

THE SWALLOW REVISITED

BY

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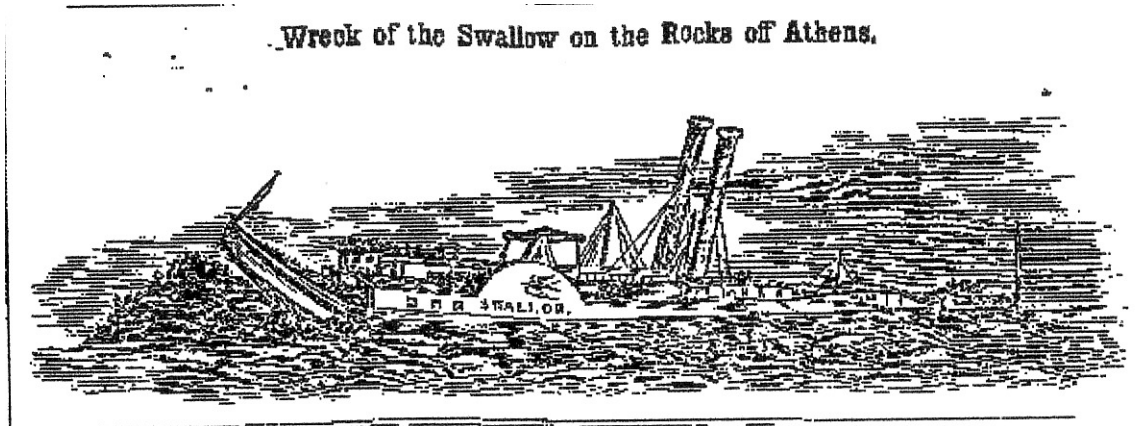


Illustration from *The Weekly Herald* (New York City), April 12, 1845, first page

The purpose of this paper is threefold: firstly, to provide a brief review of findings regarding research on the *Swallow* over the past two years; secondly, to investigate primary sources from historical American newspapers as they pertain to the disaster on the evening of April 7, 1845; and thirdly, to consider to what degree the tragedy of the *Swallow* might have influenced the original “Helmsman of Lake Erie,” which was published in the very same year.

The genesis of Theodor Fontane’s “John Maynard” from its American origins is clear: Fontane based his ballad (published in Munich and Vienna in 1886) on the prose rendering of the legend by John Bartholomew Gough (probably first recited in his native England during a three-year temperance speaking tour and then published on his return to the United States in 1860), who, in turn, based his own sketch on an abridged version of the original anonymous John Maynard prose text entitled “The Helmsman of Lake Erie” (first published on August 30, 1845, in the *Baltimore Sun*). Neither of the American versions has a steamer named the *Swallow*. In the original 1845 text, the steamer was called the *Jersey*. In Gough’s version, its name was not even mentioned.

Neither the *Jersey* nor the *Swallow* ever plied the waters of Lake Erie. Instead, both steamers served on the Hudson River. For a detailed consideration of the *Jersey*, the reader is referred to “The Author’s Signature: The Good Ship *Jersey* in ‘The Helmsman of Lake Erie,’ and the Significance of the Geography of New Jersey in the works of James Fenimore Cooper:”

http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/Jersey.pdf .

It has been established beyond all doubt that the once extremely popular German poet Emil Rittershaus (1834-1897) was the first to create a Lake Erie ballad in the German language (published in 1871). Although a steamship is in distress in Rittershaus’s ballad, there is no

heroic helmsman to save the panic-stricken passengers and crew. Instead, the ballad deals with a heroic German passenger who has settled in the United States, and such thorny issues as German immigration to and emigration from the United States. The psychological ties of a German heart, far away from the country of its birth, are also at issue. The ship's name in Rittershaus's *Ein deutsches Herz* ("A German Heart") is the *Schwalbe* [=Swallow]. Rittershaus was in contact with both Theodor Fontane and a highly talented but sadly forgotten woman writer and poet named Luise Förster (1847-1911). Her nom de plume was Ada Linden. Both Theodor Fontane and Ada Linden composed their own ballads of John Maynard. Both poets named their ship the *Schwalbe*! For an article on Ada Linden, in both an English and German version, see "The Triangle: Three German Lake Erie Ballads. Is Emil Rittershaus the Catalyst behind Ada Linden's and Theodor Fontane's 'John Maynard' Ballads?": http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/TriangleEng.pdf or http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/TriangleGer.pdf.

Rittershaus's Lake Erie ballad, as stated, is not in the tradition of John Maynard. The shipwreck in his ballad results from an unscrupulous captain accepting a wager and recklessly racing his rickety old ship in hopes of collecting the winnings: for ten bottles of whisky and \$10, the greedy captain thinks nothing of risking the lives of his passengers and crew. [1]

The motif of a race harkens back to press coverage of the wreck of the *Swallow*. Newspapers were quick to point accusing fingers at the *Swallow*'s pilot, while showering him with accusations that the passengers of the ill-fated *Swallow* were victims of a reckless and irresponsible steamboat race with the *Rochester* and the *Express* on their non-stop evening run from Albany to New York. No doubt one reason for such suspicions was that the *Swallow*, one of the fastest steamers on the Hudson, had often engaged, particularly with the *Rochester*, in competitions, which had become a popular, though dangerous, sport among pilots. Although a good deal of blame was unfairly heaped up upon him, Burnett was finally exonerated roughly one year after the disaster.

The original "Helmsman of Lake Erie" has often been said to have its origins in the conflagration of the *Erie* on Lake Erie on August 9, 1841. This was the worst steamboat tragedy on Lake Erie up to that time. A large number of immigrant families from Switzerland and Germany were on board, an aspect that the Maynard legend does *not* take into account. Yet the ballad by Emil Rittershaus very clearly comes to terms with the issue of immigration, a central element in the 1841 *Erie* tragedy. The second element in Rittershaus's ballad, as already mentioned, is the wager and the race (here, against the clock, not against another ship). It is entirely feasible that the 1841 *Erie* (representing "the problematic aspects of immigration") and the 1845 *Swallow* (representing "the inherent perils of a race") formed the historical pillars upon which Rittershaus built his moving ballad. Although after nearly one year, the objective verdict (leading to William Burnett's acquittal) was that the rumored race of the *Swallow* was indeed only vacuous newspaper sensationalism, there are to this very day still references to the *Swallow* purporting that she met her end in a race.

One prominent John Maynard researcher, George Salomon [2] claimed, back in 1977, that the shipwreck of the *Swallow* was "a relatively everyday occurrence" ("*ein verhältnismäßig alltägliches Ereignis*"), and, consequently, due to the relatively low number of casualties (estimates vary from 13 to 40 out of roughly 300 passengers), could hardly have been worthy of serious consideration. What Salomon was not in a position to undertake over thirty years

ago was to run a check of newspaper coverage of the event through the Internet. Between August 1841 and August 1845, there are only two major steamboat wrecks that receive 4-column coverage in the New York *Weekly Herald*: the *Erie* on Lake Erie (three columns on August 14 & four columns on August 21; cf.

http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/18411.pdf) and the *Swallow* on the Hudson (four columns on April 12, 1845: cf. **Appendix**, Text 2, pp. 14-26). Although there were a number of other steamer disasters, particularly on the Mississippi, they never received more than three paragraphs, and were not placed on either the first or second page of the issue.

The question of “body count” was not nearly so decisive as proximity: the Hudson was New York’s lifeline, whereas, to put it bluntly, a tragedy on the Mississippi only tended to make a New Yorker yawn. Secondly, accusations were aired. There was the suspicion of a demonic and irresponsible steamboat race during a snowstorm in the dark of the night. This was no doubt due to the fact that the *Rochester* was directly behind the *Swallow*, and that both very fast boats had a lengthy record of racing.^[3] Then there was impatience with the proprietors to raise the *Swallow* so that, should there be any bodies trapped in the submerged lower cabins (a foregone conclusion, although none were later found), they should not remain in a “watery grave.” Admittedly, early reports of the tragedy also grossly exaggerated the possibility of “Many Lives Lost” (the *Weekly Herald*’s subheading of April 12!), which added to speculation as to the immensity of the disaster. The fact that it was an extremely dark and chilly night, in the midst of a blinding snowstorm, no doubt served to augment the horror of the event.

Salomon, in his statement of 1977, remarks that the very name “Swallow” need not be of historical significance, but *only* a poetic name, suggestive of swiftness. The reader will obviously agree with Salomon that the name is well chosen and most suitable within a poetic context. Whether, however, the *historical* aspect should be committed to the wastepaper basket is another question. Tragedies dealing with transportation have always sold newspapers, both now as in the first half of the 19th century. The possibility of their transatlantic distribution and reception in Germany can hardly be ruled out. New York’s papers were eagerly grabbed up for international distribution of their news items. The 1841 *Erie* tragedy, for instance, was presented in a Leipzig paper in the form of *eyewitness* reports. [Cf. “An Investigation of American Source Material Used by the *Gewerbe-Blatt für Sachsen* in Leipzig, Germany on October 8th, 1841, under the Heading ‘Loss of the *Erie*’” :

http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/SCAEssay.pdf.] That the *Swallow*, which received at least as much coverage as the *Erie* in New York, should not have been newsworthy in both England and Germany, is highly doubtful. As was mentioned in my earlier article entitled the “*Mysterious Swallow*,” the 1845 event was also used by Currier & Ives (as well as other lithographic illustrators) to dramatize the tragedy. Not even the *Erie* received such attention from illustrators: cf. p.5,

http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/MysteriousSwallow.pdf .

