

Theater worker falls victim to an 'unfortunate accident'

"A distressing and what may prove fatal accident occurred at 7:15 last night at the Armorial Theatre," writes *Bloomington Evening World*, Sept. 22, 1903.

The expression, "an unfortunate accident," has probably been over-worked through the years, but it best describes what happened Sept. 21, 1903, at the Armorial Theatre on Madison Street in Bloomington. The consequences of tidying up the stage could not have been foreseen by anyone.

Bridge Nichols, who had been hired as a scene shifter for the traveling company appearing at the the-



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By Rose McIlveen

ater, picked up a 32-caliber revolver and, as the *Evening World* explained, "was turning it over in his hands." He was facing an exit, when the gun accidentally went off, sending a bullet through the door.

Outside some boys were standing around, possibly hoping to see some

of the members of the performing company. Among them was Roy Canada, age 16, who worked in one of the local stone quarries.

Suddenly he fell, and his friends thought he was only reacting dramatically to the sound of the gunshot. Not so. He had been struck by the bullet in the forehead over the left eye.

Nichols, who had been unaware that the gun was loaded, rushed out the door to see whether the bullet had caused any damage. He was shocked to see Canada lying on the ground gravely wounded, and he ran downtown to get help.

Nichols dispatched Dr. Charles Weir, who went to the home of Benson Clem, where the wounded boy had been taken by his companions. The backstage hand also notified the town marshal about the accident.

Weir, in consultation with Dr. Charles E. Harris, found that the bullet had passed through Canada's brain and was just below the skin at the back of his head. It was removed and the wounds dressed. The *Evening World* indelicately added that the young victim's brains were oozing out of the bullet holes.

Predictably, Canada was

unconscious, and the initial prognosis was not hopeful. In time, he was moved to the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elias Canada, who lived on Buckner Street near Rose Hill Cemetery.

On the following morning, a Dr. Vermillia was added to the consultation team. Considering that many of the drugs and techniques of modern medicine were yet unknown, the doctors had no other course but take a "wait-and-see" approach.

Nichols was naturally very upset. As the newspaper put it, "Mr. Nich-

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