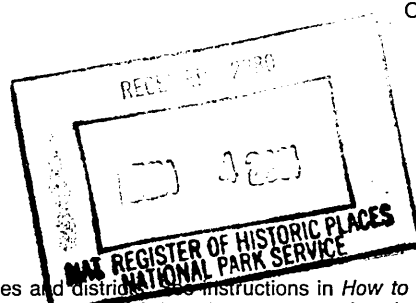


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



133

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. 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 Daniels, Captains Louis and Philomene, House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 50 Macdonough Drive not for publication

city or town Vergennes vicinity

state Vermont code VT county Addison code 001 zip code 05491

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.)

Emily Wadman 5/31/01
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): _____

lpm
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beal 7-11-01

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	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

TRANSPORTATION: water-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls METAL: Aluminum

WOOD: Weatherboard

roof METAL

other

Narrative Description

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

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

MARITIME HISTORY

TRANSPORTATION

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1880-1916

Significant Dates

1887

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Daniels, Philomene

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .34 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 639 120 4892 000
Zone Easting Northing
2

3 Zone Easting Northing
4

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 Liz Pritchett
organization Liz Pritchett Associates date October 2000
street & number 46 East State Street telephone 802-229-1035
city or town Montpelier state Vermont zip code 05602

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 Robert and Debra Lane
street & number 50 Macdonough Drive telephone 802-877-9901
city or town Vergennes state Vermont zip code 05491

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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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Daniels, Captains Louis and Philomene, House
Addison County, Vergennes, Vermont

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Captains Louis and Philomene Daniels House is located at 50 Macdonough Drive in the City of Vergennes, Vermont. The building faces southwest; it has a small front yard and is set back approximately twenty feet from the east side of the street. The vernacular, wood frame, gable roof dwelling was constructed about 1868 as the home of Philomene and Louis Daniels. The Daniels House overlooks Macdonough Park, Vergennes city dock, and the east bank of the Otter Creek. The dwelling is comprised of a one and one-half story, gable front main block, a contemporaneous one and one-half story, gable roof, west side ell, and a two-part shed roof rear appendage that consists of storage space on the north and a one-bay garage on the south. The modest house is important as the home of Philomene Daniels, a person of national and international significance who became the first woman to be licensed as a steamboat pilot. The simple house embodies the thrifty nature of its mistress, yet it belies the true personality of Philomene who was loved for her exuberant and somewhat flamboyant ways, and around whom a fascinating story has emerged to enrich the maritime history of northwest Vermont. The Daniels House retains integrity of setting, location, materials, design, workmanship, association, and feeling.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Daniels House has a wood frame comprised of both sawn lumber, and hand hewn, mortise and tenon framing members. The ell has a slightly lower ridgeline and a more shallow pitch to the gable roof than the main block. A shed roof porch spans both the front of the ell and the front façade of the main block. Wood and aluminum weatherboard siding covers the dwelling; original clapboards are visible on the rear wall of the main block inside the garage. Historic windows include one-over-one, two-over-two and six-over-six, double hung wood sash. Trim details include flat stock wood boards around windows and doors, and a raking eaves with square edged box cornice. Two gable roof dormers are regularly spaced on the front roof slope of the ell. The building rests on a stone foundation, which has been covered with a concrete cap above grade under the ell. The main block has a one-foot crawl space; a three to four foot crawl space exists under the ell. The building has a standing seam, sheet metal roof. A brick chimney with a square cap projects from the upper right corner of the rear roof slope of the ell.

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Daniels, Captains Louis and Philomene, House
Addison County, Vergennes, Vermont

Section number 7 Page 3

REAR (NORTHEAST) ELEVATION

The rear, gable end of the main block is visible above the rear shed. The gable wall has aluminum, weatherboard siding, a six-over-six window with an aluminum storm centered in the wall and a small, metal, louvered vent in the gable peak. The rear wall of the attached shed is sheathed in wood, weatherboard siding. A small, square opening just above the foundation at the north end of the elevation serves as a dog door for access to the inside of the shed.

