

Was death murder or suicide?

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were interrupted by the commotion of the defendant's grandmother collapsing. Reported the *Telephone*, "The family screamed, 'She is dead! She is dead! Where is the doctor?' A number of ladies in attendance were overcome and two were carried out of the room."

Mrs. Evans took the stand and was skillfully led through testimony that was designed to refute damaging allegations by prosecuting witnesses — allegations that hinted that she wasn't listening in Sunday school when the Ten Commandments were taught. At the interval between the last of the testimony and the judge's instructions to the jury, the *Telephone* speculated that

"opinions differ on the verdict, an impression existing that a doubt will be created as to Charles Evans' sanity and that it has not been proven that the wife gave the poison."

Col. East, whose nickname was "John Rouser," spoke fully three hours in summary. Included were his customary Bible quotations and, with tears running down his face, he exclaimed, "Oh, God! How can they hang a poor, innocent woman for a crime she did not commit?" He pointed out to the jury that Bloomington had had five times

as many suicides as murders and read off the names of 19 who had killed themselves in the previous decade.

The all-male jury deliberated all night about the guilt or innocence of Sarah Evans. In its report of the outcome of the trial, the *Telephone* disclosed that the men were obliged to take 12 ballots to get a consensus. On Friday, Nov. 5, Bailiff Reeves was notified by the jury that they had reached verdict. Word got around, and the courtroom refilled quickly. Brought from the jail, Sarah Evans was "dressed in deep black, a heavy veil almost covering her face. It was evident that the woman had spent a restless night . . ." reported the *Telephone*.

The verdict was "not guilty." Ballots of the jury were: 1st-9 not guilty, 3 guilty; 2nd — 10 not guilty, 2 guilty; 3rd — 9 not guilty, 3 guilty; 4th — 8 not guilty, 4 guilty; 5th to 10th — 10 not guilty, 2 guilty; 11th — 11 not guilty, 1 guilty; and 12th — 12 not guilty.

Col. East was to cry at least one more time in the Monroe County courtroom in an ironic twist of fate. He was appointed a special prosecutor to take charge of the case of malfeasance of Prosecutor Miller. As he recounted Miller's alleged violation of the public trust, tears ran down East's cheeks.