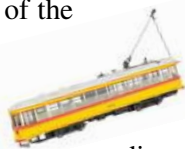


*Cleveland Disasters and the Cuyahoga River***Central Viaduct Streetcar Accident  
November 16, 1895***from Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*

The Central Viaduct streetcar accident occurred on the dark, foggy night of 16 November, 1895. Cleveland City Railway streetcar No. 642, on the Cedar-Jennings route, plunged through the open draw of the Central Viaduct into the Cuyahoga River, 120 feet below. The mishap resulted in 16 deaths, making it the worst traction accident in the U.S.



at that time and the worst such disaster in Cleveland's history. It was the second trip that evening for motorman **August Rogers** and conductor **Edward Hoffman**. There were 21 people aboard, many of them women and children who had boarded the car downtown. Visibility was poor as the car approached the derailer switch. Hoffman went ahead, threw the switch, and motioned the car forward, jumping aboard the rear platform as the car passed. Unknown to either man, the central draw was open, permitting the passage of a tug below towing 2 vessels, and the power cutoff had not operated for some time.

Peering through the mist, Rogers thought he saw the draw was open over the tracks, but since there was still current, he dismissed the idea. As he increased the throttle, the mist cleared, revealing the open draw. Slamming the transmission into reverse, Rogers and 3 passengers leaped to safety. Crashing through the warning fence, the streetcar plunged downward, striking a support piling and rebounding into the water. The deaths resulted all from drowning, for there were no injuries on the bodies when they were recovered.

**Coroner Case Files for November 16, 1895**

Name	Age	Address	File #
Hoffman, Edward	23	121 East End Ave.	3313
Foster, Harry	19	51 Mentor Ave.	3314
Madenburg, Henry	35	58 Mary Street	3315
Huletz, Louis	26	38 Brevier Street	3316
McLaughlin, James	35	77 Trowbridge Ave.	3317
Hoffman, Harvey	7	1508 Pearl Street	3318
Sauerheimer, Martha	18	154 Merchant Ave.	3319
Sauerheimer, Eliza	30	Professor Street	3320
Davis, Bessie	23	Noyes Street	3321
Sarinski, Augusta	19	207 Central Ave.	3322
Hoffman, Annie	30	1508 Pearl Street	3323
Hoffman, Carrie	41/2	1508 Pearl Street	3324
Nettgen, Mary	22	10 Joseph Street	3325
Callinan, Matthew	27	Hamilton Street	3326
Brown, Minnie	40	10 Thurman Street	3327
Palmer, Martha	59	165 Kenilworth Ave.	3328

Also, notes from [www.zodiacal.com/brooklyn](http://www.zodiacal.com/brooklyn):

**Bessie Davis**- teacher at Sackett School; **Martha (Russell) Palmer**- dressmaker; **James McLaughlin**- baseball player; **Louis Huletz**- mail carrier; **Henry Madenburg** - tailor.

**Flat-bottomed Ferry Overturns  
July 16, 1896***excerpts from Cleveland Plain Dealer 17 July 1896*

“*Twenty lives lost by the overturning of a flat bottomed scow in the river,*” was the message that flashed over telephone wires shortly after 7 o'clock last evening and startled men in newspaper offices and police stations.

The disaster proved to be an appalling one. The occupants of the boat were mostly Germans. They crowded into the scow, which was lying at the C.& P. ore docks in the old river bed. The scow started across the river, handled by a boy. Toward evening the various gangs of men at work on the dock begin to put away their tools and leave for home. The boys who carry water to them during the day have also another duty--to row the men across the river when they come to work and when they quit work at night.

Suddenly a tug hove into view, coming at a rapid rate. The men saw danger. They attempted to turn back to shore. There was great excitement. Everyone was giving orders at once. The boat became unmanageable and her side turned to the tug. At this moment a big wave from the tug washed completely over her, filling her with water.

Men yelled and jumped and in a moment there was a struggling mass of humanity in the inky black waters of the Cuyahoga. Three minutes later all was as quiet as though nothing had happened. Except for a few heads barely above water, a few life preservers floating about, and a big scow bottom side up, the river at that point presented no unusual scene. But twenty lives or thereabouts, had gone to meet their God.”

**Coroner Case Files for July 16, 1896**

Name	Age	File #
Lynch, Mike	28	3614
Kersten, August	50	3615
Merrick, Propop	35	3616
Gerhan, Christ	35	3617
Krinsky, John	38	3618
Birmeister, Charles	26	3619
Erke, Julius	36	3620
Ryan, Edward		3621
Vogelsany, Fred		3622
Nieque, Charles	29	3623
Zanders, William		3624
Gerlach, Christ	46	3625
Sporke, Charles	40	3626
Miller, Charles	23	3627
Bartel, Fritz	36	3628

from “*The World's*” History of Cleveland page 121:

“...a scow, used as a ferry boat crossed the river near the Willow Street bridge. The craft held nearly forty persons, and considering it's age and size, was overloaded.....two tugs towing a large vessel passed near it, the swash tossing them with considerable violence.”