

New York Herald
Wednesday Morning, April 9, 1845
New York, New York
Vol. XI, p.2



Further from the Wreck of the Swallow— Recovery of Several Bodies—Numbers Supposed to be Lost.

By the Albany and Hudson steamboats, arrived this morning, we have some further information in regard to the loss of the *Swallow*.

We give below all the particulars we have received this morning.

Our accounts differ in regard to the number of lives lost—*some say fifty, others a hundred. It will be impossible to ascertain with exactness how many are lost, as the passengers were probably not all booked.* Several bodies have been recovered.

Among the saved is Mr. M. G. Lenghi, a merchant of this city. After a great effort, he succeeded in reaching the shore.

We learn that the four Sisters of Charity were supposed to be on board the *Swallow*. They were from Albany to visit this city.

A number of passengers who escaped from the *Swallow* came down in this morning's boats. The Empire reached here about half past 12 o'clock, today, having been obliged to lie to off Catskill, in consequence of the heavy gale that prevailed last night. She left the latter place about half past five this morning, but no one on board heard any further particulars of the unfortunate occurrence relative to the *Swallow*, nor could they see her as they passed. The Knickerbocker came through rather earlier, but with some difficulty. There is no doubt but that the gale of last night would entirely break up the remains of the *Swallow*.

[Correspondence of the *Herald*.]

HUDSON, April 8, 1845.

The steamboat *Swallow*, on her downward passage from Albany, ran on an island called Rock Island, opposite to this city, and in the Athens channel. She broke in two by her forward gangway and also by her stern gangway. *It is thought there are about one hundred lives lost.* The night was extremely dark and snowing at the time, *it was impossible for the pilot to see where he was;* as soon as the boat struck the rock she filled with water. There have been six bodies found as yet, four from the ladies' cabin. I have not learned the names of all who have been found. Two of the ladies' names are Woods, both sisters, and from Albany; there was also one lady from Troy, of the name of Coffins found. The gentlemen's names I have not learned yet. I will send you the names of the persons as soon as they are found.

Yours, O. G. BROWN, Mansion House.

[From *Hudson Gazette*, Extra, April 8, 6 P. M.]

TERRIBLE STEAMBOAT ACCIDENT—A LARGE NUMBER OF LIVES LOST.—One of the most melancholy and heart-rending accidents that ever happened on our river, took place last evening in the Athens channel, nearly opposite this city. The steamboat *Swallow*, Captain Squires, one of the New York and Troy 6 o'clock line, which runs through without landing,

while on her passage down last night, ran upon a small island, which is situated a short distance from the main shore, between the upper and lower villages.

We have visited the scene of destruction today, and a melancholy sight it is truly. The forward part of the boat is broke off by her forward gangway, and her bows are thrown up nearly thirty feet, and rest high and dry on the island some twenty feet from the water.

The crash must have been tremendous, as every part of the boat is broken to pieces and will be a total wreck.

The loss of life is awful, and as yet no correct estimate can be formed as to how many perished. We are informed by the captain that there were *about three hundred passengers* on board. The scene that took place on her striking is indescribable. The gentleman who had ladies in charge rushed for the ladies' saloon, and the ladies who were in it rushed to the door to escape—the confusion and consternation were so great that a large number threw themselves headlong into the river, and many must have been drowned. The accident took place *about eight o'clock in the evening*; it was very dark and stormy, and *the boat was under very moderate headway* when she struck—*had she been under full speed, many more lives must have been lost.*

Some who jumped overboard had a very narrow escape. Miss Cornelia Plait, a young lady of Detroit, who was on her way to New York, under the charge of Mr. C. H. Hicks of that city, left the boat on a settee and were taken up a short distance below nearly exhausted. Mr. Hicks when he went over had his over-coat on but finding that he could not do anything with it on, and it requiring great exertion to keep the settee straight, he succeeded in getting it off—the coat was found this morning nearly five miles below, in one of the pockets was a draft for a considerable amount. A large number of boats from Athens and from this city went immediately to the relief of the sufferers and a number of persons were picked up. The Steamboats *Rochester* and *Express* were just behind the *Swallow* when the accident occurred, so they came alongside and rendered all the assistance they could, and took most of the passengers on board.

The stern of the boat sank almost immediately and must have carried a large number down with it. At high tide the water is clear up to the upper deck over the State Rooms; this afternoon at low water they succeeded in *getting out six bodies*—five women and one man. One was recognized to be the wife of George M. Coffin, of West Troy. The rest of the bodies were not recognized.

The *John Mason* has been down and taken all the baggage, and what furniture they could reach belonging to the boat. We understand that it is the intention of the owners to take out her engines and machinery immediately, so that they can raise the stern, and obtain the bodies of those who were drowned in the cabins.

The coroner of Greene county held an inquest over the bodies and rendered a verdict according to the facts. The bodies were then taken to Troy, that they might be identified by their friends.

It is supposed that a Mrs. French, and a Mrs. Lambert were among the drowned.

