



# Disaster on the Potomac: The Last Run of the Steamboat Wawaset

*Alvin F. Oickle*

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For passengers of the steamboat Wawaset, August 8, 1873, began with a pleasant cruise from Washington, D.C., down the Potomac River. As the Wawaset came into sight of a small Virginia landing, fire broke out below decks, and frantic passengers leapt from the flames only to be pulled down by the swift waters. Author Alvin F. Oickle puts a human face to the tragedy as he profiles some of the seventy-five who perished, among them young mother Alethea Gray and six members of the Reed family. With a fast-paced style and firsthand accounts, Oickle masterfully narrates the last run of the Wawaset against the backdrop of a tense post-Civil War society.

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