

FISHING BOAT SINKS; 18 DROWN, 5 SAVED

By The Associated Press.

New York Times (1857-Current file); Jan 22, 1941;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2006)

pg. 23

FISHING BOAT SINKS; 18 DROWN, 5 SAVED

Survivors Taken From Rigging
After Hours in Freezing Wind
45 Minutes From Boston

CRASH IN DARK WITH BARGE

Victims Drop From Ropes, One
by One, as Fingers Grow Numb
—Some Ships Pass Unheeding

By The Associated Press.

BOSTON, Jan. 21—Eighteen fishermen were drowned today, almost within sight of their homes, as the Boston schooner Mary E. O'Hara, homeward bound from a week on the fishing banks, was split open in a collision as it approached Boston Harbor and sank.

Five half-frozen survivors, dragged from the protruding mainmast of the sunken schooner by the crew of the trawler North Star, told their rescuers that the O'Hara apparently struck a barge and that the rest of the crew of twenty-three fell from the rigging, one by one, as their hands froze.

Hours later, the barge Winifred Sheridan was found anchored a half-mile distant by Captain Lawrence Dunn, Harbor Master, who reported that she had suffered some damage to her starboard rail and side.

Brought ashore with their hands and feet frozen, half dead from drenching and exposure, the men said that their schooner sank so quickly that there was no time to launch a dory and that they fled into the upper portions of the rigging to cling there for three hours, in the early morning darkness, from 3 to 6 A. M.

Faint Cries Heard by Rescuers

The faint cries of the survivors were heard by members of the crew of the North Star as they passed Finn's Ledge, on the outer fringe of Boston Harbor, a dozen miles from the city.

An unofficial list of the dead, compiled by the five survivors and checked with the Atlantic Fishermen's Union, follows:

James Moulton, a steward, of Gloucester; Cornelius Murphy of Cambridge; Andrew Fay, Edgar Veno and John Sheehan of Gloucester; Clayton Hines of Melrose, Fred Conrad and Cyril Oxner of Boston, Anthony Valentine of Provincetown, James Ehler of East Boston and Cambridge, Arnold Holmes and Gifford Smith of Roxbury, Manda Leblanc of East Boston and Henry Joseph of Somerville.

The union was unable to supply the addresses of Martin White, Captain Fred Wilson, Joseph Miller and John Olson.

Leblanc, 60 years old, who went to sea at the age of 13, previously assured his three sons and two daughters that he would retire to a life ashore when the fishing schooner came into port today. The vessel was within forty-five minutes' run from the Boston fish pier when she foundered.

Wreckage Is Found on Island

Soon after noon, a Coast Guard plane radioed to headquarters that "several bodies," four dories and a considerable amount of wreckage was washed up on the outermost island of the Brewster group, near Graves Light. The cutter Algonquin was rushed to the spot under forced draft.

Three times earlier other craft approached the men clinging to the ice-sheathed rigging. The men cried for help, only to see the vessels pass and their lights fade in the gloom.

Captain Lars Lunde of the North Star said that the five told him that if they had been able to attract the attention of one of these other craft, many more of the crew might have been saved.

The survivors said that the O'Hara, laden with fish and a heavy sheathing of ice in the 12-degree temperature, sank within five minutes as the crew, unable to launch the heavily iced dories, strove to run their vessel aground.

Captain Lunde found five feet of the foremast and twelve feet of the mainmast of the O'Hara above the water near Finn's Ledge and guided the bow of his beam trawler so close that he was able to remove four of those clinging to the rigging.

The fifth, Cecil Crowell of Shelburne County, N. S., was helpless and unable to move from his perch, so a dory was put overside and three members of the North Star's crew rescued him.

The other survivors were Cecil Larkin, 38; Stanley Conrad, 54; Frank Silva, 59, and Gabriel Welsh, all of Boston.

Last of those to fall from the rigging into the sea, the rescued men said, was their skipper, Captain Fred Wilson of Boston.

Crowell was so seriously affected that he had to be carried from the North Star in a stretcher into a city hospital ambulance. The other four, after first aid and stimulants, had sufficiently recovered to climb up the ladder to the wharf, unassisted.