SIDE (SOUTHEAST) ELEVATION

The main block has aluminum weatherboard siding that is barely visible during warm months due to a heavy cover of vines. Two, two-over-two windows with aluminum storms are regularly spaced across the façade; two shorter, similar windows and storms are located in the second story kneewall directly above the first story windows. The garage has wood, weatherboard siding and the roof eaves have exposed rafter tails. The garage bay contains a modern, wood, twelve panel, overhead garage door with a glass pane in the center top panel.

INTERIOR

The interior floor plan appears generally intact, retaining its historic room configuration and features. The main block consist of a living room in the front, and a small room used as a music room in the back that contains a piano and organ. The living room is accessed by a main entrance door in the northwest wall off the porch and by an interior door in the wall between the main block and ell. At the back of the living room along the northwest wall of the main block, a narrow set of wood stairs with a new wood handrail leads to the second floor. The ell contains a kitchen immediately inside the entrance door from the ell porch. Some historic beadboard kitchen cabinets remain among modern plywood cabinets. The chimney is exposed along the gable end wall. A door in the rear wall of the kitchen leads to the attached shed. The southeastern half of the ell contains a dining room / office in the front, and a bathroom at the rear. The first floor has painted softwood flooring, painted T-111 wall paneling and acoustical tile ceilings. Due to age, the house has settled over time on its foundation, and some door frames have shifted somewhat to form parallelograms.

The second floor contains the stair hall in the north corner. The southeastern side comprises the living areas with a bathroom at the rear, a bedroom in the center and a master bedroom in the

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Daniels, Captains Louis and Philomene, House
Addison County, Vergennes, Vermont

Section number 7 Page 2

FRONT (SOUTHWEST) ELEVATION

The front elevation of the main block is sided with aluminum weatherboards. The historic, one-by-three bay porch that spans the façade has exposed rafters, a match board ceiling, board deck, and chamfered posts. New porch features include the board railing with diagonal bracing, and a vinyl, diagonal lattice skirt. A c. 1950, metal hood extends over the southeast (end) bay of the porch. A c. 1970 picture window is centered in the façade and an historic two-over-two double hung window with a modern aluminum, triple track, exterior storm window is centered above in the second story front gable. A small, square, metal, louvered vent is located in the gable peak.

The three-bay front façade of the ell has aluminum weatherboard siding. The one-by-three bay shed roof porch across the front of the ell is similar to that on the main block except that the railing no longer remains. The porch has exposed rafter tails, matchboard ceiling, board deck, and chamfered posts. A new, diagonal lattice screen infills the end bay at the northwest side of the porch. Two wood steps lead up to the porch deck. On the façade a centrally placed door has an historic, Christian cross, six panel door with four glass lights in the upper panels and two, vertical, recessed panels below. The door has a new, aluminum storm door. The door is flanked by a one-over-one, double hung window on the left, and a paired, one-over-one window on the right. The gable roof dormers in the roof above have aluminum weatherboard siding and six-over-six, double hung windows with aluminum storms.

SIDE (NORTHWEST) ELEVATION

Both main block and ell have aluminum, weatherboard siding on this side elevation. The main block has an entrance door centered in this side elevation. The door has four horizontal lights above a single, raised, bottom panel, and a wood, screen door has a single, raised, bottom panel. The front porch on the main block, with its chamfered posts, diagonal board railing and vinyl skirt wraps around to this elevation to meet the porch fronting the ell. The northwest side (gable end) of the ell contains a one-over-one window with an aluminum storm slightly offset to the right of center, and a similar window is centered in the gable above. Vertical boards directly below the second story window are infill for a former door opening, which opened onto a set of exterior stairs that no longer exist. The northwest side elevation of the rear shed has wood, weatherboard siding and no window or door openings.

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Continuation SheetDaniels, Captains Louis and Philomene, House
Addison County, Vergennes, VermontSection number 7 Page 4

front. The stair hall wraps around to the northwest wall of the main block where it connects with a large bedroom in the ell second story. The second floor has softwood flooring, bedrooms have historic, four and six-panel doors, and historic plaster may remain under wallpaper.

