

Shipwrecks and Other Marine Stories Related to Middle Bass Island, 1826-1917
Edited by Michael Gora, Middle Bass Island Historian

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1826: Schooner Morning Star

Detroit Gazette (Detroit, MI), 30 May 1826

From the Sandusky Clarion.

The Morning Star. -- On the 1st inst. the Canadian Schooner Surprise, Capt. McCall found the schooner Morning Star of this port, whence she sailed on the 22d of April for Miami, floating near the Canada shore, without a soul on board--sails down, but not furled, cable, anchor and deck loading on board but rudder gone. The companion way was open, and the births [sic], hats, boots, &c. exhibited signs of the vessel's having been left in a hurry. The vessel had very little water in and was towed into Malden. After this intelligence was received, various were the conjectures as to the fate of the crew, and nothing occurred to dispel the gloomy suspense of our citizens, until Sunday last, when three persons who had been on board the lost schooner, arrived and gave the following information.

On the 23th [sic] of April the Morning Star cleared from Miami, bound for this port, with the following persons on board, viz; Captain John Costello, Thomas Goodwin, and John Furney of this town, a man by the name of Webber, (we believe,) of Chataque county, N.Y. and a woman named Julia, who had been residing on one of the Islands during the winter. In the night, during a gale, the vessel struck on a reef of rocks near Middle Bass Island, by which her rudder was unshipped, and it was supposed she had bilged. After the sails were hauled down, the captain cried that all who wished to save themselves, must take to the small boat. The boat was let down, and all hands succeeded in reaching the shore, carrying nothing with them but what they had on and a tinder box. A fire was kindled, and the captain went back alone, in the boat to learn the situation of his vessel; but it was gone, and he returned to the island. When day light appeared, it was in sight, but several miles distant. --The captain observed that all he was worth was afloat in that vessel, and requested Mr. Goodwin to go with him and endeavor to secure it. He consented and they embarked. -- They were anxiously watched by those whom they had left behind, until both vessel and boat disappeared in the distance, and the latter has not been seen nor heard from since. Messrs. Castelo and Goodwin have both left families.

Those who were left on the Island were in a deplorable condition. -- There was no human being besides themselves; no shelter from the weather; no bed but the earth; and no food but leeks and other wild roots, which they dug from the ground. In this miserable condition they spent six days and nights, when fortunately the schooner Guerrier was obliged by stress of weather to seek shelter under the lee of the Island. A shirt was hoisted on a pole as a signal of distress, by which the attention of the crew was attracted. A boat was sent on shore, and the sufferers were providentially saved from starvation.

Cleveland Weekly Herald Friday, June 23, 1826

We are indebted to James Woods, Esq. of Sandwich, for the following information respecting Capt. Costello, of the Schooner MORNING STAR. In a note, dated on the 8th. inst. Mr. Woods says; "I have just now been informed that the body of the captain of the small vessel, that was lately brought into Amherstburg, was found on Saturday last on the lake shore, in the township

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of Gosfield, about twenty-five miles below Amherstburg. An inquest was held on the body, after which it was decently interred."

Black Rock Gazette, July 6, 1826 p. 2, C. 5

About the 20th. inst., the body of Thomas Goodwin was found at Point Au Plait, Canada shore. He went from Sandusky, (O.) with Capt. Costello in the small boat, in pursuit of the MORNING STAR.

1853: Brig Hope

Buffalo Daily Republic Friday, December 2, 1853

We learn from Col. Edwards, of Put-in-Bay Island, says the Sandusky Register that the brig HOPE, lately stranded on Middle Bass Island and stripped of her rigging and abandoned, has been got off and floated into Put-in-Bay, where it is now awaiting her rigging in order to proceed to Buffalo. She was easily floated off after relieved of about one half of her cargo of railroad iron, and, being but slightly injured, was soon pumped dry, and will proceed to Buffalo without repairs. It is somewhat singular that the craft should have been abandoned when so slightly disabled; and the officers of the vessel will probably be asked to give an account.

Buffalo Express, Jan. 2, 1854

HOPE Schooner, beached on Middle Bass Island, Lake Erie, cargo R.R. iron. Got off. Property loss \$4,500

1855-1876: Steamer Island Queen, Sunk 1864 by Confederate Raiders

The Democracy, Buffalo, Thursday, May 31, 1855

The new steamer ISLAND QUEEN, which has been building at Sandusky lately, is nearly completed, and intends to make a trial trip this week.