Account By Eye-Witness

Welsh told this story of the tragedy:

"We had just approached Finn's Ledge. We must have struck the barge head-on. I was down below at the time near the bow and the water poured as though the whole ship had gone I rushed up on deck with the others and we all climbed up the rigging as fast as we could.

"We were sinking fast. We yelled at the barge, but got no answer. Then we stayed there in the rigging, half frozen. The worst part was to see the other ships keep going by. We called to them, and called to them, but we could just see their lights go by.

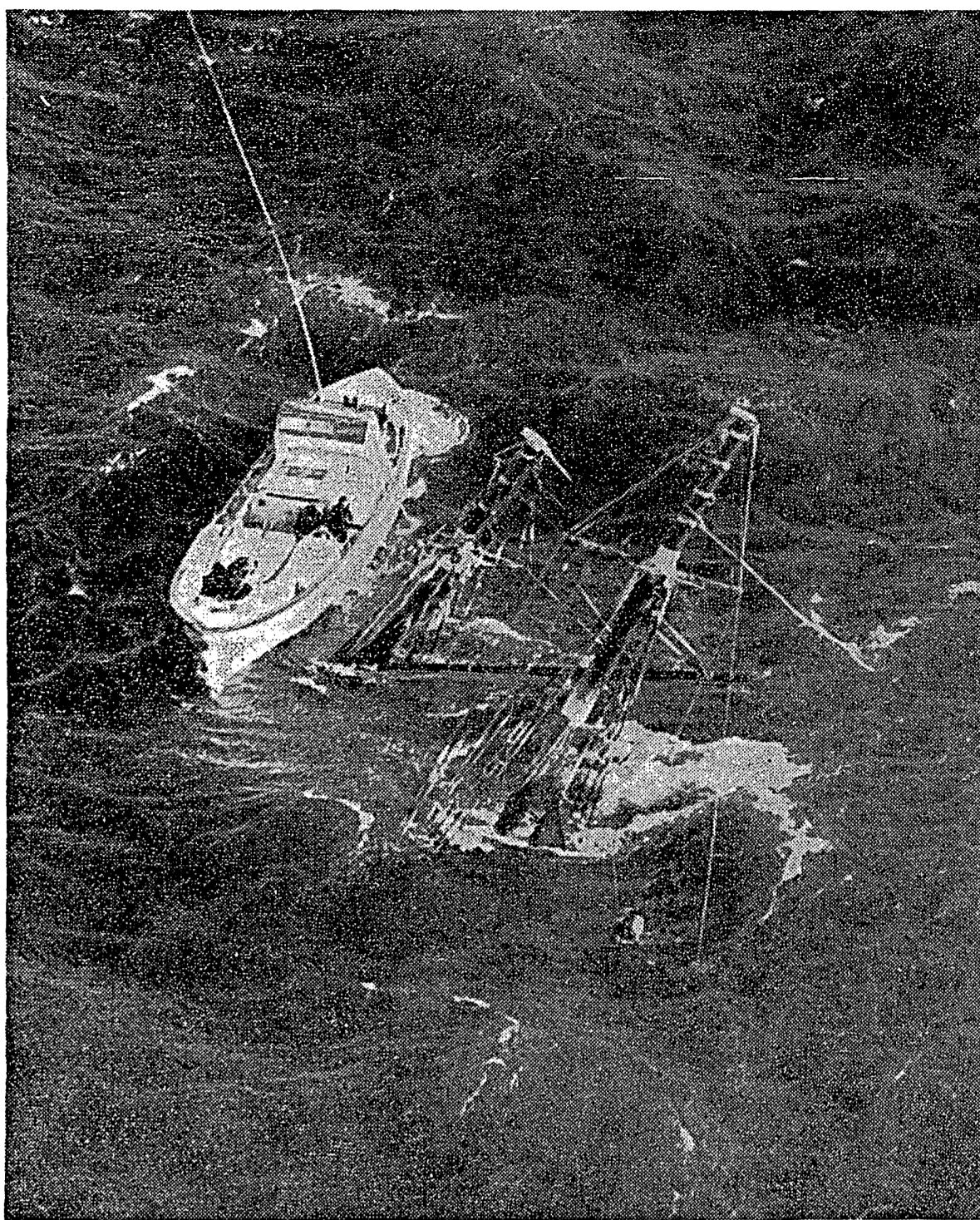
"Sometimes we talked to each other, urging each other to hang on. Sometimes, we didn't say anything, but just tried to stay there, and sometimes we all prayed together. There was never a time any of us have prayed so hard. When the North Star came by, most of us had already dropped off.