An **Appendix** at the end of this paper presents a number of newspaper articles dealing with the shipwreck of the *Swallow*. Lines marked in red are this writer’s emphasis and often refer to possible links either with the Maynard motif or Lake Erie.

At this point, a final consideration, which has never been broached, is the question of *linkage* between the original 1845 “Helmsman of Lake Erie” and the news coverage of the *Swallow*.

It goes without saying that the good name “Swallow” could not be used in the 1845 “Helmsman of Lake Erie” without immediately drawing the public’s attention to an event fresh in everyone’s mind. The anonymous writer opted for the name *Jersey* as the name of his ship. In my article investigating the possible authorship of James Fenimore Cooper in “The Author’s Signature,” Cooper’s novel *Satanstoe* was examined (also published in that sensitive year 1845) and its use of the geography of New Jersey. Without lengthy elaboration, Cooper in *Satanstoe* emphasized the importance of the Powles’ Hook Ferry, connecting Manhattan and Jersey City. The newly introduced steamboat ferry at Powles’ Hook (also referred to as Paulus Hook) was none other than the *Jersey*, the name of the steamer in “The Helmsman.”

Yet a *second* path leading to the name *Jersey* can be made out in connection with the *Swallow*. John H. Morrison, in his book *History of American Steam Navigation*, makes the following statement:

“In August [1843] the *Swallow* joined the *New Jersey*, and remained till the close of navigation.” (Cf. **Annotation** 3, p. 69)

What sort of steamboat was the *New Jersey*? According to an ad for the “*PEOPLE’S LINE OF STEAMBOATS FOR ALBANY*” in the June 24, 1845 edition of the *Baltimore Sun* [4], she (together with the other boats in the line) was “new and substantial,” “furnished with new and elegant state rooms, and for speed and accommodations unrivalled on the Hudson.” She, like the *Swallow*, was a night boat on the New York-Albany run.

As already stated, the *Swallow* would not have been an appropriate name for “The Helmsman” in late August of 1845. But what about the [*New*] *Jersey* – the “shadow” of the *Swallow*? The viability of this hypothesis depends, of course, on the actual impact and the ultimate “message” behind news coverage of the *Swallow* on a potential author of “The Helmsman.”

Was there anything, apart from public exposure through the Press and illustrators, that might have aroused the poetic imagination of the anonymous writer of “The Helmsman?”

The first point which obviously deserves attention is the fate of the pilot, the “Helmsman,” of the *Swallow*, William Burnett. Amazingly, he *alone*, received the blunt of criticism for the tragedy, although his behavior stood in sharp contrast to the scathing attacks of the Press. Due to the unusually high position of the *Swallow*’s bow on the small island, or “rock,” which she had rammed, it was immediately assumed that Pilot Burnett, labeled an “experienced” pilot by the Press, *and* Captain Squires *and* the whole crew *and* a number of the passengers, who had signed a *sworn statement*, had in fact *lied* as to the speed she was travelling at the time of the collision. Burnett’s behavior immediately following the collision was not that of a man insensitive to what he had inadvertently done. J. F. Bridges, an eyewitness, had the following to say in his defense (cf. **Appendix**, p. 32, Text No. 6, *The Barre Patriot*, April 25th, 1845: “The Wreck of the *Swallow* – by a Passenger. New-York, April 11”):

“But for the sake of Mr. Burnet[t], I may say in his behalf that, had those who have dealt so bitterly seen the tears that fell during that long and gloomy night in the Pilot’s room, I am sure they would join me in a petition for mercy.”

Burnett was also not quick to leave the scene and was not willing to “abandon” the *Swallow*:

“God only knows how many human beings have found a watery grave within these narrow limits. The lapse of every hour will render it more and more difficult to identify the bodies that may be found. And yet nothing has been done to raise the sunken hull. Not a single proprietor of the boat has been seen near the fatal spot. Even the captains and hands of the *Swallow*, (with the exception of Burnett, the pilot, and two others) have abandoned her, and gone up to New York to fit up another boat which is to take her place.”

Appendix, pp. 27-28, Text No. 3, *The New York Herald*, April 14, 1845, “From the *Albany Journal*, April 12”)

The basic issue behind the *Swallow* was finding a scapegoat for the tragedy. As it turned out, in April 1846, one year after the disaster, Burnett was found not guilty by the United States Circuit Court for New York (cf. Appendix, p. 36, Texts 11 & 12, *Vermont Phoenix*, April 23, 1846 & *New-Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, April 30, 1846). Could “The Helmsman” also be an answer to the *Swallow*: that a helmsman’s integrity is *above reproach* in that *a helmsman is always willing to sacrifice his life for his fellow man*?

Young William Davis, a passenger on board the *Swallow*, exhibited the courage and offered the sacrifice of a helmsman:

We grieve to learn that one of the bodies turns out to be that of William Davis, son of Nathaniel Davis, of this city, a promising young man, aged about 23, who was on his way to New York in company with his sister. He had succeeded in rescuing his sister from the threatened danger, and had placed her on board the *Rochester*, but returning to seek for Mrs. Conckling, who is yet missing, *lost his own life in the heroic effort to save others*.

(My italics, cf. Appendix, p. 24, Text No. 2, *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845, “From the *Albany Evening Journal*, April 9”)

Nowadays, the Hudson River (315 miles/507 km, total length) may well be regarded as a picturesque and rather quaint river, the scene of many delightful tales by Washington Irving and the source of inspiration of the Hudson River School of landscape painting and architecture, yet dwarfed by the majestic Mississippi, “Old Man River,” (2,348 miles/3,779 km in length) with mighty tributaries such as the Missouri (1392 miles/2240 km in length) and the Ohio (981 miles/1579 km in length), each, in itself, longer than the Hudson.

In 1845, however, a completely different vision of the Hudson is presented in an article reprinted from the *Albany Argus* entitled “The Hudson River – its Steamboats – the travel –

its increase.” [Cf. **Appendix**, p. 34, Text No. 10, *The Jamestown Journal*, October 24, 1845, “From the *Albany Argus*”] The “branches” of the Hudson, in this article, include canals (such as the Erie Canal connecting Albany and Buffalo), presumably the Great Lakes, and even the railways. Here, the Hudson is envisioned as one day extending across the Continent and connecting the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean. The Hudson was the gateway to the “great Western Domain,” which, in turn, served to increase the prosperity and growth of America’s premier city, New York:

“The Hudson has also as great resources of future increase as any river in this country.— The lengthened chain of rail-ways and canals which is constantly branching farther and farther to the west, can be properly regarded as a simple extension of the Hudson river, and this, in time, the [s---] river of 150 miles will be lengthened until it exceeds even the Missouri or, the Mississippi, for there seems not a doubt but what ultimately there will be a continuous chain of rail-way from the banks of the Hudson river to the shores of the pacific ocean. In the meantime, every mile of the progress of emigration adds to the travel on our river – for New-York will still be the city to which the business and commerce of every western settler tends.”

In the context of the *Albany Argus*, the quip by Captain Squires regarding Lake Erie might even be compared to a glance casually cast “upstream,” while the “stream,” which opened the West, remained the Hudson:

Captain Squires was truly in command, “Ah,” said he, “my good fellow, this is better than Lake Erie [5], for here we have the bottom, and I hope all are safe.”

(An account by C. Livingston, as reported from the *Rochester* at 10 P.M. on the evening of the disaster, (**Appendix**, pp. 12 & 15, Texts 1 & 2: *The Boston Daily Atlas*, April 10, 1845, & *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845)

There are basically two interpretations of Captain Squires’ joking remark: The first, rather negative, must cast blame on the Captain for grossly underestimating the danger the passengers (and he) were in. 2) An interpretation much more favorable to the good Captain would be that Captain Squires was only attempting to dispel the anxiety of his frightened passengers.

The reader might tend to regard the Captain’s allusion to the perils of Lake Erie and the relative safety of the Hudson as of only modest antiquarian interest if the notion of “safety” had been an isolated remark. Yet a similar attempt by the Captain to assuage the fears of his passengers cost a Mr. Walker of New York the life of his wife. The following is his moving account:

Mr. Walker, we understand, is a merchant of New York, who has been on a collecting tour in the western country for some months past. The scene before the coroner’s jury to-day was exceeding affecting, especially when Mr. Walker gave his testimony over the body of his lifeless wife. He said he could have saved her, and was urging her on toward the forward part of the boat, *when the captain came up to him and said, “be*

easy, there's no danger.” He released his hold of his wife’s arm, and no sooner had he done this than the water rushed in, and she was swept beyond his reach.

(Appendix, p. 25, Text No. 2: *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845, “From the *Columbian Republican*.” Italics here and in other citations are the author’s unless otherwise stated.)