The Democracy, Buffalo, Thursday, June 7, 1855

The new steamer ISLAND QUEEN made a trial trip yesterday afternoon to Kelly's Island and back. Though not entirely finished in all her departments, and though troubled with "foaming" in her boilers, the QUEEN is no longer an experiment, as she fully meets the most sanguine expectations of her owners. The following are her dimensions &c. Length, 122 feet; breadth of beam, 25 feet 9 inches; depth of hold, 7 feet 1 inch; draft when light, 3 feet 8 inches; draft when loaded, 5 feet 6 inches; diameter of wheel, 18 feet 8 inches. Her burthen is 175 tons. She is owned by Messrs. Kelly, Webb, Carpenter and Huntington, of the Island, and Captain Orr of Sandusky, and is intended for the general trade of the western portion of the lake, the Islands &c.-----Sandusky Register

The Buffalo Daily Courier Saturday, June 9, 1855

NEW STEAMER. - The Sandusky Register of the 5th. says the new steamer ISLAND QUEEN made a trial trip on Tuesday to Kelly's Island and back. The QUEEN is no longer an experiment, as she

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fully meets the most sanguine expectations of her owners. The following are her dimensions, &c: Length 122 ft, breadth of beam 25 ft 9 in, depth of hold 7 ft 1 in, draft when light 3 ft 3 in. draft when loaded 5 ft 6 in, diameter of wheel 18ft Sin. Her burden is 175 tons. She is propelled by a beautifully working and handsomely finished Engine, of some 170 horsepower, built by Mr. N.G. Olds, of that city. When full her boiler contains only 50 barrels of water. A very small quantity of fuel is sufficient to keep her steam to a serviceable point. She is intended for a general trade on the western portion of the Lake.

Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States 1790 to 1968. Lytle - Holdcamper List

Paddle-wheel steamer ISLAND QUEEN. U. S. No. 12097. Of 168 tons gross. Built Kelley's island, Ohio, 1855, First home port, Sandusky, Ohio. Captured by Confederate raiders, Middle Bass island, Lake Erie, 9/10/64; rig changed to barge 6/11/75.

Rerigged as barge ISLAND QUEEN - U. S. - 1875 U.S. No. 12250 Herman Runge List

Steam paddle passengers. ISLAND QUEEN.* U. S. No. 12097. Of 149 tons gross. Built Kelleys Island, Ohio, 1855 121.6 x 20.5 x 6.9 Captured by Confederates Sept., 1864. Sold to Detroit partner Aug. 30, 1866 for \$10,000. Renumbered as U 12250. Certificate surrendered at Grand Haven, Mich. Dec. 5, 1876 marked WRECKED

Merchant Vessels of the United States FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1867

Steamer ISLAND QUEEN. U. S. No. 12250. Of 149,66 tons. Home port, Detroit, Mich.

Cleveland Herald Monday, November 6, 1876

GRAND HAVEN, MICH., Nov. 3. -- The schooner ISLAND QUEEN, beached north of the north pier during the last heavy gale, went to pieces today. She was owned by Squires & White and not insured.

Chicago Republican March 21, 1868

" SHIPBUILDING AT SANDUSKY. -- The earliest established shipyard at Sandusky [c1829] was that of Augustus Jones, who also operated one at Black River, he sold his yard to Daniel Biddle in 1838. In 1844 Biddle built the steamer ISLANDER at Kelleys Island, then towed her to Sandusky to receive her engine. The same was true of the steamer ISLAND QUEEN in 1854."

Notes from ADZ, CALK, and RIVETS, By Richard J. Wright
a History of Shipbuilding Along Ohio's Northern Shore
ADVERT:-- DETROIT and SANDUSKY.

Steamer ISLAND QUEEN of 173 tons built 1855

Will run Tri-weekly until about June 1st. when she will be replaced by a new boat building at Clark's yard.

Daily British Whig (Kingston, ON), 21 Sep 1864

p.2 High Handed Destruction of Two Federal Steamers On Lake Erie - Confederate Privateers On the Lake - Island Queen and Parsons - the Island Queen sank 5 miles from Middle Bass Island and the Parsons went on to Detroit River.

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1866: Steamer City of Sandusky

Marine Casualties on the Great Lakes 1863-1873, U.S. Coast Guard

CITY OF SANDUSKY Steamer, of 432 tons, owned at Sandusky by Lawson &c. Bound from Sandusky to Detroit, went ashore on Middle Bass Island, Lake Erie, August 1866. Loss to ship \$3,900 insurance \$2,000 loss to cargo \$700 insurance on cargo \$none

Casualty List for 1866---Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, Feb. 26, 1867

CITY OF SANDUSKY Steamer, ashore and full of water on Lake Erie. August 1866. Got off. Property loss \$1,500

1866: Schooner Alma

Casualty List for 1866---Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, Feb. 26, 1867

ALMA Schooner, cargo iron ore, sunk at Middle Bass Island, October 1866. Total loss. Property loss, hull \$3,200 cargo \$1,200

Marine Casualties on the Great Lakes 1863-1873 U.S. Coast Guard Report

ALMA Schooner of 61 Tons, owned at Oswego by Dolittle &Co. Bound from Cleveland to Toronto, foundered a total loss in Lake Erie, October 1866. Loss to ship \$7,000 insurance \$5,000 cargo \$6,500 insurance \$ nil. Six lives lost

Canadian Vessel Casualty List, 1866 Toronto Globe, January 25, 1867

ALMA Schooner, cargo grain, foundered on Lake Erie, October 1866. Six lives lost

Buffalo Daily Courier Saturday, October 27, 1866

SUNK.- The schooner ALMA, owned in Cleveland, sunk in 24 feet of water in the channel, between Put-in-Bay and Middle Bass, on Tuesday. She had on board a full cargo of iron ore from Manhattan. - Sandusky Register.

