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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name General Butler, Shipwreck

other names/site number VT-CH-590

2. Location

street & number Burlington Bay N/A not for publication

city or town Burlington N/A vicinity

state Vermont code VT county Chittenden code 007 zip code 05401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Eva Hilbertz National Register Specialist September 17, 1998  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Vermont State Historic Preservation Office  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson R. Ball Signature of the Keeper 10/22/98 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/water-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape/underwater

Recreation & Culture/outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: sailing canal schooner, 1862 class

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

*General Butler*, shipwreck  
Chittenden County, Vermont

## Description of the *GENERAL BUTLER* Shipwreck

### *Summary*

The shipwreck of the *General Butler* is a Lake Champlain sailing canal schooner of the 1862 class, built after an enlargement of the Champlain Canal and its locks (Figure 1). The vessel was built in 1862 in Essex, New York, by local shipwrights John Hoskins, Wesley J. Hoskins, and John Ross using a chine log construction technique. This shipbuilding technique was commonly practiced by Champlain Valley boat builders for many different types of vessels and was the predominant technique used to build sailing canal boats. After fifteen years of service on Lake Champlain, the vessel accidentally struck the Burlington breakwater and sank in 1876. The *General Butler* sits upright on the sandy lake bottom nearly intact in 35 ft (10.7 m) of water 300 ft (91.5 m) west of the breakwater (Figure 2). The vessel's masts, spars and blocks were removed from the vessel shortly after it sank. Today the vessel remains in nearly the same condition as when it sank, except for slight erosion and corrosion, and silt within its hold.

The *General Butler* is 88 ft (26.8 m) long, 14 ft (4.3 m) in beam with a depth of hold just over 6 ft (1.80 m). The hull form and construction methods for sailing canal boats are similar to those employed on contemporary standard towed canal boats (Figure 3). The hulls of sailing canal boats were modified to permit not only negotiation of the Champlain and Chambly canals but also navigation of Lake Champlain. Despite the light framing technique, these vessels were well built for the calm waters on which they traded. They could carry cargoes in their hold or on deck. The *General Butler* was carrying a load of marble within its hold when it sank in 1876.

### *The Keel Plank and Keelsons*

The *General Butler* is an intact vessel loaded with a heavy cargo, and has settled well into the bottom sediments with additional sediments deposited in the hold over the century since it sank. The centerline timbers of the bottom are deeply buried and required excavation to determine something of their dimensions. Excavations of these features were conducted at the stern in 1983 and at the stem and just forward of the centerboard trunk in 1993. A wood sample taken from the forward end of the keel proved to be hard maple. At the stem and sternpost, the keel was found to be of a small molded dimension, 3 in (7.6 cm) and 4.75 in (12

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Chittenden County, Vermont

cm) respectively. Considering these dimensions, the keel is described more appropriately as a keel plank rather than a true keel. At the stem and stern the keel plank projects approximately 2 in (5 cm) beneath the hull planking, a characteristic common to flat-bottomed watercraft. The molded dimension of the keel plank amidships is currently unknown. Amidships the keel plank is sided 15.5 in (39.4 cm) and narrows to 7 in (17.8 cm) at the stem and sternpost. Its overall length, based on a preliminary reconstruction, is 84 ft 8 in (25.8 m).

Further study will be required to determine how many timbers compose the keel plank and how it was pierced to permit the centerboard to pass through it. The lower face of the after end of the keel plank is notched for an iron plate 3.25 in (8.3 cm) wide and 1 in (2.5 cm) thick, but of an unknown length. This iron plate extends beyond the keel plank and serves as a table on which the base of the rudder post rested. This plate is secured to the keel plank and probably to the deadwood above it by an iron fastening. A 2 in (5 cm) wide iron strap passes beneath the keel plank and up each side ending on the sternpost. This strap may serve to fasten the keel plank and the deadwood to the sternpost. The strap primarily supports the rudder post's table plate by means of a wedge driven between it and the keel plank.

The hard maple keelson and sister keelsons are buried beneath 1 to 2 ft (30 to 60 cm) of sediment throughout the vessel. In 1983, a limited excavation in the after cabin revealed that the keelson is flanked by two sister keelsons. All three of these timbers are 10 in (25.4 cm) sided and 4 in (10.2 cm) molded. The keelson and starboard sister keelson, like the keel plank, are fashioned from hard maple. These timbers and the five white pine ceiling planks, 12 in (30.5 cm) sided by 1 in (2.5 cm) molded, rest directly upon 5 in by 5 in (12.7 cm by 12.7 cm) floors. The keelson in the cabin serves as support for the cabin floor stanchions that are toe-nailed into it. The keelsons are fastened to the floors with two iron drift bolts per floor. In 1993, a trench excavated across the starboard interior just forward of the centerboard trunk revealed the centerline keelson and the starboard sister keelson. The centerline keelson at this location is molded 3.5 in (8.9 cm) and sided 15 in (38.1 cm). The sister keelson, which is molded 3.75 in (9.5 cm) and sided 10 in (25.4 cm), was removed for examination. It was fastened to the floor by two 1 in (2.5 cm) diameter iron drift bolts.

Time constraints in 1995 allowed only for a limited examination of this feature in the bow test unit. The bow trench ended at the forward face of the first floor and did not reveal any sister keelsons. The centerline keelson was present and sided 9.5 in (24.1 cm) and molded 2 to 3 in (5 to 7.6 cm). The keelson is fastened to the apron with two iron fastenings whose heads were visible on the keelson's top face. The apron is sided 14 in (35.6 cm) and molded 5 in (12.7 cm) where it began at the first floor.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3*General Butler*, shipwreck  
Chittenden County, Vermont*The Stem*

The stem of the *General Butler* is a single piece of white oak with six sides when viewed in section (Figure 4). The stem is 10 ft 5.5 in (3.19 m) long and has a maximum sided dimension of 13.5 in (34.3 cm) on its interior face. It holds this dimension for 5 in (12.7 cm) of its total maximum molded dimension of 15 in (38.1 cm). The sided dimension begins to narrow where it meets the hull planking, and continues in this fashion to the forward face of the stem that is sided 4 in (10.2 cm). The rabbet begins approximately 7 in (17.8 cm) below the stem head and 6.75 in (17.1 cm) abaft the forward face of the stem. The rabbet curves downward maintaining a distance of roughly 8.5 in (21.6 cm) from the forward face of the stem. The forward face of the stem is covered from head to keel by a 4 in (10.2 cm) wide by 1 in (2.5 cm) thick iron rub plate that is bolted to the stem. This rub plate is heavily corroded where it has been exposed to the water, but much better preserved beneath the sediments. An eye is welded to the top of the rub plate, and anchors the lower deadeye of the forestay. The head of the stem is sided a maximum of 8.5 in (21.6 cm), which creates a table 10 in (25.4 cm) beneath the stem head. This table serves as an attachment point for the bulwark's cap rail. Three breasthooks are bolted to the interior face of the stem. One breasthook is above deck level, and the other two are below. The uppermost breasthook was fashioned from white oak. The forward end of ceiling planking is nailed to the stem's interior face. The base of the stem butts against the keel plank and is scarfed to an apron piece.

The apron is, in part, obscured by the hull planking and framing. The bottom of the apron sits upon the keel plank, and beginning at the first floor increases in molded dimension as the upper surface curves toward the stem head. The apron was made from a white oak crook. The reconstructed measurements of the apron are at 3 ft 7 in (1.1 m) in length and 2 ft 11.5 in (90 cm) in height. The apron is sided a maximum of 14 in (35.6 cm) on the interior of the vessel and a minimum of 7 in (17.8 cm) where it meets the forward end of the keel plank. The broad sided dimension of the apron, as compared to the relatively small sided dimension of the keel, suggests that the apron serves as an attachment point for the hull planking in this area. This further suggests that the keel is not rebated.

There is a stop water between the stem and the apron that is visible from outside the vessel. The stem at this point is notched so that the after portion sits upon the apron, while the forward portion continues downward to the keel plank. The apron is higher on the interior of the vessel than on the exterior, which suggests that the stem does not merely sit upon a table but is scarfed to the apron. The ends of two iron fastenings are apparent on the iron rub plate. The head of the upper iron fastening is apparent on the interior of the apron, although the

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second appears to be obscured by other timbers. The 1 in (2.5 cm) head of the visible fastening suggests a 0.75 in (1.9 cm) diameter through bolt secured by a nut placed in a square cutout in the rub plate. No fastenings between the apron and keel plank were noted. However, the 1 in (2.5 cm) heads of two iron fastenings in the upper face of the keelson suggest drift bolts that pass through the apron and into the keel plank. The upper face of the apron also supports the base of two white oak windlass bitts (Figure 5).