SETTING

The Daniels House rests on a gentle westerly slope of land on a .34 acre lot overlooking Macdonough Drive, Macdonough Park and Otter Creek. The house is sited near the front of its rectangular lot. A grass yard extends across the front of the house and wraps around to the southeast side where a gravel driveway leads from Macdonough Drive to the garage and a small parking area at the end of the drive. A concrete sidewalk with two steps at the city sidewalk leads to the front of the ell porch. Another concrete walk, this one inlaid with large pieces of slate, extends from the southeast end of the main block porch along the side of the house to the garage. The yard is attractively landscaped with shrubs, mature trees, and flower beds edged with stone walls. A split rail fence parallels the northwest side of the lot from the city sidewalk to the rear of the attached shed. A stone retaining wall, at a high bank of land along the property line at the opposite side of the lot, borders the southeast side of the driveway. The backyard is enclosed with wire fencing which creates a dog run for the owners' two dogs.

The views from the Philomene and Louis Daniels House of Otter Creek and the area around the city dock are significant for their association with Philomene Daniels and her career as a steamboat pilot. From the house, Philomene could look down on the creek and her boats that were tied up at the dock when not in use by herself, her husband or two sons who were all licensed to operate the vessels in the Daniels Boat Line. The city dock and surrounding associated waterfront resources are within the boundaries of the Vergennes Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Two resources adjacent to the dock that are contributing to the district are Myer's Warehouse and Bellamy's Distillery, both c. 1825, Federal style, two and one-half story, brick, commercial buildings.

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Daniels, Captains Louis and Philomene, House
Addison County, Vergennes, Vermont

Section number 8 Page 1

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

The Captains Philomene and Louis Daniels House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. From 1880 to 1916 the Daniels Boat Line operated a successful family business from the city dock on Otter Creek. Four steamboats captained by Louis, Philomene, their two sons, Fred and Mitchell, and daughter-in-law, Helen Lavigne Daniels transported passengers and freight down the seven-mile length of Otter Creek to Lake Champlain connecting with ports in Vermont and New York. Under Criterion B the Daniels House, built around 1868, is significant as the home of Philomene Daniels who is important as the world's first licensed female steamboat pilot. Philomene Ostiguy dit Domingue Daniels was, according to one historian, "the most colorful and picturesque figure in the history of steamboating on the Otter Creek".¹ Although the Daniels House is modest and vernacular in style and form, the property is significant on the local, state and national level for its historic associations with maritime history, transportation, and entertainment / recreation.

VERGENNES HISTORY

Early settlers arrived in Vergennes in the 1760s but the population did not expand substantially until after the Revolution when peaceful settlement was possible. By 1787 it was evident that the falls, with its milling and shipping activities was very different from outlying agricultural communities. Acting on these advantages, in 1788 residents of the three bordering towns of Panton, Ferrisburgh and New Haven agreed to give up a portion of their land to establish a separate village on the Otter Creek falls.²

Vergennes is located on an old Indian trail that ran from Canada to Long Island Sound. The basin below the falls was a convenient place to ford the often turbulent Otter Creek. By 1764 a sawmill had been completed there. Vergennes was formally incorporated as a city in 1788, making it the third oldest incorporated city in New England. The name of Vergennes was suggested by Ethan Allen to honor the Comte de Vergennes, French minister of foreign affairs and negotiator of the Treaty of Paris.

¹ Vincent 17.

² *Addison County* Book 243.

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Otter Creek is Vermont's only navigable stream. It drops 37 feet in Vergennes - the last fall before reaching Lake Champlain. This waterpower and access to the lake provided the basis for the economic growth of Vergennes throughout the nineteenth century. Its location as a crossroads settlement at the intersection of the Rutland and Burlington stage road (now Vermont Route 7) and the Whitehall, New York to Vergennes stage road (Vermont Route 22A) was also advantageous to commercial development.

Vergennes prospered and grew into a manufacturing and trading center for the surrounding agricultural towns. Local industries included the Monkton Iron Works, a furniture factory, shipbuilding, window sash manufacturers, and a window shade roller company. As the small city grew, its need for a market for its products and to obtain commodities for the city and region were met by the railroad which arrived in 1849, sailing vessels on the lake, and barges on the creek that were towed the seven miles by mule teams. By mid-century steamboats brought the era of the mule teams to an end.

