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THE
WISCONSIN
CENTENNIAL STORY
OF
DISASTERS AND OTHER
UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

1848

1948



Published By
Wisconsin State Centennial Committee
1948

A
SUMMARY OF SELECTED EVENTS
UNUSUAL IN CHARACTER, COSTLY IN
HUMAN LIFE OR CAUSING SUBSTANTIAL
ECONOMIC LOSS.

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WISCONSIN DISASTERS

1848 - 1948

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MILWAUKEE AREA DISASTERS

1848 - 1948

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WISCONSIN IN THE CIVIL WAR

Before the firing on Fort Sumter the Wisconsin legislature, under the guidance of its dynamic governor, Alexander Randall, had passed a bill declaring its resolution to maintain the Union and had authorized the governor to recruit volunteers and had appropriated \$100,000 for defense. Sunday, April 14 came the news of Sumter's fall. Monday Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers for a period of 3 months. Tuesday Governor Randall called upon the companies of state militia to enlist for federal service, the legislature doubled the defense appropriation and the Madison guard was the first company to enlist in the war.

Wisconsin's quota of volunteers was one regiment of ten companies—within a week the governor had 36 companies. Though Sec. of War Cameron advised canceling all enlistments in excess of the first regiment, our governor kept on organizing reserve regiments. Within two months two more Wisconsin regiments were called and by the end of the year seven more had joined the colors. At the front they suffered so heavily from exposure, improper food and illness that with the close of the war it was found that nearly twice as many Wisconsin men died from disease as were killed in battle.

By November 16 Wisconsin regiments had been organized and drilled in camps at Madison, Milwaukee, Fond du Lac and Racine. The state's main encampment was at Camp Randall, Madison. Today it is the athletic field of the University of Wisconsin.

Hard days were ahead. Two thirds of Wisconsin's banks had their currency backed by bonds of southern states—now becoming worthless. As a result about 50 banks were forced to close their doors during 1861 and this was followed by serious rioting and disorder.

There was a bitter anti-Lincoln attitude among some of the Democrats of many northern states—Wisconsin among the rest. These did all in their power to malign, hinder and damage administration actions. They were commonly known as Copperheads and they were as silent and deadly in their actions as the snake of that name. On the other hand there were many so-called war democrats who staunchly supported the Union cause.

Since the first two years of the war saw nothing but Union defeats, Wisconsin enlistments fell off badly after the first year of the war and when Lincoln called for 600,000 more troops in 1862 Gov. Salomon had to order a draft.

In eastern Wisconsin were many immigrants who had left Europe to escape military service. Opposition to the draft became bitter among some of them and there were serious draft riots at both Port Washington and West Bend. At the former city a mob assaulted the draft commissioner, threw him down a flight of steps, demolished his house and the draft rolls. Next day several companies of

the Wisconsin infantry marched to Port Washington from Milwaukee. 130 persons were arrested and held at Camp Washburn, Milwaukee, for several months. At West Bend the commissioner managed to escape with his draft rolls and made his way to Milwaukee. In a few days he returned with a military guard and carried out his task. From then on drafts were conducted by military officers under heavy guard.

A draftee could buy exemption for \$300 or hire a substitute. Nearly 11,500 Wisconsin recruits were obtained by drafting, but almost as many never appeared for induction.

In all, Wisconsin supplied the Union with 56 regiments of men, totaling early 85,000. Around 12,000 of them died; 3,749 were killed or died of wounds, 8,022 died of disease and 400 died of accidents. This is the greatest number the state has lost in any war.

So brilliantly did the Wisconsin men fight and so faithfully did the state keep its Union supplied with replacements that General Sherman declared: "We estimate a Wisconsin regiment equal to an ordinary brigade" (four regiments).

Among army units that brought special fame and glory to our state are the following:

The "Iron Brigade", composed of the 2nd, 6th, 7th Wisconsin regiments, one from Indiana and later a Michigan regiment. Part of the Army of the Potomac, it saw the hardest kind of action in most of the great battles in the Washington and Richmond areas and suffered heavier losses than any other brigade. General Geo. B. McClellan said of it: "Equal to the best troops anywhere in the world". Among its brilliant commanders were Rufus King, Lucius Fairchild and Edward S. Bragg.

The 3rd Wisconsin infantry had the unique experience of taking into custody the bogus legislature which met at Frederick, Md., for the purpose of secession of that state. The legislators were imprisoned until they changed their minds. In the battle of Antietam which Horace Greeley designated "the bloodiest day American ever knew" the 3rd held an exposed line losing two of every three men.

The 5th Wisconsin, by a brilliant bayonet charge, turned apparent defeat into a victory at the battle of Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1862 and won high praise from McClellan. At Fredericksburg the 5th led the assault that gained Marye's hill—a position which the surrendering Confederate commander stated he had not believed the whole army of the Potomac could carry.

The 8th Wisconsin, "The Eagle Regiment" was famous for its eagle "Old Abe" who shared in the unit's 22 battles and 60 skirmishes and won fame as a veteran in his own right.

The 1st Wisconsin cavalry shared in the capture of the Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, and his cabinet as they attempted to flee by train through Georgia while the 2nd cavalry distinguished itself at Vicksburg and in Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas.

The outstanding engineering feat of the war was performed by Col. Joseph Bailey, of the 4th Wisconsin Cavalry, when he saved the gunboats of the Red River expedition from destruction.

The fleet had ascended the river during spring flood conditions and suddenly subsiding waters left it hopelessly stranded. General Bamk's officers had decided to destroy the \$2,000,000 flotilla to prevent it from capture when Bailey sought permission to attempt its release. His proposal was laughed at but he was told he could try.

Calling upon 3,000 lumberjacks from the 23rd and 24th Wisconsin regiments, Bailey cut trees and built a log dam some 750 feet in length in eight days' time. Just as success seemed assured, a section of the dam washed out. In four more days it had been replaced, rising water freed the boats from the rocks, the chute was opened and the imprisoned fleet rode through to safety. Bailey had only employed a trick commonly used in driving logs down practically every Wisconsin stream. A grateful Congress voted Bailey a sword and a loving cup.

Many of the regiments were composed of men of the same nationality. Thus the 9th, 26th, 27th and 45th infantry were mostly Germans, the 15th infantry was largely Norwegians, while the 17th, a very colorful, hard-fighting outfit, were Irish.

One of the outstanding features of the war was the great number of German and other immigrants who volunteered in this cause which they could have readily considered none of their business.

Wisconsin forces, largely volunteers, made such a striking record in the war that it erased completely from public memory the smears left by the draft riots and the Copperheads. Twelve years old when the conflict began, the State had attained the full dignity of statehood.

WISCONSIN IN THE SPANISH - AMERICAN WAR

There were no "Copperheads" in Wisconsin during the Spanish-American War. Spain's mistreatment of the Cubans had caused universal resentment and anger all over the country and the destruction of the battleship Maine was the spark needed to set off general hatred of everything Spanish.

When a careful investigation led the commission inquiring into the occurrence to report that the explosion had been outside the hull of the ship, public sentiment and national pride quickly brought about a declaration of war against Spain on April 19, 1898.

By August 12 it had been so thoroughly demonstrated that Spain was a hollow shell of her former power that a preliminary peace was signed at Washington. There was some further fighting but the final peace treaty was signed December 10 of that same year in Paris.

About 5,400 Wisconsin men, members of 4 National Guard regiments and one artillery Company, were called into service. Only two regiments left the Country. They were the second Regiment,

from the Eastern part of the State, lying North of Beaver Dam and the Third Regiment from the region North and West of the Wisconsin River. Both Regiments were in the force led into Puerto Rico by General Nelson A. Miles, in August. They returned in October.

Deaths in Southern camps from poor food, bad water and generally poor sanitation far exceeded battle casualties. Two Wisconsin men were killed in action. 141 died of disease.

WISCONSIN IN WORLD WAR I

When the United States entered World War I, the loyalty of the State of Wisconsin was generally suspected. Her large German immigrant population was openly sympathetic with Germany. One of her Senators had voiced loud approval of the sinking of the British liner Lusitania in 1915 with the loss of 114 American lives. He had demanded an embargo on the shipment of munitions to the Allies. He had fought increased appropriations to increase the armed forces of the Country and loudly criticized the administration for allowing American bankers to loan money to the Allies. Yet in 1916, tho scorned as a presidential candidate, he was returned to the Senate by a margin of 2 to 1 over his opponent.

His later opposition to the dismissal of German Ambassador Count von Bernstorff, the arming of merchant vessels and his declaration that we had more cause to war on England than on Germany, his vote against the declaration of war, and his so-called "treasonable speech" in St. Paul (which was later shown to be misquoted) brought him the condemnation of the whole country. The Senate considered expelling him and public attitude is best shown by the fact that Wisconsin University students burned him in effigy and his Congressional colleagues refused to associate with him.

The record of this Wisconsin Senator and that of one of its Congressmen were accepted by other States as representing Wisconsin's attitude toward the war. It was generally regarded as a hot bed of disloyalty and pro-Germanism. Businessmen of neighboring states talked of boycotting all Wisconsin goods and the War Department fully expected to be compelled to send troops in to quell draft disorders.

To the everlasting credit of our State, let it be said that Wisconsin astounded the Country by standing at or near the top of all states in all phases of war effort. She was the first State to report her registration completed and 218,000 men listed. She sent nearly 125,000 men into the armed forces, 91,000 of them through the draft. Her death loss was 1,709 men — 4th highest of all the States.

Less than two weeks after the war opened, our State organized a State Council of Defense — a sort of small war cabinet made up of representatives of government, business, industry, and the professions; it became a pattern for like organizations in other states. County Councils of Defense were created also for the purpose of administering war measures, such as, "heatless, wheatless, meatless,

coal-saving and gasless" days, sugar rationing and Liberty Loan Bond sales.

The people of the State over-subscribed every Liberty Bond issue, providing in all \$341,000,000 — one tenth the value of all property in Wisconsin — \$140 for each man, woman and child. \$16,000,000 was donated to the Red Cross and other agencies serving the soldiers.

Women of the Red Cross knitted 500,000 garments and made 500,000,000 surgical dressings. We supplied 450 Red Cross nurses and hundreds of canteen and clerical workers for overseas service. We sent the largest percentage of our doctors into the service of any State.

A Wisconsin University man gave the nation the submarine detector.

Our State was the first to aid dependents of soldiers, the first to give soldiers the right to vote and to offer a practical plan for absentee voting.

Thousands of Wisconsin men — scattered through many units — fought overseas. But the 32nd or Red Arrow Division and the 42nd — Rainbow Division — were each made up largely of Wisconsin men and they earned the State an enviable reputation as soldiers. The 32nd was composed of Wisconsin and Michigan men with those from Wisconsin in the majority. The regiments of the 42nd were our men, trained in the Wisconsin National Guard and fully equipped by Wisconsin at a cost of \$780,000 because the War Department could not so act without considerable delay.

From their training day in Texas until the end of the War, the Commander of the 32nd was Major General William G. Haan. They sailed for France in January, 1918, and from July 30 to August 5 were heavily engaged in the second battle of the Marne with a loss of 777 killed and over 3,000 wounded. They gained the accolade "Les Terribles" as a result of this success. At Soissons they endured the "5 days of hell" — August 28 to September 1. So fiercely did they pierce the enemy lines that a Red Arrow became the symbol of the Division. Here their loss was 485 killed and 1,800 wounded. 25 days later they pierced the Kriemheld line in the Meuse-Argonne offensive — losses 1,100 dead — 4,300 wounded. They were just preparing to go in on a 4th offensive when the Armistice ended the war. It was the proud boast of the Division that they had never failed to penetrate a line they were sent against. Total losses were nearly 3,000 dead and 11,000 wounded — 4th highest in deaths among American units. Its flags were decorated with the Croix de guerre by the French Army.

The 42nd (Rainbow) Division, so named by their Colonel, Douglas MacArthur, sailed for France in December, 1917. Going to the front in February, it saw action at Oraq, St. Michael and the Meuse-Argonne push. The first Wisconsin men killed in the war were of this unit, Commanders were Gen. Chas. T. Meucher and Gen. Douglas

MacArthur. Like the 32nd, it became part of the occupation army of the Rhineland.

A colorful Wisconsin figure of the War was Brig. Gen. Wm. (Billy) Mitchell of Milwaukee. He went to France as a Major in April, 1917, and soon won the Croix de guerre by his brilliant exploits. Promoted to Colonel he was given command of air forces in the Zone of Advance. He was the first American officer to fly over the enemy lines and was given the distinguished service cross for his bold reconnaissance flights. In September he was made Brigadier General and Air Chief of all the groups of armies at St. Michael.

After the War "Billy", convinced of the part air power would play in future wars, staged an aggressive campaign to convince the army officers of the need of a strong air unit. Unable to win consideration for his plans, he made scathing attacks against the hide-bound higher officers for which he was court-martialed and "busted" to the rank of colonel and suspended. He continued preaching the need of air power, prophesying that the States would some day see a surprise attack — perhaps from Japan. He died in 1936 — too soon to see the awful fulfillment of his predictions at Pearl Harbor.

Today all America admits that he was a man of far vision and sound judgment and Congress has made tardy recognition of his work.

THE FLU EPIDEMIC OF 1918-1920

Influenza, commonly called "flu", has been a scourge of man for many years. Long regarded as only an acute cold it was not until its mass visitation of both Europe and the United States, in 1918, that medical science recognized it as a highly contagious and deadly disease.

War and pestilence have long been closely associated but seldom in such a terrifying degree as during the flu epidemic of 1918. Early in September of that year the disease appeared almost spontaneously in both Europe and America. From Maine to California reports began to pour in of people stricken by families and communities. The death rate became appalling and medical science was helpless to stem its spread. Schools and churches were closed and all public gatherings prohibited. All to no purpose. During September, October and November flu swept the country. It had respect for neither age, sex or social position. The problem of providing nurses for the sick became a vital one. With so many of our doctors in the service those at home were forced to work until many dropped from exhaustion. Both 1919 and 1920 saw serious recurrences of the disease.

It was found that a cloth mask worn over nose and mouth seemed to offer some protection for those caring for the sick but outside of this no means of preventing spread of the disease was found. As for treatment, the patient was ordered to bed and admonished to stay there until at least two days after all fever disappeared. The slightest exposure following the fever was almost certain to result in some

form of pneumonia and — too often — death.

Army and navy training camps were among the first groups to suffer and in some of these the death rate was terrifying. Many Wisconsin men were stationed at Camp Grant, in Illinois. Here the epidemic raged in most deadly form. The caskets of the dead were piled like cordwood on the platform of the railway station, day after day, and the commandant finally shot himself because all efforts of his medical staff to control the disease failed utterly.

There is no reason to believe that Wisconsin people suffered more widely than any other state yet for 1918 85,238 cases of flu were reported to the Wisconsin State Board of Health with 11,503 deaths. At the same time 2,342 deaths from bronco pneumonia and pneumonia were reported and many of these no doubt should have been attributed to flu.

This terrible epidemic, coming as it did during the closing days of World War I, brought to Wisconsin people six times as many deaths as were suffered by Wisconsin soldiers who took part in the great conflict. Probably the number of flu survivors who were left to face life with greatly impaired health compared in similar ratio with the wounded of the war.

World War I came to an end before the epidemic died out but the joy over the return of peace was tempered by the sorrow and misery the flu had left in its wake.

WISCONSIN IN WORLD WAR II

When World War II had its terrible beginnings, Wisconsin people, like the rest of America, hoped against hope that the struggle would be confined to Europe. During the campaign of 1940 it listened to President Roosevelt's promise that America's youth would never be sent abroad to participate in the struggle and many believed him because of their devout hope that it would prove true.

(Wisconsin's Senator Bob LaFollette followed strictly in his father's isolationist footsteps. He fought the repeal of the Arms Embargo and declared Roosevelt's order to the Navy to shoot on sight any Axis war craft found in American waters, unconstitutional. Brother Phil, who had toured Europe as a correspondent in 1939, returned to tour this country and urge isolation. He denounced the administration for waste in defense expenditure and charged that Roosevelt's "shoot on sight" order was a "one man declaration of war"—an act deserving of impeachment.)

Sunday, December 7, 1941 and the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor changed the entire picture. (Phillip LaFollette stopped speech making, joined the Army. Bob voted for the declaration of war and urged all citizens to support the war effort.)

Both Wisconsin men and women did their part in the years that followed. Mothers and daughters joined in speeding the work of munitions plants and war industries. Some became members of the

armed forces—the army's WAC, the navy's WAVES and the coast guard's SPARS—the women marines.

350,000—a tenth of the State's population—served in the armed forces. 7,980 of them died in the war, a loss four times that of the first World War.

Wisconsin labor made a brilliant production record during the war—a record marred by but one major strike, a four months' strike at the Allis-Chalmers plant in 1941 that held up the output of \$45,000,000 worth of war materials. This strike, however, was Communist manipulated and called on a fraudulent vote because of the Soviet-Nazi friendship pact.

Wisconsin men who made outstanding contributions to the war effort were General Douglas MacArthur, Milwaukee; Fleet Admiral Wm. D. Leahy, Ashland; Vice-Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, Hillsboro; Lt. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, Monroe; Brig. Gen. Frederick Walker Castle, Milwaukee and Major Gen. Ralph M. Immell.

Probably the greatest fighter pilot America ever produced was Major Richard T. Bong of Poplar, Wisconsin. He shot down 40 Japanese planes and won every decoration the United States had for fliers. Gen. MacArthur personally bestowed the Congressional Medal of Honor upon him in Leyte. Finally made an army test pilot, he was killed in the crash of a P80 jet plane just as the war ended in 1945.

Fourteen other Wisconsin heroes won the nation's highest award but in far too many of these cases the awards had to be made posthumously.

The 32nd Red Arrow Division again was made up largely of Wisconsin and Michigan militiamen. Among the first units to be called, some of them were sent to New Guinea by air in 1942. In the Buna campaign the division's casualties from bullets and disease totaled more than the original strength of the outfit. Saidor, Aitope and Leyte followed in order, then they were moved into line on Lingayen gulf—Luzon. In a month they had fought their way to Manila. A month later there began a 119 day campaign in the Caraballo Mountains. August 15, the day of surrender, was the 654th day of fighting for the 32nd in World War II. They had killed an estimated 34,000 Japanese and were never beaten in combat. Units of the division were among the first occupation troops to land in Japan. Thus nobly did the 32nd of World II uphold the honor and glory of the unit.

But many were the unsung heroes of the war. 380,000 Wisconsin war plant workers produced over \$12,000,000,000 worth of war materials. Wisconsin farms changed from horse power to tractor power to turn out record breaking quantities of dairy products, farm crops, canned foods, eggs and poultry with half the usual man power.

Thousands of Wisconsin people gave their blood at Red Cross Doning Centers and thousands of women worked countless hours cheering men in the hospitals and serving as canteen workers at

USO centers. Workers in every city block became volunteer air raid wardens, salvage collectors, firemen and watchmen.

People responded so generously to the urge to buy war bonds that Wisconsin was one of the few states to surpass 150% of its bond sale quotas.

Most of Wisconsin regarded as a great but necessary nuisance the many restrictions imposed as war measures — the rationing program, the 35 mile speed limit, priorities on many scarce materials and the worst housing shortage ever experienced. Most people grumbled, many cheated, but the necessary job was done.

When on May 5, 1945 Germany surrendered, and three months later, Japan was blasted into realization that she had run her race to a broken tape, there were wild scenes of rejoicing in every Wisconsin city — rejoicing over a most distasteful task thoroughly performed.

THE PESHTIGO FIRE

"Look! Look! The sun is rising in the west!" The sawmill foreman had been roused from his bed by a roar like a long freight train on a trestle, apparently passing overhead. But instead of a sunrise, he and his wife were looking upon fiery death riding the wings of a tornado bringing such horror and destruction to the thriving lumber town of Peshtigo as no other spot in these United States has ever experienced.

