

# "BOB" DAVIS DROWNED

## Politician Loses Life While Rowing With Ex-Captain Ward.

### BOAT OVERTURNS WITH THEM

Accident Happened At Diamond Point Pleasure Club's Shore, On Stony Creek.

#### Unusual Career Ended.

Robert E. Davis, familiarly known in police and political circles as "Bob" Davis, was drowned at the Diamond Point Pleasure Club's shore, on Stony creek.

He was rowing with Bernard J. Ward, former captain of police, when their boat overturned and both were thrown into the water.

Davis, who could swim, attempted to rescue Ward, but sank himself, while Ward clung to the overturned boat and was rescued by others.

Davis' family had gone to Atlantic City to spend the Fourth. They live at 2524 Madison avenue.

Davis was tried and acquitted on a charge of receiving \$75 from Maggie Hunter for police protection, and Dr. William H. Dull, formerly known as the "cocaine king," was reported to have testified before the grand jury that he gave money to Davis for police protection.

Robert E. Davis, better known as "Bob" Davis, 37 years old, 2524 Madison avenue, whose name has figured prominently in recent police and grand jury investigations, was drowned shortly after 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon as the result of the overturning of a rowboat in the waters of Stony creek, in front of the Diamond Point Pleasure Club house, where he was spending the holiday with former Police Captain Bernard J. Ward.

Ex-Captain Ward was in the boat with Davis when it capsized. The Captain was rescued after a thrilling experience by Augustine Blockston, a fisherman, who was attracted by his cries for help. Ward cannot swim, while Davis could do so. It is thought that Davis was stricken with cramps while he was trying to save Ward. He was swimming to shore, holding the rope attached to the overturned boat, to which Ward was clinging.

Davis' body was found a short time later by several fishermen, who hurried to the club grounds and dragged the waters. He was found standing, with his feet in the mud. A fishhook attached to a cord caught in his coat and brought him to the surface.

Mrs. Davis was at Atlantic City yesterday and she know nothing of the death of her husband until last night. She is expected to return to her home, 2524 Madison avenue, today.

#### Davis Proposed To Go Rowing.

Davis and Ward, both stout men, left the wharf at the shore in the rowboat at 2 o'clock. They had been sitting on the lawn several hours and had ordered dinner to be cooked by Mrs. Otto Vollman, who, with her husband, takes care of the shore.

"I feel like getting a little exercise," said Davis to Ward. "Let's go out and take a row."

Before starting they ate several sandwiches. Ward got two cigars, and the men, lifetime friends, went to the wharf and entered the rowboat. Davis took the oars, while Ward sat in the bow of the little craft. They had gone out but a short distance when Ward suggested that he get in the back part of the boat.

"All right," said Davis, and he pulled in the right-hand oar.

#### The Boat Overturns.

Ward stood up and made one step to pass Davis. As he did so the boat swayed and a moment later the two men were thrown into the water. When Ward came to the surface he caught hold of the overturned boat. Davis, who could swim, struck out and started for shore, but he turned to save Ward.

"Hang on to the boat!" he shouted to Ward, who was struggling in the water. "Hold on until I get near you!"

Ward clung to the little craft. Owing to his weight it was submerged several times while Davis was going to his aid. At last he got the boat balanced and climbed on its bottom. Twice he stretched his arms and legs around it and the boat turned over.

Davis soon reached his side and, catching hold of the rope attached to the boat, he started to tow Ward and the craft to shore, which was only about 25 yards away.

#### Davis Goes Down.

After making a few feet headway Davis cried out, "I can't swim! I'm sinking! I'm going down!"

Ward realized his own danger, but reached over to seize Davis. As he did so, the little boat turned over again. When Ward came to the surface Davis had disappeared. Ward called for help and Mrs. Vollman, the shorekeeper's wife, heard him. She cannot speak English, but she managed to attract the attention of Blockston, who was walking across a field.

Blockston hurried to the wharf and jumped into another rowboat, named after Captain of Detectives Pumphrey, who was formerly a member of the club. Ward was battling with all his strength to save himself from drowning. The tide was going out and the rowboat was drifting away from the shore.

The only eyewitnesses were Mrs. Vollman, William H. Ford, 3112 Elliott street; his mother, Mrs. Lulu Ford, and his brother, Gordon Ford. Mrs. Vollman was on the clubhouse porch and the others were farther up the creek fishing.

