

# CURRICULUM GUIDE

## Dangers on the River

*by Jane Hedeem*

*for the Traveling Exhibition*

### *Steamboat A-Comin': The Legacy of the New Orleans*

*developed in partnership with the Rivers Institute at Hanover College*



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Cover: Painting *The New Orleans Steaming Upstream by Moonlight, 1811* by Gary R. Lucy. Courtesy of the Gary R. Lucy Gallery, Washington, Missouri. <http://www.garylucy.com>

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## Introduction

This lesson is designed as a complement to the traveling exhibition, *Steamboat A-Comin': The Legacy of the New Orleans*, developed by the Indiana Historical Society in partnership with the Rivers Institute at Hanover College. The exhibition celebrates the 2011 bicentennial of the *New Orleans*, the first successful steamboat to voyage down the Ohio River, and explores the ways this event effected the economy, technology, and culture of the Midwest and the country.

Steam technology and its innovative application to river navigation allowed the local, state, and national economy to grow exponentially. It also facilitated the westward migration of a large number of settlers, a trend that had a profound impact on Native American populations. While the river posed many dangers, it also offered thrilling adventures. For African Americans in particular, the river was both the scene of hard labor and a chance to experience freedom of movement. Those who worked, lived, and relaxed on the river became adherents to a culture that was expressed in poetry, literature, song, and legends.

The *Steamboat A-Comin': The Legacy of the New Orleans* traveling exhibition is available to organizations such as historical societies, museums, and schools. In some cases a nominal fee is charged for use of the exhibition. Lessons in the accompanying curriculum may be used to prepare students for a visit to the exhibition, as a follow-up to a visit, or as a standalone piece that provides historic context for this pivotal moment in history.

## Overview/Description

In this lesson, students will examine a variety of primary sources to learn about dangers on the river, including snags, steamboat races, steamboat fires, ice, and pirates.

## Grade Level

Elementary (grades 4 and 5) and middle/intermediate (grades 6, 7, and 8)

## Academic Standards

- Indiana Standards
  - Grade 4
    - Social Studies 4.1.6—Explain how key individuals and events influenced the early growth of and changes in Indiana.
    - Social Studies 4.1.17—Using primary and secondary sources and online source materials, construct a brief narrative about an event in Indiana history.
    - Social Studies 4.3.8—Identify challenges in the physical landscape of Indiana to early settlers and modern day economic development.
    - Social Studies 4.3.9—Explain the importance of major transportation routes, including rivers, in the exploration, settlement, and growth of Indiana, and in the state's location as a crossroad of America.
    - English/Language Arts 4.1.7—Use context to determine the meaning of unknown words.
    - English/Language Arts 4.2.7—Follow multistep instructions in a basic technical manual.
    - English/Language Arts 4.3.2—Identify the main events of the plot, including their causes and the effects of each event on future actions, and the major theme from the story action.
    - English/Language Arts 4.4.4—Use logical organizational structures for providing information in writing, such as chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and answering a question.
    - English/Language Arts 4.5.6—Write for different purposes (information, persuasion, description) and to a specific audience or person.

- English/Language Arts 4.7.1—Ask thoughtful questions and respond orally to relevant questions with appropriate elaboration.
- English/Language Arts 4.7.7—Emphasize points in ways that help the listener or viewer follow important ideas and concepts.
- English/Language Arts 4.7.8—Use details, examples, anecdotes (stories of a specific event), or experiences to explain or clarify information
- English/Language Arts 4.7.9—Engage the audience with appropriate words, facial expressions, and gestures.
- Science 4.4.7—Describe that human beings have made tools and machines, such as x-rays, microscopes, and computers, to sense and do things that they could not otherwise sense or do at all, or as quickly, or as well.
- Grade 5
  - Social Studies 5.1.6—Identify and discuss instances of both cooperation and conflict between Native Americans and European settlers, such as agriculture, trade, cultural exchanges and military alliances, as well as later broken treaties, massacres and conflicts over control of the land.
  - Social Studies 5.1.19—Using primary and secondary sources to examine a historical account about an issue of the time, reconstruct the literal meaning of the passages by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
  - Social Studies 5.1.20—Read and interpret primary and secondary source accounts that pertain to a problem confronting people during the founding era of the United States.
  - Social Studies 5.3.12—Describe and analyze how specific physical features influenced historical events and movements.
  - Social Studies 5.4.4—Trace the development of technology and the impact of major inventions on the business productivity during the early development of the United States.
  - English/Language Arts 5.1.6—Understand unknown words by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.
  - English/Language Arts 5.2.3—Recognize main ideas presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.
  - English/Language Arts 5.3.8—Identify the speaker or narrator in a selection and tell whether the speaker or narrator is a character involved in the story.
  - English/Language Arts 5.5.5—Use varied word choices to make writing interesting.
  - English/Language Arts 5.7.4—Select a focus, organizational structure, and point of view for an oral presentation.
  - English/Language Arts 5.7.5—Clarify and support spoken ideas with evidence and examples.
  - English/Language Arts 5.7.6—Use volume, phrasing, timing, and gestures appropriately to enhance meaning.
  - English/Language Arts 5.7.13—Emphasize points in ways that help the listener or viewer follow important ideas and concepts.
  - Science 5.3.8—Investigate, observe, and describe that heating and cooling

cause changes in the properties of materials, such as water turning into steam by boiling and water turning into ice by freezing. Notice that many kinds of change occur faster at higher temperatures.

