

THE EASTLAND DISASTER

JULY 24, 1915

By J. Seymour Currey

It is now nearly four years since the passenger steamer Eastland capsized in the Chicago river causing the loss of 812 lives, the most serious disaster involving the loss of life that had ever occurred in the history of the city or of the great lakes. Practically all of the fatalities were those of individuals whose residence was in Chicago. This terrible event occurred on Saturday morning, July 24, 1915.

The final report of the Eastland disaster relief committee has just been issued and a remarkably complete record of the cases as compiled by the committee is given in the 186 pages of the report.

The steamer Eastland was one of four steamers that had been chartered for an excursion of the employes of the Western Electric company of Chicago for their annual outing to Michigan City, Indiana, accommodations having been provided for 7,000 men, women and children. The Eastland was to have left her dock at the foot of LaSalle street at 7:30 a. m., to be followed at half hour intervals by the other steamers; but by 7:10 there were approximately 2,500 persons already on board and the officers prepared to sail at once as all available space had been occupied. The lines were cast off and the boat began slowly to swing into the stream. The 2,500 passengers, largely women and children, were in high spirits, the little ones romping about as well as they could in the crowded condition of the decks, while the older ones were waving their hands and shouting to their friends who were boarding the other boats.

As the steamer moved out away from the dock it was noticed that she gradually listed over toward the middle of the stream, but presently she swayed back to almost an even keel, then began to list again, and slowly turned over and lay flat on her port side in some eighteen feet of water, with the keel only a few feet from the dock. At first the people thought there was nothing unusual about the movement of the boat, and it was not until the second listing had progressed so far as to overturn a refrigerator that the crowd became alarmed. Then the cheers and shouts of glee gave way to cries of terror, and a mad panic ensued. Still the boat turned over very slowly and a number of those on the starboard side, next to the dock, scrambled ashore or dropped into the water and were pulled out by rescuers.

Several hundred of those gathered on the upper decks were spilled overboard toward the middle of the river, and either swam ashore or were saved by the prompt arrival of rescuers in small boats from the other vessels near by. But many hundreds between decks were penned in and drowned or crushed to death. Some of the imprisoned ones held on until holes were cut in the side of the boat which remained above water and were brought out to safety. Hundreds were found dead by the rescuers when they were finally reached. The bridges at Wells street and Clark street were thronged with people going to their daily tasks and of course great numbers promptly rushed to the rescue of the unfortunate passengers though it was difficult to give any help. Alarms were sent to the fire and police departments even before the boat had completely turned over, and all the newspaper offices were notified at once. Thus in the midst of crowds but a few steps away from safety and within the sound of voices from passing throngs there perished 812 persons. None of the other steamers left their docks for the proposed excursion. The Western Electric company, whose employes were the principal sufferers, suspended operations at their works until such relief as could be afforded had been given.

"The people of Chicago sprang at once to the relief of those who had been bereaved," says the report. "Entire families had been wiped out. Parents had gone to their death leaving a number of children. Sons and daughters had been drowned leaving the parents childless. All the breadwinners of other families had perished leaving a great number of dependents." The Red Cross was placed in charge of relief measures, funds were subscribed amounting in the total to \$386,000. The greatest previous disaster on the great lakes, had been that of the *Lady Elgin* in 1860 when 297 lives were lost.

The hull of the Eastland was raised a few weeks later and taken to a shipyard where extensive alterations were made and eventually it was sold to the United States government. The upper works of the steamer were removed and she was reconstructed as a destroyer under the name of "*Wilmette*," and is now doing duty on the ocean. She is rated as a vessel of 2,000 tons with a speed of eighteen knots, and according to Captain Evers, who had been assigned to her command, she "is the best gunboat in the navy."

The tale of disaster of one kind and another is frequently met with in Chicago's annals. Chicago has pas-

sed through many terrible experiences since first the explorers revealed its site to the world nearly two and a half centuries ago. The first one in the series to be mentioned here was that which occurred at Fort Dearborn in 1812, when the Indians caused the death of sixty or more men, women and children, either by massacre or in consequence of cruel captivity. Then next occurred the awful cholera epidemic of 1832, repeated at intervals during the following thirty-four years, resulting in the death of thousands.

