamship registering at 1833 tons, she was now a sailing bark. Sent to California around Cape Horn in 1852, she picked up passengers en route at San Juan del Sur, on the Pacific side of Nicaragua. Before reaching San Francisco, her engine broke down, and she began taking on water. She was run up on the beach at San Simeon Bay, California, some 200 miles south of her destination. Her passengers were removed, and salvagers bought and towed the abandoned hull to San Francisco, where her engine was taken out. Rigged as a bark, she was sent to Peru for a load of guano, which she brought to New York. Her rig was changed again, and the *Pioneer* left the Williams yard to continue life as a full-rigged ship.<sup>109</sup>

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*Herald*, 1 January 1856 (5/1), identifies only Whitlock as builder of the *Island Home* and does not list any shipbuilding by Sneden.

<sup>107</sup> *Nautical Magazine*, II, (1855), 308-311.

<sup>108</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 13 July 1855 (2/1); *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 24 November 1855 (2/3); *New York Herald*, 1 January 1856 (5/2).

<sup>109</sup> *New York Evening Post*, 5 May 1855 (2/3); Heyl, I, 347; *Sail Register* No. 565, 24 September 1855: "Vessel readmeasured & altered to a ship." Unfortunately, newspapers made only rare mentions of such work so there is no convenient way to gather statistics on repairs.