◦ Grade 6

- Social Studies 6.1.14—Describe the origins, developments, and innovations of the Industrial Revolution and explain the changes it brought about.
- Social Studies 6.1.20—Recognize historical perspectives in fiction and nonfiction by identifying the historical context in which events unfolded and by avoiding evaluation of the past solely in terms of present-day norms.
- Social Studies 6.1.22—Differentiate between fact and interpretation in historical accounts and explain the meaning of historical passages by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, and relating them to outcomes that followed and gaps in the historical record.
- English/Language Arts 6.2.7—Make reasonable statements and conclusions about a text, supporting them with evidence from the text.
- English/Language Arts 6.5.6—Use varied word choices to make writing interesting.
- English/Language Arts 6.7.4—Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view, matching the purpose, message, and vocal modulation.
- English/Language Arts 6.7.5—Emphasize important points to assist the listener in following the main ideas and concepts.
- English/Language Arts 6.7.6—Support opinions with researched, documented

evidence, and with visual or media displays that use appropriate technology.

- English/Language Arts 6.7.7—Use effective timing, volume, tone, and alignment of hand and body gestures to sustain audience interest and attention.
- Science 6.1.9—Explain how technologies can influence all living things.

◦ Grade 7

- English/Language Arts 7.5.6—Use varied word choices to make writing interesting and more precise.
- English/Language Arts 7.5.7—Write for different purposes and to a specific audience or person, adjusting style and tone as necessary.
- English/Language Arts 7.7.12—Deliver narrative presentations that: establish a context, standard plotline (with a beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution of the conflict), and point of view; establish the presenter’s relationship with the subject of the presentation (whether the presentation is made as an uninvolved observer or by someone who is personally involved); and contain effective, factual descriptions of appearance, concrete images, shifting perspectives, and sensory details.
- Science 7.1.10—Identify ways that technology has strongly influenced the course of history and continues to do so.

◦ Grade 8

- Social Studies 8.1.28—Recognize historical perspective and evaluate alternative courses of action by describing the historical context in which events unfolded and by avoiding evaluation of the past solely in terms of present-day norms.

- Social Studies 8.1.29—Differentiate between facts and historical interpretations, recognizing that the historian’s narrative reflects his or her judgment about the significance of particular facts.
- Social Studies 8.1.30 – Formulate historical questions by analyzing primary and secondary sources about an issue confronting the United States during the period from 1754 to 1877.
- Social Studies 8.3.8—Gather information on the ways people changed the physical environment of the United States in the nineteenth century, using primary and secondary sources including digitized photo collections and historic maps.
- Social Studies 8.3.9—Analyze human and physical factors that have influenced migration and settlement patterns and relate them to the economic development of the United States.
- Social Studies 8.3.11—Identify ways people modified the physical environment as the United States developed and describe the impacts that resulted.
- English/Language Arts 8.1.3—Verify the meaning of a word in its context, even when its meaning is not directly stated, through the use of definition, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.
- English/Language Arts 8.4.5—Achieve an effective balance between researched information and original ideas.
- English/Language Arts 8.5.6—Write using precise word choices to make writing interesting and exact.
- English/Language Arts 8.5.7—Write for different purposes and to a specific audience or person, adjusting tone and style as necessary.

## **National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies)**

- I. Time, Continuity, and Change
  - Demonstrate an understanding that different people may describe the same event or situation in diverse ways, citing reasons for the differences in views.
  - Identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others.
- III. People, Places, and Environments
  - Examine the interaction of human beings and their physical environment, the use of land, building of cities, and ecosystem changes in selected locales and regions.
- VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
  - Identify and describe examples in which science and technology have changed the lives of people, such as in homemaking, childcare, work, transportation, and communication.
  - Identify and describe examples in which science and technology have led to changes in the physical environment, such as the building of dams and levees, offshore oil drilling, medicine from rain forests, and loss of rain forests due to extraction of resources or alternative uses.

## **Social Studies/Historical Concepts**

Transportation, nineteenth-century life, technology, and human interaction with nature

## **Learning/Instructional Objectives**

Students will:

- Examine and analyze visual primary sources related to the dangers of river travel or steamboat disasters.

- Create a news broadcast in which they report on a steamboat disaster that resulted from natural or human causes.

## Time Required

Two to three class periods

## Materials Required

- Copies of the following materials from the Indiana Historical Society collections.
  - *A Summer Journey in the West* by Eliza R. Steele, p. 212–13 (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID F484\_3\_S79\_1841\_001)
  - “Queen City with Damaged Wheel” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID P0347\_BOX17\_FOLDER1\_C1728)
  - “Description of the Explosion of the Steamboat Moselle” in *The West: Its Commerce and Navigation* by James Hall, p. 181–82 (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID F353\_H2\_1848\_181 and F353\_H2\_1848\_182)
  - “‘Indiana’ on Fire at Cincinnati” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID P0347\_BOX11\_FOLDER4\_C1196)
  - *A Summer Journey in the West* by Eliza R. Steele, p. 235–36 (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID F484\_3\_S79\_1841\_002)
  - “Steamboats Racing on the Ohio River” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID M0945\_BOX4\_B\_1)
  - “Steamboats and Cargo Damaged or Lost from Breaking Up of Ice on the Mississippi River, 1865–1866” in *Fifty Years on the Mississippi OR Gould’s History of River Navigation*, p. 434–35 (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID F351\_G69\_1889\_434 and F351\_G69\_1889\_435)

- “Steamboats Trapped in Ice on the Ohio River” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID M0945\_BOX16\_2177)

- Paper and pencils or pens

- Dictionary

## Background/Historical Context

Rivers were fraught with dangers for steamboats. In their natural state, prior to improvements such as canals, dams, and locks, the western inland rivers were filled with snags, debris, sandbars, and other natural obstacles. Snags, in particular, presented a danger to steamboats. Trees growing along the riverbank died and fell into the water. Their jagged limbs and root system, often hidden beneath the water, could easily rip open a steamboat’s hull. Steamboat pilots had to know the river well and attempt to navigate around these often hidden snags. As you can imagine, navigating around an obstacle not visible to the pilot was a difficult task, so collisions with snags were not uncommon. Henry Miller Shreve’s invention of the snag boat helped to alleviate this danger by providing a way to clear rivers of these fallen trees. Shreve’s snag boat was essentially a steamboat with a device on its bow that picked up and removed snags from the rivers. The snag boats had a sawmill on board that could then process these fallen trees into usable lumber.