In 1849 occurred a destructive flood in the Chicago river with great loss to shipping and bridges, fortunately, however, with but slight loss of life. In the same year the cholera re-appeared and for five successive years there was a heavy mortality, the climax being reached in 1854. This was known as "the great cholera year," when there were 1,424 deaths from that disease out of a population of 66,000. This was at the rate of twenty-one and one-half per thousand, and if occurring at the present time with a population of two and a half millions it would have resulted in a mortality total of 54,000. The year 1866 was the last in which this pestilence appeared in Chicago.

The great fire of 1871 involved the destruction of 190 millions of property and about 200 lives. Passing over many minor disasters the next great event of this character to be mentioned is the Iroquois theater disaster occurring on the 30th of December, 1903. This disaster resulted in the loss of 571 lives, twelve of which were those of residents of Evanston. The latest of the great disasters which have happened in Chicago is that of the foundering of

The steamer Eastland in the Chicago river as above related.

MILITARY POLICE NOW RIDE MOTORCYCLES

Military police at Fort Sheridan will be mounted on motorcycles hereafter to arrest speeders along Sheridan road. Edward Marony, the chief of police at Highland Park, has assured the military police that he will assist the men getting fines for the speeders who are arrested by the soldiers.

Everyone who violates the speed laws, from officers to civilians, will be arrested.

Plan Midsummer Festival

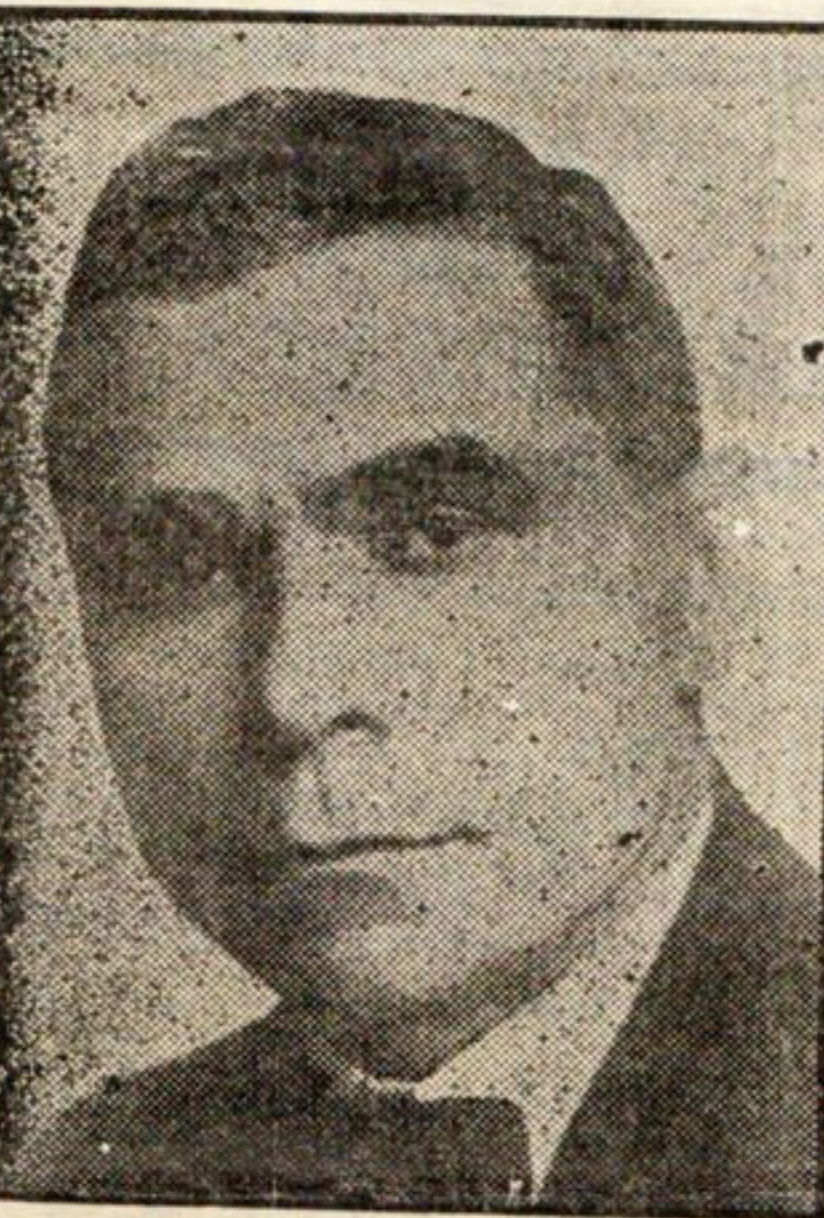
A midsummer festival arranged in the old country style was observed Tuesday evening in the Scandinavian Salvation army hall on the corner of Sherman avenue and Greenwood boulevard, Evanston.

