

Naomi Yates (- 27 Mar 1907)

The Evening Star, March 27, 1907, p. 2

Death in The Canal

Young Woman, Aged About 16, Commits Suicide

Body is Soon Recovered

Persons Who Witnessed the Tragedy Unable to Effect Rescue

Name of Girl Not Learned

Act Was Deliberate and Followed Perusal of Letter--

The Remains at the Morgue

A neatly dressed girl about sixteen years of age, after placing her hat and coat upon the wall of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, about one mile above Georgetown, shortly after 11 o'clock this morning, deliberately walked to the bank of the canal and jumped in. Persons who were near undertook to rescue her, but after floating in the water for ten or fifteen minutes and apparently strangling the young woman sank below the surface and did not reappear. At the point where she placed her hat and wrap upon the wall there is a gap, and to those who stood some distance away, but too far to render immediate aid, she was seen to lay the hat and garment down deliberately and walk through the aperture to the bank, which stands about four feet above the canal. As she stood there she was apparently perusing a letter, but was suddenly seen to tear the paper into small bits, and a moment thereafter plunged into the waters of the canal. George Portch, who lives near the scene; William Anderson of Tenleytown and Mr. and Mrs. G.A. Harlow of 3513 Prospect avenue northwest witnessed the occurrence and immediately raised an outcry.

After several attempts to recover the body the efforts were abandoned until the arrival of the harbor police boat and several policemen from the seventh precinct station, which is located in Georgetown. The body was then dragged for, and shortly after 1 o'clock was recovered and immediately thereafter removed to the morgue to await identification.

Mr. Anderson stated to a Star reporter at noon that if he had not been afraid of being drowned himself on account of the heavy clothes he wore he would have dived into the waters of the canal and attempted to rescue the young woman.

The wrap which the girl placed upon the canal wall was made of a gray material, with stripes of the same shade, while the hat was of gray felt. She was neatly attired in a white shirt waist and black skirt. Her hair was of a light brown shade.

When the body was recovered a number of collection envelopes were found in a pocket in her clothing. These envelopes had printed upon them "Father Lights, 508 Tremont Temple, Boston," and on one envelope was written the name "N. Frances." The scraps of the letter which the girl had read before jumping into the water were carefully picked up by the superintendent of the tracks of the Washington Traction Company and later turned over to the police.

It is believed that the letter was from a young man friend of the girl, and that an engagement which she had had with him had not been kept, and for that reason and her disappointment she concluded to end her life. Upon several of the parts of the letter as gathered up the word "love" was noted.

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Identified By Uncle

Name of Girl Who Committed Suicide Disclosed

Naomi Yates, Stepdaughter of Albert Francis, and Pupil in the Dent School

The name of the girl who committed suicide yesterday by drowning in the canal, as stated in yesterday's Star, has been ascertained to be Naomi Yates, the name N. Francis which was written on an envelope found in her coat pocket being her adopted name. Her stepfather, Albert Francis, lives at 764 6th street southeast. Naomi, who was sixteen years of age, was a pupil at the Dent School. She did not go to school yesterday, and when she failed to appear at home during the noon recess her mother and stepfather became uneasy. They made inquiries about her, only to find that she had not been at school. It is stated the child had been away from home on prior occasions, and her parents thought she had gone to the home of relatives. Late yesterday afternoon, however, they learned of the suicide.

It is stated that about two weeks ago Naomi threatened she would end her life by throwing herself in front of a street car. At that time, it is said, she remained at the home of a friend overnight, and in the morning she told the latter she had 9 cents in her pocket.

"I'm going as far as the 9 cents will take me," she said, "and then I'm going to throw myself in front of a street car."

Friend Gives Counsel

The friend of the child hardly thought she meant to take her life, but she talked to her about the wrong she would do by committing such an act, and Naomi went home instead of taking her proposed last car ride. Naomi was a devout member of the Sunday school at the Second Baptist Church and was looked upon as being one of the best Bible scholars in the school. The envelopes found in her coat pocket she had been given by the church people to get filled for a Boston charity. She suffered from an affliction of the hip, and her ailment caused her considerable trouble.

It is said that she had arranged to attend a dance and that this was not looked upon with favor by some of her relatives. As stated yesterday, a letter was torn in small pieces by the girl just before she leaped from the bank of the canal.

Contents of Letter

The Georgetown police last night put together enough of the letter to enable them to read:

"My Dear Girlie: I am sorry my little girl has become tired of serving a kind and loving Savior and that she is serving his enemy. I am hoping that you will change your mind about going to the dance. Am sorry that you and Ada are not on the best of terms, but I am not surprised. You were too thick.

"Now, dearie, of course I am not going to scold you. Won't you give up everything and look to Jesus? You're grieving him far more than ---

"I have given my best energies to help you to be a girl pleasing in God's sight. Won't you come back? I say won't you come back, because, dearie, you have wandered away. Hoping yet to see my little girl a bright and happy Christian, I am with lots of love and kisses, your aunt

"NET."

The letter that was destroyed by Miss Yates was not written by her aunt, as was at first supposed, but by her Sunday school teacher, Miss Jennette Teachum. As stated, the young woman contemplated taking her life at the time she made the remark about the 9 cents, and that money she still had yesterday when she parted with a companion, after telling her she was going to dispose of the money "the same as she had told another friend two weeks ago." When her stepfather learned yesterday she had not been in school during the morning he searched her room and found some writings left there by her which indicated that she had been considering the question of suicide, expressing herself upon the question in poetry. It is stated that she had written messages to friends telling of her affliction and saying there was nothing left in the world for which she wanted to live.

Harry J. Luskey, uncle of the deceased, read the account of the suicide of the girl yesterday afternoon, and later in the day he went to the morgue and identified the body. Coroner Nevitt made an investigation and gave the necessary certificate of death. Undertaker J. William Lee took charge of the body and removed it to the home of the family. It is likely that the funeral will take place tomorrow.