[From *Catskill Democrat*, April 8, 2 P.M., Extra, April 8, 6 P. M.]

We have just returned from Athens, where the steamboat *Swallow* at about half past eight last evening, on her passage down, ran upon a rocky bluff and now lies broken in two, with her bows thirty feet in the air, and her stern, with after cabin, ladies' saloon and a portion of her upper state rooms under water. Immediately upon striking, the boat took fire, but sank so rapidly as to extinguish the flames. Many of the passengers leaped into the water, and some were taken up at the ferry dock, at least 300 yards below the boat.—There being *about 400 persons on board*, it is believed that many were unable to get out of the cabins, owing to the crowd, and were drowned or crushed in attempting to escape. Of those who were in their berths, it is probable scarce any escaped, as the vessel sank almost instantaneously, and it is to be feared

that most of the inmates of the ladies' saloon perished. While we were on the spot, **we saw six bodies** drawn up from the gangway, near the ladies' cabin. One of them was recognized as the body of Miss Wood, a milliner of Albany, and another as that of Miss Briggs, of Troy. Another female had a work-basket upon her arm, in which was a silver thimble marked W. M. C. The names of the others, two females and one man, were unknown to any persons present. We conversed with one gentleman who informed us that he endeavored to escape with his wife, that he held her until she drowned in his grasp, and that he was forced to relinquish his hold to save himself, which, owing to the pressure of the crowd, who thronged the gangways, was extremely difficult. His emotion prevented him from giving us anything like a clear account of the accident. It is said his lady has with her \$15,000.

The steamboats *Express* and *Rochester* were near at the time and took up most of those who could be found. It is impossible to form any idea of the loss of life occasioned by this accident. We call this an accident, because we are unwilling to censure without just cause, yet we are constrained to say, that all the evidence presented to our mind, by a view of the situation of the wreck, and the description which we have had of the particulars of the affair, would **induce us to believe that there was at least in this unhappy instance, a censurable, if not criminal want of caution. No boat could have reached the place at which the *Swallow* is with less than a greater head of steam than it was prudent to carry in such a total darkness as that of last night.**

[From *Albany Evening Atlas*, April 8]

The Steamboat *Swallow* left this city last night for New York, and on reaching the channel near Athens, about half-past eight o'clock, struck on a ledge of rocks, out of the regular channel. The force of the shock, and the weight of the boat, were such as to part the boat at the centre, and in two minutes she was filled with water. The stern of the boat sunk in about 15 feet depth of water. There were **about 400 passengers on board**, some of them were at supper in the cabin; fortunately, none had retired to rest. One of the chamber-maids, who has returned to the city, states that she was in the after cabin at the time the boat struck, and so great was the concussion, that she was thrown to the other side of the boat, and before she could get out of the cabin, the water was up to her waist. In the midst of this calamity, a new and more awful one threatened the passengers. The boat took fire below, but fortunately the fire made little progress and was soon extinguished.

The passengers took refuge on the promenade and state room decks. The *Rochester* and the *Express*, which left the city shortly after the *Swallow*, came up to it in about half an hour after the calamity and took off most of the passengers. It is difficult to ascertain what lives were lost. Mrs. Starbuck, of Troy, one of the Society of Friends, it is said, jumped overboard, was picked up, and conveyed to Athens and died there. Mrs. Lambert and Mrs. French are also reported to be missing. Some of the rescued passengers were taken on board the *Express*, some on the *Rochester*, and some returned to this city by the *R. L. Stevens*. Of course, many of the passengers have thus been separated from their friends, and the number of the missing may be greatly exaggerated.

The night was dark, stormy and cold; and in this city there was a fall of snow and rain during the evening.

Some of the letters, received in the city, make no mention of persons drowned.

[From *Albany Journal*, April 8]

The waiters and hands were taking supper in the forward cabin. Alarmed by the shock, they rushed aft, the chambermaid passing through the entire length of the two cabins and ascending by the after stairs to the Ladies' Cabin, on the main deck. The water followed with great rapidity, and within three or four minutes after the accident, the lower cabin was filled with water. The greatest alarm now prevailed, and everybody hurried to the state-room deck. An

opening was cut through the roofing of the state rooms and many clambered up on that, as the boat continued to fill and settle rapidly. *At this moment Captain Squires heard some calls for help below, and descending to the main deck, then under water, rescued Mrs. And Miss Starbuck of Troy from imminent danger.* Mrs. Starbuck, an aged lady, was immediately carried to the shore in a small boat, and every attention paid to her, but the exposure and alarm proved too much for her enfeebled frame, and she died shortly after reaching the shore.

[From an Athens Letter, April 8]

The scene which here followed, beggars all description, the boat appeared to part immediately in the centre, the stern sinking into deep water, which was about twenty feet deep, and the bow remaining up?? the deck. * * *

The *R. L. Stevens* has just left Albany, having come alongside and taken the remaining passengers from the *Swallow*. There is no doubt but the *Swallow* is totally destroyed, although her machinery is not injured. Mr. Hoffman, the builder and former owner of this boat, sold her last year to a company at Troy, who did not take the precaution to get her insured.