It was the night of October 8, 1871 — while the great fire was wreaking destruction upon Chicago. The previous winter had seen little snow fall and the spring rains had been light. On July 8 a heavy rain fell but the already parched soil snatched it so greedily that in a few hours it left no trace. The last reported rain was September 5 and too light to reduce for more than a few hours the tinder-like dryness of Northeastern Wisconsin. For many weeks the region east of a line from Appleton to the mouth of the Menominee River had been covered with a pall of smoke. No settlement in the entire area had escaped frequent brush fire alarms and the people were red-eyed and weary from the constant fire-fighting and watching. Often the smoke was so thick that the features of a person across the street could not be distinguished. Swamps were dry, the dead leaves like tinder, brooks and creeks existed only as dry or slightly muddy courses. The resinous needles of the pine trees needed only a spark to turn a tree into a blazing torch.

Forest fires were reported by Oconto, Pensaukee, Big and Little Suamico and in the vicinity of Sturgeon Bay in Door County.

On September 22 a blaze raged in the timber some miles south of Peshtigo. On Saturday the 23rd, a smouldering fire west of town suddenly roared into fury and burned its way to the Peshtigo River about a mile north of town. All that night falling sparks set fires in the sawdust and slab piles of the big wood working plant and only ceaseless vigilance quenched each of these hundreds of incipient blazes.

Survivors have told of the awful grandeur of the Saturday night fire. The flames were roaring through virgin pine timber with the same abandon that is usual with prairie grass. Giant pines burst into fiery Christmas trees, every branch and needle blazing while serpents of fire devoured the trunk. Close overhead hung a black, impenetrable mass of resinous smoke lighted up by the brilliant flames that leaped from tree to tree beneath it. From time to time a thundering crash and a towering pillar of sparks and cinders indicated that one more great pine had been destroyed.

By the morning of the 24th these fires had burned out and all seemed safe, but about eleven o'clock a hard, northwest wind began to blow, fanning into renewed vigor the fire to the north, while a new conflagration from the southwest advanced with mad velocity. Smoke became so dense that it was almost impossible to breathe — sparks fell freely, but with teams hauling water from the river and

every man working like mad, sunset found the wind abating, the fire dying out, and, to the utter amazement of all, it was found that not a building in the village had been destroyed.

Such was the background of experience on October 8. For a month the citizens of Peshtigo had breathed air laden with smoke, had fought flames at times and had dreamed of disaster during their uneasy sleep. Fear of death by fire rose with them in the morning, sat as a specter at their tables and accompanied them wherever they went. The smoke pall seemed a little more dense than usual, but did not even excite comment.

The day passed as many a Sabbath before it. People attended the morning and evening service at the two churches and passed the other hours of the day at their wonted Sunday activities.

Late in the afternoon a strong breeze sprang up, but toward sunset it fell away and the evening was one of perfect calm — a death-like silence which brought to some a feeling of foreboding.

One woman is said to have confided to a friend, "I am afraid we shall all burn up tonight!" Before morning she was dead.

Some who were on the streets noticed something falling like snow flakes and this was proved to be ashes, yet no thought of unusual danger entered their minds. One by one the lights in the houses went out as people sought their night's repose. A dull red glare showed through the smoke on the horizon south of town. Again a southwest breeze sprang up and the air grew tense with heat. Then came the low rumbling like an approaching train. This increased to a roar until it resembled thunder or a mighty wind. People awoke and rushed into the streets to learn what threatened them. All too soon they knew. The fire they had dreaded for weeks was upon them.

Children were snatched from their beds and partially dressed. People who had not long before packed their valuables in preparation for flight tried desperately to get some belongings together. The men gathered in squads and prepared to fight the flames.

And now about 10:00 great tongues of flames were seen leaping high above the trees and racing toward the doomed village. The roar increased and live coals began to drop — one by one at first — then faster and faster until they were like the flakes of a fiery snow storm. Then the full force of the tornado was upon them. The building nearest the woods spang into flames and the very air seemed a mass of fire.

In less time than it takes to relate it, practically every building in the village was burning — from the top downward — and anyone who would admit it could see that there was no chance to save them. Still some men lingered near their homes in the hope of saving them and many of these delayed too long and were cut off from escape.

As if by common instinct all rushed for the river. Women and children made their way there as best they could while many of the

men lingered, in an attempt to save some valuables from their doomed homes. Thus families were separated — many never again to meet in this world — some to be reunited next day. Some reached a low marshy flat just south of town on the east side of the river and most of them survived.

Two common obsessions added terribly to the death toll.

The first was, the people on each side of the river seemed certain that safety lay on the other side of the stream. As a result two fighting, desperate mobs met on the bridge and massed there in utter confusion. Soon the bridge began to burn and the only recourse for those upon it was to jump into the river. Some drowned. Others escaped after almost unendurable torture.

The other fatal error was the faith of many that the company boarding house would be saved. This larger structure was directly across the road from where the fire engine was housed. The engine was gotten out and used to throw water upon the building. It is estimated that from 30 to 75 persons had taken refuge here when the whole front burst into flames. So awful was the intensity of the heat that those within could not cross the road to the river. No one knows how many perished here. Heaps of charred bones and masses of roasted flesh found in the ruins next day gave no clue to the sex, number or identity of those who had lost their lives at this point.

Scores never reached the river, suffocated by heat, smoke and foul gases, they fell and died horribly. Next morning their charred and shriveled remains dotted what had the previous evening been the streets of Peshtigo.

Many strange and unexplained phenomena accompanied the great catastrophe but none more difficult to explain than the fact that when the next day the remains were being gathered and interred, many cases were noted that where bodies were lying side by side one was reduced to a mere heap of calcinated bones and another would be intact — the hair scarcely singed.

Some claim that within ten minutes of the first home beginning to blaze the whole village was a mass of flames. Sheets of fire rolled along the ground like breakers on a rocky shore. The very air above the head seemed a mass of flames. Blinding smoke made escape almost a matter of chance. Everywhere people died horribly. Some in their homes, some trying to escape by the roads, some within mere feet of the river and a chance for life.

Over all was the tornado which lifted the rooms from buildings and buffeted fleeing human beings like straws.

No one can adequately picture the stark, pitiless horrors of that night. Those who reached the river were far from saved. So intense was the heat that floating logs began to blaze. Those standing in the cold water had to immerse constantly or cover themselves with wet blankets to endure the heat. The awful roar of the tornado could not drown the shrieks of the suffering and the groans and lamentations

of those separated from relatives and friends. Cattle, horses, and other animals rushed into the river and swam about, often rolling logs to which people were clinging and causing many to drown. Another menace was added when the burning bridge collapsed and flaming timbers were carried by the current among the huddled sufferers.

Fr. P. Pernin, the village priest, who wrote a vivid, first-hand account of the catastrophe gives this heart rending picture of the scene at the river:

"The air was no longer fit to breathe, full as it was of sand, dust, ashes, cinder sparks, smoke and fire. It was almost impossible to keep one's eyes unclosed, to discover the road or to recognize people, tho the way was crowded with pedestrians as well as vehicles crossing and crashing against each other in the general flight. Some were hastening toward the river, others from it whilst all were struggling alike in the grasp of the hurricane. A thousand discordant, deafening noises rose on the air together. The neighing of horses, the falling of chimneys, crashing of uprooted trees, roaring and whining of the wind, crackling of fire as it ran with lightning like rapidity from house to house—all sounds were there save that of the human voice. People seemed stricken dumb with terror. . . .

"The banks of the river as far as the eye could see were covered with people standing there, motionless as statues, some with eyes staring upward toward heaven and tongues protruded. . . . When turning my gaze from the river either to the right or to the left, before me or upwards, I saw nothing but flames; houses, trees, and the air itself were on fire. Above my head as far as the eye could reach into space I saw nothing but immense volumes of flames covering the firmament, rolling over one another with stormy violence as we see masses of clouds driven wildly hither and thither by the fierce power of the tempest. . . .

"Once in the water up to our necks, I thought we would at least be safe from fire but it was not so, the flames darted over the water as they did over the land. The air was full of them or rather the air itself was on fire. Our heads were in continual danger. It was only by throwing water constantly over them and our faces, and beating the river with our hands that we kept the flames at bay."

Speaking of conditions next day he tells how there were only holes in the earth where the roots of trees had once been.

The Peshtigo Ev. Lutheran Church was organized on the day of the great fire. On its 60th Anniversary, its present pastor, Rev. Kurt Geyer, issued a booklet dealing with the life of his church. In this he gives the best concise description of the fire to be found anywhere. Rev. Geyer has served his parish since 1915 and his people are made up of many who either lived through that awful night or had relatives and friends who died then. He speaks from very close intimacy with his subject. Follows a description from his book:

"Many sad and peculiar things happened while the fire was

raging. One of the inhabitants of Peshtigo started for the river with his wife, but before reaching the water they both fell. He sprang up again and seizing a woman succeeded in getting her to the water and saved her. But imagine his horror on discovering that the woman he had saved was not his own wife. It was too late to return. His wife was lost. In the lower Sugar Bush a man was found lying on the ground, a child on each side of him, the throats of all three cut and a knife lying on his breast. . . . about ten rods from him lay his wife with an infant child in one arm and a bible on the other, and a likeness of one of the other children on her breast. A man was found in a well with the bucket chain around his neck. Other instances of suicide occurred and in still another a young man fleeing torture stabbed himself in the breast and attempted to repeat the blow when the knife was caught by a twig and knocked out of his hand. He was saved, badly burned and finally recovered in a Marinette hospital. A woman in the Sugar Bush started with her children for the village in a wagon. On the way she found the road blocked by a fallen tree. She cut one horse loose, got upon it with her children and succeeded in saving them all. On the river bank she gave birth to another child. A sadder case was that of a Norwegian woman who reached the river bank in a fearfully burned condition, succeeded in crossing the river, and there gave birth to a child and died.

"Before the morning dawned the village of Peshtigo, with the single exception of two buildings, that of the now Schwarten home on the west side and the unfinished W. A. Ellis home on the east side, was utterly swept out of existence, and the ground a desert waste, strewn with blackened hideous corpses, singly or in groups, more or less mutilated.

"Before daylight came, the flames had so far subsided that the survivors were able to get out of the river and leave their retreat on the marsh flat, and they ventured forth through the hot sands in quest of relatives and friends, now and then stumbling in the still prevailing darkness over the bodies of victims. Others gather around a heap of burning coal to dry their clothes and warm themselves. Finally the sun arose, casting a red glare through the smoke upon the scene. And the horror of that scene no pen will ever be able to portray. The west side of the river where all the stores but that of the Peshtigo Company had stood together with all the hotels, the Roman Catholic Church and many private residences, was a bleak, desolate prairie, the very location of the streets almost a matter of doubt, and the only things standing above ground were the iron works of two locomotives and the number of craw-wheels. On the east side of the river stood numerous car trucks, the walls of the brick dry kilns of the wooden ware factory, the stone walls of the engine and boiler room of the factory proper, and the unfinished home which was in the course of erection by W. A. Ellis.

"Here lay a group of father, mother, and children, their clothes

all gone and their bodies shrivelled up to 2/3 their natural size; there the body of a woman, there a man, there a child found in a kneeling posture, a boy as if in the attitude of prayer, head bent down upon his hands, and his body completely roasted. There were groups lying all around the village, some of the bodies with their limbs burned off, all of them naked, and with one exception all lying on their faces. Two of the bodies found were those of a woman lying on her face, clasping an infant in her arms in an attempt to shield it from the fire. There were about 70 bodies found that morning in the streets, besides the carcasses of horses, cattle and dogs strewn promiscuously about."

No one has ever claimed to be able to give more than a loose estimate of the number of unfortunates who died in this holocaust.

Closely linked with Peshtigo were the partly settled farming areas south and west of the village known as the Upper, Middle and Lower Sugar Bushes.

The census of 1870 gave the town of Peshtigo a population of 1,750 souls. Peshtigo was a booming lumber town centered around an immense wooden ware factory — which was the largest plant of the kind under one roof in the country — a saw mill, a sash door and blind factory, a machine shop, a foundry, a grist mill, a large store and a boarding house. Most of these belonged to the Peshtigo Company that had founded the village. There was also a smaller saw mill, a wagon shop, two blacksmith shops, two shoemaking shops and two livery stables. There were four hotels, eight grocery and dry goods stores, a drug store, a jewelry store, a hardware store, a barber shop, several boarding houses, two churches and a school house.

Peshtigo was connected with Peshtigo Harbor by a company owned railroad. At the Harbor was a big sawmill capable of turning out 150,000 feet of lumber a day. The fire did not reach Peshtigo Harbor.

With such a set up there was a steady variation in population — single men coming and going from day to day. Many persons had remarked on the unusual number of strangers in Peshtigo on that fateful day.

For other reasons the number who met death in the fire is estimated at from 500 to 800. 70 were picked up on the streets next day. The official report of those found and identified was 315. The loss in the Upper Bush was 73; in the Middle Bush 140. Charred bones or roasted flesh may not disclose the names they bore during life. Besides bodies were found in the woods for years afterwards. It seems probable that 800 deaths for the whole Peshtigo area is not far wrong.

At this same time fire raging through Oconto, Shawano, Brown, Kewaunee, Door and Manitowoc Counties brought the total loss of life to 1,152 with 350 more believed dead. At least 1,500 people were seriously injured and some 3,000 made destitute. The financial loss

was placed at \$5,000,000, not counting the value of an estimated 2,000,000 trees, largely pine, destroyed by fire.

The fire raged north and east after destroying Peshtigo, causing stark terror in Marinette and Menominee. Some of it did get into the extreme east end of Marinette but was controlled. Bare sandy hills between Peshtigo and Marinette gave the inferno a chance to burn itself out and the twin cities escaped the fate of Peshtigo by a narrow margin.

Monday morning terribly needed aid came to the stricken village from Marinette and Menominee. Teams sent by Isaac Stephenson, Mr. A. C. Brown and others came with food and clothing. The owner of the Dunlap House turned his hotel into a hospital and the twin city people vied with each other in their effort to relieve the suffering of the survivors.

In 1871 the C.N.W.R.R. was extending its line from Green Bay to Menominee, Michigan but neither rails or wire had reached Peshtigo at the time of the fire. Thus it happened that the Chicago fire which occurred the same night and took almost no lives was front page news for five weeks before news of the Peshtigo disaster broke. When facts regarding it became generally known, relief for the sufferers poured in from all parts of the United States and even from Europe.

Governor Schofield in his message to the Wisconsin legislature in January reported that the Executive office had, as of January 1, received over \$169,000 in cash contributions to be used for relief. Great quantities of food, clothing, bedding and other necessities poured in and a commission was set up in Green Bay to get the articles distributed to the sufferers.

Monday night, October 9, the long prayed for rain came and all remaining fires were brought under control.

It is said that in three weeks a new saw mill began operation in Peshtigo. Lumber was plentiful and cheap and somehow the stricken provided themselves with shelter and through relief were able to face the winter.

Within a few months Peshtigo was again a thriving sawmill town. The great saws hummed till long after all the timber that could be brought down the Peshtigo had been turned into lumber.

Yet it is many years since the last log was rolled up a Peshtigo mill carriage—for many years the voice of the saw has been gone. Peshtigo is today a highly prosperous paper manufacturing city with a population of about 2,700 people.

A very few of the survivors of that awful holocaust still live but all the city is steeped in data of that wild October night when fiery death rode into town on a tornado.

WILLIAMSON'S MILL

The tornado of fire swept up from Brown County over-running

the towns of Union, Brussels, Forestville, Gardner, Nasewaupee, Clay Banks and Sturgeon Bay.

In Gardner and Nasewaupee a number of big swamps with a thick growth of timber had burned out in September, leaving large areas where this greater fire found little to feed on. Because of this earlier destruction, the fire was hindered and the Village of Sturgeon Bay and the northern towns were saved.

Williamsonville, or Williamson's Mill, the present Tornado, about ten miles south of the city, was the scene of such destruction that the name became Tornado shortly thereafter.

Williamsonville was a little settlement established by the Williamson brothers in the dense forest, the manufacture of shingles being the main pillar upon which rested the foundation for forming the settlement. A mill, store, boarding house, large barn, blacksmith shop, eight homes and minor buildings made up the settlement, and all were reduced to ashes. About eighty persons were in the settlement at the time of the fire and all perished except seventeen.

Of the eleven members of the Williamson family, but two escaped — Thomas Williamson and his mother.

The village lay in a small clearing of six or seven acres. For a week or two they had been fighting the flames, setting back-fires, and began to feel quite safe. In the evening of the fateful day a violent windstorm came up, leveling trees in all directions. This was followed by a sheet of fire that rolled over the treetops. Then came a shower of sparks, large and as thick as raindrops. In a moment the buildings were all on fire and a rush was made for the vacant part of the clearing used as a potato patch. Here thirty-five persons huddled together, several hundred feet from the woods. Not one of them escaped. Ten feet from them sat old Mrs. Williamson with a wet blanket over her, and she was saved. A woman partly covered by the same blanket was roasted to death. Thomas Williamson saved himself by wrapping in a wet blanket and rooting face downward into an old ash bed. Seven men jumped into a well but two of them burned to death. Two men suffered such intense agony from their burns that they dashed out their brains by pounding their heads against a stump.

Besides the three-score human beings who were cremated in this spot, there were also burned to death 16 of the 17 horses, five out of the six oxen and 40 swine.

While Williamsonville lost more lives than any other settlement in Door County because of its comparatively large population, the awful scenes were repeated in scores of other places. Throughout almost the entire southern half of the County, the fire raged like a hurricane.

THE WISCONSIN FOREST FIRES OF 1894

Nearly a quarter of a century after the Peshtigo Fire, another

forest fire exceeded it in all respects except loss of human life. This catastrophe was the fire of 1894 in northwestern Wisconsin. Shortly before it occurred a single blaze burned 65,000 acres of timber in the Comstock area of Barron County. This became a part of the area involved in the 1894 burning.

To get a definite idea of the magnitude of this fire, draw a line on your map of Wisconsin from St. Paul, Minnesota to Washburn on Chequamegon Bay. It will represent a distance of approximately 156 miles. Cut from this the distance from St. Paul to Amory—about thirty miles—and all the remainder—126 miles—is the path of the '94 fire which, in some places, reached a width of fifty miles.

The first fire of 1894 just east of this area was at Phillips.

Phillips was a sawmill town of about 1,500 people. Enough logging had been done in the region so that it was surrounded by hundreds of acres of pine and hemlock slashings which the droughts of two successive years had made tinder dry. In fact the drought of 1894 had made forest conditions more like those of the summer of the Peshtigo fire than had since occurred.

July 25th a fire smoldered all day in a pile of hemlock bark in the township of Harmony—some ten miles southwest of Phillips. It is claimed by some that this fire was set as the result of a family quarrel. No one paid it any attention. July 26th dawned with a brisk southwest wind blowing and the smoking bark suddenly sprang into flames that spread into the hemlock slashings, crossed Wilson Creek meadows as a grasshopper would hurdle a garden path and roared straight toward Phillips, giving fair warning of its approach by vast clouds of billowing smoke.

Besides its sawmill, Phillips boasted three lumber yards on the lake shore (that contained about twelve million feet of pine boards), a box factory and a large tannery.

At about 1:30 on the afternoon of the 26th the approaching fire appeared so threatening that the crews of the mill, the box factory and the tannery were all called from their regular work and sent to the south edge of the village to fight the fire. They were wholly successful, all burning brands being extinguished as rapidly as they fell. As night approached the wind died away and all danger seemed over.

The following afternoon, the wind again rose and the fire came toward the village from a more westerly direction, burning through a bone dry cedar swamp which lay along the west side of the village. Again men were sent out to combat the flames but this time they burst from the dry cedars with such fury that nothing could check them. Soon not only houses near the swamp but some in the center of the village began to blaze. The volunteer fire company did all that was humanly possible and was given credit for saving the one church and about twenty houses that were standing when the fire had passed on.

Many of the people were sent to Prentice on a freight train that

was passing through. Others gathered at the Price County Fair grounds where all survived. People on the south side of the town made their way to a clearing on the top of Eaton's Hill and were saved. Some 400 spent the night in the river near Tannerytown where they kept alive by splashing each other with water while the fire roared over them into the woods beyond the town.

Thirteen of the fourteen persons who lost their lives at Phillips met their fate due to a most extraordinary happening.

