

## **Francis Cahill, Jr. (1922-1938)**

Francis Cahill, Jr. was born on April 5, 1922, in Chicago, Illinois. He was the oldest of four brothers. His father, Francis Cahill Sr., and mother, Margaret Eilerman, met around 1920 when Margaret's family stayed with Francis Sr.'s family in Chicago. At the time, Francis Sr. worked as a chauffeur, and Margaret worked at a printing company. In 1921, they got married.

In 1927, the family faced hard times, and Francis Sr.'s mother suggested they move to Dayton, Ohio (where Margaret was originally from), for a fresh start. There, Francis Sr. worked briefly for the Frigidaire Corporation. However, when his mother passed away, the family returned to Chicago, and Francis Sr. lost his job. The family then had to live with Margaret's parents.

In January 1928, Margaret, who was pregnant, sent her two oldest sons, Francis Jr. and James, to a children's home in Dayton, Ohio, so she could give birth to another son. Margaret wrote in a form that her husband, Francis Sr., had been arrested many times for drunkenness and had not supported the family since 1927.

By 1930, all four boys were sent to the Illinois Soldiers' Orphans' Home (renamed the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's School, or ISSCS, in 1931) in Normal, Illinois, because their parents could no longer care for them. At that time, Francis was 8 years old. His father had asked for the boys to be placed in the Home, stating that their mother had neglected them. The boys were placed under the care of the Home's staff.

The ISSCS (or "the Home," as it was often referred to) founded in 1864, was created to care for the children of soldiers who fought in the United States Civil War. The Home provided education, shelter, and food for orphaned children, particularly those whose fathers had served in the military. Over the years, it added more buildings and facilities to accommodate growing numbers of children. The Home was located on a large tract of land in northeast Normal (today at the corner of Lincoln and Beech streets).

Francis and his brothers, who were raised in the Home, faced many challenges, but they also had opportunities to participate in sports and other activities. Francis was very active and enjoyed playing basketball, track, and field. He was part of his school's track team, and in 1936, his team tied for second place in a state competition. He also played on the basketball team for three years and enjoyed recreational activities like swimming and baseball.

However, life at the Home wasn't always fun. The boys had chores, including working in the multi-acre garden plot on the east side of the campus (today near Henry Street). One day, Francis collapsed while working in the bean fields because he had an appendicitis. He was operated on but faced complications, and his health worsened. On August 5, 1938, Francis passed away from an infection caused by his appendix surgery.

Francis was buried at the Home's plot at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery. His funeral was held at a local church, but it's unclear whether his parents attended.