

BAKER, J. ERNEST
1904-July 4, 1924

Ernest Baker, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Baker of the Laramie River canyon, and a well known Wheatland high school student and athlete, lost his life in a swimming hole on that river about 5:30 p.m. on July 4th.

Young Baker had been attending a picnic party of friends and relatives in the canyon, and in the company of his brother Robert Baker, Jr., Ernest Jones and Ray Roff had gone to a spot about a half mile from the others to enjoy a swim, in a hole located about a fourth mile above the mouth of Duck Creek where the old Elk Trail crosses the river.

Robert Baker and Jones plunged in first, and swam across the pool, a distance of about 40 feet, and back. Ernest Baker was standing on the edge of the pool as they returned, and challenged them to a race across again. They plunged in and swam to the other side, and looked back just in time to see Baker going down in the middle of the pool, where the water was ten feet deep. Robert Baker dived to his rescue, raising him from the bottom of the pool to the surface, when he became exhausted and obligated to give up. After a short breathing spell, he made the attempt again, but was unable to get the body to the shore.

A peculiar feature of the accident was that Ernest was never seen to rise to the surface after he sank for the first time. Robert Baker stated that he found his body perfectly limp in the bottom of the river when he went down the first time, less than a minute after he saw him go down.

Robert Baker, Sr. arrived meanwhile and secured a long pole, with the aid of which they were able to get the body ashore, after it had been in the water about 30 minutes.

He was carried as quickly as possible to an automobile, but so much time was occupied getting out of the precipitous canyon, that it was nearly midnight when they finally arrived in Wheatland. A physician was summoned, but he found that life had been extinct for several hours, and that in all probability, he had been dead when taken from the river.