

## **Robert L. Slater** **( - 27 Feb 1909)**

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*The Evening Star, February 28, 1909, p. 14*

### **Loud Cries For Help Heard Twining City Residents Aroused By Appeals Nothing Discovered on Investigation, But Apprehension of a Tragedy Is Entertained**

Residents of Twining City were aroused last night at about 11:15 o'clock by piteous cries for help which appeared to come from the Washington side of the river. An investigation by several persons, who rushed across the Pennsylvania Avenue bridge pointed to a tragedy of some kind that was unsolved at a late hour last night. A passenger on a car for Randle Highlands crossing the bridge shortly before 11:30 o'clock last night said that two negroes ran across the bridge and turned toward Benning after telling one of the searchers that they had heard no noise.

The Washington side of the river at that point is about as gloomy and dark a place as there is in the city. The bank slopes down steeply to the water's edge, and below the bridge are railroad tracks on which is no light except that of an occasional passing train. Looking down upon the place from the bridge always gives pedestrians an unpleasant sensation, and when the cries were first heard coming from the pit-like depression several men who had gone to bed dressed themselves and rushed to give what assistance they could.

A first the cries were very loud. "For God's sake, help me. I can't hold out much longer," in a man's voice was heard very nearly in every part of Twining City. Among the first men to get to the Washington side of the bridge were Charles N. Baker and Arthur L. Baker. They plunged down the bank and began a careful search, but the cries had become almost inaudible and finally ceased.

The searchers called out, "Where are you?" several times, but received no answer.

The two negroes mentioned climbed up the bank about the time the Twining City people were arriving. They said they had heard nothing, but the answer did not satisfy the men who had been aroused by the cries, and they told the motorman of a car which stopped on the bridge to have the policeman at the east end arrest the men. By the time the car reached the policeman the negroes were out of his reach. They turned into the Anacostia road and went off in the direction of Benning at a rapid pace.

The men who heard the cries and searched the place firmly believe that some one was killed and thrown into the river.

*The Evening Star, March 1, 1909, p. 20*

### **Fisherman's Body In River Slater Fell From Coal Chute Near Bridge Drowning Man's Cries Roused Twining City Residents, But Help Came Too Late**

The man whose piteous cries for help roused residents of Twining City to the north end of the Pennsylvania Avenue bridge, at a late hour Saturday night, as stated in The Sunday Star, was Robert Slater, thirty-five years of age, who lived with his wife and child at 242 1/2 14th street southeast. Slater had left home earlier in the night to go fishing, and members of the crew of the police boat recovered the body shortly after 6 o'clock.

When the body was taken from the channel of the river near the coal chutes of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company it was fully dressed. Fishing tackle found in the coat pockets indicated that Slater had fallen overboard before he started to fish. Charles N. Baker, Arthur L. Baker, George Sears and Policeman Seabin, who responded to the cries for assistance Saturday night, it is believed, could have saved him had he been able to keep himself above the surface of the water one minute longer.

It took the men several minutes to run from Twining City to the north end of the bridge. They responded to his cries for help by shouting to him to hold on to the coal chute until they could reach him, but his cries ceased just before the north end of the bridge was reached and he sank below the surface of the water.

During the investigation yesterday the police learned that a man and woman were seen near the water's edge some time before he accident occurred, but, they say, there is nothing unusual about such persons being seen about there. They were not there at the time Slater was drowned. Two colored men were crossing the bridge and heard the cries, but they were too much frightened to go to the man's assistance.

Coroner Nevitt made an investigation of the drowning last night. He learned from relatives of the dead man that the latter, who was a tinner, had been in the habit of spending his Saturday nights fishing. They were satisfied that he had accidentally fallen overboard and lost his life. The coroner gave a certificate of accidental death, and Underaker Schippert took charge of the body to prepare it for burial.

The Washington Post, March 2, 1909, p. 9

Think Drowning Accidental

Police Complete Inquiry Into Death of Robert Slater

After investigation by the police of the Anacostia station and detectives of the central office into the drowning of Robert Slater in the Eastern Branch last Saturday night, officials said that they were convinced that the man fell from a pier from which he had been fishing.

Police of the Harbor precinct recovered the body. It showed no evidences of foul play. A heavy overcoat which the man wore evidently dragged him down. Slater was 35 years old and lived with his wife and family at 242 1-2 Fourteenth street southeast.