

# Trainmaster hardly taken in by mystic's tall tales

Most of the other news on the front page of the Bloomington *Evening World* of May 18, 1905, seemed to be fairly conventional stuff — several obituaries, two Odd Fellows returned from a state meeting, an upcoming gathering of the Monroe County Historical Society, and so forth.

Only the article about Trainmaster J.B. Sucece was out of place. In fact, it wasn't really news at all.

According to the *Evening World*, "As is generally known in railroad circles, railway employees are a superstitious class and at the slightest provocation are wont to consult the



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

disciples of spiritualism regarding their future."

Sucece was depicted as a skeptic, but while he was in Bloomington his friends prevailed upon him to visit a fortune teller, who was directly referred to by the newspaper as "Madame — ." The trainmaster

was escorted to the medium's home, where there was a seance scheduled for 9 o'clock.

Continued the *Evening World*, "Sucece, the first victim, was ushered into a darkened room, where according to his own version, the gloom was so heavy it would act as a slide for a head light on a big battleship locomotive."

Fortune tellers do not hold professional consultations for nothing, and Sucece was obliged to give her \$1.50. That would have been a pretty hefty price, even for a glimpse at what awaited him in the years ahead.

Apparently, Sucece later shared what he learned with a reporter at the *Evening World*. The news was all good — in fact, too good to be true. The fortune teller began what the newspaper called a "harangue" that contained not the slightest scrap of ill fortune.

Her spiel had Sucece "rolled in the lap of luxury and bathed in the golden stream of fortune." First, he would buy up all of the land that contained the oolitic stone belt of Monroe and Lawrence counties. Then he would venture farther afield, acquiring the coal fields of western Indiana in a "first mort-

gage gold-bearing bond."

Noting that the trainmaster was employed by the railroad, she added that company to his store of future riches. Said the *Evening World*, Sucece was also told he would succeed W.H. McDoel as president and general manager of the Monon Railway Company.

Hastening to tell Sucece things he would surely want to hear, the fortune teller decided to gild the lily a bit by adding that, in the capacity of sole owner of the railroad, he would erect a 14-story stone passenger sta-

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