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"FAVORITE" LAUNCH CAPSIZES ON LAKE MICHIGAN, JULY 28, 1927.

Chicago, July 29 - A small excursion boat cruising from Lincoln Park to Municipal Pier (Navy Pier) capsized half a mile off North Avenue in a sudden, heavy squall. Passengers seeking shelter from a storm on leeward side which helped capsize vessel. Over 50 Rescued, but 27 perish.



Life guards and professional swimmers try to save the lives of those on board the Favorite after it capsized when a huge squall hit Lake Michigan on July 28, 1927 near Lincoln Park



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The tragedy came almost twelve years to the day after the sinking of the Eastland with 813 deaths. Both were caused by the rush of passengers to the port side. The “Favorite” was at the scene of the Eastland helping in rescue efforts.

Gertrude Berndt was one of the survivors of the accident. Mrs. Berndt had survived the Eastland disaster 12 years prior and was rescued from the “Favorite” with her daughter Lois, but four of her family members drowned.



Life guards and professional swimmers who had worked to save the lives of those on board the Favorite, stand on top of the sunken boat in Lake Michigan on July 28, 1927.



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SIXTEEN CHILDREN.

Sixteen of the victims were children -- ten boys and six girls. Ten were women and one a man. Some 75 women and children and half a dozen men were thrown into the water when the vessel "The Favorite" toppled over, but 50 or more were saved, some in a thrilling rescue by William Hofnauer, millionaire yachtsman, who chanced to be cruising nearby in his large yacht, the "Doris."



Workers pull the Favorite steamer out of the water on the evening of the disaster, July 28, 1927.

While divers searched for more victims derricks lifted the craft seven hours after the sinking. The last five bodies were found as the boat came up.



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It was an enthusiastic crowd of excursionists that left Lincoln Park for the two mile run to the Municipal Pier.

A two piece Negro orchestra -- banjo and mandolin -- strummed "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover" as suddenly, when a mile out, a rainstorm broke under a gust of wind from the northwest. As Captain Arthur Olson, a lake seaman for 18 years, sought to head his boat into the wind, passengers rushed to the port side away from the rain. The boat dipped and as water rushed over the decks, turned over.



Five more bodies were found when the capsized Favorite was pulled out of Lake Michigan on the evening of July 28, 1927.



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FOUGHT FOR LIVES.

Children, candy and pop-corn still clutched in their hands, fought to free themselves. Some were thrown free of the boat and many grabbed belts and rafts as the boat righted and sank until all but the canopy was submerged. Twenty-one bodies were recovered before the boat was raised. The five members of the crew escaped and these, all experienced sailors, saved many from drowning by tossing life preservers and rafts to them. The boat's two life boats also were unleashed and into these clambered some survivors.



A crowd of friends and family members wait to use a telephone to call home after the Favorite boat disaster on July 28, 1927.



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TO THE RESCUE.

Word of the tragedy sped along the lake front and small boats put out to the rescue.

William Hofnauer, a wealthy yachtsman, President of the Chicago Waste Company, and his guests and crew were among the first to reach the scene on his yacht “Doris” and picked up as many as they could of those still afloat.

A triple inquiry was under way. One was an inquest, the others by Hughes, chief of police and State's Attorney Crowe. Olson and his crew were arrested.

ONE LIFE BOAT.

The “Favorite” was a gasoline launch (a “launch,” akin to a “water taxi” of today) 64 feet long and 14 feet wide with double decks. It carried but one life boat, and in this three small boys were taken to shore, but it carried a stock of life preservers which Captain Olsen said he threw into the water, and to which some of the passengers clung.

The squall caught scores of boats on the lake and at first it was reported that several boats had upset. Later, however, it was found that the only other casualty was a small speed boat and the occupants of this boat swam to shore.



Russell Lucas, a survivor of the Favorite boat disaster.



