

A narrative of the wreck of the schooner "New Connecticut" on Lake Erie, Sept. 4, 1833; together with an account of the miraculous preservation of Mrs. Mary Applebee, who was confined in the cabin five days, the schooner being for the greater part of the time immersed in water.

Excerpts from a letter written by Mrs. Applebee Oct. 1, 1833, from Aurora, Erie county, N.Y., and read before the annual meeting of the Chautauqua County Historical Society in Mayville, Sept. 30, 1927 by Roscoe B. Martin, Forestville, N.Y.

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"I was born in the year 1789, in the town of Framingham, county of Middlesex, state of Massachusetts, and was the younger daughter of Mr. David Sanger, a respectable citizen of that place. After having spent most of my childhood in my native place, I removed with my parents to New Hampshire, (Grafton county, town of Franconia,) where some years afterwards I was married to my present husband, Mr. Jas. Applebee with whom I removed to the state of New York, in the year 1816, to the town of Groveland, county of Livingston, but had removed to Aurora, Erie Co. previous to the perilous adventure I am about to narrate.

"August 12, 1833, my son James A. Applebee, came down Lake Erie, from Conneaut, Ohio, in the schooner New Connecticut, Capt. Howard, and owned by Gilman Applebee, of Conneaut and Mr. Isaac S. Smith of Buffalo; and requested me to return with him, and visit some of my relatives and acquaintances in the above named place, saying that he would come down in about fourteen hours, and as the vessel would sail the next day, I could go as well as not. At first I declined going, but the thoughts of seeing a favorite sister-

in-law, and other relatives and acquaintances in so short a time overcome the aversion I had to crossing the water, and my family thought it might be advantageous to my health, as it was much impaired. Speedy preparations were made and I soon arrived at Buffalo, at which place I tarried two days for wind, and on Aug. 14th set sail; it was very calm through the day, and sometimes the motion of the vessel was scarcely perceptible, and I thought I never had a greater sense of my dependence on my Creator than at that time.

" But at evening our calm was interrupted by a sudden gale which lasted but a short time; the Captain made seasonable preparations, all hands were engaged, the passengers refused not to lend their aid; in a short time we were out of danger, and the next morning at half past ten we arrived at Conneaut, the place of our destination. Here I met my relatives with whom I had parted in my infantile days, and could scarcely discover any traces of their former features.

"After a very pleasant visit of nearly three weeks, the time of my departure drew near, and brought upon me a deep solemnity, so that my sleep departed from me, and I did really think that I had rather have died than to have started upon the water. I told my friends that I thought I should realize a view which I had in my sleep about three years previous to that time. I had been hearing of a vessel which had sunk the fall before not far from that place, the most of the crew and passengers having been lost; this brought new terrors upon me, and I had about made up my mind to return in the stage, but my son being some

acquainted with the captain, I was finally prevailed upon to return by water. On the 4th of September we sailed from Conneaut for Buffalo, in the before mentioned schooner (New Connecticut,) cargo mostly wheat and flour, with one passenger on board besides myself. The wind was fair, and the lake something rough; the vessel moved speedily along and soon passed two others that sailed sometime before us, which circumstance probably caused the sailors to say that we should arrive at Buffalo that evening by ten o'clock - but O! how suddenly are we liable to be cut off from our anticipations! At first I felt animated with the thought of being so soon restored to my family; but again there was something within which seemed to teach the reverse; the lake looked rough - small clouds were flying, and every appearance filled me with dismay. A quarter past 12 o'clock at noon I discovered a small black cloud arising in the west, which I viewed with great anxiety and to remove those terrors to which human nature is subject in a greater or less degree, and as I had no bible on board to refer to, as had been my custom when hesitating on any point, I took my hymn book and opened to a hymn commencing with the following lines:

"Happy soul, thy days are ended, all the mourning days below,
Go by angel guards attended, to the side of Jesus go."

"I do not know but that you may think it superstitious when I tell you; that to this hymn I, unwarily, opened three times in succession. We were now in sight of the village of Erie, Pa. which seemed pleasantly situated in peace and tranquility while my mind was tossing to and fro with the

approaching danger. I could look aloof and see the lofty masts extending into the air, while beneath my feet almost a boundless deep; the vessel appeared to me like a bubble

amid the towering waves. As the cloud approached, my anxiety increased, which I mentioned to one of the sailors; he replied it was nothing to what they sometimes saw, but this did not relieve my mind, for the captain was out of health in his cabin. I then asked the sailors to call him up, but they seemed to think it would be disturbing him unnecessarily.

