



So Terrible a Storm: A Tale of Fury on Lake Superior

Curt Brown

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It was Thanksgiving 1905 and thirty-one ships were on Lake Superior, making the season's last, daring run--a run old salts had warned against, but to no avail against the shipping companies' demands. What none of the sailors knew until it was far too late was that they would soon face the worst storm ever to hit the Great Lake, a storm that nearly half of their number would not survive.

This is the story of that fateful storm, and of one of the worst shipping disasters in the nation's history. As the storm strikes without warning, readers are taken aboard the SS *Mataafa* as it crashes into Duluth's piers, half of the crew freezing to death overnight as the other half survives by dancing through the dark around bathtubs set ablaze with scuttled pieces of the ship--all while 10,000 Duluthians set bonfires on shore to guide ships to safety. Next we find ourselves aboard the SS *Ira H. Owen*, crashing into the cliff where Split Rock Lighthouse would later be built, too late for these men. And here too are the many ships, from Canadian shores to Michigan, where all hands were lost. It is a story drawn from the accounts of witnesses and survivors. It is a tale of people pitted against the elements, of a disaster so extreme that, in its wake, weather forecasting, shipbuilding, and compass-reading in light of the Iron Range's magnetism were forever changed.

So Terrible a Storm: A Tale of Fury on Lake Superior Details

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From Reader Review So Terrible a Storm: A Tale of Fury on Lake Superior for online ebook

Wisconsin says

Always enjoy books about the Great Lakes. This history account was much more interesting than I thought it would be. Even has a great account of an early feminist reporter who left her mark on the history of Minnesota.

Alicia A. says

not written very well, lacking in drama.

Michael says

I thought it would take longer to read this. The 320 pages is deceiving. The book is double spaced so it should have been much less pages. Otherwise, very to the point and well written. Not a ton of detail but enough to "paint a picture". Definitely a good read.

Shelly says

It was interesting, but not fascinating. I've been to the North Shore many many times. Been to Split Rock many many times. Need to go again!

Lake Superior is a beautiful, stunning, and frightening place! Do NOT think you can outwit her, not even now....

Bob says

A fact-based history of the Great Lakes storm in 1905, known as the Mataafa Storm. Written as something of a long newspaper story, with numerous photos. Well worth reading by anyone who is interested in maritime history of the Inland Seas.

For some reason, the huge freighters of the Great Lakes are very interesting to me, especially the steam powered ones from the late 1800's and early 1900's. Never have been on board one of these, although I have been on river barges. Life on a river barge goes at a slow pace: The boats are so loaded, they do not go fast, and being on one is not very exciting. The Great Lakes freighters must be just the same, except they often operate out of sight with land.

Being on a steam freighter would have been much like working in a factory, just with the added risk of drowning. When one of these huge boats got into trouble from a storm, it had to be (a) a really fierce weather

event and (b) terrifying. This book brought out all of this.

Jim says

Sounded good. Too much detail. Finally bailed on it.

Dianne says

Great Historical read.

Chris says

Well written and at times engrossing account of a 1905 storm and the impact on the men who worked the books. It includes a new overview of the history of the Great Lakes.

Monica Bond-Lamberty says

Blessings to my public library for being able to get this for me via ILL.

Very well researched book. Obviously the material is very interesting. Even the tying up loose knots chapters were interesting at the end.

Those were not page turners and therefore the 4 stars versus 5, but very interesting read.

Maureen M says

Like "The Perfect Storm," this is an unbelievable true story. I had no inkling that there was a storm on Lake Superior in 1905 that far surpassed the one that sank the Edmund Fitzgerald in 1975. Brown's story layers the dramatic tales of survivors and those lost with the larger context that shows how different life was then, and in some ways how similar. It was especially satisfying to read this book while sitting at a window overlooking Lake Superior's North Shore, not far from the lighthouse built because of this storm.

Brad Lucht says

*** 1/2

Interesting story that could have been told better. Phrases and sentences that pertained to a specific incident were repeated throughout the various chapters of the book.

While many ships were sunk or damaged, the primary focus was on just one ship, the Mataafa, probably because its disaster played out so close to shore.

Julie says

I enjoy reading stories that are based on places I have visited. Many times have I been to Lake Superior. After reading this book, I would like to revisit the North Shore and tour the lighthouses.

S. Dawn says

An engrossing account of the ferocious November 1905 storm on Lake Superior that resulted in multiple shipwrecks and great loss of life.

Monique Kleinhuizen says

I couldn't put this down. Beautiful mix of fascinating history and enthralling prose. A beautiful journalistic take on a chilling story all Minnesotans should know

michael a santulli says

A good read

A fascinating story of tragedy and survival on Lake Superior set in Duluth Minnesota during an horrific late November storm. Exciting moments of peril and heroism are graphically told.
