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Ship Ablaze: The Tragedy of the Steamboat General Slocum

Edward T. O'Donnell

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There were few experienced swimmers among over 1,300 Lower East Side residents who boarded the *General Slocum* on June 15, 1904. It shouldn't have mattered, since the steamship was chartered only for a languid excursion from Manhattan to Long Island Sound. But a fire erupted minutes into the trip, forcing hundreds of terrified passengers into the water. By the time the captain found a safe shore for landing, 1,021 had perished. *Ship Ablaze* draws on firsthand accounts to examine why the death toll was so high and how the city responded. Masterfully capturing both the horror of the event and the heroism of men, women, and children who faced crumbling life jackets and inaccessible lifeboats as the inferno quickly spread, historian Edward T. O'Donnell brings to life a bygone community while honoring the victims of that forgotten day.

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