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The Eastland Disaster

Why don't many people know about the Eastland Disaster of 1915? Well, based on the collected data, there are many theories on why people do not know about the Eastland

Disaster. Many of the non-elderly people (between the ages of 19-48) that were interviewed blamed the lack of representation of the Eastland Disaster on poor media coverage. Also they feel that they that they horrific happenings of the Titanic out weighed the happenings of the Eastland. The elderly people (between the ages of 60-75) however had a different view of the situation. Many of them said that no one talked about the disaster and a lot of people responded by saying, "I Don't Know!"

It is apparent that for whatever reason many people do not know about the Eastland Disaster. Could it be that since there wasn't extensive media coverage it went untalked about? Or could it be that the Titanic overshadowed the disaster. One would assume that since the disaster happened here in Chicago every Chicagoan would know about it and that there would probably be a holiday in remembrance of those who perished in the accident. But if one assumed this then they would have assumed wrong. There is no holiday and not too many Chicagoan's know about the Eastland Disaster.

This brings about the question, "WHY?" Why don't more people know about the Eastland Disaster? For one, the people who were aboard the ship were middle class people, unlike the Titanic, which had many wealth business owners aboard its ship. Which means

that just maybe if the people who were on the Eastland had been rich then the disaster would have gotten some representation. This brings me to point number two; this disaster claimed over 800 lives yet there still wasn't adequate media coverage about it. Some people say that maybe it was a conspiracy and others say that the people of Chicago felt too embarrassed about what happened. Only three years prior had the Titanic sank, and then the Eastland, which never leaves the dock consumes the lives of 800 plus people.

Eight Hundred people die and no one remembers it. "Is This A Case of Social Amnesia?" Well, that all depends. If people knew about the disaster and purposely tried to forget it then no, it wasn't a case of social amnesia. But if people honestly did forget about it then maybe it was a case. From the information that I gathered I truly feel that the people of Chicago purposely tried to forget what happen. It seems that the people were so embarrassed about what happened that they tried to down play it as much as possible. Yes, it could be said that the reason why the ship sank was because of the amount of lifeboats that were aboard because of what happened with the Titanic, but it still doesn't take away from the fact that just three years after the Titanic sank the Eastland claimed the lives of so many people. I think that this is the reason for poor media coverage. If people have to constantly be reminded of what happened with images everyday then it is more likely that they won't forget what happened. If things are out of sight however, they are more likely to be out of mind. Which means that Chicago reporters purposely did not cover the story of the Eastland so that it the disaster could be easily forgotten.

The personal thought that I have about the situation is that we remember what we choose to remember. The examples that were given were: Our Lady of Angels Fire, The Chicago Fire, and the Wisconsin fire. Many people remember the Our Lady of Angels Fire

because there were nuns and children who died which happens to be very sad. Everyone knows about the Great Chicago Fire because it is drilled into your brain either in school or in the news. But not to many people know about the fire in Wisconsin that occurred the same weekend as The Chicago Fire. The reason for that could be because the people of Chicago were too consumed with what had happened here that they didn't have to time to worry about what was happening anywhere else. All of this to me means that if people wanted the Eastland Disaster to be remembered then it would be. It seems as if some decided that it would be best for the city of Chicago is the story of what happened go untold and everyone agreed. Therefore, ignorance caused the disaster and stupidity kept it under wraps. Whatever the case may be

Chicago was definitely embarrassed by what happened. But embarrassing as it was there still was no need to try to down play what happened on that day. Many people were aboard that ship and over eight hundred lives were taken. Entire families were wiped out in some cases. I think that people have the right to know what happened to their family members.

Time has passed and even though we can't undo what has already been done I do believe that it isn't too late to try to make more people aware of what happened. I feel that if Chicago can put up cows in the city and spend money on so many other things then the least the city could do is put up some kind of plaque and museum exhibit to show the remorse that is felt for the people and the family of the people who died in the Eastland Disaster. Honestly I don't believe that that would be asking too much of the City of Chicago because it is only right.