



Treasury Department,

September 16 1893

Mr. Ingar Olsen,
Surfman, Milwaukee Life-Saving Station,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Sir:

I transmit herewith a gold life-saving medal of honor awarded to you under the provisions of the Acts of Congress approved June 20, 1874 and May 4, 1882, in recognition of your heroism in saving the life of James Miller of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who was in imminent danger of drowning in Lake Michigan, on the 20th of April, 1893.

The circumstances as established by evidence filed in this Department appear to have been as follow:

A severe storm raged in the vicinity of Milwaukee during the night of April 19th and 20th, and at about half-past five o'clock on the morning of the 20th the force of the wind was so fierce as to demolish the wooden house

erected for the shelter of workmen and machinery on the stone work of the new Intake Crib, where tunneling operations were in progress, some three miles north-north-east of the Milwaukee station. The fury of the gale in the early hours of the night had driven the men employed on the crib into the air-lock for safety, where they remained until the vitiated atmosphere compelled them at about half past eight o'clock in the morning to quit their refuge or miserably perish without an effort to save their lives. In the attempt to escape more than half of the number were drowned within the air-lock and well. Five or six appear to have succeeded in getting out and reaching the top of the crib, but the powerful gale which is described as the worst seen in many years, had raised a very heavy sea, and now drove the great waves clear over the unprotected structure, soon sweeping off all the unfortunate men save two who managed to cling to some

remnants of the machinery.

Meantime the life-boat of the Milwaukee station in tow of the tug "Welcome" was slowly making its way to the scene, the strength of the tempest being such that more than an hour was consumed in making the three miles and getting into a suitable position to render service. The poor fellows on the crib were encouraged by the shouts of the life-savers to hold on a little longer and they should be rescued, but before the boat could get sufficiently near, one of them, benumbed and exhausted, fell into the angry surf and was seen no more.

A few moments later when the life-boat had been slackened down closer to the crib, the Keeper gave orders that the instant it should seem to be feasible, the nearest man should leap for the ladder attached to the stone work. You appear to have occupied the best position to make the desperate effort, and as the boat rose upon the sea you sprung with

all your power, and, life-line in hand, disappeared in the tumult of waters, your companions believing for the moment that you were lost. But your great strength and brave heart carried you through, and you were soon seen on the crib making your perilous way toward the helpless object of your humane and courageous enterprise.

Just as you reached him he fell at your feet, but though his weight was almost too great, you managed to partially raise him, and then bravely taking off your own life-belt, placed it around his waist, and made your life-line fast to him. Another life-belt and line were thrown to you, and adjusting them to yourself you pushed the senseless man from the lee side into the water, and boldly plunged in after him. Then with dauntless devotion to your noble purpose, while the waves were breaking high over your head, you placed his almost lifeless form upon your back

and with the aid of the life-line swam to the boat where both were taken on board by your faithful comrades.

The evidence and the circumstances prove that during the entire period from the moment you made your leap for the crib to the moment you were taken back into the boat, your life was placed in deadly peril, and that throughout all the trying incidents of your great achievement, your courage did not falter. I am informed that your modesty in accepting the high commendation so justly bestowed upon you is not the least of your merits. It affords me extraordinary pleasure to award the accompanying medal designed by law to bear testimony of heroic deeds in saving life from the perils of the sea.

Respectfully yours,

J. G. Curtis
Secretary.