



The Indianapolis Times

Unsettled with rain probably tonight and Thursday; warmer tonight, cooler by Thursday afternoon or night

HOME

VOLUME 40—NUMBER 151

INDIANAPOLIS, WEDNESDAY, NOV. 14, 1928

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BLANK AUTO TITLE THEFTS ARE CHARGED

Rhoads Brands Exhibit as
Fraud in Car Ring
Case.

FILES WERE OPEN

Testimony Brought Out to
Show Traugott's
Part.

Blank certificates of title were stolen, probably with the aid of an inside confederate, from the automobile license division of the secretary of state's office at the statehouse and used in the interstate traffic in stolen autos, for which fifteen persons are on trial in federal court.

This was brought out by the government today at the trial of the fifteen, on conspiracy charges, through testimony of Mark W. Rhoads, head of the auto license division.

Thirty-one government witnesses testified this morning. About twenty more government witnesses are to be heard. It is not believed the case will go to the jury before Friday night.

So far no evidence has been presented definitely linking in the "hot" car traffic the name of Robert F. McNay and W. Lee Smith, former Klan leaders, and Mr. and Mrs. William M. Jones, Wolf Sussman and William Laffey, other Indianapolis residents on trial.

Fifty employees of his office and state police have access to the room where the blank certificates of title are kept, Rhoads testified in response to direct questioning of Judge Robert C. Baltzell.

Shows the Indiana certificate of title made out to Jack Griffith, 2648 North Meridian avenue, for an Indianapolis stolen car in which Ted Baldwin, alleged to be one of the leaders of the ring, was arrested in Chicago, Rhoads said the certificate of title was on a genuine form.

It was not made out in his office, however, because titles are filled out in his office on a typewriter with an indelible ribbon, he said.

Police Pass Through Room

In response to Judge Baltzell's questions, Rhoads said the blank titles are kept in the title fileroom at the statehouse and that fifty persons have access to the room.

Asked by the judge if the state motor police have access to the room he said he did not know, but said the state policemen could pass through the room.

Further evidence intended to link Edward Traugott, who with Harry Sussman, his partner in the West Washington street clothing store mysteriously wrecked by an explosion Aug. 26, is one of the defendants, was introduced today by Alber S. Ward, United States district attorney.

Testimony intending to involve Mortimer and Jacob Wohlfeld, local furnishers on trial, also was offered.

Witnesses told how a Cadillac coupe was stolen from W. S. Hartman of Chicago, March 1, and recovered by Charles Bridges, state policeman, at the home of Jacob Wohlfeld, 2819 Washington boulevard, in July.

The car was sold to Mortimer Wohlfeld, son of Jacob, by Charles H. Medcalf, who gave his address as the Marott hotel, five days after its theft, according to the testimony. The government contends Medcalf was Leo Baldwin, one of the alleged conspiracy leaders.

Tells of Check

James E. Pierce, secretary of the Railroadmen's Building and Savings Association, testified that Mortimer Wohlfeld drew \$1,100 from his account with the association five days after the theft date, and that Wohlfeld received a check from the association for that amount. The canceled check was returned with the endorsements of Wohlfeld, Medcalf and Edward Traugott, the evidence showed.

Written on the face of the check was the notation "balance on Cadillac coupe paid in full."

Charles E. Herron, manager of the West Street branch of the Fletcher Savings and Trust Company, testified the check as one cashed at his bank on the same day, March 8. (Turn to Page 12)

DRESS BETTER ON CREDIT!
H. & R. Clothing Co., 29 E. Ohio
St.—Advertisement.

Quiz in Ship Disaster Is to Be Held

Survivors of Ill-Fated
Vestris Cared for by
Company.

By United Press
NEW YORK, Nov. 14.—Official investigation of the cause of the sinking of the Lampert and Holt liner, Vestris, will be conducted as soon as possible, David Cook, vice-president of Sanderson & Co., agents for the line, said today.

"When this inquiry will be conducted I cannot say definitely at this time," Cook said.

