

# HUNT BODY IN WATER ABOUT 90 FEET DEEP

Reuben Depping, Medical  
Student, Former Track  
Captain, Victim.

## THREE WITNESS TRAGEDY

West Branch and Iowa  
City Fire Departments  
Dragging Pool.

Iowa City, July 23.—(AP)—Renewed efforts to find the body of Reuben Depping, University of Iowa medical student and former track captain, were begun early today. Depping drowned last night while swimming in a quarry nine miles east of West Branch.

Three other students, Bertha Test of Paullina, Ia.; Fred Rolff of Aplington, Ia., and Gretchen Gaulocher of Iowa City, watched Depping swim out about 20 yards into about 90 feet of water, and disappear.

West Branch and Iowa City fire departments searched until midnight and then abandoned the task until daylight. It is believed the body may be held down by old machinery abandoned when the quarry filled with water a number of years ago.

Depping came here this week from Cleveland, where he had taken a special course in medicine. He was to have entered his senior year at the university in the fall.

He was a member of Sigma Chi and Nu Sigma Nu fraternities and president of the junior medical class. He was a star quarter miler on the Hawkeye track team.

1931 Jul Reuben Depping drowns at  
quarry IA

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# Drowning of University Student in Quarry Breaks Famous Legend

Drowning last Wednesday evening of Reuben B. Depping, University of Iowa medical student and athlete, at the Cedar Valley quarries in Cedar county, broke a legend of many years concerning the picturesque and historical quarries.

The legend was that it was impossible for anyone to drown in the waters of the quarry pools. For 13 years, since the quarries were abandoned and allowed to fill with water, it was believed that the great depth of the pools resulted in pressure making the water too buoyant for a person to sink.

The university student was the first person so far as it known, ever to drown in the pool, thus breaking the legend of so many years standing.

The site of the Cedar Valley quarries, originally known as Bealer's quarries, is one of the most picturesque spots in this part of the state. Situated in the Cedar river valley, with the river running close at hand, the limestone formations tell an interesting story.

The quarries were at one time among the most extensive in the state and enough building stone was taken out to be of considerable value. In the value of output and perfection and cost of machinery, these quarries were the most noteworthy in Iowa and the largest in the Mississippi valley during the time of operations there.

The quarries were first opened in 1883 by Mr. E. J. C. Bealer, a

bridge architect, who saw the value of the stone for bridge piers and heavy masonry. Bealer constructed a levee along the Cedar river, costing \$20,000, for protection against floods.

After the quarries were opened, a city which eventually had a population of 800, grew up on the banks of the Cedar river, a typical mining town with its dance hall, its saloons, and its general stores. Mr. Bealer employed a great many Bohemians, who came to Cedar Valley direct from Bohemia to work with the stone. He donated the ground to the workers for their homes and built the homes, taking the money to pay for them out of their wages. Most of the quarry workers moved to Cedar Rapids after the site was abandoned.

Mr. Bealer also made provision for the single men employed by him, constructing a boarding house on the quarry grounds.

A force of men which usually numbered between 200 and 300 were employed at the quarries, making Cedar Valley an industrial colony. The output was chiefly of three grades of bridge stone, and the daily output was 45 cars loaded and shipped.

Almost every building in this part of the state contains stone in some form, which was taken from Bealer's quarries. Expert stone cutters worked on the stone, and each piece was cut, marked and made ready for placement in some particular bridge. The champion

stone cutter in the state worked at Cedar Valley at one time.

The quarries flourished for many years and gained the reputation of producing the best stone in this part of the country. The B. C. R. and N railroad, now the Rock Island road, obtained all the stone used in bridge construction in that early day from Bealer's quarries.

A spur was built, connecting the quarries with the Cedar Rapids and Clinton line of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern near Plato. The story is told that when the Bohemian immigrants came to this country from Europe they carried tags with words, "Bealer's Quarries," on them, and after arrival in Cedar Rapids, they were put on trains for the spur line to Cedar Valley, their new home.

After many years of operation, the pits went to a depth below the river bed and steam pumps were used night and day to keep the water out of the workings.

The quarries were operated on full schedule up until about 25 years ago and entirely shut down about 18 years ago. A lime kiln located up the river a half mile away employed 50 men, which increased the population of that community.

The stone was taken out of the quarries from the outer edges toward the center and a series of ledges, formed as steps, lead to the deepest part of the pits from all four sides. The bottom of the pits were 20 feet narrower than

the distance across the top.

The pier, which can now be seen in the center of the north pool, was used for the hoisters and it was said that the depth to the bottom of the pool from the ledge was 90 feet.

The introduction of cement as a building material gradually took the place of the heavy and more expensive blocks of limestone, which was eventually to mean the cessation of all activities at one of the busiest spots in the river valley. The crushing of the stone was carried on for some time after cement came into use, but in the end, the great quarries were left to fill with water from the Cedar river close by.

About 10 years ago, the Iowa Railway and Light company purchased the site of the old Bealer quarries, now known as Cedar Valley, and the company is planning a dam between the quarries and Rochester, in the Cedar river.

The quarries are located in the center of many points of historical interest. Gray's ford, where transportation was conducted across the Cedar in those early days, is located down stream about two miles. John Brown's home, a house on his underground railroad for slaves escaping to Canada, is located near the ford also. And West Branch, the birthplace of President Herbert Hoover, is but nine miles from the famous quarries.

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