*The Sternpost*

The *General Butler*'s sternpost is visible in the after cabin from the cabin deck up to the underside of the main deck (Figure 6 and 7). The sternpost is made of white oak. The sternpost was excavated on the outside of the vessel in 1983. This was done to reach the keel plank, which was found to be consistently molded and sided by 7 in (17.8 cm) throughout its reconstructed length of 7 ft 11 in (2.41 m). The forward face of the sternpost is notched to receive the two transom pieces. The port and starboard faces are rebated beginning at the forward edge at the base and proceeding upwards diagonally toward the after edge of the sternpost at the level of the first transom piece. The sternpost sets plumb on top of two deadwood pieces that are in turn resting upon the keel plank. This vertical sternpost is a common characteristic of sailing canal boats, as indicated by the *General Butler*, boat plans in the papers of Orson Saxton Spear and the Burlington Harbor shipwreck, a sailing canal boat off North Beach in Burlington, Vermont

*Chine Logs*

The *General Butler* is a chine boat (Figure 8). The vessel has chine logs, sometimes called chine girders, that run longitudinally at the point where the vessel's bottom meets the sides. Unlike the keel plank, the chine logs have substantial molded dimension and provide considerable longitudinal support, which is lacking on the vessel's centerline. The starboard chine log was examined during an excavation in 1993 just forward of the vessel's centerboard trunk. A wood sample of the chine log was taken and identified as hard maple. One objective of 1995 project was to locate the ends of this timber. Unfortunately, time only allowed the forward end of the timber to be uncovered. The chine log is sided 10.25 in (26 cm) and molded 10 in (25.4 cm). It is rebated to receive both the bottom and the side planking. The forward end of the chine log begins approximately 11 ft (3.4 m) back from the forward face of the stem, and at this location has a sided dimension of 7 in (17.8 cm). This marks the transition between the chine construction and the more traditional plank on frame construction of the bow.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 5*General Butler*, shipwreck  
Chittenden County, Vermont*Framing*

The intact and buried condition of the *General Butler* hinders a complete investigation of the vessel's framing (Figure 9 and 10). However, a limited excavation and detailed recording of fastenings on other timbers does permit some discussion of frame locations and assembly. The chine log served as a point of attachment for floors and futtocks, each of which were mortised into the chine log. The ends of the floors were cut down to produce tongues approximately 0.75 to 1 in (1.9 to 2.5 cm) less in molded dimension. The tongue was probably cut with a dovetail on the tongue's after face, at least for the timbers forward of amidship. The tongue was secured into a mortise in the chine log by the dovetail and by a wooden key driven into the mortise on the timber's opposite face. The heels of the futtocks were also secured with keyed-mortise joinery, and the details of the joint are presumed to be similar to those of the floors and chine log.

Floor timbers spanned the breadth of the vessel's bottom between the port and starboard chine logs. The only exception to this is the location of the cutout in the keel plank through which the centerboard passed. In this location, floors presumably end at the centerboard trunk with mortised joints similar to their outboard ends. Two floors exposed in 1983 in the after cabin are sided and molded 5 in (12.7 cm). One floor uncovered in the 1993 excavation, just forward of the centerboard trunk, is sided 5 in (12.7 cm) at the keel plank and 4.5 in (11.4 cm) at the chine log. The molded dimension of the floor is 5 in (12.7 cm) throughout its length. The forwardmost floor in the bow, which was excavated in 1995, is molded 5 in (12.7 cm) on its forward face and sided 10 in (25.4 cm). The two floors in the stern are spaced 15.5 in (39.4 cm) between the after face of one and the forward face of the other. The two floors forward of the centerboard trunk are spaced 1 ft 7 in (17.8 cm) at the keel plank and 21 in (53 cm) at the chine log. The two forward floors were sampled and proved to be made of white oak. The key that held the floors fast to the chine log was fashioned from hard maple.

The futtocks are vertical timbers with slight tumblehome introduced by lessening the molded dimension on the outer face of the timbers. They rise up from the chine log some 5.5 to 6 ft (1.68 to 1.83 m) to deck level. Their dimensions vary, but the majority average 4 in (10.2 cm) molded and sided at the tops. Of the futtocks examined, the dimensions are 0.25 to 0.50 in (0.6 to 1.3 cm) larger midway between their heels and tops. The futtocks provide points of attachment for the clamp, the hogging truss, and the ceiling plank. The *General Butler* has only two hanging knees tying the deck structure to the vessel's sides. These are located on the port and starboard sides just before the stern cabin. The starboard hanging knee

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is a white oak crook. All the futtocks are not visible; so the fastenings of the clamp and hogging truss had to be relied upon to determine the spacing of the futtocks. Room and space of the futtocks averages 23 in (58 cm), although it varies between 20 in (51 cm) and 27 in (69 cm). The framing of the bow is slightly closer in spacing and the timbers are slightly larger in dimension. The size and spacing of the stern framing are more like that of the sides over the chine log. One side frame was examined from top to heel during the 1993 excavation; although no wood sample was taken, it was identified as an oak timber.

*The Clamps*

The clamps provide support for the deck structure. They run from stem to stern beneath the deck beams. The timbers composing the clamps are sided 5 in (12.7 cm) and molded 3 in (7.6 cm). They are fastened through the ceiling planking into each frame by an alternating pattern of either two spikes or one bolt secured with a nut.

*The Hogging Truss*

This timber structure provides additional longitudinal support for the *General Butler*. A truss is in place on both the port and starboard sides, fastened over the ceiling planking. Each truss consists of three timbers, one of which is located directly below the clamp approximately amidships and runs 15 ft 4 in (4.67 m). The other two timbers run diagonally fore and aft to the chine log from the ends of the horizontal timber. The hogging truss is fastened to each side frame that it passes by with two spikes. This structure is additionally reinforced by two iron rods that are located at the ends of the truss's top timber, and run vertically down to the chine log. These are presumed to keep tension between the truss's top timber and the chine log, and thus to support the ends of the chine log. The truss's top timber is sided 9.5 in (24.1 cm) and molded 3 in (7.6 cm), while the diagonal timbers are similarly sided, but molded only 2 in (5.1 cm). The overall length of the hogging truss is approximately 50 ft (15.24 m). The top timber of the truss was made from red oak, which is not viewed as a particularly good shipbuilding timber. Red oak has a porous structure that allows water to deeply penetrate within the wood, causing rot and weakening the timber.

*Hull Planking and Wales*

The *General Butler*'s hull planking is fastened to the futtocks, floors and chine log with square iron nails. The hull planking appears to be 2 in (5.1 cm) thick throughout the vessel, except for four wales on either side that are 3 in (7.6 cm) thick. The widths of the planks vary

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between a few inches at the bow hood ends to 10 in (25.4 cm) for side planks. The wales average 5.5 in (14 cm) in width, while the side planks beneath the wales average 9 in (22.9 cm) in width. Seven wood samples were taken from planks on the starboard side and each one proved to be white oak. During the excavation in the hold in 1993, one of the crew noted that the third side plank up from the chine log appeared to be pine. This identification is tentative, but if correct, it may represent a repair. The thickness of the bottom planking was not definitely determined. The widths of the six bottom planks exposed by the 1993 excavation are respectively from the keel out, 16 in (40.6 cm) for the garboard, 12.25 in (31.1 cm), 10.25 in (26 cm), 10 in (25.4 cm), 9 in (22.9 cm), and 10 in (25.4 cm). All six bottom planks were identified as hard maple. The lowermost side plank and the outermost bottom plank are rebated into the chine log a distance of 1.25 in (3.2 cm). It is presumed that no rabbet exists in the keel plank, due to the small molded dimension of this timber.

*Decking and Bulwarks*

The *General Butler*'s deck structure is supported by stanchions that rise from the keelson to the underside of the deck beams (Figure 11 and 12). Of the stanchions sampled, two were made of white oak, while the other two were hard maple. Iron tie-rods were in evidence along with several stanchions. The deck beams are roughly 4 in by 4 in (10.2 cm by 10.2 cm) timbers that are cambered 2 in (5.1 cm) to permit water to drain from the deck. The deck beams are spaced 27.5 in (69.9 cm) between their forward faces. Four deck beams were sampled and all proved to be of white oak. The deck of the *General Butler* consists of white pine planking 1 in (2.5 cm) thick. The planks vary in width, but average 4.75 in (12.1 cm), with the most common size being 4.5 in (11.4 cm). The waterway is a 2.5 in (6.4 cm) thick, and is between 7 to 10 in (17.8 to 25.4 cm) wide. The waterway maintains its thickness beneath the bulwarks, but narrows to meet the thinner deck planking. Each deck plank is nailed to the supporting deck beam with two iron nails placed diagonally across the joint. The deck is pierced by five hatchways. The forwardmost is a companion way leading to the stem cabin. There are three cargo hatches. The aftermost hatch supported an above deck structure that was part of the after cabin. A wood sample taken from the starboard hatch coaming of the companion way was identified as white oak.

The bulwarks are constructed using two methods. In the bow, the bulwarks consist of framing timbers that come up from below deck level and are planked on either side, and capped with a plank rail. These bulwarks are 7 in (17.8 cm) thick beginning at the stem and extending aft to just abaft the forward companionway. This type of construction provides a sturdy anchor for the towing cleats on the inside of the bulwarks, where the cleats are fastened through two frame tops. From this point to the stern, the bulwarks are composed of timber

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balks scarfed together and drift-bolted through the waterway and into the wale. One row of balks composes the majority of the bulwarks, although the upward sweep of the stern sheer is created by stacking two balks on top of each other. The bulwarks are 3.5 in (8.9 cm) at their base and 3 in (7.6 cm) at their top edge. The bulwarks are 9.5 to 16 in (24.1 to 40.6 cm) high, with its highest point being where it meets the transom. The drift bolts are 0.75 in (1.9 cm) in diameter and spaced approximately 2 ft (61 cm).