INCIDENTS, &c.—A gentleman from Albany had just arrived in search of his two sisters, who were discovered in the wreck.

Mr. Gilson, who was on board with his wife, escaped, but can find nothing of her so far. It is possible that she was taken up by the *Rochester* or *Express*.

P. H. Firman, of New York, was with his sister on board the *Swallow*. He came down on the *Buffalo* this morning, as did also Mr. Gilson.

J. C. Carl, of New York, was on board the *Swallow*, and came down this morning on the *Buffalo*. He had a narrow escape. As he was in the act of leaping into the water he heard a woman's voice, in tones of agony, shrieking, "for God's sake save me, save me!" and while swimming, so long as he can recollect, the noise of the life struggle, mingled with cries and groans, was around him on every side. The boat that picked him up saved also five others. One man, on being seized by the hair and his head lifted out of the water, exclaimed, "Save her! Save her! Let me go and save her!" On looking farther, they found and succeeded in rescuing the lady, who was as it appeared, only an acquaintance, who had been placed in his charge.

A gentleman of Detroit, named Huest, having a bag containing \$1,500 in gold, jumped overboard with the bag upon his arm, but soon was obliged to let it go. He was only saved by having fortunately grasped a narrow strip of board, as he jumped. Close after him came another man, claiming the board, with curses and imprecations. As he struck out from the boat he almost immediately went down, grasping the possessor of the board by the foot. He, however, released himself with great difficulty, and was saved.

There were on board the *Swallow*, at the time of the accident, *not far from three hundred souls.* Ninety-four were rescued by the *Rochester*, about forty by the *Express*, and a number of others went up to Albany on the *Utica* and *Robert L. Stevens*.

The boat is a total wreck, and it is doubtful whether her engines will be saved. She lies on a high rock close to the Athens side of the channel, and between which and the western shore no boat has ever gone.

It was rumored that a young lady, a niece of Joseph C. Heartt, Esq., of Troy, had died from fright, after having reached the shore in safety.

[Remainder of text not included in the excerpt:]

The chambermaid of the boat says she was the last who left the ladies' cabin, and at that time all the ladies had left it. *Mr. Earnest, of Cooperstown, [a] passenger, was sitting near the ladies' cabin when the boat struck. He went aft and the word was given out, "all safe;"--immediately after, the cry was "come forward," and all rushed forward in one confused mass. Again, the word was given "go aft," and the passengers moved from the furnace rooms, near the boilers, which happily prevented many from obeying the order, as those who were forward were all saved.* [Transcriber's note: As parts of the paragraph were illegible, the paragraph has been taken

from the more legible text of the *Arkansas State Gazette*, Little Rock, Monday Morning , May 5, 1845, Vol. XXVI, No. 22/Whole No. 1322, p. 1, c. 5]

Several of the female passengers were drowned; the cabin being under water as also part of the promenade or state room deck, leaving them no chance to escape – her stern having sunk in from 3 to 5 minutes after striking, the confusion was great, and the shrieks and moans appalling to those who were witnesses. At about 9 o'clock this morning a scow was procured to go between the decks to get out floating freight and baggage, while I assisted in raking for the dead, to do this we could go no further aft (on the state room deck) than the staircase, on account of the water – here we tore up planks and fished up with hooks five women from the midship gangway, viz.: Miss Lucretia Wood, of Albany, Miss Briggs, milliner, of Troy, and three not yet recognized. ***Miss Wood is said to be a niece of Jonas C. Heartt, Esq., of Troy; when found she had a book tightly clutched in her hand.*** Before leaving, a Mr. Walker, of New York, was on board, looking for the body of his wife. He had found her after the accident and had her by the hand trying to get her out of the cabin when the water broke in, and the other passengers making a rush, broke his hold and he barely had time to save himself. An elderly gentleman, with his four daughters, had a miraculous escape; he threw them all overboard from the starboard side (which is nearest the shore) and then plunged in himself, and all were surprised to find themselves within a few feet of each other on shore. About a dozen jumped over in one group, and I saw the only two that reached shore. Another told me that himself, two daughters and a son jumped from the bow upon the rocks, one daughter slightly injured. The engineer was considerably injured in leaping from the same place. Two gentlemen and one lady put off on a setter and floated safely down to the ferry steps, nearly a quarter of a mile. As to the number drowned by leaping overboard, as well as those in the cabins, no estimate can be formed. It is rumored that 1[0?]0 females are still in the cabin, but the lowest estimate I have is 40, and this is from Mr. Harris – the gentlemanly steward of the boat – this gentleman, last evening, hearing moaning sounds under the deck, tore up the planks and drew out two women nearly exhausted. I saw one of them this morning, her weight is nearly if not quite 200. The passengers on board extol the hospitality of the people of Athens. The rock is some 40 or 50 feet in diameter, and about 12 feet high.