Sensational Deaths

and How to Find Them

Tina Beaird

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Tracking Down Sensational Deaths

Clues to finding a sensational death:

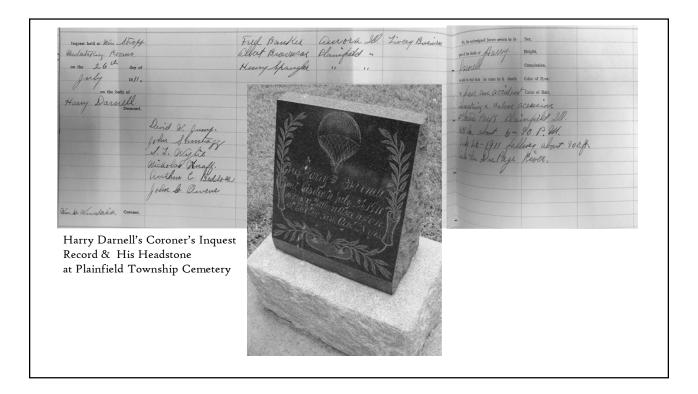
- Family scrapbook includes memorial card for someone who died young. Couple that with family lore passed down through generations.
- "Died Suddenly" in an obituary is a huge red flag alerting you to look for more information.
- The same date of death or sequential date of death for multiple people in a family plot or cemetery section.
- Is the box for Coroner's inquest check-marked on the death certificate?

Professor
Harry Darnel
Performing
His Aerial Act
Minutes
Before
Falling to
His Death



Due public respect was shown the remains of Harry Darnell, the air man, who met death at Electric park last week Wedneedsy evening. No friends or relatives were located and the aeronaut died without means with which to care for his remains. The remains were taken from Stopp's undertaking rooms to the park auditorium Priday morning where public services were held, at which all the local pastors spoke, and appropriate singing was furnished by Miss Georgia McMasters, of Jolist. The belongings of the deceased were disposed of, such as the balloon and appertainences, and the other money necessary with which to purchase a lot, pay burial expenses and erect a suitable head stone, was raised by subscription. The offeriogs of flowers were quite profuse and the funeral was largely attended.

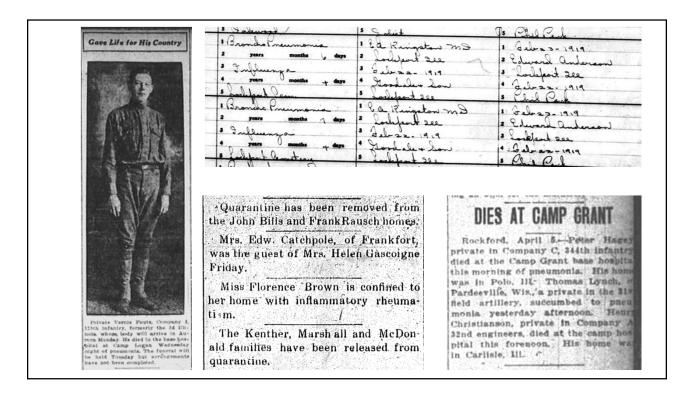
Photo from the Miles V. Hartong Glass Plate Negative Collection Plainfield Historical Society



Epidemics/Pandemics

- In 1863-1865, During the Civil War, repeated Variola (Smallpox) outbreaks brought the largest burial years in Plainfield Township Cemetery history with a total of 222 burials; mostly children.
- The Spanish Influenza killed millions worldwide, but don't just look for Spanish Flu as the cause of death, many died from respiratory complications and pneumonia.
- Diphtheria outbreaks happened several times during the 1870s and 1920s killing many children.

AN INFLUENZA WARN-ING. Do not become panicky. Do not visit the sick. Keep out of crowds. Avoid dusty places. Work, sleep and live in the openair. Avoid contact with person who have 'colds'. Keep your hands clean and keep your fingers out of your mouth. If you get acold, go home, go to bed and have, a doctor called, Dress warmly, do not permit your-self to get averticed, avoid-chills.



Epidemics/Pandemics

- List of worldwide epidemics: www.eogen.com/Epidemics
- Historic Deaths and illnesses: www.ldpierce.com/forms3pdf/illnessdisease.pdf
- Cholera Epidemic Timeline: www.timetoast.com/timelines/cholera-epidemic
- Wills, Simon. How Our Ancestors Died: A Guide for family historians. Pen & Sword Publishers. Barnsley, U.K. 2013.

