



ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 1840.12.00](#)

DATE: Early December 1840

LOCATION: The incident took place off The Domain*, Sydney Harbour, New South Wales, Australia.

33°52'S, 151°12'E

NAME: Unknown

DESCRIPTION: He was a male.

NARRATIVE: No details

INJURY: Fatal

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified

SOURCES: Daily Telegraph (Sydney), September 2, 1938, supplement, page 20, G.P. Whitley, Fishes of Australia, page 259

**Today, the Royal Botanic Gardens are adjacent to The Domain.*

SHARK STORIES.

Sydney's First Victim.

In view of the record of bathers killed by sharks in Sydney Harbor from season to season, it is strange to remember that for sixty years after the settlement of Sydney residents bathed in the Harbor without molestation from sharks (says the "Evening News"). Such was the case, and the death of the first victim is thus recorded by Lieutenant-Colonel Mundy, in his book, "Our Antipodes." Lieutenant-Colonel Mundy was Adjutant-General of New South Wales during the Governorship of his cousin, Sir Charles Fitzroy.

"If there is one luxury," he writes, "greater than another in a hot climate, one exercise more healthy than another, it is bathing. Until late in the year 1840 it might be enjoyed to perfection in Sydney; for there is a bathing cottage at Government House, a large hulk moored and fitted as a public bathing house in Woolloomooloo Bay, and every villa near the Harbor possesses a like convenience. A shady bank of the Domain, called the Figtree, is the favorite bathing place of the populace. Although large sharks had more than once been

caught far up the Harbor, no accident was ever heard of, and bathers swam about the coves without fear and with impunity.

"It was in November of that year. I think, that a dead whale was floated by some accident within Port Jackson, and was picked up and 'tried out' by some speculating fisherman. A troop of sharks must have followed the dead monster, and having disposed of his carcase, remained near the shores round Sydney. One day a large Newfoundland dog, swimming for the amusement of his master near the Battery, was seized by a shark, and only regained the shore to die. The newspapers warned bathers; but no concern was observed until, early in December, a man swimming near the Figtree was attacked by a huge shark so near the bathing place that another person repeatedly struck the fish with a boathook, thereby forcing it to release its victim. The unfortunate man was so desperately torn that he bled to death a few minutes later. Not many days later I saw a foolhardy fellow swimming about in the very same place, with a straw hat on his head and a cigar in his mouth!"

Apparently bathers took as many risks then as now.

Cairns Post, Thursday February 13, 1919, page 7