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DANIEL G. PHILBRICK

STEAMBOAT CAPTAIN

Charles C. Ferris
History 300
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DANIEL G. PHILBRICK

STEAMBOAT CAPTAIN

Daniel Philbrick, born in New Hampshire in 1800, grew up in the North. In the 1820's he married Mary Ann King of New Jersey; the couple had a single daughter, Rachel Jennie. The Philbricks moved to Charleston, South Carolina in 1832. By 1836 Daniel was employed as a steamboat captain, carrying goods and passengers on a route which included Augusta, Savannah, and Charleston. In 1842 the family came to Savannah, and by 1849 Daniel had acquired real estate and built a spacious home on Washington Square. Both he and his wife were members of the Lutheran Church, and Mary Ann was particularly active in church affairs. Daniel remained a steamboat captain until 1863, when he sold his real estate, realizing a substantial profit, and probably retired. He died in 1873, his wife in 1886. Their daughter, a writer of modest talent, never married, and so there are no descendants.

DANIEL G. PHILBRICK

STEAMBOAT CAPTAIN

Daniel G. Philbrick was born in New Hampshire¹ in 1800,² spent his early life there, and lived in New England until he reached adulthood. In the late 1820's, Daniel married Mary Ann King, a native of New Jersey.³ Miss King had been born in Belleville on September 11, 1806, and so was six years younger than he.⁴ She was baptized into the Dutch Reformed Church of Belleville,⁵ and had grown up in a religious atmosphere that was to affect her later life. Following their marriage, the couple moved to Charleston, South Carolina,⁶ and by 1832 Mrs. Philbrick had been accepted as a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in that city.⁷ During this period their first and only child, Rachel Jennie Philbrick, was born.⁸ The place of Jennie's birth is not entirely clear; she probably was born in New York, perhaps in transit to Charleston, or else was born in South Carolina shortly after Mrs. Philbrick arrived there.⁹ In either case, it seems likely that Daniel came south at least two years before his wife, for his name appears in a Savannah newspaper, The Georgian, as early as 1830.¹⁰ He apparently came in search of employment, and having secured work in Charleston brought Mary Ann down to live with him. The family lived there until 1842, when they moved to Savannah.¹¹

Like so many New Englanders, Daniel Philbrick was a mariner. He was first mate aboard the Charleston based steamboat Andrew Jackson, until that ship sank on Saturday, the 4th of December, 1830,¹² and by June of 1836 was captain of his own steamer, the Duncan MacRae,¹³ which followed a route from Charleston to Augusta, stopping in Savannah and a few small ports along the way.¹⁴ Although passengers were accepted aboard the Duncan MacRae, she was primarily a freight boat carrying a variety of cargoes, including horses,¹⁵ and sometimes pulling tow boats to provide additional capacity.¹⁶ Her principal cargo was cotton, transported in quantities of up to 800 bales.¹⁷ In Savannah, Captain Philbrick docked his boat at Scott and Balfour's Wharf, where his agent George Haas secured freight and passengers for the vessel.¹⁸

In December of 1837, Captain Philbrick left the Duncan MacRae and became skipper of the steamboat Liberty, continuing to travel the route from Augusta to Charleston, via Savannah.¹⁹ In March 1839 he was selected to command the newly commissioned steamer Sam Jones, sailing a route which included Macon, Charleston, Darien, and Savannah.²⁰ By December of the same year he was captain of the DeRossett, with agent J.A. Fawns, and on December 16th he arrived in Savannah from Augusta, carrying 1247 bales of cotton for J.H. Reid, R.M. Phinizy, and various others.²¹ In 1840 Philbrick commanded the Despatch,²² and by January 1841 was skipper of the Oglethorpe, still under the agent J.A. Fawns, and once again plying the Augusta-Savannah-Charleston route, carrying cotton and other freight.²³ For a brief span in May and June of

1841, Philbrick captained the steam packet William Seabrook,²⁴ formerly commanded by Abram C. King,²⁵ brother of Mrs. Philbrick,²⁶ but by October Captain King was back at the helm.²⁷