Disasters/Tragedies



- Search newspaper accounts and obituaries for names of undertakers who were responsible for handling the remains to see if records still exist.
- Contact the Coroner's office or Medical Examiner for copies of inquest records.
- Look for Federal or local court records pertaining to subsequent hearings or investigations.

Our Lady of Angels Fire Memorial, Queen of Keaven Cemetery, SL

Disasters/Tragedies

II.S. INSPECTORS ARE

Coroner's Jury Also Holds General Managers of the Companies Owning and Leasing Responsible

GRAND JURY AWAITS RESULT OF INQUIRY

Secretary of Commerce and Head of Inspection Serv-ice Before Probers

CHICAGO, July 28.—A coroner's jurieturned a verdict, placing the ame for the loss of hundreds of lives the capsizing of the steamer Eastend in the Chicago River Saturday on the steamer Eastend in the Chicago River Saturday on the control of the steamer Eastend in the Chicago River Saturday on the control of the control

six men.

William H. Hull, General Manager
of the Chicago-St. Joseph Southern
Steamship Company, owner of the
Eastland.

Captain Harry Pedersen, of the
Eastland.

J. M. Erickson, engineer. Robert Reid, federa linspector of

- Glance around the cemetery. Are there other deaths that occurred on the same date?
- If more than I family member dies within a short time, that should be a hint that something bigger was happening locally.
- Contact the cemetery to see if they have a designated burial section for the deceased or a file of names of those who perished in the incident.

Disasters/Tragedies

Suicide at Plainfield.

The quiet village of Plainfield had a ripple of excitement last Friday in the way of a tragedy, the fatal result of which caused more than one family to draw a breath of relief. An old resident of the township, Charles Harriman, proclaimed a truce with his neighbors and ended his own somewhat dis-agreeable existence by shooting himself through the heart while sitting on the sidewalk in front of Chittenden's store about four o'clock in the afternoon. He was a man of somewhat eccentric notions and quarrefrome disposition, always having trouble with those with whom he came in contact. Shooting and Otherwise injuring domestic animals toat came in his way seemed to be a pastime with the old gent, an indictment having been found by the grand jury in session last week against him for malicious mischief, on the charge of severely cutting a horse belonging to a neighbor.

The shot from the revolver caused instant death, and an inquest was held by Coroner Werner Saturday.

- Several places may have social history related to the disaster or accident:
 - Libraries
 - Historical Societies
 - Museums
 - University Archives/Special Collections
- Are their still survivors or descendants who could be interviewed?
- What books or articles exist on the subject?

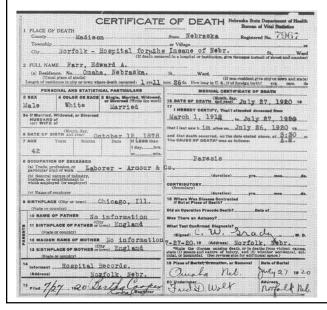
Funeral Home Records

Records pertaining to the care and burial of the dead:

- Funeral costs
 - Embalming
 - Casket
 - Hearse
 - Livery carriages
- Date of death
- Cause of death
- Place of burial
- Person requesting services (paying funeral bill)
- Records do not always include genealogical data.

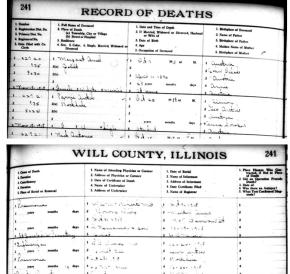
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Carriages of Dick and Pairs Blook Bulin Gloves	750
Crape	
Slippers	
Flowers	
Use of Chairs	45-
" Sending Telegram	ve dy
Heart & Dick Frum 150	1/2
Amount of Bill	103.65
Amount of Bill Paid. after 54 1898	10365
Paid.	11