In all fairness to the Captain, another version, with no mention of the Captain’s misleading words, has also been found:

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. [6]

(Appendix, p. 22, Text No. 2: *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845, “From an Athens Letter, April 8”)

Yet another statement by a “voice,” discreetly kept anonymous, and its “unfortunate” consequences, is recorded in the following:

When the boat first struck, all was confusion, until a voice was heard – “*Be calm, men – we struck a raft, but are all safe.*” This was an unfortunate statement, though evidently well meant, as many thereby were wholly unprepared for the awful situation which they were really in.

(Appendix, p. 31, Text 6: *Barre Patriot*, April 25, 1845, “To the Editor of the *Tribune*, New-York, April 11, 1845)

And for good measure, the testimony of a Mr. Earnest, from James Fenimore Cooper’s Cooperstown, records the confusion resulting from the anonymous “word given out” that “all [was] safe:”

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 bow of the boat, but were arrested by flames issuing from the furnace rooms, near the boilers, which happily prevented many from obeying the order, as those who were forward were all saved. [7]

(Appendix, p. 22, Text 2, *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845, “From an Athens Letter, April 8,” and *The Arkansas State Gazette*, May 5, 1845)

These instances of supposed safety are reminiscent of the impending tragedy on board the *Jersey* in “The Helmsman of Lake Erie,” when the passengers, in a passage dripping with dramatic irony, are blind to the dangers of their voyage:

“In short one and all were like men who thought that, let danger come to them when it might, at least it would not be that day.”

One fascinating vignette in the collage of incidents pertaining to the *Swallow* is the cryptic tale of the “strong-hearted ruffian:”

In the very height of the confusion and dismay on the upper deck, when all was darkness, the snow falling fast, the boat sinking rapidly, wives shrieking for husbands, sisters for brothers, and children for parents, and *the accents of prayer best befitted the lips, the voice of a strong-hearted ruffian was heard even above the tumult, pouring volleys of oaths at the poor agonized females around him, because of the emotion they exhibited.* (Appendix, p. 17, Text 2, *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845)

The expression “strong heart” is the English etymology of the surname “Maynard.” The “ruffian” easily reminds us of the “bluff, weather-beaten sailor,” who did not mince words when confronted by emotional womenfolk in “The Helmsman.” Whether this “coarse” individual on the *Swallow* confronted the anxious ladies with the bitter truth and, in spite of his impatient “volleys of oaths,” reminded them that “accents of prayer best befitted the [female] lips,” is, of course, a matter of interpretation. Yet, a glance at “The Helmsman,” when the wheelsman is surrounded by women passengers badgering him with anxious questions, provides a comparable scenario:

“But, to speak the truth,” he added, “we are all in great danger; and I think if there was a little less talking and a little more praying, it would be the better for us, and none the worse for the boat.”

As can be seen quite clearly, the second major motif in the wreck of the *Swallow* is the ominous ambivalence between safety and danger. The thin line separating life and death, the paramount need to be *conscious* of imminent danger and not indulge in fatal self-deception could well have provided an impulse to create a “strong-hearted ruffian” by the name of Maynard, the “ruffian” metamorphosed into the paragon (“a diamond in the rough”) of the common man of the western frontier, a simple and honest soul, with perhaps one petty character flaw (his impatience with emotional womenfolk), who was honest enough to tell his women passengers the unadulterated truth, one who was Christian enough to insist on the need for prayer in a moment of crisis, and finally, one who, in spite of his bluff behavior, was above reproach, as was evinced by his ultimate sacrifice *for the lives of others*. Due to the unusually short time span separating the wreck of the *Swallow* and publication of “The Helmsman of Lake Erie,” together with significant intertwining motifs, the impact of the *Swallow* may indeed go further than the adoption of the poetic name in the Lake Erie ballads of three German poets decades later.

Annotations:

1) For a translation of **Emil Rittershaus**’s ballad *Ein deutsches Herz* into English, cf. http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/HerzEnglish.pdf .

2) Cf. **George Salomon**’s typewritten unpublished statement (New York, September 1977) entitled ZU FONTANES “JOHN MAYNARD”: NOCHMALS DER SCHIFFSNAME

“SCHWALBE”. The document (unnumbered) is on file in the “George-Salomon Akte,” in the Fontane Archives in Potsdam, Germany.

3) Cf. **John H. Morrison**, *History of American Steam Navigation* (New York: Stephen Daye Press, 1958), p. 54:

“There were during the period between 1830 and 1840 several steamboats built for service adjacent to New York, but none commanded so much attention as the *Rochester* and the *Swallow*, built in 1836.

The *Rochester* was built for the opposition company, and the *Swallow* for Anthony N. Hoffman of New York City, and others, who ran her in the interests of the North River line. This was the first lively and determined opposition that had been met on the Albany route, and what made it more so was the equal, or nearly so, speed of the two boats. They have been known when racing to have made over 28 revolutions of their wheels per minute, with 40 lbs. and over of steam, while their average pressure was about 20 lbs. and 24 revolutions.

This opposition was kept up for about five years, with racing at frequent intervals, and during all this time they were the acknowledged fast boats of the river. The best time made between New York and Albany, by either one of these boats, was about nine hours.”

4) *The New York Herald*, Tuesday Morning, June 24, 1845, Vol. XI, No. 172 – Whole No. 4034, p.1:

From an Advertisement for “PEOPLE’S LINE OF STEAMBOATS FOR ALBANY”

“Steamboat NEW JERSEY, Capt. R. H. FAREY, will leave on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday Afternoons, at 5 o’clock.

Passengers taking either of the above Lines will arrive in Albany in ample time for the Morning Train of Cars for the east or west.

The boats are new and substantial, are furnished with new and elegant state rooms, and for speed and accommodations are unrivalled on the Hudson.”

5) Apart from the Captain’s singular reference to the dangers of Lake Erie, a steamboat named the *Buffalo* is also mentioned twice: **Appendix**, p. 21, Text 2 (*The Weekly Herald*), “From an Athens Letter, April 8.” The *Buffalo*, as the name would suggest, generally ran from Buffalo to Detroit, the same route the *Jersey* had embarked on in “The Helmsman of Lake Erie.”

“**SUDDEN DEATH ON THE LAKE.**—Shortly after the steamboat *Buffalo* left Buffalo for Detroit, on Tuesday morning, one of the passengers for Detroit, a man whose name was afterwards found to be Charles C. Foote, was observed to stagger and fall on the deck of the boat, striking his head with great force. . . .”

The Tri-Weekly Ohio Statesman, (Columbus, Ohio), Wednesday, October 29, 1845, Vol. I, No. 52, p. 3, c.2

6) Perhaps the most flagrant example of clashing versions (in the same section of the same paper!) is that of the unfortunate Miss Wood. Although her name is not mentioned in version b), and her uncle’s name is suddenly Joseph instead of Jonas, it would seem that the reference is to the same young lady.

a) “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.”

(Appendix, p. 22, Text No. 2, *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845, “Incidents”)

b) 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.

(Appendix, p. 21, Text No. 2, *The Weekly Herald*, April 12, 1845, “Incidents”)

7) Cooperstown is not only mentioned in connection with the wreck of the *Swallow* in 1845, but twice in connection with the conflagration of the *Erie* in 1841. Cf.

http://homepage.mac.com/joel_huberman/JohnMaynard/SCAEssay.pdf, Levi Beebe and Judge Samuel Nelson on pp. 12-18.

APPENDIX:

Relevant Newspaper Clippings on the Loss of the Steamboat Swallow

Text No. 1

The Boston Daily Atlas

April 10, 1845

Vol. XIII, No. 242

FEARFUL DISASTER — *Loss of the steamer Swallow* —

The usually safe and peaceful navigation of the Hudson has been marked since the opening of the present season, by an unusual number of serious accidents; but not for many years have we been startled by an event of such magnitude, and, there is perhaps reason to fear, of such distressing consequences, as that which we are now called on to record. The *Swallow*, it appears, left Albany last evening at six o'clock, having on board passengers in numbers variously estimated at from 250 to 350. At a little after 8 o'clock, she struck upon the point of the island between the Hudson and Athens, with such force as to lift the bow entirely out of the water, break the boat in two, and render her a complete wreck. Whether any lives were lost is not certainly established, nor can it till we hear more fully from the scene of the disaster, which will be tomorrow morning. Some of the gentlemen who came down by the *Express* or *Rochester*, with whom we have conversed, are of the opinion that many must have been drowned, while others are equally confident that all on board were saved. From the early hour of the evening at which the accident occurred, there is reason to hope that few if any of the passengers had betaken themselves to their state rooms or berths, and we think that those who were dressed and stirring, must have had sufficient time to reach the deck, before the waters rushed into their cabins. About one hundred of the passengers were brought down by the *Rochester*, and fifty by the *Express*, the remainder being landed at Hudson, many preferring to stay there for the purpose of making an effort, in the morning, to recover their baggage from the wreck.

The following letter from the correspondent of Mr. Livingston, who was on board the *Rochester*, gives a graphic description of the scene.

