

Structural Iron Worker Plunges to His Death in Huge Tank of Water at River

2/26/32

Ben Johnson Drowned in Mystery Death Near Upper Portal of Diversion Tunnel; Body is Found This Morning by Searchers; Last Seen at 2 Yesterday.

BULLETIN

Ben Johnson, Six Companies worker, drowned in a big 40,000 gallon water tank yesterday, was believed to have been electrocuted by a high tension wire passing over the top of the tank, fellow workers who accompanied the remains here said just before press time. It is believed he came in contact with the wire and then fell unconscious or dead into the tank.

BEN Johnson, structural iron worker, in the employ of Six Companies Incorporated, Boulder Dam contractors, was drowned under mysterious circumstances some time yesterday afternoon, while at work on a 40,000 gallon water tank a short distance above the upper portals of the diversion tunnels on the Nevada side.

Johnson was last seen at two o'clock yesterday afternoon, by a fellow worker on the tank, and when he failed to show up for work this morning, an intensive search was made to determine his whereabouts.

With no indication that he had left camp suddenly, fellow workmen finally hit upon the idea that he might have fallen into the tank and been drowned in the 24 feet of water which filled it to within six inches of the top.

GRAPPLING HOOKS were immediately pressed into service and body discovered at the bottom of the tank. Just as the body was about to be lifted to the surface, however, it slid back into the water, and it was finally necessary to drain the tank in order to remove the body.

Johnson was working on the outside of the tank, swinging from the top in a bos'n's chair. How he slipped into the water was a mystery to those familiar with his work, and could be explained only on the theory that he climbed to the top to move the hooks holding the chair, and either slipped into the tank, or experienced a sudden heart attack and fell in.

HIS FELLOW workmen, similarly suspended from the other side of the tank, said he heard no splash or any outcry from the unfortunate man, and was at a loss to understand what had happened.

The level of the water in the tank was only six inches below the top, and even if Johnson had been unable to swim, he could have grasped the edge when he came to the surface, fellow-workmen argued.

REMAINS ARE being brought to the Palm Funeral Home, and an inquest will be held by Coroner Frank M. Ryan to determine, if possible the exact cause of death.