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Miss Opal Helton, of Hugo, Oklahoma, a passenger, rescued four children. When the boat capsized and she was plunged into the water, Miss Helton held her breath. When she came to the surface, three small boys and a 10-year-old-daughter of the captain of the boat were struggling near her. She grabbed them separately, and aided them to the side of the boat, which had righted itself. After her heroic rescue Miss Helton was on the verge of collapse.

WEISSMUELLER HELPS.

Johnny Weissmueller, national swimming champion was bathing near the scene of the accident and soon after the boat capsized began diving for bodies. He brought several to the surface, they being taken to the beach for resuscitation.

Small craft, with their burden of victims, still were coming in to shore along a two-mile strip of beach two hours after the accident. More than fifty boats hurried to the scene of the disaster.

Scores of doctors and nurses worked frantically along the shore line over the victim's bodies and for many of them entertained virtually no hope of resuscitation. One small lad clung to the smoke stack of the craft for more than an hour before finally being rescued.

BEACH IS HOSPITAL.

The beach for two miles was turned into an emergency hospital, where doctors and nurses worked frantically over the victims. Those who showed signs of life were hurried to hospitals and a few were resuscitated and taken home. One man in a speed boat rescued more than a score (<20 people).

Captain OLSEN told police the accident occurred so suddenly he barely had time to escape from the wheelhouse.

CAPTAIN EXPLAINS.

"The squall came up so quickly that all the passenger ran over to one side of the boat, causing it to turn completely over," he said. "I left the wheel as fast as I could, grabbed my knife and cut the cords holding the life preservers. Then I cut the cords of the life boat and threw the life preservers into the water where the struggling passengers could reach them."



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"The squall that hit us was the fiercest that I have encountered in my twenty years of sailing on Lake Michigan."



Favorite boat Captain Arthur 'Beef' Olson, a lake seaman for 18 years, and his crew survived the disaster and were all taken into custody and questioned by police (No information on which one is the captain). Captain Olson's daughter Katherine, 10, who had been selling candy and pop on the boat, survived when she was rescued from the water. "There was a lot of terrible howling. I fell into the lake and felt the bottom with my feet. Then I paddled my way up and managed to swim around until someone picked me up."



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WORK OF RESCUE.

The work of rescue was under way almost before the vessel had settled into the water. The few men on the vessel fought heroically to save women and children, while nearby, scores of small craft raced to the stricken vessel and removed scores of women and children clinging to the sides of the boat.

By the time the first rescue boats had reached shore doctors and nurses were on the beach and worked over some of the bodies for hours in efforts at resuscitation. DR. HERMAN N. BUNDESEN, health commissioner, issued a call for all available doctors and nurses and himself assisted in the work of resuscitation.



The coroner swears in the jury after the Favorite disaster on July 28, 1927.



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CONTINUE SEARCH.

Although search of the lake waters was carried on in the face of a rough waters, none of the authorities had any missing list and whether others than the 27 known dead had been lost was unknown.

Two women believed within a 1,000 foot radius of where the boat sank. No bodies were recovered, but a miscellaneous collection of clothes, umbrellas and other objects were brought up by the grappling lines. A banjo was included in the list of articles found.

"ACT OF GOD."

An "act of God as if the boat had been hit by lightning," was the way W. A. Rittenhouse, assistant state's attorney described the foundering of the excursion boat, "Favorite" Thursday.

He said the state's attorney's investigation had revealed nothing of criminality and apparently there was no evidence of carelessness.

SAYS CAPTAIN IS HERO.

William Hofnauer, Millionaire yachtsman who was cruising near the boat when the squall struck it, praised Olson, declaring he was "a hero" and should not be censured.

"My boat was 300 feet off the breakwater when the storm struck." he related. "It drove us within five feet of the breakwater. In a few seconds the storm passed and the effect was the same as if a curtain was raised on a staged tragedy. There was the "Favorite" floundering with many persons struggling in the water. We went immediately into rescue mode."

DISASTER VICTIMS

The known dead in the excursion boat disaster was twenty-seven, sixteen children, ten women and one man.