A resident at Phillips named Frank Kliss owned a large houseboat. After the scare of the 26th he stocked this boat with provisions and planned, if fire again threatened, to pole the outfit to a place he had selected on the lake shore and be certain of safety. When it became apparent that nothing could save the village he went to his boat along with his wife and daughter and eleven neighbors. He and the one man with him poled the craft down the river and into the entrance to the lake. Just as they were congratulating themselves that they were safe, one of the lumber yards started to burn on the shore of the lake near them. The millions of feet of lumber went with explosive force; whole piles of boards were lifted into the air. The entire yard of flames took on a rotating motion shooting smoke and flames skyward for a thousand feet. The air drawn toward this vortex became a gale which swept the houseboat toward the shore and raised waves from six to eight feet high on the lake. Kliss was snuffed out by one great burst of flame that hit him as he was trying vainly to hold the boat from drifting. His passengers took to small boats which immediately capsized. Only Mrs. Kliss was able to cling to an overturned boat and get ashore, so badly burned that she was blinded for life.

The other life lost was a man known as Fitzpatrick who rushed into his boarding house after personal belongings and never reappeared.

Leaving Phillips in ashes, the fire swept up the valley of the Big Elk River and its tributaries, destroying millions of feet of splendid standing pine and several large logging outfits. When rain checked it in a tamarack swamp near Fifield, it had devastated 100,000 acres.

Yet the Phillips burning was but the prologue of the fire tragedy of 1894.

All through August the drought grew more intense. Days of 100 degree weather followed each other for a time and the timber lands lay like gunpowder needing but a spark to set them off. Blazes were common along the railroads because small sparks from the locomotives—ordinarily harmless—had to be watched unceasingly. Thousands of cords of fuel wood and crossties burned in Barron, Rusk and Chippewa Counties and many acres of standing grain and hay were destroyed.

Evidently the fire demon planned his all out assault for September 1. On that day fires seemed to burst out simultaneously along the

belt of 126 miles and up to a width of fifty miles. The village of Barronette was one of the first to suffer. When fires on the roofs began, most of the people left by train for Cumberland, Shell Lake or Spooner. Destruction of the place was complete and the Barronette Lumber Company lost in lumber, lath and shingles alone over \$200,000. Shell Lake had a bad night as fifty-three of its homes burned. Comstock and Granite Lake were wiped out completely while Spooner, Prentice, Fifield and Park Falls were saved only by the most valiant effort on the part of their citizens. Hayward was practically surrounded by burning timber but its fire department kept the blaze at the edges of the town. Railroad men said that all northern Wisconsin was on fire that night and the statement does not seem to be greatly overdrawn.

Cable, in Bayfield County, was deserted by its people and lost 13 houses and a railroad building. Mason was left with two small dwellings and the White River Lumber Company alone lost \$700,000 here.

Ashland was attacked by the flames but an efficient fire force kept them at bay. At Washburn fire got into the suburbs and was held there by the fire department until blowing embers sailed over the heads of the men to ignite the lumber piles on the Cook and Company docks. Volunteer firemen could do nothing with the flames and they spread to the four docks of Bigelow & Company. In half an hour docks and lumber were going up in smoke clouds that lifted to the sky. With the assistance of an Ashland fire engine most of the town was saved.

Parrishville lost its sawmill and lumber yards. Iron River 18 houses and its sawmill. At Marengo three quarters of a mile of the Soo Line's railroad trestle was completely destroyed.

Other places seriously threatened by fire that night were: Butter-nut, Glidden, Miller, Plummer, Iron Belt, Ashland Junction, Gile, Saxon, Odanah, Sanborn, Sedgwick, Bayfield, Houghton, Moquah, Ino, Poplar, Itasca, Pratt, Agnew, Altamont, and even Hurley.

On this same night what is known as the Hinckley Fire took over four hundred lives in eastern Minnesota. While the great fire in Wisconsin is often referred to as the Hinckley Fire, the facts appear to be that there was a band of at least thirty miles of unburned territory separating the two areas at their closest approach.

Eleven counties of Northwestern Wisconsin suffered great destruction of timber and towns and some lives in this burning. The amount of timber destroyed was vastly greater than that around Peshtigo. But on that awful night of September 1st, when the world seemed on fire, but nine human lives were lost in those eleven counties.

These were the most destructive fires Wisconsin has suffered and the resulting losses in mature and second growth timber went far toward taking our state out of the lumbering industry.

THE OSHKOSH FIRE

Few growing cities have endured the hardship of two major fires within ten months. Yet this was the experience of Oshkosh in 1874 and 1875 when it was a place of about 17,000 population.

The fire of July 14, 1874 destroyed upper Main Street and several adjacent blocks. The April fire of 1875 wiped out the remainder of the business places from almost the exact southern limit of the first fire to the river as well as much of the adjacent business area. Thus the combined disasters destroyed nearly a mile of main street and practically the entire business area north of the river. The April fire loss was over \$2,000,000.

On May 9, 1874, a fire south of Algoma Street consumed around 30 buildings, at an estimated loss of \$45,000. On July 14 another blaze started on upper Main Street and before being stopped had burned out most of the completely built Main Street and had spread to over a mile from its origin. 700 new buildings were built in 1874.

April 24, 1875 was clear and warm but fear lurked in many minds because a long drought had left everything tinder dry and a howling gale came out of the northwest.

The forenoon passed without incident but at 1:20 in the afternoon the staccato shrieks of the saw mill whistles along the river indicated that all fears would be realized. People rushed out to find that the Morgan Brothers saw mill, northwest of the business district, was a mass of flames. Almost instantly the lumber piles were burning fiercely and everyone realized that no ordinary ordeal faced them.

Showers of blazing embers shot upward by the terrific heat were seized by the gale and broadcast far down the wind. Blazing boards carried for half a mile. Before the fire had crossed the blocks to Main Street, homes in the second ward far east of Main Street burst into flame.

The fire department worked as men never worked before but no sooner would a pumper crew get set and start to reduce a blaze than a new inferno would burst out rods beyond them and they could only save their lives and apparatus by immediate retreat.

The crowd watched the fire among the mills, little thinking that it would reach Main Street until it was discovered that the Northwestern House, at the corner of Pearl and Light Streets, was a mass of flames. Then Main Street business men began wildly attempting to remove some of their most valuable stock by impressing every vehicle that could be found to carry it away. About that time, too, word was received of the fires in the second ward and all realized that the entire business section was doomed.

Calls had been sent to all neighboring cities for fire fighting equipment and, though the response was speedy and generous, no human agency could cope with the awful onrush of the flames. The so-called fire proof brick structures of the business district lasted but little longer than those of wood. Some of these stood for a time but

the wooden buildings in their rear together with the piles of barrels, boxes and packing materials piled back of them burned with a fierceness that no wall could resist. Soon all were aflame.

Leaping Main Street, the flames struck Washington Street, one of the finest residential sections of the city, and burned nearly to the lake.

Sheriff Stephens determined that the Court House should be saved so, commandeering the services of every man he could lay hands on, he stationed them on the roof, where, with taller buildings blazing on every side, they extinguished scores of fires and left the building the only structure standing in a blackened waste.

Some idea of the fierceness and terrific speed with which the conflagration spread is conveyed by the fact that over a square mile of the heart of the city was blazing at the same time.

About 5:00 o'clock the wind subsided and the fire soon after was brought under control.

The picture then presented beggars description. The heart of the business section was a square mile of bleak desolation. There were crowds of homeless who knew not where to turn. Few had saved more than they held in their hands and where goods had been carried out, they had burned in the streets. The entire business district had disappeared.

While the origin of the July fire was very uncertain, that of the Great Fire was definitely traced to sparks from a saw mill smoke-stack.

Of the total destruction suffered to the city a Times article lists the following: Between 600 and 700 residences; About 200 stores, offices and business places; four newspaper plants and one job printing plant; three banks; ten saloons; four livery stables; two saw mills—one with a loss of \$110,000; four planing mills; one sash door and blind factory; the match factory; one soap factory; one boiler works; one plow works; one Rotary Harrow Works; two Churches—one with rectory; The Opera House; the U.S. Postoffice; Revenue Office; St. Paul Depot; Masonic Temple, Second Ward School; Two Hotels—one with a barn.

Stories

Thieves and looters over-ran the burned out places and much property saved from the fires was stolen. Afterwards shrubbery and vines were stolen from the yards.

A residence on Washington Street escaped because the flames leaped it, tho they took the next house and over a block of those beyond.

One man saved his piano by burying it in the garden. When resurrected it was o.k.

About half of the safes in the business district proved to be fire-proof. The other half offered about as much protection as so many

pine boxes.

One business man stopped a bus loaded with passengers from the depot — compelled the passengers to vacate — then filled the vehicle with goods, saving many valuable articles.

The fire did a clean job on printing offices. The editor of the city Times lost both his plant and his home in the fire.

"A walk over the burned district will convince the most skeptical that Oshkosh is not discouraged to any alarming extent. The smoke of the fire has scarcely died away, yet a large number of substantial brick and stone buildings are well under way, while on many lots workmen are engaged in cleaning away the ruins for the same purpose. Down in the second ward a large number of fine residences have been commenced while many others, whose owners are not so well off, are being built on a more moderate scale. The idea of leaving the city is not entertained by anyone; on the contrary, all are going ahead as tho the fire was a common everyday occurrence." Thus the city arose Phoenix like from its ashes.

THE HUDSON FIRE

Hudson, like so many of our frontier towns, had its great trial by fire. At the time it was a thriving place of about 1,465 inhabitants, a center for the lumber industry and also a trade center for the prosperous farming region developing in the St. Croix River valley.

No railroad had reached the place at that time and all supplies were brought in by the many river steamers that plied between Hudson and St. Paul.

On Saturday, May 19, 1866, following a long drought and with a west gale blowing, a blaze broke out in the business district and spread like a prairie fire till it covered four blocks of the town. Bucket brigades could do little and goods removed from stores and houses were, in many cases, burned in the streets. Starting at 5:30 P.M., it had cleaned up all in its path when about 6:30 the wind fell and the flames were brought under control.

Sixty-four business places had been destroyed and twenty-five families had been made homeless. One store was left standing. Both the Methodist and Baptist Churches were out of line of the blaze and escaped. So great a quantity of goods and furniture had been stored in each of them that neither could hold services the next day.

No lives were lost though there were many narrow escapes. Many claimed the fire started from an outdoor blaze behind one of the furniture stores, being used to melt either glue or linseed oil. Some believed the source was sparks from the pipe of a drunken man lying near one of the stores, (who was saved with difficulty).

The loss was estimated at \$325,000, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of which was covered by insurance.

It is claimed that the sites of some new buildings were laid before smoke had ceased rising from the ruins and the city was soon

rebuilt. Such was the spirit of the men who built our frontier towns.

THE PASSING OF OLD SCIENCE HALL

Old Science Hall of the University of Wisconsin was the most important building on the campus. It housed the scientific laboratories and class rooms, invaluable and irreplaceable scientific collections, the entire school of Mechanical Arts, the power plant and the pumping station of the University.

It was the largest, most costly and most necessary building on the campus, but was well known to be a veritable fire trap.

On December 1, 1884, fire broke out in the carpenter shop, located in the basement, completely destroying it, together with much of the elaborate and costly apparatus for the illustration of, and instruction in, the natural sciences and mechanical engineering, and a fine art gallery.

The value of the building, fixtures and contents was placed at about \$200,000, but the cabinets of collections which had been accumulated by thirty years of assiduous effort represented a total loss to the institution since so many of the objects simply could not be replaced.

The building was replaced by a fireproof structure and the chemistry shop and the power and heating plant were housed in separate and appropriate structures.

THE LOYAL FIRE

During a blinding blizzard on Saturday, March 28, 1931 at 2:40 A.M. fire broke out in the Allen Building, Loyal, becoming a roaring inferno before any steps could be taken to quench it.

Besides apartments, this building housed a general merchandise store, a drug store, the Loyal Tribune office and a bowling alley.

Six persons, four of whom were members of one family, lost their lives and fifteen others narrowly escaped with their lives.

The origin of the blaze was unknown tho it was preceded by an explosion.

Damage to property was estimated to exceed \$150,000.

RACINE'S GREATEST FIRE

Friday, May 5, 1882 stands out as the date of Racine's greatest fire.

It started in the building of the Goodrich Transportation Company, then located on the river near the mouth of the harbor. Soon it was a raging inferno which enveloped seven city blocks and destroyed 44 buildings and 10,000,000 feet of lumber.

The total loss was estimated at \$700,000. The origin has always been a mystery, but the most plausible explanation seems to be that sparks, from the smoke stack of a tug, lodged in cracks of the warehouse and smouldered for some time before bursting into flame.

LAKE GENEVA DISASTERS

The Whiting House, Lake Geneva was built in 1873 — the first of the imposing summer resort hotels of that famous vacation place. It was an ornate structure built at a cost of \$30,000. It could accommodate 200 guests and was considered one of the finest buildings of its kind.

On July 9, 1894 it burned to the ground. Tho the structure was a complete loss, all the guests made good their escape.

On July 17, 1895 the steam launch, Dispatch, was chartered for a trip by some visitors at Harvard Camp. It was caught on the lake in the most severe storm ever known in the region and sank in 110 feet of water.

The six persons aboard her all lost their lives and the services of a diver were necessary to recover the bodies.

MARSHFIELD'S GREATEST FIRE

Fire damage amounting to several million dollars visited Marshfield in 1887.

Fire started in the lumber yard of the Upham Manufacturing Company just before noon and, because of extremely dry conditions, quickly spread over most of the town. Before nightfall, 250 buildings had been destroyed, wiping out the entire business section and most of the residences.

If any casualties resulted to the citizens they are not reported.

GREEN BAY FIRE OF 1880

While Green Bay was under constant threat of fire during the summer of the Peshtigo fire, flames never reached into the city. Smoke on Green Bay and in the city was so dense most of the summer that lake boats used their fog horns almost continuously and in town all eyes were irritated to redness and smarting.

In 1880 flames that started in the Astor planing and saw mill were soon swept by strong, shifting winds to all parts of the city. At first the wind carried the blaze into the business district. Then it shifted to carry sparks and cinders all through the residential section.

When, late in the evening, the volunteer fire fighters of the whole countryside had brought the fire under control, it was found that some sixty homes and twenty barns had been destroyed.

Damage was estimated at \$150,000.

THE FIFIELD FIRE OF '93

In the earlier days of our state where wood was the almost universal building material and fire fighting apparatus was little more effective than the bucket brigade, the town was lucky indeed that could boast of no bad blaze.

Fifield's worst fire was in July, 1893, and it completely wiped

out the three blocks that comprised the business district. Some sixty buildings were burned and twenty-one families were made homeless but no lives were lost.

The blaze started in the woodshed of the Clifton House and when discovered had an excellent start. Aided by a southwest wind the flame swept from building to building and from block to block until all that remained of the once business district was a single barn.

The Fifiield Advocate of that time lists 41 buildings upon which the loss was placed at \$118,650, with only \$37,500 of insured value. In addition to these, the depot, two boxcars and seven warehouses in which logging outfits owned by loggers were stored, were destroyed.

The Fifiield Manufacturing Company's plant had a narrow escape as the wind carried sparks direct to the millyard but constant work and watching saved the property.

The catastrophe was doubly discouraging because it came in the heart of one of our bitterest business depressions.

SHEBOYGAN FIRES

An estimated two and three-fourth million dollar fire loss visited the city of Sheboygan on January 19, 1920 when the Badger Tannery was destroyed.

The blaze seemed to originate in the hide house about 10:22 in the morning and within a minute had spread to all parts of the immense tannery. The lives of many of the workers were seriously threatened and it was most fortunate that none were overcome by the flames.

By 1:15 in the afternoon the blaze was completely under control, but the whole plant, with the exception of a new engine room which was nearing completion, was completely destroyed.

A similar fire destroyed the plant of the Zschetzsche Brothers in 1900 on the same location.

In May, 1929 the back house of the American Hide and Leather Company took fire which spread with such speed that the whole business district was threatened. The Garton Toy Company plant was partially destroyed with an estimated loss of two-thirds of a million dollars. A shift in the wind's direction made it possible to save the remainder of the plant and keep the flames out of the rest of the business district.

THE ASHLAND AREA FLOOD

In June, 1946 the area lying around Chequamegon Bay was visited by one of the most disastrous floods ever experienced in northern Wisconsin.

Unusually heavy rain began to fall Sunday, June 23, and continued until 2 A. M. of the 25th. A deluge of 9.23 inches during this short period sent all the ordinarily small rivers far out of their banks to such an extent that concrete highways and railroad grades were three feet under water and damage to the streets of Ashland alone was estimated at \$53,000. The damage to road and railroad grades, bridges, culverts and dirt roads was estimated in the millions.

Perhaps worst hit was the little Indian village of Odanah where every home was surrounded by three or four feet of water and the river flowing the length of the main street was a roaring rapids. Here was located the beautiful brick Indian school of St. Mary's, an \$80,000 structure. This was so undermined at its foundation that the whole building split in half. There were no casualties as schools were not in session.

Houses located near the river were under water to the eaves. Many were carried away to swell the pressure being exerted upon the bridges by the gathering debris.

No trains crossed the flooded area for nearly a week and most of the main highways were impassible for nearly as long.

It was two days before all those marooned in their homes could be evacuated and that was accomplished mainly by the use of row boats with powerful outboard motors as the rushing torrents rendered rowing an impossibility in most of the area. In one tourist camp a young man was able to get his father — a one legged war veteran — to high land by towing him upon a mattress that chanced to float by as they were seeking means of escape from their flooded cabin. By the same means several small children were taken from other cabins.

Four men from Lena, Wisconsin bent on fishing in Bayfield County, crossed the Long Bridge under which a river flows into Chequamegon Bay, west of Ashland. They had not proceeded far beyond it when they found that further progress was impossible. Returning to the bridge they found water flowing over it, but a car just ahead of them crossed it safely and they drove on to it, only to have it give way beneath them and drop their car into deep water. Water pressure made it impossible to open the doors, but all escaped by breaking windows and crawling out. One who weighed over 200 pounds will never know how he got himself through the front side window of the Ford car. Three of them received severe cuts.

The body of one man was found whom it was believed had been on a bridge when it washed out. This seems to have been the only casualty in spite of the great number of very narrow escapes.

Many tourists caught in the flooded area were stranded until falling water and much repair work made highways passable.

Stores all over the area suffered severe losses because stock stored in basements was practically a total loss.

Severe damage was done to both Washburn and Bayfield by flooded basements and washed out streets and Glidden—40 miles south of Ashland—was badly submerged, making the area affected at least sixty miles in length from north to south.

EAU CLAIRE FLOODS

Few Wisconsin cities have suffered more often or more heavily from floods than Eau Claire in the Eau Claire River Valley.

In the year 1846 the first dam, mill and trading post were built. In 1855 the village was platted. In 1856 occurred the first flood. Of its seriousness we have no report.

On August 22, 1870 a fifteen foot flood carried away 20,000,000 feet of logs—a total loss.

On September 11, 1884 a 27 foot flood carried away houses and logs, hurling them against bridges, destroying all of them. A ferry boat was employed for some time to keep transportation open between the East and West sides. The total loss in the Eau Claire Valley was placed at \$1,500,000.

Again in 1938 and in 1941 floods occurred, the latter reaching a level of 22 feet and causing great suffering and financial and economic loss.

For a stream of its size the Eau Claire River seems to hold top place in Wisconsin as a periodic cause for destruction.

LACROSSE FLOOD

The days from June 15 to June 19, 1880 were filled with deep anxiety for the people of LaCrosse when the greatest flood in its history visited that city.

June had seen an unusual amount of rain fall; the ground was saturated and all streams above LaCrosse were out of their banks. On June 14, 1.3 inches of rain fell over the entire northwest part of the state and the river, already at a flood stage of 12 feet 5 inches, began a rise that promised to break even the 1870 flood record. St. Paul had seen a rise of 15 inches on the 13th and 14th and the deluge had hit to the headwater of all the tributaries of the big river.

It was during the season of the log drives and the main boom above the city was already holding eighteen miles of logs—hundreds of millions of feet—with more being constantly added. Little fear was held for this mass of logs as they were securely held, but between the main boom and the city were 15,000,000 feet or more of logs held in rafts and they were all in danger of being lost.

Steadily the river rose, flooding the lower part of the city and seeming to specialize on undermining the ice houses which held a bumper crop of ice. At one time it was reported that 30,000 tons of ice had been swept away but this later was reported at 15,000 tons.

By June 19 the crest of 15 feet two inches had been reached and reports from upstream cities showed that the flood was beginning to subside.

