

Many actions of extraordinary innovation saved lives. A Dunbar and Sullivan dredge was anchored off Green Island before the storm. When the anchors began to drag, the captain made signs of distress. Tugs sent to retrieve the dredge before it took its crew over Niagara Falls were unsuccessful in stopping the momentum. The dredge captain used the dipper bucket to dig into the muddy river bottom, thus holding the vessel against the wind and massive current of the overflowing river, saving the lives of all on board.¹⁸

Not all of the damage was sustained on the water. Two towers of the Mutual Elevator were destroyed.¹⁹ A wireless tower, many docks, small boats, boat houses, and waterfront homes along the Niagara River were badly damaged or swept down river, as was the inventory of several lumber yards, damage estimated at over \$500,000. Bird, Squaw, Willow, Green, and the Three Sister Islands were almost completely submerged, the volume of water going over Niagara Falls being so great that the spray – tinted brown and yellow – froze on trees hundreds of feet back from the cataract.²⁰

Countless chimneys toppled, trees uprooted, and windows blew in as the wind pushed “water in the harbor to an unprecedented stage.”²¹ In Buffalo, one man was killed when flying debris went through the windshield of his car and two sisters were badly hurt by a falling tree. Nearly one hundred squatters’ shanties between the Barge Canal and the Niagara River were smashed, some of the occupants were carried out in the river with their homes, to be rescued later by the Buffalo Police, Fire Department, and the United States Coast Guard.²² Street car service was interrupted on the morning of 18 December, but was largely restored by the end of the day. Power lines were down throughout the region. In Tonawanda and North Tonawanda water eight feet above flood-stage submerged the first floors of shoreline businesses.²³

Serious damage was reported at Dunkirk, Rochester, Johnstown, Binghamton, Syracuse, Utica, Ploughkeepsie, the Bronx, Quebec City, and Ogdensburg. Telephone and telegraph communication between Quebec City and Montreal were disrupted. On Lake Michigan, the Grand Trunk Railroad carferry *Milwaukee* battled the storm for hours, requiring an additional thirteen hours to cross the lake from Grand Haven to Milwaukee, normally a six hour run.²⁴ Page one of the *Detroit Free Press* covered the presumed loss of the Canadian lighthouse tenders *Patria* and *Concretia* on Lake Ontario.²⁵

¹⁸ “Damaging Gale Sweeps Up-State,” *New York Times*, 20 December 1921, 7.

¹⁹ *Annual Report of the Lake Carriers Association, 1921*, 131.

²⁰ “Damaging Gale Sweeps Up-State” and “\$1,500,000 in Storm Damage: Vessels at Niagara Falls and Buffalo Suffered in Gale,” *New York Times*, 20 December 1921.

²¹ “95 Mile Gale Floods Buffalo; Niagara Rages,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 December 1921.

²² “Damaging Gale Sweeps Up-State,” *New York Times*, 20 December 1921.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*; “95 Mile Gale Floods Buffalo; Niagara Rages,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 December 1921; “Storm Sweeps Michigan, East,” *Detroit Free Press*, 19 December 1921; George W. Hilton, *The Great Lakes Car Ferries* (Berkeley, CA: Howell-North Books, 1962), 177.

²⁵ “2 Ships, 24 Men Given Up For Lost in Storm,” *Detroit Free Press*, 20 December 1921.