Floating debris could also endanger steamboats by getting caught up in the paddle wheel, causing it to break. Since lumberjacks commonly floated logs to sawmills downriver, it was not unusual for a few logs to be lost along the way. These stray logs could easily find their way into a steamboat’s paddle wheel, causing it to break and sending debris flying everywhere.

Adverse weather conditions also presented a danger to steamboats. Since river commerce was limited to times of the year when the water was not frozen, steamboat captains tried to take full advantage of times when rivers were free of ice. It was never certain when the first freeze would

occur and ice would appear. Captains sometimes pushed their luck. According to Louis C. and Beatrice Jones Hunter, authors of *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History*:

Steamboat captains ordinarily did not lay up when they encountered the first ice of the season but pushed on as rapidly as possible in the hope of reaching their destination before the river closed completely. . . . The chief danger from ice came with the breaking up of the river. Then steamboats moored in exposed positions, especially those caught in midstream when the river closed, were in danger of having their hulls crushed or ripped open by the surging masses of broken ice.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of being caught in an ice flow, steamboats might be severely damaged or even sunk.

There were also man-made dangers. The boilers that powered steamboat engines were at risk of exploding. The inherent risk of explosion was exacerbated by two factors—a lack of knowledge and experience on the part of steamboat engineers and the tendency to overtax the engine in an attempt to outpace another boat. As Louis and Beatrice Hunter note:

By all accounts most engineers in the early steamboat decades were sadly lacking in an understanding of the forces with which they had to deal and ignorant of the limits within which engines and boilers could be safely operated.<sup>2</sup>

Some engineers did not properly maintain the boilers, letting steam build up inside the engine, which would explode as a result of the pressure. As steamboats became more popular and steamboat engineers gained experience, the risk of explosion due to operator error decreased.

Still, sometimes engineers deliberately pushed the limits of the technology, either for economic gain

or bragging rights. There was pressure to move quickly to reach as many landings and to transport as much cargo as possible. This is how steamboat captains made money. Rival steamboat captains also tried to clock the fastest time between cities, earning recognition and “owning” the route between cities such as New Orleans and Saint Louis.<sup>3</sup> As engineers sought to come out ahead of the competition, they stoked the flames higher and higher, and then closed the safety valves, hoping to ensure the fastest travel time. Since steamboats were mostly constructed of wood, they were “veritable firetraps; an exploding boiler could quickly lead to a spreading conflagration.”<sup>4</sup>

Another danger to steamboats came from Native Americans or river pirates. As settlers moved further west along the rivers, some native tribes reacted to this encroachment on their lands by attacking boats that carried newcomers. Hiding under cover of trees or foliage on the shore, Native Americans could shoot arrows or bullets at steamboats—easy targets since they were entirely exposed on the open rivers. Travel books and images of the day describe this danger and depict the Native Americans as savage attackers preying on innocent travelers.

Early in the steamboat era, groups of pirates on the western inland rivers preyed upon steamboat crews and passengers, stealing cargo and the personal possessions of passengers, and sometimes committing murder in the process. Samuel Mason was a legendary river pirate of the late 1700s, who was said to sit in wait at Cave-in-Rock along the Illinois-Kentucky border on the Ohio River. Supposedly, Mason’s men would offer to pilot flatboats or keel boats through a dangerous section of the river where reefs threatened to damage the craft. In reality, the pirate deliberately grounded the boat at Cave-in-Rock, where Mason’s band of pirates boarded the boat, murdered the crew, and piloted the boat down to New Orleans, where they sold the cargo. Although Mason abandoned

<sup>1</sup> Louis C. Hunter and Beatrice Jones Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1993), 258.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>3</sup> “Steamboating Dangers,” at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/transport/accident.html> (accessed August 19, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



Cave-in-Rock around 1800, it had become clear that “the dramatic increase in river traffic to New Orleans made this form of banditry economically profitable,” and piracy continued along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers after Mason’s death and until about 1830.<sup>5</sup>

Fire, explosions, ice, snags, and Indian and pirate attacks were just some of the many dangers that awaited steamboats on the western rivers. The aggregate result of these dangers and obstacles was that steamboats had an average life of just a few years. Natural dangers and obstacles also provided impetus for improving the river through a network of canals, locks, and dams. This system of improvements was intended to allow steamboats to bypass dangers such as The Falls of the Ohio, snags, or shallow waters.