Railroad grades and tracks suffered much damage and train service was badly disrupted for several days. Fortunately no lives were lost.

DARLINGTON FLOOD OF 1948

Again, as in 1923 and 1937, the little city of Darlington was subjected to the whims of the Pecatonica River and suffered great hardship and large financial loss because of a flood.

Rain began on Friday, February 27, and continued until over two inches had fallen in the Darlington area. Hard frozen ground sent all this water to the east and west branches of the river above town. By Saturday morning the main river was rising a foot each hour and by mid afternoon had reached a flood crest of 18 feet.

Two blocks of the business section of Main Street were under several feet of water and the flood extended for blocks in all directions. Basements were flooded in both the business and residential sections and the Fair Grounds lay under five feet of water.

Because of washouts, the Milwaukee railroad was forced to discontinue trains for nearly a week.

In many cases water was entering the front door of business places and flowing out the back door.

All business places suffered losses. Bulk oil companies lost heavily as their tanks were torn loose and floated away. A Co-op Oil Company lost over 10,000 gallons of gasoline. The two lumber companies also lost heavily.

By Monday the river was again within its banks, leaving mud filled, water soaked streets.

The local press complained bitterly that over a long period of years every means had been exhausted to secure government aid for flood control but to no avail.

SPARTA FLOOD

The night of June 11th and 12th, 1899 will long be remembered by the people of Sparta.

A storm which broke about 6:00 in the afternoon continued nearly all night with great intensity until all streams, brooks and rivers were out of their banks, washing out roads, bridges, and cultivated fields, causing immense damage. There was no loss of life.

On May 31, 1943 the worst flood in the life of Sparta caused damage estimated at half a million dollars.

Usually peaceful Bear Creek jumped its banks and went on a rampage. Basements were flooded and in many places water stood three and four feet deep on the main floors of stores, business places and houses. Bridges were washed out, roads destroyed and gardens

washed away. One person who lived in a trailer on the banks of the creek was reported drowned as parts of his trailer and its contents were found in dammed up debris.

Many water mains were broken, thus not only reducing the water supply but contaminating what was available.

Torrential rains continuing from eight o'clock in the evening for much of the night were the cause of the flood which had subsided by nine o'clock next day. The high point of the flood was above any reached in the history of the city.

Two bridges were destroyed and these, together with the damage to streets and water mains, caused \$250,000 loss to the city alone and the damage done to business places and residences was probably of equal amount.

PORTAGE FLOODS

Few Wisconsin cities have been more often inundated and flood threatened than Portage.

In 1838 the flat between Portage and Baraboo was a sea. Very high water occurred in July, 1845 and continued for five days. In 1866 came a third flood and there was unusually high water in both 1850 and 1852.

The record breaking rise came in 1880. Portage was completely isolated from the outside world. Property destruction was heavy and the bottom lands between the Wisconsin and Baraboo Rivers were completely submerged. The Lewiston levee gave way and the Wisconsin River sent its backwater pouring into the Fox River. All train service had to be suspended. The Wisconsin Central suffered the heaviest damage from the rampaging water.

In 1881 the Lewiston levee broke both in April and October. When the October floor occurred, trains to both Portage and Madison had to be suspended.

In June, 1905 the Wisconsin reached a crest of twelve and a half feet but by this time a system of protective levees had been thrown up and no harm resulted. October, 1911 saw the last time high water caused general alarm, but the levee held and the protection value of the system of levees that had been built was finally demonstrated.

THE NEW RICHMOND TORNADO

As the Peshtigo fire of 1871 is without equal among Wisconsin holocausts, so stands the distinction of New Richmond among tornadic disasters in our state.

June 12, 1899 was circus day in New Richmond. Gollman Brothers had reared their tents along the east side of the town and the place was crowded with outsiders. The day was unusually warm and not until afternoon did many clouds appear. About 4:30 rain fell for about twenty minutes. When the rain ceased the clouds did not break but grew gradually heavier and darker. It was near 6:00 that the tornado struck with almost the suddenness of a bolt of lightning.

Entering the southwest corner of the town it plowed a furrow from 80 to 100 yards wide completely across to the northeast corner. The violence of the wind is without equal in any other Wisconsin tornado. Large trees were either torn from the ground or twisted like reeds with foliage and bark stripped from them. One business place with 18" stone walls had its walls smashed in, to fall upon and crush hapless people who had taken refuge in the basement. Whether buildings were of brick or stone, not one had one stone left upon another above the basement line. Wooden structures were reduced to mere kindlings.

The water tower was blown down and the electric wires supplying current to the pumping station were torn away. Consequently when fire broke out in the ruins there was no water with which to fight it.

With the passing of the tornado, rain fell in torrents for some time and the wind blew a gale. In spite of the deluge of rain, fire started in the ruins and ravished them until the end of the following day. Thus it happened that people trapped in fallen debris were burned before they could be rescued.

One hundred fifteen persons lost their lives and many of the survivors were horribly battered and injured.

All means of communication with other towns had been destroyed so the four physicians of New Richmond did all in their power to care for the wounded. Not until nearly 3:00 next morning did the first relief train from Chippewa Falls bring more doctors, and it was the next day that train loads of workers and urgently needed food, clothing and other supplies began to come in from St. Paul and other cities.

So overwhelming had been the disaster that rescue work was slow in being organized, and so overpowering was the task that it was several days before the last body was taken from the ruins. The task of identifying and burying the dead presented almost unsurmountable difficulties. The great number of persons, some affluent perhaps, who now possessed nothing but the clothes on their backs contributed to great confusion until relief began to arrive.

Governor Scofield promptly called for financial aid from neigh-

boring counties and appointed banks in many communities to collect funds. State authorities made a quick investigation of conditions and a further appeal was made by the Governor to all counties to organize and furnish relief. In his proclamation the Governor stated in part:

"233 persons, residents of New Richmond, representing 843 individuals, have registered with us as losers of property. 148, representing 720 individuals, have registered from the County. The property loss as registered foots \$624,763, to which must be added a large amount lost by those who made no application for aid and offered no record of losses."

It was no uncommon thing to find personal belongings blocks away. The sausage cutter of a meat market was found four blocks away and near by was a 20 foot timber that had been carried three blocks. All that summer farmers continued to find articles in their fields. A tree twelve inches in diameter was twisted like a reed and a pitchfork was found driven part way through a board.

So great was the loss that insurance companies went bankrupt and over \$48,000 in fire and tornado insurance carried on destroyed property could not be collected.

Relief funds totaling \$137,406 were collected throughout the state. It was years before the community was completely rebuilt and even to this day structures over one story high are unusual in New Richmond.

MINERAL POINT TORNADO

On May 23, 1878 a considerable area near Mineral Point was visited by one of the most vicious tornadoes that has ever struck southern Wisconsin.

The devastation began in a densely settled farming region lying South and West of the town. On the first farm it hit, the buildings were somewhat shattered but from there on practically every place was completely destroyed. Before it had reached the city, sixteen sets of farm buildings and one large, new barn had either been reduced to kindling or carried away. Two women were badly injured and four head of cattle were killed and several more badly injured.

The storm path varied from a quarter of a mile to half a mile in width and its original path would have taken it squarely across Mineral Point but, miraculously before reaching the town, it entered a deep ravine, dropped from that into another that almost reversed its course for a short distance so that it hit only the Northwest corner of the city.

In Mineral Point, a smelting furnace that lay partly in the storm's path was badly damaged and a brewery, almost completely destroyed. A girl working here was killed by a falling chimney and two horses were crushed by falling brick walls. Ten houses were either carried away or very badly damaged. Five persons were killed

and five badly injured.

The storm left Mineral Point with a bounce which carried it over two miles toward the northeast before it resumed its destruction in the County. Here twelve farms had all their buildings torn away and one lost its barn and hop house. One man was killed and three badly injured. Two rural school houses were destroyed. In one of these were the teacher and about 30 children. Two children—a brother and sister—were killed and another child injured. The teacher was injured, but not seriously.

Twelve persons had gathered in the cellar of a Mineral Point house when one of the older women became erroneously convinced that a child had been left upstairs. She returned to the upper floor just in time to have the house disintegrate about her. Her crushed, lifeless body was slammed to earth 80 yards away. Both her shoes were "gone with the wind".

At the same house a barn and carriage house was destroyed and the hub removed from the wheel of a carriage as smoothly as it could be done with a saw and no other part of the vehicle was damaged.

A threshing machine was carried 200 feet and a boy who had been working with a horse in the field and had unhitched the horse and was riding him to the barn had the experience of feeling the horse and himself lifted from the ground, yet both escaped injury.

The storm roared across southern Dane County, hit lightly at Fort Atkinson in Jefferson County and spent itself around Waukesha, headed directly toward Milwaukee. No one cares to contemplate what the results would have been had the storm carried out its early threat of passing directly across Mineral Point.

HAZEL GREEN TORNADO

Hazel Green was visited by a destructive tornado on the afternoon of March 10, 1876. The storm, which covered a path from 30 to 40 rods wide, struck the southwest corner of the village and crossed the southern portion.

Eight persons were killed and over 20 others received serious injury. Several horses were killed.

Property damage included 26 houses and the Oddfellows' Hall completely destroyed and much damage to the village cemetery. The loss was estimated at \$50,000.

BELMONT TORNADO

Belmont, the first capital of Wisconsin, was badly damaged by a tornado on the evening of June 22, 1944. One of the fortunate features of the storm was the fact that the old capitol building escaped serious damage.

Five persons were killed, five more badly injured and seventeen hospitalized.

Seven residences, one church and two filling stations were destroyed in the village with many more buildings twisted and damaged.

In the farming area, three farm homes were totally destroyed and dozens of others damaged. High winds lasted for half an hour.

VIROQUA TORNADO

At 4:00 o'clock on the afternoon of June 28, 1865 a tornado tore through the pretty, then, village of Viroqua in Vernon Co., Wis., with its 1,000 inhabitants, destroying everything in its path for a distance of fourteen miles. People, animals, buildings of all kinds, trees, crops, rocks and even the ground were swept away from spots as the immense rolling, whirling, frightful looking, funnel shaped clouds rose and fell from the earth for a period of time lasting about four minutes.

At least eleven persons were killed outright, while one hundred fifty more were injured, forty seriously, and left destitute. Hundreds of animals were either killed or injured.

Twenty-six houses and barns were completely demolished and about forty more were more or less wrecked.

It is said that the ground was torn as if plowed and large rocks ten feet square were hurled a distance of forty rods. Huge oak trees were twisted from the ground like reeds. A mill pond six miles east of Viroqua was emptied of logs and water as the wind dipped into it.

The terror was indescribable. People thought that the final destruction of the earth had come and many gave themselves up for lost.

THE TRAIN WRECK AT RIO

The story as it appeared in the Capital Times, Madison, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the wreck is as follows:

Rio, Wisconsin. "The citizens of this Columbia County village are still talking today of the Rio railroad wreck which happened 50 year ago and took the lives of 22, burned to death.

"They still sing the song of the Rio wreck, which was the biggest in the state's history. Last Memorial day, for the 50th time, they again decorated the grave in the village cemetery in which the charred and fragmentary remains of 17 of the victims are buried together beneath a tombstone marked: "Victims of the Rio Wreck — October 27, 1886."

"The switch was open, the Milwaukee Road passenger train came racing through the night at 40 miles an hour, telescoped as it was derailed and 22 of the 66 aboard burned to death.

"This happened half a century ago on October 27, but the events of that midnight tragedy cling to the memory of the older inhabitants and can be recounted with the story.

"Particularly poignant is the case of the mother, trapped in the burning coach, who handed her two small children through the window to safety and was then herself burned to death.

John Collins Recalls Incidents

"Eighty-five year old Judge John Collins, who was Rio postmaster at the time, recalled it vividly:

"The odor of burning flesh was terrible and the whole scene was enough to shake the nerve of the strongest man. The cries of those trapped in the burning passenger coach, as they waited death, which alone could relieve them, was agonizing.

"Only three passengers in the day coach were rescued, two children who were saved when their mother handed them out of the window to safety, and a young interne, Charles L. Smith, Charles City, Ia.

"For weeks relatives of victims scoured the wreckage in a pitiful effort to find the charred remains of their kindred. Seventeen of the 22 were buried in the cemetery here, a couple of bones and small pieces of flesh being all that remained of several of those incinerated in the wreck.

"Friends and relatives gathered to ask, "Are these my dead or your dead?" The passengers in the sleepers escaped death from the flames but many of them were crippled for the rest of their lives. Many of these have later returned to Rio to the scene of the wreck.

"Two Catholic sisters of charity were among the victims, and to this day, two of the victims remain unknown."

Hotel Used for First Aid

"Mrs. Dell Barrett, whose hotel was transformed into a first-aid

station for the survivors, recalled other gruesome incidents.

"The whole community was in a turmoil. The hotel was filled with people with broken legs, arms and serious lacerations. We did all we could to aid them. The village doctor worked without rest for 24 hours and through his effort, I am sure, saved the lives of several. The railroad company later sent physicians to attend the injured. Several were later taken to hospitals in Columbus and Portage,' she said.

"Other accounts of the Rio wreck were contained in the newspapers of October 28, 1886.

"The 41 passengers in the sleepers escaped with their lives. The conductor, brakeman, fireman and engineer escaped with serious lacerations, cuts and fractures.

"A coroner's jury was impaneled to investigate the wreck and allocate the blame.

"Among the passengers on the train who escaped were Bishop Benjamin Wipple of St. Paul. Traveling salesmen enroute from Milwaukee to the Twin Cities made up most of the passengers in the sleeping coaches.

"The open switch which caused the crack-up of the limited, was left by a brakeman on the freight train, which stood at the East Rio siding waiting for the through passenger train. The engine and luggage cars plowed through the freight train.

"The rear brakeman of the freight was later found guilty of criminal negligence by a coroner's jury of Rio citizens. He was never jailed. The freight train conductor went insane.

Largest Funeral in Rio

"The funeral rites for the victims, said to be the largest ever held in Rio, were conducted by the Rev. F. F. Pierce, in the Congregational Church here. He read the service over the remains of 17. Five other victims were taken by relatives and friends for burial elsewhere.

"Attempts were made by George Bush, Rio photographer, to take pictures of the wreck, but he is said to have been driven off by railway officials, who wrecked his camera and later offered him money to 'keep off,' which he did, as today no one here claims to have any photographs of the famous wreck."

THE DE PERE TRAIN WRECK

June 24, 1900 was was a gala day for many people in the Fox River Valley. The Saengerfest was to be held in Green Bay that day and the railroads were, as usual, offering excursion rates to those who wished to attend.

Thus it was that the Chicago, Northwestern passenger, pulling into DePere at 10:15 that morning, was loaded with excursionists from along the lower Fox River Valley.

Backing into a siding to clear the line for the rapidly approach-

ing passenger was a double-header freight train which did not quite succeed in getting out of the way. When the passenger engineer could see that collision was inevitable, he had but time to apply his air brake and shrill a warning whistle before the passenger plowed into the freight engines with terrific impact.

The first car of the passenger was a combination baggage car and smoker and this was shoved into the second car as one section of a telescope slides into another. Seats were jammed together with their occupants between them and the task of releasing these trapped beings was long and difficult.

Five persons died in the crash and another on the way to a hospital. Thirty-seven were very seriously injured, most of them with fractured legs and disabled backs. There were few who were not either badly shaken up or bruised by the crash.

Some of the train men, recognizing the engineer's warning whistle, threw themselves from open doors or windows and a few passengers followed suit. These escaped serious injury.

THE NORTHWESTERN AIRLINE CRASH

Minor airplane crashes have claimed lives in Wisconsin from time to time but there has been no other to compare, either in the number of victims or the general horrors of the accident, with the Northwestern Airline catastrophe near Fountain City on August 29, 1948.

The new Martin 2-0-2 passenger plane, Chicago to Minneapolis bound, carrying thirty-four passengers and three crew members, crashed into the heavily wooded Mississippi River bluff known as Sutter's Ridge during a violent thunderstorm and was completely destroyed. Every occupant of the plane was, probably, instantly killed.

Eyewitnesses of the crash related that a bolt of lightning seemed to shear off part of one wing of the plane just before it dived into the ridge. The impact was terrible beyond description and it is reported that bits of the plane were picked up in a Winona baseball park seven miles away.

The difficulties of getting at the bodies was almost insurmountable. The plane lay a quarter of a mile up a 45 degree, heavily wooded slope and the bodies were scattered over a wide area. One body, still held to the chair by the life belt, was found over a thousand feet from the wreck.

The accident occurred about 5:30 in the afternoon, yet it was possible to get but ten bodies down the hill that day and it was nearly noon of the following day before the last one was brought out. It was accomplished by having a human chain of about a hundred men pass the bodies down.

Before the authorities could get the situation in hand, there was considerable looting by vandals. Many emptied purses and wallets were found later and valuable rings and jewelry were reported to have

been removed from bodies.

Ironically, less than two months before this crash, Northwestern Airline had received a national safety committee award for having flown over a billion miles of passenger service without accident.

A thorough investigation was made to determine, if possible, the cause of the accident. It was found that the plane had crashed due to structural weaknesses rather than from the effects of a lightning bolt. All Martin 2-0-2 planes were immediately grounded until the defect could be overcome. An inspector who had allowed the defective planes to be put out jumped from a sixth story hotel window rather than testify before the investigating commission.

The co-pilot of the ship, born in LaCrosse but living in Minneapolis at the time of his death, was the only person who might be considered a Wisconsin victim of this tragedy of the airways.

DISASTERS IN THE MILWAUKEE AREA

Fires — Explosions — Bombings

The mayor of Milwaukee offered a \$500 reward to catch the fire bug who lighted the \$40,000 fire of May 17, 1849.

At three o'clock in the morning, the cry of fire rang through the sleeping town as flames broke out in the steam planing and stave factory on the east bank of the Milwaukee River. Before the fire engine arrived, stage coaches and sleighs, 12 stage wagons and 4,000 bushels of oats were burned. A blacksmith and wagon shop, livery stable and stage barn were a smouldering heap of ashes.

Sparks and cinders were flying wildly across neighboring buildings. The flames spread rapidly to two saloons and a billiard parlor, a tailor shop, two grocery stores and a meat market, leather store, shoe store, harness shop and other buildings.

Looters were busy during the hasty removal of goods from doomed buildings. Excited volunteers crowded into a newspaper office, determined to break up the printing presses and spill the type; but one of the partners turned the key in the front door of his fire-proof building, and boldly faced the crowd outside. He threatened with clenched fists anyone who dared to enter, and his courage saved him hundreds of dollars worth of damage to the presses and equipment.

By sunrise, thirty buildings along the river bank on E. Water Street south of Mason Street had been destroyed by a fire that someone set deliberately, probably to satisfy a grudge!

SERIOUS DOWNTOWN FIRE

The pyromaniac who set fire to the hay loft in the Davis' livery stable back of the old United States Hotel certainly picked a strategic spot, because everything was parched dry after six weeks of drought. A strong northwest wind was blowing on August 24, 1854, and the fire raced along on the summer wind. The Tremont House and barns were soon in ruins. Another livery stable near by proved highly combustible. The remainder of the block was easily kindled, and within two hours everything bounded by Main (now Broadway), Huron, E. Water and Michigan Streets was in ruins.

Mayor Kilbourn sent to Racine for help, and reinforcements were a welcome addition to the exhausted Milwaukee firefighters. The flames shot westward across E. Water Street and licked their way along the river bank, devouring property valued at \$500,000.

The little tug, Tift, was quickly loaded with record books from an insurance company and a bank, and was anchored at a safe distance down the river until the fire was over.

The ingenious proprietor of a crockery store, realizing that his fragile stock could not be removed easily, decided to wet down everything from the inside of his shop. By persistent effort, he man-

aged to save his entire establishment.

The excitement of the rapidly spreading conflagration was a wonderful opportunity for looters; 91 persons were arrested for stealing. Critics had a good deal to say about the way the fire was handled, but a sharp reply from the firefighters themselves put a stop to their censure.

TRAGEDIES OF 1860

The year 1860 was a busy one for the Milwaukee firefighters.

The volunteers were called out in a hurry in early March when a southwest wind developed into a gale. Toward evening, as the velocity increased, two large windows in the banking-house on the corner of Huron and E. Water Streets blew in with a terrific crash. Neat piles of five and ten dollar bills, checks and securities were swept into the street, flying in all directions..