1867: Schooner L. S. Noble

Casualty List for 1866---Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, Feb. 26, 1867

L.S. NOBLE Schooner, cargo coal, ashore on Middle Bass Island, November 1866. Got off. Property loss \$1,000

Marine Casualties on the Great Lakes 1863-1873 U. S. Coast Guard Report

S.L. NOBLE Schooner of 129 Tons, owned at Racine by Williams & Co. Bound from Cleveland to Detroit, went ashore at Middle Bass Island, Lake Erie, November 1866. Loss to ship \$600

Buffalo Daily Courier Friday, November 16, 1866

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MARINE DISASTERS. - The schooner S.L. NOBLE is reported ashore at Middle Bass Island, Lake Erie.

1869: Brig Saxon

Daily British Whig (Kingston, ON), 17 Nov 1869

brig Saxon ashore at Middle Bass Island

1871: Scow Rough & Ready

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser Tuesday, August 15, 1871

A SAILOR DROWNED - Francis Shaw, a sailor before the mast on board the scow ROUGH & READY, was drowned from that vessel on Friday morning at about four o'clock, when about half-way between Middle Bass Island and Bar Point. By being knocked overboard by the foreboom. Every possible effort was made to rescue him, but being stunned by the blow he sunk almost immediately. He was shipped from Toledo, and it is thought his friends reside there. His age was about 22.

1872: Tug Torrent, Schooner J. W. Sargent & Five Barges

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser November 30, 1872 3-5

A heavy northwest gale passed over the head of Lake Erie yesterday, causing serious disasters to the shipping. Tug TORRENT with schr. J.W. SARGENT and five barges, all coal laden from Cleveland, struck ice at the islands. Two of the barges sunk. The others and the schooner were abandoned.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser December 21, 1872 3-7

About the close of the season a tow of barges, including also the schr. J.W. SARGENT, all laden with coal for Detroit, on arriving at Middle Bass Island became so firmly surrounded by ice as to prevent any further progress on the voyage. The names of the barges were the MORNING STAR, RITCHIE, ONTARIO, JOHN F. WARREN and the OTIAWA. The latter craft sunk and became a total loss soon after reaching the above place. The RITCHIE at the same time also stranded and became a total loss. The ONTARIO drifted out into the lake and was not seen afterward. The MORNING STAR, WARREN and schr. SARGENT were well anchored and under as good protection under the island as could be secured under the circumstances. Within the past few days it is supposed they have parted their cables, and have also been sunk by the ice and totally lost. , with their cargo save the SARGENT, which has been discovered adrift in the lake from various points on the north shore, and was last seen somewhere off Rondeau on or about the 15th instant. Capt. Sims her late master has left on a visit to the coast, and will use every possible endeavor to rescue the lost vessel. - Detroit Post.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser February 6, 1873

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ADrift IN THE LAKE. -- The vessel reported seen passing Kelley's Island, Lake Erie, a few weeks since, was the schooner J.W. SARGENT, which broke adrift from her anchors, near Put-in-Bay, in December last. The vessel had been seen in the vicinity of the Islands about every ten days. During the 1st thaw she came within two miles of Kelley's Island, but there was no way of reaching her on account of the floating ice. The spars, ropes, &c., appear in good condition, with the exception of something dangling from the jibboom. She sailed with the ice, altering her course with the wind, and towards night started for the open water again.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser April 14, 1873 3-5

The schr. J.W. SARGENT and barge ONTARIO are still among the missing, and have not been seen by either of the other vessels that wintered in the ice at the head of the lake. Their owners have well nigh abandoned all hope of their recovery.

Port Huron Daily Times Wednesday, May 7, 1873

The owner of the lost barges MORNING STAR, OTTAWA, ONTARIO and J.W. SARGENT have been making a diligent search for the past two weeks near the Islands, but thus far it has been fruitless, and further efforts have been abandoned.

Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI), May 7, 1873

A FRUITLESS SEARCH. - The owners of the barge Morning Star and others have been making a diligent search for the past two weeks near the islands, but thus far the search has been a fruitless one, and all further efforts have been abandoned. A portion of the cabins of the Star were found near Middle Bass Island, but beyond this no discovery was made. The vessels thus lost will be remembered as the Ottawa, Ontario, Morning Star and J. W. Sargent.

