

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY FEBRUARY 27



On the night of February 27, 1912, the steamer *H. K. Bedford* sank in the Ohio River near Waverly.

**CSO:** SS.8.24, SS.8.14, ELA.8.1

**Investigate the Document:** (*Parkersburg Sentinel*, February 28, 1912)

1. What was assumed to be the origin of the *H.K. Bedford*'s demise?
2. Why did the boat have an abnormally large load to haul?
3. According to the article, what was the approximate cost of the damage?

**Think Critically:** It's 1912 and you are a reporter for the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel*; the news about the sinking of the *H.K. Bedford* on the Ohio River has come across your desk. What three questions would ask the survivors of the incident?

- The *H.K. Bedford* was en route from Williamstown-Marietta northwards on the Ohio River to East Liverpool, Ohio. Which of the following river cities would the boat have traveled through to get there? (Y= Yes, N=No)
  - St. Marys: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Paden City: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Ravenswood \_\_\_\_\_
  - Clendenin: \_\_\_\_\_
  - New Martinsville: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Wheeling: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Pt. Pleasant: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Weirton: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Bruceton Mills: \_\_\_\_\_

The Parkersburg Sentinel

PARKERSBURG, W. VA., WEDNESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 28, 1912

**Str. Bedford Sinks  
Passengers and Crew  
Plunge Into River**

**THRILLING  
EXPERIENCE  
LAST NIGHT**

**DOZEN PASSENGERS AND CREW  
HAVE CHILLY AND NARROW  
ESCAPE.**

**WELL KNOWN CRAFT WENT  
DOWN THREE MILES ABOVE  
MARIETTA.**

**BOAT MAY BE TOTAL LOSS—  
HEAVY LOSS IN VALUA-  
BLE FREIGHT.**

The steamer H. K. Bedford, one of the oldest packets on the Ohio river, and which has been operating in the upper river and in the trade affecting Parkersburg for the past nineteen years, was sunk opposite Ralph Bean's landing near Reno, three miles above Marietta, about 11:40 o'clock, Tuesday night.

The boat had about one hundred tons of freight aboard, most of which had been taken on at Marietta, the balance having been taken on here and at Williamstown, about five tons being taken from here. The cause of the accident is not exactly known, although it is thought to be due to a hog chain breaking, and caused the hull to break near the first stanchion.

**Left Here Tuesday Afternoon.**

The boat left here at 2:00 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, with Captain Henry Kraft, of Belpre, in command, Captain Ed Sims, of Wheeling, at the wheel; Oscar Hissam, of New Martins, and Lewis Richey, of Whitens Landing, as mates; Morton Harper, of Marietta, as clerk; Dude Petty of Parkersburg, chief engineer; Geo. M. McElhose, of Marietta, second engineer; William Gray, of Parkersburg, and Ben Joy, of Sardis, as firemen.

This was her first trip out after having been laid up here since before the last freeze up of the river, and this was responsible for the boat having such a heavy trip of freight. Owing to the large amount of freight loaded at Marietta the boat did not get away from there until about 11:00 o'clock.

**Found Nothing Wrong.**

Before retiring Captain Kraft made a round of the boat, about fifteen minutes before the accident occurred, and found nothing wrong, and the first he knew of the trouble was when he heard some of the crew awakening the passengers and telling them that the boat was sinking. The discovery of the trouble was made by Fireman Gray, whose turn it was to be on watch.

**Twelve Passengers Aboard.**

There were twelve passengers aboard and twenty-eight in the crew, the latter including the deck hands, cooks, cabin boys, etc., in addition to those above named. A partial list of the passengers secured is as follows:

Dr. and Mrs. Earl Gray, of Baltimore.

Frank Thomas, of Newport, Ohio.  
Albert Hutchinson, of Williamstown.

Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Watson and two sons, Roy, aged 12; and Delmas, aged 4, of Williamstown.

It is understood that there were one or two women in the list from Parkersburg, who boarded the boat at Marietta, but whose names have not been learned.

The boat was running not far from shore, but owing to the high stage of the river at present, it sank in rather deep water, and tipped partly over, the water coming within two feet of the roof. All on board had narrow escapes with their lives and were compelled to jump into the river.

**Struggle in the Water.**

By means of lines which were thrown out to shore, some reached the bank in that way, which method was used by the women aboard, who were assisted by men who could swim. Mr. Watson threw his four year old son from the boat to Morton Harper, the clerk, who in turn, passed him to Frank Thomas, one of the passengers, and the latter placed him in the arms of Mrs. Watson, who had reached shore.

The accident was a particularly hard blow to the Watson family, who, in addition to their exciting experience, lost everything they had, their furniture having been loaded at Williamstown on the boat, only a short time before, to be shipped to East Liverpool, where they were going to live. They also lost what money they had with them. Notwithstanding their loss, the family left Marietta this afternoon, going to East Liverpool by train.

### Heavy Loss of Freight.

Among the heaviest losers who had shipped freight by the Bedford, were the Phoenix Mill Company, of Marietta, who lost thirty-one shipments; C. C. Higgins & Co., wholesale grocers of that city, and the Marietta Chair Co. However, some of the property of the latter was recovered.

The Grace V., a gasoline boat from Marietta, went up this morning, about 8:30 and brought back quite an amount of water soaked freight that was removed from the river, including 150 chairs, which had been shipped by the chair company of Marietta. A cow which had been shipped by J. B. Hickman, from Belpre, to a point up the river, and a

coop of chickens shipped by other parties, were lost.

### Boat Probably Total Loss.

The Bedford, it is thought, will be a total loss, after the heavy run of Allegheny ice, which is coming, has crashed into it, and if so the loss will be about \$15,000. The boat was built at Jeffersonville, Indiana, a good many years ago, and during its time has been operated by a number of interests.

At present it is operated by a company, in which Captain Fred Kimpel, of Moundsville, is the heaviest stockholder; Captains Henry and Harry Kraft of Belpre; R. W. Potts, of Moundsville; Edward Dunn, of Wheeling; H. C. Connally, of Portsmouth; and the E. C. Gerwig estate, of Parkersburg.