

safety measures. One man who had worked on the Victoria's steamfitting said it was fastened down by bolts, rather than being held in place by iron bands. Stanchions supporting the upper decks were held by spikes.

In addition, the Victoria apparently damaged its hull by hitting a snag on the way up from Springbank.

The Victoria could safely accommodate 300 and in a pinch 400 passengers. That trip, it carried 500, perhaps 600. As the boat proceeded upstream, they moved from side-to-side, careening the steamer each time—water sloshing onto the lower deck.

Finally, they moved to one side to watch once more the occupants of passing small boats—two racing shells. Again the Victoria careened. Constant movement had weakened the boiler supports. This time the boiler became loose, rolled over smashing the supports of the upper deck.

Hundreds tumbled headlong into the water, trapped by the upper decks. Hundreds of others tossed into the river, fought their way to shore.

With one exception all the victims were drowned or crushed to death by the wreckage. The exception was a middle-aged man, rescued at the time, but who died later from his injuries. He had been hurt internally.

There were legal proceedings as a consequence. An inquest was held but in the final analysis nothing came of any of the proceeding.

The inquest jurors criticized nearly everything possible. They found that the vessel capsized because of water in the hold, and believed the water leaked in through a hole stove in her bottom from an unknown cause (probably by hitting a snag or stone in the river);

That the boiler was not securely fastened;

That the stanchions between decks were too slender and not properly braced;

That the engineer was negligent in not seeing the hold was clear of water and in not telling the captain;

That the captain was to blame for serving as both captain and wheelsman, and

That there was not a sufficient number of hands to man the Victoria.

(It is not generally known but the Thames that day claimed one other victim. A 12-year-old Richmond Street boy "suffered cramps" while bathing in the North Branch and lost his life. A companion was saved.)

The tragedy effected nearly everyone in the city or its suburbs—the separate municipalities of London East and London West and the heavily populated, but not incorporated, section of Westminster known as South London. In one block in the latter community, six funerals were held from five homes.

There were few families who were not acquainted with victims, many of whom were children.

The well-to-do and the poor died in the disaster. Victims included an ex-mayor and a court official, as well as a 12-year-old domestic.

Some victims came from families in straightened circumstances. A relief fund was set up to help pay burial costs. Many Londoners were out of work—a major industry had been burned out a few weeks earlier.

The disaster occurred Tuesday evening. First funeral services were held late on Wednesday. The bulk, though, were held on the Thursday. From 7:00 in the morning until evening the corteges moved through the streets.

City works department employees had been pressed into service to assist regular cemetery employees, in order to provide a sufficient number of graves.

Undertakers sought assistance from district centres—both men and hearses. Sometimes drays were pressed into service to carry the coffins; hacks (which customarily car-

ried the mourners) were unable to cope with the situation. Sometimes mourners rode in delivery wagons.

There were triple funerals and double ones.

One involved five persons—a 19-year-old girl (bride of less than 2 hours) her 10-year-old brother, an older married sister, and the latter's two young children.

One priest, it was reported, conducted services for victims; another remained on duty at the cemetery to officiate at graveside rites.

One elderly man came from Rochester, N.Y., to claim the bodies of his son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. Service, it was recorded, was held in a "desolate house" before the bodies were moved to Rochester for interment.

There was extensive newspaper coverage but neither of the London newspapers boasted of its exclusive work. An exception was mention by The London Advertiser that one of its reporters was aboard the Victoria. He was not identified in stories but a list of survivors included the name "William Thompson, Advertiser Reporter". Charles A. Matthews, night editor of the Advertiser, also was a passenger, along with his wife and two children. His wife and one child died in the tragedy. Lambert W. Payne, Free Press reporter told of manning a pikepole the morning after the tragedy and of recovering the body of his colleague's (Matthew's) son.

A description of the Victoria, published at the time, gave this description:

A stern-wheel, two-decker with hurricane roof, measuring over all from bow to stern 80 feet, beam 23 feet, depth of hold three feet, 10 inches. The boiler, 60 horsepower, 14 feet in length, three and a half in diameter, with 90 tubs.

The seats encircled both decks, affording accommodation for about 400. Height between decks seven to eight feet. The steamer was supplied with life-preservers. She was registered at Port Stanley, with gross tonnage of 58, net of 38 tons. Cost was about \$5,000.

Other stories called it of "match box construction".

A Free Press editorial said:—

"It was a light construction, and built for the most part of pine wood. It was, in truth, little else than a large scow, propelled by a small steam-engine, and carrying a large upper deck, over which was erected a wooden roof, supported upon slender uprights. Under ordinary circumstances the boat was safe enough. But it became imminently dangerous, when it had imposed upon it a top load estimated at 500 people. . .

"Had the cargo remained stationary it is probably that the latter portion of the trip—about one mile—would have been successfully performed but, unfortunately, that condition was not observed. The passengers seemed to enjoy the swaying of the boat to and fro and some spoke of it as having 'a teeter'. The condition thus was that a slenderly constructed boat, intended to carry not more than 200 people, had a living freight of 500.

"That it should sway and lurch was mechanically natural to the circumstances, and when the motion, accelerated by the thoughtless conduct of some of the passengers, attained a maximum, over the whole concern went. But that was not all.

In going over, the frail timbers that had held up the roof gave way, and, falling upon the upper deck, caught the men, women and children upon it as in a trap, and held them there. The collapse having begun was continued, and those packed on the main deck were similarly entrapped to their deaths".

(To be continued)