

## Mary S.R. Canter

( - 21 Apr 1895 )

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**Canter.** Suddenly on Sunday evening, April 21, 1895, Miss Catherine R. Canter aged 18 years. Funeral service at Emmanuel P.E. Church, Anacostia, D.C. at 6 p.m., Tuesday April 23. Interment at Brick Church, Prince George's Co., Md. on Wednesday, April 24.

*The Evening Star, April 22, 1895*

### **A Double Tragedy**

#### **Two Young People Drowned in Eastern Branch**

#### **Generally Believed to Have Been an Accident--**

#### **The Bodies Recovered--Both Were Well Known**

A sad affair, by which two young people of Anacostia, Miss Katie Canter and Irving Lyles, lost their lives by drowning, occurred yesterday afternoon in the Eastern branch of the Potomac River, opposite Buzzard's Point. Both victims were well known in Anacostia. Both were members of the choir of Emmanuel Protestant Episcopal Church, and both were universally popular.

Rumors of a probable suicide on the part of each have been freely circulated in Anacostia, but careful investigation failed to substantiate such a theory, and there are no grounds for believing that the dreadful affair was other than an accident. Miss Canter and young Lyles occupied their usual places in the choir of Emmanuel Church yesterday morning, and after the conclusion of the church services agreed to take a boat ride on the river in the afternoon. Accordingly, between 1:30 and 2 o'clock they left Miss Canter's home on Fillmore street near Jefferson, where she resided with her father and stepmother, her own mother being dead, and went to French's boat house, corner of 11th street, Southeast Washington, where they hired a flat-bottomed boat. Lyles remarked to Mr. French, when engaging the boat that he preferred one of that sort, as he did not want one that would ever turn over. No attention was paid to the remark, except to comply with the request, as inexperienced persons who go boating often select similar boats.

On the way to the boat house the young couple met some friends to whom they spoke, and Lyles and Miss Canter both seemed to be in the best spirits. Seating themselves in the boat that Mr. French furnished them, Lyles took the oars and rowed a long distance down the river. On their way back and when nearly opposite Buzzard's Point, the unfortunate young people were seen to rise in the boat suddenly, and almost immediately both went into the river.

### *An Eye Witness*

So far as is known, Charles S. Martin, a young man who has lived his entire life in Anacostia, and knew Miss Canter and Lyles well, was the only witness of the tragedy. Martin had also been down the river in a boat and was returning to Anacostia, and when about 100 yards distant saw the movement which preceded the fall into the river of the young couple.

Martin hurried to the substation at Anacostia, where he told Sergt. Kerby and others that as soon as he saw Miss Canter and Lyles leave the boat he hastened to the scene. Miss Canter did not, he said, come to the surface at all, but Lyles rose twice and once seized hold of the boat. Even then Martin was too far away to render Lyles any assistance and, catching the boat, which was about to float away, towed it to French's boat house where it belonged. There it was found to contain Miss Canter's hat and parasol, which were properly taken care of.

### *One Body Found*

Sergt. Kerby at once reported the facts to Lieut. McCathran, at the fifth precinct station house, and as quickly as possible the police boat Joe Blackburn, with Harbor Master Sutton in charge, proceeded to the place where it was supposed the bodies were. After several hours search that of Miss Canter was found a short distance from where she went down, and brought to the surface, and then taken on board the vessel. The boat conveyed the remains to the 7th street wharf where Coroner Hammett was communicated with, and a little later were carried by an undertaker to Miss Canter's late house.

The news of the double drowning spread through Anacostia like wild fire, and by the time Miss Canter's body reached her father's house a large crowd of people had assembled in front of the place. Among them were a number of ladies who were personally acquainted with the dead girl, and they were so affected by the sight of the dripping garments as the body was carried in and the knowledge of her sad end that some narrowly escaped fainting and there were many whose eyes became dimmed with tears at the scene before them.

As soon as the body of Miss Canter had been put in a proper place then shore Harbor Master Sutton returned in the Joe Blackburn and her crew and renewed the search for the body of Lyles, but up to 10 p.m., when the attempts to recover it were abandoned for the night it had not been found. The search was renewed this morning, and finally resulted in success.

### *A Great Loss*

As has been already stated, Miss Canter was universally popular. She was also quite pretty, and her manners were such as to cause her to be a welcome visitor in any home. She was a daughter of Mr. George Canter, who has been employed in the navy yard for many years. Her stepmother is employed at the pension office and Miss Katie, who was just budding into womanhood, had the care of the household affairs. The Canter family has been greatly afflicted lately. A little more than a month ago Mrs. Downing, a sister of Mr. Canter, was taken ill at her home in Washington, and a second sister, Mrs. Rollins, went from her former home near Hughesville, Charles county, Maryland, to nurse her. Mrs. Downing died and her death was followed by that of Mrs. Rollins the next day.

Lyles was just past his eighteenth year. He was a plumber by trade and worked for a Washington house. He was a nice looking fellow and was respected as one of the best young men in Anacostia. He resided with his mother, Mrs. Albert Perkins at 321 Monroe street. Both families are completely prostrated by the sudden bereavement which has befallen them.

### *No Cause for Suicide*

The young couple was acquainted from childhood, and it is understood were engaged to be married. There was, so far as is known, no opposition to the match from either side, and the wedding was postponed only until such time as Lyles could earn a sufficient sum to enable him to properly care for his wife.

### *Probable Cause*

There seems to have been no reason whatever why Miss Canter and Lyles should wish to put an end to themselves, and the theory advanced today by an older waterman in reference to the matter seems to be the correct one. This was that Lyles had become tired while rowing and mentioned the fact to Miss Canter. She probably expressed a willingness to take the oars and they rose to exchange places. They met about midway of the boat, and in attempting to pass, the craft rocked and both were thrown into the river.

Coroner Hammett visited Anacostia today, and will decide whether or not an inquest shall be held.

### *Both Bodies*

The body of young Lyles was recovered by the crew of the Joe Blackburn about 10:30 o'clock this morning in exactly the same spot as that from which the body of Miss Canter was taken last evening. One of the men on the boat who assisted in the dragging said that he was certain that his hook caught the young man's clothing twice yesterday, but that he was unable to retain the hold.

Coroner Hammett visited Anacostia today, and after a thorough examination into all the circumstances, decided that there was no reason to hold an inquest, as he was convinced that the drownings were entirely accidental.

The arrangements for the funerals have not been fully completed, but it is understood that it will be a double one and will take place tomorrow from Emmanuel Church, to which the remains will be carried from the late homes of the deceased. The services will be conducted by the rector of the church, Rev. W.G. Davenport and the bodies will be placed side by side in the Congressional cemetery.

Mr. Canter, father of the dead girl, said today that his daughter had often expressed a wish that after death her body should be taken to the church and permitted to remain there all night previous to interment, but he feared that under all the circumstances her expressed desire in this particular would have to be disregarded.