The bank clerks chased frantically after the money, but were sometimes preceded by the loafers and small boys who had a head start and disappeared down an alley with their catch. The firemen turned out to guard the property. They helped to reclaim some of the lost currency. About \$800 blew away, and \$470 of it was never seen again on the counters of the banking-house.

On March 20, flames were discovered in the cornice of an old frame structure considered an eye-sore on the busy crossing of E. Water and Wisconsin Streets. The progressive young businessmen of the fire department decided that this was a splendid opportunity to get rid of several ramshackled old rookeries lining the main street. They carefully sent one stream of water down the chimney where it would do the least good, and another stream was poured down the alley to the rear of the building.

The first blaze could have been put out with a pail of water or a few snowballs. But the wind carried the flames beyond all expectation, and twenty-two buildings burned before the fire was put out. Earnest and efficient effort was required to save the Newhall House.

Practical jokers had a heyday at a fire, and this one was even more exciting than usual. Some small boys discovered that a privy had burned to the ground. Gleefully, they covered up the vault with fresh ashes and placed a shiny penny on top. Their first victim was a tall, lanky carpenter who was carrying his sawbuck, axe and saw over his shoulder as he kicked among the ruins looking for old iron. When the boys drew his attention to the coin, he lunged eagerly forward, in spite of his awkward load, and snatched the penny but fell into the trap up to his neck. Firemen pulled him out and washed him off with the hose as the boys relaid the trap for the next victim.

On December 30, several serious blazes kept the firemen busy in the terrible cold. A \$50,000 fire broke out in a west side warehouse, and the Axtel House was badly damaged. The flames were scarcely under control when an alarm sounded from the east side.

Cross's block, on the northeast corner of E. Water and Huron Streets, had been set on fire. All city offices, except that of the treasurer, were in this building, and city records valued at \$500,000 were destroyed. A pile of mortgages and testimony on thirty-six indictments against two forgers were accidentally left out of the safe that night and burned to ashes.

The blazing walls of the building crumbled and fell, crushing to death six young men who were fighting the roaring flames.

A prominent citizen who lived in the block was confined to his bed with a broken leg. He and his family were rescued with great difficulty from the smokefilled apartment.

Property loss at this fire was \$143,000.

AN EXPENSIVE FOURTH OF JULY

Firecrackers were popping merrily all over the town on the Fourth of July, 1861. It was a hot day, with a strong southwest wind whipping the holiday flags and bunting.

Children playing with firecrackers in the yard of Oakley's livery stable decided it was too hot in the sun, so they moved inside the barn to celebrate the grand and glorious Fourth by tossing lighted firecrackers near the hay.

At ten minutes to twelve, the hayloft suddenly became a blazing furnace. The high wind whipped the flames in all directions. Twenty-five buildings between Spring and Michigan Streets were soon smouldering in ashes.

The American House, next door to Oakley's stable, was an old five-story building with lots of combustible furniture that fed the flames. The hotel and stables were quickly destroyed. Very little was saved besides the horses and carriages.

As the flames spread west, the entire fire department assembled, but the men were powerless in fighting the roaring fire that swept along on the summer wind. Holiday crowds watched the flames leap across Spring Street (W. Wisconsin Avenue). A scream of horror rose as sparks landed on the steeple of the Spring Street Methodist Church at Second Street. The insurance on the church had run out just a few weeks before, and by some oversight had not been renewed. Within an hour the Methodists found themselves with a mortgage of \$2,000 on a vacant lot covered with a pile of hot ashes.

The total losses, falling principally on poor people, amounted to \$90,000. The townspeople renewed their demands for a steam fire engine to give adequate protection to their lives and property.

NEWHALL HOUSE FIRE

Tom Thumb, the famous midget, was the headliner at one of the Milwaukee theatres on the night of January 9, 1883. A light snow was falling when he and his wife left for the Newhall House after the evening performance.

The fashionable downtown hotel was still gay even at that late hour. Heads turned to watch the diminutive couple pass through the red plush parlors and gorgeous halls, where sparkling chandeliers poured down a flood of light upon elaborate paintings and etchings. The three hundred rooms of the Newhall House were well filled that night, and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Thumb occupied a spacious room on the sixth floor, with windows overlooking Broadway.

At four o'clock in the morning, fire broke out in the elevator shaft. The flames spread rapidly through the entire building. The terrifying cry of "Fire!" rang through the dark night. Many a panic-stricken victim leaped from his bed, ran to the window, screamed at the sight of the licking tongues of flame, and jumped to his death in the crowded street below.

Tom Thumb and his tiny wife crept out on to the window ledge of their top-story room. Behind them was a blazing furnace; below was a frantic, shouting mob. Certain death awaited them if they jumped; yet the narrow window sill was a haven of safety for only a few brief moments. What should they do?

Looking up through the flames and the rolling clouds of smoke, a tall Irish policeman with a long black beard discovered them, and raised a ladder against the flaming wall. By some miracle, O'Brien's handsome beard was not even singed as he made his way carefully, rung by rung, up to the sixth floor. He managed to clutch the two midgets under one arm. Grasping the swaying ladder with his free hand, he made his way cautiously down through the licking flames. Amid the triumphant cheers of the crowd, he carried the midgets to safety.

Heroic acts of bravery saved the lives of many of the guests trapped in their blazing rooms. The hotel register was destroyed, so it is not definitely known just who was stopping at the hotel that night. Charred bodies were removed from the smoking ruins for several days, and about seventy-six people lost their lives.

The fire was of incendiary origin.

The proprietors were charged with negligence in employing insufficient watchmen to guard the hotel against fire, and the owners were found guilty of having provided inadequate outside fire escapes. The Newhall House fire is the most costly in life of any fire in the history of the city.

THIRD WARD FIRE

An eye-witness account of the Third Ward Fire is given by the President of the Milwaukee County Historical Society, Frederic Heath. He worked by candlelight through the heat and excitement of the fire, putting out the morning edition of **The Sentinel**.

"Milwaukee's 'big fire' occurred in October, 1892, virtually wiping out a large part of the old Third Ward, which ran from Wisconsin Street south to the river and harbor, and from the river to the lake.

It turned to cinders sixteen city blocks, levelled 440 buildings, and rendered homeless hundreds of small home dwellers in the eastern half of the ward.

"October 28 appeared to be just another day in the life of the city and of its morning newspaper, **The Sentinel**. The paper was having its old home in Mason Street, west of Broadway, rebuilt into a sky-scraper, and was temporarily occupying a wide, three-storied building in lower Broadway, near the corner of Detroit Street, where the commission row is located today. The editorial rooms were on the second floor, reached by a broad stairway, the composing room, that of the type-setters, being farther back.

"The reporters were busy writing the day's gathered news, when at about six o'clock there was a fire alarm from lower E. Water Street. It challenged attention because the fire was only a few blocks away in the Union Oil Company building. When thought under control, it blazed up anew, and attacked the buildings across the street to the east, being whipped up by a chill fierce east wind.

"We soon realized the seriousness of the fire, for while it was moving east, it was also coming slowly in our direction. A sudden shift of the wind might send it down upon us like a prairie fire and our building would go up like a tinder box. But our work must go on despite uneasiness. The strain, however, was worse with the type-setters, for they were virtually chained to the cases from which the type was being set, while those getting the news were foot-free. All were prepared to make a dash when necessary, should the flames cross Detroit Street. We had our effects close at hand, while the printers had overcoats and dinner pails stacked beside their cases and must keep their eyes on the type they were setting. They nerved themselves against sudden panic from the hubbub in the streets, and sounds of falling walls. Pandemonium was increasing, with noises of the fire sirens, shouts of people crowding the streets, the firemen's trumpets and also with the pounding of the presses grinding out the inevitable 'Extras'.

"Suddenly in **The Sentinel** office the gas went out and left the building in darkness, for the fire had reached the Third Ward gas plant! The light of the conflagration without helped a little, but not much. Meantime the hunt for candles in downtown stores brought results. The type was again being set, news stories and headlines being written and proofs read, all by the primitive illumination.

"In spite of successive alarms, the fire circled round **The Sentinel** building and providentially, if you believe such things, failed to cross Detroit Street. The printers and others did not lose their heads and run for safety. The Fire Department gradually gained the mastery over the great fire, and by daylight the morning paper was on the streets and in the subscribers' homes.

"But the Third Ward fire cost four million and a half dollars."

Fourteen other major fires broke out before the close of the year, with an additional loss of \$1,000,000.

DAVIDSON THEATRE FIRE

The Davidson theatre cost \$400,000 when it was built in 1890 on N. Third Street, just south of W. Wisconsin Avenue. During the Gay Nineties it was the scene of many gala performances, and ranked high as a leading playhouse in the west.

A troupe of midgets playing at the theatre in April, 1894, were staying at the adjoining Davidson hotel.

Fire broke out in the empty theatre at 4:30 on the morning of April 9. Flames spread rapidly, and in fighting the blaze, fifteen firemen were injured. Nine firemen were victims of the flames.

The terrified midgets were trapped in their smoke-filled hotel rooms just a few yards away from the roaring flames in the theatre. Firemen carried the tiny people out, assisted by alert young townspeople who volunteered to help. Charles K. Harris, writer of the popular song hit "After the Ball", emerged through the smoke carrying the star midget comedian on his shoulder.

EXPOSITION BUILDING FIRE

The magnificent Exposition Building cost \$300,000 when it was built in 1881. Excursionists came from all over the country to attend the elaborate entertainments held beneath the great central dome that rose to a height of one hundred and fifty feet. The building was four hundred feet long, two hundred and ninety feet wide, and three stories high, with several small towers. It was one of the most elaborate structures of its kind in the United States.

Thousands attended the many popular concerts, charity balls, fairs, brass band competitions, and the twenty-one annual exhibitions held within its spacious halls.

A skat congress had rented the Exposition Building for two days for the sum of \$200. On the afternoon of June 4, 1905, as the players sat at their tables absorbed in the game, the cry of fire rang through the great hall. The flames spread so rapidly that the skat players barely escaped alive.

The great dome fell with a thundering crash, and before long the gorgeous structure was a heap of smoking bricks and ashes.

WINDSOR HOTEL FIRE

The roof of the Windsor hotel fell in only half an hour after fire was discovered in the early morning of March 19, 1914.

The terrifying cry of fire sounded through the smoke-filled corridors as guests were aroused out of a sound sleep. One man clad only in his undershirt rushed out into the icy streets carrying his heavy overcoat neatly folded on his arm.

Another guest was still half asleep as he threw all of his clothes into his grip, locking it securely as he fled in his nightgown out into the shouting crowd in the street. He joined the shivering guests huddled in the lobby of the Schubert theatre trying to find a little

privacy in the improvised dressing room. Here he struggled desperately to open the lock of his grip, and finally broke it open so he could get dressed.

The hotel and adjoining buildings were soon caked with ice from the freezing hoses as fire threatened to destroy the entire block bounded by N. Milwaukee, E. Wisconsin, N. Jefferson and E. Michigan Streets. Fire loss was estimated at \$200,000.

The Western Newspaper Union, the Milwaukee Printer and Roller Supply Company, and the Standard Blank Book Manufacturing Company were burned out completely. Heavy smoke damage was suffered by the warehouse of T. A. Chapman Company and the Novelty Dye Works. The Evening Wisconsin was flooded with water, and was unable to print its newspaper in its own building because of the flood.

The Windsor hotel suffered heavy loss, and one person was killed.

TWO MILLION DOLLAR TANNERY FIRE

During a two million dollar tannery fire, ten million dollars worth of property was in peril as oil and grease-soaked debris drifted slowly with the current down the Milwaukee river.

Twenty-eight men were injured in the fire which left the tannery of the American Hide and Leather Company in ruins.

Fire broke out September 28, 1921, in the very heart of Milwaukee's tanning district, where six great tanneries lined the waterfront, extending for about half a mile along the Milwaukee river. Fire engines and firetugs pumped water onto the blaze in an effort to keep the flames from spreading to adjoining property. Flying embers were carefully watched, and the fireboats stood by for several days, pouring streams of water onto the ruins. The fire loss was over two million dollars.

RIALTO GRAIN ELEVATOR FIRE

Milwaukee has had many serious grain elevator fires. One of the hottest was that of the old Rialto elevator operated by the Donahue-Stratton Grain Company. One million bushels of grain were stored in the Rialto elevator, and the fire loss was \$450,000.

The Rialto was the last of the old slate and sheet-iron covered elevators that dotted the Milwaukee waterfront in the days when Milwaukee was the chief wheat shipping center on the Great Lakes.

Burning embers as big as baseballs were hurled through the sky the night of August 15, 1933. The terrified residents of the Italian section in the Third Ward were all out with their garden hose wetting down their shingle roofs.

Three hundred firemen reported for duty as burning embers dropped into the grain bins and set up new fires which worked both ways, up from the bottom and down from the top.

Nobody was injured when the wall nearest the river suddenly

caved in, sending an avalanche of blazing grain into the water. Before long the south wall crumbled, pouring a heap of corn and wheat into a mound on S. Water Street.

The firetug Torrent was busily pumping 6,000 gallons of water per minute into the blaze of grain. Eighteen fire engines and three fire-tugs fought the blaze, but the elevator burned to the ground. Water was poured onto the ruins for several days until the fire was really out.

FIRE SET IN ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL

On a cold January morning, flames swept through St. John's Cathedral on N. Jackson near E. Wells Street. Someone had set fire to the magnificent building which is one of Milwaukee's early landmarks.

At 2:30 A.M. on January 28, 1935, just one hour after policemen had turned in the alarm, the ceiling around the altar fell, nearly trapping sixteen firemen who were below fighting the roaring flames. Many beautiful paintings were destroyed, and exquisite stained glass windows smashed to bits as they cracked and fell.

Firemen poured continuous streams of freezing water upon the famous belfrey of the cathedral, and the sparks and flames were not permitted to reach the steeple. The walls of the cathedral stood when the roof fell in with a crash that was heard for blocks. The total loss was \$200,000.

Later in the day, when the smoking ashes had cooled, two violin-makers walked around the charred timbers. With great care they selected pieces of the aged wood to fashion painstakingly into melodious violins. For centuries the old masters have used wood from the bell-towers of old churches for making fine musical instruments. The beams are seasoned in the natural way when they hang for two or three centuries. The rafters of St. John's Cathedral held sentimental as well as commercial value for the two friends who were violin makers. They appreciated that these stout beams had supported the great structure through nearly one hundred years of Milwaukee history.

HOT PLASTICS PLANT FIRE

Thousands of Milwaukeeans were late to work on the morning of December 18, 1947, when fire broke out in the basement of a plastics plant. Heavy smoke and bitter cold hampered the 165 firemen who turned out with twelve engines and five trucks to fight the blaze in the 1000 block on N. Water Street.

The fireboat Torrent laid out five lines from the Milwaukee River only two hundred feet away, and shot water into the rear of the building. Firemen wearing smoke and oxygen masks punched holes into the south wall of the burning building, and were able to play their streams of water more directly onto the fire.

The four-alarm fire in the early hours of the morning gutted the three-story brick building, and damaged two adjoining buildings.

with an estimated loss of \$200,000. The heat of the burning plastics was so intense that only the walls of the building were left. Three firemen were overcome by smoke.

Fourteen occupants of adjoining flats were driven out by smoke when flames broke through the roof and shot up into the sky, sending bright embers flying out in all directions. Despite the fact that it was only four o'clock, shivering knots of onlookers gathered to watch the firemen at work. Street cars and automobiles were rerouted as the firelines blocked the busy streets.

On the third floor of the same building, a three-alarm fire broke out on October 17, 1944. This fire is believed to have been started by an exploding light bulb in a sawdust shaker where fur coats were being cleaned. Fire loss was estimated at \$50,000.

MARTIN HOTEL FIRE

Quick work on the part of 200 firemen swarming over the Martin Hotel brought about the rescue of 50 guests who were in their rooms during the supper hour February 23, 1948.

A crowd of 10,000 onlookers watched the five-alarm fire which broke out in the basement workshop between seven and eight o'clock. Most of the guests were still out to dinner, but firemen hurried through the halls, banging on the doors. The flames did not reach above the first floor of the 58-year-old building, but smoke rose rapidly and spread through the corridors. One resident who was eighty years old was overcome by smoke. He was lowered from his fourth floor room in a canvas life bag and taken to Emergency hospital.

The damage was \$25,000, and twelve persons were hospitalized, two of them firemen.

BOMB EXPLODES IN THE POLICE STATION

A cleaning woman found a parcel wrapped in newspaper in a vestibule of a mission school in the Third Ward, and she turned the unusual contents over to one of the teachers in charge. This was on Saturday, November 24, 1917. The teacher telephoned to the police to come and get it. The package contained a piece of gas pipe with some cotton and chemicals stuffed inside!

The thing was still uncalled for when the teacher was ready to leave, so she instructed two boys to carry it carefully over to the central police station on N. Broadway at E. Wells Street.

At about 7:30 in the evening, when a number of policemen were standing around examining the queer-looking object, the thing exploded. Twelve people were killed, and a portion of the police station was wrecked.

KRAUSE MILLING COMPANY EXPLOSION

A dust explosion at the Charles A. Krause Milling Company, S. 43rd and W. Burnham Streets, was heard for miles around, and people rushed out into the streets wondering what could have happened.

The entire south side was covered by a smoky haze. Nine employees were killed, and twenty-four others were seriously injured.

The explosion occurred on April 10, 1937, with a property loss of \$1,000,000.

A similar explosion and fire at the milling plant on September 2, 1924, also caused damage amounting to \$1,000,000, and one employee was fatally burned.

BOMBINGS CAUSE REIGN OF TERROR

A reign of terror gripped the city for nine days in the fall of 1935, when a series of dynamite bombings began.

The first bomb went off on October 26 in the Shorewood village hall, on N. Murray Avenue south of E. Capitol Drive.

The next night, two branch banks of the First Wisconsin National Bank were bombed. The Villard Avenue bank was damaged, and barely half an hour later, the East Side branch suffered an explosion.

Businessmen rushed out to buy bombing insurance as newspapers received telephone calls threatening the immediate destruction of newspaper plants, theatres and the city hall.

Townpeople developed bad cases of the jitters as they went uncertainly about their business.

On Monday, October 28, a false alarm was turned in. On the fire alarm box was a package containing wire and fuses. A note scribbled in pencil demanded that if \$100,000 were not left at a designated spot, the bombings would continue. That night a typewriter was stolen from the Center Street school, and on Wednesday the police received a typewritten note demanding \$125,000, since with delay, "the price goes up". The next night the Hadley Street police station was bombed. Eleven minutes later, dynamite went off in the Vine Street police station.

On Friday, late in the afternoon, a young man was seen shoving a parcel wrapped in newspaper under the radiator in the lobby of the city hall. When an employee called to him, he grabbed his package and disappeared.

Saturday was quiet, and some of the timid people who had packed up and left the city for summer cottages, or to visit relatives and friends in distant cities, began to think about coming back home.

On Sunday afternoon the south side was rocked by one last terrible explosion when the bombers blew themselves and their workshop to bits. Windows were shattered for four blocks surrounding what had been a garage at 2121 W. Mitchell Street. A nine-year-old neighbor child was killed when the walls of her home blew in. Eleven people were injured in the blast.

The principal bomber was Idzi Rutkowski, an unhappy lad of 20 who had been arrested numerous times and hated the police. He had

spent several days looking for a job, and in his spare time read a book about the detonation of dynamite. He interested his friend, Paul (Shrimp) Chovonec, who was four years younger. The two boys were busy in the shed with the dynamite when some accident occurred that blew them both to shreds.

The force of the explosion was estimated to be over one hundred sticks of dynamite which were believed to have been stolen from Estabrook park, in Shorewood.

NINE BURIED ALIVE

The collapse of the old Forsythe Leather Company building, in the 6600 block on W. State Street, occurred while the workmen were eating lunch. The four-story reinforced concrete and brick building was being used for a warehouse for beer cases and bottles by the Jos. Schlitz Brewing Company.

The men, who had come on at 6 A. M., sat around with their dinner pails on their laps, laughing and joking as they ate their sandwiches that Monday morning of August 10, 1942. A terrific crash sounded above their heads as the fourth floor suddenly gave way, dumping its load of thousands of beer cases and broken bottles on to the third floor, which also gave way. The whole structure cascaded down upon the helpless men.