The program included violin recitals by Miss Carol Clapp of Evanston. A quartet of young women from Chicago sang, and a number of persons dressed in their old country's national costumes also took part.

Several north shore Scandinavians attended the festival. This branch of the Salvation Army claims a large representation on the north shore.

The more properly and regularly all refuse of the household is harmlessly disposed of the better for the healthfulness and comfort of the home.

Harry Mitchell



CleanUp Sale

Giving every Man the Greatest Tailoring Opportunities He ever Had. Don't Miss It! Regular \$50, \$60 and \$70

Suits Made to Order \$35

Extra Pants FREE With Every Suit

I am having an early sale of fine Spring and Summer fabrics and it's your opportunity to get the greatest values you ever saw.

Suits Made to Order

Extra Pants FREE With Every Suit

EVERYTHING GUARANTEED

Fit, Style, Lining—to be the very best

HARRY MITCHELL

16-18 East Jackson Boulevard Between State and Wabash, Chicago



WILMETTE

Mon. and Tues., June 30, July 1

Evenings 7:30 and 9:00

VIVIAN MARTIN

in "An Innocent Adventure"

EXTRA PATHE NEWS
EXTRA, CHRISTIE COMEDY

Wed. and Thurs., July 2 and 3

Evenings 7:30 and 9:00

LILA LEE

in "A Daughter of the Wolf"

EXTRA, HAROLD LLOYD'S LATEST
EXTRA TRAVEL

Fri. and Sat., July 4 and 5

Evenings 7:00, 8:20 and 9:30

Matinee Each Day at 3:30

Admission

Matinees: Adults 22c; Children 11c

Evenings--All Seats 25c

MARY PICKFORD

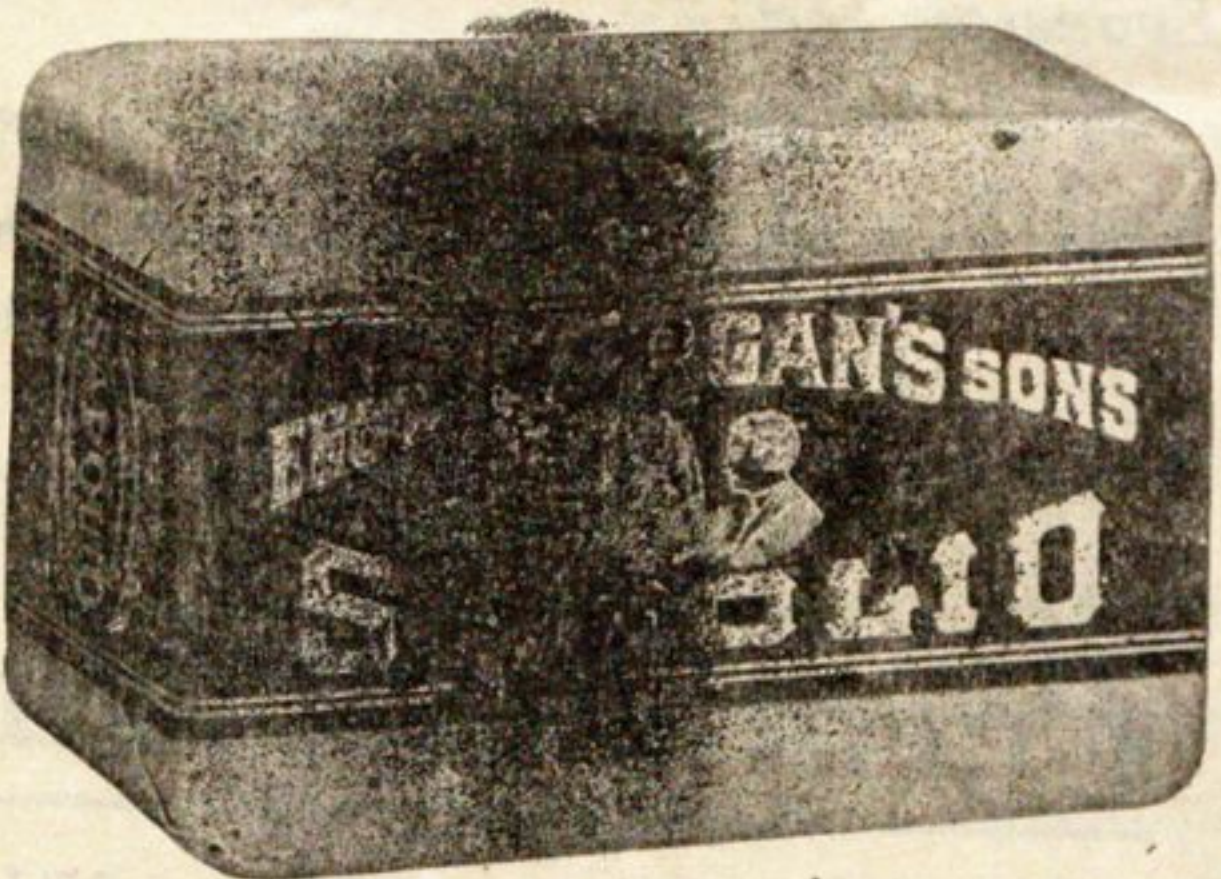
in "Daddy Long Legs"