Seventeen scuppers on each side of the vessel are cut from the lower portion of this bulwark balk. The scuppers are 19 to 20.5 in (48.3 to 52.1 cm) in length, except for one that is 2 ft 5.5 in (75 cm) long. They average 3 in (7.6 cm) in height and are separated by 3 ft (91.4 cm) of bulwarks. A wood sample taken from the bulwarks came from the starboard bow, and was identified as white oak. It is unclear where exactly this sample came from, but it is presumed to be from the section of bulwarks constructed of drift-bolt-fastened timber balks and not from the plank on frame bulwarks. The starboard bow cap rail was also sampled and identified as white oak.

*The Centerboard*

The centerboard of the *General Butler* is encased in a trunk that is 16 ft 1 in (4.9 m) long. The centerboard trunk is constructed of four planks per side that are drift-bolted together, and fastened at the ends to deck stanchions by iron nails. The planks are 1.5 in (3.8 cm) thick and approximately 1 ft (30.5 cm) wide. The uppermost starboard plank of the centerboard trunk is white pine. The centerboard is also constructed of 1.5 in (3.8 cm) thick planks that are drift-bolted together. The top centerboard plank was identified as hard maple. The centerboard pivots from a point that is located 3 ft 10 in (1.17 m) abaft the forward face of the centerboard trunk and 4 ft (1.22 m) below deck level.

*Rigging*

The *General Butler* was schooner-rigged. It has two mast tabernacles. Each tabernacle is composed of two mast partners that rise from the floor of the vessel up through the deck approximately 2.5 ft (76 cm). The mast partners are joined by a plank between their forward edges, while the after portion is open to permit the mast to be raised and lowered. The mast pivots on a 2 in (5.1 cm) diameter iron pin that runs through the mast partners. The foremast's port and forward tabernacle planks are white oak, as are the main mast's starboard and forward tabernacle planks. The stump of the foremast that is still contained within its tabernacle was identified as spruce. The masts were raised and lowered by the windlass located at the bow. While the masts were in place they were secured by a forestay attached to a tackle at the head

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of the stem and by shrouds to three deadeyes at the vessel's sides. The masts were additionally secured by an iron band around the top of the tabernacles.

*Steering Mechanisms*

The *General Butler* was originally wheel-steered. Historical accounts of the wrecking event describe the steering system failing, at which time the crew chained a tiller to the rudder post. This white oak tiller is still chained to a gear on top of the rudder post, which was made from American elm (Figure 13). This gear along with hardware and planking located on the stern rail, and iron rust marks on the stern deck are all that remain of the original steering apparatus. The wheel would have been mounted on an axle that passed through an upright plank on the stern rail. The other end of the axle would have been supported by missing framework coming up off the deck. The movement of this axle would have been transmitted to a vertical axle that in turn would have transmitted its movement to the gear on top of the rudder post. The rudder post gear has 56 teeth and is 22 in 55.9 cm) in diameter.

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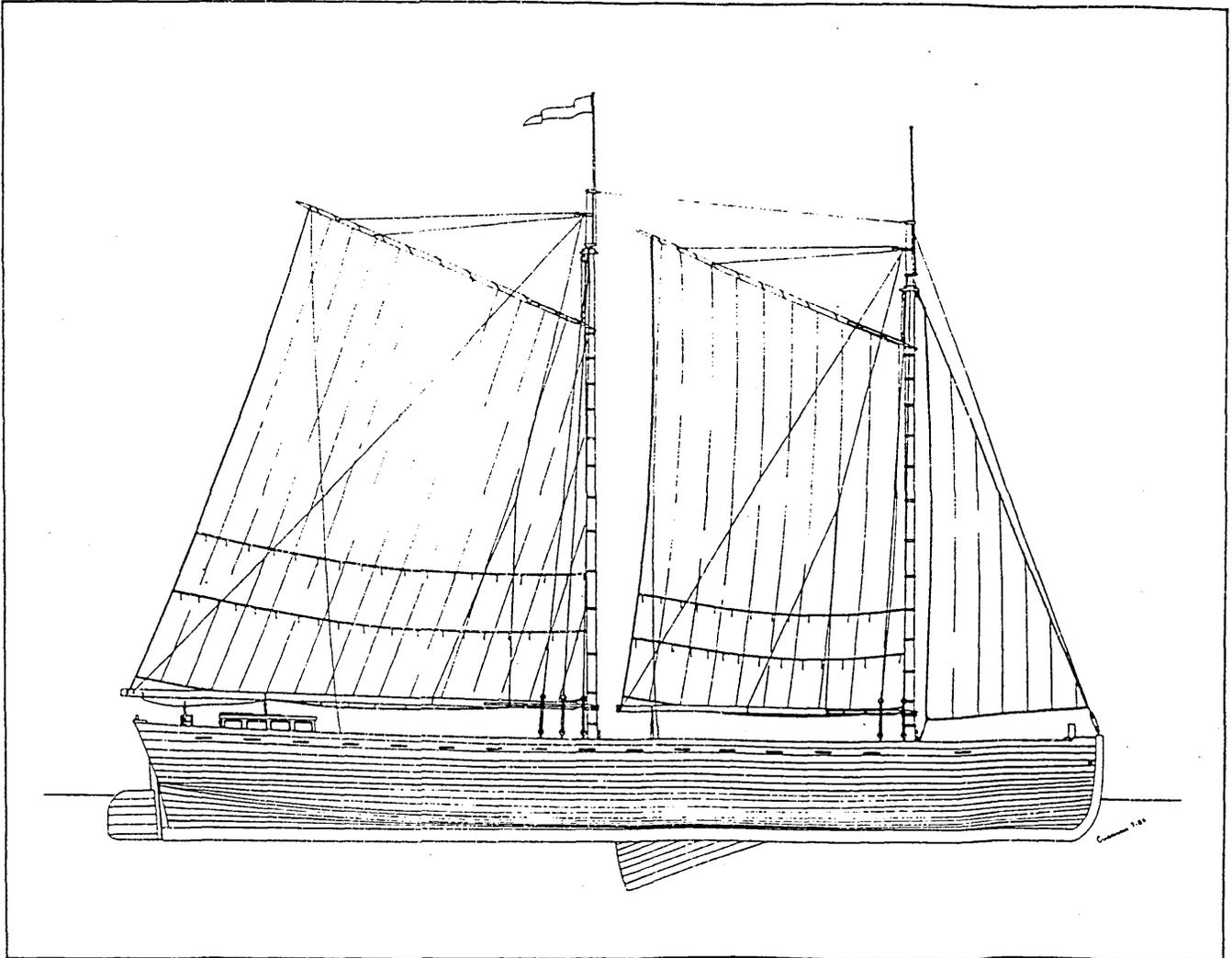


Figure 1: Reconstructed view of the *General Butler* (drawn by Kevin J. Crisman, 1985).

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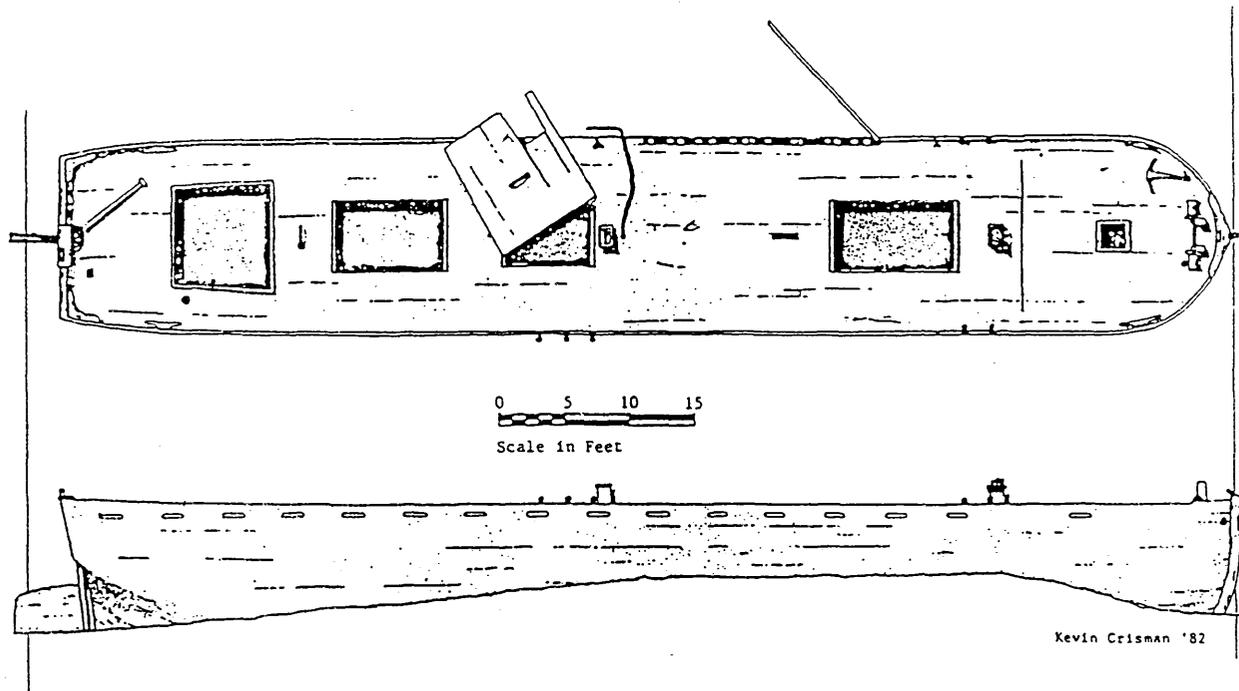


Figure 2: The schooner-rigged canal boat *General Butler*, VT-CH-590 (drawn by Kevin J. Crisman, 1982).