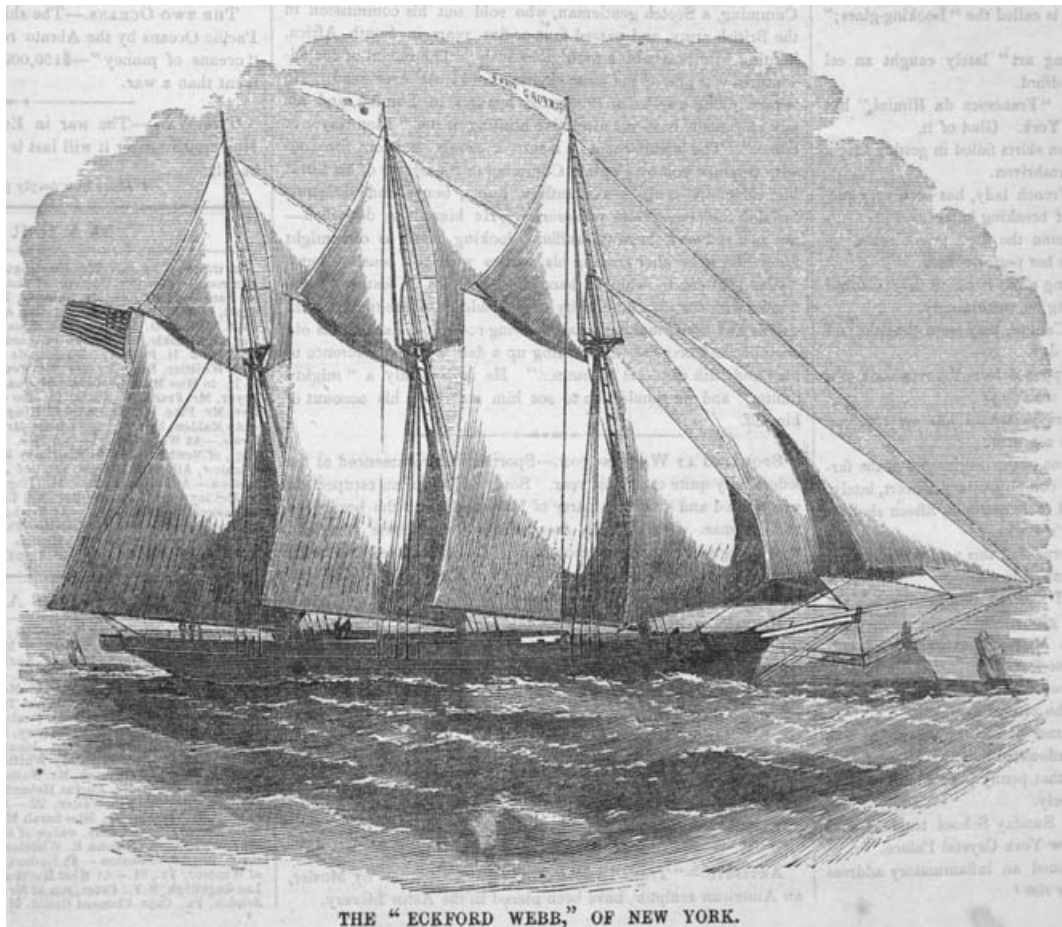


Figure 13. The 7 October 1855 issue of *Ballou's Pictorial* carried this illustration of the tern schooner *Eckford Webb*, "which created such a sensation on her first trip to England. . . . Each mast is furnished with a winch. . . . She can be handled by six men." *Courtesy of The Huntington Library.*

Earlier in the year, another major shipbuilder had moved his operation to Greenpoint. This was Jeremiah Simonson, a nephew of railroad and shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, many of whose vessels Simonson had built. In March, upon completion of the 1295-ton steamship *Ariel* for Vanderbilt at his old yard in New York City, Simonson turned his attention to Greenpoint. His entrance into the community was marked by the laying of the keel of "the largest steamship ever built in the United States." This was the only vessel he had under construction during 1855, and it attracted much attention as the months passed. In August, it was reported: "This vessel will be built with prodigious strength, and will be furnished in a style of elegance unsurpassed." She was destined to run in Vanderbilt's New York-Havre Line. Construction of such a large vessel was not without mishap. In November, a machinist, who commuted from New

York, where he resided with his wife and four children, was killed when he fell from the upper deck into the hold.<sup>110</sup>

As launching day approached, “the public are invited to call and inspect her.” The new steamship, registering at 3360 tons, was named *Vanderbilt*, but her designation as the “largest steamship” was usurped even before she was launched. Under construction across the East River was the larger *Adriatic*, which was to measure 4144 tons.<sup>111</sup>

That, however, did not deter a crowd of between five and six thousand people from gathering to witness the *Vanderbilt*'s launching on 10 December. Among the spectators on that cold and windy morning were Commodore Vanderbilt, members of his family, and numerous dignitaries. At about half past nine that morning, the *Vanderbilt* “gracefully glided from the place of her nativity, amid the shouts and huzzahs of the assemblage, and the booming of cannon.” She went on to a noble 45-year career as a trans-Atlantic passenger liner, naval vessel during the Civil War, and sailing ship after her engines were taken out.<sup>112</sup>

The launching of that grand vessel was a fitting end to a five-year period that saw both the advent of shipbuilding in Greenpoint and the beginning of its decline. While there were to be some years during which constructed tonnage rose, when new shipbuilders were to move into the community, and some of the largest and grandest wood-hull vessels ever constructed were to slide down the ways, shipbuilding overall was declining.<sup>113</sup>

The decline is not to be attributed to the substitution of steam for sail, for . . . this country in the early years of steam-navigation easily took and held the first rank . . . . But the change from wood – the material of marine construction in which our new country abounded – to iron, in the cheap production of which Great Britain excelled, completely altered the conditions of ship-building.

There were feeble (though notable) attempts at building iron hulls in Greenpoint. Samuel Sneden, with Thomas F. Rowland as his engineer, built the iron-hull steamers *Flushing* and *Alabama* in 1859, and Rowland soon after established the Continental Iron Works, which built the *Monitor* and other Monitor-class ironclads during the Civil War. The company went on to build a small number of iron and steel vessels in the last decades of the century; however, shipyards in Baltimore, Maryland, and along the Delaware River had long before stolen the march on New York-area shipbuilders, who seem not to have been inclined to move away from wood as their primary material of

<sup>110</sup> Heyl, I, 33; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 28 March (2/2), 20 August (2/2), and 5 December (2/5) 1855; *New York Daily Times*, 17 November 1855 (2/6); *Nautical Magazine*, II (1855), 421.

