John Fitch Encyclopedia Article

John Fitch

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Contents

John Fitch Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

John Fitch.....3

John Fitch

1743-1798

American inventor who was one of the steam-boat's developers. Self-educated, Fitch experimented with a steam-propelled boat, constructing a model in 1785 and a steamboat two years later. Plagued by a lack of money and public disinterest, Fitch also struggled to defend his invention's originality when James Rumsey simultaneously developed a jet-propulsion steamboat. Fitch received several state patents and the Patent Act of 1790 was partly a result of the Fitch-Rumsey conflict. Both men were awarded a patent on August 26, 1791.