

Streator youth drowns in Vermilion

Steven Skaggs, 16, 116 LaSalle St., Streator, drowned Tuesday afternoon in the Vermilion River despite efforts by his older brother and a Streator rescue team to aid him.

According to Coroner Keith Von Qualen, Steven and his brother James, 23, had been swimming in the Manville area early Tuesday afternoon and at about 5 p.m. went to the dam southeast of Streator.

The youths were, according to Von Qualen, sliding off the edge of the dam into four feet of water which covers a cement slab. The slab runs the width of the dam, about 400 feet and is approximately 30 feet in length.

Von Qualen said that the boys after sliding off the edge of the dam the first time were caught in an undertow but subsequently were able to stand up and get to the bank by walking upon the slab.

Von Qualen said James told him they decided to go over the dam a second time.

The second time the two youths walked in a southwesterly direction after coming over the dam onto the concrete slab. By walking in this direction according to Von Qualen the youths walked off

the slab and due to a heavy current at the time dropped off into 15 feet of water.

Von Qualen added that the youths apparently panicked and were unable to swim back to the slab.

James attempted to rescue his younger brother at this point, but he told authorities Steven broke free of him. James floated downstream until he could call for help.

The Streator Fire Department received the call for help at 5:50 p.m. The Streator Emergency Service and Disaster Agency responded by sending 15 units to the area. Recovery of the body was made at 6:35 p.m.

The body was found approximately 100 feet downstream from the south bank in 15 to 20 feet of water.

The Livingston County Sheriff's Department was at the scene of the fatality and conducted an investigation of the incident.

Von Qualen said this morning he is continuing his investigation and will hold an inquest later.

An obituary appears on Page 12.