

Walter Acton

(- 13 Sep 1895)

Acton. Suddenly on Friday, September 13, 1895 at 1:30 p.m., Walter Acton, in the 20th year of his age, son of Elizabeth and the late George T. Acton. Funeral from his late residence, 15th and C streets northwest at 2 p.m. Sunday, September 15.

The Evening Star, September 13, 1895

Instantly Killed

Fatal Accident at the New Library Building

Young Acton's Tragic Fall

Trips or Walks Through an Open Trap

The First Death

This afternoon about 1:30 o'clock there was an accident at the new Congressional Library building, which resulted in the almost instant death of an eighteen-year-old white boy named Walter Acton, who lived on 15th street between C and D streets.

Acton was employed as a water boy by Smead & Company, the iron contractors of Louisville, and was a very bright and intelligent young man. His father is dead, and he has made his home with his widowed mother.

The accident occurred in the west or main entrance hall of the library building.

From the floor to the handsome ceiling above is a distance of about 100 feet. On the north and south sides of the hall are the beautifully carved marble staircases. At a distance of eighty-one feet from the floor is a temporary flooring for the convenience of the men who have been at work upon the ceiling. It is a thoroughly substantial structure, and here, as elsewhere throughout the building, every safeguard was taken to prevent accident.

Through the Trap

In the center of this temporary wooden flooring, and at a point directly above the center of the main hall or corridor, is a gangway or hole cut through, about five feet square, through which building materials are hoisted. It was through this trap that young Acton fell this afternoon. It would seem as though there was no one near him at the time he fell, but it is supposed that he was walking across without looking where he was going, and either tripped or stepped into this hole. From there it was a clear fall to the floor below.

He Was Dead

The body turned over as it fell through the air and dropped heavily and with a dull sound upon the solid floor below.

Mr. John Chambers, the superintendent for Smead & Co., was standing on a scaffold nearby and saw the body in the air, although he did not see Acton when he first fell. He and some of the laborers at once ran to his assistance.

Dr. J.W. Bayne, who lives near at hand, was summoned at once, but the young man was dead before he reached him. Acton's skull was badly fractured, his left arm was broken and there were other injuries besides. The patrol wagon from the fifth precinct was summoned and the body was removed from the building shortly afterward and the coroner notified.

First Tragedy

It was stated at the library building this afternoon that this was the first fatal accident that has occurred there since the building was begun. It is a curious coincidence that a workman who was killed some time ago by a falling stone at the new city post office met his death at the very center of the main entrance, so that in future years the thousands who enter the two buildings will walk over the places where two men have met untimely ends.

The Evening Star, September 14, 1895

Young Acton's Death

An Investigation Held by the Coroner at the First Precinct Station

Dr. Hammett, coroner, assembled a jury at the first precinct station house this afternoon to investigate the manner in which Walter Acton, who was killed by falling through an opening in the floor of the new Congressional Library building yesterday, came to his death.

The jury consisted of Henry J. Tippet, J.B. Daughton, Frank J. White, Jacob Ritterspach, C.C. Beveridge and Frederick Miller.

Immediately after assembling the jury decided to visit the Library building to make a personal inspection of the ground.

The jury returned to the first precinct station house at 2:50 o'clock, accompanied by several witnesses.

Mr. Jones, the foreman of painters at the library, testified that Acton was in the act of removing a ladder, when he stepped back and fell through the hole in the floor.

The inquest was in progress when The Star went to press.