County/State Records

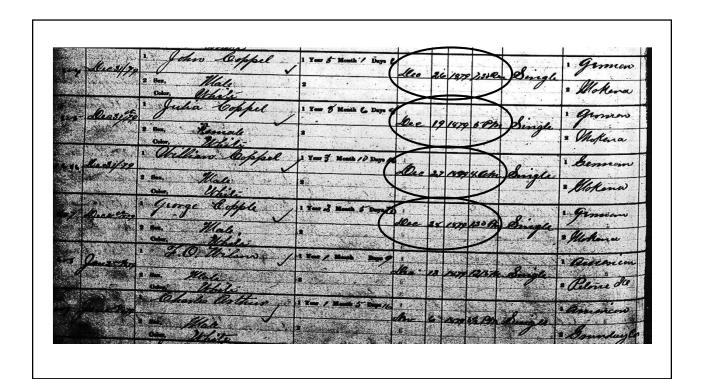


- Death Certificates
 - Death certificate information varies by state and time period.
 - Illinois did not start recording deaths until November 1877.
 - Coroner's records often predate death certificates.
 - Certificate numbers are based on the order in which the death was recorded in the death register.

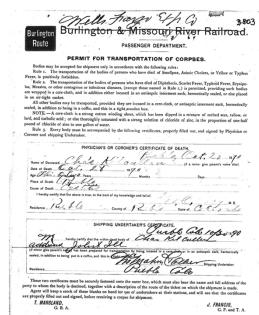
County/State Records



- Death Registers
 - Will include date of death, cause of death/length of illness, age, sex, burial location, undertaker and attending physician.
 - Deaths are registered chronologically not by date of death.
 - Be sure to check ahead to the next quarter as many doctors only filed their records with the county once a quarter. Some only filed one or twice per year!

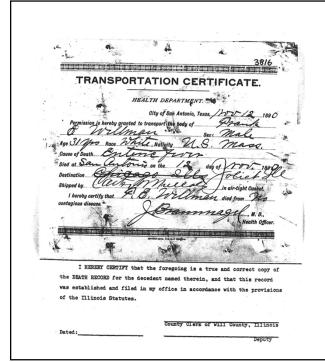


County/State Records



Burial/Transfer Permits

- Certificates vary widely and probably will not have genealogical data.
- Bodies were shipped to undertakers who signed off on the delivery and either conducted the funeral or contacted the cemetery for immediate burial.
- Paperwork should be filed in the County Clerk's offices in both the county where the death occurred and the county receiving the remains.

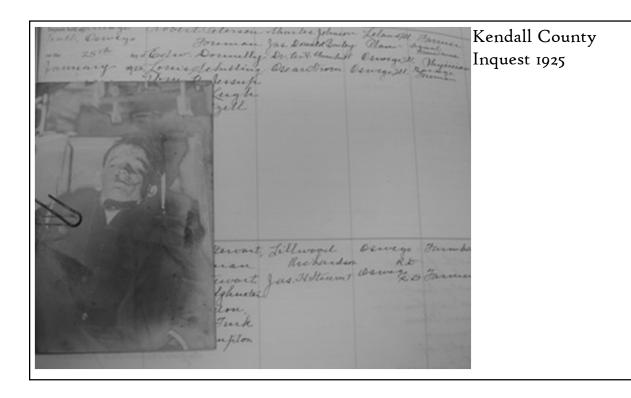


Burial/Transfer Permits

- Some counties filed all transfer permits at the beginning or end of each quarter instead of filing them chronologically as they were received.
- Be sure to check ahead to the next quarter. If still not located, check June/July and December/January.

Coroner's Inquest Records

- Some coroner's filed separate death certificates that are not always filed with county death certificates
- Coroner's records will include:
 - Personal affects found on the body
 - Cause of death
 - List of jurors/place of residence
 - Verdict
- Coroner's Inquest juries are appointed by the county court. Juries can be appointed to serve one inquest or quarterly. Often times the local newspaper would list the appointed jurors
- Modern inquests may have eyewitness testimony attached



STATE OF ILLINOIS COUNTY OF KANE AN INQUISITION held on the body of DuPage County inquest 1922 THOMAS F. BROWN before L. VICTOR PETERSON, Coroner Kane County at the Healy Chapel, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois on Dec. 6,1946. State of Illimits, a.