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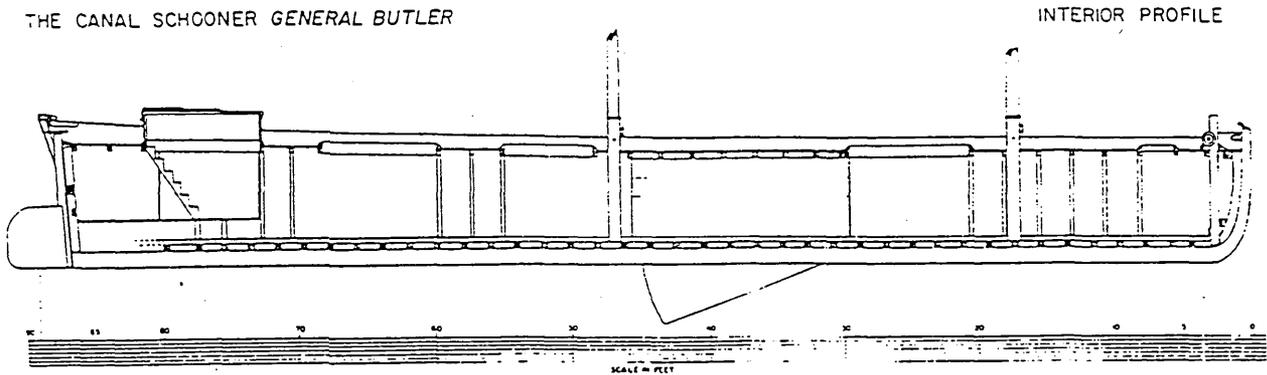


Figure 3: The interior profile of the *General Butler* (drawn by Kevin J. Crisman).



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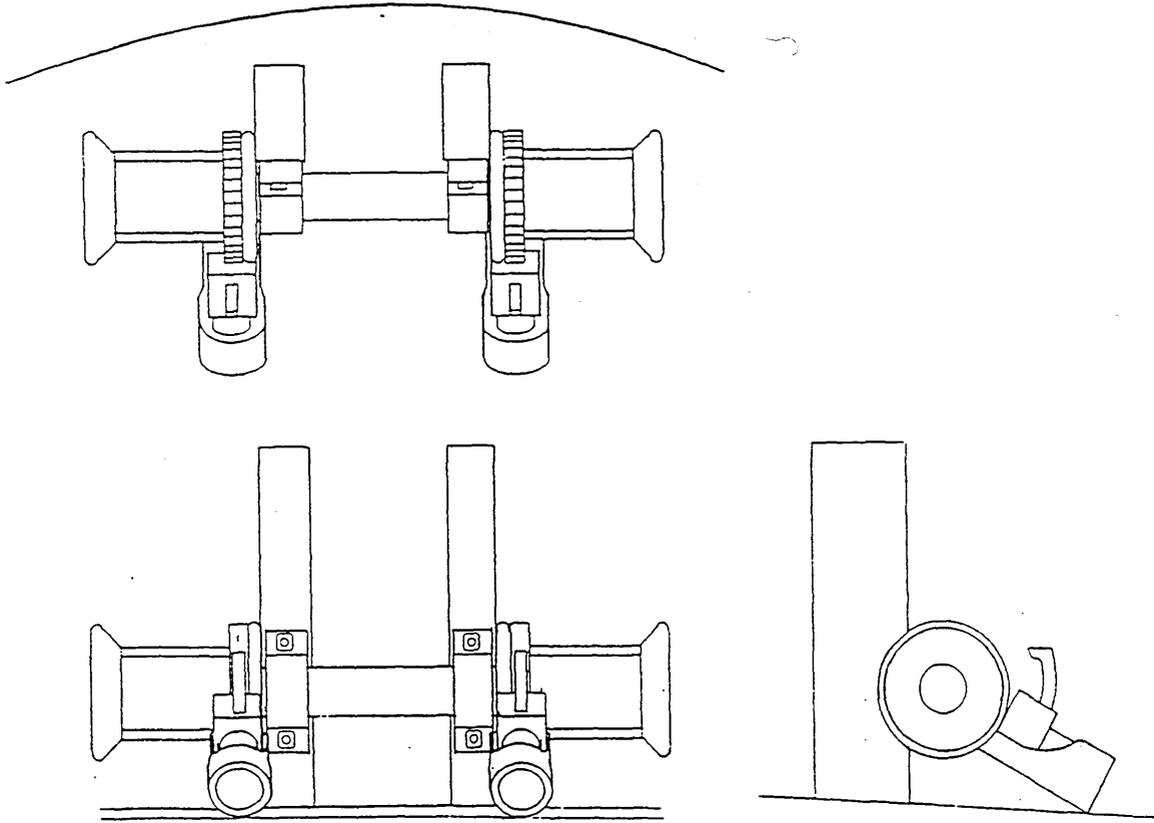


Figure 5: Three views of the *General Butler's* windlass (drawn by Joseph R. Cozzi, 1995)

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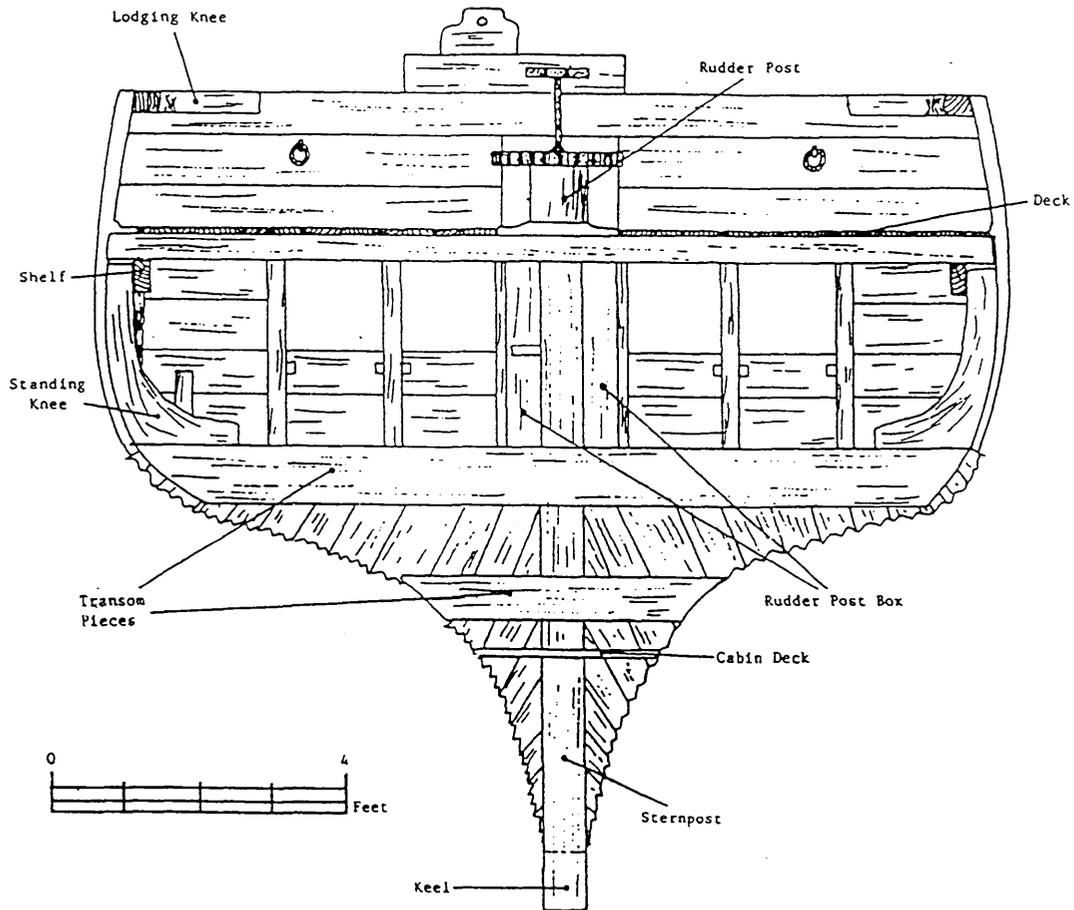


Figure 6: Stern of the *General Butler*, looking forward (drawn by Kevin J. Crisman, 1982).

