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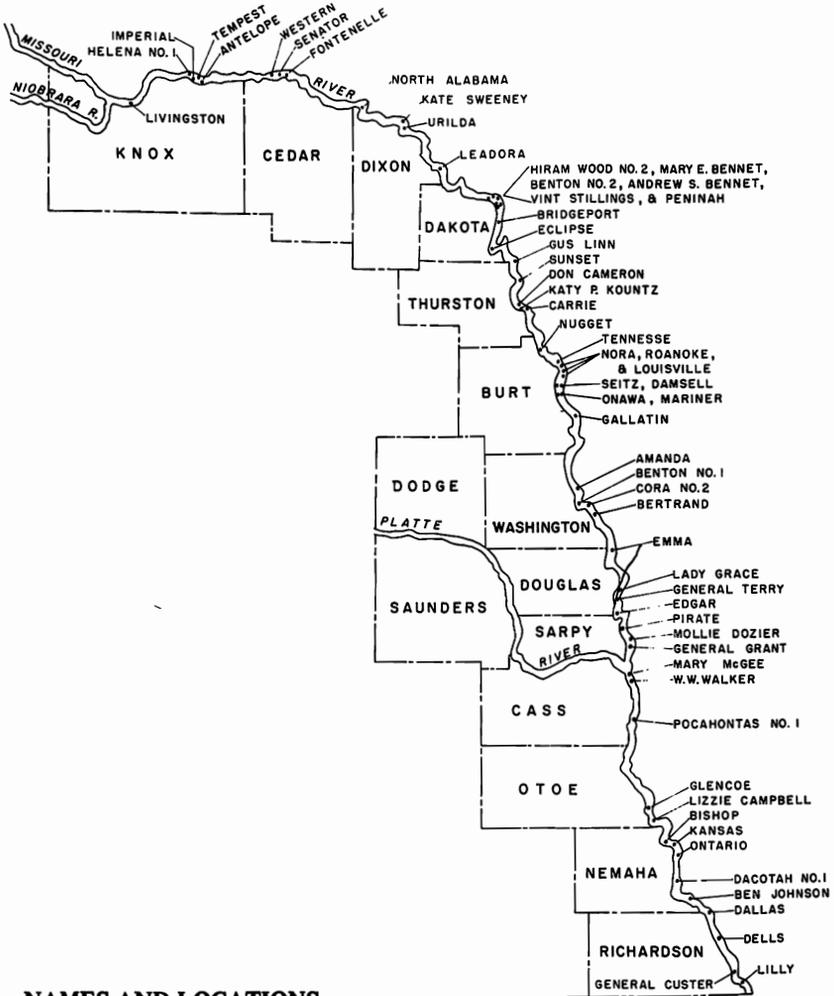
Article Summary: A list of steamboat wrecks which occurred on the Missouri River in the Nebraska area from the opening of steamboat navigation to the present time [1853 -1897], presented by Captain H M Chittenden, Corps of Engineers, for inclusion in the Corps of Engineers Annual Report. Includes chart and map, causes and descriptions of wrecks with brief analyses.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Joseph LaBare, E H McFarland, J B Clarke, Joseph Fecto, E H Gould, John P Kaiser, William G Lingo, Grant Marsh, W R Massie, James O'Neal, W H Simms, George W Vaughan

Keywords: *Charles R Suter* [snag boat]; Missouri River Pilots; *Lloyd's Steamboat Disasters*

Photographs / Images: Map, Names and Locations of Certain Steamboats wrecked on the Missouri River (Nebraska area, 1853-1897); the steamboat *Benton* wreck near Sioux City, July 18, 1867



**NAMES AND LOCATIONS
OF CERTAIN STEAMBOATS
WRECKED ON THE MISSOURI RIVER
(Nebraska Area, 1853-1897)**

REPORT ON STEAMBOAT WRECKS ON MISSOURI RIVER

By CAPT. H. M. CHITTENDEN
Corps of Engineers

Missouri River Commission
Office of the Secretary
St. Louis, Mo., June 30, 1897

Colonel: I have the honor to transmit herewith for incorporation in the Annual Report a list of steamboat wrecks which have occurred on the Missouri River from the opening of steamboat navigation to the present time. The preparation of this list, which received your verbal approval before it was begun, has entailed much more labor than was at first expected. The number of wrecks has been found to be greater than anticipated, and the deficient and conflicting data in many cases have involved considerable research to get at the correct facts.