<sup>111</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, 5 December 1855 (2/5); *The Lytle-Holdcamper List*; *New York Journal of Commerce*, 10 October 1855 (2/2).

<sup>112</sup> *New York Herald*, 11 December 1855 (1/4); *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 22 December 1855 (30/3).

<sup>113</sup> Eugene T. Chamberlain, “Our Merchant Marine,” in *One Hundred Years of American Commerce 1795-1895*, 2 vol., Chauncey M. Depew, ed., I, 39.



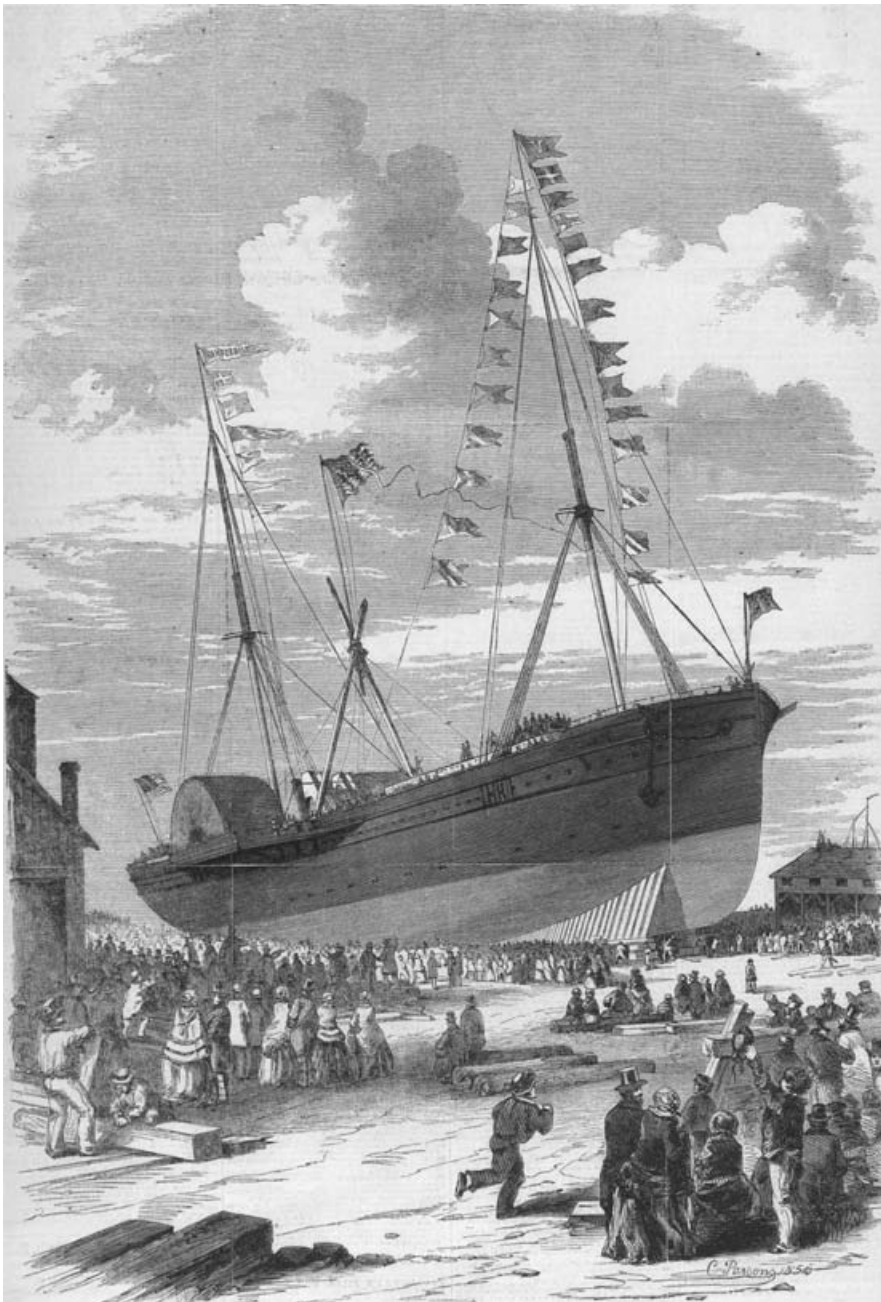


Figure 14. *Leslie's Illustrated* captured the festive air at the 10 December 1855 launching of the sidewheel steamer *Vanderbilt*, the largest vessel built at Greenpoint to that date. Representations of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt and his party appear in the foreground. *Courtesy of The Huntington Library.*

construction.<sup>114</sup> With the possible exception of the Continental Iron Works, there were no major shipbuilding companies left operating in Greenpoint by 1900.

From the standpoint of community identification, effective 1 January 1855, the entire Town of Bushwick (population 8,109), of which Greenpoint was a part, was consolidated with the overwhelmingly larger city of Brooklyn (population 159,883).<sup>115</sup> Though Greenpoint still maintains an identity as a neighbourhood, its production statistics were long ago absorbed into those of the overall city of Brooklyn and virtually lost to independent accounting. Not a monument exists in the Greenpoint of today to attest to the magnitude of the shipbuilding industry that flourished there in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

### Appendix 1

#### Shipbuilding (1830-1855) Incorrectly Attributed To Greenpoint

In the maritime literature, a number of vessels are identified as having been built in Greenpoint. Following is a list of such vessels. No information has been found in contemporary sources to support the claims.