CORRESPONDENCE OF C. LIVINGSTON, NO. 10 WALL STREET,

STEAMBOAT ROCHESTER,

10 O'CLOCK, P. M.

We left Albany at 6 o'clock this evening, following in the wake of the steamboat *Swallow*. As we neared Athens, opposite Hudson, we observed that the *Swallow* was apparently aground, and as she was well on the west shore, we steered to the Eastward. When close to her, her bell was rung, but we were under too much headway to come to until we had passed some distance ahead, although it was evident to us that she was sinking. Every effort was made to bring the *Rochester* about, but being on the Hudson flats, with a strong northwest wind, we were unable to accomplish it until an anchor could be rigged and let go, which enabled the boat to drift round and head towards the wreck. Much credit is due to Capt. Cruttenden and his pilots. They made every effort for dispatch, but our anxiety, and the cries for aid of the sufferers ringing in our ears, made each moment seem an hour. On coming alongside of the *Swallow*, we found her bow completely out of water, high up on a rock, the

boat broken in two, and her stern under the water, which was over the hurricane deck. Captain Squire[s] was truly in command, *“Ah,” said he, “my good fellow, this is better than Lake Erie, for here we have the bottom, and I hope all are safe.”* The ladies’ cabin was about ten feet under water, and much anxiety was felt lest some of them were drowned. But from inquiries made among the passengers, I think all the ladies came upon the upper deck, and were saved. When the water came up to the furnaces, it caused the flames to rush out, and in the confusion many thought that the boat was on fire, and jumped overboard, but we have every reason to suppose that all who did were rescued. The evening was extremely dark, so as to require that the boats should be run with less than their usual headway. The steamer *Express*, which was also in the wake of the *Swallow*, got alongside of her before the *Rochester*. Both boats remained alongside until all the passengers, and as much of the baggage as could be got at, were taken off. There was much excitement on board the *Rochester*, and the hundred ready to advise, and the many obstacles in the way of getting the boat about, rendered it a time of peculiar embarrassment to her commander. The moment when it was supposed that the *Swallow* was on fire, was indeed one of trial to Capt. Cruttenden, yet he was cool, calm and collected, and commanded his vessel in such a manner as showed that he is a man to be depended upon in any emergency.

A more lamentable account is given by a passenger, in a letter to the editors of the *Tribune*, which we copy. His description of the catastrophe is appalling —

STEAMBOAT ROCHESTER,

Tuesday, 3 o’clock, A. M.

My Dear Friend: You may value a few lines, from an eye witness, descriptive of the terrible accident which befell the *Swallow* last evening. At 8 o’clock, when going at a rapid rate, the boat struck on a small rock island abreast the town of Athens and city of Hudson. I was sitting in the upper saloon, in conversation. At the first severe shock the passengers rushed below, but fears were calmed for the moment by the outcry that we had only come in contact with a raft.

But our ears were speedily assailed by the appalling sounds of the rending timbers, and the evident destruction of the boat; while the stern settled with frightful rapidity. Those who had “turned in.” in the after cabin, had barely time to leap from their berths before the water was upon them. You can imagine the horrors of the scene at this moment, when more than three hundred souls were thus exposed, in the midst of falling snow, and almost utter darkness. As the water reached the boiler fires, a sheet of mingled steam, smoke, and flame, poured into the boat, illuminating the ghastly countenances with the sudden glare of vivid [lurid?] light, and completing the consternation. The conviction that the curse of fire was to be added to our other imminent perils, curbed the resolution of the stoutest hearts. But the rapid sinking of the boat extinguished the fires, and all was darkness again.

In less than five minutes, by the blessing of God, the stern rested on the bottom, the water being above the windows of the aft saloon state rooms. Several females were drawn out of state rooms by dashing in the windows; two almost exhausted — one, very aged, and now

lying on board this boat, in a precarious situation — were taken from the ladies' cabin, by cutting through the floor. They had sustained themselves on settees, with only a few inches of breathing room for their faces.

By this time, the alarm had been thoroughly communicated to the shore, on either side. The bells of the churches began to ring, and the river was covered with torches, waving in the fleet of boats that put off to our assistance; while the *Rochester*, which had found it difficult to get to us, and the *Express*, which had now come up, were gradually approaching alongside. The sound of the bells, pealing on the air, the shouts of those in the boats, the light of the waving torches, and the wailing grief of many on the wreck, constituted features of a most impressive scene.

In the course of an hour all were taken off who remained in the *Rochester*, the past seeming like a terrible dream. It can scarcely be but that several are lost. Many leaped immediately overboard, in that frenzy of mind which precluded the power of self-preservation in the water. The doors of most of the state rooms were so sprung at once as to be immovable, and examination will probably discover the dead within some of them. I can scarcely hope otherwise.

The boat is a complete wreck. It was a mournful sight as we cast off from her side. The Captain behaved nobly — calming fears, and making his voice heard every where in advice, with the most thorough judgment and self possession. The baggage is almost all deep under water, and will be recovered only in a damaged state.

Our hearty thanks are due to the officers of the *Rochester* and *Express*, for their prompt assistance and untiring assiduity to save every thing that hand could be laid on.

Friends in the *Rochester* tell me that the yell of a gong, as they describe it, which came to their ears from the sinking boat, was of a character never to be forgotten.

Yours truly,

HENRY HARRINGTON.

N B. — *Morning* — The apprehensions of loss of life which I have expressed above, are fully realized. Several females were seen to be washed off by the water, as it rose above the guards, and all, it is thought, could not have escaped from the cabins. Several on board our boat have nothing but their night dresses.

MEETING OF THE PASSENGERS — At a meeting of those persons who were passengers on board the steamboat *Swallow*, on her passage down the river, 7th of April, 1845, held on the same evening, on board the steamboat *Rochester*, the Hon. Gideon Hard, of Albion, was appointed chairman, and the hon. James Jarvis of New York, secretary. John Paine, James Jarvis, Gideon Hard, Day O'Kellog and Samuel Cary were appointed a committee to recommend suitable resolutions for the consideration of the meeting.

The committee reported the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That the Steamboat *Swallow*, at the time of the happening of the melancholy accident this evening, in the Athens channel, was running considerably below her usual speed, it being at the time very dark, and the snow falling in such quantities as to render it very difficult for the pilot to discover the shores.

Resolved, That Captain Squires, of the *Swallow*, during the continuance of the danger to which the passengers were exposed, conducted himself with a coolness and self possession worthy of all praise, and by so doing contributed essentially to the safety of the passengers.

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting are eminently due to the Captains of the steamboats *Express* and *Rochester*, as well as to the citizens of Athens and Hudson, for a very prompt relief by which we were rescued.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be signed by the chairman and secretary, and such of the passengers as are present, and be published.

GIDEON HARD, Chairman.

JAMES JARVIS, Secretary

N.Y. Com. Advertiser.

Text No. 2

The Weekly Herald

(New York, N. Y.)

Saturday, April 12, 1845

Vol. X, No. 15 (Whole No. 483)

p. 113 (first page), c. 1-4

Wreck of the Steamboat Swallow.

MANY LIVES LOST.

We learn from Livingston & Co. that the steamer *Swallow*, Capt. Squire, while on her passage from Albany to this city, was wrecked on Monday evening, at eight o'clock, by

running on a ledge of rocks near Hudson. She had between three and four hundred passengers on board at the time.

Our accounts differ in regard to the number of lives lost — some saying 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.

It appears that three boats, the *Swallow*, *Rochester*, and *Express*, were coming down the river in sight of each other — the *Swallow* leading. Her pilot, a careless fellow, determined to keep ahead, run with unchecked speed through a narrow passage off Athens, where a ledge of rocks bulges up from the river. These rocks are plainly to be seen, and every pilot on the river is acquainted with their locality; yet, strange as it may seem, the *Swallow* ran plump on to them and immediately “broke her back.” This occurred about eight o’clock. She lay on the rocks a few minutes before she began to sink — time enough to lull the first alarm of the passengers. — Water, however, soon entered the cabin when her stern went down almost immediately. All her passengers rushed into the saloon. When the water reached the fires and boilers, it generated so much steam and gas, and sending up a lurid flame, consternation spread among the passengers, and twenty or thirty instantly threw themselves into the river — one lady exclaiming “My God! My God! Are we to be burnt alive?” By this time the *Rochester* and *Express* were alongside rescuing passengers from the wreck, and small boats from the shore were picking up those in the water.

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

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

Daniel Webster was a passenger on board the *Rochester*.

In addition to the above, we have received a letter from Livingston & Co., which we annex: —

STEAMBOAT ROCHESTER, 10 o’clock, P. M.

[See p. 11 of this collection]

We left Albany at 6 o’clock this evening, following in the wake of the steamboat *Swallow*. As we neared Athens, opposite Hudson, we observed that the *Swallow* was apparently aground, and as she was well on the west shore, we steered to the eastward. When close to her, her bell was rung, but we were under too much headway to come to until we had passed some distance ahead, although it was evident to us that she was sinking.— Every effort was made to bring the *Rochester* about, but being on the Hudson flats, with a strong northwest wind, we were unable to accomplish it until an anchor could be rigged and let go, which enabled the boat to drift round and head towards the wreck. Much credit is due to Capt. Cruttenden and his pilots. They made every effort for dispatch, but our anxiety, and the cries for aid of the sufferers ringing in our ears, made each moment seem an hour. On coming alongside of the *Swallow*, we found her bow completely out of water, high up on a rock, the boat broken in two, and her stern under the water, which was over the hurricane deck. Captain Squire was truly in command, “Ah,” said he, “my good fellow, this is better than Lake Erie, for here we have the bottom, and I hope all are safe.” The ladies’ cabin was about ten feet under water, and much

anxiety was felt lest some of them were drowned. But from inquiries made among the passengers, I think all the ladies came upon the upper deck, and were saved. When the water came up to the furnaces, it caused the flames to rush out, and in the confusion many thought that the boat was on fire, and jumped overboard, but we have every reason to suppose that all who did were rescued. The evening was extremely dark, so as to require that the boats should be run with less than their usual headway. The steamer *Express*, which was also in the wake of the *Swallow*, got alongside of her before the *Rochester*. Both boats remained alongside until all the passengers, and as much of the baggage as could be got at, were taken off. There was much excitement on board the *Rochester*, and the hundred ready to advise, and the many obstacles in the way of getting the boat about, rendered it a time of peculiar embarrassment to her commander. The moment when it was supposed that the *Swallow* was on fire, was indeed one of trial to Capt. Cruttenden, yet he was cool, calm and collected, and commanded his vessel in such a manner as showed that he is a man to be depended upon in any emergency.