During this same year; the Philbricks began preparations for their move to Savannah. In March 1841 Mary Ann and Jennie both traveled from Charleston to Savannah aboard the William Seabrook,²⁸ and in October of that year Daniel made two trips to Savannah, the first aboard the William Seabrook²⁹ and the second aboard the William Gaston.³⁰ By 1842 all arrangements were completed, and the family had settled in Savannah.³¹ Following the move, Daniel resumed his maritime occupation, though it is unclear which boat or boats he commanded. Most likely, he returned to the helm of the steamboat Oglethorpe, continuing to ply the waters of the Savannah River.³² He remained a steamboat master at least until 1860, commanding the Reliance in that year,³³ but may well have retired as early as 1863.³⁴ By 1870 Captain Philbrick definitely had retired.³⁵

The Philbricks commenced their life in Savannah either as renters or as boarders, since Daniel owned no real estate, but by 1847 he was prosperous enough to purchase a lot on St. Julian Street adjacent to Washington Square,³⁶ and the family moved into the house on this property. His financial success continuing, Daniel constructed in 1849 a large new house to replace the older structure,³⁷ and by 1850 the property assessment had jumped \$2000 to a very substantial \$3300.³⁸ This new building is the present day 512-16 East St. Julian Street,³⁹ a box-shaped wooden structure, three stories in height, massive yet refined. Details

include a vee-shaped roof with gables, three rows of shuttered windows across the facade, and twin entrance porches on the second level, each supported by small, square Doric columns, and each accessible by its own staircase. The general appearance is impressive, and certainly its builder was proud of his new home.

The house provided more space than the Philbricks required, and so Daniel was able to supplement the family income by taking in boarders. In 1850 five persons, including Elisha Hager, a grocer, John Cercopoly, a clerk, and Joseph Bourk, a merchant, boarded at the Philbrick residence.⁴⁰ With this additional income, Daniel was able on July 11, 1856 to mortgage from George M. Willett a second piece of real estate, lot number 70, Crawford Ward.⁴¹ Included in the purchase price of \$6500 was the home Willett had built on the property in 1850.⁴² This structure, which stands on Liberty Street between Lincoln and Abercorn, is today 218-20 East Liberty Street.⁴³ Although similar in appearance to the Washington Square house, being a large, boxy, three story building with twin porches, it lacks the refinement of the former, particularly in light of its rather stark stuccoed concrete facade. Nevertheless, the home is quite spacious, and certainly was more than adequate for the Philbricks' needs.

The family lived in their Liberty Street residence for eight years, until 1863, when Daniel sold all of his real estate, perhaps in preparation for retirement. The Washington Square property, sold to James Doyle, brought in \$6000,⁴⁴ while the Liberty Street property was divided and sold as half lots. The

western half was sold to Luke Carson for \$4550,⁴⁵ whereas the eastern half commanded \$6950 from John Kenney.⁴⁶ The transfer of deeds, finalized on April 17, 1863,⁴⁷ netted \$17,000 for the Philbricks. Following the sale, it seems likely that the family moved into a residence owned by Mrs. Philbrick's younger brother, Nicholas King, located on the corner of Hall and Montgomery Streets. By 1870 the Philbricks definitely were sharing this home with the King family,⁴⁸ but in 1873 Nicholas sold the property,⁴⁹ and both families moved into a residence situated at Jones and Drayton Streets.⁵⁰ It was here, in July of 1873, that Daniel Philbrick died.⁵¹

While living in Savannah, both Daniel and Mary Ann were active in the community. They belonged to the Lutheran Church of the Ascension,⁵² and Mary Ann in particular was quite involved with church affairs. During the years of her membership, a majority of the Church ministers resided for at least a season in her home.⁵³ Evidently she was highly regarded by her fellow Lutherans: "Quiet and unobtrusive in her manners, firm and irreproachable in her principles, earnest and energetic in her Christian character, she exerted a powerful influence for good in the congregation."⁵⁴ Mary Ann also participated in charity work. On the 19th of December, 1853, she was elected to serve on the Board of the Female Seaman's Friend Society, a philanthropic organization that maintained a Sailor's Home for disabled or destitute seamen.⁵⁵ In January of 1861 she was elected to the Board of the Savannah Female Asylum,⁵⁶ which supported an orphanage in the city, and in 1863 she was among those who donated clothing

