

## William X. Stevens

(21 Dec 1835 – 15 Feb 1924)

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*The Washington Post, August 21, 1889, p. 7*

### **A Place To Bathe**

#### **A Much-Needed Association Asks Official Indorsement**

A communication from W.X. Stevens, president; P.L. Tate, Robert H. Yeatman, John B. Clark, jr., William L. Phillips, and James W. Webster, was received by the Commissioners yesterday, in which the writers state that they have organized the Washington Beach Association, for the purpose of forming and maintain a beach for fine public bathing in the waters of the Potomac.

They ask the privilege of depositing and removing sand and other materials at their own expense, to form a bathing beach along the shore of the tidal basin adjacent to the monument grounds, and that they and all other respectable and well-behaved persons be permitted to bathe there, in accordance with the rules of the association. They also ask for a detail of police to preserve , and order. The Commissioners referred Mr. Stevens to the War Department.

*The Washington Post, July 31, 1896, p. 7*

### **Race For Lady Swimmers**

#### **Feature of the Bathing Beach Contests Next Week**

#### **Superintendent Stevens Fixes Upon Thursday for the Races, and Announces a Series of Events, for Which Prizes Are Offered**

There will be a great time at the bathing beach next Thursday afternoon. Supt. William X. Stevens, of the beach, has arranged a series of races and diving contests for that day, and the entries, it is expected, will be numerous. The contests are only open to patrons of the bathing beach who have been there to swim at least three times, and the winner of each contest will receive a handsome gold medal; the second best will receive an equally elegant silver medal. These medals have all been contributed by prominent people in this city, including Supt. Stevens.

The events will include plain diving, in which a graceful curve and turn endwise entry to the water shall be the points to be judged.

Fancy diving, comprising somersaults, flip-flaps, diving from the south springboard of the float and somersaults, and long-throw diving from swing rings, and somersault diving from the cross piece at the top of the swing.

A fifty-yard race, for boys under sixteen years of age, will be an interesting event.

So, too, will the 100-yards dash, open for all ages, be interesting.

The feature of the day, however, will be the women's race, for a valuable mandolin, or some other musical instrument of equal value. Mr. Stevens is trying to obgtain a large number of entries for tthis contest. There are many young women who visit the beach that are excellent swimmers, and if they all enter the race it will be a pleasant and exciting feature of the programme.

A contest will be arranged, also, for the winners of medals, which will include diving and swimming.

The contests will begin at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The tide will be high then and the water suitable.

For half an hour before the first event the general public will have a chancde to make a display of diving and swimming. Mr. Stevens has arranged for ample police protection, and the river will be kept free from obstructions. Seats that will accommodate 300 people are now at the beach, and on Thursday additional facilities for comfort will be provided.

*The Washington Post, September 13, 1904, p. 12*

### **Bathing Beach Plans**

#### **Improvements Recommended by Superintendent**

#### **Would Make The Lake Safe**

#### **Propose that It Be Drained and the Bottom Covered With Sand --**

#### **This Also Would Operate to Destroy Weeds That Have Proved A**

#### **Nuisance -- Says Cost Would Not Be Excessive**

Comprehensive plans, looking to the improvement of the bathing beach, are outlined in the annual report of the Superintendent W.X. Stevens, in charge of the beach. This report was submitted through Dr. William Tindall, chairman of the bathing beach committee, to Commissioner West, yesterday. Should the superintendent's plans be adopted and executed, the local beach will have few superiors as a safe and desirable place of bathing.

One of the improvements he suggests is the proper grading and sanding of the bottom of the lake. In order to do this it would be necessary to empty the basin. By such a plan he would accomplish several objects. Among other things, he would eradicate the weeds and remedy the treacherous ground and changes of depths likely to result in drowning.

"Some years ago, before the lake was open to the public," he says, "a swimmer became entangled in the matted weeds and was drowned. These weeds are still a source of danger to the venturesome and they greatly restrict the free use of the swimming lake, but they do not render the water unhealthy for bathing.

#### *Common to Fresh Water*

"Such weeds grow in all the shallow waters of the Potomac, and in nearly all inland waters where there is not a strong current. We have experimented with rakes and with a heavy chain, but the weeds cannot be pulled out in bulk." He estimates that by sanding the lake bottom it will require not more than \$100 annually to keep it clean of weeds.

To prevent the drowning of persons through suddenly finding themselves beyond depths, he would have the bottom of the lake made like a great playground, and as even as a floor. "Then the water may be held at one depth," says he. "It will be enough to swim in and yet not so deep but that the learner or those engaged in romping and invigorating sports may at any time stand on the bottom with head and shoulders out of water."

He would have deep water alongside the more shallow water, but separated therefrom by a wharf, over which any person must climb to get into deep water. "Our swimming lake would permit a straight swimming course of 220 yards," he says, "and long-distance swimmers might repeat this eighth of a mile as many times as they wish to, and yet be at all times within easy reach of the lifeguards. The contestants would always be directly in view of the spectators, so that even a mile race might be made interesting from beginning to end."

Another improvement he would have is the rebuilding of the dressing houses on a lighter, more airy and economical plan with the switchboard locking system.

#### *Good Grounds Of Complaint*

"The best people who patronize the beach have complained bitterly on account of the small number of dressing rooms and lockers for clothing," reports the superintendent, "and of the bad odor of the premises. On hot days the dressing stalls and aisles are so filled that there is hardly elbow room, and privacy is impossible. At such times the lockers are wadded with clothing, and as the most crowded days are Sundays, when people are at leisure and in their good clothes, the close atmosphere of the

great dark dressing house, saturated with malodorous moisture from the wringing of bathing suits and punctuated with profanity from some of the disgusted patrons, does not inspire happy expressions of sentiment toward those who made such provisions for public comfort."

During the past year the beach was opened eighty-nine days. The first day's attendance was 748, and on ten days during the season there were more than 1,000 at the beach. On Sunday, June 26, the largest crowd swarmed in the water, there being 2,010 on the register. That was the largest attendance in the history of the beach. For the season the attendance showed 631 women at the beach, 29,406 white males, and 5,760 colored. The amount received for the rental of bathing suits was \$566.30. There were no drownings, but the lifeguards made twenty-eight rescues.

*The Washington Post, April 26, 1908*

### **Will Have Charge Of Beach**

#### **Oliver M. Bright Has Been Named A Superintendent**

Oliver M. Bright has been appointed superintendent of the bathing beach, to succeed W.X. Stevens. The appointment takes effect June 1. It was made upon the recommendation of the committee on bathing beach of the Playgrounds Association of which Dr. William Tindall is chairman. Mr. Bright at present is assistant supervisor of playgrounds.

The work of placing the beach in order for the coming season will be begun immediately.

*The Washington Post, May 28, 1912, p. 5*

Eleventh St. and Virginia Ave. S.W. -- William X. Stevens to Margret S. Huddleson, part original lot 2, square north of 351, \$10.

Dobbins Addition -- Alexander Miller ex ux. To William X. Stevens, lot 58, square 3123, \$10.