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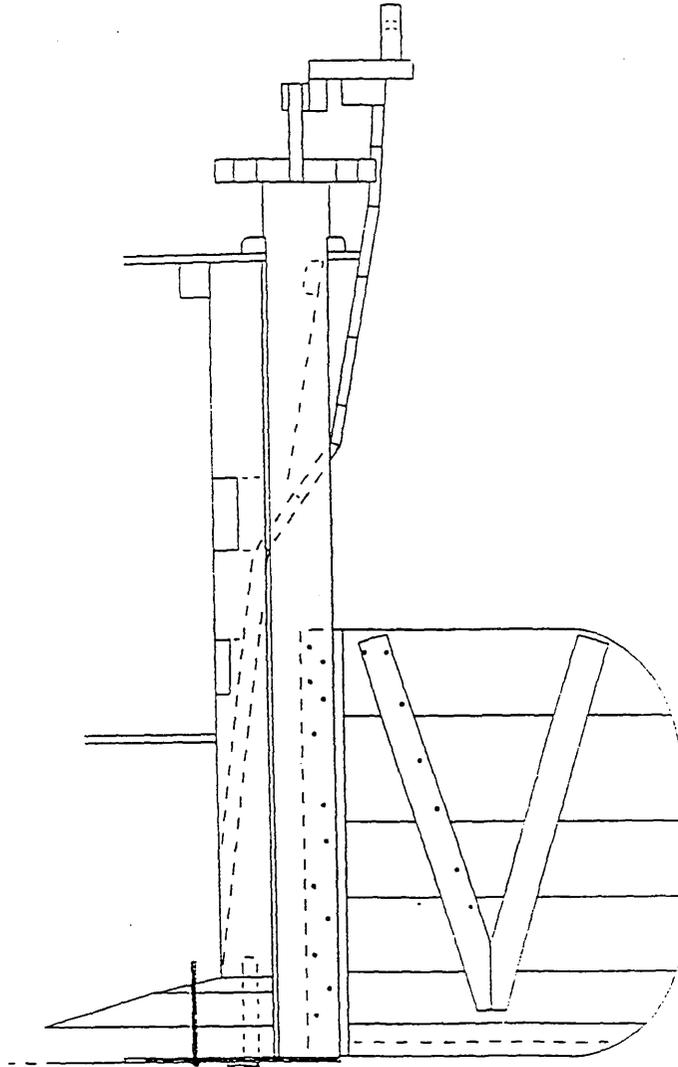


Figure 7: Centerline profile of the *General Butler*'s stern (drawn by Joseph R. Cozzi, 1995).

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*General Butler, shipwreck*  
Chittenden County, Vermont

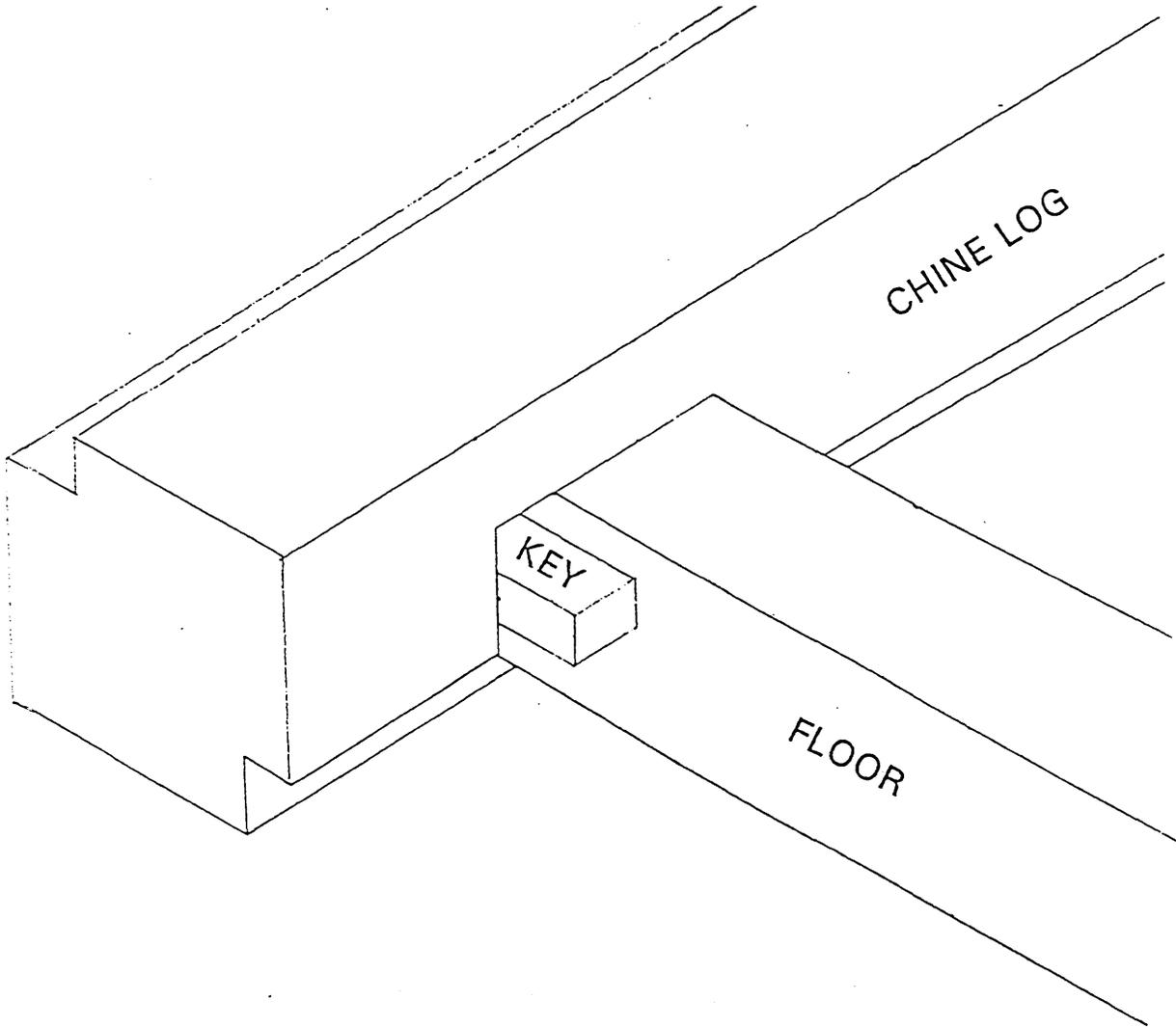


Figure 8: Method of mortising the floors into the chine log of the *General Butler* (drawn by Joseph R. Cozzi, 1995).

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*General Butler*, shipwreck  
Chittenden County, Vermont

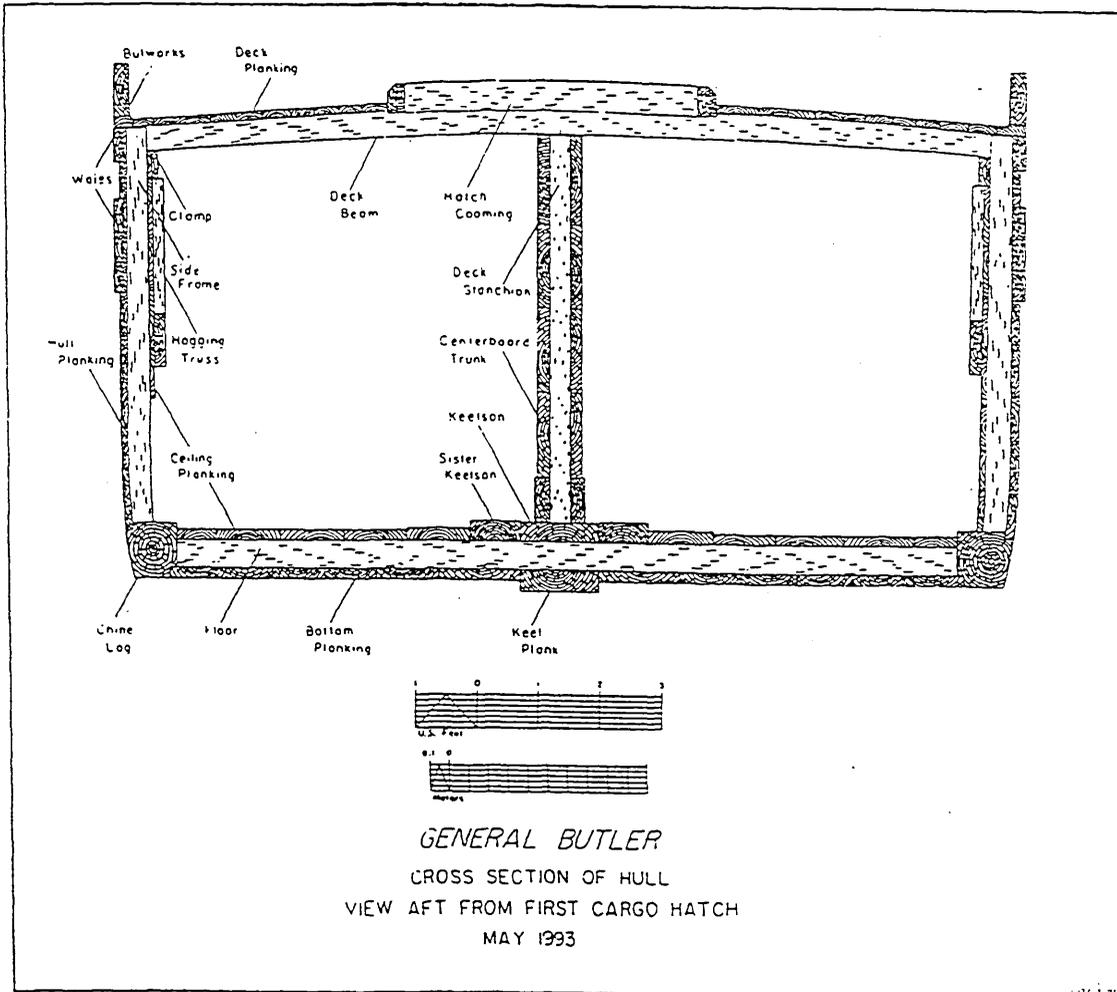


Figure 9: A cross section of the *General Butler* hull, view aft from first cargo hatch (drawn by Joseph R. Cozzi, 1993).