to the Soldiers' Relief Committee.⁵⁷ Daniel was a registered voter in Savannah,⁵⁸ and on several occasions served as a juror in Superior Court. In May of 1855 he defaulted as a Petit Juror,⁵⁹ but in May of 1859⁶⁰ and again in January 1866⁶¹ he served on the Grand Jury of the Chatham County Superior Court. On at least one occasion, the 9th of August, 1866, he attended a meeting of the City Council, presenting a petition requesting payment for a bell which he had loaned to the Young American Fire Company several years before, and which subsequently had been placed in the Bell Tower on Wayne and West Broad Streets.⁶² Whether or not he received compensation is unclear.

Information on the Philbricks' home life is rather scarce. A major event for the family was certainly the move to Savannah in 1842. In July of the following year, Mrs. Philbrick and Jennie, eleven years old, traveled aboard the steamer Cincinatti to Palatka, Florida, returning on July 28.⁶³ The reason for the trip is uncertain; perhaps it was simply a pleasant summer excursion. By 1847 the Philbricks had bought their own home, at 6 Washington Square,⁶⁴ and in 1849 moved into the large new house which Daniel had built on the property. In 1853 Daniel acquired a slave,⁶⁵ probably a domestic to aid Mrs. Philbrick in her housework, who was with the family until 1858.⁶⁶ The summer of 1855 was a time of mourning for the Philbricks, for in August of that year Charles A. King, Mary Ann's nephew, drowned at the wharf below the mill of J. Roberts and Company.⁶⁷ A year after this unfortunate incident, the family moved into their newly acquired home on Liberty Street, and here on Thursday, November 21, 1861,

Mary Ann's older brother, Abram C. King, having lived with the Philbricks only briefly,⁶⁸ died of gangrenous erysipelas at the age of fifty-six.⁶⁹ He, like his younger brother Nicholas,⁷⁰ and like Captain Philbrick himself, had been commander of a steamboat.

By 1863 Daniel had sold all of his real estate. The reason is unclear; perhaps the war had so curtailed commerce that he was forced into retirement, selling his property to support his family. Whatever the explanation, it seems likely that following the sale the Philbricks moved into the household of Captain Nicholas King, where they remained for a number of years. On October 1, 1872, Nicholas P. King, son of Captain King, died, and the funeral was held from the King-Philbrick residence on the corner of Hall and Montgomery Streets.⁷¹ A year later, after Captain King had sold his property, and both families had moved to the corner of Jones and Drayton, Daniel G. Philbrick died of bilious congestive fever.⁷² Having succumbed at home on Monday, July 14, at the age of seventy-three,⁷³ he was buried on Tuesday in lot 981, Laurel Grove Cemetery.⁷⁴ Daniel left no will,⁷⁵ but probably his wife and daughter were financially secure, for in 1870 his personal estate had been valued at \$10,000.⁷⁶

Following her husband's death, Mary Ann, now sixty-six years of age, and Jennie, forty-one, continued to live in the residence of Nicholas King at Jones and Drayton Streets.⁷⁷ Over the next decade they moved successively to Bolton Street,⁷⁸ to Gaston Street,⁷⁹ and finally in 1883 to 59 Gordon Street.⁸⁰ It was here that Mary Ann Philbrick, eighty years old, died from congestion

of the lungs, on Sunday, December 19, 1886.⁸¹ She was buried the next day, beside her husband in Laurel Grove.⁸² Jennie continued to reside with Captain King until his death, at age sixty-nine, in January of 1889.⁸³ She then boarded in a succession of locations, including Charlton Street, Henry Street, Tatnall Street, Liberty Street, and finally Oglethorpe Avenue.⁸⁴ She died at her home, 128 West Oglethorpe, at eleven o'clock Tuesday morning, May 26, 1908, having been ill for only a day.⁸⁵ Services were conducted on Wednesday by the Reverend James Y. Fair, pastor of Independent Presbyterian Church,⁸⁶ and she was buried in the family plot, Laurel Grove Cemetery.⁸⁷