DU PAGE COUNTY.

was taken for the People of the State of Illino AN INQUISITION Present: William C. O'Brien, Attorney representing Clyde Miller John S.Petersen, Assistant States Attorney representing the People township of Iraferville . . . in said Comm WITNESS: JANET WILLER, being first duly sworn, testified of the budy of Edward planed breat - then and there tying dend, as follows: Q: State your name? A: Janet Miller. Edward blavid Trent Q: What is your residence address? A: 407 Garnsey, Joliet, Illinois. Q: What is your occupation? A: Housewife. of Febr a. 11. 11 from a fractured Q: What is your relationship to the decedent? shall as a result of having had his could raught in the fly while of the enfine in the Plain full grain bos elevator, where he had Q: What is your brother's full name? A: Thomas F. Brown. Q: What was his residence address? Horing got colelwhile in the proformance of his centres as section hand for the 8/18/19/60. A: Plainfield, Illinois Route No 1. Kane County inquest transcript 1946

Select Online Resources

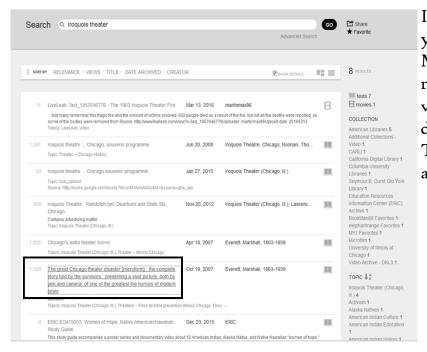
www.fold3.com

- Digitized records from the National Archives Washington D.C.
 - Military Records including Courts Martial Records
 - Southern Claims Commission Records
 - Military Headstone Applications
 - War Diaries
 - Newspapers
 - Orphan's Home Records
- Facebook for the Dead??
 Create your own ancestor pages.



Internet Archives www.archive.org

- Internet Archives is a non-profit organization designed to house digital storage for both print and media sources.
 - Full-text access to historic books and periodicals
- Download full color PDF copies of county histories and city directories or browse digital copies online
- Some titles only available through Google Books
- Signing-up for a free account allows you to 'bookmark' items for later reference or upload your own collections



Internet Archives allows you to download Millions of books, records, videos and other types of documents that can tell The story of your ancestor's tragic death

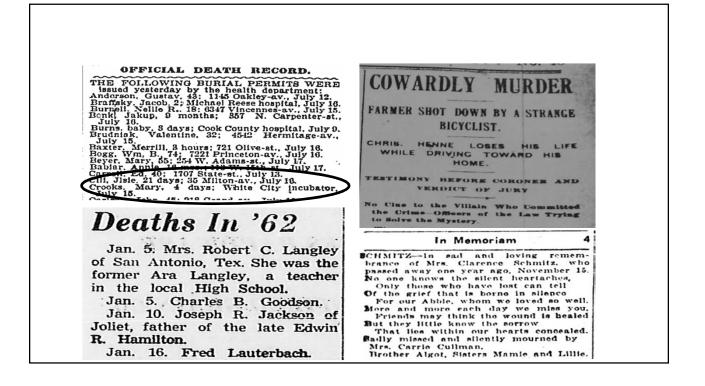
More Online Resources for Books & Articles

- Digital Public Library: www.dp.la/bookshelf
- FamilySearch: https://books.familysearch.org
- Google Books: https://books.google.com/?hl=en
- Hathi Trust: www.hathitrust.org/digital_library
- JSTOR (Journal Storage) www.jstor.org
- World Catalog: www.worldcat.org

Newspapers

- There are several online subscription newspaper services on the market:
 Ancestry.com
 Newspapers.com
 Genealogybank.com
 Archives.com
 World Vital Records
- Each is searchable by name, date and event
- Mortuary or death notices typically ran weekly announcing deaths from the previous week. Name, date of death and address only
- Cards of Thanks from families to thank the community for their support
- Year-in-review columns save you the hassle of finding which issue ran the death notice