## Teachers Instructional Plan

### Introduction

Introduce the lesson by reading students an excerpt from Eliza R. Steele’s travel diary, *A Summer Journey in the West*, in which she discusses her experiences as a passenger on a steamboat in 1840 that was damaged by a floating log. Distribute copies of this excerpt so that students may read along with you:

I leaned over the railing and found the banjo player and his audience all in slumbering attitudes, or swinging in their hammocks, and every thing denoted silence and repose. Suddenly a terrific and astounding bang, clang and clatter, as if the boat had been cracked to atoms, the wheel house was broken in pieces, the boards flew over me, and a torrent of water flowing from it nearly washed me from the deck. In a moment every one tumbled out and rushed upon the deck exclaiming, “what’s the matter?” “are we snagged”—“has the boiler burst”—“is it a sawyer.” The old Kentucky lady who had

stepped out first, took her pipe from her mouth and said quietly, “It’s only a log;” “Oh, only a log;” “nothing but a log;” echoed from every mouth, and returning to their cabins they all stepped into their berths again. I looked around me in amazement. “Only a log!” said I to myself and what is a log. The steamboat is broken and stops, all is confusion and crash, and I am told it is nothing but a log. “Madam,” said I, turning to the Kentucky woman, “will you have the goodness to tell me what a log is.” “There they are,” she said, pointing with her pipe to the river. Floating along like so many alligators were long branchless trunks, which had been wafted along thousands of miles from the Rocky Mountains perhaps. “But, pardon me madam, how are these logs able to create such a disturbance?” “You seem a stranger child,” she replied; “as these are floating along, and we are riding among them, what more natural than that they should get in the water wheel, break it, and stop the boat. But see, the carpenters are already at work, and I dare say they will have it repaired in the course of two or three hours.”<sup>6</sup>

As you read, ask students to make note of any vocabulary they do not understand or cannot determine the meaning from the context. After reading of the excerpt, discuss the meaning of any vocabulary words noted by students and ask for a volunteer to summarize the event that Steele describes in her travel diary. Indicate to students that Steele is describing how a steamboat was damaged by debris floating in the river. Ask students to brainstorm other dangers or obstacles that steamboat travelers or crews might face. After students have offered their ideas, describe the dangers outlined in the historical background/context section of this lesson.

<sup>5</sup> Marilyn Davis, “River Pirates,” review of *X Marks the Spot: The Archaeology of Piracy, Perspectives* (Fall 2006) [http://perspect.siuc.edu/06\\_fall/river\\_pirates.html](http://perspect.siuc.edu/06_fall/river_pirates.html) (accessed September 20, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Eliza R. Steele, *A Summer Journey in the West* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1841), 212–13.

## Procedure

After completing the lesson introduction, divide the class into groups of three to four students each. Give each group copies of an image and text excerpt that relates to a particular type of steamboat disaster. Some groups will work with the photo of the *Indiana* steamboat on fire and the accompanying excerpt about the explosion of the steamboat *Moselle*; some will work with the photo of a steamboat race and the accompanying excerpt about racing steamboats in Steele's *A Journey to the West*; and some will work with the photo of steamboats trapped in ice on the Ohio River and the accompanying text, "Lost from Breaking Up of Ice."

Distribute copies of the handout, "Disaster! The Dangers of Steamboating," one per group.

Allow students fifteen minutes to read their written document and to use dictionaries to look up any vocabulary words that are not familiar to them.

Then, allow each group approximately twenty minutes to complete the analysis of their documents and photographs.

After twenty minutes, indicate to groups that they should move on to step three—creating a news broadcast about their assigned disaster. Within their groups, students may decide who will take on the role of the anchor, the reporter, and the witness. Allow students another twenty minutes to script their newscast.

Each group will perform their newscast for fellow students, allowing time after each performance for questions.

## Assessment

Use a teacher-created rubric to assess the student-performed newscasts. Assess students on their inclusion of factual information taken from the primary sources, participation in the presentation, and their inclusion of inferred information, such as emotions.

## Suggested Modifications

Rather than creating a newscast, students might write a newspaper article as a group or individually.

Students could also compose a journal entry in the style of Steele's travel diary about experiencing a steamboat disaster or coming into contact with a dangerous situation.

Have students research a particular steamboat disaster of their choosing—some options are the *Sultana*, the *Moselle*, or the *Belle of the West*. Students may look for local newspaper articles that reported the disaster as one primary source.

## Additional Resources

### Publications

Paskoff, Paul F. *Troubled Waters: Steamboat Disasters, River Improvements, and American Public Policy, 1821–1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007, p. xvii and 324.

The author looks at how snag-related steamboat disasters prompted government action to improve western rivers.

James T. Lloyd. *Lloyd's Steamboat Directory and Disasters on the Western Waters*. Cincinnati: James T. Lloyd and Company, 1856.

Listing and descriptions of steamboat disasters to the mid-1850s. Full text of this publication is available on Google books. Go to the Google books Web site at <http://books.google.com/> and search "Lloyd's steamboat directory, and disasters on the western waters."

Howland, S. A. *Steamboat Disasters and Railroad Accidents in the United States: To which is Appended Accounts of Recent Shipwrecks, Fires at Sea, Thrilling Incidents, etc.* Worcester, MA: Dorr, Howland, 1840. From the Internet Archive Web site at <http://www.archive.org/details/steamboatdisaste00howl> (accessed September 16, 2010).

Full text of the 1840 publication describing various steamboat disasters.

## Web sites

Gailey, Billie J, “Early Steamboats with Emphasis on Pittsburgh’s Role in the Steamboat Era.” From Chatham University’s Web site at <http://www.chatham.edu/pti/curriculum/units/2007/Gailey.pdf> (assessed September 16, 2010).

Curriculum guide about steamboats with an emphasis on the Pittsburgh area and includes some activities related to steamboat disasters.