This disaster, was caused wholly by the gross carelessness of the pilot of the *Swallow*. On him all the blame rests; and we hope and trust that the proper authorities will not let this affair rest without a searching investigation. The lives of the thousands of human beings who travel on the Hudson, indeed, who travel all over the United states, ought not to be endangered and trifled with by the carelessness which has been displayed on this occasion. The ledge of rocks, on which the *Swallow* struck, is well known; and there is not a particle of excuse for wrecking this fine boat, or playing at “paw paw” with the lives of the three hundred passengers on board. Let the affair be thoroughly investigated.

ADDITIONAL. —[See p. 4 of this collection]

At a meeting of those persons who were passengers on board the steamboat *Swallow*, on her passage down the river, 7th of April, 1845, held on the same evening, on board the steamboat *Rochester*, the Hon. Gideon Hard, of Albion, was appointed chairman, and the hon. James Jarvis of New York, secretary. John Paine, James Jarvis, Gideon Hard, Day O’Kellog and Samuel Carr were appointed a committee to recommend suitable resolutions for the consideration of the meeting.

The committee reported the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted.

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Resolved, That Captain Squires, of the *Swallow*, during the continuance of the danger to which the passengers were exposed, conducted himself with a coolness and self possession worthy of all praise, and by so doing contributed essentially to the safety of the passengers.

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting are eminently due to the Captains of the steamboats *Express* and *Rochester*, as well as to the citizens of Athens and Hudson, for a very prompt relief by which we were rescued.

Resolved, That the proceedings of this meeting be signed by the chairman and secretary, and such of the passengers as are present, and be published.

GIDEON HARD, Chairman.

JAMES JARVIS, Secretary

List of Passengers Saved.— Mr. Hard, Albion; David L. French, New Lebanon; Roland Buck, Buffalo; A. W. Coles, J. T. Potter, Leyden, Livingston county; James B. Robinson, Stephentown; Edward Ivison, Auburn; W. Stipen, do; S. P. Cranson, do; Thomas Baldwin,

Va: J.C. Abbott, Utica; James Barber, New York city; W. H. Miles, Brooklyn; Wm. McMurray, Lansingburg; James Lahrison, Troy; James Dickson, Albany; W. H. Graves, Bellville; . . . [ca. 140 passengers listed under “saved”]

Mrs. Conklin is not to be found.

Just before the boat struck, the engine had been stopped, as the pilot did not exactly know his whereabouts. — The fare being very low, there were a great number of passengers, an unusual proportion of whom were females. It was full twenty minutes before any assistance whatever arrived; and, when the boats from the shore came up, they very wisely remained at the distance of a rod or two, for they perceived that the steamer was fast, and knew enough of human nature to realize that, did they approach close to the wreck, the rush of trembling fellow beings would inevitably swamp them, and increase the ultimate danger. But this precaution leads to the greater fear that several lives have been lost; for many jumped overboard, especially in that terrible moment when the boat was seemingly a sheet of flame amid ships, and no hope existed but in a trust to the chilling waters. One gentleman, of plethoric proportions, opened a window of the saloon in the first agony of alarm, squeezed himself through with all his clothing upon him, on the Hudson side, where it is a mile to the shore; and it seems scarcely possible that he can have been saved. Several estimable ladies, diligently inquired after this morning, on board both the *Rochester* and *Express*, could not be found, and sad apprehensions are entertained. As the berth list of the *Swallow* was by no means complete, the full extent of the loss cannot be ascertained until it be known from many scattered and distant homes, who had probably trusted themselves to the fated vessel. There were several passengers from the Western states. The awful scene exhibited to the self possessed observer many striking traits of human nature. In the very height of the confusion and dismay on the upper deck, when all was darkness, the snow falling fast, the boat sinking rapidly, wives shrieking for husbands, sisters for brothers, and children for parents, and ***the accents of prayer best befitted the lips, the voice of a strong-hearted ruffian was heard even above the tumult, pouring volleys of oaths at the poor agonized females around him, because of the emotion they exhibited.*** A gentleman was hurrying up from the lower cabin, with difficulty escaping the pursuit of the waters, and when he reached the saloon he saw a husband hasten from a state room beside him, closely hugging a valise, while his wife, with an infant in her arms, and another little child by her side, shrieked to him as he rushed away, never turning his head to view their fate — “Husband! Husband! In God’s name, drop your valise and save your wife and children!” But he disappeared unheeding! A gentleman, although he had apparently lost every thing, except the clothing on his back, did not make an effort for himself until he had secured the safety of that family. We rejoice to be able to offset so fiendish an exhibition of selfishness, with the energy of disinterested generosity. A passenger gave his little boy, about two years old, to a person near him to take care of, while he was looking for his wife, whom he found; but upon looking for his child and the person to whom he had entrusted it, they were no where to be found and no account of them was received up to yesterday evening. Great fears are entertained for their safety.

The boat is broken entirely open. The engine, &c., may be saved, provided it holds together long enough to raise them. But it is so complete a wreck, that a high wind is likely to break her entirely up.

[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 to day, 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.]

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 any thing 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 foreward cabin. Alarmed by the shock, they rushed aft, the chambermaid passing through the entire length of the [wo?] cabins, and ascending by the after stairs to the ladies' cabin, on the main deck. The water followed with great rapidity, and withing three or four minutes after the accident, the lower cabin was filled with water. The greatest alarm now prevailed, and every body [...*illegible*...] the state-room deck. An opening [...*illegible*...] roofing of the state room 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, recued 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 in 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.

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 bow of the boat, but were arrested by flames issuing 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 this paragraph were illegible in this issue of *The Weekly Herald*, words and expressions in brackets have been taken from 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.

[From the *Hudson Gazette* – April 9 – 6 P. M.]

Large numbers have visited the wreck today, all appearing anxious to get a view of the remains of the ill-fated *Swallow*. The tide has been unusually low – lower than has been known for a long time. Five more bodies have been obtained, four from the wreck and one from the river, all females.

One of the bodies recovered has been identified as that of Mrs. Walker, from New York. Her husband was on board at the time, and when the boat went down, had hold of his wife, but the current was so strong as to tear her from him – he, however, retaining a part of her dress in his grasp.

Another body has been identified as that of Mrs. Coffin, an old lady, and mother of George M. Coffin, whose wife was found yesterday. Mrs. Coffin was sister of the late Capt. Reuben Moores, of this city.

The bodies of the other three, we understand, have not been identified as yet. They were removed from the wreck to the hotel of Mr. Cobb, where the Coroner held an inquest.

It has been ascertained that two of the bodies found yesterday, were those of two sisters, by the name of Wood, who reside in Albany.

We understand that it was given in testimony before the Coroner's Jury yesterday, that the boat, at the time she struck, was only going at the rate of six miles an hour.

The pilot informed us to-day, that it was his intention to have stopped at Athens, and to have laid by until the squall had passed over.

There has nothing new transpired in regard to this sad catastrophe. We shall keep our readers advised of every thing of importance that transpires.

[From the *Albany Evening Journal*, April 9]

There are many rumors afloat of individuals missing or lost, but we refrain from publishing them until confirmed. The *Hope*, which came up from Hudson this morning, brings no further particulars. The weather yesterday was so tempestuous as to prevent any measures being taken to raise the hull or get into the cabins, where, it is feared, many bodies remain. The boat is broken into three pieces: the forward part lying upon the Island, at an angle of thirty-five degrees with the water, and the bow some ten or fifteen feet above the rock. The *Swallow* must have been going at great speed at the time of the accident, to have run so far up on the rock.

We are yet at a loss to conjecture how it was possible for *an experienced pilot, as Mr. Burnett, of the Swallow, is known to be, to have run his vessel aground*, in the Athens

channel, with the Hudson and Athens lights on either side, and the bold outline of Prospect Hill in front, to guide his course.

There were six members of the Legislature on board the *Swallow*, viz.: – Mr. Hard, of the Senate, and Messrs. Mather, Wyekeff, Frisbee, Stevenson and Jarvis of the Assembly. When the boat struck, Mr. Hard was sitting in the ladies' cabin engaged in conversation. The crash was dreadful, and there was a general rush to the main, and thence to the upper deck, Mr. Hard, discovering that the bow was f[a]st, while the stern of the boat was rapidly sinking, called upon all to go forward. Just at this moment the flames burst out from the wheel house and undoubtedly drove many back who were making their way to the bow. Mr. Hard persevered, and by the aid of a ladder, descended, with some sixty others, from the bow of the boat upon the island on which she struck. He saw two ladies jump overboard, but the darkness was such that he could not [help] them, nor [tell what....illegible....] several ladies were drawn out of the water upon the island while Mr. H remained there.

