

to Death. A Woman Drowned in Making Her Escape. A Horrible Fatality at Leamington Last Night. The BYRON TRERICE Burns to the Water's Edge."

"There was an awful fatality at Leamington at an early hour this morning. Two men of the steamer TRERICE were burned to death and the cook lost her life, drowning in attempting to escape from the burning boat. The passenger steamer BYRON TRERICE, owned by W. D. McRae, of Wallaceburg, Ont., plies between Rond Eau (note the spelling -Ed.) and Cleveland. Last night, she started out on her regular trip. The lake was very rough and after putting out a few miles, she put in at Leamington and tied up there at the piers. There were no passengers aboard. The crew consisted of D. McRae, Wallaceburg, captain; W. J. Powers, mate; J. B. Jackson, Detroit, purser; Geo. Taber, Wallaceburg, engineer; Geo. Shaw, Wallaceburg, and John Cronk, Dresden, deckhands, and Miss Jennie Fennancy, Wallaceburg, cook.

"About two o'clock, the crew were awakened to find the boat in flames. They had not the time to dress themselves but had to flee for their lives. It was impossible to reach the dock and all jumped into the lake but Shaw and Cronk, the two deckhands. They never awoke and were burned to death in their berths. Miss Fennancy, the cook, jumped overboard with the rest, but was unable to reach shore and sank before assistance could be rendered. The other members of the crew swam ashore in their night clothes.

"The boat was burned to the water's edge and all the belongings of the crew were destroyed. It is supposed that the fire originated by one of the lights on deck being upset by the rocking of the boat and igniting a barrel of oil... The wood and coal aboard (cargo and fuel respectively? -Ed.) is burning yet and the hull is a total loss. It was rated A1 and valued at \$25,000. (The) Hon. S. A. Hardy and party were to have gone to the Eau (Rond Eau, or Rondeau -Ed.) on the boat."

Additional detail concerning the conflagration is provided by Frank and Nancy Prothero in their book Tales of the North Shore, page 64. "The dock (at Leamington) at this time was privately owned, having been built by Lewis Wigle out of timbers. It was here that the TRERICE tied up for the evening. It was, perhaps, fortunate that the busiest part of the tourist season was over and but few souls were aboard her. The fire that broke out after dark quickly became a raging inferno, fanned by the winds. The skies lit up and attracted hundreds (of people), but there was little that could be done. One woman threw herself into the harbour to escape the hungry flames but she drowned before anybody could reach her. Two sailors were trapped in the vessel and died a horrible death.

"Pieces of burning cinder floated high in the air and the fire continued to burn with even greater intensity. In the midst of it all, the tall mast located just behind the wheelhouse came down with a huge thud, spraying sparks in every direction. The smoke stack followed in a similar manner shortly after. By morning, the BYRON TRERICE had burned to the very water's edge and there was nothing left of her to salvage. Thus ended a splendid little steamer that had provided an essential link between the communities of the north shore (of Lake Erie)."

It is to be noted that the master of BYRON TRERICE at the time of her loss was one D. McRae, of Wallaceburg. This was David F. McRae, brother of William Dobie McRae (the steamer's owner), who by 1904 was described as owning "a number of racing horses and looks after his brother's racing interests".

Of David F. McRae, the August 6, 1892, edition of "The Toronto Mail" reported that: "Marine Villa, one of the most attractive residences in Wallaceburg, is the house of D. F. McRae, the popular commander of the steamer BYRON TRERICE. Marine Villa, which stands on the south side of James Street facing the Sydenham River, was erected in 1886 from designs furnished by the owner. Capt. McRae is a New Year's gift, having been born January 1, 1856, in the County of Middlesex. He came when an infant with his parents to Wallaceburg, in which he has ever resided. At the age of 19, he embarked in his