Cook inferred he would arrange to see the surviving officers of the Vestris Thursday before answering reported criticism by some passengers of the delay in sending out the SOS call and also the reported clumsy handling of the life boats by members of the crew.

Cook was emphatic in his assurance that survivors of the disaster would be properly cared for, and added that passengers who arrived aboard the Berlin today had been given their choice of hotel accommodations. Later, he said, free passage would be provided to any destination for them.

At the offices of the agency today two passengers who were in immediate need of funds were properly cared for.

CAPTAIN STANDS AT POST TO END

Radio Operator Drowns at
Key.

By United Press
NEW YORK, Nov. 14.—Captain William J. Carey and Radio Operator Michael J. O'Loughlin remained at their posts as the ill-fated liner Vestris sank to her grave. They went down with their ship, passengers said.

The skipper spent the final minute of his life standing silhouetted on the up-turned side of the Vestris. With life belts lying at his feet, he made no effort to strap one about him. He stood there, scorning death, until a wave washed him into the depths below.

O'Loughlin, so far as is known, never left his little radio shack from which he flashed the "SOS". Apparently he drowned at his key.

From the moment he ordered the radio operator to begin his series of frantic distress signals, Carey knew his ship was doomed, survivors said. But he prevented a panic board the fast-sinking liner.

He was in full view at all times and as the list carried the vessel over, he clung tenaciously to the rails, shouting orders to the boatmen and pointing out struggling passengers in the water.

Then—the great vessel turned completely on its side, and just before it plunged to the bottom, Carey scrambled up and stood erect, still defiant of death.

CABINET UNSETTLED

Hoover Not to Make Choice
Until Return.

By United Press
PALO ALTO, Cal., Nov. 14.—President-elect Hoover has given no consideration to cabinet appointments, and does not intend to consider the make up of his cabinet until he returns from his South American trip, it was said today on his behalf.

The President-elect has been displeased with reports of his probable selection of this and that person for his cabinet so soon after his election, it was said.

SEND BUREAU AUTO TAG

Special Indiana Plate Shipped to
Good Roads Body.

A special auto license plate carrying a black star and the number 025, was sent to the National Highway Association today by Mark W. Rhoads, chief of the automobile licensing department in the office of the secretary of state.

Each year the organization receives a similar plate from each state and territory. They are placed on a car which makes an annual tour of the country in the interest of good roads.

Captain Down With Ship

Banister swam to a lifeboat that had broken loose, and maneuvered it while twenty-two men jumped

into the water.

Mrs. Devore and Mrs. Norman K. Batten, wives of two men who have made automobile racing history on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, were saved from the

LIVES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN SACRIFICED IN LEAKING LIFEBOATS, SAY SHIP SURVIVORS; DENOUNCE CAPTAIN FOR SOS CALL DELAY

Negro Members of Crew Fought to Prevent
Escape of Passengers From Sinking
Liner; Scene of Confusion.

STORIES OF HEROISM ARE TOLD

Sixty Persons Had Failed to Leave Vessel
at Time of Final Plunge; Relate Tales
of Horror After Disaster.

BY LOUIS F. KEEMLE
United Press Staff Correspondent

NEW YORK, Nov. 14.—How the women and children of the lost steamer Vestris died was described today by 148 survivors brought to New York by the steamers American Shipper and the Berlin.

The sacrifice of lives was denounced by the surviving passengers, who blamed the ship's officers for delaying the sending of an SOS call, for the condition of the lifeboats, which they described as unseaworthy, and for the confusion and lack of discipline when the ship went down.

Of 326 passengers and crew aboard the Vestris, latest accounts today showed 210 rescued, eight known dead and 108 still unaccounted for, most of whom probably were lost.

The reason why the lists of 210 rescued showed mostly men of the crew, the majority of whom were members of the crew, and few women and children, was explained by the survivors.

The women and children were loaded into the first two lifeboats, which broke from the davits while loaded and threw their human cargo into the water.

All of Life Boats Leaked

Survivors said they saw one of the boats turn completely over as it struck the water and another fall to pieces after it had been struck against the Vestris' side.

