

Prater Makes 'Firey' Jump From Dam

Few people in Coppell still remember Walter Prater, who was known as a "rough boy" from the "wrong side" of town, but for one day in 1922 Walter was a celebrity.

The Carrollton Dam was built in 1912 on the Elm Fork of the Trinity River. It was intended to control flooding on the east side of town, but quickly became a favorite location for swimming and picnics. One Sunday in particular drew hundreds to the spot. Newspapers and circulars had advertised an act of daring to be performed by the 19-year-old Prater.

According to resident Clayta Harwell, Prater stood at the top of the dam and was doused in gasoline by friends. He was then set on fire and jumped from the bridge into the waters below. After emerging from the water, he waved to the crowd.

For his performance as a human torch, Prater was awarded between \$25 and \$50.

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