In collecting this information a working list was first prepared by the aid of Capt. Joseph LaBarge, probably the oldest living pilot on the Missouri River, with over sixty years' experience, and Capt. E. H. McFarland of the snag boat Charles R. Suter. This list was then mailed to all surviving Missouri River Pilots whose length of service was such as to give them some historical knowledge of the river with a request for information under certain specified heads. This correspondence resulted in ten replies, more or less complete, from Capts. J. B. Clarke, Joseph Fecto, E. H. Gould, John P. Kaiser, William G. Lingo, Grant Marsh, W. R. Massie, James O'Neal, W. H. Simms and George W. Vaughan.

Interest in the recently uncovered sunken steamboat *Bertrand* makes pertinent reprinting this 1897 report of Capt. Chittenden. It was one of twenty articles published in a "Missouri River Number" of *Nebraska History*, VIII (January-March, 1925).

The information in these several communications was collected on memorandum cards, one to each wreck, so as to bring all the data pertaining to each case into one group. From these cards the condensed descriptions have been prepared. Acknowledgements are due to those who have responded to the requests sent out as above described and particularly to Capts. Joseph LaBarge and William G. Lingo. The long acquaintance of the former with the Missouri River navigation has supplied much information which would otherwise have been lost. Captain Lingo has rendered valuable assistance by searching the records of old St. Louis newspapers, the lists of steamboat disasters at the St. Louis Merchants' Exchange, and such publications relating to the subject as could be found in the city libraries.

The list thus compiled is believed to be very nearly correct. Its publication may elicit a few errors, and possibly some additions, and it may be desirable to revise it at a later period. Such revision, however, can effect only minor details, for in essential features the list, in its present form, may be considered complete.

