

**Obituaries for John Rigdon and Earnest Crater--Taken from Harry Dearing's book *Wonderful Wyoming The Indians Choice and Our Choice*, page 30,**

The first big celebration for Wheatland and the entire community was held at the "Big Lake" (now called Fest) on July 4, 1901 ....

It was a beautiful day and many people were enjoying swimming, boating, and fishing. About 3:00 p.m. two boys, Ernest Crater, the son of the Congregational minister, and John Rigdon, Son of Dr. Rigdon, Wheatland's first doctor, decided to take one of the boats and row to the opposite side of the lake. One of them was to swim back across the lake while the other one rowed along close by in case of trouble. Both boys were excellent swimmers and sailors, being veterans of the Spanish-American War, and had crossed the Atlantic Ocean and returned.

When they were about half way across the lake on the return trip a slight breeze came up and caused the water to be slightly rough, but not too bad and the boys kept on coming. They got within about 40 feet of the shore when Crater called "Help" and went down.

Rigdon in the boat, was close to him, about 16 feet and Crater came up again and once more yelled, "Help, Help." Rigdon jumped in to save him, both went down and never came up again.

Immediately an all-out effort was made to recover them. Ropes, barbed wire and everything available was gathered up and placed on the big raft. Several men tried unsuccessfully to fish them out. Some men dived into the water, but the water was about 25 feet deep at this point, and diving was not successful. Finally, at someone's suggestion, they sent for an ordinary hay rake. A long rope was tied to the tongue of the rake with a horse (on the bank) hitched to the other end of the rope. This rake was then loaded on the raft and taken out beyond the location and pushed into the water. The horse pulled it back to shore.

The first few tries were unsuccessful, digging up only rubbish and moss. Finally, they recovered Rigdon's body and the effort was continued until Crater was found. This was about 4:00 A.M. of July 5th, which meant the boys had been in the water approximately twelve hours. According to Dr. Rigdon's examination, Crater drowned and Rigdon died of heart failure.