

The Evening Star, August 18, 1873, p. 4
Life-Saving Apparatus

Editor of the Evening Star: the lamentable loss of life by the burning of the *Wawaset* induces me at this time to call public attention direct to an improved life-saving apparatus, especially adapted to such accidents on rivers. It consists of any desired number of life preservers or floats, strung upon a strong rope like beads upon a string, and fastened thereon at about the length of each float apart. They may be made of sheet copper, sheet tin, or cork, and of any desired shape. Thus for each two feet of rope there is a life preserver, so that a rope two hundred feet long contains one hundred life preservers. A line of the floats is to be placed or piled up in the bow and another in the stern of the boat, on deck, ready to be thrown overboard in a moment, and others, if desired, are to be placed in other positions – for instance, one string along just under the outer edge of the deck,, suspended by small cords easily broken to let it down into the water. The utility and safety of this device must be obvious. The line floats, and can sustain at least as many persons as there are floats, simply by their seizing the rope between the floats, or lash lines and loops attached to each. Passengers can with perfect security seize hold of this line and jump at once into the water, or jump in by it. And, if persons are struggling about in the water scattered, one person, with a boat attached to one end of the line, can in a minute sweep it along around and save them; and then they can all be quickly towed ashore together. Or a safe communication can be established by it between a wrecked vessel and the shore. I submitted this plan by a model and description, now in the Treasury department, to the commission authorized by Congress to examine and report on life-saving inventions in 1868; and it was reported favorably upon with one or two suggested objections. I will copy this report verbatim:

“J.S. Brown's Line Of Buoys consists of a series of cylindrical vessels, hollow and airtight, about twelve inches in length and eight inches in diameter, with a hallow tube extending through the center of each, from end to end, for the purpose of passing the buoy line through for the attachment of the buoys. These buoys are to be made of sheet copper; they are to be fitted with means for grasping them firmly, as well as an extra line for the purpose of lasing persons to the buoys, and are to be about one foot apart. The purpose of this arrangement is apparent, and as a means of sustaining persons overboard there is no doubt it would be quite effective. There are two reasons, however, that perhaps would render their general adoption doubtful, to wit: the difficulty of keeping them properly stowed, so as to have them at all times in readiness for immediate use, and their liability to injury. Could these obstacles be overcome, Mr. Brown's system, modified, would doubtless come into use.”

With regard to these objections, I have to say that I see no reason why these life-preservers are any more liable to injury than others, and it is obvious that if one of a considerable number were useless, that it would not be fatal, and would only impair the usefulness of so much of the line; and as to their readiness for use, I have always thought and claimed that the floating line is peculiarly excellent in that respect. It is compact in stowage and easy to handle.

J.S. Brown