

Frederick Taft (- 16 May 1896)

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Fred Taft Drowned

Brave Effort at Rescue by Policeman Phil Browns

This afternoon a few minutes before 1 o'clock there was an exciting scene and a sad fatality on the river front at what is known as the little basin, near the bathing beach. Fred Taft, sixteen years old, whose parents live at 429 1st street northeast, was in swimming with a party of companions, and there was as exciting scene when he called "Help," and went beneath the surface of the water. There were several companions in the party, most of them pupils of the Blake school, and during the day's enjoyment about the river some one in the party dared young Taft to swim across the basin and back.

"I can do it," said the plucky fellow, "and I'm not afraid to try it."

He was as good as his word. he was not afraid to try it, and plunging into the cold water boldly struck out in the direction of the other side of the basin. In a short while he was safe and sound on the other side, and when he reached the shallow water he stood and called across the basin to let his companions know that he had partly succeeded.

Without waiting many minutes to rest himself he returned to the deep water and started back in the direction of those whom he had left on the shore to welcome him upon his return.

His stroke was as steady as it had been on the outward trip, but soon the youthful swimmer noticed that there was something the matter. The water had probably chilled him so that he was losing the use of his limbs, but he continued to do his best, and it was not until he was within fifteen or twenty feet of the shore that he realized that he was giving out and would need assistance.

"I don't think I can make it," he called to those on shore and the next instant he cried for help. Then he sank beneath the surface, and all his companions could see of him were his feet.

"Save him," shouted one after another of his companions, and two of them, Joseph Demar and Frank Pugh, jumped in the water and went toward him. When they got in reaching distance they saw his feet, and might have rescued him, but they feared he would drag them under the water, and so they returned and sent word around to the bathing beach. There Policeman Philip Browne was found, and he soon made his way to the spot, and, diving, had the youth out of the water.

A quick trip was made to the Emergency Hospital and a half dozen physicians worked over the body for an hour and a half before they would give up in their attempts to bring him to. It was the general opinion, however, that life was extinct before the body was brought to the surface.

Policeman Browne was warmly congratulated on his pluck and heroism, for it was not an easy task to dive in such a place, where there was every chance of being caught among the submerged timbers.