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*General Butler*, shipwreck  
Chittenden County, Vermont

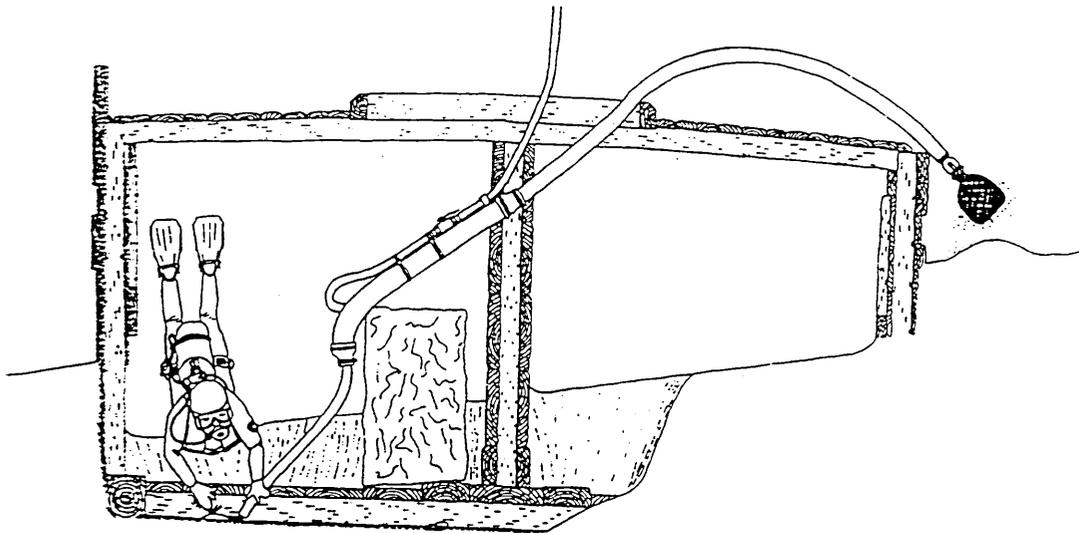


Figure 13: Profile view of the *General Butler* at the after end of the centerboard trunk (drawn by Joseph R. Cozzi, 1995).

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*General Butler*, shipwreck  
Chittenden County, Vermont

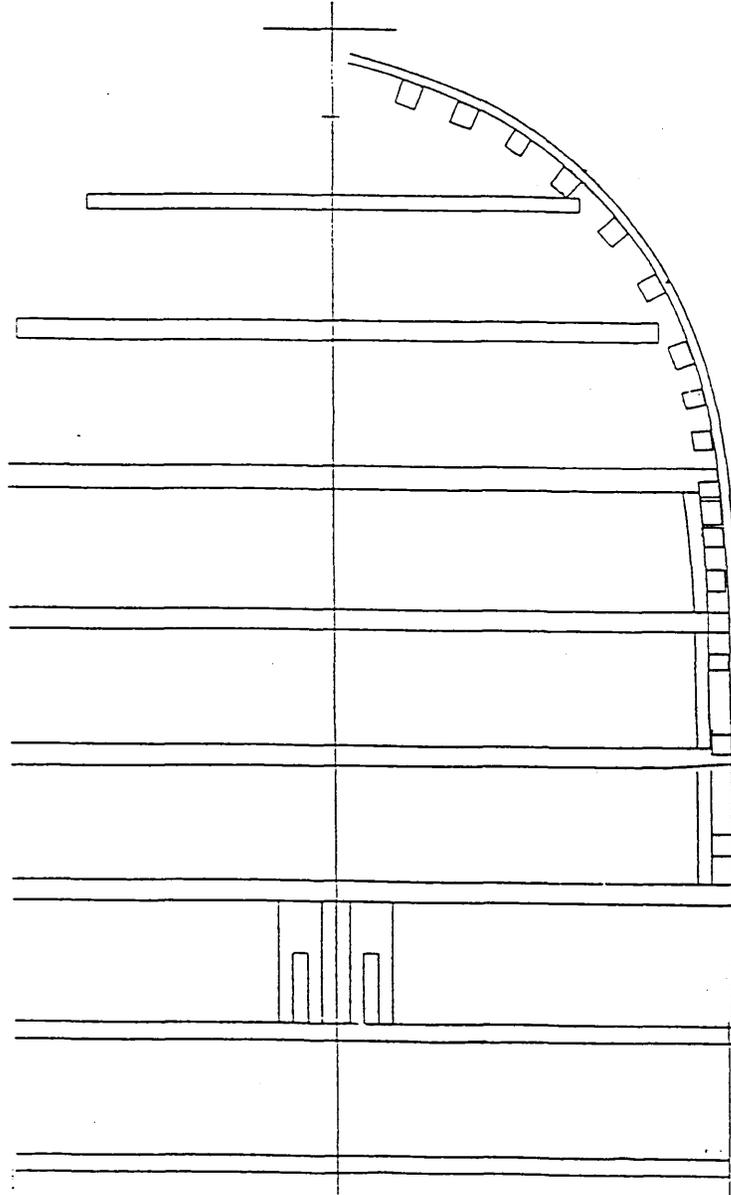


Figure 11: The deck beam spacing in the bow of the *General Butler*  
(drawn by Joseph R. Cozzi, 1995)

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*General Butler, shipwreck*  
Chittenden County, Vermont

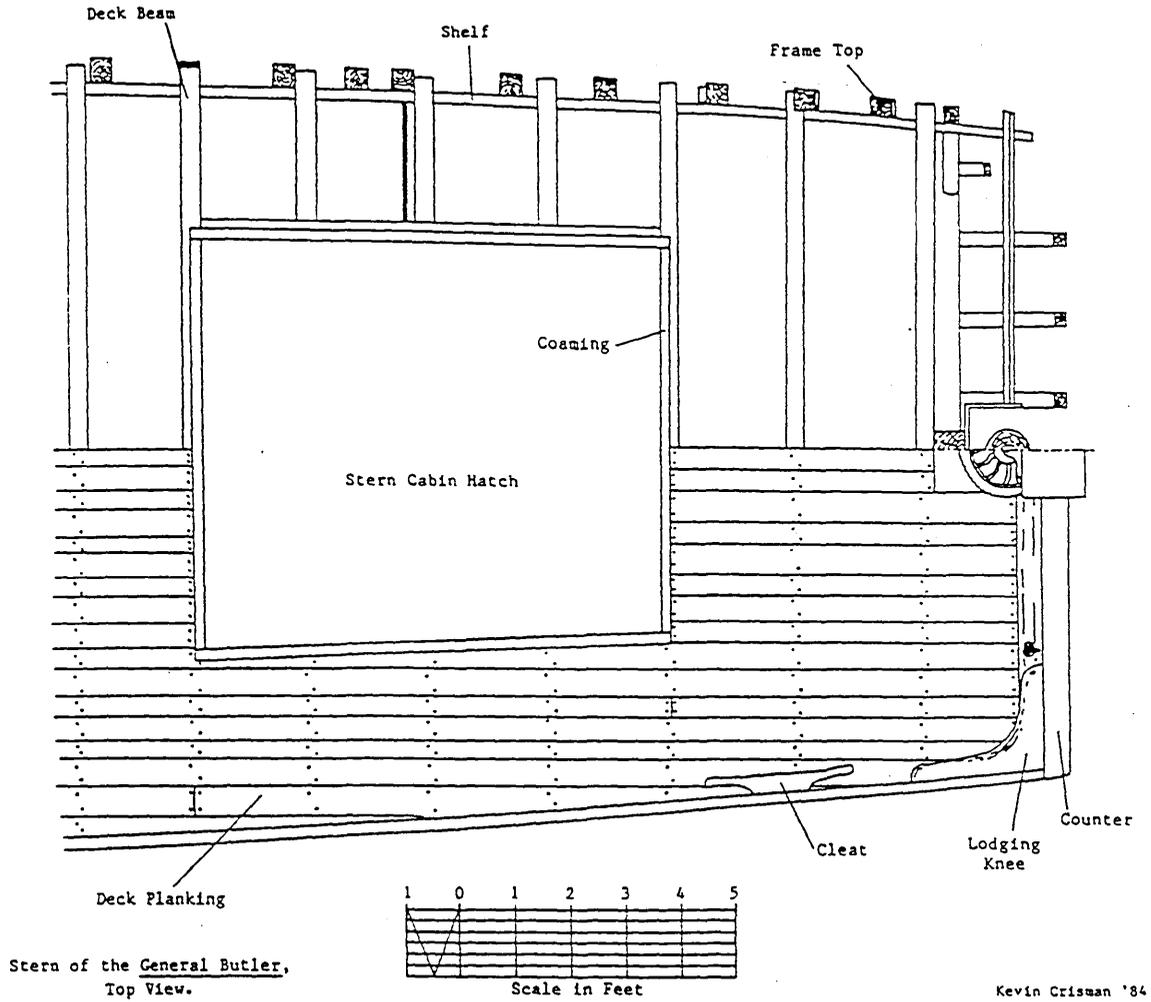


Figure 12: The stern of the *General Butler*, top view (drawn by Kevin J. Crisman, 1984).

