

## James Arthur Acton ( - 18 Apr 1901)

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**Acton.** On Wednesday, April 17, 1901, at 7:30 p.m., James Arthur, beloved son of Mary E. and George T. Acton, aged 20 years and 10 months.

I miss thy bright and merry ways,  
Thy sunny smiles of cheer;  
I miss thee, Arthur, in every place,  
And hold thy memory dear.

By His Mother

Funeral from parents' residence, 1421 D street northwest, on Saturday, April 20, at 2 p.m., thence to Bethel Chapel, 13th and Ohio avenue northwest. Friends and relatives invited to attend.

*The Evening Star, April 18, 1901*

### **The Shock Was Fatal**

#### **James Arthur Acton Killed By Electric Wire**

#### **Dead Body Was Found This Morning in Frame Building Near Lighting Company's Plant**

James Arthur Acton, twenty years old, was killed by coming in contact with an electric wire some time last night or this morning in a small frame structure erected against the outer wall of the plant of the United States Electric Lighting Company, at 13-1/2 and B streets northwest. His dead body was found by Edward Spinner in the little building this morning shortly after 6 o'clock, and was removed to the home of his mother, No 1421 D street. An inquest will be held at the first precinct station at 11 o'clock tomorrow to determine, if possible, just how the accident happened.

It is not known at what hour the unfortunate young man lost his life, but it is believed it was between 7:30 and 8 o'clock. He was last seen about that time. The appearance of the body indicated that death had taken place many hours before.

The box-like structure was evidently not locked last night, for the door was open when the body was found and there was no evidence of breaking. It is stated that the door had been broken open on previous occasions, but for what reason does not appear. There is nothing in there except a number of electric cables, which are in use. The cables are insulated, but there was one place where the lead covering was exposed, and it is supposed this is where the young man placed his hand and received a fatal shock from the 1,000-volt wire. Both hands were burned, and there was also a hole through the sole of one shoe, which looked like it might have been made by an electric wire.

The deceased was a son of the late George T. Acton, who was in the police patrol service a number of years ago, and a nephew of Police Sergeant Joseph Acton of the first precinct. The young man is said to have been somewhat weak-minded as the result of illness from scarlet fever and typhoid fever. Much of his time was spent about the plant of the electric light company, and he had constructed a miniature plant of his own, which he believed might be operated. Some time ago he did a week's work cleaning brick when one of the buildings was taken down and earned 72 cents. Yesterday when he returned home he said he had been promised another similar position, as one of the big buildings of the company is being taken down to make room for a more modern structure.

Arthur left home last night with his brothers George and Grover, and went with them to the Washington Light Infantry armory, where a game of basketball was being played. His two brothers remained to watch the players through the side window. Arthur left them shortly before 7:30 o'clock. It is believed he went directly to the place where he lost his life. His mother became alarmed when he did

not return home, and about 11 o'clock inquiries were made for him, but nobody had seen him since he parted from his brothers.

A brother of the deceased, Walter Acton, was killed by the falling of a scaffold at the Congressional Library the 13th of September, 1895. The death of Arthur was reported to the coroner, who viewed the body and decided to hold the inquest at the hour stated. Arrangements for the funeral have not yet been made.

*The Washington Post, April 19, 1901, p. 12*

### **Killed By Electric Shock**

#### **James Acton Found Dead in Lighting Company's Cable House**

James Arthur Acton, twenty-one years old, of 1422 D street, was killed by an electric shock some time Wednesday night, in a small structure adjacent to the plant of the United States Electric Lighting Company, Thirteen-and-a-half and B streets northwest. His body was found by Edward Spiner, an employe of the company, about 6 o'clock yesterday morning. The coroner was notified, and after he had viewed the remains, the body was removed to the late home of the deceased. An inquest will be held this morning at 11 o'clock at the First precinct station.

The deceased was said to have been weak-minded, and his particular hobby seemed to be electricity. As a consequence of his desire for knowledge in this direction, he spent most of his time about the plant of the company. When one of the buildings was being taken down some time ago young Acton obtained work as a helper at the building, and worked for about a week. Wednesday he announced to members of his family that he was going to work again yesterday. He left home Wednesday night with his brothers, George and Grover, and the three went to the Washington Light Infantry Armory, to watch a game of basket-ball. Arthur left them about 8 o'clock.

When the others arrived at home Arthur was missed, and the family was alarmed. It was thought that the young man went for some unknown object to the frame structure mentioned, in which are a number of "live" electric cables. All the cables are said to be well insulated, except one 1,000-volt wire, which is exposed at one point.

It is thought that young Acton laid his hands on the wire. Both hands appear to have been burned, and there is a decided burn mark on the sole of one of his shoes. The door of the frame structure was found open, and there was nothing to show that it had been forced. It is believed that Acton went in there to examine the cables, as he had often done, and that he met death by laying his hands on the exposed wire.

The deceased is a son of the late George T. Acton, who was on the police force several years ago.

*The Washington Post, April 20, 1901, p. 12*

### **Electric Company Censured**

#### **Jury in Acton Inquest Holds Cable House Should Have Been Closed**

An inquest was held at the First precinct station yesterday morning over the body of James Arthur Acton, aged twenty years, who was found dead Thursday morning in the cable house of the United States Electric Lighting Company. After hearing the testimony of a number of witnesses, among them several employes of the company, the jury returned a verdict that Acton came to his death by coming in contact with a live wire at the premises of the company, Fourteenth and B streets northwest, and added:

"We, the jury, believe that the death of the said James Arthur Acton was due to the negligence of the said company."

This was taken to mean that the jury held the company to have been derelict in leaving the cable house open. The company's representatives who testified claimed that the door had been nailed up, but that it had been broken open several times.

The body of young Acton was turned over to his mother, who lives at 1421 D street northwest. It will be buried today at Congressional Cemetery.