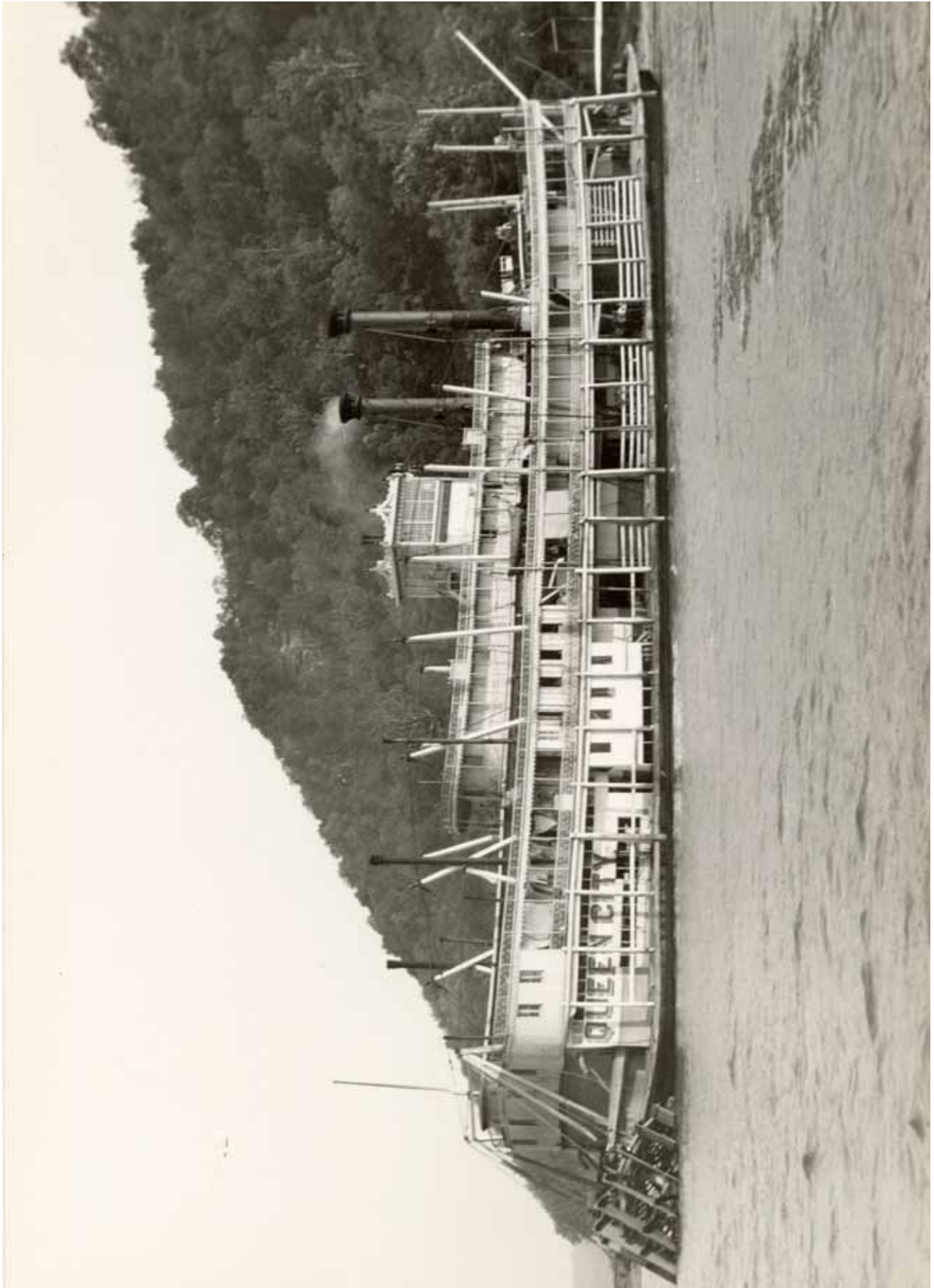
“Inland Riverboats Photograph Collection.” From the The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Web site at [http://wiki.cincinnati.org/index.php/Inland\\_Riverboats\\_PhotoCollection](http://wiki.cincinnati.org/index.php/Inland_Riverboats_PhotoCollection) (accessed September 16, 2010).

Extensive photograph collection of steamboats and steamboat-related topics. Search for “fire,” “explosion,” “snag,” etc. to find steamboat disaster photos.

may be necessary to wash for the captain and crew, but surely bed and table linen enough might be provided to reach Cincinnati, where they stop long enough to have them washed. If not, why may there not be a room in some other part of the deck. The captain in some instances reaps the profits, as the chambermaids are his by hire or purchase, and if they charge all as they did us, one dollar and fifty cents a dozen, the profit must be considerable. It is sometimes, as in our case, a great convenience to travellers, but another place should be provided. But to go on with my afternoon adventures. I left the cabin and walked out upon the shady side of the guards. All was still except the booming steampipe; every one was asleep or reading. I leaned over the railing and found the banjo player and his audience all in slumbering attitudes, or swinging in their hammocks, and every thing denoted silence and repose. Suddenly a terrific and astounding bang, clang and clatter, as if the boat had been cracked to atoms, the wheel house was broken in pieces, the boards flew over me, and a torrent of water flowing from it nearly washed me from the deck. In a moment every one tumbled out and rushed upon the deck exclaiming, 'what's the matter?' 'are we snagged'—'has the boiler burst'—'is it a saw-yer.' The old Kentucky lady who had stepped out first, took her pipe from her mouth and said quietly, 'It's only a log'; 'Oh, only a log'; 'nothing but a log,' echoed from every mouth, and returning to their cabins they all stepped into their berths again. I looked around me in amazement. 'Only a log!' said I to myself and what is a log. The steamboat is broken and stops, all is confusion and crash, and I am told it is noth-