As the walls crumbled, nine workmen were buried alive under the mass of debris that piled up above them three stories high. The men on the west end of the central portion of the 30-year-old building were more fortunate than the others. Many were able to make their way to the entrance about ten feet off, but twenty-three of them were injured.

MARINE DISASTERS **ON LAKES MICHIGAN AND SUPERIOR**

1846	Nov.		Boston wrecked off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1847	Nov.	2	Phoenix burned off Sheboygan	247 lives lost
1849	April		Oregon burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1853			A. D. Patchen wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1853			Nile wrecked off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1854	Aug.	8	Fashion sunk off Kewaunee	No lives lost
1854			Lady Elgin sunk off Manitowoc	No lives lost
1854			Westmoreland foundered in Lake Michigan	17 lives lost
1955			Cataract sunk in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1855	Sept.	17	Sebastopol lost off Milwaukee	8 lives lost
1855			Allegheny stranded off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1855			Delaware wrecked off Sheboygan	11 lives lost
1855			Rossiter wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1856	Sept.	24	Niagara burned off Port Washington	60 lives lost
1856	Oct.	22	Toledo foundered off Port Washington	46 lives lost
1856	Oct.	29	Superior lost in Lake Superior	35 lives lost
1856			B. S. Webb burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1856			Brunswick sunk in Lake Michigan	11 lives lost
1856			Falcon burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1857			City of Superior wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1857			Nicolas wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1857			Louisville burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1858			Indiana sunk off White Fish Point	No lives lost
1858			Garden City lost in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1858			Lady Elgin stranded in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1859	Sept.		Manhattan wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1859	Oct.		Oriental wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1860	Sept.	8	Lady Elgin in collision with Augusta off Winnetka	287 lives lost
1860			Kenosha exploded near Sheboygan	2 lives lost
1860			Arctic wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1860			Gazelle wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1861			L. B. Britten wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1861			Minnesota stranded in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1862			General Taylor lost in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1863	Aug.	26	Sunbeam foundered in Lake Superior	29 lives lost
1863	Sept.		Planet foundered in Lake Superior	35 lives lost
1864			Sea Bird sunk off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1864			Almighty wrecked off Long Point in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1864			Mears burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1864			Cleveland wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost

1865	Aug.		Traveller burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1865			Marquette lost in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1865			Brockville foundered in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1865			Monitor burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1866	Nov.		F. W. Backus burned off Racine	No lives lost
1866	Nov.		Mary wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1867	Oct.	21	Vernon foundered in Lake Michigan	
			(Cargo shifted)	No lives lost
1867			Sunny Side lost in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1867			Tubal Cain lost at Two Rivers	No lives lost
1869	Sept.	16	Granite State wrecked in	
			Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1869	Sept.		Equator wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1869	Sept.	16	H. Howard stranded in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1869	Sept.	16	Thomas A. Scott stranded in	
			Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1870			Ontonagon sunk in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1871			Free State wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1872	Sept.		Lac la Belle foundered near Racine	8 lives lost
1873	Oct.		Vienna foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1873	Nov.		Anthony exploded near Milwaukee	No lives lost
1874	Apr.	24	Ida H. Lee run down by schooner	
			off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1874	July		Merchant wrecked off Racine Reef	No lives lost
1874	Oct.		Letta Bernard foundered on	
			Lake Superior	No lives lost
1875	Sept.	10	Equinox foundered in Lake Michigan	25 lives lost
1875	Sept.	10	Mendota foundered in Lake Michigan	12 lives lost
1875			Comet sunk after collision in	
			Lake Superior	No lives lost
1875			Algerian wrecked in Lake Superior	7 lives lost
1875			Grant burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1875			Phil Sheridan burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1876	July	9	St. Clair burned in Lake Superior	26 lives lost
1878	Aug.		Java sunk in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1880	Oct.		Canistee sunk in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1880	Oct.		Alpena foundered in Lake Michigan	75 lives lost
1881			St. Albans sunk by ice off	
			Port Washington	No lives lost
1881			Columbia foundered in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1881	Dec.	31	Depere wrecked at	
			Two Rivers, Wisconsin	No lives lost
1882	May	18	Grace Patterson wrecked at	
			Two Rivers Point	No lives lost
1882			Chicago No. 1 burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1882			Albert Mills burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1882			Wetzel boiler explosion at Milwaukee	No lives lost
1883			Mayflower wrecked at Long Point	No lives lost

1883	Nov. 16	Manistee foundered in Lake Superior	23 lives lost
1883		Mary Jarecki wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1884	April	Caroline Williams burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1884	July	J. M. Osborne sunk after collision in Lake Superior	3 lives lost
1884	Oct.	Scotia wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1885	Sept.	Prussia sunk at Bayfield	No lives lost
1885	Nov.	John Spry burned off Green Bay	No lives lost
1886	July	Milwaukee sunk after collision in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1886	Oct.	W. L. Brown foundered at Peshtigo Harbor	No lives lost
1886	Nov.	A. Neff wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1886		Selah Chamberlin sunk after collision off Sheboygan	5 lives lost
1886		Robert Wallace wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1887	April	G. P. Heath burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1887	Oct. 29	Vernon foundered at Two Rivers Point	36 lives lost
1888	Oct.	City of Montreal wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1888	Nov.	Robert Noble burned off Green Bay	No lives lost
1889	Sept.	R. A. Seymour sunk off Port Washington	No lives lost
1890		Nevada foundered at Two Rivers	No lives lost
1890		Monitor foundered off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1891		Sovereign foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1892	May	Kalamazoo wrecked in collision in Lake Michigan	None lost
1892	July	R. P. Flower wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1892	Aug. 30	Western Reserve foundered in Lake Superior	31 lives lost
1892	Oct. 28	W. H. Gilbert foundered near the Beavers	25 lives lost
1893		Thomas H. Smith lost off Racine	No lives lost
1893		Ida M. Torrent burned off Cross Village	No lives lost
1894		Roanoke burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1895	Jan. 21	Chicora foundered in Lake Michigan	26 lives lost
1895	Oct.	Australasia burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1897		Shickluna sunk after collision off Long Point	No lives lost
1898	April	Service burned off Whitefish Point	No lives lost
1898		Superior wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1898		Colorado wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1898		Wenona wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost

1898			Keystone burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1898			Arthur Orr abandoned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1898			Tampa wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1898			St. Lawrence wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1898			Toledo wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1899	June	3	R. G. Stewart wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1899	Aug.	5	Bob Anderson burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1899	Aug.	10	Ontario wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1899	Oct.	1	Music burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1899			Satisfaction burned off Sheboygan	No lives lost
1900	May	1	Josie Davidson burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1900	Sept.	9	R. J. Hacket stranded off Green Bay	No lives lost
1900	Sept.	25	St. Andrew wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1900	Nov.	16	T. H. Camp foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1900	Nov.	20	Elfin Mere burned off Green Bay	No lives lost
1900	Dec.	12	Mary Mills burned off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1901	May	10	Bon Voyage burned in Lake Superior	4 lives lost
1901	Sept.	16	Hudson burned in Lake Superior	24 lives lost
1901	Sept.	20	Fedora burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1901	Oct.	2	M. M. Drake foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1901			Ira Chaffee off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1902	Aug.	10	Northern Belle lost in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1902	Sept.	4	I. M. Weston lost in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1902	Oct.	15	Hattie B. Perene wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1902	Nov.	21	Bannockburn foundered in Lake Superior	20 lives lost
1902	Nov.	29	Charles Hibard wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1902			Robert Wallace foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1903	May	13	D. F. Rose burned at Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1903	Oct.	3	Eril T. Hackley foundered off Green Bay	11 lives lost
1903	Oct.	9	John M. Glidden sunk after collision in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1903	Oct.	15	Marquette foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1903	Oct.	26	Wm. F. Sauber foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1903	Oct.	27	Manhattan burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1903	Nov.	4	Walter L. Frost stranded in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1903	Nov.	16	Newaygo stranded off Green Bay	No lives lost

1903	Dec.	5	J. Emery Owen burned off Manitowoc	No lives lost
1903			Vermillion burned off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1903			Queen of the West burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1904	April	11	Frank Canfield stranded in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1904	May	30	Michael Shields burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1904	June	4	Niagara stranded in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1904	Oct.	4	Congress nee Nebraska burned off Manitou Island	No lives lost
1904	Oct.	4	Silka stranded in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1904	Oct.	5	Hunter burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1904	Nov.	12	Continental wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1905	May	10	Thomas W. Palmer sunk after collision in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1905	May	29	Hiram R. Bond sunk after collision in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1905	June	26	George Presley burned off Green Bay	No lives lost
1905	Sept.	1	Sevena wrecked in Lake Superior	7 lives lost
1905	Sept.	2	Iosco foundered in Lake Superior	19 lives lost
1905	Sept.	15	V. H. Ketchum burned in Lake Superior	2 lives lost
1905	Nov.	2	Appomatox wrecked off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1905	Nov.	28	Ira H. Owen foundered in Lake Superior	19 lives lost
1905	Nov.	28	Crescent City wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1905	Nov.	28	Progress foundered in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1905	Nov.	28	Vega stranded in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1905	Nov.	28	William Edenborn wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1905			George F. Burrough lost in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1905			Hesper wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1905			LaFayette wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1905			Charles S. Parnell burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1906	Mar.	18	Atlanta burned off Port Washington	One life lost
1906	May	1	Naomi burned in Lake Michigan	5 lives lost
1906	Nov.	14	Strathmore nee Gordon Campbell burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1906	Nov.	19	Theano wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1906	Nov.	22	Panama wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1907	April	23	Arcadia foundered in Lake Michigan	14 lives lost
1907	June	28	Batchawana burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1907	Oct.	11	Cyprus foundered in Lake Superior	22 lives lost
1907	Nov.	22	Lizzie Madden burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost

1907	Nov. 27	City of Glasgow burned off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1907		Hunter burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1907		Pewaukee lost off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1907		Spokane stranded in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1907		Cormorant burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1907		Alex Nimick wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1908	Sept. 6	Chaucey Hurlbut sunk in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1908	Dec. 5	D. M. Clemson foundered in Lake Superior	24 lives lost
1908		S. C. Baldwin foundered in Lake Michigan	One life lost
1908		Neshoto stranded in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1909		Adella Shores sunk in Lake Superior	13 lives lost
1909		Ottawa foundered in Lake Superior	17 lives lost
1909		Aurania foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1909		John B. Caule sunk after collision off Whitefish Point	15 lives lost
1909		Falcon wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1909		Flint burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1909		Francis Hinton wrecked off Manitowoc	No lives lost
1909		Wasago burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1910	Mar. 7	Ann Arbor burned off Manitowoc	No lives lost
1910	Sept. 9	Pere Marquette No. 18 foundered in Lake Michigan	32 lives lost
1910	Oct. 18	W. C. Moreland wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1910	Nov. 21	Panther sunk in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1910	Oct. 23	Langham nee Tom Adams burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1911	July 9	John Mitchell sunk after collision in Lake Superior	3 lives lost
1911	July 25	Rappahannock foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1911	Aug. 21	Warrington stranded in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1911	Sept. 27	Three Brothers wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1911	Oct. 4	A. L. Hopkins foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1911	Oct. 31	D. Leuty foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1911		Gunilda foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1912	June 27	Sidney P. McLouth burned off Green Bay	No lives lost
1912	June	City of Freemont foundered in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1912	Aug. 7	James Galey sunk after collision in Lake Superior	No lives lost

1912	Sept. 27	Culligan foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1912	Nov.	Rousse Simmons foundered in Lake Michigan	All lives lost
1912	Nov. 24	South Shore wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1912		Viking foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1913	Oct. 6	C. C. Hand burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1913	Nov. 8	Louisiana burned off Green Bay	No lives lost
1913	Nov. 9	Plymouth foundered in Lake Michigan	7 lives lost
1913	Nov. 9	Leafield foundered in Lake Superior	18 lives lost
1913	Nov. 13	Major foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1914		Ora Endress sank at Whitefish Point	No lives lost
1914	April 27	Benjamin Noble foundered in Lake Superior	20 lives lost
1914	Aug. 4	George H. Van Vleck burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1914	Oct. 30	Conestoga burned off Milwaukee	No lives lost
1914	Nov. 8	Jos. L. Hurk burned off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1914	Nov. 10	Oscoda wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1914	Nov. 19	C. F. Curtiss foundered in Lake Superior	14 lives lost
1915	May 7	Robert Holland burned off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1915	Sept. 15	Onoka foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1915	Nov. 16	Alfred P. Wright burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1916	May 10	S. R. Kirby foundered in Lake Superior	20 lives lost
1916	June 26	Panther sank in collision in Whitefish Bay	No lives lost
1917	June 30	Christopher Columbus wrecked at Milwaukee dock	16 lives lost
1917	Dec. 8	Desmond foundered in Lake Michigan	7 lives lost
1918		Cerisoller foundered in Lake Superior	All crew lost
1918		Inkerman foundered in Lake Superior	All crew lost
1918		Bon Ami burned at Green Bay	No lives lost
1918	Oct. 29	Rising Sun stranded in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1918	Oct. 30	Vulcan wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1919	Oct. 2	Frank O'Connor burned in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1919	Nov. 12	John H. Owens foundered in Lake Superior	22 lives lost
1919	Nov. 22	Myron foundered off Crisp Point	16 lives lost
1920	Nov. 12	Francis Widlap wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1920		Superior City sunk after collision in Lake Superior	29 lives lost
1921		Miztee foundered off Whitefish Point	7 lives lost
1922	Nov. 13	Norland nee Eugene C. Hart foundered off Milwaukee	No lives lost

1922	Dec.	1	Maplehourst wrecked in Lake Superior	1 life lost
1923	Sept.	20	Forrelle foundered off Racine	5 lives lost
1924	Jan.	6	Thos. Friant foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1924	May	17	Orinoco foundered in Lake Superior	5 lives lost
1924	Nov.	2	Niko foundered in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1924	Dec.	3	Lakeland foundered off Sturgeon Bay	No lives lost
1925	Nov.	16	J. F. Crane lost in Lake Superior	7 lives lost
1926	Aug.	29	Zillah lost in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1926	Nov.	21	Herman Hettler stranded in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1927			Ontario foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1927			Lambton wrecked in Lake Superior	2 lives lost
1927			Altadoc wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1928			Mingoe foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1928	June	7	America wrecked in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1928	Oct.	4	M. J. Bartelme wrecked in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1929	Sept.	9	Andaste foundered in Lake Michigan	25 lives lost
1929	Oct.	22	Milwaukee foundered in Lake Michigan	48 lives lost
1929	Oct.	29	Wisconsin foundered in Lake Michigan	9 lives lost
1929	Oct.	31	Senator sunk after collision in Lake Michigan	9 lives lost
1930	Sept.	26	North Shore foundered in Lake Michigan	6 lives lost
1931	Oct.	9	Charles H. Bradley burned in Lake Superior	No lives lost
1937	Jan.	1	Marold II—explosion of gas	5 lives lost
1940	May	1	Arlington sank in Lake Superior	One life lost
1940	June		Sidney O. Neff sank at Menominee Harbor	No lives lost
1940	Aug.	23	Carneida foundered in Lake Michigan	No lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Navodoc wrecked off Juniper Beach	2 lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	William B. Davock wrecked off Pentwater	All aboard lost
1940	Nov.	11	Anna C. Minch wrecked off Pentwater	25 lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Alfred H. Smith damaged but safe	No lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Justine C. Allen damaged but safe	No lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Crudoil damaged but safe	No lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Arthur Orr damaged but safe	No lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Empire State damaged but safe	No lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Mercury damaged but safe	No lives lost
1940	Nov.	11	Irene damaged but safe	No lives lost
1942	Sept.	23	Transport stranded at Eagle Harbor	No lives lost
1942	Nov.	28	Judge Hart foundered in Lake Superior	No lives lost

ASLEEP IN DEEP WISCONSIN WATERS

If you were listening to your radio on Armistice Day of 1940, you heard first-hand reports on the worst storm in the history of this generation.

Fascinated spectators climbed into their streamlined automobiles, and crept cautiously along wet roads fringing the lake shore from Kenosha to Superior. Their dashboard radios announced new sinkings and more lives lost out there on the angry waters, where ships and men went down in a brave battle against 35-foot waves and a 70-mile gale.

Ship-to-shore telephones were busy reporting new disasters even as the pounding waves were triumphantly washing over the decks of foundering vessels.

Newspapers, rushed out onto the streets by shouting newsboys, were snatched up by eager readers who studied the disaster pictures and the tragic news stories.

Marine men gathered in anxious groups and lit up their pipes for comfort as they talked about the terrible storm of 1905. They recalled the Big Blow of 1913, when 29 ships went down and 235 men were lost in a single night. But they all agreed that this Armistice Day storm seemed worse.

PHOENIX

One of the most tragic disasters of Lake Michigan was the loss of the propeller **Phoenix** by fire November 2, 1847.

She carried a large cargo of merchandise for the Chicago trade, as well as a capacity load of passengers, most of them immigrants from Holland. The weary travelers had taken a steamboat out of Buffalo, and when it became crippled, they transferred their meagre baggage and boarded the **Phoenix** at Cleveland, bound for Milwaukee.

On November 2, as the ship left Manitowoc after midnight, the Hollanders watched the shoreline with keen interest, because over there to the southward lay Oostburg, where many of them planned to settle with relatives and friends. They rejoiced to be so near the end of the 4,000-mile journey to their new homes.

The weather was stormy, and the **Phoenix** plunged ahead with her heavy load. The firemen kept the boilers going furiously. About four A. M., the alarm of fire was shouted across the deck as smoke poured out of the engine room. The bucket brigade proved useless as the flames swept across the decks. The two small lifeboats were loaded to capacity with the captain and first mate, and 41 passengers and crew. One woman hung on to the back of the boat all the way to shore. A young girl got her hand on the edge of the boat, but was beaten off by those inside, and she drowned before their eyes.

One of the lifeboats was launched with three members of the crew to man the oars, but it was soon discovered that there was only one oar. The sailors did their best, but the waves continued to wash in over the sides. The resourceful Hollanders took off their wooden

shoes and bailed out the water as fast as it came in.

The storm had subsided so that the two lifeboats reached the shore in safety. The light of the fire was seen ten miles away at Sheboygan. Three hours passed before rescue ships reached the doomed **Phoenix** and her helpless passengers left aboard at the mercy of the fire. Victims of the disaster numbered 247.

Many of them had climbed into the rigging to escape being burned to death on deck; but the flames ran up the tarred ropes and set fire to the sails. Some frantic people leaped into the lake to escape the heat of the fire, only to drown in the icy water.

About seven o'clock the first rescue ship, the propeller **Delaware**, arrived from Sheboygan, but only three men were still alive on the charred deck. One of them was the father of nine children, who had given up everything in his beloved homeland to come to America that his family might grow up in this wonderful new land of opportunity. One by one he had seen his children drown as he was helpless to save them.

The outstanding heroic figure of the disaster was David Blish, a Southport merchant thirty-three years old, who was the father of four small children. He was offered a place in the lifeboat along with the captain and the first mate, but he declined. On the voyage he had made friends among the Hollanders, and was beloved by all the children. He shielded the body of a terrified, screaming little girl from the heat of the flames. He finally put together a small raft which he clung to with a little child in each arm. But the brave merchant gradually lost his strength as he was overcome by the cold water, and the three bodies sank together.

Generous contributions were made by Milwaukeeans to finance the destitute survivors of the **Phoenix** disaster. Most of the Hollanders had converted their wealth into gold, which they carried in money-belts around their waists. It is estimated that over \$50,000 sank with the thrifty Hollanders to their watery graves. One 17-year-old girl was the sole survivor of a party of 25 who had \$18,000 among them.

SEBASTOPOL

The captain of the **Sebastopol** missed the pier light at the entrance to the harbor during a terrific storm on the night of September 17, 1855. He became confused by the lights in the windows of the homes south of the harbor entrance, and ran his ship aground off St. Francis.