We learn from other sources that the hull broke in two almost immediately after the boat struck, and the water rushed into the cabins like a torrent. Many sprang overboard when the fire broke out, thinking that the only chance of escape [left].

It is impossible yet to guess at the number of victims of this appalling catastrophe. There is but too much reason to fear that as many as thirty or forty persons have perished. The *John Mason*, which came up from the wreck last night, brought with her six dead bodies, five females and one male. The two Misses Wood, sisters of Doctor Wood, of this city, were among the number; the others were taken up to Troy, where it was supposed that they belonged. We grieve to learn that one of the bodies turns out to be that of William Davis, son of Nathaniel Davis, of this city, a promising young man, aged about 23, who was on his way to New York in company with his sister. He had succeeded in rescuing his sister from the threatened danger, and had placed her on board the *Rochester*, but returning to seek for Mrs. Conckling, who is yet missing, **lost his own life in the heroic effort to save others**. Most deeply do we sympathize with his respected father and family in their afflicting bereavement.

When the vessel struck first time, one of the colored waiters jumped overboard, and swam about for some time, but at length returned to the boat, where his first act was to take from **his** vest pocket three one dollar bills and dry them before the fire. Notwithstanding the danger all were in, this drew forth a smile from many who witnessed it. Many intelligent passengers who have called upon us, are of the opinion that it was impossible for the great number of passengers to escape, from the ladies' cabin in particular; and that they believe the the loss of life will be eventually found to be much greater than is at present thought of.

The following is from a passenger in the *Swallow*, on the night of the accident: –

I was one of the passengers in the *Swallow* on Monday evening, and never do I want to be the witness of another scene such as occurred on board this boat. I had just returned to my state room, after taking tea in the lower cabin, when I felt the boat strike with tremendous force against what I thought was some other boat. Immediately I heard an uproar through the cabins, with confused cries that we had struck ground and were sinking. I put on my cloak,

and rushed out upon the guard up to my hips in water. I was astounded and bewildered at the sight which presented itself to my view. Although the night was very dark, I could see a number of bodies in the river, some clinging to the guard of the boat, which was then fast sinking under water. *At this moment a fireman rushed from the boiler room and gave the cry of "fire."* I then gave myself up to despair, and resolved to jump overboard, and try to gain the shore. I proceeded to the top of the state rooms, where one of the most heart-rending scenes presented itself to my view that was ever witnessed. The bells of Hudson and Athens were sounding the alarm, and we could hear the shouts from voices on the shore; but this only added to our agony, as we knew they could be of no service to us at this awful moment. Although the confusion at this moment was great, I distinctly recollect seeing several men throw themselves into the river. I know not what became of them, but I suppose they found a watery grave.

A gentleman just arrived from Athens informs us that among the persons lost is Mrs. Parker, of Utica, widow of the late Milton Parker. Her body has not been found.

PASSENGERS SAVED:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| The <i>Express</i> took on board..... | 40 |
| The <i>Rochester</i> | 91 |
| Carried to Athens and Hudson..... | 70 |
| Total..... | 201 |

It is now supposed that there were five [...*illegible*] on board.

[From the *Columbia Republican*]

Exertions have been made all day to recover the bodies of the drowned passengers, and the result has been the recovery of five more, all females, making in all eleven. Four were taken from the boat, and one from the river, a short distance from the wreck – With the exception of the latter, who appears to be about 30 years, they appear to be all between 40 and 50 years of age. Two have been recognized by their friends; one a Mrs. Coffin, of West Troy, and the other Mrs. Walker, of New York. On the person of one other of the ladies was found a card on which was written in pencil “Mrs. Skidmore,” and in her pocket a handkerchief marked with indelible ink, “H. Conklin.” The body is supposed to be that of Mrs. Conklin, of Albany. We learn that in the pockets of the young man recovered yesterday, there were found a handkerchief, marked “Sarah Brundage,” a large roll of bank bills, and memoranda for the purchase of hardware. It was presumed that he was a western merchant proceeding to New York to purchase goods. On Mrs. Walker, whose body was found to-day, there was a pocket book containing a large sum of money. Her husband recognized her by a miniature of himself, attached to a gold chain, which she wore around her neck. Mr. Walker, we understand, is a merchant of New York, who has been on a collecting tour in the western country for some months past. The scene before the coroner’s jury to-day was exceeding affecting, especially when Mr. Walker gave his testimony over the body of his lifeless wife. He said he could have saved her, and was urging her on toward the forward part of the boat,

when the captain came up to him and said, "*be easy, there's no danger.*" He released his hold of his wife's arm, and no sooner had he done this than the water rushed in, and she was swept beyond his reach.

The son of General Mather, who was supposed to have been lost, is safe. He floated on a plank, and was picked up a good distance from the wreck.

THE RECENT CALAMITY ON THE HUDSON – RACING OF STEAMBOATS – It seems to be the general impression on the public mind, that the late dreadful calamity to the *Swallow*, was caused by the reckless racing of that boat with others, and the gross carelessness of her pilot, William Burnett. In the *Albany Atlas* of the 9th instant, we find an account of the disaster, and the particulars of a steamboat race next to it. The latter of which we annex:–

ON BOARD STEAMBOAT KNICKERBOCKER, April 1[3?]

A great deal of anxiety has been manifested by the friends of the steamboats *Knickerbocker* and *Empire*, relative to the speed of the two boats. An opportunity, accordingly, offered itself yesterday, and they came out of New York together for the first time, at 6 o'clock, the *Empire* starting about a length and a half ahead.

It was a grand and imposing sight to witness the thousands of persons on the docks, cheering as we bounded along at lightning speed, in chase of the *Empire*.

The following is the time made by the *Knickerbocker*: –

Left foot of Courtland street, about a length behind the *Empire*, at..... ..6 h. 2 m.

Arrived at Hamilton street dock, Albany, the *Empire* not in sight, at.....2 41

Both boats were in admirable running order, and no part of their machinery broke while running, so that the race has been fairly contested throughout.

If this racing is permitted, we shall soon hear of another accident much worse than that of the *Swallow*. The Hudson is surely becoming the race course to eternity.

Text No. 3

The New York Herald

(New York, N. Y.)

Monday Morning, April 14, 1845

Vol. XI, No. 10[3?] – Whole No. 40[6?]5

p. 2, c. 4

WRECK OF THE SWALLOW – The Albany papers of Saturday contain further particulars of the dreadful disaster to the *Swallow*.

There seems to be blame attached to all concerned with this ill-fated boat. She has now been under water five days, and no effort made to raise, although it is supposed that several bodies are yet in her cabin.

The more we hear of this shocking affair, the more culpable appears the conduct of William Burnett, the pilot.

[From *Albany Journal*, April 12.]

[In] company with a large number of our citizens, we went to Athens, in the steamer Sandusky, for the purpose of examining the wreck, and satisfying ourselves as to the position of the ill-fated *Swallow*. We have rarely looked upon a more appalling sight. The rock upon which the *Swallow* struck is about 15 feet high and some 40 feet by 30 feet broad. On the inner or west side there is a thin sheet of water, perhaps four rods across, which at low tide a man can easily wade. On the outer or eastern side of the rock the water is deep, the channel running within a rod or two. Looking to the south, the rock is just in the line of the Athens docks, distant about fifteen rods. To the north, however, the channel inclines somewhat to the westward of this range. The entire bow of the *Swallow* rests upon the rock, her stem being 30 feet above the water's level. The whole of the after part of the boat (say 80 to 100 feet) is under water. This includes the ladies' cabin on the main deck and a few of the state rooms on the upper deck. The gentlemen's cabins below are, of course, full of water. The *Swallow* lies with her head pointing in shore, making an angle with the direction of the channel of some [20] degrees. If the rock had not been there, the *Swallow*, from the course she was taking, must have run up high and dry on the Athens shore. It has been said that the *Swallow* was not in the usual channel. This is an error. The Athens, or west channel, is much the most direct, the widest and the deepest, and is always preferred by steamboats which do not land at Hudson. It has also been pointed out that the second pilot was at the wheel when the boat struck. This is equally a mistake. We had it yesterday from Mr. Burnett's own lips, that he took the wheel about six miles above Hudson, and was at his post when the disaster occurred. He can give no other account or explanation of it, than the night was so dark as to deceive him as to the lay of the land. He states, however, that he could see the lights on shore. A wide difference of opinion exists as to the rate at which the *Swallow* was going when she struck the rock. The engineers, firemen and pilots, as we were informed at Athens yesterday, all swore before the Coroner's Jury, that the boat was not going much over six miles an hour, when she struck. No man can look at the wreck with the bow forced nearly forty or fifty feet up on the rock, without an instant and unchangeable conviction, that her speed must have been much greater than this testimony makes it out. After all, however, the heaviest charge remains to be brought against the proprietors of the boat. Five nights and as many days have passed since the accident occurred, and the *Swallow* still remains with the ladies' Saloon and main cabins entirely under water. God only knows how many human beings have found a watery grave within these narrow limits. The lapse of every hour will render it more and more difficult to

identify the bodies that may be found. And yet nothing has been done to raise the sunken hull. Not a single proprietor of the boat has been seen near the fatal spot. *Even the captains and hands of the Swallow, (with the exception of Burnett, the pilot, and two others) have abandoned her*, and gone up to New York to fit up another boat which is to take her place. Many persons are still at Hudson and Athens endeavoring to ascertain the fate of missing relatives or friends. No traces have been discovered of Gen. Mather's little boy. A letter, received in this city yesterday, from a young lady, who was drawn from the river about 15 minutes after the *Swallow* struck, states that just after being washed off the boat, she was clasped round the neck by a little girl, and that they sank together; but the child losing her hold, she rose again and happened to strike a settee, clung to it until rescued. The river, it is feared, has yet to give up all its victims. A large number of boats, however, are constantly employed in dragging the bottom for a mile or more below the fatal rock.

