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1854

Untitled story describing a near-drowning incident, circa 1854

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UUID: 9695D111-0B46-B181-4B86-8801D4DB9D17

Recommended Citation:

[Untitled story describing a near-drowning incident]. (ca. 1854). In Early 1800s [Folder].
Valdosta State University Community Archives: Bennett Collection (CA-005), Box 1,
Folder 1. Valdosta, Georgia. Retrieved from [url].

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A most miraculous escape from drowning - reselling of a boat.
It was in the month of March 1854. That in company with Mr Oliver W. Stevens, his son Eddie with two negroes, Primmus and boy Alfred, we left Palmyra in a batteau for creek in search of oysters. We took the primus to have the mast well cordged to keep it steady, and then hoisted our main sail (which contained canvas in it for a boat double her size) a gentle breeze flowing from S. W. we had no occasion to alter the sail, until we got to the mouth of Dickerson creek where it emptied into Sunbury River; when the wind threw the sail on the other side, which caused the batteau to turn over on its side, and precipitate us all into the river. I caught hold of the boys, and got them to hold on to a small Beech on the stern of the boat. Mr Stevens then by great exertion got the mast out, thinking by so doing she would right, but instead of that she came bottom up; we all got then on the bottom, and a strong ebb tide at the time running out, we were going rapidly down to St Catharines Sound. Mr S. and myself could have easily swam to the shore, as the Marsh was not more than twenty yards distant, but had we done so the others would undoubtedly have perished. Mr S. observed to me, suppose we all jump off and try to right her, we did so, and to my astonishment succeeded, but we might as well had been still on the bottom, as she was full of water, we all got in however and an oar burrowing up, Mr S. got a stride of the boys, and commenced paddling, I was up on the Stern with Eddie and acted as a kind of sail; the two negroes were on a seat in the Centre. We made very little progress, the mast with the sail we could perceive going down to the Sound, also some boxes that we had along, to put Oysters in. When the boat capozed a very valuable gun worth Forty dollars

went to the bottom, it was saved by Mr O W Stevens. About two hundred yards from the Marsh, the boy Alfred observed Mas Oliver the anchor has never been taken in since the boat upset. Mr Stevens then drew it up, just after saying so, the boy Alfred gave three screams and went into fits, frothing at the mouth. I reached forward and drew him to me, he took hold of my leg and Eddie had hold of the other. I had ^{the} use of my body however, and whenever I saw a large wave coming down the back river, I would throw my weight on that side and break its force. We were in this perilous situation for four hours, not knowing what moment the boat would turn over. I threw my seaver hat to Primus and told him to sail her, but he might as well had attempted to have sailed the ocean, as the water was running entirely across her. I never saw my hat again. As we neared Garts Creek over in Bryan County, the boat upset again, but fortunately this time on a bed of Narcissus oysters, ~~the boat~~ I had to set on the bottom of the boat and hold Alfred who had not recovered. Mr S. then proposed to walk up to Mr Garts, for assistance, but I dissuaded him, we had tried to raise the boat, but being sucked in, it cracked our oar in the attempt, so soon however as the water ran out so that we could discover the banks we got her turned over and the large tin pan containing our dinner, having been caught under the seat, we soon emptied the contents on the seat and sailed her out in short order. It was very cold, and we had been wet ever since we upset. On starting back for home we could discover all of the sand-bars in the river. Alfred on our way back discovered the victuals on the seat, and asked for some meat, I knew then that had recovered. We stopped where the boat capsized and dragged for the gun

but never found it. The boat we left at Seabrook landing that night, with a load of oysters that we had taken in at the mouth of the creek. All went home as well as drowned rats.

J. Stevens.

of whom was a crusty old bachelor) he beg'd her to stop playing, she said she would not unless I desired it, she also wanted the curtains raised whilst it was pouring down rain, I told her she could play a little, but to put the curtain down, whatever became of the poor creature afterwards I never learnt — John Stevens.

The late Judge Dooly after the county bearing his name was called, was as much distinguished for his wit as for his legal force, he was at the head of the Clark party of this State when Troup was his opponent. Some one remarking one day that Troup was mad the Judge observed he wished the same dog that bit Troup would bite him. He had a difficulty with Judge Tate which was to be settled by a duel, as his opponent had a wooden leg, he mentioned to his "second" that would fight him only on equal terms & must go & look up a hollow gun stump to encase one of ^{his} legs in. This was told to Tate & so amused him that a laugh settled the difficulty. On another occasion he a man of formal bearing - declined a Challenge when told that the would be published in the news papers as a coward he said, "that he would rather fill every news paper in the State than one Coffin". He was right for ~~it is the only~~ moral Courage is the only true Courage. H.S.