Detroit Free Press November 6, 1874

Capt. Charles Hearn, who was formerly the owner of the schr. J.W. SARGENT, which was carried off by the ice during the winter of 1873 while anchored among the islands at the head of Lake Erie, discovered the locality of the lost craft while on a recent voyage upon Lake Erie, and a view of her sufficient to distinctly read her name of her quarter boards. She lies about 5 miles below Long Point Cut in about 16 ft. of water. She rests with her stem off the bottom and with some of her outfit dangling from the wreck. After obtaining the first view of the wreck he stood about with his vessel and again discovered sufficient evidence as to satisfy him it was none other than the vessel in question. It is not improbable that an effort will be made to regain possession of the long lost craft.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser November 9, 1874 3-6

The schr. J.W. SARGENT, which was carried off by the ice in the winter of 1872-73, and never heard from, has lately been discovered in 16 ft. of water about 5 miles below Long Pt. Some of the outfit was still hanging on her. An investigation will be made to see if she is worth trying to recover.

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1872: Barge Ottawa

Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI), 17 Dec., 1872

Barge Ottawa, cargo coal, sunk by ice near - Bass, Lake Erie, total loss.

Barge Ontario, cargo coal, broke adrift from tug Torrent near Middle Bass, Lake Erie, and disappeared, probable total loss.

1872: Scow Nettie

Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI), 13 Dec., 1872

Scow Nettie, lost spars and ashore at Middle Bass, Lake Erie, got off.

1873: Steamer Petronelle

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser July 2, 1873 3-6

The stmb. PETRONELLE, laden with staves, went ashore recently at Middle Bass Island and sunk.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser July 8, 1873 3-4

The stm. PETRONELLE, ashore at Middle Sister, Lake Erie has been rescued by the stm. FAVORITE and taken to Detroit. Damages light.

1876: Steam Yacht Rosaline

Cleveland Herald March 10, 1876

A NEW YACHT FOR THE ISLANDS.

Within a few days a gentleman of this city has purchased from Buffalo parties a new steam yacht, which is accounted the fastest and most elegant vessel of the kind on inland waters. She is named ROSALINE, and is intended to be run between Ballast, Middle Bass and Put-in-Bay Islands, mainly for the accommodation of the Ballast island Club, Toledo Club of Middle Bass Island, and visitors generally, which will be a great convenience to all visiting this famous and favorite Summer Resort. The hull of the yacht is of steel plate, and the boilers are also made of steel. She has two powerful engines, with a propelling power of twenty miles an hour. The passenger accommodation are superb, there being two cabins, fitted up elegantly, with every modern convenience and improvement, making her one of the most beautiful boats ever put afloat on the waters of the lakes. She was built by the celebrated iron ship builder of Buffalo, David Bell, Esq., who has spared no expense to make her complete in hull, machinery and outfit. As soon as navigation will permit the ROSALINE will be brought here from Buffalo, when our citizens will have an opportunity to examine her.

Cleveland Herald April 1, 1876

STEEL YACHT. - In speaking of the vessel building in Buffalo, and in the yard of David Bell, the Commercial says: " The third is a steel yacht, 80 feet long, and 10 feet beam, with a steel boiler

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and a pair of engines 8 x 8. She has been purchased by Captain G.W. Gardner, of Cleveland, and is warranted to make eighteen miles an hour."

Cleveland Herald May 15, 1876

THE STEEL YACHT -- The new steel yacht ROSALINE arrived here Sunday. She was built at Buffalo, and purchased by Cleveland parties, and will be stationed up among the Islands. We shall take pains to give further description of her.

Merchant Vessel List, U.S., 1884

Steam screw ROSALINE. U.S. No. 110275. Of 28.30 tons gross, 104 nominal horsepower. Built 1875 at Buffalo, N.Y. Home port New York, N.Y.

NOTE:-- Later VOLANTA

[1876: Schooner Unadilla](#)

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser June 15, 1876 3-5

The name of the black fore-and-after, reported ashore at Middle Bass Island, is the UNADILLA. The tug GLADIATOR succeeded in pulling her off and the CRUSADER took her to Chicago.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser June 21, 1876 3-5

The schooner UNADILLA, recently ashore at Middle Bass Island, and towed to Chicago by the wrecking tug CRUSADER a day or two ago, was docked by the Chicago Drydock Co. Monday for a survey and repairs. Part of her fore-foot is gone and about 14 ft. of her keel will have to be renewed. She will also need some planking in two small spots.

Merchant Vessel List, U. S., 1884

Schooner UNADILLA. U. S. No. 25021. Of 396.22 tons gross; 376.41 tons net. Built Cleveland, O., 1862. Home port, Detroit, Mich.

[1876: Schooner Lizzie Law](#)

Cleveland Herald Monday, June 12, 1876

Captain Cramer, propeller MAINE, reports passing steamer MARINE CITY ashore midway between Crawford quarry and Presque Isle on mainland yesterday noon, a large tug, presumably the CRUSADER, endeavoring to release her. A large schooner was also reported ashore on Middle Island Reef as sundown yesterday, with a tug working to get her afloat. Both went on during a fog. The tug MOCKINGBIRD has been sent to the vessel's assistance.