I then asked them to take in the topsail as had been done in going up, but they very pleasantly replied, that it was calm now,, and true it was- they pointed to the other vessel which still had theirs up. Finding that they were not alarmed, I went down to the captain and desired him to come up and see the gale of wind which was fast approaching. But he thinking, it was female timidity, and not having any particular request from the sailors, I was still rejected. I went up once more and entreated them to take in sail, telling them that though it was calm now, it was necessary to prepare for danger while they could, but I met with the same success as before.

I now resigned myself to fate, thinking I had done all I could, and that it was the arm of the Omnipotent alone that could save or destroy. While I was thus meditating, there came a gust of wind which struck the sails, which made the vessel tremble immediately. The captain came on deck, and I could perceive by their movements, that they were alarmed. The captain requested me to go into the cabin, saying it rained, and I might.

take cold, to which I complied. I suspect he thought the dismal appearance might terrify me, he drew over the companion hatch, and closed the doors, but did not bolt them. If he had, I think my doom must have been sealed; they immediately flew open with great violence: he turned round as if to bolt them - he looked on them and then on me - he paused, turned back and went away.

I now went into the after cabin, as unto my grave. Said I, my voyage of life is at an end - my mortal affliction is passed - I am now going to try the realities of death and eternity, which must be the fate of all the living. While I was thus meditating, I thought I had something more to do. I rose, went up the companion way, where I witnessed the scene. I saw the sailors bent over the railing of the vessel, and heard some call aloud, as I thought, for help. I have since been told that one or more were in the Lake at this time. I cast my eye around, and saw the beds falling out of the berths, my feet immediately slipped from the place where I stood, and the water poured in upon me. I suspect I slipped to the bottom of the vessel as she then lay, although her side when erect. I had an opportunity of catching my breath two or three times, until I found myself fastened by my apparel to what I knew not, and was here strangling for breath, and as I thought expiring. I was in some distress for breath for a short time, being dashed against the sides of the vessel or the furniture, I knew not which; but all at once I found myself, to my surprise, floating on the top of the water, in an upper berth, in perfect ease, with my hymn book and pocket handkerchief in my hand. I do not know exactly how long I lay there, but was

greatly surprised to see with what strength the water bore me up. I at length turned around and let myself down by the bottom of the berth, although the side when erect, the place designed for sleeping, the width of which I am told is not quite four feet, the height about two. The former was the width of my apartment, and the latter the height; After letting myself down in the above manner, I unexpectedly found a foothold, which proved to be the facing of the berth, a board about six or eight inches wide, and on this I rested. The vessel now rocked violently, and every motion or plunge it made I thought would send it to the bottom. Every motion it made on its side I was forced to move my head in a contrary direction from the waves to prevent my strangling. Not having sufficient room to stand erect I was forced to stand in a bending posture, which brought my face within about three inches of the water. Being forced to stand in this position for an indefinite period, I know not how long. I now renewed my supplication to God to be with me whilst in the pangs of death, and to receive my spirit. I continued my supplications for about an hour, according to the best of my judgement, when the water decreased a little, and having to stand thus bent, and nothing to hold by but to spread my hands upon the side of the berth, I now sought a different situation. I found a board to be loose on the side of the vessel where I was resting, it being the bottom of the berth when the vessel was erect. With this I endeavored to make a seat, by turning it up edgewise and placing its ends in two separate berths; but the water had not decreased enough to admit of my setting down without being too much immersed in it. But I could stand more comfortable, having the edge of the partition

board to hold by and the whole width of the facing to stand upon. The vessel had now ceased from its violent rockings, and all at once it became dark, which caused me to think that it was sinking, but its not filling, I thought it was a violent tempest. I then felt something hard press against me which proved to be a bed, and by the help of the water I raised it to the board, thinking to make a seat, but this did not raise it enough for me to sit down, without being too much immersed in the water.