ing but a log. 'Madam,' said I, turning to the Kentucky woman, 'will you have the goodness to tell me what a log is.' 'There they are,' she said, pointing with her pipe to the river. Floating along like so many alligators, were long branchless trunks, which had been wafted along thousands of miles from the Rocky Mountains perhaps. 'But, pardon me madam, how are these logs able to create such a disturbance?' 'You seem a *stranger* child,' she replied; 'as these are floating along, and we are riding among them, what more natural than that they should get in the water wheel, break it, and stop the boat. But see, the carpenters are already at work, and I dare say they will have it repaired in the course of two or three hours.' So saying she knocked the ashes out of her pipe, took off her cap, and passed into her state room, to sleep away the hours we were doomed to pass under a July southern sun inactive. The most remarkable event connected with this accident, was the discovery of the fair unknown of the closed state-room. When the noise was first heard, the young man rushed out, bearing a plump rosy young girl in his arms who, as soon as he put her down, began to tell the beads of a long rosary which hung from her neck. One glance sufficed to tell him the nature of the accident, and he left her to walk towards the wheel house just as the Kentucky lady disappeared. Seeing the poor thing's agitation, I turned towards her and endeavored to sooth her. 'I thank the Virgin Mary it is no worse,' she said kissing her cross, 'but something dreadful will come to punish my wickedness. Oh how could I leave my dear mother Abbess and the sisters!' Stopping sud-





“Queen City with Damaged Wheel” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID P0347\_BOX17\_FOLDER1\_C1728)

crew amounted to thirty—making in all about two hundred and sixty souls.

It was a pleasant afternoon, and the boat, with steam raised, delayed at the wharf to increase the number—already too great—of her passengers, who continued to crowd in, singly, or in companies, all anxious to hurry onwards in the first boat, or eager to take passage in the *fast running* Moselle. They were of all conditions—the military officer hastening to Florida to take command of his regiment—the merchant bound to St. Louis—the youth seeking out a field on which to commence the career of life—and the indigent emigrant with his wife and children, already exhausted in purse and spirits, but still pushing onward to the distant frontier.

On leaving the wharf, the boat ran up the river about a mile, to take in some families and freight, and having touched at the shore for that purpose, for a few minutes, was about to lay her course down the river. The spot at which she thus landed was at a suburb of the city, called Fulton, and a number of persons had stopped to witness her departure, several of whom remarked, from the peculiar sound of the steam, that it had been raised to an unusual height. The crowd thus attracted—the high repute of the Moselle—and certain vague rumors which began to circulate, that the captain had determined, at every risk, to beat another boat which had just departed—all these circumstances gave an unusual eclat to the departure of this ill-fated vessel.

The lading completed, the bow of the boat was shoved from the shore, when an explosion took place, by which the whole of the fore part of the vessel was literally blown up. The passengers were unhappily in the most exposed positions—on the deck, and particularly on the forward

part, sharing the excitement of the spectators on shore, and anticipating the pleasure of darting rapidly past the city in the swift Moselle. The power of the explosion was unprecedented in the history of steam: its effect was like that of a mine of gunpowder. All the boilers, four in number, were simultaneously burst, the deck was blown into the air, and the human beings who crowded it hurried into instant destruction. Fragments of the boilers, and of human bodies, were thrown both to the Kentucky and the Ohio shore, and as the boat lay near the latter, some of these helpless victims must have been thrown a quarter of a mile. The body of Captain Perrin, the master, was found dreadfully mangled, on the nearest shore. A man was hurled with such force, that his head with half his body penetrated the roof of a house, distant more than a hundred yards from the boat. Of the number who had crowded this beautiful boat a few minutes before, nearly all were hurled into the air, or plunged into the water. A few, in the after part of the vessel, who were uninjured by the explosion, jumped overboard. An eye witness says, that he saw sixty or seventy in the water at one time, of whom not a dozen reached the shore.

The news of this awful catastrophe spread rapidly through the city, thousands rushed to the spot, and the most benevolent aid was promptly extended to the sufferers—to such, we should rather say, as were within the reach of human assistance—for the majority had perished.

The writer was among those who hastened to the neighborhood of the wreck, and witnessed a scene so sad, that no language can depict it with fidelity. On the shore lay twenty or thirty mangled and still bleeding corpses, while others were in the act of being dragged from the wreck or the water. There were men carrying away





“‘Indiana’ on Fire at Cincinnati” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID P0347\_BOX11\_FOLDER4\_C1196)



his request she readily displayed her stores, and would have pressed them upon me if I would have taken them. After we had returned to our boat we looked towards the shore and beheld the crew assembled for a jumping match. They were a motly assemblage of fire-men, covered with soot, pilots, stewards, etc. They formed a line—one of them placing himself in the centre, holding a stone in each hand, swayed himself backward and forward, and then sprang, some jumping eighteen, twenty and twenty-two feet, with the greatest ease. While crew and passengers were thus amusing themselves, we were aroused by the cry of 'The Lone is coming! away boys, away!' and bounding over the shore they were soon in the boat. We understood the meaning of this sudden cry, and were much amused with the amazement and terror depicted in the countenances of those who did not. 'What is coming?' they cried. 'Bears, wolves, sawyers, what!' It was soon all explained; the lone was in view, which we had left behind us, and it was feared it would arrive at Cincinnati before us. The hands were working with all their might; the break-age was finished; the paddle threw up a whirl of foam; steam whizzed; pipes snorted; engineer's bell tingled, and away we went, hurry skurry, after our rivals who had passed us with a triumphant cheer. Straining every rope and piece of machinery we soon shot ahead of the presumptuous lone, ringing our bell and shouting in our turn. She was determined not to be out done, and a regular race came on. We ladies all determined we would not go to bed, but would remain up, alarmed and uncomfortable; one went so far as to threaten to faint if the captain did not slacken his speed,

