

Richard B. Smith **(- 12 Jul 1903)**

Smith. On July 12, 1903, Richard B. Smith, who was struck by lightning at the bathing beach, aged 33 years. Funeral will take place from the undertaking establishment of Joseph A. Repetti, 317 Pennsylvania avenue southeast. Notice of funeral later.

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Killed By Lightning

Death and Destruction Caused by Electric Storm

At the Bathing Beach

Richard B. Smith Receives a Fatal Shock

Twelve Others Injured--Fluid Passes From Flag Pole to Interior of Boat House

Death and destruction followed in the wake of yesterday's storm, shortly after noon. At times it appeared that even the houses were shaken, and the thousands of persons who were on the streets, returning from the morning services in the churches, were forced to seek shelter in any convenient place. Some went under awnings and were drenched, while many of those who sought shelter in street cars were no better off. Lightning struck a number of places and did considerable damage.

The most serious damage done was at the bathing beach, where one life was sacrificed and a dozen persons were injured. The man who was killed was Richard B. Smith, a one-legged man, who was employed as a machinist in the navy yard. His home was at 613 South Carolina avenue. The list of injured includes Policeman Banagan, who does duty at the bathing beach; Jacob Hekimian, an Armenian, 21 years old; Frank Lombardy, 17 years old, son of Policeman Lombardy; 400 1st street northwest; Duncan Thompson, 13 years old, 228 ½ 13 ½ street southwest; William Lines, 37 years old, employed as a District foreman, 117 2d street northwest; Charles Slaughter, colored, 20 years old, 43 Defrees street northwest; George B. Eshelman, 22 years old, a press feeder, 474 Massachusetts avenue northwest; George Washington, colored, 13 years old, 444 Prather's alley northwest; F.F. Sheckles, 20 years old, a bookkeeper, 1300 10th street northwest; Daniel Cunningham, colored, 24 years old, 14 Decatur street northeast; Robert Carroll, colored, 22 years old, 12 Decatur street northeast, and Oliver Patterson, colored, living at 10 Decatur street northeast.

Crowd of Bathers

Because of the intense heat yesterday morning a big crowd of men and boys made an early start for the bathing beach and scores of them were in the water. Many of them started toward the shore at the first sign of the approach of the storm, while others remained until the last minute. More than a score of bathers reached the boat house and sought shelter in the building rather than risk going to the dressing rooms. Those fared worst who took refuge in the boat house, where Moses N. Hekimian, an Armenian, conducts a refreshment stand. Smith, who was an expert swimmer despite the loss of his leg, was assisted from the shallow water to the boat house on the back of a friend. His attention was attracted to one of the boys who was hastening to get out of the path of the lightning and his remark was that there was no use trying to dodge lightning. He told the boy it would do no good to run, as one place was no safer than another. About this time there were several boats being rowed in the direction of the shore and two boats in which there were no occupants were overturned.

Those who had reached the boat house were standing near the open door watching what was going on outside. While they were thus employed the crash came. The tall flagpole on the boat house was struck by lightning and several of those who had sought shelter in the building suddenly fell to the floor. Smith was instantly killed, and for a short time it was believed that others were dead. It was several minutes before those who were but slightly stunned recovered their senses and were able to move. Charles Slaughter was unconscious and William Lines was also in an apparently serious condition. Slaughter's clothing had caught fire, but the flames were extinguished before he was burned. Duncan Thompson, who soon recovered from the fright and the effects of the shock, ran and told Police Banagan of what had occurred.

Hospital Physicians Notified

One glance in the boat house assured the policeman that physicians were needed, and he started off on a run to the Emergency Hospital. On the way to the hospital the policeman fell from exhaustion, but he recovered his strength enough to enable him to resume his journey. He fell a second time, and it is his idea that a shock from lightning had something to do with his fall. When he finally reached the hospital he was in a state of collapse and it was not until a stimulant had been administered that he was able to give the doctors the information that they were needed at the bathing beach. Drs. Dunn, Perkins and Hussey, resident physicians at the hospital entered the ambulance and the animal attached to the vehicle made a quick run through the rain.

Upon reaching the boat house the physicians faced a condition of affairs that required quick and heroic action, having made preparations to treat the victims while being conveyed from the river front in the ambulance. They found that Smith was dead and that those who were still unconscious were Slaughter and Lines. The former had been burned in addition to suffering from the effects of the shock. Lines had been injured by falling and had lost some blood. When the physicians had given them what treatment they could at the boat house the two victims were placed in the ambulance and driven to the hospital. Under the hospital treatment they soon got better, and this morning the belief was expressed that they will recover.

Eshelman, Washington and Sheckles were conveyed to the hospital in one of Knox's express wagons that happened to be on the river front at the time the building was struck. They had received minor burns and injuries and were sent to their homes yesterday afternoon.

Death Certificate Given

The body of Smith was removed to the morgue, and Coroner Nevitt gave the necessary death certificate. Undertaker Repetti conveyed the body from the morgue to his undertaking establishment this morning and prepared it for burial. There were two distinct marks on the body, showing the lines traversed by the lightning. They seemed to have started from the collar buttons and gone down the entire length of the body.

Smith's father, R.B. Smith, sr., is a machinist on the U.S.S. Marine, now undergoing repairs at Cramps' shipyards, Philadelphia, and his wife was on a visit to relatives at her former home in Baltimore yesterday. The father and wife were notified of his death. Arrangements for the funeral had not been completed this morning. It is believed that the two victims in the hospital will not be able to leave there for many days.

Given a Scare

The shock that caused so much damage at the bathing beach was felt at the house of detention, where the prisoners and attendants were given a scare. Four colored women were held as prisoners in one of the large cells on the upper floor, and they were so badly frightened that they crawled under the

bed, and all that was to be seen of them when the frightened matron returned to the room were their eight feet protruding from beneath the bed. Those who were on the first floor on the structure saw what appeared to be a ball of fire pass through the building. Some of them felt the shock. The building sustained no damage nor was anybody hurt.

During the storm at noon Johnson's Hotel and H.J. Staley's lunchroom were not damaged but a number of persons were frightened. The streets were flooded and water caused some damage in cellars. When the second electric storm appeared in the afternoon people were better prepared for it, and there were not so many persons on the street. During this storm, Mary Shipley, the 15-year-old daughter of Wyatt Shipley, a grocer, was rendered unconscious by a bolt of lightning. She was seated at the front window of her parent's house on Good Hope Hill at the time. A physician was summoned from Anacostia. The child recovered in a short time.

Part of a chimney of the Corcoran building at Pennsylvania avenue and 15th street, was blown down during this storm. A mailbox on the corner was demolished and a pedestrian had a narrow escape. The chimney at the house of Dr. E.E. Cissel, 2117 Pennsylvania avenue, was struck by lightning. About \$25 damage was caused. An alarm of fire was sounded last night from box 729. This was caused by the crossing of wires near the M street bridge, and was due to the storm.