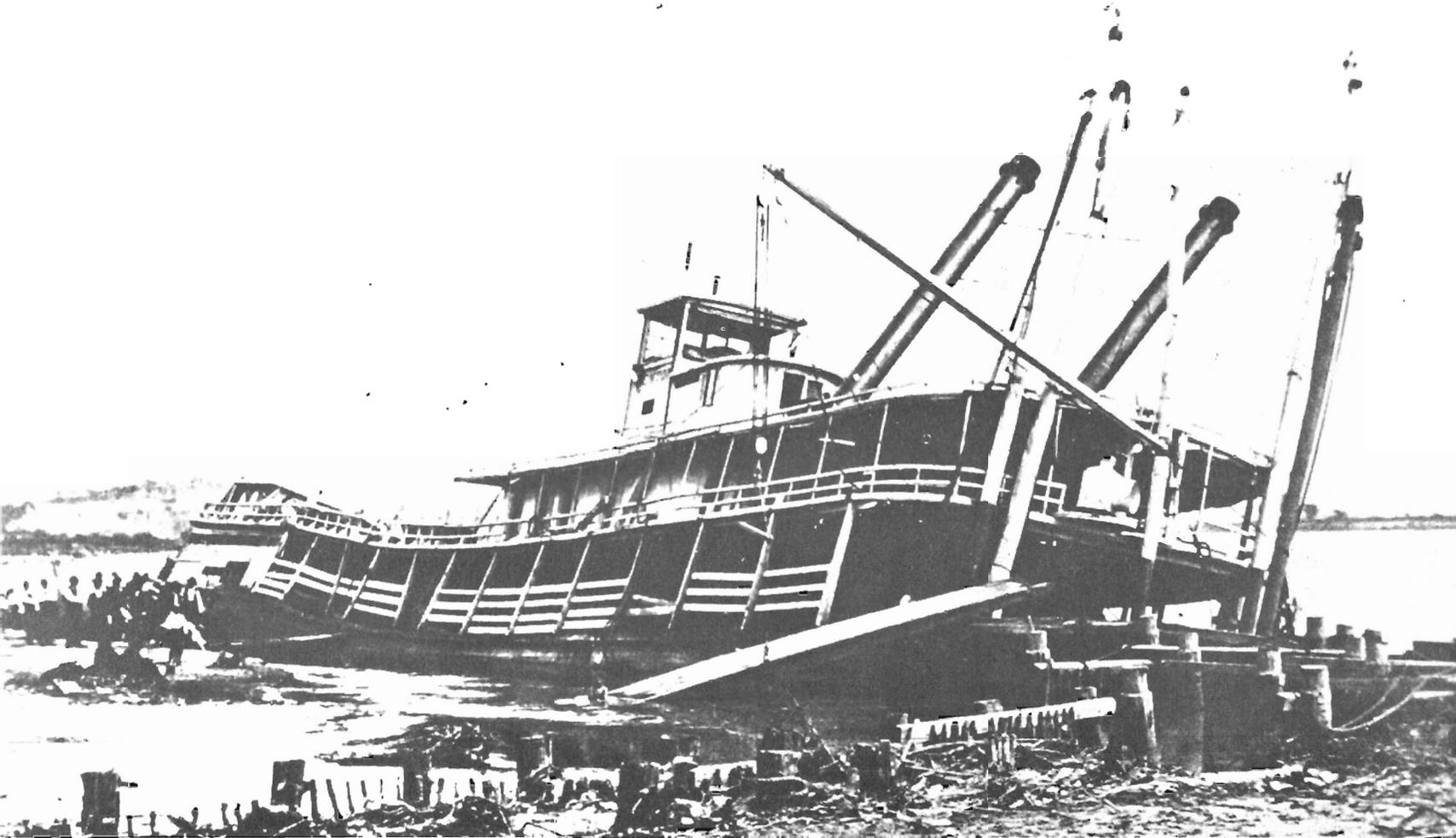
ANALYSIS OF LIST

The total number of wrecks embraced in the list is 295*, distributed according to cause of wreck as follows:

Cause of Wreck	No. of Boats Wrecked	Cause of Wreck	No. of Boats Wrecked
Snags.....	193	Storm and wind.....	2
Fire	25	Collisions.....	1
Ice	26	Overloading.....	1
Rocks.....	11	Swamping in violent	
Bridges	10	eddy.....	1
Explosion of boiler.....	6	Unknown	14
Sand bars and falling			
river.....	4		
Ran into the bank	1	Total.....	295

*This includes 6 boats wrecked twice and finally lost, 1 boat wrecked three times and finally lost, 12 boats wrecked once and saved, and one boat wrecked twice and saved. This reduces the actual number of boats lost to 273.

From the above table it is seen that the great menace to the safety of navigation on the Missouri River has heretofore been the snags and rocks



The steamboat Benton was wrecked near Sioux City on July 18, 1867.