The area that is now called Macdonough Park is the site of early shipbuilding activities in Vergennes. The park marks the spot where Commodore Thomas Macdonough built the fleet with which he defeated the British at the Battle of Plattsburgh in 1812 on Lake Champlain. Around 1813 Hudson River boatman and merchant, Jahaziel Sherman, moved to Vermont and bought the land below the falls for his boat building site. He leased the shipyard to Lake Champlain Steamboat Co., which soon prospered in the shipping industry.³ By 1823 four lake steamers had been built on the site.⁴ The Vergennes basin became particularly active after 1823 when the Champlain Canal was opened, connecting Lake Champlain to the Hudson River. Many sloops and steamships were docked in the basin.

By the early decades of the twentieth century, the various industries that once thrived on the waterpower of the Vergennes falls had closed, the steamboats that traveled Otter Creek had gone, and growth in Vergennes slowed.

MARITIME HISTORY

Philomene and Louis Daniels, like many residents of Vermont during the second half of the nineteenth century, were of French Canadian descent. Philomene Ostiguy dit Domingue⁵ was born on September 14, 1843 in St. Mathias, Quebec. She had descendants from the Basque

³ GEOARCH, Inc. 11.

⁴ Ibid. 3.

⁵ The name Ostiguy was changed to Austin after Philomene and her family moved to Vermont.

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region of southwestern France. In the 1850s she moved with her family to Vergennes. Philomene was married to Louis Daniels, Jr. in 1862. Louis, born in 1833 in Panton, Vermont was the son of a French-Canadian stone mason, and his wife, Mary, was reputed to be an Indian princess.⁶ Philomene and Louis had two sons, Fred and Mitchell.

Louis first worked in factories by the Vergennes falls and later entered into a maritime career when he landed jobs on some steamboats on Lake Champlain. In 1869 he was employed on the small steamboat called the *Water Lily* and by 1877 had secured licenses as Chief Engineer, pilot and master. That same year Louis and a partner Sam Ives bought the *Water Lily*. Three years later Louis bought out his partner for one hundred fifty dollars and established the Daniels Boat Line. The Daniels Boat Line operated out of the basin at the foot of the Vergennes falls of the Otter Creek where the city dock is now located.

The Daniels line ran daily and carried freight and passengers on Otter Creek and across Lake Champlain from Vergennes to Westport, New York, with stops along the way. It provided connecting service with the north-south trains that ran on the New York side of Lake Champlain.

Philomene's interest in boating began to manifest itself after she decided to go with her sons who were helping their father on board, rather than stay at home. After a few months on the water she asked her husband if she could try her hand at the wheel. She knew at once that she wanted to be a pilot.⁷ After that she and Louis worked together.

Philomene achieved her goal to learn to be "as good a pilot as any man."⁸ She became an experienced and skilled navigator by the time she passed the rigorous test before the inspectors for her license as a steamboat pilot. Along with her navigation skills she was tested for color blindness and other defects of vision.

On April 6, 1887 Philomene A. Daniels was issued her second class pilot's license to operate a steamboat. She then became the first woman licensed to operate a steamboat in the world. ⁹ Her new, unique role made the news, and *The Burlington Free Press & Times* of May 5, 1887 reported that Philomene was "undoubtedly the first woman to receive a pilot's license in this country, if not in the world..."¹⁰

6 Sheldon Museum.

7 Vincent 18-19.

8 Vergennes 200 Years 5.

9 National Archives facsimile.

10 Vincent 19.

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Daniels, Captains Louis and Philomene, House
Addison County, Vergennes, Vermont

Section number 8 Page 4

After Philomene was issued her license she and Louis bought their second vessel, *Little Nellie*, so they could each have a boat to captain. Philomene most often piloted the *Little Nellie*, which primarily operated as an excursion boat on Lake Champlain. She affectionately became known as Captain Phil. Her life was full of adventure. She captained the boats through storms and gales on the lake and down the challenging channel of the Otter Creek.