After this there floated up a large canister of tea, an onion, and a broom. The canister I placed upon the bed, which made my seat more comfortable. I put the brush of the broom under my feet, the onion I kept with me during my whole confinement, except a very small part with which I moistened my mouth occasionally. I sat now very comfortably, by holding the edge of the board, which stood erect or the partition board, and on this I rested my head, and being much exhausted I soon fell asleep. Thus the night passed away, and the morning appeared; and brought nothing new. The water continued about the same depth in the vessel as the day before, if I mistake not, for the thoughts of my body had little control over my mind, never expecting to reach the shore alive. The day glided along; I kept the same position and never moved my station, and nothing occurred until the after part of the day, when I thought I heard the sound of a steamboat, but the air made such a noise I could not tell at first positively, but it soon passed by and I heard no more of the steamboat; - night came on through which

I rested quite comfortably.

My sleep was quiet and refreshing. Till the third day appeared, nothing of importance occurred, not hearing the sound of any human voices, I sometimes thought the ship's crew were overboard and drowned - at other times I thought their grief was so great that they could not speak: for I thought I heard them walk on the vessel and remove the ropes; yet it seemed a mystery how they could thus do, but finding the water to decrease immediately after, I fancied that was the manner in which they emptied the vessel, but I have since been informed, that the crew left the vessel immediately after she was capsized, in the small boat, which was parted from the schooner by the violence of the waves, and as the vessel disappeared and sunk in deep water, as was by them supposed, they made for the shore thinking they could be of no use to me. The captain, I was informed, returned by stage to Conneaut that evening and informed my friends of the disaster that had befallen me, who started next morning in search of the vessel, in hopes to obtain my body and enter it, not entertaining the least idea that it was possible that I was still living. I have been informed that the vessel drifted into deep water, between fifteen and twenty miles, when it was arrested in its progress by some rocks, about five miles from Portland Harbor and one mile from the high banks; the first and only place it could have stopped without dashing against the rocks, where it was discovered on Thursday evening, by Capt. Applebee and other of my friends, who immediately came to the vessel, but the lake being very rough, they were obliged to leave it until Friday evening, when they came to it

again and found its bottom stove, or its side when erect, and its cargo lost. (Note by R.B.M. Portland Harbor here mentioned is the present Barcelona Harbor).

The next day, being Saturday the fourth day, the lake was so calm that they were enabled to reach the vessel, and make particular search for me, with poles with hooks attached to them; and concluded I was washed into the lake, and searched up and down the beach. They also commenced righting the vessel, but were unable to accomplish their design. I have been informed that Captain Norton made his steamboat fast to the vessel, but was unable to move her, she was so firm on the rocks, and was obliged to leave it until Monday, the sixth day, when by the assistance of four vessels, they were enabled to accomplish their designs. But to all this I was ignorant until the latter part of the third day, when I thought I heard human voices; I concluded the prospect was more favorable, and they were encouraged to speak to each other, I now had a glimmering hope, but it soon left me, for whether we were near the high banks of Lake Erie or floating down Niagara river, was alike unknown to me, only I knew the vessel hit on rocks, and could not be in the middle of the lake. Soon after this, night set in, through which I rested comparatively well; and the fourth morning appeared; the water was now at its lowest ebb below the facing of the berth, leaving me above the water. I now heard human voices again. About this time I began to think of food, although I had no appetite for it, yet I felt the need of it.

I now looked up to my preserver, as a child to its earthly parent, saying, how long hath thou allotted me to reside in this earthly tenement - my spirit might soon depart - I cannot much longer

subsist - for I felt feeble and exhausted -. I then had a check of conscience, for I considered our redeemer had fasted forty days, and I had lived but three.

While I was thus musing, I discovered something white floating on the water, to which I reached out and caught, and found it to be a cracker, and immediately after I discovered a small piece of butter floating, which I also obtained. The cracker was very much watersoaked, but yet it retained sufficient substance to support my necessity. I eat part of it and put the rest in the canister of tea. As I also used some of the tea, after the water lowered sufficiently to enable me to take off the lid, for my hands being wet and feeble rendered it impossible for me to do so while in the water.

I now heard men's voices distinctly on the vessel, and sometimes spoke to them. I called to them once to throw me down a rope, that I might take hold of and be drawn out, but they not complying, I concluded they thought not proper. At length they put down a pole; I took the broom and rapped against it, asking if they meant that for me. I thought that they heard me, and that they answered, but the answer I could not understand. I remembered the words of St. Paul, "Except ye abide in the ship ye shall not be saved". I have since been told the gentleman who put down the pole felt the force of the broom, but thought his pole hit against some of the furniture, and was very positive that if I had taken hold of it he should have dropped it, thinking it impossible for me to be living.