The skipper spent the final minute of his life standing silhouetted on the up-turned side of the Vestris. With life belts lying at his feet, he made no effort to strap one about him. He stood there, scorning death, until a wave washed him into the depths below.

The radio operator, one passenger said, was never seen outside of his "shack." The survivors believed he died within the shack from where he sent the stirring messages calling for relief.

One of the last persons to see Carey alive was George Fantana, a third-class passenger from New York, who was standing with the captain on the sinking hull of the Vestris as the ship finally went down.

Fantana, who cannot swim, was thrown into the water and sucked under. When he emerged he cried to three lifeboat crews to pick him up, but all of them, he said, shouted back:

"We're too crowded." *Leaking Boat Swamped*

Only a piece of wreckage, which he seized, saved his life, he said. After floating for an hour he finally was rescued by one of the lifeboats.

John J. Bowlen, chief surgeon of the American Shipper, said he had treated virtually all of the 125 survivors of that ship for exposure or shock, and that forty of them had been injured, twenty seriously.

He amputated the hand of one man passenger and a finger of another. Most of the women, he said, were suffering from extreme shock or exposure.

Paul A. Dana, a representative of the Radio Corporation of America, with a woman whose name he did not know floated for many hours on a piece of wreckage after the lifeboat, in which they were bobbing about, had capsized.

Some survivors charged that Negro members of the crew, heedless of discipline, seized life boats to save themselves and were unwilling to take passengers aboard.

Most of the survivors believed about sixty persons had failed to get into boats when the Vestris sank.

Within a moment after its final lunge, the survivors said, the vessel had disappeared from sight, leaving the remaining passengers floundering about in the water and calling to those in the life boats to save them.

Drift for Hours in Sea

The American Shipper brought 125 survivors, of whom eighty-four were members of the Vestris crew and forty-one were passengers. The American Shipper picked up five lifeboats.

The Berlin, which picked up one lifeboat, brought twenty-three survivors, eighteen of whom were members of the crew and five were passengers.

Survivors described their sufferings in the lifeboats, drifting in a stormy sea for fourteen hours and to those in the life boats to save them.

They said they saw many persons swimming in the water, who gave up exhausted and went down as they watched.

Sharks were in the water, swimming around the struggling swimmers, several passengers said.

The tragedy of the disaster was lightened by several stories of heroism, notably that of Michael O'Loughlin, chief radio operator, and Archibald Banister, a Negro boatswain's mate.

O'Loughlin stuck to his post, sending out radio calls to the last and was believed to have gone down with the ship.