The Daniels Line eventually had four vessels in operation – The *Water Lily*, *Little Nellie*, the *Victor*, and the *Alexander*. The *Water Lily*, the first vessel acquired by Louis, was purchased in 1877. According to local history, the 45-foot long *Lily* was built in 1864.¹¹ Louis operated the boat for twenty years and sold it in 1897.¹² *Little Nellie*, built in 1875, was the second vessel acquired by Louis.¹³ He paid one hundred fifty dollars for the boat after it had been abandoned in the bottom of the lake following a cyclone in August 1890. The boat was restored and served the Daniels Line for many years. The *Victor*, at 63.2 feet, was built in 1897 by Captain L. Daniels and his sons, Mitchell and Fred. The *Victor* had a capacity of 275 passengers. In 1916 or 1917 it was sold for service as a tugboat, and used to mend the Burlington breakwater.¹⁴ In 1899 the *Alexander*, at 58.6 feet, was built by Mitchell. After its useful life was over, Mitchell, who was known to be as practical as his mother and left nothing to waste, chopped up the boat for firewood.¹⁵

Members of the Daniels family - Louis, Philomene, and their two sons, Fred and Mitchell - all worked on the four boats. Fred, in addition to his job as steamboat captain, also worked for a time as a fireman. Typically three crew members operated each boat, one to fire the boilers, one to cast off and dock the boat, and one at the wheel to navigate.

Philomene was confident in her role as steamboat captain. One newspaper article reported,

Mrs. Daniels says she feels just as “much at home at the wheel as she does in her own home. I know all about a steamer downstairs as well as up, and I could get an engineer’s license just as well as I did the pilot’s only I’d have to wear trousers and I’m not anxious to do that. In this house there are four pilots and three engineers. My husband and two sons have both licenses and I have one.”¹⁶

11 GEOARCH, Inc. 8.

12 Ingham.

13 GEOARCH, Inc. 8.

14 Interview, Vincent.

15 Ibid.

16 Sen. Manderson article.

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Philomene has been described as a strong, determined woman who was not only bluff and aggressive, but also vivacious and merry, with an unorthodox wit and zest for adventure. She is remembered as hearty, a flirt, canny, and thrifty. She was rather small in stature and her feminine side was apparent by her fashionable appearance. She bought most of her clothes in New York and was noted for her stylish long skirts, gold jewelry and fancy hats. Although a woman, she was not to be taken advantage of in her typically male role as ship captain and she commanded the respect of her passengers. Once she was known to have pushed a young man overboard when his behavior began to annoy her and the other passengers. When he climbed back on board, he had a bruised ego but new respect for Capt. Phil.

Louis was a jovial man who loved children. He always carried candy with him, which he distributed to happy children when he went on a walk. He was also known to carry a fat wad of cash because he didn't trust banks (Vergennes had two bank scandals during his lifetime.)¹⁷

Louis died in 1903. Philomene continued to run the line with the help of her daughter-in-law Helen Lavigne, who was married to her son Mitchell. Helen was issued a "special" pilots license on June 11, 1903 and became the second woman steamship captain in the world.¹⁸ Helen had eight children. She is remembered as a refined and vital woman who not only was a skilled steamboat navigator but also was a talented cook and dressmaker. Helen and Mitchell lived next door to Philomene at 52 Macdonough Drive.

In 1908 Philomene married Charles E. M. Caisse, a Vermont blacksmith who like Philomene, had been born in Canada. Around the time that she married Charles, Philomene turned the business over to her son Mitchell and daughter-in-law Helen who continued the Daniels Boat Line until 1916 when competition from railroads and automobiles made it unprofitable.

Charles died suddenly in 1916. Philomene spent the remainder of her life in Vergennes living with her son Fred. She died at home of bronchial pneumonia on October 29, 1929 at age 86. Philomene is buried in St. Peter's Cemetery in Vergennes. The small, flat memorial stone next to her second husband Charles' large monument reads "Philomene A. Ostiguy, wife of C. E. M. Caisse, 1842-1929."¹⁹ This seems a meager epitaph for the woman who distinguished herself as the first female licensed steamboat captain in the world. The many descendants of this remarkable woman who live in Vergennes and out-of-state continue to recall her colorful life as steamboat captain of the Daniels Boat Line.

¹⁷ Vergennes – 200 Years 12

¹⁸ National Archives facsimile.

¹⁹ Date of birth on memorial stone is incorrect. Philomene was born in 1843.