STEAMBOAT WRECKS ON THE MISSOURI RIVER

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DATE	LOCALITY	CAUSE
Amanda	Side Wheel 140 tons	Nov. 17, 1867	Peters Landing, Ia. Above Omaha....	Fire
Andrew S. Bennett	Stern Wheel Ferry boat	1888	Sioux City	Ice
Antelope	Side Wheel 326 tons	Apr. 12, 1869	5 Mi. Below Upper Bonhomme Island	Fire
Ben Johnson	Side Wheel large boat	about 1870	4 or 5 mi. below Brownville	Snag
Benton	Stern Wheel 246 tons	May 19, 1869	Benton Bend 8 mi. above De Soto ..	Snag
Benton No. 2	Stern Wheel 394 tons	July 18, 1897	Sioux City, Iowa	Bridge
Bertrand	Stern Wheel 160x30 ft.	1865	Bertrand Bend, Portage La Force ..	Snag
Bishop	Stern Wheel Small steamer	July 15, 1867	Head of Peru cut-off	Swamped
Bridgeport	Stern Wheel 250 tons	June 2, 1868	1½ mi. below Dakota City	Snag
Carrie	Stern Wheel 267 tons	Aug. 14, 1868	2 m. above Indian Mission, Nebr.	Snag
Cora No. 2	Side Wheel 360 tons	Aug. 13, 1869	30 mi. above Omaha near Calhoun ..	Unknown
Dacotah No. 1	Side Wheel about 300 tons ..	1851	13 mi. above Peru	Snag
Dallas	Stern Wheel	in seventies	Morgan's Island	Snag
Damsell	Stern Wheel	1876	Head of Onawa Bend	Snag
Dells	Stern Wheel	Oct. 26, 1878	Above Arago, Nebr.	Snag & Explosion
Don Cameron J. ...	Stern Wheel	May 17, 1877	Omaha & Winnebago Agency	Snag
Eclipse	Stern Wheel 178x31 ft.	Sept. 3, 1887	15 mi. below Sioux City	Snag
Edgar .....	.....	Mar. 26, 1884	Near Omaha	Ice
Emma	Stern Wheel small boat	Aug. 1, 1873	20 mi. above Omaha	Storm
Fontenelle	Stern Wheel	Spring, 1881	Yankton, So. Dakota	Ice
Gallatin	Stern wheel 140x30 ft.	Apr. 16, 1868	Mouth of Little Sioux	Snag
General Custer ...	Stern wheel	1879	Between Winnebago bar and Rush Bottom	Snag
General Grant	Stern wheel	Mar. 18, 1866	3 mi. below Bellevue	Snag
General Terry	Stern wheel 174x31 ft.	June 30, 1888	Omaha, Nebr.	Bridge
Glencoe	Side wheel	about 1887	Copeland's Bend 3 mi. above Nebr. City	Snag
Gus Linn *(1860)	Side wheel	1865	Henry Chattillion Bend	Snag
Helena No. 1	Stern wheel 210 tons	Oct. 31, 1868	Upper Bonhomme Island	Snag
Hiram Wood No. 2	Ferry Boat	1880	Sioux City	Unknown
Imperial	Stern wheel moderate size ..	1867	Upper Bonhomme Island	Snag

*Record shows boat bearing this name sunk more than once.

STEAMBOAT WRECKS ON THE MISSOURI RIVER

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DATE	LOCALITY	CAUSE
Kansas	Side wheel	Apr. 25, 1853	Kansas Bend above Linden Landing	Snag
Kate Sweeney	Side wheel 328 tons	Aug. 1, 1855	Kate Sweeney Bend above Vermillion River	Snag
Katy P. Kountz ..	Stern wheel	1878	Omaha and Winnebago Agency	Snag
Lady Grace	Stern wheel	1870	Landing at Omaha	Fire
Lendora*	Stern wheel 180x32 ft.	1867	Ponca Landing, Mo. (S. Dak.)	Fire
Lilly	Stern wheel 226 tons	Oct. 24, 1868	Rush Bottom Bend below Rulo	Snag
Livingston	Side wheel 120x20	1868	Running Water	Ice
Lizzie Campbell ..	Transfer boat	Mar. 6, 1883	Nebraska City	Snag
Louisville	Stern wheel 180x33 ft.	Apr. 1864	Pratt's Cut-off or Louisville Bend ..	Snag
Mariner	Stern wheel 180x33 ft.	May 9, 1867	Onawa Bend, Near Decatur, Nebr. ..	Snag
Mary E. Bennett*	Stern wheel	1869	Sioux City	Ice
Mary McGee	Center Wheel	Apr. 6, 1877	Plattsmouth, Nebraska	Ice
Mollie Dozier	Side wheel 225x34 ft.	Oct. 1, 1866	Just below Council Bluffs	Snag
Nora	Stern wheel	May 30, 1867	Below Decatur in Pratt's Cut-off ..	Snag
North Alabama ..	Stern wheel 160x32 ft.	Oct. 27, 1870	Bow River Bend Above Vermillion ..	Snag
Nugget	Stern wheel	Apr. 22, 1866	Abreast Dacotah City	Snag
Onawa	Stern wheel	1880	Onawa Bend	Snag
Ontario	Stern wheel	1866 Sept. 22	Kansas Bend	Snag
Peninah	Stern wheel 287 tons	Apr. 6, 1875	Sioux City	Ice
Pirate	Side wheel	1842	3 mi. below Bellevue	Snag
Pocahontas No. 1.	Side wheel	Aug. 11, 1840	½ mi. below Rock Bluff	Snag
Roanoke	Stern wheel	1867	Pratt's Cut-off	Snag
Seitz .....	.....	.....	Head of Onawa Bend	Unknown
Senator	Stern wheel 120x26 ft.	1888	Yankton, South Dakota	Fire
Sun Set	Stern wheel	July 18, 1869	40 mi. below Sioux City	Snag
Tempest	Side wheel	about 1865	Upper Bonhomme Island	Snag
Tennessee	Stern wheel	Apr. 25, 1869	Head of Louisville Bend	Snag
Urilda	Stern wheel	Apr. 24, 1869	Foot Kate Sweeney Bend	Snag
Vint Stillings ..	Stern wheel .....	.....	Sioux City	Ice
W. W. Walker	Stern wheel	Nov. 14, 1874	Near Plattsmouth	Snag
Western	Stern wheel 212x34 ft.	Mar. 29, 1881	Yankton, South Dakota	Ice