[From *Albany Advertiser*, April 12.]

We stated yesterday that of the passengers saved from the *Swallow*, 94 were taken on board the *Rochester*. We are told that over 150 of the *Swallow*'s tickets were taken by the *Rochester*'s officers, some of the *Swallow*'s passengers had mislaid their tickets, and it is supposed that the *Rochester* could not have had less than 165 of those saved on board. Thus, supposing the number taken on board the *Express* is correctly stated at 40, and the number landed at Athens and Hudson is 70, makes an aggregate of 275 saved. To this number add the 13, whose bodies have been found, and there is a total of 283. The number estimated to have been on board the *Swallow* was about 300. Should this calculation prove correct, it may be that but few bodies remain to be recovered. The loss of life already ascertained is sufficient to render this calamity deeply heart-rending.

The *Troy Whig* of last evening contains notices for the funeral of three ladies who were lost on board the *Swallow*. Mrs. George Coffin, Miss Lucy Briggs, and Miss Elizabeth Spencer, all of whom were buried yesterday afternoon. In addition to the loss of lives of the citizens of Troy, which must throw a gloom over that beautiful city, the pecuniary loss is heavy. The *Swallow* was principally owned in Troy; she was purchased last fall for \$50,000 (and not \$24,000 as has been stated) and \$10,000 in repairs and improvements expended during the winter. She was built by Anthony N. Hoffman, of this city, and commenced running in 1836.

Text No. 4

The Southern Patriot

(Charleston, South Carolina)

Thursday Afternoon, April 17, 1845

From the Columbia Republican – Extra.

MORE FROM THE WRECK.

HUDSON, April 10, 1845.

TWO MORE BODIES FOUND – THIRTEEN IN ALL RECOVERED. – To-day two more bodies were recovered from the river, outside the ill-fated steamboat *Swallow* – one that of Miss Torrey, of Pennsylvania, and the other that of Miss Catharine T. Parker of Utica. Both were recognized by friends who were present.

We were present at the Coroner's inquest over the body of Mrs. Parker. Her brother was present, who was almost beside himself, and it was with difficulty he could be restrained. During the examination he called loudly on the Coroner and jury to bring in a verdict of *murder* against the pilot of the boat.

The body of Mrs. Ann Lam[a?]rtson, of Jamaica, L. I., has been recognized among those that were recovered.

Mrs. Gel[s]ton, of Schenectady, took passage on the *Swallow*, and has not been heard from; her friends are present at the wreck, and anxiously watching for her body. She was only 22 years of age and was recently married.

Mrs. S[ti?]llman, of N. York, is supposed also to be among the drowned.

Captain Squires thinks that no more bodies will be found in the boat. Thorough search, as far as possible, has been made during the day within the boat, but without success. A large number of persons are grappling around the boat, and hundreds of spectators are looking on.

We begin to hope that the loss of life will be limited to a small number, and that the exaggerated reports which have been circulated are without foundation.

We have seen a carefully revised list of the passengers on the *Swallow*, compiled from the Clerk's list, the list taken on the *Rochester*, and embracing those who are ascertained to have taken the *Express*, the up-boats, and to have gone ashore, which confirms our early expressed opinion, that no more than fifteen or twenty, at the outside, could have perished by this dreadful accident. We cannot publish the list referred to, as its necessarily imperfect character would lead to confusion. We shall know about all in a day or two.

Text No. 5

The New London Democrat
(New London, Connecticut)

Saturday, April 19, 1845

Vol. I, No. 5

p. 2, c. 2

THE STEAMBOAT SWALLOW

This noble boat, which was unluckily run on a rock in the North River a short time since, an account of which we gave in last week's paper, is suffered to remain there with her stern under water, without any exertions being made to raise her. This seems the more culpable, when we call to mind the fact that many persons are missing, whom it is feared may yet be found dead upon the wreck under water.

Such steamboat disasters strike a dread upon the community for the time being, but how soon such fatalities are numbered with forgotten events. The news of the conflagration of the *Lexington* went to every hamlet in the Union in a few days time, and was discussed in every circle and in every manner — but in as many months as it had been days when the event was ushered into human knowledge, the ill-fated *Lexington* had faded from our recollection, unless some cord more tender than the rest had nourished its existence. And so it always is — mankind seems to forget calamities of this kind, and move steadily on in the great thoroughfare of time until another, perhaps the last sad disaster is upon them. In the case of the *Swallow*, that event is now fresh in our minds, and while it is so we humbly petition that some penal enactment may take place, which, though it should not immediately prevent these accidents to human life from occurring, yet might prove a check on the now ungoverned myriad of steamboat conductors and masters, and in some manner put a stop to such woeful calamities. We know that there are many gentlemanly and good men in the command of steamboats on our waters, and we know too that they would regret the occurrence of an accident as much as ourselves — but men are not all alike, and until the press speaks out trumpet-tongued upon this subject, no more will be made to fix the proper penalties, so that reckless engineers, pilots or masters, shall know their reward for every breach of duty.

Text No. 6

Barre Patriot
(Barre, Massachusetts)

Friday, April 25, 1845

Vol. I, No. 40

p. 2, c. 3

The Wreck of the Swallow — by a Passenger.

NEW-YORK, April 11th, 1845.

To the Editor of the Tribune:

After having seen and read the numerous statements which have been made, in relation to the recent destruction of the steamboat Swallow, I feel a reluctance in writing a word upon the subject for public perusal. But being urgently solicited by those to whom I have related the manner in which I so narrowly escaped, I have concluded to make a statement of the facts as they occurred. I perceive that very few who have not seen this Island of Wo[e] understand its location. I will therefore describe it. It is about 10 feet high, 25 by 40 feet on the top, perfectly barren rock, within 8 or 10 rods [1 rod= 16.5 ft./5.03 m.] of the West shore, between which and the island no boat ever goes. A man can wade from the Island to the shore, except about 10 feet in the little channel; in extraordinary low water there is very little to be seen. — But on the other side, where all those who did jump overboard went, it is very deep, and at least half a mile to the Hudson shore.

When the boat first struck, all was confusion, until a voice was heard — *“Be calm, men — we struck a raft, but are all safe.”* This was an unfortunate statement, though evidently well meant, as many thereby were wholly unprepared for the awful situation which they were really in. — The thought occurred to me, that though this shock might be in consequence of coming in contact with a raft, it must cause a bad leak. I walked immediately to the stern of the boat intending to prepare myself with some article which would be of service in the water, should I be compelled to launch out. When at the extreme end of the boat, I saw four men standing in the yawl preparing to leave. I immediately, though I may say carelessly, stepped on board (though forbidden). It was then I saw for the very first, the dreadful situation which those that were left on board were in. One of the men called for a knife to cut lo[o]se from the *Swallow*, which was then down to her guards, though in my judgment not more than two minutes had elapsed since the fatal shock. In an instant of time I unconsciously took full command of the boat, and ordered the men to row immediately to the *Rochester*, which was then in hearing distance but for the noise of steam and the cries of those on board the *Swallow*. In the bustle and effort, an oar was broken; I took the round part, and paddled and steered as well as possible, until we distinctly hea[r]d some one on board the *Rochester* reply to our entreaties to come and assist the *Swallow*, for she was sinking! I then ordered the boat to go directly to the Athens shore for boats and help. Here one of the passengers who had taken the helm resisted with many bitter imprecations, which I now forbear to mention, and

was determined to go back to the *Swallow*. I begged him to follow my instructions, as thereby other boats could be obtained and as we were really in jeopardy ourselves, being between the two boats, with only one oar, and on account of the extreme darkness of the night, very liable to be run over.

In justice to my unknown friend, I must say he was a bold man; and though he charged me with cowardice and folly, I will only point to the many boats which came to the relief of not only those in the water, but those upon the wreck long before either of the steamboats came to their assistance, as an evidence of the correctness of my instructions. It needed but little forecast to see the awful consequences that would follow our return to the *Swallow* with only one oar and five men already in the boat. What an inducement to look to us for assistance by very many who must have been lost. Many contradictory statements have been made in regard to the boat being on fire; – I was at that moment paddling with the broken oar. I saw the flash; – it was like the igniting of the whole boat at once. – But darkness immediately followed. Again, another flash, which plainly showed to view the situation of the passengers and every part of the boat above water. I saw the blaze which was driven from the mouth of the furnace by the water, catch in the dry wood near the window. A moment more, and it was darkness. But for the bitter cries for help, and the awful shrieks that were heard, it were difficult to tell where the wreck lay. She had even at this early period of time sunk, and rested on the bottom. In the struggle through the passage in the state rooms, and through the skylights and windows, probably every light was put out. All those below were under water. The recollection of that awful scene at this moment fills me with horror and with sadness. After refusing many pressing invitations from the very kind and hospitable inhabitants of Athens to accompany them home, about 12 o'clock at night we were found on board of a sloop which dropped alongside the wreck for the purpose of securing baggage and whatever else might be found. Captain Squires with his men spent the most part of this gloomy, boisterous night, in searching every part of the boat.

