
Register of the Culver (William B.) Memorial Scrapbook of the Shipwreck of the Ville du Havre, 1873-1874

Collection number: Mss169

Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections
University Library
University of the Pacific

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Culver (William B.) Memorial Scrapbook of the Shipwreck of the Ville du Havre,

Date (inclusive): 1873-1874

Collection number: Mss169

Creator: Beverly Hodghead

Extent: 0.3 linear ft.

Repository: University of the Pacific. Library. Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections
Stockton, CA 95211

Shelf location: For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library's online catalog.

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation

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Biography

On November 22, 1873 at 2:00 a.m. the steamship Ville Du Havre (formerly named Napoleon III) of the French Atlantic line, running between New York and Le Havre, collided with the British ship Loch Erne, travelling from London to New York. Of the approximately 226 crew and passengers, only around 87 were saved. According to newspaper accounts the Ville Du Havre spotted the lights of the Loch Erne through the

fog with minutes to spare. A Second Lieutenant and the Captain tried to turn the ship in time but they received a full hit at mid-ship. The Ville sank in twelve minutes drowning many passengers in their cabins. A mast fell, hitting a craft filled with those who made it to the deck and killing many more. The captain had a first lieutenant swim to the Loch Erne for help, and although the latter had also been badly damaged and had drifted half a mile away, she sent over three craft to pick up survivors.

The Chicago papers emphasized the 11 Chicagoans killed in the wreck. It is of interest that Mrs. H.G. (Anne) Spafford travelled with her four children, another child in her care (William B. Culver) and a nanny. Mrs. Spafford was the only one to survive in her party. Wm. B Culver was the twelve year old son of B.F. Culver, President of the Lincoln Park Commissioners. The boy was being escorted by Mrs. Spafford on his way to school for a few years in Germany. He was to be placed under the charge of his grandfather, the Reverend William Barry. Barry was formerly of Chicago, and once Secretary of the Historical Society.

Scope and Content

The scrapbook, inscribed "Wm. B Culver" on the cover, is probably a memorial to Culver, created by a family member. Newspaper clippings in the scrapbook report varying accounts of the event, provide the names of survivors and those who died, speculate on the cause of the collision and whether the crew had acted appropriately to avoid the hit. The accounts also report on prominent figures who died in the collision, including Judge Rufus W. Peckham of Albany, New York (1810-1873) and Collodion, a caricaturist.

BOX 1: CULVER VILLE DU HAVRE SCRAPBOOK, 1873-1874

- Misc. newspaper clippings from Chicago Boston and New York newspapers, though most are from the Chicago Evening Mail, the Chicago Evening Post and the Chicago Tribune [December 1st, 1873 to February 19, 1874]
- Harper's Weekly (12-20-73) account [includes sketches of the ship]
- "The Ville Du Havre: Letters from C. Burritt Waite, one of the rescued passengers"