Since Jennie never married,⁸⁸ Daniel Philbrick has no living descendants. Miss Philbrick was an author, however, and some of her work does survive, including three short novels serialized in the Savannah Weekly News of 1879,⁸⁹ 1880,⁹⁰ and 1883,⁹¹ and later issued in complete form in the Morning News Library.⁹² The first of these, Warp and Woof, was written during the Civil War.⁹³ Ladies dressed "in deep purple gauze" with "amethyst ornaments to match the purple-black roses"⁹⁴ attend gorgeous balls escorted by courtly Southern gentlemen. The general tone is a wistful, romantic evocation of aristocratic life in the antebellum South. Through the Years, a sequel to Warp and Woof, portrays Southern home life during and immediately after the War, mixing fact with fiction by including several actual letters from Miss Philbrick's "war correspondence."⁹⁵ The intent of the story, admitted by the author and evident throughout the work, is to help "mitigate the unpleasantness of the 'Late Unpleasantness.'"⁹⁶ Miss Philbrick's

final novel, Desire Wentworth - A Romance of Provincial Times, is set in Puritan New England of 1692. A moralizing, Hawthornish tale, its major thrust is to contrast witch-hunting, fear-ridden Massachusetts with sane and peaceful Charleston, South Carolina. In this, as in her other books, Miss Philbrick is typical of the sentimental school of Southern writers which emerged after the Civil War.

In addition to prose, Jennie also composed verse. This selection, from a "New Year's Address" she penned in 1884, though not especially distinguished, provides a fitting epitaph for her parents, and for herself:

Ah! had those honored shades the power
To visit their old haunts again
And watch unseen that festal hour,
Then walk about their ancient streets,
In which no tracks of theirs remain,
And look on all the wondrous feats
Of late inventing, they had been
Too well astonished ghosts, I ween.⁹⁷

NOTES

¹Death Certificate of Daniel G. Philbrick. Office of Vital Records, Chatham County Health Department; filed by year of death (1873); within year, listed alphabetically.

Sources vary concerning Mr. Philbrick's birthplace; the Chatham County Census of 1850 lists Massachusetts, while the 1860 Census lists New York. As both Mr. Philbrick's Death Certificate and the 1870 Chatham County Census list his birthplace as New Hampshire, I took this to be the most reliable information.

²Death Certificate of Daniel G. Philbrick. Philbrick died in July of 1873, being 73 years of age at the time. Therefore, he must have been born either in 1800, or in the latter part of 1799.

³Death Certificate of Mary Ann Philbrick. Office of Vital Records, Chatham County Health Department.

⁴Savannah Morning News, 29 January 1887, p. 2. From a Memorial notice originally contained in the Newberry (S. C.) Lutheran Visitor.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Death Certificate of R. Jennie Philbrick. Office of Vital Records, Chatham County Health Department. Miss Philbrick died in May of 1908 at age 76. Therefore, she must have been born either in 1831 or in 1832.

⁹Miss Philbrick's Death Certificate lists New York, as does her obituary, appearing in the Savannah Morning News, 27 May 1908, p. 5. The Chatham County Census of 1870 lists South Carolina.

¹⁰The Georgian (Savannah), 4 May 1830, p. 3.

¹¹Savannah Morning News, 29 January 1887, p. 2.

¹²The Georgian (Savannah), 9 December 1830, p. 2.

¹³The Georgian (Savannah), 28 June 1836, p. 3.

¹⁴Daily Georgian (Savannah), 20 October 1836, p. 2.

¹⁵Daily Georgian, 18 March 1837, p. 2.

¹⁶The Georgian, 19 October 1837, p. 3.

¹⁷Daily Georgian, 30 November 1836, p. 2.

¹⁸Daily Georgian, 4 February 1837, p. 2.

¹⁹Daily Georgian, 4 December 1837, p. 2.

²⁰Daily Georgian, 8 March 1839, p. 2.