Cleveland Herald Wednesday, June 14, 1876

ASHORE. -- The captain of the propeller MAINE, which arrived down Sunday, reports seeing a large black schooner ashore on Middle Bass reef, with a tug at work on her. The name of the vessel or tug he was unable to obtain, but the schooner LIZZIE LAW is supposed to be the one, as her description accords with the one detailed by the captain. --- Detroit Free Press.

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Merchant Vessel List, U. S. , 1884

Schooner LIZZIE A. LAW. U. S. No. 140133 . Of 747 .48 tons gross; 710 .13 tons net. Built Huron, Mich. , 1875. Home port, Chicago, Ill.

[1876: Barge Island Queen](#)

Cleveland Herald Thursday, October 12, 1876

ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS. -- The Chicago Journal of the 10th has the following: On the 9th, the schooners TWO CHARLIES; H. D. MOORE; MINNIE CORLETT, and ISLAND QUEEN were driven on the beach near Grand Haven.

Cleveland Herald Monday, November 6, 1876

GRAND HAVEN, MICH., Nov. 3. -- The schooner ISLAND QUEEN, beached north of the north pier during the last heavy gale, went to pieces today. She was owned by Squires & White and not insured.

Association of Lake Underwriters 1876 Classification

Barge ISLAND QUEEN, of 131 tons. Built Kelley's Island by Hackett, et al, in 1855. Owned by W. T. Co. Home port, Detroit. Value \$2,000 Class B 2 REMARKS:- Formerly steamer.

Merchant Steam Vessels of the U. S. A. The Lytle - Holdcamper List, 1790 to 1868

Paddle wheel steamer ISLAND QUEEN, of 168 tons. Built Kelley's Island 1855 First Home port, Sandusky, Ohio DISPOSITION:-- Captured by Confederate raiders, at Middle Bass island, Lake Erie September 10, 1864; rig changed to a barge June 1, 1875.

Herman Runge Notes

Steam paddle ISLAND QUEEN. U. S. No. 12097. Built Kelley's Island 1855 by Hackett. 121.6 x 20.5 x 6.9. Captured by Confederate forces in 1864 and sold to Detroit Merchant. changed rig in 1875 to schooner ISLAND QUEEN and renumbered as 12250, Totally Wrecked at Grand Haven. 1876

[1876: Scow St. Charles](#)

Cleveland Herald Saturday, May 27, 1876

The tug RIVER QUEEN left yesterday with a lighter in tow to rescue the scow ST. CHARLES, which sunk some time ago at Middle Bass Island. The ST. CHARLES is not supposed to be damaged a great deal, and will likely be raised without much difficulty. She is to be brought here for repairs. ---Detroit Post, 26th.

[1881: Scow Iron Rail](#)

Cleveland Herald Friday, May 20, 1881

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Sandusky. -- The scow IRON RAIL, a Canadian craft, is ashore on the northeast end of Middle Bass Island. She left Point au Pelee on Tuesday last with wood for Mr. Henry Beebe, proprietor of the Beebe House at Put-in-Bay, and during that night encountered a gale, which drove her ashore. Her deck load was washed off, and she is full of water.

Cleveland Herald Saturday, May 21, 1881

The scow IRON RAIL, mentioned in these dispatches yesterday as being ashore at Middle Bass Island is still hard on. An effort will be made tomorrow to release her by means of an anchor and windlass, but we doubt very much if she can be gotten off without assistance of a tug. Captain Varner, formerly harbor master at Cleveland, is in command of the IRON RAIL.

Cleveland Herald Wednesday, May 25, 1881

The crew of the scow IRON RAIL made an effort today to list her over by means of a line from her mastheads, so that the hole in her bottom could be repaired, but when they got her over about far enough, both masts snapped off like pipe stems, and she went back to her former position. She is an old craft and is about gone up. The effort to release her will probably now be abandoned.

Cleveland Herald Saturday, June 4, 1881

An Amherstburg correspondent of the Detroit Post and Tribune says: The schooner IRON RAIL is hard aground on the Middle Bass Island, lake Erie. On Wednesday, Captain J. Lafromboise, of the steamer CITY OF DRESDEN, obtained permission from the American authorities to go to her release. He went over on Wednesday night but was unable to get her off, as she is half full of water. The IRON RAIL is light, and is likely to go to pieces unless speedily released.

1882: Steamer American Eagle

Chicago Inter-Ocean May 20, 1882

The passenger steamer AMERICAN EAGLE running to Put-in-Bay, exploded at 4 P .M. today near Kelley's Island. She was licensed for 106 lbs. pressure and was carrying 110 lbs. She was racing with the JAY COOKE. Three of the crew were hurt.

The J.W. Hall Great lakes Marine Scrapbook, April/May, 1882

A RACE WITH DEATH.

Further Of The Horrible Occurrence To The Steamer AMERICAN EAGLE.

