

# Activity of one county inmate captures the spotlight in 1901

Thursday, Aug. 30, 1901, was what newspaper people would call a "slow news day," with one exception. One of the prisoners of the jail provided the *Bloomington Evening World* with some unusual front-page copy for a couple of days.

Among the temporary "guests" of the county was a man by the name of Sherman Fitzpatrick, who had been charged with taking a sack of flour from the depot. But, the charge was not his only problem.

Fitzpatrick's wife was serving a sentence in jail for an offense frowned upon by the prevailing Victorian conscience and the law — that of trading more of her person than the law allows, for the purpose of monetary remuneration. Apparently her case had already been processed by the court, and she was serving time. Fitzpatrick, according



## Looking back

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8-1-1987

to the *World*, on the other hand, had "waived examination and is laying in jail until circuit court convenes."

The man was despondent, his depression deepened by the bizarre behavior of his wife. Commented the *World*, "But what has been the greatest worry to Sherman, so the jail employees say, is the fact that his wife endeavors to talk through the bars and make 'goo goo' eyes at the prisoners in the male apartments below."

Earlier in that week, at the end of August, 1901, Fitzpatrick had asked a jail employee to buy some poison for him. His request had fallen on deaf ears.

Other means of expressing his desperation were available to Fitzpatrick. Apparently he crushed a glass and swallowed a spoonful of the slivers, remembering to tell some of his fellow prisoners after the fact. His foolhardy act earned him a visit from Dr. Frank Tournier, who gave the man an emetic to bring up as much glass as possible. The *World* indicated that there was some doubt about the prisoner's recovery. "Dr. Turner visited Fitzpatrick again this afternoon and found his patient in a serious condition. It is not known whether he will entirely recover or not."

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