

iron as a protection for war vessels, and in compliance with the request of this joint board John C. and Edwin A. Stevens wrote them a letter giving their views upon the subject of steamers for coast and harbor defense, stating that their ideas were principally derived from their brother, Robert L. Stevens, then abroad. This letter written August 13, 1841, and before the application of the screw to vessels of war, can be said to embody the leading principles of naval warfare that have since been reduced to practice.

The army officers were Colonels Totten, Thayer and Talcott, and the naval ones Commodores Stewart, Perry and Smith. The targets 4 1-2 inches thick made by Edwin A. Stevens were tested at Sandy Hook by the joint board of officers in the months of September, October and November, 1841. They made an elaborate report unanimously agreeing that the targets fully withstood the numerous shots from the heaviest guns then in the service. It was upon the presentation of this report by the Naval Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives that the act of Congress was passed, authorizing the Secretary of War to contract with Robert L. Stevens, who had then just returned from Europe, for an iron clad steamer, to be "shot and shell proof." The act is as follows:

Chapter XII., (statutes of the United States at Large) April 14, 1842, An Act authorizing the construction of a steamer for harbor defense.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, that the Secretary of the Navy is hereby authorized to enter into contract with Robert L. Stevens for the construction of a war steamer, shot and shell proof, to be built principally of iron, upon the plan of said Stevens. Pro-