THE LIST:

MRS. SARAH REZNICK, 24.

BERNARD REZNICK, 5.

ALBERT REZNICK, 3.

MRS. CLARA YOUNG, 34.

RUTH YOUNG, 5.



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MARGARET MURRAY, 8.
GEORGE MURRAY, 3.
CHARLES ABERNATHY, 3.
ROBERT ABERNATHY, 4.
MRS. FANNIE HENDRICKS, 38.
MARY HENDRICKS, 8.
MRS. OLGA KOUTNEK, 38.
HARRY KOUTNEK, 7.
NATHAN POZANSKY, 45.
BESSIE POZANSKY, 9.
CELIA POLEN, 38.
ROSE POLEN, about 8. (previously unidentified)
MRS. MABEL PARENTI, 23.
ANTHONY PARENTI, 8 months.
MRS. MAY K. FENLON, 46.
VINCENT FENLON, 14.
MRS. AMANDA BERNT, 32.
MRS. PEARL CARPENTER, 35.
MRS. FANNY HOLMES, 40.
MICHAEL CITERA, 7.
ROBERT ERICKSON, 6.
EILEEN SCHLAUDER, 5.

INVESTIGATION FAILS TO SHOW CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE.

A preliminary investigation by the state's attorney failed to disclose evidence of criminal negligence or violation of any state law, it was revealed today as four inquiries were under way into the capsizing of the "Favorite", small excursion boat yesterday in Lake Michigan with a loss of 27 lives.

The sudden squall as a thunderstorm broke the heat wave, turned the little boat partly over, throwing women and children into the water as others were trapped below decks.

ROTTEN STRAPS.

Rotten straps on life preservers comprised one of the first discoveries by Coroner WOLFF in an inspection of the boat today. The craft had been raised and towed in. One life preserver bore a date of 1910 and a 1927 inspection stamp.



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Federal inspectors, the state's attorney, the coroner and the police launched a quadruple inquiry as divers and harbor craft continued to drag the waters in search of other bodies. Approximately 75 persons were aboard the boat.



A funeral for several victims of the Favorite steamer disaster, which capsized on July 28, 1927, killing 27 people, including 16 children.

EXPERIENCED JURORS.

The coroner asked a number of licensed skippers, prominent men of experience on the lakes, to sit on the jury.



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State's Attorney Crowe directed his assistants to open an inquiry at once. After questioning a number of persons, W. A. Rittenhouse, assistant state's attorney announced that no evidence of any violation of law had been uncovered.

Fred Meno, representing the federal steamboat inspection service, with local inspectors began an inspection of the "Favorite". He said the boat was last inspected July 11.

NOT ACCESSIBLE.

The coroner, in addition to finding some life belts with straps which he tore with ease, said some of the life preservers apparently were not easily accessible.

Although the authorities were without information as to the exact number of persons aboard and no authentic list of missing persons was reported, search of the lake waters went ahead today without finding other bodies.

CAPTAIN OLSON'S STATEMENT.

Captain Olson's statement before the state's assistant attorney's assistants follows:

Q -- Did you have your boat loaded with passengers when you left the pier?

A -- Yes.

Q -- Before leaving is it customary for a government inspector to look over your list of passengers so you will not overload?

A -- There are government inspectors on Sundays and holidays and evenings during the busy hours, but in the day we are not inspected.

Q -- How many passengers did you have on the boat?

A -- About sixty.

Q -- How many life preservers is your boat equipped with?

A -- One hundred and seventy-six.

Q -- Where were the life preservers?

A -- They were up overhead against the ceiling of the upper and lower decks.

Q -- And where were the two raft boats situated?

A -- One on the lower deck and one on the boat deck.

Q -- Now when the squall started blowing, it did not capsize your boat at once did it?



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A -- Yes, the minute she hit it went. And furthermore, it was raining and the people rushed from the starboard side to the port and that helped to turn the boat over.