Six of the vessels named in this appendix were built or repaired by John Englis. Englis was associated with William H. Brown for a number of years, and after Brown's departure from business in 1853, Englis opened a yard at the foot of East 10th Street, New York, under his own name.<sup>116</sup> He continued building at this location until 1865-66, except for a short period in 1853-54, when he went to Buffalo with some of his shipwrights to construct two large lake steamers – *Plymouth Rock* and *Western World*.<sup>117</sup> Of these vessels, James P. Barry writes, "They were built in sections at Greenpoint, N.Y., then shipped to Buffalo for assembly and completion."<sup>118</sup> No contemporary documentation has been found to support the contention that the sections were constructed at Greenpoint. As he includes Samuel Ward Stanton's *American Steam Vessels*<sup>119</sup> in his bibliography, Barry may have based his statement on that book. Of the *Western World*, Stanton (130) writes: "Hull, of wood, constructed by John Englis, at Greenpoint, (Long Island), NY, and put together in . . . Buffalo," implying the same for the *Plymouth Rock*. In *American Paddle Steamboats*,<sup>120</sup> Carl D. Lane writes, "The *Western World* was the first vessel built by John Englis of Greenpoint, who had taken over the famous William H. Brown yard. . . ." That yard was in New York City. Lane also acknowledges Stanton as a source of his information. While John Englis was at Buffalo, construction continued on the steamers *Forest City* and *Menemon Sanford* at his New York City yard under the supervision of James Englis, his brother. It was not until 1865-66 that the firm, now known as John Englis & Son, relocated to Greenpoint. (The Lawrence & Foulks yard also relocated to Greenpoint after the Civil War.)

<sup>114</sup> Morrison, *Ship Yards*, 155-163, and *Iron and Steel Hull Steam Vessels of the United States* (n.p., n.d.), unpaginated—this book consists of a series of articles beginning with October 1905, clipped from the pages of the *Scientific American Supplement*.

<sup>115</sup> Rosenwaike, 50.

<sup>116</sup> Morrison, *Ship Yards*, 148.