*Record shows boat bearing this name sunk more than once.

which abound in its bed, the total number of disasters from these two causes being 204. This fact fully justifies the maintenance of the elaborate plant now employed in clearing the lower river of these obstructions. The active service of the snag boat may be said to have removed largely the dangers to steamboat navigation from snags, and ought to have a favorable influence on the insurance rates for Missouri river boats.

The next most important cause of wrecks has been fire. In the majority of instances disasters from this cause have been due to sheer carelessness, as in the cases of the Butte and Chippewa. The carrying of candles into the hold, the overturning of lights, and other similar negligences, explain many of these disasters. Danger from this source is now greatly diminished by the use of electricity, which obviates almost entirely the necessity of carrying lights.

Ice has also been one of the principal causes of steamboat wrecks, and this danger cannot be said to have diminished in recent years. Owing to the decline of steamboat navigation, suitable ways for hauling out boats have fallen into decay more rapidly than they have been repaired or replaced by new ones; and no ice harbors to speak of have been constructed on the river.

Accidents from steamboat explosions were very common, and of appalling fatality in the early history of steamboat navigation. In Lloyds' Steamboat Disasters, published in 1856, out of a total of 213 wrecks given, 124 were from this cause, and of the 2,035 lives lost, the greater part were on boats so wrecked. This record is probably not to be relied upon strictly, for the sensational tenor of the work indicates that especial attention was devoted to the more terrible disasters, and other early records do not corroborate its statements. But after making due allowance for exaggeration, it is nevertheless true that in the early steamboating days boiler explosions were both frequent and terribly destructive of life and property. The improvements in the material and construction of boilers, the better arrangement for supplying feed water, the application of various safety appliances and, above all, the enforcement of Government laws and regulations which provide for the inspection and tests of materials and workmanship in marine boilers during construction, for annual inspection of the vessel after it is built, and for the licensing of the chief officers in the marine service, have largely removed this cause of steamboat disaster.

The other causes of wrecks, except bridges, are mostly accidental and require no comment.

The only danger to navigation on the river which has increased in recent years is the bridges which span the stream. It is probably true that at present these bridges are more dreaded by the pilot than all other obstructions put together. This unfavorable condition arises from two causes: (1) injudicious location of the bridges in some instances; and (2) in all, the ever-changing character of the channel of the river. With a good navigable depth and satisfactory approaches one year, there is no assurance that they will be there one or two years later. The channel may shift and has done so, from a draw to a fixed span, thus cutting off the passage entirely. It would seem that a judicious improvement of the navigation of the Missouri River should require the permanent and fixed control of the channel of the stream for a sufficient distance above and below every bridge to allow of a safe approach for vessels.

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Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

HIRAM M. CHITTENDEN,
Capt. of Engineers, U. S. A.
Sec'y Mo. River Commission.