A lifeboat manned by Milwaukeeans at dawn assisted in the rescue of the captain's wife and four small children, and about sixty passengers and crew. Eight men were drowned in the angry surf. When the last survivor was safe ashore, the ship broke up completely. The vessel and her cargo were a total loss, except that the neighbors salvaged the Indian shawls and fabrics, hanging them on the bushes to dry.

NIAGARA

Two tragedies occurred off Port Washington within a few weeks of each other in 1856.

The **Niagara** carried about 300 passengers when she caught fire and burned to the water's edge. The fire and smoke could be seen from the shore, and four rescue ships started to her aid. About 60 lives were lost. Many acts of heroism are recalled in aiding the survivors.

Captain Frederick Pabst, who afterward became a famous Milwaukee brewer, was aboard the **Traveler** serving as first mate. He assisted in the rescue of many of the passengers thrashing about in the cold waters of the lake.

The captain of the doomed **Niagara** was a favorite lake captain who had jumped overboard with the rest, trying to escape the licking flames. The courageous Fred Pabst rescued the captain from man-devouring Lake Michigan.

TOLEDO

The **Toledo** went to pieces on the beach off Port Washington near the place where the **Niagara** had burned just a few weeks before. One man and a tiny baby were the only survivors. They reached shore in a truly miraculous manner.

The captain had discharged his passengers and his freight, and was about to set out for Milwaukee and Chicago with 48 people left on board, when a sudden storm broke. About 20 rods from the pier, the links in the heavy anchor chain fouled in the hawse pipe. The hook could not be raised, neither could it be dropped. The crew hacked away at the $\frac{3}{4}$ inch iron links with their heavy axes as the ship drifted toward the sandy shore.

The **Toledo** went to pieces like an eggshell when she struck bottom. All the crew and passengers were lost, except two. The helpless spectators on the shore watched a huge wave approach the doomed ship. As it broke over the deck, it picked up a man, carried him along on its crest, and swept him safely up on to the pier.

A tiny baby boy was somehow deposited upon a bit of driftwood, and he floated safely up onto the beach without mishap.

Many of the bodies of the victims of the **Niagara** and **Toledo** washed up onto the shore, and were buried in the cemetery high up on the bluff at Port Washington. The **Toledo** sank on October 22, 1856. In 1900 her anchor was recovered by a fishing tug crew. Today you may visit the cemetery and see the anchor of the **Toledo** set up as a monument to the victims of these tragic lake disasters.

LADY ELGIN

The loss of the **Lady Elgin** is one of the greatest tragedies ever to occur on the lakes. The large side-wheeler left Chicago with a crowd of nearly 400 Milwaukee young people. The Union Guards and

their friends aboard were dancing and singing and having a good time in spite of the wind and the rain that swept Lake Michigan.

It was about two o'clock in the morning of September 8, 1860 when the schooner **Augusta** crashed the **Lady Elgin** amidship, tearing a great hole in her side. Within a few moments the two ships drew apart, and the **Augusta** proceeded on to Chicago with her load of lumber.

The **Lady Elgin** was about five miles off shore opposite Highland Park, 23 miles north of Chicago. The waves were running high, and three small boats were lowered so that the sailors could stop the hole in the side of the ship with mattresses and sail-cloth. But somehow the oars were lost or broken as the three boats and their occupants drifted ashore. The news was telegraphed to Chicago from the railroad station at Highland Park.

Within fifteen minutes after the collision, the engine of the **Lady Elgin** fell through the ship, and presently the hull sank.

Nearly four hundred passengers were cast adrift in the icy water 300 feet deep. About fifty of them clung to the wreckage of the hurricane deck. The captain encouraged them to hold on as they navigated toward Winnetka, only to be dashed to death by the heavy surf beating upon a sand bar just a short distance off shore.

The captain held a little child in his arm as he clung to the raft until they were both drowned within a hundred feet of the shore. Many of the struggling passengers managed to cover the five miles from the deep water, only to be caught in the undertow of the surf, and they died within fifty feet of dry land.

Heroic efforts to save those who neared the shore were made by rescuers who waded out to reach forth a helping hand. Edward W. Spencer was a strong swimmer who made sixteen trips out beyond the breaking surf, and saved seventeen lives which would otherwise have been lost.

When the news of the sinking of the **Lady Elgin** reached Milwaukee, the city was stricken with grief. The noon train was greeted by crowds of anxious relatives and friends eager for news of loved ones. The mayor declared September 11, 1860, as a day of mourning and prayer, and all public buildings were closed.

In the morning a military and civic funeral procession moved from the City Hall to St. John's Cathedral. Here a requiem high mass was read for the repose of the souls of those lost. Each year this mass is read for the victims of the **Lady Elgin**. Nearly 300 persons were drowned.

There were several notable newspaper men and their families on the passenger list of the **Lady Elgin** and all were lost in the heavy seas. The proprietor of the London Illustrated News and the proprietor of the New Orleans Picayune were drowned. Newspapers all over the world carried the story of the disaster.

Marvelous tales of heroism are told of the survivors. One of the

most interesting relics of the disaster is the drum on which a young drummerboy floated safely ashore.

ALPENA

One of the ships that mysteriously disappeared without leaving any trace was the steamer **Alpena**, engaged in the Lake Michigan run from Chicago to Grand Haven and Muskegon. Weather bureau signals indicated that a severe storm was approaching, but the captain left Grand Haven bound for Chicago at eight o'clock on the night of October 15, 1880. There were about forty-five passengers aboard, and a crew of thirty men. The storm increased in its fury at midnight. Nothing was ever heard of the **Alpena** again, though it is believed that she foundered about forty miles off the west shore of Lake Michigan.

WESTERN RESERVE

A pleasant vacation trip with his family proved ill-fated for the captain of the new steel freighter **Western Reserve**, pride of the Great Lakes. She rode high on the waves as she entered Lake Superior on August 30, 1892, bound for Two Harbors to pick up a cargo of iron ore.

When a moderate wind sprang up, the captain anchored at Whitefish Bay, but decided to continue on out into open water since the storm did not increase. Suddenly, forward of the boiler house, a crack appeared in the deck. The ship wrenched suddenly. The crack widened. The brittle steel plates strained against the cold waves of Lake Superior pounding upon them, and the long freighter snapped in two. Ten minutes later the waves closed over the **Western Reserve** as she sank into 600 feet of water.

The passengers and crew, numbering 27, were all safely afloat in two yawls. The captain's wife and sister-in-law held his shivering son and daughter and little niece as the crew battled the heavy sea and pulled toward shore. In the darkness, one yawl capsized in the trough of the angry waves, and the terrified survivors were pulled out of the icy waters by the occupants of the other boat.

Now the overloaded yawl sank dangerously low with the additional load. Suddenly, against the darkness of the night, they saw the lights of an upbound freighter, and they watched with tragic disappointment as their one hope of rescue disappeared in the distance. There was no flare or light in the yawl to send up a signal of distress.

About a mile off shore from Deer Park, Michigan, the yawl upset in the boiling surf, tossing the 32 people into the cold water. Bravely they choked and gasped for breath, and one by one they sank.

The sole survivor was a wheelsman, who was an expert swimmer. He fell exhausted on the beach, and presently set out to walk the twelve long miles to the life saving station to tell his sad story.

Shipbuilders agreed that the steel used in the **Western Reserve**

was too brittle when chilled by the cold water. Later, vessels were built of steel that would not crack under the severe strain of the pounding waves.

The starboard light was the only thing salvaged from the **Western Reserve**. It was found on the beach with a bit of wreckage. The captain had a son who was not aboard with the family on that tragic night, and he kept the light burning in his window each night as long as he lived.

CHICORA

Only one passenger was aboard the steamer **Chicora** when she set out from Milwaukee for St. Joseph on January 21, 1895. She was a sturdy passenger ship; but a sudden winter storm whipped up Lake Michigan, and the **Chicora** sank in an angry sea with all hands lost. Months later a bit of wreckage from the steamer was washed upon the beach at South Haven, but Lake Michigan never gave up even one of the 26 bodies.

CRIB DISASTER

A thrilling rescue, much like what you see in the movies, took place in a terrific storm on Lake Michigan, April 20, 1893.

A water works crib was being constructed off North Point, near the Milwaukee pumping station.

Fifteen men lived in the crib as they sank a shaft 80 feet straight down into the bottom of the lake. Air was pumped in, a negro chef fed them well, and the men were comfortable in adequate living quarters.

By Wednesday, April 19, the men had sunk the shaft down only 70 feet. That evening a storm blew up, so the men took refuge in the shaft. By morning, they found that the air pumps had stopped working. Water was coming in the lower shaft. The twelve-inch timbers of the crib were strong but the force of the storm was stronger.

Two men died as the rest fled up the shaft for safety. Six survived to climb up into the daylight, only to discover that the wind and waves had ripped the house off the crib. The waves pounded over the men as they twisted their arms around the hoisting cable in a frantic effort to keep from being washed off into the lake.

Crowds gathered on the nearby shore. Wives and mothers with shawls clutched about their shoulders shivered in the wind and rain as they looked through their tears trying to identify the six strong men swaying on the cable.

The waves were too high to permit a lifeboat to leave the shore. Time and again the Coast Guard's boats were washed back onto the beach. The flag was raised on the pumping station to encourage the six survivors to hang on a little longer.

A cheer rose from the group on shore as the smoke of the tug **Welcome** was seen rising out of the deep trough of the waves. Cap-

tain William Gnewuch was a fearless seaman with faith in his tug and his crew. As the captain inched his way along toward the six tragic figures, a lifeboat swished and bounced along behind on the big waves.

Two men slipped off. Then two more dropped into a watery grave. Only two tragic figures were left.

The lifeboat was manned at a distance of 200 feet from the crib. Part of the tug captain's art is the clever use of tow lines, and the captain maneuvered so that the line from the lifeboat to the tug passed directly over the crib platform. The tug went ahead, jerking the small boat close enough to the crib so that a brave young man named Ingar Olsen could leap from the swaying lifeboat to the crib platform, where two men still strained every muscle to survive.

With a swift movement, Olsen fastened his own lifeline to James Miller, who was nearest. Turning, he saw the other man lose his grip on the cable. He slid just out of reach, into the swirling waves, and went down to his death.

Olsen fastened a life preserver to the exhausted Miller before both plunged into the icy water. Within a few brief moments they were hauled safely into the small boat, and Miller was the only survivor of the fifteen men.

SCHOONER ROUSE SIMMONS

A fresh gale was rising over Lake Michigan. The captain of the **Rouse Simmons** looked at the barometer, and then looked at the calendar. November, 1912, and just a month until Christmas. The captain looked at his cargo of Christmas trees fresh cut from the Manistique forests. For fifteen years he had been sailing down the Wisconsin shores with his trees to sell at the Clark Street Bridge in Chicago. Before that, his brother August had come too, but August went down with his ship in 1898, and since then the genial captain had been sailing down alone.

He must be on his way, in spite of the storm, if his fine trees were to be in Chicago for the Christmas trade. Courageously, he set out. But a blizzard struck, and the heavy seas washed over the schooner and coated her decks with ice.

The captain ran up distress signals, hoping that the Coast Guard at Sturgeon Bay might come to her aid; but the seas were so heavy that the lifeboats could not be launched.

As the **Rouse Simmons** approached Kewaunee, there was a lull in the blinding snowstorm. The captain sighted the Coast Guardsmen coming to her rescue. Then the curtain of sleet and snow closed in upon the schooner and her cargo of Christmas greens, and the **Rouse Simmons** was never seen again.

The following summer, fishermen from Two Rivers Point found Christmas trees tangled in their nets.

The captain's farewell note, corked in a bottle, was found on

the beach: "Friday: Everybody goodbye. I guess we are through. Sea washed over our deckload Thursday. During the night the small boat was washed over. Ingvald and Steve fell overboard Thursday. God help us. Herman Schuenemann."

Twelve years after that, the captain's water-soaked wallet was cast up on the beach near Two Rivers Point. There was a rubber band around it which held the papers tight inside, and they were still legible.

Three years after that, in 1927, another note was found in a bottle washed up on to the sands, "These lines are written at 10:30 P. M., Schooner R. S. ready to go down about 20 miles southeast Two Rivers Point between fifteen or twenty miles off shore. All hands lashed to one line. Goodbye. Charles Nelson."

After the tragic loss of the **Rouse Simmons**, her holiday cargo, and her crew of seventeen brave men, the captain's widow and his two daughters carried on the business at the dock at the Clark Street Bridge. For 22 years they came with schooners loaded with Christmas trees for holiday cheer.

LEAFIELD

During the "Big Blow" of 1913, ships built for ocean travel were like children's toys under the pounding of the 35-foot waves which followed each other in quick succession. The wind blew sixty to seventy miles an hour. Often the wind blew one way and the sea ran the opposite way, like a cyclonic storm. The gale ripped over the lakes for sixteen hours, pounding the ships unmercifully.

The **Leafield** was built in Scotland. She was strong and sturdy, as an ocean-going vessel should be. But not one of the eighteen men aboard survived to tell how the 35-foot waves pounded the **Leafield** with her cargo of grain. She was tossed up onto the rocks at Angus Island, and her entire crew perished in the cold waters of Lake Superior, November 9, 1913.

PLYMOUTH

The freezing November wind and waves took their toll of lives aboard the barge **Plymouth** on November 9, 1913. She was obviously in distress when the Coast Guard sighted her being driven before the hurricane off St. Martin's Island.

She was riding high on the mountainous waves, yet no shout of welcome greeted the approach of the rescue ship. The icy, wind-swept deck was deserted as the Coast Guardsmen climbed aboard, their breath steaming before them as they swung their arms to keep the numbing cold out of their bones. Not a human being stirred to greet them as they shouted their arrival. Yet seven men stood upright, lashed securely to prevent their being swept overboard by the towering waves. Icicles hung from the figures of the crew frozen stiff in death.

CERISOLER AND INKERMAN

Two mine sweepers built for the French government were launched in Lake Superior just a month before Christmas in 1918. It was late in the season, and the ship builders were anxious to get them safely through the lakes and out into the salt water before the big freeze.

The crew laughed at the uneasy talk about the danger from late November storms. They were saltwater sailors, and looked upon the Great Lakes as a series of millponds with nothing worse than a mild summer breeze.

The shipbuilders shook their heads as the **Cerisoler** and the **Inkerman** set out for Sault Ste. Marie. But the twin ships never reached the Soo locks, through which all ships must pass to get out into the lower lakes. Nothing was ever seen or heard of the French minesweepers again, nor of their crew of 76 men. They just disappeared in the cold waters of Lake Superior.

MILWAUKEE

The carferry **Milwaukee** sailed about noon on October 22, 1929. She was loaded with twenty-seven box cars, headed for Muskegon, Michigan. The freight cars had been run aboard onto tracks, having clamps to keep them from shifting positions with the roll of the boat.

During the afternoon a heavy sea washed the decks of the carferry. Mountainous waves pounded the stern until they smashed the sea-gate, and the water poured in. The freight cars tore loose, shifting the weight of the cargo.

At 6:30 P. M. the captain turned back, hoping to reach Milwaukee harbor safely with his ship and cargo and a crew of forty-eight. But the **Milwaukee** never reached port. She sank with all hands lost. A note was found in a leaky can a week later.

"S. S. Milwaukee

"Oct. 22,-'29, 6:30 P.M.

"Ship is taking water fast. We have turned and headed for Milwaukee. Pumps are all working, but sea-gate is bent and won't keep water out. Flickers are flooded. Seas are tremendous. Things look bad. Crew roll about same as last pay day.

(Signed) "A. R. Sadon, Purser."

ARMISTICE DAY STORM

One of the worst lake storms in history blew up on Armistice Day in 1940. For thirty hours, Lake Michigan was lashed by a gale which swept a stretch of 150 miles. The wind velocity rose as high as 126 miles per hour.

In the early afternoon, the wind increased from thirty to sixty miles an hour. Blinding rain poured out of the heavens. Men battled for their lives in the heavy surf as the gale blew stronger.

The **Anna C. Minch** was lost off Pentwater with 25 men aboard.

The wreck was found with the mast head just above the surface.

The **Wm. B. Davock** broke in two before she sank near by. The entire crew of 43 men were lost.

The pulpwood carrier **Novadoc** was driven onto a reef off Ludington. Two lives were lost, but seventeen of the crew were rescued after clinging to the broken ship for twenty-four hours.

Waves thirty feet high tossed the railway carferry **City of Flint** aground at Ludington.

The **Sinaloa** went aground in Sac Bay. She broke her anchor line in the heavy seas, and drifted around for twenty-four hours before being washed ashore. All members of the crew were saved.

Five men were lost when the **Indian** foundered off South Haven.

Three of the crew were drowned when the **Richard** foundered nearby.

The freighter **Sparta** was wrecked off Picture Rock, near Munising. All aboard were saved.

The **Conneaut** ran hard aground off Manistique, with all hands saved.

When the **Frank J. Peterson** went aground at Soi Fox Island, near Charlevoix, the entire crew were rescued.

The steamer **Frank Billings** was stranded east of Manistique.

The 600-foot ore boat **Sensibar** tore loose from her moorings and was driven across the channel into the excursion liner **Theodore Roosevelt**.

The **Alfred H. Smith** lost part of her cargo before she succeeded in making port at Milwaukee.

The naval reserve patrol boat **YP-26** was wrecked on the beach near Port Washington.

The **New Haven Sacony** was battered upon her arrival at East Chicago.

Other vessels that made port safely, but suffered damage, included the **Justin C. Allen**, **Crudoil**, **Arthur Orr**, **Irene**, **Mercury**, and the **Empire State**.

The wind whipped in from the west and southwest. Many small boats on their way from naval reserve bases to the East coast were heavily coated with ice as they plunged through the rolling seas, and they fled into nearby harbors as the fury of the storm increased.

In Milwaukee, the storm caused over \$100,000 in damage. When the skies cleared and the wind went down, two freighters, a wood pulp carrier, and four fishing tugs had been lost. Shipping losses were estimated to be \$1,700,000. Seventy-seven persons were killed.

CONCLUSION

The ingenious devices of man are not always equal to the might of the terrible storms that have lashed the lakes through the years.

In November of 1842, thirty sailing boats were swept from the Great Lakes. In 1869, a sub-zero storm developed into a four-day hurricane that wrecked 97 ships, including 50 schooners. In 1892, the fog and forest-fire smoke caused the wreck of one hundred vessels trying to make their way safely into Green Bay. Detailed reports are not available on the early days, but we do know that in 1913, 235 men were drowned in a single night when a mighty storm swept the Great Lakes, sinking 29 ships, including 13 steel bulk freighters. In 1918, 93 men were lost, and six million dollars in ships and cargo.

Rigid licensing and constant inspection keep modern navigation as safe as man can make it.

In the pioneer days the lake captains took chances of necessity. Their lake boats were loaded with more passengers and freight than they could safely carry. More and more people crowded up the gang-plank, and furniture was lashed to the rigging for lack of space on the deck.

In the early days of navigation on the lakes, the ships, judged by modern standards, would be considered death traps. Stories are told of ingenious devices used to stop a leak in the hull. A piece of pork was clapped over the hole, and a heavy timber was braced against it to hold it in place. When the **Lady Elgin** was wrecked, sailors were sent down over the side with mattresses and sailcloth to fill up the gap.

Boiler explosions on the lake boats were frequent. Wood piles were stacked near the fires, and there was constant danger from sparks flying onto the wooden decks.

Lake captains were brave and sensible men who carried heavy responsibilities. Newspapers gave front-page space to their opinions. A nod of recognition from a lake captain was a great honor sought by businessmen ashore.

In recent years, the toll of marine disasters has been cut down by modern beacons and buoys, radio compasses, hydrographic service, and many other inventions and comforts of life today.

Not long ago, a great rock never before discovered was spotted from an airplane flying over Lake Superior. Roughly speaking, the rock must be about as big as Milwaukee's towering City Hall. The top of the rock comes to within about thirty feet of the surface of the water. Some of the ships that disappeared so mysteriously in Lake Superior may have been caught in the trough of thirty-foot waves just as they passed over the rock. Rich treasures have settled into the sandy bottom beside the rock where the water is deep and still. In years to come, divers will go down to see the wrecks strewn about, and we may solve some of the mysteries of the ships that sailed away and were never seen again.