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*General Butler, shipwreck*  
Chittenden County, Vermont

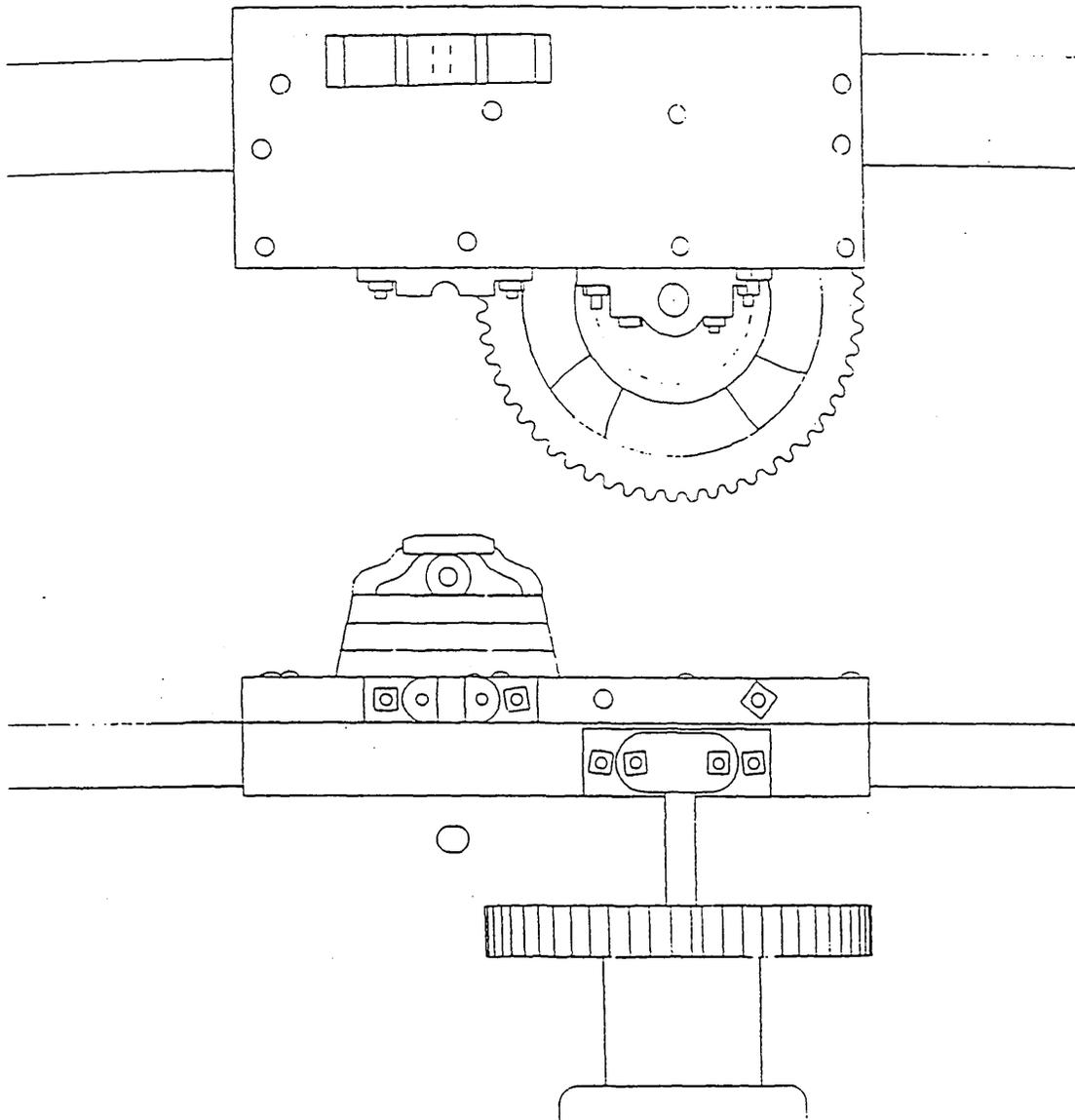


Figure 13: Remains of the *General Butler's* steering apparatus, top and side view (drawn by Joseph R. Cozzi, 1995).

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Archeology: Historic, non-aboriginal
- Architecture
- Maritime History
- Transportation

**Period of Significance**

1862 - 1876

**Significant Dates**

1862  
1876

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Hoskins, John  
Hoskins, Wesley J.

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

General Butler, Shipwreck  
Name of Property

Chittenden County, VT  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 2.88

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	8	6	4	0	9	2	0	4	9	2	5	6	0	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

3 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

4 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Scott McLaughlin, Underwater Archeologist

organization Lake Champlain Maritime Museum date February 20, 1997

street & number RR #3, Box 4092 telephone (802) 475-2022

city or town Vergennes state VT zip code 05491

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

#### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, c/o John Dumville

street & number National Life Building, Drawer 20 telephone (802) 828-3051

city or town Montpelier state VT zip code 05620-1501

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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*General Butler*, Shipwreck  
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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### *Summary*

The shipwreck of the *General Butler* is eligible for National Register listing under criteria A, C, and D. The areas of significance within these criteria are archaeology, architecture, maritime history and transportation. The *General Butler* fulfills all the aspects and qualities under each criteria and demonstrates an importance within local, state and national history.

Criteria A: Sailing canal boats were an important element in the North American transportation network during the nineteenth century; although the story of these humble craft has long been overshadowed by the steamboat and railroad. Sailing canal boats were able to move large, heavy, bulky cargoes from a lake port to a canal or river port relatively quickly and cheaply without the need to transfer the cargo to a standard canal boat. Sailing canal boats were built in New York, Vermont and Eastern Canada. The vessels were used mainly to transport material through the Champlain Valley and its connecting canal systems. Lake Champlain played a major role in linking the Eastern Canadian, Great Lakes and New York City markets. Sailing canal boats were in use in the Champlain Valley from 1823 to about 1900, but their construction peaked between 1845 and 1875, and then declined in the following decades as the railroads consolidated their hold on the inland transportation system.

Criteria C: The *General Butler* embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and method of construction used during the nineteenth century. The *General Butler* is a Lake Champlain sailing canal schooner of the 1862 class. The vessel was built using a chine log construction technique. This construction technique was commonly practiced by American boat builders for many different types of vessels; and was the predominant construction technique used to build sailing canal boats.

Criteria D: The archaeology and historical research conducted to date on the *General Butler* has yielded a tremendous amount of information about the construction, function, operation and life aboard sailing canal boats. By no means has this research been exhausted. There still remains a large amount of data still to be analyzed and a large section of the vessel that has not been excavated or documented.

United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation Sheet*General Butler*, Shipwreck  
Chittenden County, VTSection number   8   Page   2  *Archaeology*

Since the discovery of the *General Butler* in 1980 by the Champlain Maritime Society (CMS), the vessel has been under sporadic investigation by archaeologists. Most of the vessel above the mudline has been documented, but relatively little of the vessel that lies under the bottom sediments has been uncovered and documented. The *General Butler* has yielded and is likely to yield more significant information about the construction, function, operation and life aboard a sailing canal boat. This information is made possible as a result of the vessel's quick, but gentle sinking. The people aboard were unable to remove anything before they abandoned the vessel. This type of site has allowed archaeologists to view the ship's contents, condition and organization at the exact moment of the vessel's sinking.

*Architecture*

The *General Butler* is one of thousands of sailing canal boats that once were involved in the commercial carrying trade on Lake Champlain. The *General Butler* is a largely intact example of a Lake Champlain sailing canal schooner of the 1862 class. The *General Butler* was the first vessel built of this class and is an excellent example of a sailing canal boat from the end of Lake Champlain's commercial period. The vessel represents the finest features of sailing canal boats developed by local shipbuilders. The vessel was constructed in the Hoskins and Ross Shipyard in Essex, New York. The shipyard was owned and operated by John Hoskins, Wesley J. Hoskins and John Ross. These master shipwrights produced a large number of vessels of varying sizes and types during the nineteenth century and played an important role in the design, construction and repair of lake craft.