The exploded steamer AMERICAN EAGLE left Sandusky with three other vessels at 3 o'clock p, m, the 18th. She and the COOKE ran side by side for forty minutes when she exploded. The engineer, J.W. Johnson, was terribly scalded. Frank Bittel, -fireman and Frank Walter, deck hand, were killed instantly. John Lutes. Mrs. Lutes, Miss Lutes, of Middle Bass; J.W. Gilbert, Wm. Dilger, Jas. Fulton, Chas. Kramer, B. Carstensen, Lorenz Neilson, are all badly scalded, and two of them will die. Johnson died at 2 o'clock Friday morning. Before his death he made a statement that he was carrying 110 pounds of steam, when he was allowed only 106. He denied that they were racing, but admitted that five minutes before the explosion Captain Magle had

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come to him and said, " I Guess we'll stop and let the COOKE go by, and then go on." He replied, " Well I'll check her down in a few minutes."

Inland Seas, Summer 1953 p. 141-143

The maritime pulse of Sandusky, Ohio, has followed a rather steady and regular pattern throughout most of the years of steamboating, from the day of the entry into Sandusky harbor of the first Lake Erie steamboat, Walk in the Water, August 25, 1818, to the present. There have been, of course, the usual groundings, collisions, an upset or two and several fires to locally owned boats, perhaps the most memorable being the destruction by fire of the Steamer ARROW at Put in Bay, October 14, 1922. Two sand boats, the KELLEY ISLAND and JOHN M. MCKERCHY, have gone down in Lake Erie with loss of Sandusky lives (in the case of the KELLEY ISLAND) and the small Neuman owned MASCOT spent a winter on the bottom not far from Marblehead. Compared with many Great Lakes ports, however, Sandusky's accident frequency and loss ratio have been extremely low. Perhaps the most noteworthy exception to this statement was the explosion of the boiler of the small steamer AMERICAN EAGLE in Lake Erie off Kelleys Island, claiming a total of six lives and setting off two lengthy and reputation searing inquests. The AMERICAN EAGLE, hull number, 105936, owned by Andrew Wehrle of Middle Bass, Ohio, was a wooden propeller built in Sandusky by John Monk in 1880. She was 144.8 feet long x 24.4 feet wide and 9.0 feet deep and was built exceptionally stout as she was designed to begin operation early in the spring and run until late in the fall. Her hull was sheathed with steel to above the water line since this out season use required the crushing of ice on her run from Sandusky to the Lake Erie islands. Doubtless this sturdy construction stood her in good stead when her hull was called upon to resist the tremendous shock of a boiler explosion.

On May 18, 1882, the EAGLE, probably with 12 passengers aboard, left Sandusky at about 3 p. m. for the islands. Simultaneously, departures were made by the JAY COOKE, B.F. FERRIS and R.B. HAYES. The COOKE and FERRIS preceded her into the lake and she was followed from her slip by the HAYES. Lest the spectacle of four steamers all departing at once seem unusual, it must be remembered that this was prior to the day of plane, bus and auto transportation on the scale we know it today, and Sandusky was a thriving port, the natural gateway to Cedar Point, Catawba Peninsula, Sandusky Bay ports and the Lake Erie Islands. The daily spring schedule called for all these boats to leave at about the same hour on their afternoon trips into Sandusky Bay and Lake Erie.

The JAY COOKE and the EAGLE soon overtook and passed the FERRIS and kept pace with each other for 40 minutes or so into Lake Erie to quote their masters, "as we did every day," (Sandusky Register, May 19, 1882). That the question of racing should be raised is natural, and from the facts disclosed by the inquests, it seems that there was little doubt in most minds that the two vessels did race or at least that the EAGLE did her best to keep up to and pass the Cooke in spite of her owner's specific instructions to the contrary (Sandusky Register, May 19, 1882).

When the two vessels were about 1 1/2 to 2 miles off the Kelleys Island dock, Captain Magle of the EAGLE went to the engine room and advised the Chief Engineer, J. W. Johnson, that he wanted speed reduced so that he could fall behind the JAY COOKE and get back onto his usual course. Johnson replied that he would check down in a few minutes. Within less than five

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minutes, there was a terrific explosion. The boiler had blown up enveloping the entire boat with steam and starting a fire on the upper deck. Captain Magle, who was not injured, extinguished the fire while the JAY COOKE turned and came alongside the EAGLE with fire hoses ready to play on the stricken ship. The uninjured passengers and crew were taken aboard the COOKE. Later these people were transferred to the tug, MYSTIC, which had come out from Marblehead, attracted to the scene by the explosion. The bodies of the dead crew members were placed aboard the tug, MYRTLE, which also towed the EAGLE into Sandusky where she was berthed on the east side of what is now Neuman's pier at the foot of Columbus Avenue. The COOKE continued on to Detroit.