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TRANSPORTATION

The Daniels Steamboat Line operated from 1877 to 1916. The boat line ran daily during the shipping season from June to October. The steamboats carried freight and passengers on Otter Creek and across Lake Champlain, from Vergennes, Whitehall and Isle La Motte to Westport and Port Henry on the New York side. Occasional additional stops along the way included Hickock's Point, Ft. Cassin, Kimball's, Mile Point and Basin Harbor on the Vermont side, and Higginson's Harbor and Barn Rock in New York. The boats provided connecting service with the north-south trains that ran on the New York side of Lake Champlain. Horse drawn stages also met the boats at Westport. In addition, the Daniels Line towed canal boats on Otter Creek between the lake and the factories at the falls seven miles away. The freight that was transported by steamboat and canal boat included coal, iron ore, molasses, sugar, salt and liquor.

A notice distributed in June 1895 provided the following timetable.²⁰ *Little Nellie* and *Water Lily* ran between Vergennes and Westport daily, leaving Vergennes at 9:00 AM and arriving in Westport to connect with the train going south. The return trip from Westport at 3:20 PM, on the arrival of the line boat, arrived in time to connect with the evening train for Boston or New York. In addition the flyer stated that the steamers "will touch at any point on the route to land passengers, or when signaled."

By the early twentieth century, the lake trade had declined due to increased use of the railroad, the automobile and trucking. Today ferries and steamers no longer operate on Otter Creek, and pleasure craft are the only boats in use on the waterway.

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

The Daniels Boat Line was primarily a commercial operation for moving freight and passengers up and down Lake Champlain and the Otter Creek. The Daniels boats, however, also took passengers on day trips around the lake. Advertisements for the Daniels line boasted that their steamers were available for charter at reasonable prices. Included in their customers were guests at the Westport Inn in Westport, New York. On one such excursion in September 1887, Champ, the elusive monster of the lake was supposedly sighted.²¹

²⁰ Flyer from Bixby Library archives.

²¹ Vincent 20.

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Older residents in Vergennes recall that many romances were sparked during trips on one of the boats in the Daniels Line with Philomene at the wheel. At the end of the season in 1887, testimony of the popularity of excursions with Capt. Phil in the *Water Lily* is found in an article in the *Middlebury Register*.

Daniels and her barge have been in constant demand for pleasure parties and picnics. Probably over 3,000 persons have enjoyed a trip down the creek to camp, picnic, or on regular business during the summer. The uniform care and consideration shown the public, and the assured safety of the *Lily*, has increased confidence of the public in Capt. Daniels, and next season his efficient pilot, Mrs. Daniels, will have additional patrons to favor.²²

After the Daniels Line ceased operations in 1916 due to competition from the automobile and the railroad, the steamboat era came to an end on Otter Creek. Although commercial vessels no longer use the city dock, Vergennes remains a popular port of call for sailboats, motor boats and other pleasure craft. The memory of the famous female ship captain lives on today, however, on Lake Champlain. A touring vessel named the *Philomena D.* is commercially operated out of Westport, New York.

CRITERION A

The Louis and Philomene Daniels House is eligible for the National Register for its associations with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. For nearly four decades, from 1880 to 1916, the Daniels Boat Line made an important contribution to the maritime history of northwestern Vermont. The successful family business transported freight and passengers on the Otter Creek and Lake Champlain. The Daniels vessels were also active in the excursion trade around the lake. Philomene and her daughter-in-law, Helen Lavigne Daniels (married to Mitchell), made significant contributions to woman's history by becoming the first women licensed steamboat captains in the world.

Under Criterion A, the Daniels house is associated with the historic shipbuilding site now called Macdonough Park. On or near this site Louis Daniels and his two sons built two of their boats, the *Alexander* and the *Victor*. The *Alexander* was built on the waterfront; the *Victor* was built in a shed across the road between the two Daniels' homesteads belonging to Louis and Philomene,

²² Middlebury Register, County News, Bixby Library.