LAKE DISASTERS EXPERIENCED BY THEODORE MUELLER

Life on the lakes was exciting and dangerous during the quarter of a century that Theodore Mueller sailed. His cronies called him "Dutch". He is the only man alive who went down into the deep waters of Lake Superior on the **Adella Shores** in 1909.

On June 30, 1917, as Dutch was passing through Broadway bridge on the Milwaukee River, he witnessed the tragic accident aboard the whaleback **Christopher Columbus**. Sixteen people were killed outright, and many were seriously injured.

Dutch was caught in the terrible October storms of 1929, and went down with the **Wisconsin**. He was picked up by a rescue ship and laid out in the morgue. Presently he revived, much to the astonishment of all, and was taken to the hospital for treatment.

Life is a good deal less dangerous now that Dutch is curator of the Milwaukee County Historical Society. He has been generous in writing up his eye-witness accounts of some of Wisconsin's tragic marine disasters.

Adella Shores

One night when I was working on the **S. S. Indiana**, we hit the underground cable in the river at Racine and lost our propeller. A tug came and towed us to Manitowoc, where we stayed in the dry-dock waiting for a new propeller.

At Manitowoc I had a chance to see many ships docked there. Among them was one of the few remaining schooners still sailing on the lakes. I found that she was sailing for Duluth, and immediately I shipped on her.

It was a slow trip. The wind was low, and the weather unusually hot. We finally made Duluth.

The **Adella Shores**, a small steamer, was loading freight at the time we landed. The assistant engineer approached me as to whether I wanted to ship as an oiler. Well, I felt it could be no worse than the old schooner. I soon found that I had made a poor choice. It was hard work down in the hot engine room, six hours on and six hours off. The ship had been sadly neglected. Nobody seemed interested in keeping it shipshape.

The first night was rather rough, but that did not disturb me for I was too tired. Turning in, I tried to sleep; but the spasmodic sputtering of the decrepit little dynamo, and the monotonous groaning and crying of the tub hit by the waves, made it impossible for me to sleep. The day passed and then the lake became unusually calm. By night when I left my watch, it had become foggy. The fog seemed to envelop us like a huge blanket, and in a few hours everything became black before our eyes. After lingering on deck for a while listening intently to the dreary belling of the foghorn, I decided to turn in.

At last I fell asleep, and was soon tortured by a wild dream. I

dreamed that I was falling out of nowhere — dropping — dropping into a bottomless abyss. Desperately I was searching for something to hang on to. All of a sudden I woke up, still in a trance, not quite aware whether it was a dream or reality. While still imagining that I was going down, I began to notice that it was terribly cold.

With a determination to find out what this was all about, I managed to open my eyes; at least I thought I did. To my amazement I discovered that I was in the water — perhaps in Lake Superior — and was going down to the bottom at a furious pace. Instinctively I began to paddle with my arms and legs to reach the surface for a breath of air. I managed at last, but it seemed impossible to determine where the surface began and where the fog ended. It was still deep dark around me. From the distance I heard voices crying for help. Then came a thundering voice of someone shouting through a megaphone.

While I was splashing in the water and trying to swim, breathing heavily to keep from freezing, I saw a big black shadow before me. I did not have the presence of mind to shout, and was gradually losing my strength, sliding slowly down again beneath the surface into this endless pit, when something hit me over the head. I instinctively grabbed it for dear life.

To my tortured mind everything became heavenly blue. A thousand and one thoughts, beautiful and lovely, experiences during my lifetime, revolved through my mind. In a swift change the sky-blue specter grew darker, and at last it was deep black; everything seemed black, and my mind a blank. From that moment I knew no more.

Slowly I regained full consciousness, and many times I wished to be back to the tranquility of the whirlpool in the lake. There was no pain there, no disturbing thought.

During my convalescence, the doctor inquired about my family, how I came to be here, and on what ship I had sailed. He could not believe that I had been a member of the crew of the **Adella Shores**, since I was brought in by members of another ship.

Later, I gathered from old newspapers that the **Adella Shores** was reported as foundered in Lake Superior about the 10th of June, 1909, with all hands lost.

I was a lucky stiff to escape this disaster.

Christopher Columbus

We were on our way home from a six-day trip to the Soo on the sleepy old **S. S. Georgia**. Captain "Tootin' Tom" was lustily blowing his whistle announcing his entrance into the Milwaukee harbor on June 30, 1917.

As usual, the stubborn pilot of the railroad bridge purposely waited to hear "Tootin' Tom" blow off some more steam. When we finally passed the bridge, the captain and the bridge pilot exchanged

choice bits of lovely sailor lingo while they were shaking their fists at each other.

There was a swift current in the river that day, and even "Tootin' Tom" had trouble controlling his ship while we were going up stream. This current was caused by the recent heavy rainstorms up north.

As we passed Broadway bridge, we had to stop. We witnessed one of the most horrible tragedies ever to happen on the Milwaukee river.

There stood the passenger whaleback, the **Christopher Columbus**, like a huge wounded animal, helpless and crowded with excursionists crying and shrieking. The current had carried the ship, with its awkward length and long noses at bow and stern, in an uncontrollable jig-saw in the narrow river. Neither the furious maneuvering of Captain Moody and an old hand at the wheel, nor the terrific pulling of the two tugs at the bow and stern, could prevent her from sticking her long nose into the steel structure which held a huge watertank above.

As soon as the ship twisted the steel girders, the tank came tumbling down with a terrific crash on the pilot house and the deck which was packed with hundreds of excursionists. By a miracle, it missed the captain on the starboard end of the bridge, descending with incredible swiftness on the mass of people below. Many were seriously hurt. Several were killed outright. One unfortunate young lady was literally cut in two from the head down, by the huge iron band which held the tank together.

The horror of the tragedy drove the rest of the passengers and crew frantic. The sirens of many ambulances screamed. There stood the majestic ship, helpless in a maze of steel girders.

Every since 1893, from the beginning of the Columbian World's Fair in Chicago, the **Christopher Columbus** plied between Chicago and Milwaukee carrying three to four thousand passengers at each trip. Never once had she had a serious accident. Yet, I had always hated the "Pig", as we sailors called her, and refused to ship on the old peanut shell.

This disaster happened like a streak of lightning. The tragedy closed the entire excursion traffic at the peak of the summer season. Mourning for the dead, and the eternal fear that it might happen again, kept the crowds away.

Wisconsin

It so happened that I selected for my winter boat the sleepy old **S. S. Wisconsin**. She was a solid old tub. Nothing ever happened on her. The crew consisted mostly of old timers, who refused to be pensioned off. We called her the Old Ladies' Home. There wasn't much to do but sleep and eat your meals every six hours. She plugged her way slowly from Chicago to Racine, and then to Mil-

waukee, and back. Once a week we had the excitement of visiting Sheboygan. Passengers and freight were few, most of them being absorbed by fast trains, busses and automobiles.

As an old timer, I was well aware of the fall and spring storms which visited the Great Lakes, having experienced them year after year. They meant little to me. I did, however, tremble with fury and cursed the skipper when he foolheartedly turned around in the midst of a terrific northeasterner at Fox Point, smashing everything, including the big cast iron stove, rolling a huge quarter-inch frying pan into a German pancake, leaving not a single dish solid to serve a meal. The pies landed in the soup and the twenty-four gallons of milk cluttered up the coal pile, while the piano raced through the cabin, smashing the bunks of a stateroom into the roaring lake.

The skipper insisted on getting \$750 worth of freight from Sheboygan, and when he realized he could never make port, he turned, of all places, at Fox Point, the graveyard of the lake, at a cost of not less than \$5,000.

Our fateful hour came on the 29th of October, 1929, when we left Chicago in spite of the severe storm warnings at the life saving station. The old man was a "Split-the-Wind" and didn't care how furious the wind was blowing, with the waves pounding us to pieces. He had weathered all sorts of storms, and this was merely another one, which happened to be the last one.

Of all days, something had to be amiss in the engine room. The suction pump and pipes, which cleared the bilges from the dirt and water settling there, were jammed and failed to function. Besides, the bolts which held the passenger gangway hatch on the starboard side snapped and refused to hold tight. As soon as we reached the breakwater, the waves came crashing against the steel hull of the old tub with such fury that the old round radiator in the main cabin snapped from its mooring and came tumbling down the stairway, crashing into the social hall.

Beaten continuously by the powerful mountainous waves, accompanied by the roaring angry storm, the ship made little headway, and was nearly helpless. Now and then we could see the long string of lights of the Chicago lake drive extending as far as Waukegan.

The freight, what little we had, was rolling like a flock of peanuts over the deck from port to starboard side, and we expected any moment that she would turn turtle.

The old man saw it was impossible to reach Racine, and tried to make the next possible port, perhaps Kenosha, if we could get into the narrow straits of the harbor. Meanwhile, the never ending pounding of the waves against the passenger gangway, our weakest spot, was carefully watched. But then all of a sudden one powerful wave crashed through and the heavy plank landed in the social hall, filling the hall with water which descended into the engine room.

Helpless against this fury, we made for the main cabin and the promenade deck. The engine room soon filled up and so did the firehold. The fires had to be scraped in a hurry, and this was the end of the trip. We were now a helpless wreck of the waves.

All we could do was to wait for the skipper to blow his distress signals and wireless for help. We dashed for the hurricane deck, and started to throw over the liferafts and prepared to lower the life boats. We could hear the cries of the deckhands below trapped in the gloryhole, but had no time to help them.

The old ship was groaning and wriggling like a huge shell. We worked feverishly to lower the lifeboat. The only boat which got under way was the one I was ordered in to; but it was smashed by a heavy wave against the steel hull. I landed in the chilly waves and was held up for a few moments by the life preserver.

I decided to make my way to a liferaft floating with the huge waves, but I was carried against the big ship again. I could almost reach the railing, but failed. Then something hit me on the head.

That is all I ever saw of the ship, the captain and chief and its desperate crew. . . .

At last I made an effort to open my eyes. I heard again those voices of the men from the ship, laughing and shouting. Then I knew I was in a hospital. I was alive, and I was hungry.

My partners in the ward related how I happened to be there.

I was floating on the surface, held up by the life preserver. When being picked up, it was assumed that I was dead, and they threw me in a hurry on the forward deck. The little fishing tug was rolling dizzily over the waves, and I was thrown back and forth against the railing, protected by the life preserver from being seriously hurt, and at the same time being turned over and over. The water I had swallowed came out and made me breathe again. When the ship landed, I was almost forgotten; but the skipper of the fishing tug, in the turmoil and excitement, ordered my body to be sent to the county morgue. The undertaker took my body and threw me on the bench, where I suddenly groaned. Immediately they revived me and took me to the hospital, where I at last came out of my trance.

While I was enjoying my breakfast, happy to be among the living, my wife and baby suddenly came rushing into the ward, crying with joy to see me safe and sound. My wife had been to the morgue to identify my body, but could not find it. The nightman explained that they couldn't kill the Dutchman, and that I was in the hospital, sound and alive.

I never set foot on a ship again.

MILWAUKEE AREA

EPIDEMICS

Smallpox

There wasn't a single doctor or any medicine available in Milwaukee in the winter of 1833-34.

Lots of Indians, but less than half a dozen white men, lived in the village. The nearest place to get medical assistance was in Chicago, eighty-five miles down the deserted lake shore.

In January, when Solomon Juneau's wife became critically ill, the Indians predicted that Juneau's young clerk, who was setting off on his pony for Chicago to get help, would freeze to death on the way. The brave young fellow survived the long journey through the ice and snow, and returned in time to save the life of his beloved employer's wife.

When the land sales of 1835 opened up the Milwaukee territory, swarms of settlers poured into the town, bringing with them all the diseases of densely settled areas. Hotel and housing facilities were taxed beyond capacity. New arrivals built shacks along the lake front, or slept out under the trees. When the transients took sick, there was no place to hospitalize them and nobody to care for them.

A smallpox epidemic broke out in 1843, and a pest-house and an infirmary were made available for the victims. Three years later, when Milwaukee became incorporated as a city, smallpox again appeared. The number of cases increased so rapidly that the common council passed an ordinance that every person must be vaccinated. The doctor's fee was twenty-five cents; if the patient was too poor to pay, then the service was free. No youngster was permitted to enter the schoolhouse if he had not been vaccinated.

Not everyone approved of vaccination, and many of the immigrants refused it. The Germans proved particularly stubborn in their refusal. In 1869 there were 501 cases of smallpox on record, and 419 of them were among German families. In 1872, 469 cases broke out in the German settlements in Milwaukee. Of the 772 cases that year, 288 proved fatal. In 1874, 114 died of smallpox. There were few cases in 1875; but 438 died the year after.

A new health commissioner took office in 1878. During his four-year term only one case of smallpox broke out. Drastic measures were taken promptly so the disease did not spread. The patient was immediately isolated, and his house was set on fire and allowed to burn to the ground so that everything in it was completely destroyed.

Smallpox appeared again in epidemic proportions in the summer and fall of 1894. Of the 894 cases reported, 274 were fatal. Again, no child who had not been vaccinated was admitted to any school in the city. A pest-house with a high wooden fence around it was established on the present site of the Milwaukee-Downer College.

Great excitement broke out among the stricken people in the

Polish district. Shouting mobs hurled stones at the big yellow horse-drawn ambulances that came to remove the patients to the isolation hospital. Police were called out to protect the health officers who met with violent resistance when they appeared among the Poles to fumigate the premises where a case of smallpox had developed.

In 1895, 176 cases of smallpox were reported, with 30 deaths.

A mild form of smallpox broke out in the summer of 1914. Of the 1,157 cases that were reported, all recovered.

In 1925, a smallpox epidemic again gripped the city, with 87 deaths. The total number of cases that year was 386. Health authorities were alert, and 427,959 Milwaukeeans were vaccinated within a very short time.

Four cases of smallpox were reported in 1939, but all recovered. Not a single case of smallpox has been reported in Milwaukee since. No one in Milwaukee has died of smallpox in the past 23 years.

CHOLERA

Wisconsin was celebrating its first birthday as a state when cholera swept into its borders on the great tide of immigration. New Orleans, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and then Chicago were ravaged by cholera epidemics. Travelers brought the disease with them to the new settlements. Many Chicagoans came to visit their Milwaukee friends in order to escape cholera at home.

The gathering of crowds was frowned upon by the City Council. They requested the mayor to charge a license fee of not less than \$500 for every circus performance, and \$150 for every theatre program. In spite of the council's recommendations, a large crowd lined the streets to watch Crane & Co.'s circus parade pass by with banners and flags and a loud brass band. The usual audience of small boys watched the circus tent being pitched in Court House (now Cathedral) Square.

The first cholera victim died early in July, 1849, near the waterfront on Huron St. Many weary and ill-fed immigrants were arriving daily at the Huron, Erie, and Detroit St. piers. Six immigrants died of cholera within the next few days, so the City Council built a bath-house where all new arrivals must purify themselves before entering the city. A health officer was assigned to inspect all newcomers.

In August, 209 cases broke out, with 104 deaths reported.

Soon after the Fourth of July in 1850, cholera again broke out in Milwaukee, claiming at least 300 victims. Many bodies were buried secretly by members of the grief-stricken families, and it is believed that another 300 deaths were never reported. It was difficult to find either time or means for proper burial of the dead when the epidemic was at its peak. As many as seven members of one family were stricken and died in one day.

The disease hit suddenly. A large shoe manufacturer left home

in apparent good health. On his way to the office he was stricken with cholera and fell in the street. Friends picked him up and took him home, where he died within a few hours.

The city marshal was taken with cholera while attending a session of the Common Council. He quietly dragged himself into the street and crept into a hack that took him home.

Milwaukee escaped the cholera in 1851. During the next two years only a few cases broke out in the vicinity of Cold Spring Rd.

The last cholera epidemic in Milwaukee was in 1854, when the dread disease again swept through the streets. In August it broke out among the prisoners in the overcrowded jail. About twenty of the prisoners were let out on parole, and some of the patients were cared for in the jury rooms and in the halls. Only three cases proved fatal.

When the United States hotel burned down, the disease seemed to disappear, and the terrible scenes of agony and suffering were never visited upon Milwaukee again.

TYPHOID FEVER

Modern health regulations were unknown in the early days of the settlement. It is small wonder that in 1874, when the first city water works was put into operation, sixty per cent of the deaths in the city were children under five years of age.

During the 1880's, the average age at death was 18 years!

During the Gay Nineties, the city's piped sewage was still flowing into the Milwaukee River. Inside plumbing was being installed as fast as public opinion would accept it; but the public natatorium at N. Seventh and W. Prairie Sts. was a popular spot in the life of the town; 128,811 persons took baths there in 1890.

Many wells that supplied drinking water to Milwaukee's dinner tables were polluted by the 20,000 privy vaults still in use in the city. Typhoid fever was contracted by persons who drank contaminated water or milk, or ate infected food. In 1891, 166 cases of typhoid fever were reported, and 77 of them proved fatal. The year after, 220 cases broke out, with 81 deaths.

In 1910, the disease assumed epidemic proportions, with 1,605 Milwaukeeans stricken, and 171 deaths. Medical circles were making great strides in purifying what Milwaukeeans ate and drank. Only thirty-five per cent of all deaths in the city were among children under the age of five years. By 1940, only six per cent of all deaths were children under five.

Strict regulations which we now take more or less for granted have reduced the number of cases of typhoid fever to practically zero. Three cases were reported in 1943, bringing the total of all cases reported to 9,324. The last death from typhoid fever occurred in 1943, bringing the total typhoid deaths to 2,818. A few scattered cases of typhoid fever have broken out in the past five years, but not a single one has proved fatal.

INFLUENZA

Scattered cases of influenza broke out in Milwaukee from time to time, and in 1909 there were 12 fatal cases. In 1912, many Milwaukeeans were absent from their work because of the flu. But in 1918, the disease broke out in epidemic proportions. There were 18,339 cases of influenza reported that year, and of these, 403 proved fatal. Pneumonia deaths numbered 371, and many of these were believed to be the result of complications of the flu.

Crowds were frowned upon by the city fathers just as in the cholera epidemic years when the City Council recommended a \$500 license fee for every circus performance. To prevent the spread of influenza, policemen kept the crowds moving even at a fire.

In 1920, 1,570 cases of influenza broke out in the city, with 108 deaths. In 1928, another epidemic broke out, with 5,884 cases reported, and 141 deaths. The next year, 1,016 Milwaukeeans came down with the flu, and 129 died. Ten years later, 173 cases were reported, with 55 deaths.

In 1947, only 22 cases were on record, bringing the total number of influenza cases reported in the city of Milwaukee to 29,539. There were 21 deaths in 1947, bringing the total deaths from influenza to 2,081.

POLIOMYELITIS

The Milwaukee Health Department in the City Hall is a busy place when the polio quarantine goes into effect. Staff members sit with a telephone in each hand, answering the questions of puzzled and harassed parents who are trying hard not to violate the new regulations as the quarantine is extended.

"My Johnny is hollering something awful with a toothache. Can I take him to the dentist on the street car?"

A colored woman who is the mother of nine wants to know how she can keep the neighbor's brood of ten children out of her kitchen!

In recent years, severe epidemics of poliomyelitis have gripped many sections of Wisconsin. One day an active youngster would be riding horseback and swimming in an outdoor pool at a day-camp for young children. Going home on the bus he might complain of a headache. By suppertime his mother would call the doctor, and the next day the child would be dead.

Terrified parents drove to the country with their children, hoping to escape. If they stayed near a lake, the youngsters were forbidden to go swimming. In the city, children under twelve were ordered quarantined at home, and were forbidden to assemble in public places. Opening dates for elementary schools were postponed for two, three or four weeks, until the epidemic had been checked.

In Milwaukee, records of poliomyelitis have been kept since 1910. By 1918, the total death toll was 42. In 1937, 105 cases broke out with 11 deaths. The number of cases increased gradually, until in 1945 there were 139 cases reported, with 12 deaths. In 1946, 129 cases resulted in 7 deaths; only one death occurred in 1947, bringing the total deaths to 140, out of a total of 1,081 cases since 1910.

In 1948, toward the end of September when the health authorities decided that it would be safe to reopen the elementary schools, the season's total number of cases in the city was 159, of which only 136 survived. Non-residents also received treatment in Milwaukee, and ten out of 59 cases had proved fatal.

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