"I think I could have held on for another half hour, but not any longer."

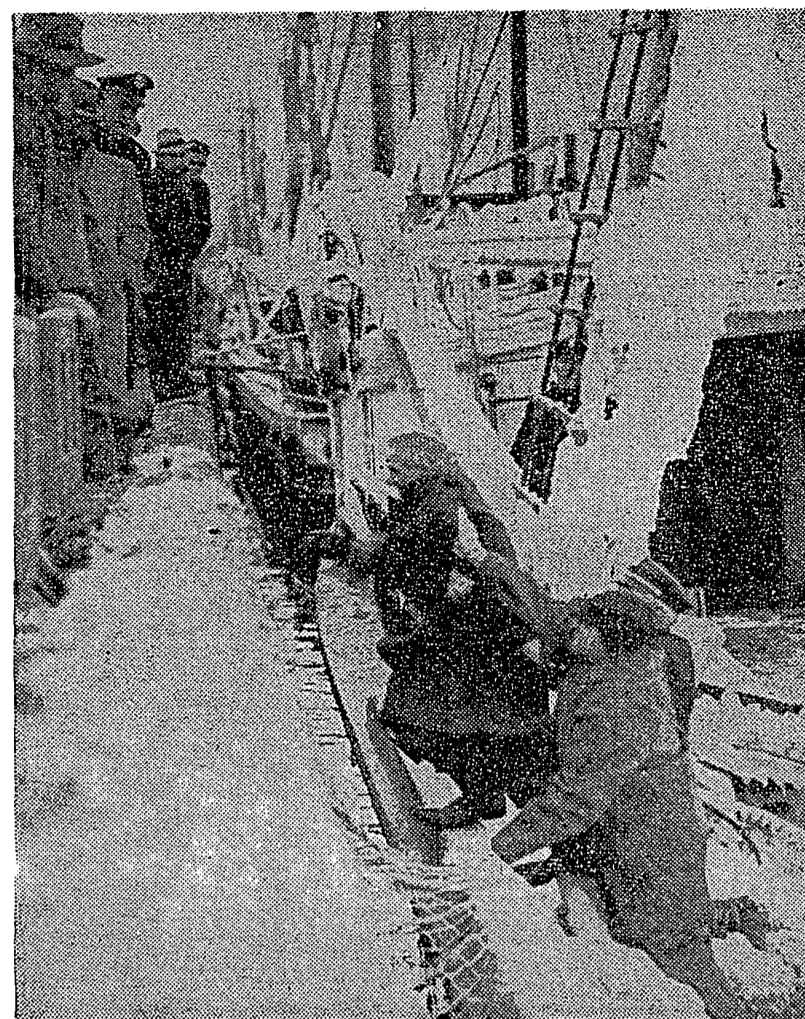
Welsh was taken to City Hospital, where his condition was reported as "good."

The disaster was the worst in the history of the New England fishing fleet since the Gloucester schooner Columbia, once queen of the North Atlantic fisheries, went down with twenty-four men in a storm on the Grand Banks in 1927.

WHERE EIGHTEEN SEAMEN LOST THEIR LIVES AS FISHING SCHOONER SANK OFF BOSTON



Only the masts of the vessel Mary E. O'Hara protrude from the icy waters after all but five of her crew died as the craft went down yesterday when it rammed a barge in the channel near Finn's Ledge. The Coast Guard boat at the left is searching the water for the victims.



One of the five survivors of the tragedy is helped from the rescue ship, North Star, a trawler, on arrival at the Boston Fish Pier.

Times Wide World