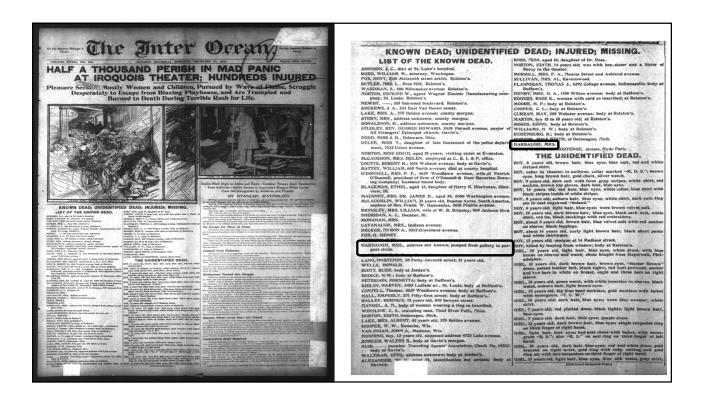
More Online Resources for Newspapers

- The Ancestor Hunt: www.theancestorhunt.com/newspapers.html
- California Digital Newspapers Collection: http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=q&e=----en--20--1--txt-IN-----
- Chronicling America: http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov
- Elephind: www.elephind.com
- Fulton History (New York): www.fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html
- Google News: http://news.google.com/newspapers

Case Studies

Harbaugh Sisters & The Iroquois Theatre Fire

- Mary and Harriet Harbaugh, both school teachers, attended the play at the Iroquois Theatre in December 1903.
- When the fire broke out Harriet perished by jumping to her death from the gallery.
- Mary lingered on for a couple more days before succumbing to her burns and smoke inhalation.
- The sisters had a large funeral with dozens of mourners.
- They were buried at the Plainfield Township cemetery. There is no headstone marking the sisters tragic demise.



62 IROQUOIS THEATER DISASTER.

restaurant. But at the word she collapsed, and, though three physicians worked over her for ten minutes, she never breathed again.

ONE LIFE BROUGHT BACK FROM DEATH.

Of a sudden Dr. E. E. Vaughan saw a finger move in a mass of the dead against the far wall of the restaurant.

"Men, there's a live one in there," he cried, and, while others came running, the physician flung aside the bodies till he had uncovered a woman of middle age, terribly burned about the face, and with her outer garments a mass of charred shreds.

In a second the woman was undergoing resuscitative treatment on a table, while the oxygen streamed into her lungs. Two doctors worked her arms like pumps, while a nurse manipulated the region of the heart. At length there was a flutter of a respiration, while a doctor bending over with his setthoscope announced a heart beat just perceptible. Another minute passed and the eyelids moved, while a groan escaped the lips.

"She lives!" simply said Dr. Vaughan, as he ordered the oxygen tube removed and brandy forced between the lips. In five minutes the woman was saved from immediate death, at least, though suffering terribly from burns. She was just able to murmur that her name was Mrs. Harbaugh, but that was all that could be learned of her identity before she was taken away to a hospital.

ONE HUNDRED FEET IN AIK, POLICE CARRY IN-JURED ACROSS ALLEY.

Over a narrow, ice covered bridge made of scaffold planks, more than 100 feet above the ground the police carried more

IROQUOIS THEATER DISASTER.

HARBAUGH, MARY E., 30 years old, 6653 Harvard avenue.

HOFFEIN, MISS ADELINE J. C., 24 years old, 292

HARTMAN, JOHN, 5705 South Halsted street. HENNING, CHARLES, 6 years old, 5743 Prairie avenue.

HENNING, WILLIAM, 14 years old.
HENNESSY, WILLIAM, 14 years old, 4411 Calumet ave

HICKMAN, MRS. CHARLES, 24 years old, 4743 Calumet

HIGGINSON, JANITHE B., 2 years old, Winnetka, Ill.; identified by P. D. Sexton, 418 East Huron street. HIPPACH, ROBERT A., 14 years old, 2928 Kenmore ave-

nue.

HIVE, ENA M., 15 years old, 613 West Sixty-first place.

HOLLAND, JOHN H., 60 years old, 6429 Evans avenue.

HOLLAND, JOHN H., 60 years old, 6429 Evans avenue.
HOLST, MRS. MARY W., 36 years old, 2088 Van Buren street.
HOLST, AMY, 7 years old, 2088 Van Buren street.

HOLST, AMY, 7 years old, 2088 Van Buren street. HOWARD, MRS. MARY E., 54 years old, Jonesville, Mich.; identified by son, Frank Howard, 3812 Prairie avenue.