Daily Georgian, 25 March 1839, p. 3.

²¹Ibid., 17 December 1839, p. 2.

²²Ibid., 27 October 1840, p. 2.

²³Ibid., 19 January 1841, p. 3.

²⁴Ibid., 30 May 1841, p. 3.

²⁵Ibid., 19 January 1841, p. 3.

²⁶Daily Morning News (Savannah), 15 August 1855, p. 2.

²⁷Daily Georgian, 11 October 1841, p. 3.

²⁸Ibid., 14 March 1841, p. 3.

²⁹Ibid., 11 October 1841, p. 3.

³⁰Ibid., 16 October 1841, p. 3.

³¹Savannah Morning News, 29 January 1887, p. 2.

³²Ibid., 15 July 1873, p. 3. This is Daniel Philbrick's obituary. It states that Captain Philbrick commanded the Oglethorpe "for a long time."

³³Directory for the City of Savannah, To Which Is Added A Business Directory for 1860 (Savannah: John M. Cooper and Company, 1860), p. 133.

³⁴Chatham County Deeds, vol. 3-V, pp. 327-30. Located in the Chatham County Courthouse, Superior Court.

³⁵1870 Census of Georgia, Chatham County, City of Savannah, p. 80, no. 503.

³⁶Ward Books, located at the Georgia Historical Society. Catalogued by Ward name, and within the Ward by Lot number. Philbrick's property is Lot 18, Washington Ward.

³⁷Ibid.

38Tax Digest for the City of Savannah, 1849, p. 66.

Tax Digest for the City of Savannah, 1850, p. 62.

Located at the Georgia Historical Society. Listing is alphabetical, by last name.

39Ward Books, Washington Ward, Lot 18.

401850 Census of Georgia, Chatham County, p. 256, no. 454.

41Chatham County Deeds, vol. 3-P, pp. 380-81.

42Ibid.

Ward Books, Crawford Ward, Lot 70.

43Ward Books, Crawford Ward, Lot 70.

44Chatham County Deeds, vol. 3-V, pp. 329-30.

45Ibid., pp. 327-28.

46Ibid., pp. 328-29.

47Ibid., pp. 327-30.

481870 Census of Georgia, Chatham County, City of Savannah, p. 80, no. 503. Where the Philbricks lived from 1863 to 1870 is uncertain. They definitely resided somewhere in Savannah, or at least in Chatham County, since Daniel served as a juror in Chatham County Superior Court during this period (see note 61).

49Chatham County Deeds, vol. 4-P, pp. 94-5.

50Savannah Morning News, 15 July 1873, p. 2. Daniel Philbrick's funeral is held from the residence of Nicholas King, corner of Jones and Drayton Streets.

Death Certificate of Daniel G. Philbrick. Mr. Philbrick died at his residence, Jones and Drayton Streets.

51Death Certificate of Daniel G. Philbrick.

52Mrs. W. G. Gnann, compiler, Records of the Lutheran Church of the Ascension, Savannah, Georgia (Savannah: Daughters of the American Revolution, Lachlan McIntosh Chapter, 1954), pp. 13, 23.

53Savannah Morning News, 29 January 1887, p. 2.

54Ibid.

55Daily Morning News, 21 February 1853, p. 2.

56Ibid., 8 January 1861, p. 2.

57Ibid., 14 April 1863, p. 2.

58Annals of Savannah, 1850-1937, A Digest and Index of the Newspaper Record of Events and Opinions, vol. 4, 1853, pp. 53-4. Original entry appeared in the Daily Morning News, 7 April 1853, missing from the Savannah Public Library collection.

59Daily Morning News, 12 June 1855, p. 2.

60Ibid., 17 May 1859, p. 1.

61Ibid., 28 October 1865, p. 3.

62The Daily News and Herald (Savannah), 10 August 1866, p. 3.

63Daily Georgian, 28 July 1843, p. 3.

64Lot 18, Washington Ward. The present day 512-16 E. St. Julian Street.

