

## Newspaper Accounts From the Past, II

The April 18, 1906 edition of the *Winsted Evening Citizen* contained interesting articles both locally and nationally, here are the highlights:

(Headline) “San Francisco Destroyed, Holocaust Following Terrific Earthquake Early Today Killed 3,000 People. Fire Still Raging, Thousands Fleeing From City”

When this headline was written, the full extent of the damage was not known; the fire alone was to rage for three days, destroying everything in a 2,000 acre area, or 514 city blocks. 28,000 buildings were reduced to ashes. The headline estimate of 3,000 dead proved to be greatly exaggerated, as the final tally was about 500, two of whom were shot as looters. The majority of the citizens were caught in their beds, as the first severe shock occurred at 12 minutes past 5 a.m. At that time, this earthquake/fire was considered to have been one of the greatest disasters in recorded history.

While all this excitement was taking place on the west coast, things weren't exactly quiet back in our local area – the *Citizen* reported: “Balloon Lands in Colebrook” “Four aeronauts who ascended in Pittsfield, Mass. this morning came down safely on C. R. Fritz's farm. Count Henri de la Vaux, with A. M. Herring, Allen R. Hawley and Augustus Past of the Aero Club of America, made a successful ascension in the count's large balloon “La Centaure” this morning.

The balloon shot up 200 feet and then caught a southerly breeze and started in the direction of Lenox. The next reported sighting was in New Boston about 2 o'clock this afternoon, when postmaster Clark of New Boston, Mass. telephoned to the *Citizen* that the balloon had just passed over that village going in the direction of Colebrook. People at the New Boston Inn observed through field glasses that the party was unloading ballast.

The next reported sighting was in Colebrook River. Ives and Baxter, proprietors of the general store in Colebrook River, telephoned the *Citizen* about 2:15 that the balloon had passed over that place and was fast descending about one mile from there in the direction of Simons Pond [Lake Marguerite]. They reported that ballast was being unloaded.

About 2:30 word came to the *Citizen* that the party had landed safely on the farm of C. R. Fritz in Colebrook.” [Charlie Fritz lived on what today is Fritz Road, off of Prock Hill Road and parallel to the Massachusetts border.] “None of the passengers was hurt. The aeronauts telephoned to friends in New York and Pittsfield immediately after they landed. The party is expected to pass the night in Winsted, stopping at the Hotel Winchester.”