but we were laughed at by the gentlemen who enjoyed the sport. Hour after hour of the night passed away while we rushed swiftly through the waters, with our foe just in our rear. 'Hurra! sling on more wood!' was the cry from below. High blazed the furious fire, illuminating the water around; the steam increased—the engine worked madly—the boat strained and groaned at every stroke, and seemed actually to spring out of the water. Behind us came our rival puffing, panting, snorting, throwing out volumes of flame and sparks like some fiery dragon of old, and as she came near, we could see into her lower deck, where around the fierce fire, shadowy forms were rushing, bounding, carrying wood, heaping it on, shouting and cursing. One strain too much—one upright snag in our path, and we should all be strewed, some hundred souls, upon the water, writhing, agonizing, dying—and all for what? that we might arrive one hour the sooner in the night, at Cincinnati, where we should be obliged to lie still till morning; or perhaps it was the *honor* of beating another boat,—honor here setting the steam in motion as well as the sword. Our rival, unable to compete with us, abandoned the race, and was soon left behind; our people satisfied with this wonderful triumph relaxed in their speed; the ladies recovered from their fears, and one by one crept into their berths. We had here no such heroine as she who is going the rounds in the newspapers, who in the excitement of the race, finding the wood failing, directed her smoked hams to be thrown on the fire.

Sixteen miles below Cincinnati is the residence of Gen. Harrison, the candidate for the Presidency. It is said he lived in a log cabin, but it was a neat country





“Steamboats Racing on the Ohio River” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID M0945\_BOX4\_B\_1)

Boy, valued at \$35,000, were burned 13th of September, 1863. The Chancellor, Forest Queen and the Cathoula were burned on the 4th of October, 1863.

The steamer Maria, having on board a part of the Third Iowa and Fourth Missouri Cavalry, was blown up at Carondelet, in December, 1864, by which many lives were lost.

The steamer Jennie Lewis and the ferryboat Illinois, No. 2, were sunk in the ice at St. Louis, November 19, 1864. The Carondelet and Marine Railway Docks, together with steamer Jennie Deans were totally destroyed by fire on 12th of May, 1866.

Steamers Ida Handy (valued at \$75,000), Bostona, and James Raymond, were burned on 2d of June, 1866.

Steamer Magnolia, valued at \$150,000, was burned at St. Louis on 13th June. On the 7th of April, 1866, steamer Fanny Ogden, Frank Bates, Nevada, Alex. Majors, and Effa Deans, all with some cargo on board, were burned, involving a loss of over \$500,000.

On 26th of February, 1866, the Leviathan, Luna, Petona, and Dictator were burned at the wharf at St. Louis with an estimated loss of \$750,000. On December 19, steamer Gray Eagle was sunk at St. Louis.

#### LOST FROM BREAKING UP OF ICE.

*Breaking up of the ice gorge in the winter of 1865-6* caused a loss of nearly a million dollars to owners and underwriters at St. Louis.

This was the most disastrous *break up* that has ever occurred on Western waters.

The following is the estimate with the names of the boats lost:—

New Admiral.....	Value. \$ 60,000
Sioux City.....	10,000
Empire City.....	20,000
Calypso (about).....	30,000
Hylander.....	20,000
Geneva.....	28,000
Metropolitan (about).....	18,000
Four Wharf Boats (about).....	15,000
Two Barges (about).....	25,000

#### ON THE SECOND BREAK OR MOVEMENT OF THE ICE ON FRIDAY, 12TH JANUARY, 1866.

Belle Memphis.....	Value. \$ 85,000
John Trendy ferryboat.....	50,000
Prairie Rose.....	15,000
India.....	16,000
Warsaw.....	35,000
Underwriter, No 8.....	20,000
Omaha.....	12,000

#### SATURDAY, 14TH JANUARY.

Nebraska.....	20,000
City of Pekin.....	32,000
Hattie May.....	50,000
Diadem.....	22,000
Viola Belle.....	30,000
Reserve.....	30,000
Rosalie.....	45,000
Five Rock boats (about).....	18,000
Memphis Wharf-boat.....	5,000
Alton Wharf-boat.....	2,500

Total.....\$692,500

In the above estimate there is no calculation for the damage to boats not entirely lost. This is variously estimated from \$150,000 to \$175,000.

*In 1860 there was lost and partially lost or damaged on Western waters 299 steamboats.*

Totally destroyed, 120.

For some years after the bridge was completed, but few serious casualties occurred, and it was thought the bridge piers would so protect the harbor that the breaking up of the ice in the river would not hence forward cause serious losses. But the winter of 1887-8 proved more disastrous to floating property than any winter since the great break up in 1866.

All that remains for the protection of that harbor seems to be an appropriation from the government to build an ice harbor for the protection of boats in winter. Several efforts have already been made in that direction and an inadequate amount has once been appropriated, but for some reason used for another purpose.

The following is a list of steamboats lost and partially so, at or near St. Louis from 1862 to 1881, inclusive:—

1867—January 20, steamer Mexico, burned at St. Louis; total loss.

January 26, R. C. Wood, sunk opposite Carondelet.

January 26, E. H. Fairchild, sunk opposite Carondelet.

February 6, Tom Storms, sunk near St. Louis.

February 13, White Cloud, sunk at St. Louis; total loss.

June 13, Governor Sharkey, sunk at St. Louis; total loss.

September 10, G. W. Graham, burned at St. Louis; total loss.