65Tax Digest for the City of Savannah, 1854, p. 87. Philbrick is first taxed for one slave over age twelve in 1854; thus, it is likely that the slave was acquired in 1853 or early 1854.

66Tax Digest for the City of Savannah, 1859, p. 155. The slave is taxed through 1858, but from 1859 forward there is no assessment.

67Daily Morning News, 15 August 1855, p. 2.

68Abram King is not listed with the Philbrick household in the 1860 Chatham County Census.

69Death Certificate of Abram C. King. Office of Vital Records, Chatham County Health Department.

70Death Certificate of Nicholas King. Office of Vital Records, Chatham County Health Department. Nicholas was about fifteen years younger than his brother, and fourteen years younger than Mary Ann.

71Savannah Morning News, 2 October 1872, p. 2.

72Death Certificate of Daniel G. Philbrick.

73Ibid.,

74Laurel Grove Cemetery, Savannah, Georgia, General Index to Keepers' Record Books, 1852-1938 (Savannah: Works Progress Administration, 1939), vol. 3. Listing is alphabetical by surname.

75There is no will listed in the Index to Estates, 1742-1955, housed in the Chatham County Courthouse, Court of Ordinary.

76 1870 Census of Georgia, Chatham County, City of Savannah,
p. 80, no. 503.

77 Estill's Savannah Directory for 1874-75, p. 113.

78 Sholes' Directory of the City of Savannah, 1879, pp. 293,
362.

79 Sholes' Directory of the City of Savannah, 1881, pp. 316,
391.

80 Savannah, Georgia, City Directory, 1883, pp. 310, 362.

81 Death Certificate of Mary Ann Philbrick.

82 Laurel Grove Cemetery Index, vol. 3. Alphabetical by surname.

83 Death Certificate of Nicholas King.

84 Sholes' Directory of the City of Savannah, 1890, p. 359.

Sholes' Directory, 1893, p. 370.

Ibid., 1896, p. 363.

Goette's Savannah City Directory for 1905, p. 619.

Death Certificate of R. Jennie Philbrick.

85 Savannah Morning News, 27 May 1908, p. 5.

86 Ibid. I do not know why Miss Philbrick joined the Presby-
terian Church rather than following her parents as a Lutheran.

87 Laurel Grove Cemetery Index, vol. 3.

According to volume 4 of the Laurel Grove Index, Nicholas
and Abram King, with their wives and children, as well as Jennie,
Mary Ann, and Daniel Philbrick, are buried in Lot 981. Only
the graves of Mary Louise King and Rachel King Lincoln, daughters
of Nicholas King, are marked, and these with rather modest stones.

88 There is no marriage record in the Index to Marriage
Licenses, 1806-1957, housed in the Chatham County Courthouse,
Court of Ordinary. Miss Philbrick lived with her parents until
her father's death in 1873 (at which time she was forty-one years
old), and continued to live with her mother until Mrs. Philbrick
died in 1886.

89 Savannah Morning News, 30 January 1879, p. 3.

90 Ibid., 16-April 1880, p. 3.

91 Ibid., 1 May 1883, p. 4.

92 Miss R. J. Philbrick, Warp and Woof, in the Morning News
Library (Savannah: J. H. Estill, 1880-83), no. 13.

Miss R. J. Philbrick, Through the Years, in the Morning
News Library (Savannah: J. H. Estill, 1880-83), no. 3.

Miss R. J. Philbrick, Desire Wentworth. A Romance of Provincial
Times, in the Morning News Library (Savannah: J. H. Estill,
1880-83), no. 17.

93Philbrick, Through the Years, Preface, p. 1.

94Philbrick, Warp and Woof, p. 10.

95Philbrick, Through the Years, Preface, p. 1.

96Ibid.

97Miss R. J. Philbrick, "The New Year's Address," in the Savannah Morning News, 1 January 1884, p. 4.

A Final Note: I was unable to make any determination concerning Daniel Philbrick's ancestry. He is not listed in Jacob Chapman's Philbrick Genealogy. Samuel Philbrick, a Savannah merchant and Captain Philbrick's direct contemporary, is listed in the genealogy. Apparently these men were not related.

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