

The Evening Star, August 11, 1873, p. 2
The Wawaset Tragedy

There is a general feeling in the community that there should be a more searching enquiry into the causes that lead to the Wawaset tragedy than was made by the King George jury. It is evident that the number of deaths were in excess of the first reports, which were then supposed to be greatly exaggerated. Over fifty bodies have already been recovered, and many persons are yet missing, including a number of small children who were not registered, and who were probably burned on the steamer. This would be an appalling proportion of lost, even in case of a similar disaster at sea; and that sixty or seventy persons perished within a few yards of shore on a calm river shows something radically wrong in the management of a vessel to which so many lives were entrusted. The captain seems to have stood by his vessel to the last; but there was an utter absence of anything like nerve or head in looking after the safety of the passengers. There should have been some officer on the boat having the nerve and discretion to stand, pistol in hand, by the life-boats and see that they were properly lowered, and that the helpless women and children were first put ashore. It is requisite to inquire, too, why it was that the life preservers were not in a position to be available, and why the floats required to be provided were not there. It will be seen by the item elsewhere that an investigation of the kind above suggested is to be made by the government.