

***The Jamestown Journal***

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[column 1]

**Most Appalling Calamity!**

***DESTRUCTION OF THE STEAMBOAT ERIE; AND THE LOSS OF ONE  
HUNDRED AND SEVENTY LIVES !***

Little did we think yesterday in penning a brief paragraph in commendation of the *Erie*, that, to-day we should be called upon to record the destruction of that boat together with a loss of life unequalled on our own or almost any waters. The *Erie* left the dock at ten minutes past 4, P.M. loaded with merchandise destined for Chicago. and, as nearly as now can be ascertained, about two hundred persons, including passengers and crew, on board. The boat had been thoroughly overhauled, and although the wind was blowing fresh, every thing promised a pleasant and prosperous voyage. Nothing occurred to mar this prospect till about eight o'clock when the boat was off Silver Creek, about 8 miles from shore, and 33 miles from this city, when a slight explosion was heard, and immediately, instantaneously almost, the whole vessel was enveloped in flame. Captain Titus, who was on the upper deck at the time, rushed to the Ladies Cabin, to obtain the Life Preservers, of which there were from 90 to 100 on board, but so rapid had been the progress of the flames, he found it impossible to enter the cabin. He returned to the upper deck, on his way giving orders to the Engineer to stop the engine, the wind and the headway of the boat increasing the fierceness of the flames and driving them aft. The engineer replied that in consequence of the flames he could not reach the engine. The steersman was then directed to put the helm hard a starboard.— The vessel swung slowly round, heading to the shore, and the boats — there were three on board — were then ordered to be lowered. Two of the boats were lowered, but in consequence of the heavy sea on, and the headway of the vessel, they both swamped as soon as they touched the water. We will not attempt to describe the awful and appalling condition of the

passengers. Some were frantic with fear, others plunged headlong madly into the water, others again seized upon any thing buoyant, upon which they could lay hands. The small boat forward had been lowered. It was alongside the wheel, with three or four persons in it, when the Captain jumped in, and the boat immediately dropped astern filled with water. A lady floated by with a life preserver on. She cried for help. There was no safety in the boat. The Captain threw her the only oar in the boat. She caught the oar and was saved. It was Mrs. Lynde, of Milwaukie, and she was the only lady saved. In this condition, the boat, a mass of fierce fire, and the passengers and crew endeavoring to save themselves by swimming or supporting themselves by whatever they could reach, they were found by the *Clinton* about 10, P. M. The *Clinton* left here in the morning, but in consequence of the wind, had put into Dunkirk. She laid there till nearly sunset, at which time she ran out, and had proceeded as far as Barcelona, when just at twilight, the fire of the *Erie* was discovered at twenty miles astern. The *Clinton* immediately put about and reached the burning wreck about 10. It was a fearful sight. All the upper works of the *Erie* had been burned away. The Engine was standing, but the hull was a mass of dull, red flame. The passengers and crew were floating around, screaming in their agony and shrieking for help. The boats of the *Clinton* were instantly lowered and manned, and every person that could be seen or heard, was picked up, and every possible relief afforded. The '*Lady*,' a little steamboat lying at Dunkirk, went out of that harbor as soon as possible, after the discovery of the fire, and arrived soon after the *Clinton*. It was not thought by the survivors that she saved any. By 1 A. M. all was still except the dead crackling of the fire. Not a solitary individual could be seen or heard on the wild waste of waters. A line was then made fast to the remains of the *Erie*'s rudder, and an effort to tow the hapless hull ashore. About this time, the *Chautauque* came up and lent her assistance. The hold of the *Erie* was towed within about four miles of the shore, when it sunk in eleven fathoms water. By this time it was day-light. The lines were cast off.—The *Clinton* headed for this port, which she reached about 6 o'clock. Of those who are saved, several are badly burned, but none are dangerously injured so far as we have heard.

*Origin of the Fire.*— Among the passengers on board were six painters in the employ of Mr. W G Miller, of this city [Buffalo], who were going to Erie to paint the steamboat Madison. They had with them demijohns filled with spirits of turpentine and varnish, which unknown to Capt. Titus, were placed on the boiler deck directly over the boilers. One of the firemen, who was saved, says he had occasion to go on the deck, and seeing the demijohns, removed them. They were replaced, but by whom is not known. Immediately previous to the bursting forth of the flames, as several on board have assured us, a slight explosion was heard. The demijohns had probably burst with the heat, and their inflammable contents, taking fire instantly, communicated to every part of the boat, which having been freshly varnished, caught as if it had been gunpowder.

