

EXPLOSIONS KILL 21 ON EXCURSION BOAT

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the Mercy, South Side and Allegheny General Hospitals.

When the explosions took place Clyde Trask of Ft. Mitchell, Ky., the Island Queen's orchestra leader, was talking ship-to-shore long distance to Mr. Schott in Cincinnati. Trask was injured, but his condition was described as good.

Not only did the blasts rip the Island Queen but the concussion and flying debris knocked out hundreds of windows in near-by downtown office buildings and stores and damaged at least fifty automobiles in the city-owned parking lot on the wharf.

Fire Chief Charles H. Davis estimated at 9 o'clock tonight that damage to the boat, to surrounding property and to automobiles was \$1,000,000.

Damage to the Island Queen, built in 1925 at Midland, Pa., to carry 4,000 excursionists, was estimated at upwards of \$500,000.

The explosions created one of the worst traffic jams in years in downtown Pittsburgh as office workers, shoppers and store clerks rushed toward the river. The crowds lined Water Street for at least four blocks and spilled onto the Smithfield Street and Point Breeze bridges, which offered excellent vantage points to view the blazing hulk and rescue work.

Those in the editorial rooms of the Post-Gazette, more than three blocks from the scene, said that the blast seemed to be right in the building.

"The building quivered as in a spasm," an assistant editor related. Josephus Miller, the manager of the Union Bus Terminal, about two blocks from the disaster, said he was felled by the first blast.

"I actually thought somebody had dropped an atom bomb," he declared.

Screams of "atom bomb" were

Justice's Ruling Fixes Lake George Level; Ryan Rejects Appeal of Property Owners

ALBANY, Sept. 9 (AP)—A State Supreme Court justice has fixed what he termed "the most advantageous water levels" for Lake George and appointed the State Public Works Superintendent to supervise control of the long-litigated issue.

Justice Andrew W. Ryan of Plattsburgh held in an opinion that the level of the eastern New York vacation region lake "can and shall be maintained between 4.0 and 2.5 (feet) on Roger's Rock gauge" between June 1 and Oct. 1.

Justice Ryan, in an opinion released today by the Attorney General's office, also:

Rejected a contention by the state and ruled that System Properties, Inc., had title to that portion of the Ticonderoga River bed on which it operates a dam affecting the lake level.

Rejected an appeal by several Lake George property owners for an order restraining the company from operating the dam (known as "Dam A"), which provides power for near-by industries.

Declared it "not necessary to determine whether the defendant

(System Properties, Inc.) has obtained a prescriptive right to fluctuate the levels of Lake George, nor is it necessary * * * to determine the equitable doctrine of comparative injury."

Justice Ryan ruled that the company, through its predecessors, had title to the river bed on the basis of a land grant signed in 1764, by King George III of England. The state claimed that the river itself was not included in the original conveyance and passed to the state in the Revolutionary War.

The justice, who took continuing jurisdiction in the matter as a court of equity, appointed Charles H. Sells, State Public Works head, to enforce compliance by System Properties, in operation of its dam, with the court's water-level directive.

The litigation stemmed from opposition of lake-bordering property owners to fluctuation of the water level by dam operation. They said the result was adverse effects, especially as they involved docking facilities on a basis of "normal level.

heard here and there from frightened persons walking near the Island Queen's wharf.

The ship's pilot, Capt. James A. McDavid of Pittsburgh, was walking on Wood Street on his way back to the Island Queen when he heard the explosion.

"The blast," he said, "almost knocked me down. Something told me it was the Queen. I started for the waterfront as fast as I could go. When I got there she was all ablaze. There were a lot of men in the river."

He added that "it was about the time the men would be eating lunch."

"They eat on the side that was out on the river," he went on. "They probably took to the water, those who weren't hurt."

Herbert Henderson of Cincinnati,

a crew member, was asleep in his bunk at the time of the explosion. He was thrown to the deck and when he gathered himself together discovered that he was bleeding.

He called to his brother, William, also a crew member, and both leaped into the river.

Only a few minutes before the explosion, William Henderson's wife, Margaret, had left the ship to go shopping. She had just reached Water Street and immediately turned around to hurry down to the wharf. The intense heat and smoke beat her back, however.

A few minutes later she was joined by her husband and brother-in-law, brought from the river. She cried hysterically, while the throngs milled around her.

The Island Queen came to Pitts-

burgh last week to offer excursions following her usual summer season of excursions on the river at Cincinnati.

Last night she took 3,500 Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation employees down the Ohio.

It was the first pleasure craft mishap at Pittsburgh in four years. On May 21, 1943, the Yacht Club, a refitted steamer, sank, but there were no casualties.

One of Pittsburgh's most famous excursion boats, the Julia Belle Swain, burned Dec. 2, 1931, at her Thirty-ninth Street wharf. Her pilot, the only person aboard, leaped to safety into the Allegheny River. A few months before that the steamer Greater Pittsburgh was destroyed by fire.

After today's explosions the downtown YMCA, two blocks from the wharf, became a clearing house for the survivors. It set up bunks in the gymnasium and began a careful registration of ambulatory survivors.

Crew men were advised to notify fellow-workers they might see on the street to report at the "Y" where they would be bunked and fed while they remained in Pittsburgh.