By CHARLES BOND

Virginian-Pilot Correspondent

WINTON, N.C.-Friday will be the 49th anniversary of the sinking of the steamer Olive in a cyclone, one of the greatest disasters among the dozens of steamships of that day that plied Hertford County waters.

Seventeen lives were lost when the Olive went down near Holly's Wharf in the Chowan River. Eight persons scrambled in the dark to the deck house roof and launched the only lifeboat the storm had not carried away. They were rescued several hours later by the tug Gazette.

The eight had headed the lifeboat toward a light. But after four hours of rowing they had not reached it. They crawled aboard a barge anchored in the river.

J. N. Bell, two deck hands and three passengers.

The Norfolk Southern Steamer Marie Roberts appeared the Martha Barrett and four passengers who had decided to cling to began to come toward us from the northwest. the deck house roof.

Disaster of 49 Years Ago Recalled

were aboard and hurried to the fire room for drying out and hot high layer of white foam beaming directly on my port side, and disappear, he felt that the last string connecting him with life in another second the cyclone had us. drinks.

"It was like nothing I had ever experienced before. It was Capt. Withy was quoted in the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot two days later. He said the Olive had left Franklin, Va., at 11 a.m. like heaven and earth had come together, only a thousand times of the crew and seven passengers. Feb. 16 on her regular trip to Edenton: worse.

"The Olive stood straight on her beam and water poured "Before beginning I want to ask you to express my thanks "I have been navigating the Eastern Virginia and Carolina in the pilot house and could not get out but J. T. Murphy, crawl up and help me force the door open. We made our way fervor from the saloon below; and Negro crew members George "We left Franklin on Monday morning and had been making back along the top of the deck house which was already under

for the courteous treatment accorded us by the men on the into her shattered windows and portholes in great volume. Then tug of the Norfolk Southern Railroad which saved our lives. she began to light and settle at the same time. I was caught waters ever since 1867, and have been master of the Olive for assistant engineer who was off duty at that time, managed to minister of Elizabeth City, who could be heard praying with over eight years. good headway all day, notwithstanding a strong breeze from the water to where the lifeboats had been. Two had been carried southwest which was blowing. Our regular landings were made away, but one, the large metal boat, remained. It was jammed

and everything was coming along well though I noticed that the tight against the smoke stack. "From below we could hear the shrieks and groans of the to hear the 12-year-old girl pinned in her stateroom with her wind was increasing.

"After darkness set in, it began to blow a regular gale and passengers and crew who were pinned down with the water aged grandmother crying for aid that could not be given and It was from the barge that the Gazette picked up chief when I passed Holly's Wharf at 9:45, the wind had begun to rushing on them and the fact that we could not move a hand telling her grandmother they were going to die but that God engineer C. L. Conway, assistant engineer J. T. Murphy, purser blow so violent that I decided not to venture into Edenton, but to to save them made the matter only more terrible for us. "Along with the lifeboat, I found Chief Engineer Conway, turn where there was shelter from the wind.

"The boat was put about without much consideration and Purser Bell, the colored servant, Martha Barrett, one white and her self next morning and took aboard Capt. George H. Withy, stewardess the little trip had been started when suddenly a horrible roar six colored passengers, and two colored deck hands. "And the rest were drowned."

"Everything became misty below and it was impossible to The six were exhausted. They signaled frantically and soon see a short length ahead. All at once I met with a mountain as the lifeboat was launched, said that when he saw the boat and probably would have drowned."

passengers.

Mountain of White Foam Killed 17 on River Steamer

had been cut.

Of the crew of 13 and 18 passengers, there were saved seven

Accounts identified the dead as a Mrs. Bennett and her 12-year-old granddaughter returning from a visit to their former home at Franklin; a Mrs. Vaughan and a Mr. Wilder of Colerain; Jake Lassiter of Rich Square; the Rev. George White, Negro Britt, Frank Hunter, Andrew Vaughan, Abram Cooper, Preston Scott, John Cooper and Esther Williams and three Negro

The stewardess after her rescue told that it was pitiable would take care of them.

In Windsor, N.C., Mrs. Walter H. Bond says that it was only from being on the boat with her father, J. T. Murphy, the assistant engineer. "I used to think in hearing him tell of the Capt. Withy, obdurate in his decision to stick with the Olive, sinking that but for a cold as a cild, I would have been aboard