

[Stearns, Chauncey S.]

TWO LIVES LOST
And Thousands of Dollars Worth of Property Destroyed.
[Excerpts]

Saturday was indeed a sorry day to Belmont. The high waters of the Genesee River and numerous smaller streams created sad havoc, destroyed thousands of dollars worth of property, and worst of all, two aged and respected gentlemen lost their lives!

...

But the going of the 85 foot span of the iron bridge that spans the river just below the dam, near the Van Campen and Hood & Bradley's flouring mills, carrying with it William Allen and Chauncey Stearns, was the most disastrous and saddest of all. This bridge was a fine structure 170 feet long, and supposed to be proof against all floods. But the waters washed away the abutment on the south end, and the 85 foot span went down stream.

...

At the time of the fall, fortunately, comparatively few persons were on the bridge, possibly 30 or 40, and they were mostly on the north end. There were a few on the south end, however, but they got off, excepting the two gentlemen named above. Mr. Allen very nearly reached the north span, but lacked a few feet of it—in a second more he would have been safe and saved. Mr. Stearns started in one direction and supposedly becoming bewildered, turned about and started in another direction. Both went down.

...Mr. Allen was seen, striving hard to keep afloat and to swim ashore. Mr. Stearns was seen clinging with might to a piece of the bridge. It was all done in a comparatively brief time, and the two men were out of sight.

...

Chauncey S. Stearns was 71 years of age. He was born in Massachusetts in 1818, and removed to Friendship with his parents when a very small boy. When about eight years of age he moved onto East Hill, town of Amity, where he lived until he moved to this village some five years ago. He was married in 1839 to Miss Keturah Stout, who survives him. Two daughters were born to them, who are still living, viz: Mrs. [Sarah Elizabeth] / H.[Hiram] S. Corbin, living on the old homestead, and Miss Helen, living with her parents. Mr. Stearns was a hardworking, industrious, conscientious man, and succeeded in acquiring a handsome property, owning several farms and having considerable money at interest. Up to about six years ago, he was healthy and strong, but a runaway team at that time caused him injuries from which he never fully recovered. He was well thought of by all who knew him, and was a most desirable citizen.

The Dispatch, Belmont NY, Tue. 4 Jun 1889

[Stearns, Chauncey S.]

ALLEGANY COUNTY
Friendship

Chauncey Stearns, who was drowned at Belmont May 31, was buried in Mt. Hope cemetery, Friendship, Wednesday, the Rev. F. M. [Francis Milton] Alvord [Universalist], officiating. A large number of Belmont people accompanied the remains. Mr. Stearns was a wealthy, retired farmer.

Buffalo Courier, Buffalo NY, Fri. 7 Jun 1889

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