

## John B. "Jack" Thayer III:Obituary

### ***Philadelphia Inquirer***

Sunday 23 September 1945

John B. Thayer, 3d, financial vice president of the University of Pennsylvania and a member of an old Philadelphia family, who had been reported missing since Wednesday, was found dead, his wrists and throat cut, in a parked automobile near the P.T.C. loop at 48th St. and Parkside Ave. yesterday morning.

Coroner J. Allan Bertolet, one of the first to arrive on the scene after the body was discovered by to P.T.C. employees, said Mr. Thayer probably had died 40 hours before the body was found at 8:50 A.M.

The Coroner, who was accompanied by his chief deputy, Matthew A. Roth, said he believed that the death was a suicide.

Frederick M. Thayer, a brother, of Newtown Square, and Lieutenant Governor John C. Bell, Jr., a lifelong friend, identified the body at the Morgue.

Mr. Bell said that Mr. Thayer had been suffering from a nervous breakdown during the last two weeks. "The breakdown," Mr. Bell explained, "was due, I believe, to worrying about the death of his son, Edward C. Thayer, who was killed in the service."

Mr. Bell said that he had reported Mr. Thayer missing to the State Police when the latter failed to return to his home in Grays Lane, Haverford, Tuesday night.

The Lieutenant Governor stated that a few days ago Mr. Thayer had "seemed to develop amnesia." Mr. Bell added that Mr. Thayer had not been seen since he left his office in the University of Pennsylvania Tuesday morning.

The son, one of two who went to war, was Second Lieutenant Edward C. Thayer, a co-pilot of an Army bomber, who was killed in action in the Pacific last October, the first member of the First City Troop to die in the Second World War. The other son, John B. Thayer, 4th, is a lieutenant (jg) and a Naval Air Force pilot.

The P.T.C. employees who found the body on the front seat of the car with the feet under the steering wheel are George E. Wharton, of 2036 N. 54th ST., a supervisor, and Daniel Petetti, a mechanic, of 1247 N. 54th St.

They said they first saw the automobile, a sedan, registered in the name of his wife, Mrs. Lois C. Thayer, parked adjacent to the trolley loop on the south side of Parkside Ave. at noon Thursday. When they saw the same car parked there yesterday, they investigated.

The auto, with Mr. Thayer's body in it, had gone unnoticed by trolley-car passengers and boys who played football nearby.

The P.T.C. men, after finding the body, telephoned police. Patrolmen John Berry and John Joynes, of the 50th St. and Lancaster Ave. station, took the body to Presbyterian Hospital.

Deputy Coroner Roth, after the body was identified, said that there was no doubt that Mr. Thayer used razor blades, which the police found in the car, to kill himself.

Dr. Thomas S. Gates, chairman of the University of Pennsylvania, in a formal statement, declared: "In the death of Mr. John B. Thayer, trustee, financial vice-president and former treasurer, the University of Pennsylvania has lost a trusted and loyal servant. He has given unsparingly of himself to his university and to community affairs, and he had redoubled his efforts in the war period, especially after the death of his son, Edward, in the Pacific, which was followed closely by the death of his mother."

Mr. Thayer's mother, Mrs. Marian Longstreth Morris Thayer, died at her Haverford home April 14, 1944, which was the 32nd anniversary of her husband's death on the liner Titanic, which sank after striking an iceberg in the Atlantic.

Mrs. Thayer and a younger son, Frederick, had been placed in a lifeboat, while John stood with his father on the Titanic's deck when the ship went down.

The younger Thayer was rescued. (Note by PG: Frederick Thayer was not aboard the Titanic and Jack stood on the deck with Milton Long-not his father-as the ship sank.)

Mr. Thayer, who was 50, came from a family which had long been active in the affairs of the University of Pennsylvania. In 1928 he was elected a trustee, and on October 2, 1939, he became treasurer of the university. In February, 1944, he was appointed to the newly created office of financial vice president. He also was a director of the bi-centennial celebration of the University of Pennsylvania in 1940.

A graduate of the College of Arts and Sciences at the university, Mr. Thayer was active in athletics and on undergraduate publications, and was a member of the Phi Beta Junior Society, Sphinx Senior Society and the Delta Psi Fraternity.

During the First World War he served a captain in the artillery of the 79th Division, and was an honorary member of the First Troop, Philadelphia Cavalry. In 1919 Mr. Thayer entered the employ of Lee, Higginson & Co., bankers, in charge of their Philadelphia office. He left that firm in 1932 to become a partner in Yarnall & Co., from which he resigned in 1937.

He also served as a member of the managing committee of the university, as a member of the General Alumni Society Board of Directors and as vice chairman of the Alumni Annual Giving Fund Committee.

He also was a director of the Academy of the Fine Arts, and chairman of the board of trustees of the Haverford School, of which he was a graduate. He was president of the Philadelphia Skating Club and Humane Society, and his hobby was figure skating.

Mr. Thayer was president of the Racquet Club, and former president of the Bond Club of Philadelphia. He was a member of the Rose Tree Fox Hunt, the Rabbit Club and the Gulph Mills Golf Club. His father was a vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and was a member of the class of 1882 at the University of Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Thayer, who was the former Lois B. Cassatt, is a granddaughter of the late Alexander J. Cassatt, former president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Her parents were Colonel and Mrs. Edward B. Cassatt. Colonel Cassatt, a graduate of West Point, served throughout the Spanish-American War, Philippine campaign and the First World War.

Separately included in the same newspaper is the following notice:

THAYER.--Sept. 21, 1945, JOHN B. THAYER, son of the late John B. and Marian Longstreth Morris.  
Funeral services, Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr, Pa., Mon., 4:30 P.M.

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