At low tide the next day many bodies were found, the number and all the circumstances being already known.

I feel it to be due Captain Squires to say, that no blame can possibly be attached to him; and from the very first up to the time I left, he manifested a calmness and deliberation seldom seen. The extreme carefulness for the dead as they were from time to time taken from the water, certainly showed an unusual degree of deep feeling.

Great censure, with all the reasons fully given, have been passed upon the unfortunate Mr. Burnet[t], the Pilot. No doubt, this will cause those who are entrusted with the fate of such great numbers, never to allow themselves to proceed one moment after they are uncertain where they are. Nor should they, under any circumstances whatever, when they consider it dangerous. But for the sake of Mr. Burnet[t], I may say in his behalf that, had those who have dealt so bitterly seen the tears that fell during that long and gloomy night in the Pilot's room, I am sure they would join me in a petition for mercy. **J. F. BRIDGES, NEW YORK.**

THE PILOT OF THE SWALLOW. The Grand Jury of the United States Circuit Court, yesterday brought in a true bill against William Burnett, late pilot of the *Swallow*, charging

him with manslaughter. The indictment charges that “the said William Burnett did by his misconduct, negligence, or inattention, cause the death, on the night of the 7th of April last, by drowning or suffocating,” &c. We are glad to find that the Grand Jury have so promptly done their duty. Their action will have more influence on steamboat officers, than any legislative report whatever. – *New-York Commercial Advertiser*.

Text No. 7

Barre Patriot

(Barre, Massachusetts)

Friday, May 2, 1845

Vol. I, No. 41

p. 2, bottom of c. 4

PILOT OF THE SWALLOW. William Burnett, the pilot of the *Swallow*, was arrested yesterday, and this evening was ***admitted to bail, in the sum of ten thousand dollars***, in the U. S. Commissioner’s office. *New York Com. Adv.*

Text No. 8

Albany Evening Journal

(Albany, New York)

Tuesday Evening, May 20, 1845

Vol. 16, No. 1591

p. 2

Correspondence of the *Journal of Commerce*.

ATHENS, Saturday, May 17th, 1845

They have the Steamboat *Swallow* on the beach, decks out of water. A man has explored the cabins and ***no bodies could be found***. On coming out he said that he had examined every berth. It is now barely possible that there is any on board. Efforts are now to be made to pump her out, to bring her to New York.

Text No. 9

Vermont Phoenix

(Brattleboro, Vermont)

June 13, 1845

Vol. XI, No. 42

p. 4

THE SWALLOW.— We learn from the *Hudson Gazette* that the proprietors of this boat have determined to abandon the hull, and not attempt to save any part except her machinery.

Text No. 10

The Jamestown Journal

Jamestown, Chautauque County, New York

Friday Morning, October 24, 1845

Vol. XX, No. 1008

p. 2, c. 2

From the *Albany Argus*.

The Hudson River – its Steamboats – the travel – its increase.

The number of magnificent steamers now afloat on the Hudson is exciting the comments of the Press in different parts of the country. It is not too much to say that in the public eye the Hudson is becoming *the river* of the nation. Its steamers are confessedly the first on the American waters, or rather in the world, not only for speed, elegance, comfort, and we may add cheapness. There is no route in this country or in Europe, where the same amount of accommodations is afforded for the same money. This superiority is the more unquestioned since the appearance of such steamers as the *Knickerbocker*, the *Empire*, the *Rip Van Winkle*, the *South America*, the *Troy*, the *Niagara*, the *Oregon* and the *Hendrik Hudson*.

We have now literally a fleet of steamers that daily depart from this city to New-York. It has been remarked that almost every boat of the largest class and of the most splendid finish built in New-York, even when designed for other routes, is soon plying the waters of the

Hudson. As many as we have already, next spring the fleet will be increased by the addition of the *Christopher Columbus* and the *Iron Witch*, which it is said will make the passage in six hours. The very fact of so many new boats being brought out is an unerring indication of the extraordinary amount of travel on the river and it is considered the best route for an expensive boat in this country. Capitalists certainly would not place such magnificent boats on the river, unless they had an object, and that object is clearly travel. Statistics show that to be enormous. *Evidence given before the Senate committee to investigate the cause of the disaster of the ill-fated Swallow*, proved that the number of passengers on the Hudson in the season of 1844 was **ONE MILLION**. This year on account of the very low rates of fare, that aggregate will be increased to 1,200,000. As there are only nine months of navigation that will divide 120,000 passengers *every month* of the navigation season. This evinces the magnitude of the traffic to be divided among steamboats. We doubt whether the Ohio or the Mississippi will show a greater number of passengers.

The Hudson has also as great resources of future increase as any river in this country.— The lengthened chain of rail-ways and canals which is constantly branching farther and farther to the west, can be properly regarded as a simple extension of the Hudson river, and this, in time, the [s---] river of 150 miles will be lengthened until it exceeds even the Missouri or, the Mississippi, for there seems not a doubt but what ultimately there will be a continuous chain of rail-way from the banks of the Hudson river to the shores of the Pacific ocean. In the meantime, every mile of the progress of emigration adds to the travel on our river — for New-York will still be the city to which the business and commerce of every western settler tends.

The western States now contain but five millions people, and even now the tide of travel is astonishing. What will that be when that population expands to fifty millions of an enterprising and travel-loving race? — The tide that will pour down the Hudson even when the Erie rail-way as well as the New-York and Albany are in full operation, will be tremendous. As large as is the present travel, it is but the mere beginning of what we may expect when many additional States are formed in the great Western Domain.

There is also a reflected travel up the Hudson from the great city at its mouth, which must increase with the growth of New-York. When that city expands into a population of 2,000,000, as it assuredly will, the up-travel from the city alone would make the Hudson the greatest thoroughfare in the Union. With the first city in America and perhaps in the world at its mouth, and the Western States along its branches of far-reaching canals and rail-ways, the imagination can form some idea of the commanding national importance of the Hudson river.

Vermont Phoenix

(Brattleboro, Vermont)

Thursday, April 23, 1846

Vol. XII, No. 35

p. 2, bottom of c. 2

William Burnett, pilot of the *Swallow*, indicted for manslaughter, in causing the death of many individuals by carelessly running that vessel on a rock in the Hudson river, has been found **not guilty**.

Text No. 12

New-Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette

(Concord, New Hampshire)

Thursday, April 30, 1846

Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1941...New Series, vol. XII, No. 605

p. 2, c. 3

☞ **William Burnett**, pilot of the steamboat *Swallow*, which struck on a rock in the Hudson river, in April, 1845, causing the sad loss of human lives, has been tried in the U. States Circuit Court for New York, on charges of misconduct, negligence, &c., and **acquitted**.

The following two texts may be “sheer coincidence,” yet the coincidence is worth reporting:

Text No. 13

Boston Evening Transcript

Friday Evening, March 30, 1855

Vol. XXVI, No. 7592

p. 2, c. 4

ANOTHER DECISION IN THE STEAMERS “OCEAN” AND “CANADA” COLLISION CASE.

After the late decision of the local board of inspectors for the district of Boston and Charlestown, in the case of collision between steamers *Ocean* and *Canada*, revoking the pilot licenses of Richard Donovan, master of the *Ocean*, and of George Stilpen and James Collins, pilots of said steamer, the aggrieved parties made an appeal to *William Burnett, Esq., the Supervising Inspector*, who has reviewed the case, and publishes his report in the *Post* this morning. The concluding paragraph is as follows:

Although giving in this case a confirmatory decision, that there was, on the part of those managing the steamer *Ocean*, a failure to conform to the “rules to be observed by pilots, with regard to steamers’ lights, to prevent collision at night,” still, as I do not consider that this is one of the cases of infraction for which the penalty of forfeiture of license is contemplated by the law, not that such disposal of the case would subserve the purposes of the law or the public interest. And as it is not shown that these pilots have, heretofore, been guilty of a like offence, it is plainly my duty, in accordance with the 9th clause of the 9th section of this act, to revoke the decision of the local board, in as far as relates to the revocation of the licenses of the appellants in this case. And the same is hereby revoked.

Text No. 14

The Cincinnati Commercial

(Cincinnati, Ohio)

Sunday Morning, December 20, 1874

Vol. XXXV, No. 98

p. 7, c. 1

RIVER AND STEAMBOAT NEWS.

MISCELLANEOUS.— Business was only moderate at the landing yesterday The telegraph from Washington announces the confirmation by the Senate of *the appointment of William Burnett, Esq., as Supervising Inspector General of Steamboats.*

Bad Schussenried, Germany,

March 8, 2009