<sup>117</sup> New York *Herald*, 29 December 1853 (3/1) and 26 December 1854 (3/).

<sup>118</sup> *Ships of the Great Lakes: 300 Years of Navigation* (Berkeley, Calif., 1973), 79.

<sup>119</sup> New York, 1895.

<sup>120</sup> New York, 1943, 114.

Four of the vessels listed below are attributed to Lawrence & Sneden at Greenpoint. As explained in the main text of this article, the firm of Lawrence & Sneden never did business in Greenpoint, and three of the four vessels were built prior to 1850; there is no contemporary documentary evidence that steamers were constructed in Greenpoint in those early years.

The intent here is not to criticize the early authors cited in this work. They conducted their research in the years before today's great mass of microfilmed newspapers and government records was assembled, before the proliferation of photocopying machines, and before the marvels of the computer and Internet. They worked under a great handicap – labouring in an age when acquiring and sharing information was slow, difficult, and often tedious. Yet they managed to assemble and provide for us a great body of information on which we are now building. The work being done today takes us to another level of research, full of the myriad details our predecessors were unable to access in a reasonably convenient manner. At the time Stanton began producing his works, both the Englis and Lawrence & Foulks yards were located in Greenpoint. He may have assumed that they were always in that place, and as his focus was on the vessels, he may not have researched the histories of the yards *per se*.

*Arrow* (also known as *George Washington, Broadway*), sidewheel steamer, 290 tons, was built in 1837 by Lawrence & Sneden, at New York. Heyl (V, 15) places Lawrence & Sneden in Greenpoint. Dayton (47) says the *Arrow* was built in New York, as does *The Lytle-Holdcamper List*. No contemporary documentary evidence has yet been found that indicates shipbuilding was being conducted in Greenpoint at this early date.

*Baltic* (2640), sidewheel steamer, 372 tons, was built in 1848 by Thomas Collyer, at New York. Heyl (VI, 11) says this vessel was built at Greenpoint. The customhouse copy of her enrolment says this vessel was built at New York City by Thomas Collyer. No contemporary documentary evidence has been found to indicate that this shipbuilder had ever constructed a vessel in Greenpoint. Perhaps the confusion arises from the fact that a 570-ton ferryboat of this name (Official No. 2570) was built in Greenpoint in 1863.<sup>121</sup>

*Commonwealth*, sidewheel steamer, 1732 tons, was built in 1854 by Lawrence & Foulks, at Williamsburgh, New York. In “The ‘Elegant’ Steamboat *Commonwealth*,”<sup>122</sup> Alexander Crosby Brown writes, “*Commonwealth* was built by Lawrence & Foulkes [*sic*] of Greenpoint, L.I. . . .” He cites the June 1855 *Monthly Nautical Magazine* (II, 221-226) report on this vessel; however, that report says, “The hull . . . was built in 1854 by Messrs. Lawrence & Foulks, at Williamsburgh. . . .” Brown also cites Stanton’s *American Steam Vessels*, which says the *Commonwealth* was built at Greenpoint. Complicating the issue are the New York *Herald*’s shipbuilding report of 9 October 1854, which erroneously lists “Messrs. Laurence [*sic*] & Foulks” among the Greenpoint

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<sup>121</sup> Steam Enrollment No. 21, 24 May 1848; *The Lytle-Holdcamper List*.

<sup>122</sup> *The American Neptune*, VIII, No. 3 (July 1948), 246-54.

yards, and the entry in the 1862 *American Lloyds' Registry of American and Foreign Shipping*, which says the vessel was built in Greenpoint. In his narrative of the *Commonwealth*, Heyl (III, 97) writes that she was built "at the yard of Lawrence & Foulkes [*sic*]" and refers to the 27 June 1854 New York *Daily Times* report of the steamer's launching. The item actually appears in the *Daily Times* of 28 June and says: "Launch of a Mammoth Steamboat. – Messrs. Lawrence & Foulks launched . . . from their yard foot of North Fifth-street. . . ." North 5th Street was, and is today, in the section of Brooklyn known as Williamsburg, then an independent city. But Heyl ignores the referenced *Daily Times* report and identifies her builder as "Lawrence & Sneedan [*sic*], Greenpoint, N.Y." Confusion arises from the fact that the Herbert Lawrence of Lawrence & Foulks was the son of Herbert Lawrence of the dissolved partnership of Lawrence & Sneedan.