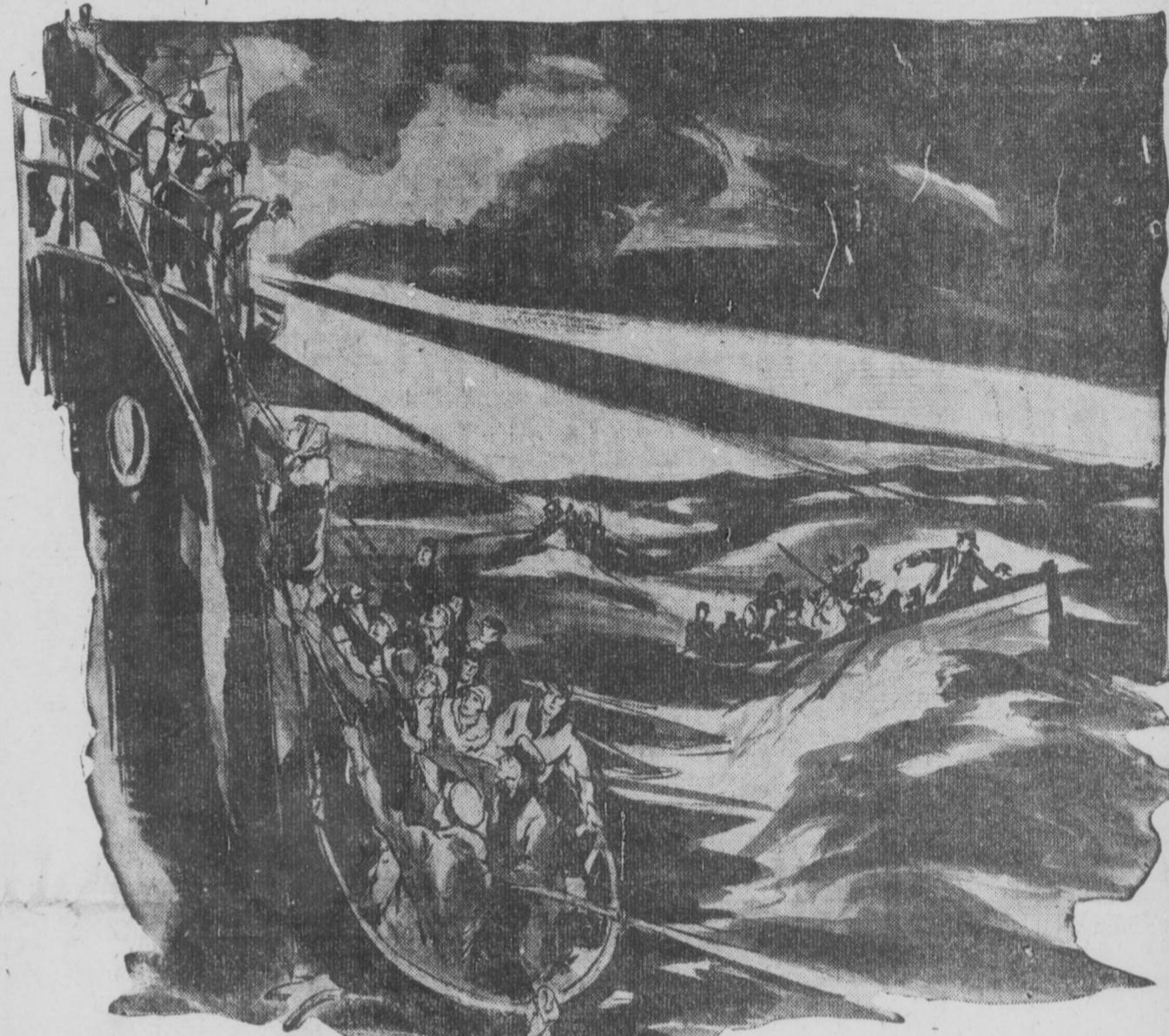
Captain Down With Ship

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into the water.

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Out of the Dark, Light, Strong Hands, Rescue!



This graphic sketch by Joe King, staff artist for The Times and NEA Service, shows one of the most thrilling rescues in the annals of the sea—survivors of the ill-fated Vestris being taken aboard the S. S. American Shipper, first rescue ship to reach the scene. Under the glare of powerful searchlights, men, women and children literally were snatched from death after having been adrift in lifeboats in a rough sea for hours.

asked Captain Carey several times during Sunday morning and night to send out an SOS, but that Carey replied the Vestris was in no danger and would be able to "proceed presently."

"We're too crowded." *Leaking Boat Swamped*

Only a piece of wreckage, which he seized, saved his life, he said. After floating for an hour he finally was rescued by one of the lifeboats.

Captain Sorenson said the lifeboats were in no condition for use at an emergency.

"We got into No. 8 boat," he continued, "forty or fifty of us, more than half of them women. There was a hole in the bow. We tried to plug it with a piece of tin, bailing water all the time. We couldn't make it hold against the water." *Leaking Boat Swamped*

Almost immediately a leak was discovered, Dana said.

Soon the boat began breaking apart and finally a great wave swamped it, throwing the passengers out in the sea.

"We floated and swam about amidst the wreckage. Finally another lifeboat came along. We called to the Negro members of the crew who put about for us. They went about:

Sorenson said he found himself swimming alongside Herman Ruckert of Leipzig, Germany. Both men were trying to reach a lifeboat some distance away when Ruckert gasped, "My God, I can't go on. I'm giving up."

Ruckert said he swam, alongside Sorenson, encouraging the boat, with seventeen survivors. They put their boat about and picked up about twenty men.

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