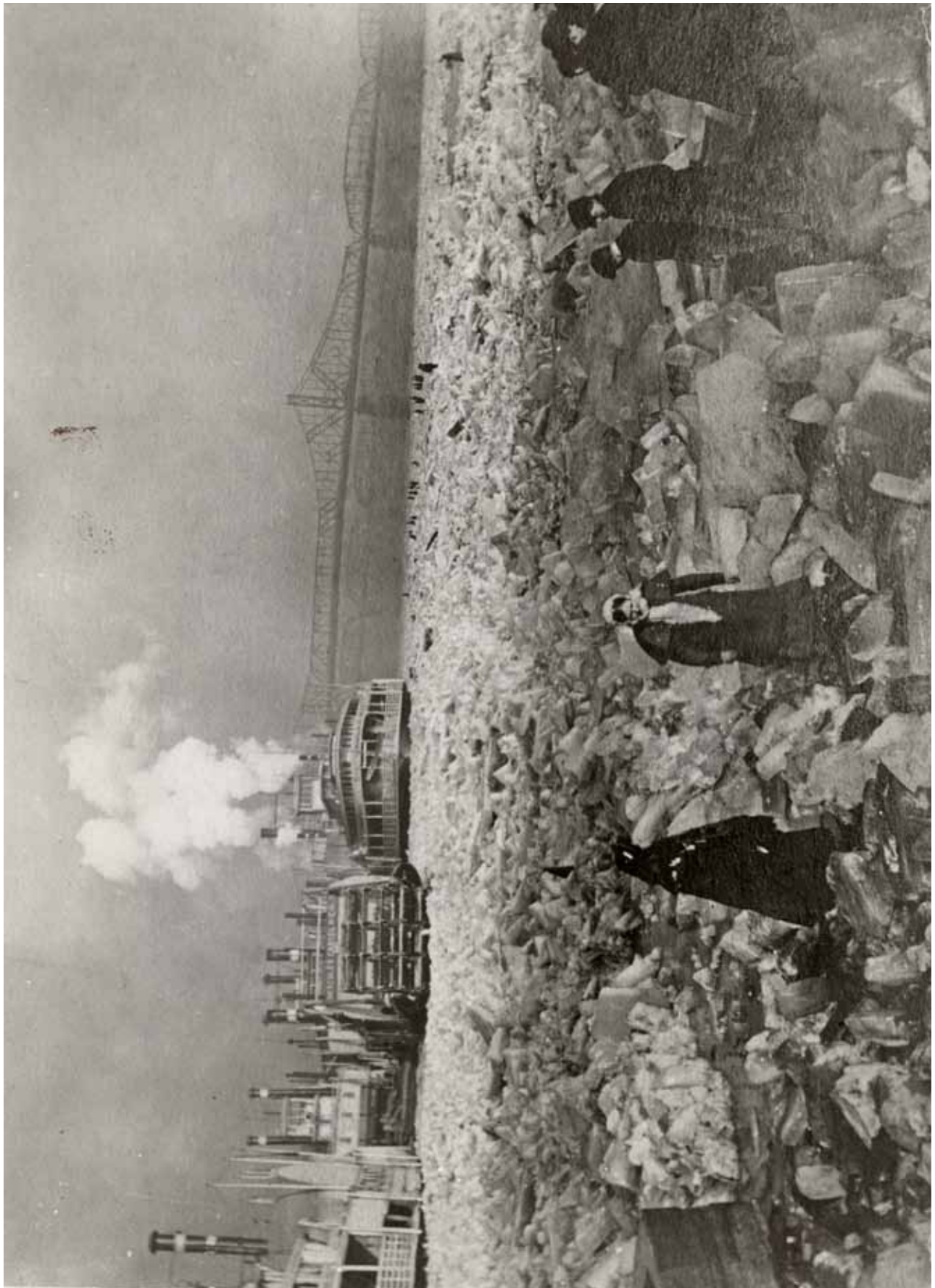
September 10, Yellowstone, burned at St. Louis; total loss.

September 27, Illinois exploded at St. Louis, and repaired.

1868—February 4, Annie White, sunk by ice at St. Louis;

Clara Donelson burned at St. Louis.





“Steamboats Trapped in Ice on the Ohio River” (Indiana Historical Society Digital Image Collections, Item ID M0945\_BOX16\_2177)

# DISASTER! THE DANGERS OF STEAMBOATING

## Step 1: Analyze your Written Document

Read through your document and use a dictionary to help define any vocabulary words that are unfamiliar to you.

Answer these questions:

- 1) From what publication is this excerpt taken?
  
- 2) What type of steamboat disaster or danger does the document describe?
  
- 3) Note as many details about these facts of the disaster as you can:
  - a. **When** did the disaster occur?
  
  - b. **Where** did the disaster occur?
  
  - c. **How** did the disaster occur? What was its cause?
  
  - d. **What** was the result? (Did the boat sink, explode, catch fire, etc.?)
  
  - e. **Who** was affected? (How many people were killed or injured?)
  
- 4) From the text, can you tell what the reaction of the people involved in the disasters, either survivors or witnesses, was? (What were they feeling? Did they try to do anything to help?)
  
- 5) What two things about the account do you think are important?

## Step Two: Analyze Your Image

Study the photograph for two minutes to get a sense of what is going on in the scene.

Use the chart below to list the people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

Image Analysis Chart		
People	Objects	Activities

Based on your observation of the photograph, answer these questions:

- 1) What do you think might be the scene on board the steamboat? (Chaos? Calm? How are the crew and the passengers reacting?)
  
- 2) What do you think might be the scene on shore? (Chaos? Calm? How are witnesses to the disaster reacting?)
  
- 3) What do you think will happen next? Describe what might have happened just after this photograph was taken.

## Step Three: Report Your Findings

Now, your group will create a newscast about this incident. One person may serve as the news anchor in the newsroom. He or she will announce the details of the disaster. Another student will serve as a reporter on the site of the disaster and give a live description of the scene. He or she will also conduct an interview with a witness. A third student will be the witness who gives a firsthand account of what he or she saw. Your group will broadcast the news story to your classmates.