*Isaac Newton*, sidewheel steamer, 1332 tons, was built in 1846 by William H. Brown, at New York. Stanton (85) writes, "Hull lengthened and widened by John Englis, at Greenpoint, L.I., 1855." In that year, the Englis yard was still in New York City.

*Forest City* (9513), sidewheel steamer, 869 tons, was built in 1854 by John Englis, at New York.<sup>123</sup> In the January 1974 issue of *The American Neptune* is a pictorial supplement featuring paintings by Antonio Jacobsen, Plate III of which shows the *Forest City*, with the caption on the painting itself: "1,134 tons. Built at Greenpoint, Long Island, in 1854." This statement is supported by entries in the 1891 edition of the *Record of American and Foreign Shipping* and by the 1891-92 *Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping*.<sup>124</sup> However, *The Lytle-Holdcamper List* and the various editions of the *List of Merchant Vessels of the United States*,<sup>125</sup> from 1881 to 1895, say that the *Forest City* was built in New York. While the tonnage of the vessel in the 1890s was considerably higher than that given for her in 1854, this is the only steamer of that name with 1854 as her year of construction. Both the *Record* and *Lloyd's* identify her builder as "Englis" and give her official number as 9513, the same as given in *The Lytle-Holdcamper List* and the *List of Merchant Vessels*. In his short narrative of the vessel, Heyl (III, 141) says she was built in New York and gives only her original tonnage, making no mention of the higher tonnage, which was likely the result of her readmeasurement under the new rules of 1865. The *Preliminary List of Merchant Vessels of the United States*<sup>126</sup> (the first record of official number assignments) gives her tonnage as 1134 and Portland, Maine, as her home port, and misspells her name as "Finest City." The *Forest City* was the first vessel launched at John Englis's new yard at East 10th Street. Newspapers of the 1850s and early 1860s consistently place the Englis yard in New York City.

<sup>123</sup> New York *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, 5 January 1854, page dated 30 December 1853, col. 3; New York *Herald*, 26 December 1854 (3/4).

<sup>124</sup> London, 1891, republished in 1967 by Gregg Press Limited, Volume I, *Steamers*.

<sup>125</sup> Washington, DC, 1869 to present.

<sup>126</sup> Washington, DC, 1868. I believe this was an internal document, not for public distribution. I am especially grateful to Robert Schwemmer for making the *Preliminary List* available to me.

*Menemon Sanford*, sidewheel steamer, 904 tons, was built in 1854 by John Englis, in New York. Both Heyl (I, 247) and Lane (110) place the Englis yard in Greenpoint. However, the *Sanford* and *Forest City* were built concurrently at the same yard and launched within weeks of each other. The yard was in New York throughout the 1850s. The *Sanford* was lost on a reef off the Florida coast in 1862.<sup>127</sup>

*Napoleon*, sidewheel steamer, 136 tons, was built in 1830, in New York, either by Lawrence & Sneden or Smith & Dimon. Heyl (V, 189) names both and places Lawrence & Sneden in Greenpoint. *The Lytle-Holdcamper List* says the *Napoleon* was built in New York. No contemporary documentary evidence has yet been found that indicates shipbuilding was being conducted in Greenpoint at this early date.

*New World*, sidewheel steamer, 1312 tons, was built in 1848 by William H. Brown, at New York. Stanton (95) writes, "In 1855, the hull was widened to 43 feet, by John Englis, at Greenpoint, making tonnage 1675." In 1855, the Englis yard was still in New York City.