HOLM, HULDA, 176 North Western avenue. HULL, MARIANNE K., 32 years old, 244 Oakwood boule-

HULL, HELEN, 12 years old, 244 Oakwood boulevard. HULL, DWIGHT, 6 years old, 244 Oakwood boulevard. HULL, DONALD, 8 years old, 244 Oakwood boulevard. HAYES, FRANK, 22 years old, son of Police Sergeant "LEST WE FORGET"

Chicago's Awful Theater Horror

By THE SURVIVORS AND RESCUERS

BISHOP FALLOWS

Presenting a Vivid Picture, both by Pen and Camera, of One of the Greatest Fire Horrors of Modern Times.

Embracing a Flash-Light Sketch of the Holocaust, Detailed Narratives by Participants in the Horor, Heroic Work of Rescuers, Reports of the Building Expetts as to the Responsibility (Co.), Wilson St. March 18, 1985, 1

FUSELY ILLUSTRATED WITH VIEWS OF THE SCENE OF THE SCENE OF THE FIRE

PLAINFIELD MOURNS

Two of Our Bright Girls Laid Away in the Cemetery as a Result of the Awful Iroquois Fire.— The Third Sister May Survive.

Sad, appropriate, and impressive were the services held at the Methodist church last Saturday morning in memory of Harriet E. and Mary E. Harbaugh, both cultured and successful teachers, who died from it juiles received at the Ir. quois theatre disaster in Chicago. About seventy-five people from Joliet attended the services in token of their high esteem for the dead, and deep sympathy for the bereaved living. The floral contributions were numerous, varied, handsome and expressive of love and admiration, and especially beautiful was the floral piece from the Savanna High School. The music was impressively rendered, and the pieces used were selections from the favorite hymns of the deceased sisters. The funeral discourse was upon the theme of "Life's Drama." It was short,

THE BLAME FIXED.

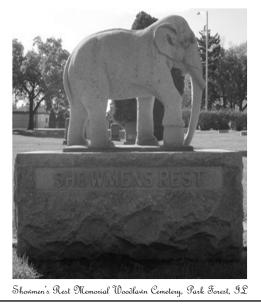
Eight Men Held Responsible for Iroquois Theatre Horror.

Chicago's Mayor and Fire Chief are Among the Number Held to Await the Action of the Grand _____ Jury — The Findings of the Coroner's Jury.

Plainfield Enterprise Obituary January 1904

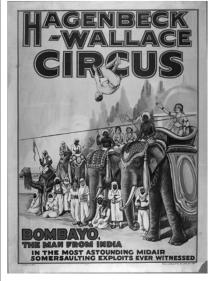


Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus Train Accident 1918



- Conductor Alonso Sargent falls asleep at the helm of an empty troop train near dawn on June 22nd. The train plows into the stopped Hagenbeck-Walalce circus train which was parked on a siding.
- An estimated 86 people perished in the wreck. 62 were identified, the rest were assumed to be so badly burned that their ashes were all that was left.
- The Lake Co. Coroner held Inquests into the tragic event. An Inquiry was held by the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus Train Accident 1918



HORROR VICTIMS TO REST CIRCUS DEAD TO BE BURIED WITH HONORS IN SHOWMEN'S PLOT

By international News Service.

CIIICAGO, June 55—Pureral serices for fifty-three of the Hagencies Wallase Irain werek tragedyed will be held here tomorrow,
historian to the Hagenstandard to the Hagentown of the Hagenprotestant clergyman afficialing
butts.

Jointly, Palyard, owner of the Edward M. Baljard, owner of the circus, will place fitting monuments and headstoness at the graves. Pive the control of the circus of the control of the circus of the control of the circus of the

anowing that arguest had need seen seen train that wrought the havee, and that fusees had been lighted and placed and one of them actually huried in the face of the cab, tended up huried in the face of the cab, tended upon "Low" Surgenit, engineer of the empty, who is to be brought from Kniamanco, Mich, to tell his version of the wreck.

