

1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Riverboats, steamers, and paddlewheels were a
3 common mode of transportation along the Rivers of America;
4 the Illinois River has served as an essential by-way in that
5 transportation network and has seen its share of passenger
6 river traffic and, unfortunately, its share of disasters and
7 accidents; and

8 WHEREAS, Riverboat excursions had become a common and
9 popular form of entertainment along the Illinois River as
10 America raced to the end of World War I in 1918; as trains
11 and cars were slowly replacing these boats as a mode of
12 transportation, the excursions remained quite popular as a
13 way to spend a summer evening and be entertained; and

14 WHEREAS, Licensed and trained pilots navigated rivers
15 across the U.S. with inspected and well maintained boats;
16 boats such as the East St. Louis, the Julia Belle Swain, the
17 Columbia, and the Idlewild were active on the Illinois River;
18 the Columbia, it was said, "was a veteran of the trade; she
19 had been on the Mississippi for a few seasons before being
20 transferred to central Illinois around 1911"; and

21 WHEREAS, The Columbia had been rebuilt at the Howard Ship
22 Company in Mound City for the third time in her career before
23 the start of the 1918 season; federal inspectors pronounced
24 her "the safest boat on western waters"; and

25 WHEREAS, The South Side Athletic Club (of Pekin)
26 sponsored the Steamer Columbia for an excursion on the
27 evening of July 5, 1918; the ship left Kingston Mines with
28 some passengers and proceeded north to Pekin, where the
29 majority of the nearly 500 passengers boarded to travel to Al
30 Fresco Park in Peoria; and

31 WHEREAS, The Steamer Columbia, known as the "safest boat

1 on western waters", instead became the worst disaster in the
2 history of the Illinois River; on its return that night, the
3 ship struck the Peoria side of the river and swung back
4 towards the Pekin side only to sink in about 25 feet of
5 water; and

6 WHEREAS, This tragedy precipitated the end of river
7 passenger transportation on the Illinois River when 87 lives
8 were lost including Eugene Bailey, Louise Berends, James
9 Blackburn, Letha Black, Hazel Bowlby, Mayme Bohlander, Harry
10 Brown, Jennie Brown, Mrs. John Brown, Ricka Brown, Wm.
11 Capoot, Mrs. Wm. Capoot, Mrs. Frank Callahan, Jerry Cloles,
12 Mrs. John Diepenbrook, Norman Diepenbrook, Melvin
13 Diepenbrook, Miss Jennie Evans, Vera Flowers, Lizzie
14 Franklin, Maurice Feinburg, Mrs. Wm. Freeland, Gordon Gay,
15 George Gillott, Mrs. George Gillott, Albert Grewey, Francis
16 Grewey, Mrs. John Grewey, Theresa Gunion, Thomas Hancock,
17 Jr., Mrs. J.C. Harboldt, Grace Harboldt, Mildred Harboldt,
18 Mabel Harboldt, Mrs. George Haschert, Clarence Hill, Mrs.
19 Frank Hill, Mayme Holden, Ruth Hoskin, Mrs. Alvin Jacobs,
20 Hattie Johnson, Hazel Jones, Mrs. James Kinney, Joe Kumpf,
21 Mrs. A.B. Loomis, Ada Lowry, Mrs. Mary Luther, Baby Luther,
22 Mrs. T.J. McPherson, Mrs. Phil Maser, Mrs. John Mogga, Mrs.
23 Cora Moldenhauer, Elizabeth Moldenhauer, Stella Murphy, Henry
24 Neaver, Louise Neaver, Doren Neaver, Mrs. Sam Neaver, Miss
25 Ellen Nelson, Mrs. Al O'Hern, Charles Race, Rudolph Rachel,
26 Mrs. John Reuling, Jr., Ada Rumsey, Miss Addie Sapp, Mrs.
27 Martha Sapp, Kenneth Saunders, George Schuster, Mrs. Kate
28 Scott, Bessie Shemel, Orville Shryock, Chris Sickles, Mabel
29 Stout, Mrs. Harry Thurman, Clyde Thurman, Ruby Thurman, Edwin
30 Voll, Dorothy White, Dorothy Whitmore, Theresa Wingenbach,
31 Mrs. Clyde Witcher, Richard Witcher, Donald Witcher, Nellie
32 Worth, Mrs. Kate Wright, John Wright, and George Stewart; and

33 WHEREAS, The memories of these victims are kept alive by

1 an annual memorial ceremony held by the Tazewell County
2 Historical Places Society; and

3 WHEREAS, The Illinois State Historical Society has
4 approved a historical marker sponsored by the Tazewell County
5 Historical Places Society and Walgreens Drugs that will be
6 dedicated on July 5, 2003, the 85th anniversary of this
7 tragic event; and

8 WHEREAS, There are still 3 survivors of the Steamer
9 Columbia tragedy, including Lucille Adcock of Pekin, Everett
10 Stringer of Bartonville, and Mildred Deere of Joliet;
11 therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
13 NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
14 to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Steamer Columbia
15 Disaster we declare that July 5, 2003 be set aside as a
16 solemn day of remembrance for those who perished aboard the
17 Steamer Columbia; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
19 presented to the Tazewell County Historical Places Society
20 and to the Pekin Park District.