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and Mitchell and Helen.²³ Archival research strongly suggests that Jahaziel Sherman first established a shipyard at this location, building the commercial hull that was later converted into the warship Ticonderoga, integral to the victory of the United States during the War of 1812. In addition to its industrial shipyard functions, this waterfront parcel played an important role in regional transportation and commerce throughout the tenure of the Sherman family. During the 1830s to 70s Mosley D. Hall leased the wharf, warehouses and storehouses owned by the Sherman family for his shipbuilding business of transporting goods.²⁴ A brick distillery and three coal sheds on the waterfront were owned and operated by the Daniels Boat Line in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.²⁵

CRITERION B

The Daniels House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion B for its associations with the life of Philomene Daniels, a woman significant in our past. The determination and success of Philomene to become a steamboat captain, when no woman had earned that distinction before her, qualifies Philomene Ostiguy dit Domingue Daniels as a woman who has made a highly significant contribution to our history. Her colorful personality and stories of her adventurous life as she navigated the narrow channel of the Otter Creek and braved storms on Lake Champlain, are valuable additions to maritime lore in Vermont and New York.

The Daniels House was built around 1868. According to the Vergennes Land Records, on January 14, 1867, Lewis Daniels Jr. purchased a small parcel of land and a boat from John Miller of Vergennes. The transaction also allowed Mr. Miller to continue living on "a certain boat now lying upon said premises" for up to two more years".²⁶ The following year, when Louis purchased additional adjacent land to increase the size of his small parcel, the Vergennes Land Records make reference to the "Daniels homestead", which indicates that the house had probably been constructed soon after the original parcel was purchased in 1867.²⁷

The house appears on Beers Map of 1871 in its current configuration as a main block with a north side ell. The two appendages (main block and ell) appear similar in age. Because the appendages each have a substantially different roof pitch, they do not appear to have originally been built together as a house and ell. The owners claim that the main block was built later, so

²³ Vincent interview.

²⁴ GEOARCH, Inc. 10

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Vergennes Land Records, Vol. 8, 258.

²⁷ Ibid. Vol. 8, 433.

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that appendage may have been moved to the site sometime between 1868 and 1871 and joined to the original structure that then became the ell.

The vernacular style, wood frame Daniels House continues to relate to the time when Philomene lived there. Except for the addition of modern aluminum siding and front picture window, the features and form of the building both on the exterior and interior appear generally intact. The house retains its historic double-hung windows, some historic wood panel doors, a brick chimney and two dormers that overlook Otter Creek. Besides its proximity to the waterway, important features of the house that are evidence that Philomene's life revolved around the waterfront are the two dormers in the ell and the front porches which provide clear views of the Otter Creek. From the house Philomene and her family could look down on the wharf to check on their boats that were tied up at night, as well as other vessels that may have been docked there.

The house as Philomene knew it and lived in it continues to read through today. Documentation that Philomene was thrifty in business matters appears evident in the somewhat humble size and detail of the dwelling. The lack of decorative trim corresponds not necessarily to her income, but rather to her thrifty nature. The porches have simple chamfered posts (the diagonal railing is new), and window and door trim on both inside and outside walls are comprised of flat stock boards. The remaining historic kitchen cabinets have bead board paneling, typical of modest working class homes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The rooms are quite small and unassuming. Despite her apparent lack of concern for material things in the domestic arena, Philomene was willing to spend money on clothing, as she is often described as wearing fashionable long skirts, fancy hats, and gold jewelry.

The significant views from the house associated with the historic resources in Macdonough Park at the city dock are not substantially different than they were during the period when the Daniels Boat Line was in operation from 1880 to 1916. On the waterfront, the two, two and one-half story, brick buildings called the Myers Warehouse and Bellamy's Distillery are good examples of Federal style lakeside architecture. Adjacent to the Daniels house, the dwelling at 52 Macdonough Drive that formerly belonged to Mitchell, also remains generally intact. Resources that no longer remain include several, long, rectangular, gable roof, wood frame coal sheds that were located at the dock, and the Thomas Mack Cider Mill formerly located on the site of the gravel parking area on the west side of Macdonough Drive opposite the Daniels house. Traces of the former towpath on the northeast bank of the Otter Creek along which mule teams pulled canal boats to the lake and back, may exist north of the shipyard.²⁸ The city dock was replaced in the 1960s.

²⁸ GEOARCH, Inc. 5

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Daniels House is located on tax parcel no. 250114, 50 Macdonough Drive, Vergennes, Vermont.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Daniels House.