

Charles Alfred Bliss

(1872 - 9 Aug 1899)

Bliss. Suddenly (drowned) at Ocean City, Md. on Wednesday, August 9, 1899, Charles Alfred Bliss. Funeral private. No flowers.

The Evening Star, Thursday, August 10, 1899

Death in the Surf

Drowning of Charles Alfred Bliss at Ocean City

Body Recovered Within an Hour

Funeral Will Probably Be Tomorrow at 4 O'clock p.m.

Peril of Other Bathers

Charles Alfred Bliss, cashier of the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company of this city, and son of Mr. Alfred G. Bliss, chief clerk of the bureau of internal revenue, Treasury Department, was drowned at Ocean City, Md., shortly after noon yesterday. Mr. Bliss had gone to Ocean City last Saturday to stay two weeks. He went in company with Dr. W.M. Newell, and since going on their vacation the two have been together almost constantly.

Yesterday Mr. Bliss was out with a number of bathers when he was caught in an eddy and carried out a considerable distance. The current was very strong, and those who saw his danger and heard his cries for help were unable to render assistance. While Mr. Bliss was in peril several other bathers became exhausted and called for help, among them being Misses Alice and Bessie Hunting, Miss Geeting of Baltimore and Dr. Wm. M. Newell of this city. The life-saving crew seeing the danger of Mr. Bliss made ready to go to his relief, and while doing so the other bathers got beyond their depth.

Bravery of Sidney Willson

While this preparation was being made Mr. Sidney Willson of Snow Hill, a youth of fifteen years, boldly rushed into the breakers, swam to Miss Bessie Hunting and succeeded in bringing her ashore. Young Willson's efforts and cries attracted the attention of the crowd to Miss Alice Hunting, and Rev. Francis Y. Nichols of Princeton plunged to her rescue. He caught at her as she was going down the last time, but missed her. He then dived and held her up until Mr. Charles R. Gantz of Baltimore and Mr. Strauss went to his assistance. They all three managed to get ashore with the young lady. It took some time to resuscitate Miss Alice Hunting. The Misses Hunting were rescued in front of Mount Pleasant Cottage.

In the meantime Dr. W.M. Newell had become exhausted about 100 yards below, in front of the life-saving station, near where young Bliss had gone down. Mr. Raleigh DeShields, son of Major DeShields of the Atlantic Hotel, swam to Dr. Newell, and, though merely a boy, held him up till young Sid Willson went to help him, and they both brought the doctor safely ashore, with the assistance of the life-boat, which had just been launched. Mr. Raleigh DeShields also pulled Miss Geeting out of the surf almost exhausted.

The lifeboat started to look for the body of Mr. Bliss, but as the crew were passing the first breaker Bob Purnell of Ocean City and Charles Gantz of Baltimore saw the body, and, plunging from the boat, brought it to the surface. The body had been in the water about an hour, and all efforts at resuscitation by four doctors present proved in vain. It was taken to one of the rooms of the life-saving station, where it was embalmed by Undertaker J. E. Wise of Berlin.

Young Bliss Highly Esteemed

Mr. Bliss was twenty-seven years of age, a graduate of the Washington High School and was highly esteemed in this city. He lived with his parents at 923 East Capitol street. Only a couple of days ago his parents received a letter from him, in which he said he had that day sailed over the spot where the Birney boys were drowned recently. He was a good swimmer.

Mr. A.G. Bliss, father of the drowned man, today said it appeared strange that the life-saving service at Ocean City was so long in rendering assistance. It did not appear to him that the patrol of the beach at Ocean City was satisfactory, otherwise he did not think an hour would have been consumed in the rescue of his boy.

Funeral Tomorrow

Mr. Bliss was not able to reach Ocean City until after the body of his son could be started on the journey to this city, and for that reason he did not go there last evening, as he first intended to do. The remains are expected to arrive here at 3:45 this afternoon. The funeral will probably take place at 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon and will be private. The interment will be made in Congressional Cemetery.

Statement of Miss Fenwick.

Miss Fenwick of 1204 K street, who was at Ocean City at the time and who has returned to Washington, said today to a Star reporter that the circumstances surrounding the drowning of young Bliss were sad, but at the same time the heroic qualities of the young man were brought out. It seems he noticed the danger of a party, which was farther from shore than he was and gave the alarm.

Two young men responded -- Sid Wilson and Roy DeShields. They were both strong swimmers, and when they reached Bliss said to them, "I am all right; go and help the others -- they need you more than I do."

So his would-be rescuers went on to the assistance of the others. Sid Wilson was confident he saw young Bliss go out of the water, but afterward found he was mistaken. The fact is Bliss was not seen again until his lifeless body was brought from the ocean.

There was, of course, a good deal of excitement over the rescue of the others, as owing to the roughness of the breakers it was difficult to launch the lifeboat. It was supposed for some time that Bliss was somewhere on shore, and therefore a search party was not sent out as soon as would have been the case under other circumstances.

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Funeral of Charles A. Bliss

The funeral of Charles A. Bliss, who was drowned at Ocean City, Md., Wednesday, will take place at 4 o'clock this afternoon from the residence of his father, 923 East Capitol street. Rev. George Havell will conduct the services at the house and at the grave. Interment will be at Congressional cemetery. The funeral will be private.

Messrs. Samuel Feland, H.S. Delaplaine, Russel Whelply and Alfred Erly will act as pallbearers. A number of beautiful floral pieces were contributed by friends of the deceased.