



Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes: Contests and Collisions (Disaster)

J. Thomas Allison

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Beginning in the mid-1800s, steamboats carried people between New York City and the Albany area on the Hudson River. Romantic images lull us into believing it was a quiet means of travel, but a crowded river, faulty equipment and the bravado of the captains resulted in at least one major catastrophe every year. Night boats collided and sank, carelessness caused boiler explosions, races put passengers at risk and fires would quickly swallow the wooden vessels. The grand "Empire of Troy" suffered many collisions. The "Swallow" broke in two on a rock, "Reindeer"'s explosion took forty lives at once and the "Oregon" and "C. Vanderbilt" entered into an epic and dangerous race. Collected from eyewitness accounts, these are some of the most exciting and frightening stories of peril aboard steamboats on the Hudson River.



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