

The Evening Post, August 19, 1873, p. 2

The *Wawaset* investigation thus far fails to throw any great amount of light into the cause of the fire. The evidence seems to demonstrate that the steamer was amply provided with lifeboats, life-preservers, and safety apparatus generally, but that there was a terrible want of management, throughout. It would seem that long exemption from accidents on the Potomac had caused the officers of the *Wawaset*, or some of them, to relax proper vigilance, and there does not appear to have been any proper assignment of duties in case of emergency. There was no one in particular to look after the small boats, or the fire extinguishers. The engineer, it would appear, was in the habit of subbing for the bar-keeper, and it is not impossible that the fireman varied the monotony of his duties in the same manner. At any rate it does not seem that he considered himself bound to look after his fires further than to keep them supplied with fuel. The fire never could have made the great headway it did undiscovered had he been at his post. Then, again, the practice of truck-trading by the steamboat men on their own account must have been demoralizing to their efficiency in the line of their duties.

Although it may not be possible to make an exact apportionment of blame in the matter of this disaster, we have no doubt that the terrible lesson will have its effect in securing a vigilance in future on the part of our river steamboat men that will avert the possibility of a repetition of a like tragedy.