EXTRA PATHE NEWS

COMING

Robert Warwick in "Secret Service"
Chas. Ray in "Hay Foot, Straw Foot"

From sink and basin, tile and tub



Grease disappears with scarce a rub

HUPMOBILES
— SEE —
BRIDGES & GAGE

Expert Auto Repairing
— SEE —
BRIDGES & GAGE

STUDEBAKERS
— SEE —
BRIDGES & GAGE

FRANKLINS
— SEE —
BRIDGES & GAGE

The Cemetery Beautiful

PLANTED amidst nature's own beauty, man has created a beautiful park cemetery. The sunken gardens, the winding paths, and the imposing chapel makes this spot a vision of beauty. It is indeed a fitting final resting place for our beloved ones.

MEMORIAL PARK CEMETERY and ANNEX

Gross Point Road and Harrison St., 1/2 Mile West of Evanston

We want you to visit this cemetery. You will find it interesting and attractive. You should reserve for yourself a family lot—all lots in Memorial Park are sold with full perpetual care guaranteed. Suitable easy payments—no interest. Don't miss this opportunity.

YOU ARE INVITED

to call or write to the main office, 703 Marquette Bldg. and make appointment to have one of our representatives call for you in an automobile to take you to and from the cemetery. No obligation. Investigate NOW!

Central Cemetery Company

703 Marquette Building, Dept. A861 Chicago

Our perpetual care funds are on deposit with the Trust Department of the Central Trust of Illinois.

Curtis Kodak Shop

1728 1/2 SHERMAN AVENUE
EVANSTON

Will Open for Business on
June 30th

We carry nothing but
Eastman Kodaks and Films

EXPERT developing and finishing department for your films in charge of Mr. Dietert, formerly with C. E. Smith, Photographer.

We carry a large line of picture mouldings, and frame to order pictures at reasonable price.

Our aim is satisfied customers. All our work is guaranteed, and the most courteous treatment is assured.

Mail orders given special attention

FIREWORKS

HURRAH FOR THE FOURTH!

We have the only and the largest assortment of fireworks north of Chicago. If you are going out of town for the Fourth, be sure to take your fireworks with you. We have some splendid assortments from one dollar up. The FIREWORKS MAGAZINE is located at West Ridge Road between Central St. and Harrison St., half a block north of Memorial Park Cemetery. Take North Shore Line to Central St., Evanston, west on Central St. to end of line and walk half a mile on Central St., then half a block south. Two other fireworks magazines, one at the Niles Center Mercantile Co. at Niles Center; the other at the Niles Center Mercantile Co. at Niles on Milwaukee Ave. Also we have safety torpedoes and other harmless devices at

Rake's Hardware

1943 Central St., Evanston

Phones: EVANSTON 227 and WILMETTE 211 & WILMETTE 926-R

You may call up and leave your order if you wish