

# Wreck of the William and Mary

Southport Visiter, June 3rd 1853

Dreadful wreck of an emigrant ship

Loss of nearly 200 lives

One of the most disastrous shipwrecks which it has ever been our painful duty to record occurred on the 3rd of May at Stirrup Key, among the Bahama Islands.

The news was brought to New York by the Brig REUBEN CARVER, from Saqua la Grande, which had on board the Captain, 1st and 2nd mates, and six of the crew of the ill-fated vessel WILLIAM and MARY.

The Barque WILLIAM and MARY, commanded by Capt STINSON, left Liverpool 2mths ago, with 208 passengers, principally emigrants, and a cargo of railroad iron for New Orleans.

On the 31st of May they entered the dangerous channels of the Bahamas with the most unfavourable manner, the sky was clouded, the wind blowing strong from the S.E, with a heavy sea.

About 7am the barque passed "The Hole in the Wall," the most southern part of the island of Abaco, so called from one of the prominent rocks on the coast being perforated with a large hole, which is visible at a considerable distance at sea.

Passing this in safety Capt STINSON steered for Stirrup Key, which at noon was 12miles distant, the weather becoming more clouded, the wind increasing. The vessel kept on her course without accident, but at 8.30 she struck on a sunken rock, where she remained for 15mins, receiving extensive damage.

The Capt, it appears, had at sunset lost sight of the Key, and supposed it laid to the south, he did not discover his mistake until the barque struck.

The scene on board was terrible to the extreme, about 15mins elapsed before she wore off, but scarcely got clear when she struck another rock, and began to fill so rapidly as to render all labour at the pumps useless.

At midnight the water had gained so rapidly it was 4ft in the hold, at 4am, 8ft. Scarcely had the day dawned when it was 10ft in the hold and the pumps were abandoned in despair.

The boats, the last resort for the terror-stricken passengers, were unshipped from the davits, but of 4 or 5, all except 2 were swamped. The Capt and crew and about 30 passengers got into these, the rest about 200, being left to their fate. There they stood on deck vainly calling for assistance, which was impossible to render without risking the lives of the few who had got in the boars.

Within a few minutes after they left, the vessel went down, all on board, about 170, perished.

Finding it impossible to keep together the boats separated and after tossing about for some hours, the crew and passengers were picked up. It would appear one of the boats was manned entirely by the crew, all the passengers being crowded on the other. Of this we are not certain and suppose that there were 3 or 4 crew on the boat containing passengers.

The Capt, 1st and 2nd mates and crew were taken up by Capt Edward COBB of the Brig REUBEN CARVER bound from Saqua la Grande to this port. It was impossible to save any property and some were glad to escape only half dressed. Capt COBB said he saw the passengers taken up by a vessel supposed English.

The provisions on Capt COBB'S vessel began to diminish very rapidly, but on the 10th May the barque ONECO of Portland, Maine, bound from New York for Baltimore came in sight and supplied them with what they wanted. The REUBEN CARVER was 12days at sea from when she picked up the crew of the lost vessel till her arrival at New York.

One of the sailors is of the opinion some of the passengers formed a raft of some of the debris and saved themselves in it. This is considered not improbable as there was 2 or 3 sailors left on the vessel and these it is believed would have devised some means of saving themselves. If this, is so it would not have been long before they would have been picked up as where the vessel foundered is a general highway to vessels bound south.

Of the rescued passengers not more than 3 or 4 were women, theses flung themselves over the side of the vessel into the boat. Several passengers injured themselves jumping into the boat, and some leaped into the sea in an effort to escape.

One of the sailors, John BEST, said that in the boat was so crowded that they were seriously debating to draw lots to see who would go overboard, and it was feared the boat would be swamped. He was standing on the side of the vessel just as the rope was about to be cut, he asked the mate should he jump, and on being given no encouragement, was about to give himself up for lost when, he thought that by rendering them some service he may be allowed in the boat.

Knowing that they were in want of a sail, he took one of the ship's skysails and handed it to those on the boat, who, although the boat was crowded could not refuse him a chance for life. The rope was cut by another sailor named RIDLEY, who immediately after jumped into the water and was taken on the boat.

The WILLIAM and MARY, 512 tons, was built in Bowdoinham last year, and was named by John HARWARD of that place. She was insured in Boston for 26,000 dollars, at the following offices, New England, 10,000 dollars, City, 8,000 dollars and Hope, 8,000 dollars.

The passenger agent at Liverpool was James CHAMBERS.

About 80 passengers were Germans who were going out in company with the intention of settling in a large tract of land which had been bought in Illinois. The remainder, Irish, English and Scotch, the Irish forming the largest portion.

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