#### Ward Rescued.

Ford and Blockston started from the wharf in separate boats to row to Ward, but Blockston reached him first.

"Climb into my boat," he called to Ward. "No, row me to shore, for my strength is giving away," Ward urged. "If I climb into the boat it might turn over."

Ward held to the stern of the boat and was in that manner taken to shore.

"Davis is gone!" Ward exclaimed as he climbed on the wharf. "Hurry and get some people and get his body. We may be able to save him yet."

A number of fishermen soon reached the clubhouse, and Mr. D. Meredith Reese, Jr., of Walbrook, who had been on a fishing trip with several friends, was out in the creek in a yacht. A rowboat was lowered and Mr. Reese went ashore. He arranged a dragnet and in a short time Blockston, Richard F. Phelps, Jr., William H. Hood and Frank Stancliff, fishermen, who live near by, were out in boats dragging for the body. Davis was well known and liked among the fishermen and they went to work with a will.

#### Body Found Upright.

Just 35 minutes after they started in their search Phelps shouted: "There's something heavy on my line!" A steady pull brought the body of Davis to the surface in a perpendicular position. The legs and arms were stiff. In a short time after the body was placed on the wharf the face became discolored.

Mr. Reese left the shore before the body was found. He telephoned information of the occurrence to Detective Hammersla, at police headquarters, from the Stony Beach Hotel, a short distance up the creek. This was the first news of the drowning that reached the city. Mr. Reese asked that the police boat Lannan be sent to drag for the body, but when Marshal Farnan learned later that the body had been found he decided not to send the boat.

Joseph P. Nolan, saloonkeeper, 17 North Howard street, who is a member of the club and a close friend of Davis, had spent Sunday fishing in the creek. He left for Baltimore on the steamer Severn at 10.30 o'clock yesterday morning. He heard of the accident when he reached his place later in the day.

#### As Ward Tells It.

In telling of the accident Ward said: "I will never forget it as long as I live. My escape from drowning was miraculous. I cannot swim, and when I was thrown into the water, I almost saw death staring me in the face."

"But I did not lose my nerve. I saw

there, was a chance that I probably could save myself and I went to work to see if I could do it. The boat continually turned over and went down with me, but I did not give up. I was determined to win out, and I did it."

Tears gathered in his eyes as he spoke of Davis.

"He was my friend; yes, I loved him," Ward said. "He had a big heart. I don't care what anybody says about him; I want it understood, 'Bob' Davis and I were the best of friends."

#### Attributes Death To Cramps.

Ward believes Davis died from cramps. Before they left to go rowing, he says, Davis ate two schweitzer cheese sandwiches and he believes this had something to do with his getting cramps.

Ward said Davis had not seen the newspapers for two days and knew nothing of the report that Dr. William H. Dull had been before the grand jury and made a statement that he had paid money to Davis for police protection while he sold cocaine. Mr. Ward said:

"No, Davis never knew that the papers had reported this matter. I don't believe it is true. I have known Davis for many years and I never heard anything about it."

John W. Davis, brother of the drowned man, who keeps a saloon at 135 West Cross street, arrived at the shore several hours after the report of Davis' death reached the city. He went there in an automobile with Frederick Schoenewitz, another saloonkeeper, and J. P. McGovern.

Coroner Horton decided that Davis' death was accidental and the body was brought to Baltimore in a launch and taken to Flynn's undertaking establishment, 42 East West street, where it was embalmed.

Dr. Horton said he believed that Davis was attacked with apoplexy while he was struggling with the boat in the water trying to save Captain Ward.

#### Family At Atlantic City.

Mrs. Davis left home Friday afternoon for Atlantic City. She was notified of her husband's death by her sister, Mrs. Lillian Shenkel, who lives in the same house. She took her three children—Myrtle, 15 years old; Mildred, 13 years old, and Roland, 12 years old, with her and stopped at the Hotel Whittle.

Mr. R. L. Land, brother-in-law of Davis, and his wife also occupy apartments in the Davis home. They had prepared to enjoy the Fourth, but the news of the drowning dissipated all idea of pleasure.

The Diamond Point Club house has been a gathering place for Democratic politicians and their friends for several years. The property is owned by City Councilman George W. Green. The members of the club besides Davis are ex-Captain Ward, Nolan and Schoenewitz. Captain Pumphrey was formerly a member, but recently resigned.