

1) Levi T. Beebee's account:

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From the Cleveland Herald, Aug. 24.

BURNING OF THE ERIE

This appalling disaster has filled the public mind with horror, and the public press is filled with the terrific and agonizing descriptions of the terrible scene, as related by some of the survivors. Much has been said and printed about the astonishing preservation of Levi T. Beebee, a boy only twelve years old, the son of Washington T. Beebee, Esq, of this city. These statements are somewhat variant, and in some cases exaggerated; and as this fine lad exhibited a degree of self-possession, heroism, and unflinching endurance of mental and bodily suffering unsurpassed, if ever equaled, we have obtained, from the boy's own lips, his simple story of what he saw and did during the awful scene.

Before giving this story, it is proper to state that young Beebee is an unusually athletic and manly boy of his age—that from his childhood he has been trained to manly sports and exercises. During the past year, he had been a member of Maj. Duff's scientific and military school for boys, at Cooperstown, New York. —Once or twice a week he was required to bathe in the lake or river, and instructed to dive and swim under water.

It was this training which enabled this boy so wonderfully to save himself. He was cool and self-possessed while all was confusion and agony around him. It was this training which enabled him to hold on with a stout heart, for hours, where most men would have let loose in despair. It was this training that enabled him to hold fast while wave after wave dashed over him for hours, without strangulation or fainting. But it was his own native energy of character that nerved him to keep fast hold while molten lead was running upon his head, and his hands were completely skinned by the flames! His story is as follows:

That the lake was very rough, so much so, that the waves dashed into the gentlemen's cabin at the stern of the boat, and the dead lights were consequently shut. After tea he ran about the boat and looked at the race horse; the waves would wash entirely over the horse, and even wet some passengers who stood upon the upper deck; that about 8 o'clock he went into the cabin, and saw but two passengers there, it was so warm, having the stern windows closed, and by reason of sea sickness, the other passengers were on deck.

He took off his boots and stock and lay down upon the locker at the stern; just as he lay down, he heard a report like the puff of a high pressure boat; looked up and saw the waiters running up stairs; he followed as far as the stairs, and then went back and drew on his boots; he then ran up the center stairs, leaving one man behind on the locker; at the head of the stairs a thick suffocating smoke met him, and he put his hands over his eyes and ran around the ladies' cabin towards the stern; here he found the passengers huddled together, and some on the floor; saw no lady but Mrs Lynde, she and her husband were blowing up their life preservers; he asked Mrs Lynde if she could save him; she had her mouth at the pipe of her preserver, and made no reply but shook her head; he then asked Mr Lynde if he could aid him any; Mr Lynde said his life preserver would not support both, but was sorry he could not aid him.

At this moment Mr. Gelston, the clerk of the boat, came running aft with a lantern in his hand, and called out "stand aft" the passengers called out "where," saw no other officer or man of the boat as he thinks; Gelston dropped the lantern and jumped over the railing at the stern. That he (Beebee) picked up the lantern, and the flames in a moment came running aft; some held their hands to their faces, some fell down, and all was confusion; that he dropped the lantern and made his way over those on the floor, and reached the railing at the stern; that Mrs. Lynde reached the railing with him and called to her husband, "come, **William [Charles]**, come quick; we must jump over." —Mr. Lynde seemed to be unwilling. From the railing B. leaped and caught hold the chain leading from the stern to the rudder; saw no more of Mrs. Lynde; the small boat at the stern had been lowered before this; on the rudder and chains he found five or six persons; Mr. Gelston, the clerk, was one, Mr. Wilkinson, of Euclid, another, and there was a black man, appeared naked, had hold of the end of the rudder, who afterward got on something and floated off. That he had nothing to rest his feet upon, and had had to cling to the chain with his hands, arms and legs; when the boat was on top of the waves, he was entirely out of the water, clinging to the chain; when the boat was in the trough of the sea, the waves would dash entirely over him, that he was under water and out of water alternately, as wave followed wave, that his mouth and nose filled with water, but he had learned to hold his breath under water, and when he came up he could spit and blow it out.—The lead on the deck melted and run [sic] down upon his head, and when out of the water he would take his hand and put water on his head.

That the lake, around the boat was covered with floating substances and human beings; a small boat passed near them and some one on the rudder called out "for God's sake come to us," but heard no reply. That Mr. Gelston and one or two others must have been struck from the rudder by pieces of the boat falling upon them.

He clung to the chain at least two hours and a half, with nothing to rest his feet upon any part of the time; the only rest he has was when under water, as the water would buoy him up, so he need not exert himself so much to hold on; talked with the persons around him; told one man who he was, and begged him to tell his father and mother what became of him, and that he held on as long as he could; that he did not think he should be saved, for his hands after a while became numb, and he was so much exhausted that it was with the greatest exertion that he could keep awake.

Mr. Wilkinson, who was near him, got on to this *guard*, and he (Beebee) asked to be helped on: Wilkinson extended his hand and helped him on. It was on fire, and he took a

handkerchief or cloth which Wilkinson gave him, and with water extinguished the fire around him. Here he remained till a small boat of the Clinton took him off.

Such is the story of young Beebee. As soon as he was placed in the small boat he fell asleep. His hands and head were very badly burned, but we are happy to say he is rapidly recovering.