*Maritime History/Transportation*

Maritime law required all commercial sailing vessels to register with the local collector of customs. The *General Butler*'s first owners filed registration papers while the ship was under construction at the shipyard in Essex, New York. Each time the *General Butler* changed hands, the new owners added documents of ownership to a file that was ultimately sent to the National Archives in Washington, DC. These registration papers, similar to the title documents now used to register an automobile, identify the *General Butler* as either an "L&C Boat" or as a "Lake & Canal Boat." The vessels surrender papers, filed for all vessels lost on the lake, describe her as a "Schooner rigged Lake & Canal Boat." These descriptions and the physical evidence suggest that the *General Butler* represented a hybrid vessel that functioned

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both as a sailboat and as a canal boat. This type of vessel is today described as a sailing canal boat.

The sailing canal boat was essential to the commercial trade on Lake Champlain, which connected the Canadian, New York City and Great Lakes' markets. These wooden vessels carried millions of tons of cargo each year from 1823 to about 1900. The sailing canal boat played an important role in the local Champlain Valley economy and the greater economies of the United States and Canada. The *General Butler* was part of this commercial activity from 1862 to 1876.

Edwin Langdon and Jabez Rockwell of Alburg, Vermont, ordered the construction of the *General Butler*. Langdon, a merchant, was only an investor in the vessel. Rockwell descended from a family that had produced over a dozen lake mariners including Captain Ell Barnum Rockwell, who worked on vessels on Lake Champlain until he was ninety-eight years old. Ell also reportedly had a financial interest in this new vessel.

The new vessel was christened the *General Butler*, after General Benjamin Franklin Butler (1818-1893). Butler, a Union officer, had become a national hero for his efforts in the victory at New Orleans. Butler was a Massachusetts lawyer and a politically appointed general. Ironically Butler later became embroiled in a serious squabble with Vermonters. In August 1862, he alleged that Vermont's 7th infantry had exhibited cowardice behavior at the Battle of Baton Rouge (Benedict 1888:2, 6-45).

The *General Butler* had to compete with the railroad network developing throughout the Champlain Valley. The vessel had three owners during its fifteen year career on Lake Champlain. The *General Butler's* second owner, Julius Rugar of Plattsburgh, New York, owned a number of vessels during his long career on the lake (Plattsburgh Daily Press 1903).

The *General Butler's* final owner and captain was William Montgomery. Montgomery had a reputation as a "rough and ready old fellow," who would venture out of port when others chose not to travel. This rashness led to a number of close calls and misadventures during Montgomery's long working life. Both Montgomery's sons, William and John, followed their father into the lake trade. Montgomery survived the wreck of the *General Butler* in 1876 and lived to the age of ninety-two. He died in 1922, after witnessing the steady decline in lake commerce in which he worked for fifty years (Julian Rockwell, personal communications with Marshall M. True, 1981).

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Toward noon on Saturday, December 9, 1876, heavy winter gales drove the *General Butler* toward the north end of the Burlington breakwater. The vessel carried a load of thirty tons of marble from Isle La Motte for delivery to the Burlington Manufacturing Company Marble Works. Onboard were Captain William Montgomery, one deck hand, Montgomery's teenage daughter and a school girlfriend, and Elisha R. Goodsell, a quarry operator from Isle La Motte. The girls planned to do some Christmas shopping in Burlington. Goodsell was traveling to get medical treatment for an eye injury he had suffered while hammering a piece of steel (BFPT 1876a).

The strength of the storm was too much for the steering mechanism of the aging *General Butler*. Just off the breakwater, the vessel began to drift at the mercy of the winds and waves. The storm was apparently severe. A reporter noted:

Winter wasn't satisfied with merely leaving his card this time, but came himself and took possession of the whole earth...Experienced sailors declare they have seldom seen the weather so rough, and certain it is that persons who were out on the lake wish never to do so again (BFPT 1876a).

The situation of Captain Montgomery and the *General Butler* is an example of some of the commercial realities of boating on Lake Champlain in the nineteenth century. Economic necessity drove commercial sailors to brave the Champlain Valley's worst weather to carry their cargo. As long as the lake remained reasonably free of ice, some courageous captains risked cold water, freezing temperatures and frostbite to make one last trip before winter. In this voyage of early December, Montgomery and his crew expected a routine delivery; although, they certainly understood the risks of the season. Sailors in 1876 had none of the benefits of radar, weather forecasting or radio communications; instead they relied on their experience in scanning the sky to predict the weather. Montgomery had miscalculated.

As the *General Butler* drifted southward, the deck hand threw over a storm anchor in a futile attempt to keep the vessel from crashing into the breakwater's stone-filled wooden cribs. Meanwhile, Captain Montgomery rigged a spare tiller bar onto the ship's steering gear to give him some control of the crippled vessel. With the tiller bar chained in place, Montgomery ordered the anchor line severed with an ax. He attempted to run around the southern end of the breakwater, but failed to make it. A reporter noted:

A little way beyond the southern lighthouse she struck and all hands made haste to land on the breakwater. So tremendous was the force of water that with each

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wave the schooner would be actually sent higher than the breakwater; and alternately sinking, each plunge in the trough of the sea would seem to be the last. To land on the breakwater the members of the party were obliged to jump from the schooner when it was on the crest of the wave; and the undertaking required a leap of some eighteen feet (5.5 m) on to a mass of large rough stones covered with ice. All, however, made the perilous essay with little or no injury, save Mr. Goodsell, who struck on his head and was knocked senseless, and was afterward found to be quite severely cut and bruised (BFPT 1876a).

The *General Butler* survived the pounding of the gale long enough for passengers, crew and captain to leap to the ice covered breakwater. Captain Montgomery was the last to leave the ship. Immediately after he jumped at the crest of a large wave, the *General Butler* sank in 35 ft (10.7 m) of water, its stone cargo taking it quickly to the bottom. Although the passengers and crew escaped riding the *General Butler* to the lake's bottom, they found themselves on the open breakwater being soaked by heavy waves and whipped by fierce winds and driving snow. Chilled and exhausted, the refugees from the *General Butler* might have died had it not been for James Wakefield and his son, Jack. Although dozens of lake mariners had flocked to the wharves in response to the *General Butler's* plight, only the Wakefields acted. They seized a small government lighthouse boat and rowed out to the breakwater. Captain Montgomery threw his daughter and her young friend into James Wakefield's arms. As scores of people watched from shore, the groggy Goodsell, the deck hand and finally Captain Montgomery clambered into the bobbing rescue craft. Wakefield and his son rowed them safely to shore (BFPT 1876a).

Bystanders took the chilled survivors to J. Sullivan's house on Battery Street where Dr. H. H. Langdon examined them. Shortly all were pronounced out of danger. The *Burlington Free Press* commented on December 12: "It was Miss Montgomery's first trip in her father's boat, but she showed a goodly degree of Yankee grit, for the first question she asked on returning to consciousness was that she might be allowed to make the return trip when the schooner would be raised" (BFPT 1876b). Although the masts, shrouds, rigging and other equipment were recovered, the salvagers never attempted to raise the hulk of the *General Butler*. Today, the remains of the schooner lie in 35 ft (10.7 m) of water approximately 300 ft (91.5 m) off the Burlington breakwater.

James Wakefield was an adopted Vermonter and his experience had prepared him well for the rescue that December. He had left England at age thirteen and worked as a sailor on many of the world's oceans. He had experienced revolutions, pirate raids, mutinies, storms

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and shipwrecks. He had served on Lord Horatio Nelson's flagship, *Victory*; and after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Wakefield continued in the merchant service for several years. After visiting a brother in Whitehall, New York, Wakefield decided to move to the shores of Lake Champlain. Wakefield sailed back to England to get his wife and they embarked on the return trip to North America on the *Queen of the West*. Off the Newfoundland coast, this ship was overtaken by a hurricane. Fierce winds and violent seas scattered the vessel's rigging about the deck and tore out her masts. The waterlogged rigging and torn masts threatened to capsize the ship. Wakefield took an ax, crept across the deck, cut away the rigging and saved the ship, passengers and crew. In 1857, he settled in Burlington and prospered as a sail maker, rigger and ship chandler (Stone 1929:336-337).

Sailing canal boats are a significant vessel type in the maritime history of the United States and in the development of nineteenth century transportation. They filled a need that enabled the transport of large, bulky cargoes relatively quickly and cheaply in the age of American expansion.

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The *General Butler* is setting upright in 35 ft (10.7 m) of water in Lake Champlain on the eastern side of Burlington Bay, Burlington, Vermont. The vessel is approximately 400 ft (122 m) northwest of the extreme southern end of the Burlington breakwater and 3350 ft (1021 m) south of the extreme northern end of the breakwater.

Latitude: 44° 28.28' N

Longitude: 73° 13.68' W

A circle, with a 200 ft (61 m) radius around the *General Butler*, is designated as the outer limits of the site boundary. The shipwreck lies in the center of this circle, which is an area of 2.88 acres (1.17 hectares).

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The *General Butler* sunk to the bottom of the lake upright, retaining all its marble cargo inside its hold. The 200 ft (61 m) radius used as the boundary limit around the wreck will ensure that if any scatter of artifacts associated with the wreck will be included within the site boundaries. A few isolated targets were identified during early surveys of the wreck site, but were not identified adequately to eliminate them from being possibly associated with the wreck. A cargo hatch of the vessel lies approximately 20 ft (6 m) of the port bow of the vessel. The 200 ft (61 m) radius is also the State of Vermont designation as the safety zone around any diver's down flag. The boundary is sufficient to convey the significance of the property.