Eyewitnesses to the return of the ill-fated steamer are, naturally, few today. However, W. O. Stubig, Sandusky shoe dealer and marine authority, and John Herb, retired barbershop operator, both recall vividly the confusion and drama of the moment when the EAGLE was towed in. "Her boiler dome was bent up like a tin can," said Stubig. Herb recalls that the funnel was blown completely off the boat. Johnson, the Engineer, died shortly after being hospitalized in Sandusky. His deathbed statement affirmed that the boiler was carrying 110 pound pressure although licensed for only 106 pounds. He vehemently denied charges of racing, in fact, he advised that he could have run 1 to 1 1/2 mph faster. Captain Magle also testified under oath that her time to a check point was 49 minutes on the 18th as against 45 minutes the previous day (Sandusky Register, May 19, 1882 et seq.).

Passengers aboard both vessels, however, felt that a race was in progress at the time of the explosion. Statements were taken from travelers on the EAGLE who allegedly heard Johnson say that he would not let the Cooke beat him to Kelleys Island. This, plus the damning evidence of the safety valve of the EAGLE's boiler which was tested at the inquest and "blew" at 130 pounds, although it had been officially set by the government to release at 106 pounds, led the government investigator to assume that it had been screwed down in order to gain more speed from the higher steam pressure.

Expert opinion of Sandusky machinists and boiler men at the inquest brought out the fact that a study of the interior of the boiler showed that excessive heating had been occurring over a prolonged time, thus preparing for the ultimate fate by weakening the iron. A great "to do" was made in the local newspaper (Sandusky Register) against the late Mr. Johnson and also against Captain Magle. The Captain of the JAY COOKE, George Brown, was completely exonerated when testimony showed that his boiler was carrying only 43 pounds pressure although licensed to carry 50 pounds. This was effectively corroborated by the fact that no "blowing off" of his boiler safety valve occurred when he came to a stop in the mid lake to render aid to the EAGLE. He vigorously denied racing with the EAGLE at any time.

The outcome of the Federal investigation was that the explosion was attributed to the excessive steam pressure, carried in contravention of Federal regulations. Captain Magle was exonerated. The local newspaper (Sandusky Register) campaigned vigorously against the reappointment of Magle, whom they alleged was derelict in his duty in not exercising his right of command by ordering Johnson to check speed at once.

But what of the EAGLE, smoldering at her Sandusky pier. She was not structurally damaged but was rebuilt and continued her run for many years, a better looking boat than prior to the accident.

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A tragic lesson in safety was taught at the expense of six lives. Today, steam boats do not race and boiler inspections are thorough and occur regularly. The shadow of the old EAGLE still hovers over Sandusky only in the memory of the old timers.

1883: Yacht Lillie

Marine Record Aug, 16, 1883

The little Yacht LILLIE, of Middle Bass Island was giving a pleasure sail yesterday, and when about half way between Middle Bass and Put-In-Bay Islands, a sudden squall struck the boat, capsizing it and throwing the occupants into the water. The party were all rescued by the steamyachts INA and IDA MAY. -Put-in-Bay Report. (part)

Marine Record, Cleveland, Aug. 16, 1883

While the little yacht Lillie, of Middle Bass Island was giving a pleasure sail yesterday, and when about midway between Middle Bass and Put-in-Bay Islands, a sudden squall struck the boat, capsizing it and throwing the occupants, Mr. Capper and Matt Morgan and family, all of Cincinnati, into the water. The water was rising at the time, but several row boats and the steamyachts Ina and Ida May hastened to the spot. The first to reach the spot was a small row boat containing Will Molyneux and Harry Robbins, two Cleveland youths, who are at the bay to attend the Seventh Regiment encampment. This party, together with a small boat which was fastened to the Lillie when she capsized, took up the party of nine persons, none of whom, except Mrs. Morgan, was any the worse for the ducking. Mr. Morgan lost a valuable watch and \$200 in money which were in the yacht when she capsized. Mrs. Morgan was taken to the home of Mrs. Dr. Webster, on Put-in-Bay Island, and promptly restored from the insensible condition into which she had fallen from the excitement.

1883: Scow Sassacus

Marine Record Aug. 23, 1883

Scow SASSACUS got fast on a reef off Middle Bass Island. The Tug CAL. DAVIS went from here and pulled her off. Sandusky Report.

1883: Schooner Reed Case

Marine Record, Oct. 25, 1883

The schooner REED CASE, which is reported ashore on North Bass Island, left this port a week ago with 21,500 bushels of wheat shipped by C.J. Kershaw & Co, and insured in the Big Four of Chicago. - Milwaukee Report

Merchant Vessel List, U.S., 1885

Milwaukee, Wis., Oct. 25. -- On discharging the cargo of the schooner REED CASE, which was ashore on Bass Island, at Sandusky, 1,000 bushels was found to be damaged. The cargo was insured in the Big Four.

