

BRUNER, GEORGE WALTER
1908-1928

George Bruner, age 20, one of Wheatland's finest young men and the only son of Mrs. Patience Bruner, is dead. Young Bruner came to an untimely end Sunday when he drowned in the Little Reservoir, eight miles southwest of town at 5:30 p.m., about 100 feet from shore.

George's last act was a favor to his fellow man. Billy Houseworth, young son of Mr. and Mrs. E.J. Houseworth, had been playing alone in a rowboat, and unnoticed, the boat had drifted quite a distance from the shore. The boy's father and several other persons then became somewhat alarmed. Just at this time George walked from the water and offered to swim to the boat and bring the boy to shore. As the swimmer approached the boat, Billy extended his hand to assist him and George's last words were "Don't do that," as he reached for the side of the boat. Without ever touching the boat, he sank and never came to the surface.

Almost immediately, David Cochrane, who was one of the several bathers present, attempted to save the youth. Cochrane, after diving several times, could not locate him. Francis Agnew and several other swimmers then attempted rescue without success. In the meantime, Mayor O.O. Natwick, who was one of a picnic party nearby, was informed that George was under water. Natwick immediately left for the nearest telephone and had to go to the Yellowstone highway before reaching one. An alarm was turned in to the fire department and the siren sent forth its shrill cry for aid. Members of the fire department responded with hooks and ropes. Then began an exhaustive search for the unfortunate young man.

News of the drowning spread over Wheatland rapidly and hundreds of people drove to the scene of the tragedy as rescue crews of citizens were quickly formed in an effort to locate the body. Every available rescue method was brought into play, but it was not until 10:50 p.m., that the barbed wire lines with which the lake was combed came in contact with the arms and brought the body to the surface. The left hand was resting against the left cheek and the right arm rested across the chest when the body was brought to shore.

A tragic death claimed George Bruner at a time at a time his mother was attending a family reunion at Plankinton, S.D., and word of the tragedy was first broken to his sister, Mae, and who was alone in the house, and later to Mrs. A.R. VanAuken, who resides in the country. A phone message to Plankinton that evening informed the mother of the sad news and in company with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Nelson of Stickney, S.D., the latter, her sister, Mrs. Bruner began a journey of 500 miles at 4:30 o'clock Monday morning and at 11:00 A.M. Tuesday, she reached Wheatland.

As soon as the body was removed from the reservoir, it was conveyed to the Watson Mortuary and arrangements made for funeral services at the M.E. church at 2:30 Monday afternoon. Friends of the deceased and his family filled the main floor of the church to capacity, and many others occupied the balcony to pay final tribute. Interment was made in the Wheatland cemetery.