Not a paper nor an article of any kind was saved. Of course it is impossible to give a complete list of those on board. Of cabin passengers, Capt. Titus thinks there were between 30 and 40, of whom 10 or 12 were ladies. In the steerage were about 140 passengers, nearly all of whom were Swiss and German immigrants. They mostly in families with the usual proportion of men, women and children. The heart bleeds at the thought.

It is a singular coincidence, that the *Erie* was burned at almost identically the same spot where the *Washington* was burned in June, [column 2] 1838. Captain Brown, who commanded the *Washington* at that time, happened to be on board the *Clinton* and was very active in saving the survivors of the *Erie*. We annex a list of the lost and saved so far as we have been able to ascertain;

### LOST.

W. M. Camp, Harrisburgh, Pa.  
Willet Weeks, Brooklyn.  
John C. Pool, N Y city.  
E. S. Cobb, Ann Arbor, Mich.  
Otto Torp, N. Y., wife and three children.  
Lloyd Gelston, Erie, Clerk.  
Mr. Joles, Steward of the boat.  
Mrs. Giles Williams, Chicago.  
Chs. J. Lynde, Milwaukie.  
Watts S. Lynde, Homer, N Y.  
Mrs. Wm. H. Smith, and child, Schenectada.  
A. Sears, Philip Barbier, Henry Weaver, Wm. Thomas, ——Evarts, Peter Finney, painters, Buffalo in the employ of Wm. G. Miller.  
Miss. A. Miller, Buffalo, sister of Wm. G. Miller.  
J. D. Woodward, New York.  
Wm. Griffin, Mississippi.  
D. S. Sloane, Geneva.  
F. Stow, Canada.  
Wm. Sacket, Michigan.  
Mrs. Spencer and two children.  
Mrs Dow.  
Mrs. Robinson, Ballston Spa, N Y.  
Miss Robinson, do. do.  
Miss King, do. do.  
Mr. Moore, lady and 2 children, from Yates Co. moving to Michigan.  
Orin Green, Rushville, Yates Co.  
Roome Button, from near Fort Plain.  
Charles S. Mather, Mt. Clemens, Mich., has got a family in that place.

A large number of Swiss immigrants were on board—they were shipped by Messrs. P. L. Parsons & Co. Their list comprises the names of 87 persons; as it is customary to pass children at half price, the whole number in the list must have reached one hundred souls. Only four persons of the whole, whose names we could not learn, were saved.

### SAVED.

We are indebted to Mr. GIBSON, clerk of the *De Witt Clinton*, for the following list of persons saved by that boat:

Jerome McBride, wheelman, badly burnt.  
James Loverty, do.

Hiram De Graff, passenger.  
Dennis McBride, 1<sup>st</sup> mate.  
Theodore Sears, painter.  
J. H. St. John, passenger to Chicago.  
C. Hogg, do. badly burned.  
William [sic] Wadsworth, one of the Erie band.  
Alfred O. Wilkeson, East Euclid, Ohio.  
William Hughes, 2d mate.  
Luther B. Searls, fireman.  
Thos. J. Tann, Pittsford, N. Y.  
John Winchell, Buffalo.  
Edgar Clemens, 1<sup>st</sup> engineer.  
Son of Geo. Beebee, Cleveland.  
Harrison Forrester, Harbor Creek, Pa.  
Thos. Quinlid, Middlefield, Mass.  
Three German passengers, burned badly.  
Robert Robinson, colored man, barber.  
—Johnson, do. 3d cook.  
Giles Williams, Chicago.  
Capt. Titus, captain of the boat.  
Mrs. Lynde, of Milwaukie.  
Christian Durler, Holmes Co. Ohio.  
——Rice, Hydraulics, Buffalo, badly burnt.  
LATER.—By the *Robt. Fulton*, Capt. Hart, we learn that two men more person [sic] were saved by the people of Dunkirk. One was Fred. Parmelee, the bar-keeper of the Erie, and an American, name unknown.