Their attempts to right the vessel almost buried me in the water. I called and told them they were drowning me, and as soon as they desisted I thought I was heard. If they had have righted it at this time I must have been drowned, for I never had had a thought what a trial was to be passed through to save life. I had been looking forward into futurity; never expecting to reach the shore alive. But when I found the vessel to hit on the rocks, it was a consolation, thinking my remains might be washed ashore, and relieve the anxiety of my friends. For I fancied I could see them grieve, and I wished to say to them, mourn not for me. Now there seemed to be a small prospect of reaching the shore, I did not expect to survive much longer than thus to do, should God permit, for I had become feeble and quite benumbed. The falling of the water and the circulation of the air made me more sensible of the severity of the weather. My apparel was quite light, I had got much of it torn in the vessel, and that part of it which remained on me was wet and cold, which made the weather seem more severe than when in the water. I now wrapped about me a sailor's jacket, which had previously come up to me, after wringing it out as well as my feeble hands would permit. This in a measure protected me from the air.

It had again become night, and I composed myself to rest; my sleep I believe was never more refreshing. I could now realize from whence every blessing flowed. The wind this night was very high - the vessel was tossing to and from the rocks, and dashed about as if coming all into pieces. The crockery and furniture was rattling in the cabin, yet I could awake and hear it, and

immediately fall to sleep again.

Thus the fourth night passed away, and the Sabbath morn appeared, which was very calm. The water in the vessel began to rise, and continued rising through the day. I have since learned that the vessel was driven off the rocks in the night, by the violence of the wind, and was in the morning drifting up the Lake. The water appeared colder to me now than at first, whether occasioned by my being more chilled, or by the change of atmosphere, I knew not. The water had risen above my waist and I became extremely cold. I now called aloud to Capt. Howard, not knowing yet but that man did a little towards my preservation. But he appeared I thought very negligent about it, and delayed, I tho't longer than was necessary; but after a great while I thought I could hear him moving the ropes very moderately, I suppose in consequence of their being much fatigued. The water had lowered about two or three inches, and I told them it would do.

It appears that all the efforts of the men to right the vessel while on the rocks were in vain. My sleep departed from me, for the most part of the night, and at this time I would have been glad to have had death put an end to my misery, if it had been agreeable to the will of God. Towards day I fell asleep, and when I awoke I found my head resting over my right arm, and my face very near the water. I now had another assurance that the Omnipotent was my preserver; for I found on waking, that if I had let go with my hands from the board, by which I supported myself when asleep, I must

have most certainly plunged into the deep water, which filled the body of the vessel, and been drowned; but my Preserver watched over me and the blow was arrested. I now again felt the need of food, it being the sixth day of my captivity. I now took the canister of tea, which I found the water had penetrated, and poured out all the liquid, which was probably about a gill, and drank it, which somewhat reanimated me, and seemingly gave me strength to pass through the trying scene which was just before me. I likewise sought for the cracker, but I could not find it, and concluded it had become dissolved in the tea.

This morning I found the men engaged very early on the vessel, and could hear different voices in every direction, and I concluded we had come to some harbor. I have since understood that four vessels were fastened to the one I was in. I wondered that they did not try to relieve me, and had numerous thoughts about it, which it might be unnecessary to relate. I called and asked them to open a place in the side of the vessel, that I might be relieved from my situation; but receiving no answer, and finding they were doing nothing towards it, I took the broom and rapped as hard as I could on the side or top of the vessel as it now lay. Still receiving no reply, and finding that they had commenced righting her, I began to conceive my solitary state was unknown to them; and as they continued to raise the vessel, my state became more deplorable, for the cabin was full of water and the berth almost. I now thought my time could not be long.

I now made an estimate of how far I should have to walk to reach the companion way, which I concluded to be about ten feet; and I concluded the water to be about seven feet deep, exclusive of the water in the berth. I now formed the design of plunging through the water in the cabin, and walking out through the companion way. I waited till the water I thought would soon fill the place where I was, and then put my design into execution. I was successful in reaching the cabin, and walked under the water, I should think as far as the companion way, but could find no place to go out at, my eyes being closed, it was of course quite dark. Beginning to strangle for breath I endeavored to retrace my steps and regain my former situation, which by the help of God I was enabled to reach. I have since been told the companion way was two feet under water at this time, and had I gone out I must have gone into the lake. I had now relinquished nearly all my hope of getting out alive.

