

AN APPALLING ACCIDENT

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The Illustrated Historical Album of Orleans County recounts a calamity in Albion under the heading An Appalling Accident which is as follows:

"A terrible catastrophe, which brought anguish to many a fireside and threw a pall of gloom not only over the Village of Albion but over the entire county, occurred September 28th, 1859. It was on the occasion of the annual fair of Orleans County, and a large crowd from the surrounding towns had assembled in the village.

"A young man from the village of Brockport, proposing to turn the occasion to his own account, had stretched a rope across the canal, from the Dyer block to the Mansion House, and advertised a rope walk at 5 o'clock P.M. of that day.

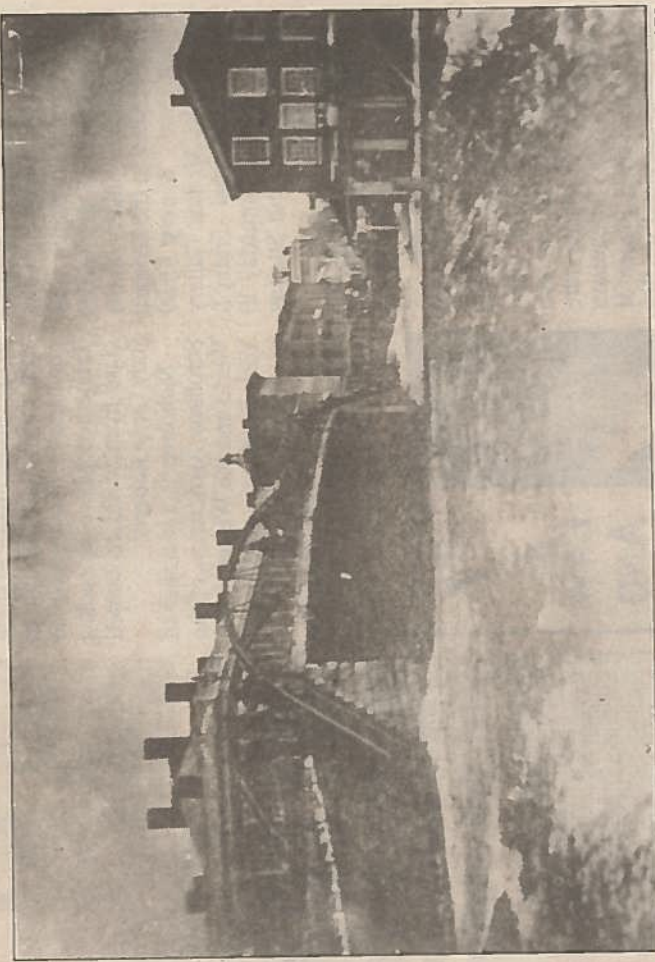
"At the appointed time a large concourse of people had gathered near the point designated, and the canal bridge was crowded. Hardly had the gymnast begun his walk, when the

Bethinking of Olde Orleans

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bridge gave way under the load of human freight, carrying with it into the water about 250 persons, of whom a considerable portion were forced under the remains of the bridge.

"Fifteen persons were killed and about as many more seriously injured. The killed, with one or two exceptions, were young men and women, six of them the latter. They were: Jane Lavery, Albion; Lydia Harris, Albion; Joseph Cade, South Barre; Perry Cole, Barre; Mrs. Annie Viele, Gaines; Edwin Stillson, South Barre; Adelbert Wilcox, West Kendall; Sarah Thomas, Carlton; Caroline A. Martin, Carlton; Harry Henry, Carlton; Ransom L. Murdock, Gaines; Thomas Alchin, Canaan, Canada; Thomas Handy, Yates; Sophia Pratt, Toledo, O.; Charles Roosevelt, Sandy Creek."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

1859 no permits were necessary and perhaps as a result, an accident occurred.

Today an historic marker is located on the south side of the Erie Canal just west of the lift bridge which notes this catastrophe. Calamity September 28, 1859 250 people & 5 horses Gathered here on a wooden bridge to watch a

I feel this article is now timely not only because the accident occurred in September but because it was precipitated by an exhibitionist who was trying to copy cat Blonden who had earlier that year walked a tightrope over Niagara Falls. Currently another exhibitionist is attempting to acquire all the appropriate permits to cross over Niagara Falls on a tightrope. However, in

Orleans County Historical Association 2002 Our photo, circa 1859, shows the canal bridge to the left and the Dyer building to the right from which the gymnast began his trek.

tightrope-walker cross the canal. It collapsed killing 15 people.

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