

George Colton Burch

(- 5 Aug 1906)

Burch. On Sunday, August 5, 1906 at noon, at Colonial Beach, Va., George Colton Burch, only son of J.B. and Lillian Burch, in the 16th year of his age. Funeral services at his father's residence, 511 D street southeast, Tuesday morning, 11 o'clock.

The Evening Star, August 6, 1906, p. 2

Loses Life in River

George Colton Burch Drowned at Colonial Beach

Body Brought to This City

Funeral From the Residence of the Parents Tomorrow Morning

Sad Ending of a Lad's Outing

Had Gone Out in a Boat With Others and the Craft Was Overturned

The remains of George Colton Burch, fifteen years of age, of 511 D street southeast, who was drowned yesterday morning shortly before 11:30 o'clock at Colonial Beach, were brought to this city this morning and conveyed to Lee's undertaking establishment, where they were prepared for burial and thence to the family home.

The funeral will take place tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock at the residence of his parents, Rev. Mr. Graves, pastor of the Falls (Va.) Church Baptist Church, will officiate. Interment will be at Congressional cemetery. The pallbearers, who were chosen from among the boy's young companions, will be Walter White, Edwin Tyler, Evans Reed, Harold Shannon, Samuel McCauley and John Hardey.

There were several hundred bathers within easy reach of young Burch, but none knew that he was in danger. He had gone out with three companions, all of Washington, in a rowboat. The names of the boys could not be definitely learned, but it is said one was Roland Boller and another was named Robertson. The third has not been identified.

After leaving the beach the boys began to frolic in the boat and the craft was overturned, plunging the four occupants into the water. Burch was the only one who could not swim. For a time his companions, who believed he was a swimmer, thought he was showing them his ability in remaining under water. They were sure he would come up again, and they said nothing.

At last they raised an outcry, and many of the bathers went to the rescue. All of them dived into the water frequently in search of the boy, but always came up empty-handed. The search lasted fully two hours before a man brought the lad to the surface. The name of the man who recovered the body was not stated, although it is known that he lives on 11th street southeast.

Most of the bathers had paid no attention to the upturned boat, believing the boys had done it purposely. A sister of young Burch was bathing at the time of the accident, and was informed of her brother's death. She swooned before she could reach the shore, and it was with difficulty that she was kept above the surface while being taken to the beach. Restoratives were applied and she soon recovered.

Mr. J.R. Burch, father of the drowned boy is assistant superintendent of the Prudential Insurance Company at the Commercial National Bank building in this city. He was spending the day with Mrs. Burch, his son and his three daughters, Miss L.M. Burch, Miss D.A. Burch and Miss Lillian Burch, at the beach. All of these excepting the boy, went down the river Friday. Young Burch, who was employed for the summer by the Southern Railway Company, followed them Saturday evening.

Incorrect Rumor

It was at first stated that the boys were diving from the boat, but this statement, according to Mr. Burch, is not correct. He states that his son could not swim, and therefore would not attempt to dive.

Harbormaster Sutton, who is ill at his cottage at Colonial Beach, where he is passing his vacation, sent a man with the grappling irons to search for the body of the boy after he was told of the accident.

As soon as the body was recovered arrangements were made by the family to return to Washington. They applied to the captain of the steamboat St. Johns for permission to bring the body to this city aboard the boat, but the request was denied. Mr. Burch, however, was relieved of all anxiety in this respect, Mr. Robert H. Bontz of 11 N street northwest, employed at the Columbia Theater, offering his launch, the B.C.L., and his services, which were gratefully accepted.

The boy's body was cared for in the best manner then possible and the launch left Colonial Beach at 11 o'clock last night, arriving at the 7th street wharf this morning at half past 6. Those in the boat besides its owner were Mr. Burch, F.L. Walter of 27 1/2 Bates street northwest and E. Leaman of 764 Gresham street northwest.

When seen at his home this morning, Mr. Burch said he would have to be excused for not giving many details. "I haven't quite completely recovered from the shock. All the funeral arrangements have been completed. As to my family, all are prostrated, especially Mrs. Burch. I owe a debt of gratitude to a great many people, but especially to Mr. Bontz, who certainly proved to be a great friend at such a time."

"I offered my services and my launch to Mr. Burch," said Mr. Bontz to a Star reporter today, "when I first learned of the accident. Why the body was refused by the captain of the St. Johns I cannot tell."

"It was imperative that the body be brought into Washington at once as the law allows only thirty hours after death for a body to be brought into the city, without first being embalmed and prepared for burial. There were no such facilities at the beach, and therefore the need of a quick conveyance."

In speaking about the accident, Mr. Walter said that the boys had more than likely been rocking the boat, and that when they went under water George Burch did not come to the surface because he was not a swimmer. He added that the run from Colonial Beach was made in good time, considering the handicaps of the hurried run at night. The B.C.L. is a launch thirty-five feet in length, and has been used by the owner for pleasure only.

Statement of Steamboat Company

At the offices of the E.A. Randall Steamboat Company it was stated that the reason the body of the drowned boy was not accepted for transportation aboard the St. Johns was because his family did not have the required coroner's certificate. Furthermore it would have been impossible to procure the certificate before the hour set for the boat to leave for Washington.

The Evening Star, August 7, 1906, p. 5

Funeral of George C. Burch

Lad Who Was Drowned at Colonial Beach Buried Today

The funeral of George Colton Burch, the boy who was drowned at Colonial Beach Sunday, occurred this morning from his late home, 511 D street southeast, Rev. A.W. Graves, pastor of the Falls Church, Va. Baptist Church, an uncle of the dead boy, officiated. Interment was at Congressional cemetery, many of the schoolmates of young Burch attending. Many beautiful floral pieces were placed upon the casket. The pallbearers were Walter White, Edwin Tyler, Evans Reed, Harold Shannon, Sam McCauley and John Hardy.

The body of the boy was found two hours after the drowning, one hundred yards out. It was recovered by Toye Olsen and John Kees, Dr. William G. Schafhirt of 1008 F street made every effort to resuscitate the boy, but it was finally conceded that life was extinct.

Coroner W.C. Minor held an inquest, and the jury composed of Charles T. Terry, P. Snider, George W. Staples, Henry Staples and C.S. Rowley, rendered a verdict of accidental drowning.

In an interview with a reporter for The Star, J.B. Burch, the boy's father, declared that the statement made at the office of the E.S. Randall Steamboat Company of the reasons for declining to bring home the boy's body aboard the St. Johns the evening of the drowning, printed in yesterday's Star, was not correct.

"I wish to state," said Mr. Burch, "that the statement relative to the coroner's certificate is unqualifiedly false. I had the necessary coroner's certificate in my pocket when I asked Captain Randall to allow the remains of my boy to be brought up on the St. Johns. Captain Randall did not ask me if I had such a certificate, but most positively refused to allow me to bring my dead son up on said boat under any circumstances."

"I make this statement to correct any false or erroneous impression which may have been conveyed by the above statement of the E.S. Randall Company.