My state had now become more deplorable than ever, being wholly under water, except my face and the top of my head. It was now some time before they commenced raising the vessel, and I have since been told that they had broken something about the vessel, which detained them. I now had sufficient leisure to take a full view and have a realizing sense of the situation I was in. I knew the next hoist of the vessel would fill my apartment. I could hear them busily engaged about it, and knew what they were about would deprive me of life, unless prevented by the strong arm of Omnipotence. I could see the watery element all around me,

just ready to take my breath. I once thought of attempting to write with a pin on the side of the berth the particular sensations of my mind, but I soon saw the futility of this idea. First I had not sufficient strength in my fingers to write with a pin, and even if I could have wrote, and had, perchance it might never be seen.

I now hesitated, lest I should not be resigned to God in attempting to get out; but after thinking of the dangers I had past through, and the many mercies I had received by his kind protecting care over me, and of his preserving my life through the deep waters, I thought it would be an omission of duty not to do all in my power to preserve my life, and I submitted myself to the water, as obeying his commands, saying "Lord protect me as thou seest fit

I found a very hard struggle to get through the water. It was quite dark, and becoming nearly exhausted, I was about to give up my life, and relinquish myself unto death; when lo! I discovered a light close by my side, for I was passing by the companion way unknown to me. I turned, and stepped one step, and the water appeared to help me up, just at the critical moment when they were raising the stairs; and one moment more delay would have been too late for me.

I was caught on my emerging from the cabin by my nephew, Capt. Gilman Appelbee. Hearing his voice was very surprising to me, expecting the disaster of the vessel was yet unknown to my friends. I next saw my son, who immediately turned round and wept, not

thinking but that it was my corpse that emerged from the cabin.

I then saw a number of gentlemen from Conneaut, with whom I was acquainted, and whom I left at that place when I started. They, as well as the vessels appeared strange to me. I fancied we had beat it back to Conneaut harbor and asked if it were not so; but they declined telling, I suspect for fear of frightening me;

knowing we were one mile from shore and five from Portland harbor.

At the time of emerging from the cabin, the most of the sailors stood motionless, until being reproved by a commander, when they cried out, a woman! a woman! coming up out of the water. Upon hearing which, he became as motionless as they. Some cried out, see the dead woman walk. It was truly a surprising thing to them all. I should think there were between 40 and 50 persons on board the vessels.

I was taken into another vessel, called the Packet; and by the assistance of a lady passenger, I had my wet clothes changed for dry ones, my own being then lost in the lake, and then took leave of the high banks of Lake Erie, and with a fair wind soon reached Portland harbor. At which place I was soon received

by the inhabitants of that vicinity in a very kind and hospitable manner, and who will ever be entitled to my most sincere respects.

I was taken to Mr. Eliphalet Tinker's, an Innkeeper of that village, and after remaining at his house four days, I found myself so far recovered as to be able to ride out, and in about a week afterwards

I took my departure from Portland and its kind inhabitants, and started for my home in company with my husband, who came out to

see me on the seventh day of my restoration, which was the very

day appointed for my funeral at Aurora. I tarried two days in Westfield till I was able to take the stage, and return home to Aurora, where I met my friends and relatives, like one who had arose from the dead, even with their mourning apparel. My health is pretty much restored, but my fingers I fear will never regain their former strength.

I shall always retain feelings of strong gratitude towards Doctors Bradley, Fisk and Gale for their humane attentions to me, and professional services while at Portland, for which they declined receiving any remuneration. Also,, the kindness, assistance and humane assistance I received from my friends and other individuals, has made a deep and lasting impression on my mind; but the feelings of gratitude and love are more especially awakened towards that Being who rules the universe, and whose merciful providence was so wonderfully exercised in preserving me, and rescuing me from the very jaws of death, and restoring me to my family.

The following are the names of some of those who were present at the time of my emerging from the cabin:

Capt. Soaper, commander of one of the vessels; Capt. John Vail, Silas Howard, Theodore Howard, Edward Rodgers, Walter Atwell, Capt. Gilman Appelbee, Calvin Appelbee, Elisha Whitmore, Joseph Whitmore, Henry Whitmore, Horace Snow, Lyman Wood, Joseph Benjamin.

On deck when the vessel capsized, Capt. Howard, Dolphin Gilbert, David Ford, and George Vanteeth.

MARY APPELLEE.

The end.