

# Tragedy befalls Isaiah Wright, son of Harriet Wright

Did Ingersoll's first murder occur on October 5, 1905?

The following article from the 1993 Ingersoll Times Bicentennial Edition seems to suggest this.

## First murder?

Bowman is certain that recent tragic events in Ingersoll were NOT the first murders to take place here. He clearly remembers an event in the early 1900s which was discussed at length around his father's table.

It seems there was a man, by the name of Issaah Wright who spent a great deal of time in the Oxford House. He used to "earn" his beers by butting his head through a wooden door. Two other men would hold up the door between them and Wright would take a head-first run at it, butting his head right

through the door and then collect a beer for his payment.

The legend is that one night another man got into the picture and as the hapless Wright's head burst through the door, it was whacked by a 2x4 plank. As Bowman remembers the story, the man was killed instantly. Several men carried his body to the Wonham Street bridge and tipped it into the river.

He recalls hearing about the men being charged with manslaughter and the case eventually being thrown out of the courts. No one was ever convicted.

Isaiah Wright was perhaps the victim of a vicious attack perpetrated at The Oxford House, which was a tavern located on the present site of 116 Oxford Street, just north of the Ingersoll Library.

Scene of the crime?



The Oxford House, later known as The Kirwin House. Built in the 1890s was one of Ingersoll's hotels. It was torn down in May 1947. It was situated on Oxford Street across from the present Blue Station.

There were many witnesses in the area of the Wonham Street bridge at the time that incident occurred and the police chief charged five local men with murder. The coroner declared that Isaiah did not drown and that he suffered a head wound. Eventually all those charged with murder would be acquitted.

## STARTLING STATEMENT.

A rumor in circulation today suggests that Wright did not die either in the water or at the bridge, but that his death occurred in some out-buildings in the centre of the town, whence his lifeless body was carried to the river.

## THE POLICE AT WORK.

Chief Wright and his assistants were promptly at work on the case. Intense excitement reigned when it became known that informations had been laid and warrants issued for the arrest of local men. At first two arrests were made, then four more, all before seven o'clock.

## CHARGE OF MURDER.

In five instances the charge is that of murder. The prisoners are:

GEO. DENNIS.  
THOS. WILSON.  
GEO. (BENDER) BOWER.  
GEO. B. HARTSELL.  
EWART BELL.

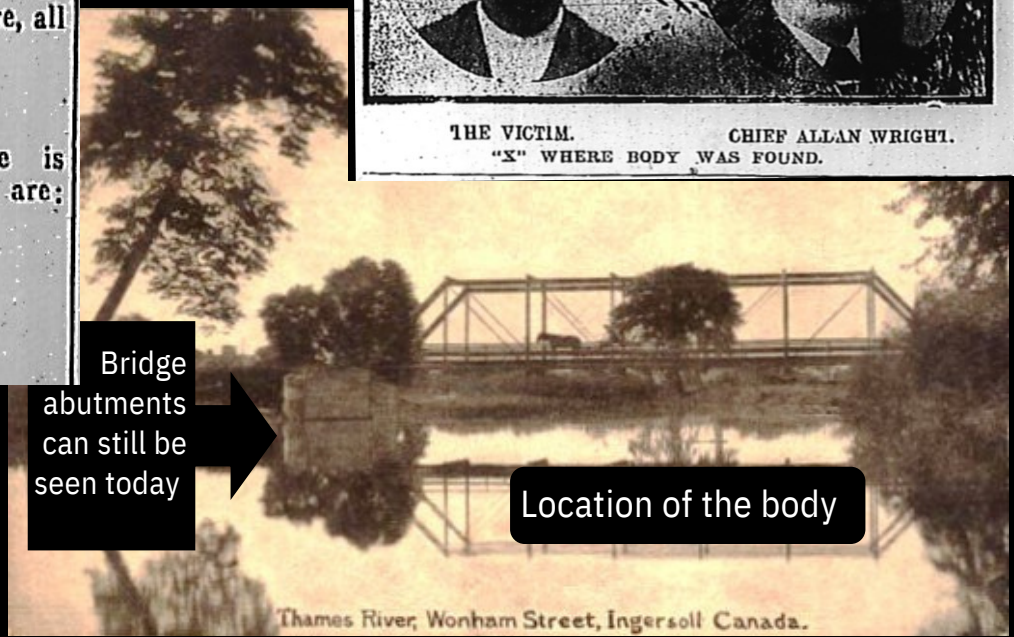
Isaiah Wright



THE VICTIM. CHIEF ALLAN WRIGHT.  
"X" WHERE BODY WAS FOUND.

Bridge abutments can still be seen today

Location of the body



Thames River, Wonham Street, Ingersoll Canada.

INGERSOLL CHRONICLE  
OCTOBER 5 1905.

## BODY TAKEN FROM THE RIVER

That of Isaiah Wright Who Had Been Missing Since Friday Last--An Inquest Will Be Held.

From Thursday's Daily.

The dead body of Isajah Wright (colored) was taken from the Thames River shortly after nine o'clock this morning. He had been missing since Friday last.

While crossing the Wonham street bridge between eight and nine o'clock this morning on his way to the pork factory, John McMillan had his attention attracted by some object in the water at the west side of the bridge. The object could not be clearly seen then and he was unable to make out exactly what it was. On returning a short time later, McMillan found "Diek" Barrow and Harold Smith on the bridge gazing at the object, and the discovery was then made that it was the body of a man.

McMillan hurried to the office of J. W. Patterson and notified Chief Wright over the 'phone. Coroner Dr. McKay accompanied Chief Wright to the river and the body was taken out by McMillan and Barrow, who reached it by means of a boat.