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J.W. Hall Great lakes Marine Scrapbook, October, 1883

The schooner REED CASE, mentioned in a previous issue, as having got aground off Middle Bass Island on Sunday evening, was released yesterday morning. The schooner AMERICAN EAGLE worked at her all day Monday and during Monday night. The tug MYSTIC also worked at her Monday night. The schooner was loaded with grain, and was bound here from Milwaukee. About 5,000 bushels of her cargo were lightered onto the EAGLE, about 3,000 bushels onto the scow TRAUX, and between 500 and 600 bushels thrown overboard or given to the people in the Island region, who went out to the stranded schooner in boats. Finally enough grain was gotten out of the schooner to enable the EAGLE and MYSTIC to pull her off, and they then towed her and the TRUAX to this port. With the exception of the breaking of some lines and checks the schooner sustained no damage. -- -- Sandusky Register.

J.W. Hall Great lakes Marine Scrapbook, October, 1883

Schooner REED CASE. U.S. No. 21929. Of 330.38 tons gross; 313.87 tons net. Built Toledo, O., 1869. Home port, Chicago, Ill. 137.0 x 26.0 x 13.9

[1883: Steam Yacht Leila](#)

Marine Record, Cleveland, Jul. 1, 1883

The steamyacht Leila, formerly owned by the Toledo Club of Middle Bass, will run this season between Toledo & Lakeside, touching at Put-in-Bay and Middle Bass.

Steamer Eagle has commenced running between Huron, Lakeside and Put-in-Bay, making connections at Huron with the W. & S. E. R. R. She will leave Huron daily, Sundays excepted, at 10:15 a.m., returning will leave Put-in-Bay at 2 p.m. and reach Huron at 4:20 p.m.

Marine Record, Cleveland, Aug. 16, 1883

For more than a year past the masters of lake craft and the custom house officials have been in a quandary as to whether the Lake Erie islands belong in the Sandusky or Toledo revenue district. The question is entirely on the construction to be placed on the United States statute which defines the boundaries of these two districts. Since the Toledo Club House has been established on Middle Bass Island boats have been passing regularly between Toledo and the islands. The law requires that the master of a craft passing from one district to another shall leave copies of his manifest at both the port of clearance and the port of entry. Some time ago two criminal suits were brought, one against the master of the Leila and one against the master of the Chief Justice Waite, and also a civil suit against the master of the Leila, Mr. William Leaver, for violation of the law mentioned. One of the objects of the suits was to obtain a judicial determination of the boundary lines, as the guilt or innocence of the parties would depend upon whether the islands were in the Toledo or Sandusky district. The civil suit against the master of the Leila was tried before Judge Welker and a verdict was found for the defendant; which left the islands in the Toledo district. The two criminal suits were then called up and submitted to the same jury with the same evidence. Of course the verdict was similar to the one previously rendered. At those trials the people of Sandusky were not in the court as witnesses, nor were they represented by counsel. United States District Attorney Eggleston, to

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settle the question, brought a civil action against the master of the steamer Chief Justice Waite, for passing between Put-in-Bay and Toledo without leaving a copy of his manifest at either port. The defense demurred to the petition, and Judge Welker overruled the petition at Toledo Monday. The case will come up for trial on its merits, in June.

[1886: Steam Barge Fred McBriar](#)

The Detroit Tribune Tuesday, August 24, 1886

The steam-barge FRED McBRIAR which went ashore on Middle Bass Island some days ago has been released and has come to Detroit to reload.

[1904: Steamer State of New York](#)

Buffalo Evening News Thursday, June 2, 1904

BOAT WITH PASSENGERS AGROUND IN LAKE ERIE!

STATE OF NEW YORK WENT ASHORE OFF MIDDLE BASS ISLAND LAST NIGHT.

Cleveland, Ohio, June 2. - The steamer STATE OF NEW YORK with forty passengers on board, went ashore late last night during a dense fog on the south shore of Middle Bass Island. The steamer was enroute from Toledo to Cleveland. The passengers were taken off by the steamer ARROW, which conveyed them to Sandusky, whence they came to Cleveland by rail. The STATE OF NEW YORK, it is thought, can be floated.

NOTE:- Formerly steam paddle wheel steamer CTIY OF MACKINAC

[1915: Steamer Arrow](#)

The Marine Review, February 1916

ARROW Steamer, ran aground in heavy fog on Middle Bass Island, Lake Erie, October 20, 1915. Released by Tugs.

[1917: Steamer Isabella J. Boyce \(with photo\)](#)

Loss of American Vessels Reported during 1917 Merchant Vessel List of the U.S. for 1917
BOYCE, ISABELLA J. Steam propeller, official U. S. Number 100446, built 1889, of 368 Gross Tons.

On June 6, 1917, with 11 persons on board, vessel burned off Middle Bass Island, Lake Erie. No lives were lost but vessel classed as a total loss.

Merchant Vessel List, U.S., 1895

Steam screw ISABELLA J. BOYCE. U. S. No. 100446. Of 368.28 tons gross; 316.95 tons net. Built Manitowoc, Wis, 1889. Home port, Grand Haven, Mich. 138.0 x 29.6 x 11.0 280 estimated Nominal horsepower.

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