

Commercial Advertiser and Journal

OFFICIAL PAPER OF THE CITY.

BUFFALO:

SATURDAY EVENING, AUGUST 14, 1841.

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☞ Much surprise and some indignation have been expressed, because the *Rochester*, which left only four hours after the *Erie*, passed that boat without changing her course or rendering any assistance. The explanation we have heard exonerates Capt. ALLEN of the *R.* from all blame. He saw the light soon after leaving port, but supposed it was a “brush-burning” on Sturgeon Point.—The wind soon began to blow off shore, and the *Rochester* ran out towards the Canada shore to gain sea-room. No suspicions were entertained that the light seen was that of the *Erie*, until making the port of Erie, and learning that the boat had not arrived. Those who know Capt. ALLEN, need not be assured that he would have been among the foremost in rendering assistance, if he had felt the slightest suspicion of the truth.

SUFFERERS BY THE *ERIE*. —We continue to add such names as we are able to gather of the unfortunate sufferers by the *Erie*. Capt. ZHAM has furnished us the names of the following Germans, not before mentioned:

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| Anthony Weichel and fam’y of 8 pers’s, | Buffalo. |
| Peter Stein, | do. |
| A. Siegel, wife and three children, | do. |
| Geo. Kraft, | do. |
| ...John Long and family of 4 persons, | do. |
| Michael Kreis, | do. |
| Philip Freigent, one of the band from Erie. | |
| John Voegele, a Swiss emigrant, wife and 9 children, had in his possession 25,000 florins. | |
| John Angell, Providence, R. I. | |

We find the following in a Detroit paper:
Miss Sherman, and father, lost.

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coroner’s inquest.

INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES WHICH LED TO THE
DESTRUCTION OF THE STEAMBOAT ERIE.

[*Continued.*]

Wm. Hughes sworn.—My age is 25; I am a seaman; have followed that business seven years, the last three on the lakes; entered as 2d Mate on board the *Erie* this season.

[Witness described the duties of that station, which are principally stowing away the cargo, &c.]

Previous to leaving port on Monday last, saw a barrel of white lead and a smaller cask of oil, and assisted to stow it forward. There was a female passenger on board who was

going to Milwaukie [sic]; among her luggage were some jars of pickles or preserves, which I directed the men to put on the boiler deck, and those only; saw no other articles on the boiler deck; if any had been there [I] would have seen them; saw no demijohns on board; saw, however, Miller's men come on board with small kegs, having the heads out, and such as are used for paint pots. Being informed that these men were going to Erie, I gave orders that their things should be stowed forward; one of the men said he would look after the things himself; thinks that if any paint pots had been placed on the boiler deck he should certainly have seen them; saw persons lying on the boiler deck; was forward when the fire broke out; saw Capt. T. conversing with a stout gentleman; heard a hissing sound, he jumped aft and saw the skylight windows illuminated from the flames below. The flames came up in a large body through the scuttle instantaneously; jumped forward and informed the captain of the fire; then ran to the passage way and called below for the men to get the buckets and rig the engine immediately; ran to the fire engine and found the flames coming fiercely from below, high as the walking-beam; ran forward to clear away the small boats; there I saw *Mr. Clemens*; saw several others at the bows, many Swiss were in the boats before they were clear of the decks. I ordered them out, but they did not obey, so I jumped in and threw them out; the boat was then lowered, and as she was on her way to the water many persons jumped in, and she soon filled. Heard Capt. T. calling out to "stop her," but could not see him for the smoke; jumped over among the others, and was afterwards picked up by the *Clinton*; is of opinion that there were 300 persons on board at the time of the accident.

Edgar Clemens sworn.—Aged 27 years; is 1st engineer of the steamboat *Erie*; acted in that capacity three years; was on board Monday last at the time of the fire; did not see any demijohns of turpentine on board. Half an hour before the fire, went down below to examine under and about the boilers to see if all was safe, as was usual every watch; watch is six hours, There had been some new brick work laid under the boiler or ash pan; while below he could see the under side of the boiler deck; saw no fire; had no light with him. The side of the boat is covered with whitewash and salt, as a protection against fire; twenty inches between boilers and boiler deck; round the smoke pipe, the boiler deck is lined with tin or zinc; grating in boiler deck to let off heated air; deck gets hot, but could lie upon it. There are holes in the corner of the boiler deck to try water in boilers, which is done every fifteen minutes; he looked into these holes and tried water 15 minutes before; he was standing by the engine by the starting bars, when the fire broke out. There was 2½ inches water in the ash-pan; when fire broke out had just been oiling and fixing machinery framing; a stormy night; heard an explosion like the light blast of rock; instantly saw fire just aft of the smoke pipe, on boiler deck; he was looking in the direction of boiler deck at the time; attention called by the cry of children; explosion, fire and rolling of paint kegs were all seen and heard at the same instant. Saw painter put pots on the deck, but nothing else; after black smoke passed off saw fire; smoke had the odor of turpentine; odor was strong; attempted to stop engine; did not; fire burnt face; bewildered with smoke; something got under the bow; could not see what it was; people rushing past prevented him, and filled up gangway; half minute trying; pulled pin out of throttle lever; effect to shut off steam, make her run slower; went aft to go on to promenade deck; met Capt. T. on stairs, he asked if I could stop the engine; I told him I could not and get back alive. Went on the upper deck, captain came up and said he

thought she was lost, there was no chance of saving her; went to get over the yawl boat; captain, 2d mate, 2d engineer and one passenger; got the boat over; passengers jumped in from main deck; she struck a sea; she swamped and carried cranes and tackle with her; thinks the crane struck the 2d engineer, if so killed him; flames were now bursting out of the boat in every direction; pulled up a piece of a bench, threw it over; two men seized it and made off; put hands on rail, it was on fire, and burnt my hands; I intended jumping over; I let go, then ran and jumped over; this was at the stern. Explosion with turpentine he thinks; carpenter told him after that he had taken two demijohns off from his tool chest; carpenter wanted to get out his tools; carpenter after the fire told him he did not think turpentine would expand so; thought it was oil; witness directed carpenter to make some plugs; it was now 7 o'clock; it then became necessary for carpenter to go to his chest—tool chest was on boiler deck, under stairs, (so many Dutch people on deck and from the position of the demijohns off the chest and on boiler deck, they would not be discovered) on the chest they would; carpenter said they (the Dutch) were not on chest a short time before; carpenter's name is Harrison Foster, was saved, but is not here; demijohn, if broken, the fluid would run between the boilers and into furnace doors; my opinion is that the fire originated from the demijohn of turpentine; believes the expansion of turpentine burst the demijohn; two persons were laying within two feet of demijohn, two children at their feet; demijohn must have been within two feet of smoke pipe; six families in all, one saved; we ordinarily carry 18 to 20 inches of steam, at this time 17 inches; safety valve weighted for 20 inches, would expand in 15 minutes by such a fire, so as to stop engine; if the boiler had burst, I should have known it; it could not have been the case.

The evidence of Mr. *Parmalee* was taken after this witness, but did not show any very material or important fact that would tend to throw light upon the cause which led to the disaster.

☞ Mr. HIBBARD wishes the following qualification to be made in his testimony. For the words "nearly all the lake boats have this guard," read "It is not customary for low pressure boats to have this guard, but is proper and necessary for high pressure to have it."

BENEFIT OF THE SUFFERERS.—The report which appeared in the *Republican* this morning, is not sufficiently explicit. The public would doubtless wish to know what were the total receipts and the amount deducted therefrom for the use of house, throwing out of course the night's salary of the company, who very generously tendered their services.