

## Catherine Louise Burnell ( - 16 Mar 1930)

*The Evening Star, March 17, 1930, p. 1*

### Maryland Probes Crash Of D.C. Car; 3 Dead, 3 Injured Auto Smashes Into Concrete Culvert and Plunges Into 20-Foot Ravine Woman's Body Is Found After Half-Hour Hunt Party En Route to Baltimore When Machine Meets Disaster Near Savage

Maryland authorities began an investigation today of the automobile accident on Baltimore boulevard last night which killed three Washingtonians and injured three others when an automobile crashed into a concrete culvert near Savage and hurled them into a 20-foot ravine.



Left to right, top row: Mrs. Howard O. Burnell, whose mangled body was found near a wreck last night on the Baltimore Boulevard beyond Laurel; Howard Burnell, driver, who was injured. Bottom row: Miss Gertrude Cephille and Miss Ethel Randolph, who were severely injured.

The dead:

Samuel Matthews, 23 years old, of No. 22 Todd place northeast, president of the Original Sam, Inc., department store in the 3100 block of M street.

George Posey, 25 years old, formerly of Rockville, who roomed at 3118 M street, employed in the trucking business here. He is the son of Charles Posey of Potomac, Md.

Mrs. Catherine Burnell, 24 years old, of 3114 M street.

Of the three survivors, the most seriously injured was Miss Gertrude Cephille, 23 years old, of Harrison, N.J. She received internal injuries. Her condition today had failed to improve.

#### *Party on Pleasure Trip*

The other two injured were Howard O. Burnell, 24 years old, a bricklayer and husband of the dead woman, living at 3114 M street, and Miss Ethel Randolph, 18 years old, of the 3000 block of O street.

With Burnell driving, the party of young people was en route to Baltimore on a pleasure trip.

According to ten eye-witness accounts of the wreck, given by a Washington newspaper man who was returning from Baltimore last night and was on the scene of the accident, an attempt by the driver of the death car to swerve his machine from the left side of the road and miss oncoming traffic caused the wreck.

The witness said: "The car was coming toward my car at a terrific rate of speed, far over on the left side of the road, headed straight into the west-bound stream of traffic. It swerved and careened as the driver, without reducing speed, sought to get the machine back onto the right side of the road. The driver pulled the wheel too far over, the car's left wheels hit the dirt on the right side of the road and the machine crashed into the culvert nearby. Parts of the car and clothing of the passengers flew high into the air as the machine hit."

The witness declared a large crowd gathered about the wreck car in a few minutes, and almost as soon as the wreckage settled in the ravine below the culvert a Maryland State policeman was on the scene.

### *Body Hurlled Long Distance*

One body was hurled so far from the wrecked machine that it was not located until half an hour after all the victims supposedly had been removed from the wreckage-strewn ravine.

Matthews and Posey were taken to St. Agnes Hospital, Baltimore, where they were pronounced dead. About 30 minutes after the accident, which occurred at 10:30 o'clock. Corpl. Beaseman of the Maryland State Police located the body of Mrs. Burnell. The body, crushed beyond recognition, was lying in the small stream flowing beneath the culvert. One leg had been amputated and the other partially so. The body was removed to a Laurel undertaking establishment,

A motorist took Burnell and the Randolph girl to St. Agnes Hospital, while Miss Cephillie was taken to the University of Maryland Hospital. Both Burnell, supposed to have a fractured skull, and Miss Randolph, who suffered internal injuries, are expected to recover.

The eight-cylinder car sideswiped a telephone pole, careened into the culvert and was almost completely demolished. The occupants of the car were lifted high into the air and descended into the 20-foot ravine amid a shower of debris.

Part of the car remained hanging over the culvert and the other bits were hurled a distance from the scene.

One woman's hat was found lodged on the limb of a tree 35 feet high and at some distance from the culvert.

### *Report to Justice of Peace*

Police believe the car in some manner got off the paved portion of the 40-foot highway, struck a telephone pole lying parallel to the road and was thrown into the culvert.

In addition to Corp. Beaseman, Sergt. Rassa and Pvt. Haddway of the Laurel substation investigated the accident. They made a report to Justice of the Peace Howard D. Gosnell at Savage, who had not decided early today if an inquest would be necessary.

One curious circumstance of the accident, friends of the party were told, was the fact that Miss Cephillie's brother passed the scene coming to Washington last night only a few moments after the tragedy and stopped to examine the wreckage without knowing his sister had been one of the victims.

*The Evening Star, March 18, 1930, p. B1*

### **Probers Informed 2 Left Death Car**

#### **Maryland Officers Learn Action Was Taken Because of Excessive Speed**

Maryland State police investigating circumstances surrounding the automobile accident Sunday near Savage, Md., in which three Washingtonians were killed and three others seriously injured, have been informed that two other passengers in the car left the group because it was being driven too fast before the crash occurred. The names of the two were not revealed.

As the investigation continued inquests into the deaths were being held in abeyance by coroners of two jurisdictions pending the outcome of injuries to the three victims now in Baltimore hospitals.

The police investigation centers around reports that the car, in which six persons were riding, was going at an excessive speed when it hit a culvert, catapulting its occupants with terrific force into a ravine.

The condition of Miss Ethel Randolph, 18 years old, 3000 block of O street, and of Miss Gertrude Cephillie, 23, of Harrison, N.J., was reported improved this morning, while Howard O. Burnell, 3100 block of M street, said to have been the driver of the car, was declared to be "about the same." Burnell has a fractured skull and his condition is considered serious. His wife was one of those killed, the others being Samuel Matthews, first block of Todd place northeast, and George Posey of Potomac, Md.

Justice of Peace Howard Gosnell of Savage and Dr. Germanus France, automobile coroner of Baltimore, are awaiting the further improvement of the patients before holding inquests. Gosnell has announced that his inquest will be over the body of Mrs. Burnell which was taken to a Laurel undertaking establishment, following its discovery half an hour after the other victims had been removed from the wreckage. Posey and Matthews were taken to Baltimore by passing motorists and pronounced dead at St. Agnes' Hospital.