"While the state and county officials of indians were busy yesterday at "Hammond fixing responsibility for the deaths of their feloustions of the circus troop who had escaped death or injury in the catastrophe "carried on" in preparation for the show at Beloit, Wis. Hiding

their grief as best they could, they put on the show last night under the big top," from under whose laugh shielding folds an many funmakers were missing. Ringlings and Barrawan missing, ringlings and Barrawan missing, ringlings and Barrawan missing, ringlings and Barrawan were missing, ringlings and somehow they put it over—these circus folk, winese duty it is, in apite of their own-sorrows, to make the rest of the world forget its week.

Engineer Dozing Report at Inquest

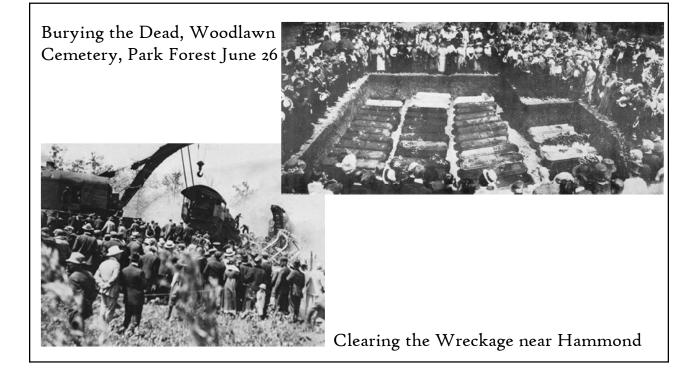
HAMMOND. Ind., June 26.—Testifying before a coroner's jury. Conductor Lewis Johnson of the Michigan Central train that ran down the Indian Section of the Indian Control of the Section of the Indian Control Section of the Indian Control Section of the Indian Control Lan Sargent told him he was dealing when the wreck occurred.

"After the crash I ran forward," Johnson testified. "I ran to Sargent

"Sargent answered: I was dozing." Sargent was brought here been made a charge of manslaughter. He refused to testify today on advice of his attorney, who elaimed right to refuse on the growth of the same of the



http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-e917-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

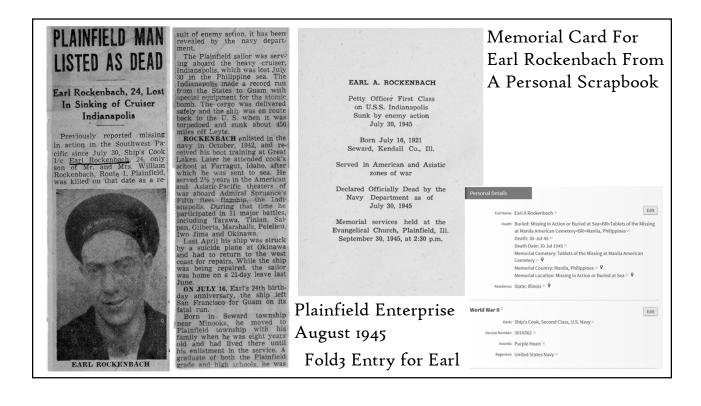


Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus Train Accident 1918

- www.circusworldbaraboo.org/our-treasures/library-research-center
- http://funtobebad.blogspot.com/2015/04/odd-but-interesting.htm
- www.genealogybank.com & www.ancestry.com
- Digital Public Library: http://dp.la/search?page=4&q=Hagenbeck+circus&utf8=%E2%9C%93
- Hammond Indiana Public Library: www.hammond.lib.in.us
- Lytle, Richard. The Great Circus Train Wreck. Hammond, IN. History Press. 2014.

Earl Rockenbach and the U.S.S. Indianapolis

- Earl Rockenbach was the only boy in a household with six sisters.
- Had joined the Navy in WWII as a way of seeing the world. As a young farm boy in Plainfield, he didn't have much experience with boats. He enlisted in October 1942 and was assigned to the U.S.S. Indianapolis in early 1943.
- The ship was attacked by Japanese submarines 450 miles from Leyte Gulf. Nearly 1200 men were onboard. The ship sank in twelve minutes.
- About 800 men went into the water. For five days these men floated in the water until rescued by the USS Cecil Doyle. Just over 300 men survived.