*Northern Light* (18204), 1757 tons, was built in 1852 by Jeremiah Simonson, in New York. Heyl (I, 307) says she was built by Simonson in Greenpoint. Jeremiah Simonson did not start building in Greenpoint until 1855.

*Star of the West*, sidewheel steamer, 1172 tons, was built in 1852 by Jeremiah Simonson, in New York. Heyl (I, 413) gives Greenpoint for her place of build. Jeremiah Simonson did not start building in Greenpoint until 1855.

*Telegraph*, sidewheel steamer, 171 tons, was built in 1832 by Lawrence & Sneden, in New York. Heyl (III, 309) places Lawrence & Sneden in Greenpoint. *The Lytle-Holdcamper List* says the *Telegraph* was built in New York. No contemporary documentary evidence has yet been found that indicates shipbuilding was being conducted in Greenpoint at this early date.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Official Numbers Awarded**

Official vessel numbers were not awarded to American-flag vessels by the U.S. Treasury Department until 1866. Starting in 1865, all American vessels were readmeasured according to new regulations. Following is a table showing the official numbers awarded to the vessels mentioned in this article that survived and remained in American registry into the 1860s. Readmeasurements and vessel alterations in the intervening period account for tonnage differences. For a discussion of tonnage measurements, see Robert Greenlaugh Albion, *Square-Riggers on Schedule: The New York Sailing Packets to England, France, and the Cotton Ports* (Princeton, NJ, 1938), 298-99.

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<sup>127</sup> New York *Weekly Journal of Commerce*, 5 January 1854, page dated December 30, 1853, col. 3; New York *Herald*, 26 December 1854 (3/4).

Vessel Name and Rig	Old Tonnage	New Tonnage	Official Number
Abbie, sidewheeler	299	393	1819
Adelaide, sidewheeler	734	872	85
Admiral, sidewheeler	648	771	1371
Alabama, propeller	510	757	1468
Almena, bark	756	698	847
Ariel, sidewheeler	1295	1736	797
Cahawba, sidewheeler	1643	1553	4862
Calhoun, sidewheeler	508	391	5540
China, sloop-lighter	48	35	4709
City of Brooklyn, ship	1513	1513	4835
City of Hartford, sidewheeler	814	1306	4562
Connecticut, sidewheeler	1129	1370	4897
Creole b) General Banks c) Creole, sidewheeler	316	339	4666
Daniel Webster	766	819	6057
Eagle, sidewheeler	266	422	8447
Eastern City, sidewheeler	616	707	7141
Eclipse, schooner	269	199	7638
Edwin Collyer, schooner-lighter	59	54	7636
Elm City, sidewheeler	760	1449	7563
E. Morris, sidewheeler	69	96	7532
Franklin Nickerson, schooner	258	213	9117
Granite State, sidewheeler	887	1118	10332
Henry Wolcott, schooner	not found	49	11838
Island Home, sidewheeler	481	484	12141
J. H. Ryerson, ship	954	1037	12211
Jenny Lind, sidewheeler	88	98	13297
Kate Brigham, schooner	470	494	14095
Lotus, sloop lighter	71	49	14957
Lydia, sidewheeler	299	331	14938
Metropolis, sidewheeler	410	433	16302
Metropolis, sidewheeler	2108	2210	16760
Onota, sloop lighter	71	49	19047
Osprey, propeller	341	429	19097
Persia, sloop lighter	51	36	19848
Rip Van Winkle, sidewheeler	465	640	21450
R. L. Mabey, sidewheeler	137	82	21446
Susquehanna, barge	356	355	57378
Union, sidewheeler	244	251	25052
Vanderbilt, sidewheeler; altered to ship in 1873, renamed Three Brothers	3360	2972	24964
Westchester, propeller	312	449	26826
William L. Burrough, schooner	496	512	26936