The Herald Express
(Saint Joseph, Michigan)
Thursday, April 5, 1956
p. 8, c. 1-2

Great Lakes Hero Lives on in American Folklore

One of the Great Lakes' most dramatic heroes lives on in the annals of American folklore despite the fact that he died a derelict's death, according to an article in the spring issue of *Inland Seas* mailed today.

It relates how in 1841 a brave lakes helmsman became as great and legendary as Paul Bunyan, Mike Fink, Davey Crockett and Daniel Boone. His name was Luther Fuller, later known as John Maynard, says Marvin A. Rapp, historian and folklorist and writer of the article.

On the evening of August 9, 1841, Martin [sic] Fuller was at the wheel of the steamer *Erie*. The little ship had a full passenger list of new Americans and was headed down Lake Erie from Buffalo to Dunkirk, New York, when fire broke out and engulfed her. According to the celebrated story, Fuller stayed at the wheel of the burning ship and died trying to steer her to the nearest shore so that passengers and crew could escape. Most of them died, but the brave attempt placed him high in the ranks of the folk heroes and marked him for lasting fame.

The story grew, alterations and embellishments were made, and it is reported that even Charles Dickens wrote about the heroic helmsman when he toured the lakes in 1845.*
By 1875, relates Rapp, the story of John Maynard was turned into poetry attributed to Horatio Alger, Jr., and appeared in many publications including the popular dime novels of the day.

It was revealed in 1912 that John Maynard had not really died in the burning ship, according to Rapp. A reprobate criminal confessed before dying that he was actually Luther Fuller, or John Maynard, and had escaped from the burning ship when he could do no more. The helmsman remains a hero since he risked his life by doing everything he could, the writer says.

Inland Seas, now in the twelfth year, is a quarterly magazine devoted to lakes lore. It is published by the Great Lakes Historical Society, a non-profit organization by the Cleveland public library.

* Dickens visited North America in 1842, not 1845. A reference to John Maynard in his *American Notes for General Circulation* has not been found. Cf.:
http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/NFDickens.pdf