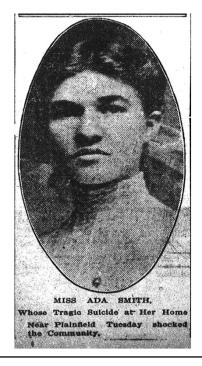


Earl Rockenbach and the U.S.S. Indianapolis

- www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/disasters-and-phenomena/sinking-of-the-uss-indianapolis.html
- Internet Archives: https://archive.org/details/SwimmingWithSharksNavyPhysician RemembersTheIndianapolisDisaster
- Veterans Oral History Project: http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.70532
- Find A Grave Memorial for Earl Rockenbach: www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=56771401

Ada Smith the Jilted Lover

- Ada Smith was a beautiful 19 year old woman who was a recent graduate of Plainfield High School. Her love snubbed her and started stepping out with other women. Jilted, Ada wrote her parents a note and snuck down the stairs in the middle of the night, walked out to the barnyard and took her own life by drowning herself in her farm's horse troth filled with 18 inches of water.
- A Coroner's inquest was held. Ralph Mather testified they were never engaged and he had stopped calling on her the previous month. Her death was ruled a suicide.
- Ada's sad demise was picked up by the Associated Press and ran in newspapers from Texas to South Dakota.



The suicide of Miss Ada Smith of Plainfield last week in eighteen inches of water is one of the saddest news stories that has been published in the columns of the press for many months. She was a bright, popular young lady, one of a family of eight, and her death is the first link in the family chain to be broken. Rev. B. A. Dickens of the Plainfield Methodist church, who conducted the funeral. in an editorial in The Enterprise says: "An honorable person should feel honored by the purity of the love of such a girl, and base beyond the power of expression is the person who would knowingly trifle with such affections and betray such confidence. Such an one, in our judgment should be disdained by society, and held by them in contempt, for such imashers need to be smashed." In a note left by Miss Smith, she stated that her love tor a young man of that community had been lightly passed by, the engagement broken, and that she could live no longer in the face of the disappointment. pointment.



TAKES LIFE WHEN LOVE **GROWS COLD**

Miss Ada Smith, Plainfield Girl Drowns Self in Horse

LEAVES NOTE CHOOSING HER SIX PALL BEARERS

Raiph Mather, Man in Case-

Quits Calling.

The friendship which had sprung ing srew, and finally it was whispered that the young couple were to be married, and that the wedding would take place in the spring of 1908. All went well until about a month ago when Mather suddenly quit calling on Miss Smith. Later he began to nay marked attention to other girls, and the forsaken girl brooded over the matter. However, she concealed her true feelings from her parents, and they had no thought that she contemplated kiling herself. The family heard her moving about the room early this morning, but thought nothing of it. It was not until later in the morning that her body was discovered in the horse tank in two feet of water. In order to drown herself the girl had to enter the the trough and lie under the cevering, which was partly open. When interviewed by a representative of the Herald this morning, Ralph Mather defined that there had been any quarrel between him and up grew, and finally it was whispered

been any quarrel between him and the girl. He said that he had quit going to see her about a month

Sympathy With Family.

Sympathy for the bereaved family is everywhere expressed in Plainfield.
Miss Smith was a talented and beautiful girl. She was a graduate of the Plainfield high school, and a soprano in the church choir.

Holds Inquest.

Correct Noel was notified and in

Coroner Noel was notified, and in company with Ralph Mather, left Jollet to hold the inquest. The ver-dlet returned was to the effect that the young girl committed suicide.

Christian Henne and the Crazed Bicyclist

- Christian Henne's tale is one of unfortunate misunderstandings
- Henne accidentally nudges a bicyclist off the road. The enraged man turns around and peddles after him and shoots Henne in the stomach.
- Henne rides his carriage to the nearest farm ½ mile away. The mistress of the house assumes he is drunk because of his slurred words and sends him away.
- He rides to the next house I mile away and collapses on the porch. Having lost much blood, he retells his tale the owner of the home as best he can and then dies.

Christian Henne and the Crazed Bicyclist

- The Kendall County Record Newspaper reports on the incident in a full column article giving tremendous detail on October 5, 1896.
- Kendall County Coroner's inquest register includes the list of witnesses and verdict as well as a copy of the Kendall Co. Record news article.
- Little White School Museum in Oswego has a file on the Henne Family.
- www.findagrave.com has headstone photo and listing of other family members buried nearby.
- Ancestry and FamilySearch also provided other genealogical information.

