POOR DOCUMENT

MC2035

76 CHILDREN DIE IN STAMPEDE CAUSED BY MONTREAL MOVIE FIRE

Death Toll at Laurier Palace in East End May Increase; Disaster Caused By Minor Outbreak of Flames

VICTIMS PILE UP IN HEAP NEAR EXIT

Usher Sounds Alarm; Boys and Girls Become Solid Mass Five Steps Off Sidewalk When Those in Van Stumble and Fall; Most of Those Removed Found Suffocated

MONTREAL, Jan. 9—Seventy-six and possibly more smoke-stained, blood-blotched boys and girls lie lifeless on the floors of the Montreal morgue. A score of other children, and a few adults, crazed and burned, repose at four city hospitals. All are victims of a stampede that followed a minor outbreak of fire this afternoon during a moving picture show at the Laurier Palace, 1683 St. Catherine street East, in the east end of the city.

All evening the toll mounted and may continue to mount, hour after hour, as ambulances make still more journeys to the old gray building near the harbor, where mortuary chambers held scores of bodies ghastly in death. Long after the last wisp of steam had disseminated over the gaunt east end of the building which had been a tomb for so many, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, tramped wearily from hospital to hospital. Some cried hysterically as they found their little ones in safe care. Others left the last hospital with one more call to make. And the morgue, enveloped in the deathly stillness of a business district hushed on the Sabbath day, saw ever-filling lines of tzut-strung men, women, and children even, still searching and awaiting the worst.

The mute and mutilated were taken in mid-afternoon from a stairway barely 30 feet long, leading from the eastern end of the theatre gallery to the street. Ten minutes encompassed the whole tragedy. Out of the bright January sunshine, which threw alluring blue shadows under the trees of the snow-covered park opposite the threatre, troops of adults and children, but above all children, had filed, rosy-cheeked and laughing, into the ground floor and the gallery of the show house.

LURED BY GLARING BILLS.

Glaring bills, rich in startling colors, had filled them with anticipation of the fun they would get from the comedy "Get 'Em Young," of the excitement that would come from the serious films. Chattering and gay they filled the greater part of the theatre.

Then from the balcony, the cry of "fire." It was an usher who sounded the alarm. There was a startled gasp from the audience; a stir and the ominous mutterings of a panic. Trained employes hushed the anxiety, for only a little smoke was coming from beneath the front of the gallery. It grew in volume. The audience on the ground floor was advised to take the exits, and that was done without semblance of a scramble. Upstairs the children were piling towards the ways that led down to the sidewalk.

THEY PILE UP IN HEAP.

The western stairway was clear, and the youngsters were descending rapidly. Things were equally good on the eastern stairway, then five steps from the sidewalk, five steps from safety, the tragedy was born. Boys and girls in the van of the stampeding mob and pressed suddenly from the rear, stumbled and fell. Behind them, in serried ranks were the others. In an instant, panic had seized those at the rear. There was shoving and scrambling. Then boys and girls piled in a heap, and a minute or two was sufficient for the stairway to be solid, suffocating, groaning, shrieking and dying mass.

MANY SAVED FROM JAM.

Firemen and policemen were on the spot instantly. The blaze became secondary. Many of the children were rescued from the jam, though 20 men pulling on a constable's sturdy leather belt could not snatch one little fellow from death. Practised eyes saw the need for heroic measures. Holes were chopped through the wooden stairs, directly under the jam of bodies; another hole was made in a wall. Firemen formed a human chain, and gradually undermined the mass.

NEARLY ALL DEAD

Nearly all pulled out of the stairway were dead. Two or three boys gave their names and died, crushed and mangled. Outside the police worked feverishly. While motor firepumps roared in ear-splitting cacophony, as the interior blaze was attacked with tons of water, doctors were summoned. Frail little bodies were laid in rows on the sidewalk, and injured were quickly separated. Priests were on the scene, and the last rites were given to a few gasping little ones who revived a little in the open air, then died.

Nearby fire and police stations became temporary morgues. Mortuary wagons started their trips. Ambulances rushed the injured to the various hospitals. The news spread, and soon hatless, anxious parents were on the run toward the theatre. Reinforced police were merciless to the curious, kindly and sympathetic to the people who feared their little ones were inside the building. They got little news. The safety forces of the city and the hospital squads worked so quickly that either hospitals or the morgue alone could answer the queries.

TREK TO HOSPITALS

Then the trek of tragedy from hospital to hospital, and then to the morgue, began. Admitting officers at the four big hospitals were besieged for the names of the patients they had. The best was done for the questioners.

But there was need for tact, for more were dying and the rustle of the soutane was heard in more than one corridor.

At the end of the journey was the morgue. Line after line of police repelled the insistent- near-crazed people, who wanted to decide once for all if the loved ones were dead or missing.

MOST SUFFOCATED

In each mortuary chamber the crucifix topped an unforgettable scene. Under the brilliant lights, stretched on the shining, gray-tinted floors, were the boys and girls. There they lay, some with blood-stained faces, other smoke-blackened, most of them just pale and suffocated. Bright red mufflers, green sweaters, round-toed little shoes, mingled with tousled hair, upraised first, chubby faces,wrinkled and distorted into grimaces of agony of which they died. The morgue officers had done their best. For the time being, the relatives, admitted two or three at a time, must look upon the bodies just as they had been pulled from the choked stairway.

Sobbing, some near-crazed, went into the mortuary chambers and came away with nothing learned. Others caught their breath. "There" and a finger pointed at the victim. Constables moved reverently about the chambers, trying to find some little clue to identity. And all the time the mothers and fathers, the brothers and sisters, poured in.

CORONER'S COURT.

The scene in the little room of the Coroner's Court was unparalleled. A long line of weeping parents led to the bench, where Coroner McMahon, investigator of crime and accident cases in Montreal for more than 40 years, asked each one particulars concerning the deceased. The coroner had opened the inquest in order to permit relatives to claim the bodies. The regular opening of the inquiry will be tomorrow.

TWO QUESTIONS ASKED.

To each person Mr. McMahon put two questions. He asked the bereaved person whether or not the child who perished was accompanied to the theatre by an adult. In nearly every case the answer was "No." The coroner then asked if the child had permission of the parent to go to the show. Seventy-five percent of the answers to this question were in the negative. The "death" line twisted from the bench to the door of the courtroom. Down stairs in the lobby of the building a crowd of persons seeking to identify their dead were held back by provincial policemen. At intervals a father, a mother or brother was escorted to the mortuary chamber where recognition of a loved one brought a flood of tears or collapse.

After persons had established identification they were brought to the courtroom up stairs to replace those in the line who had passed before the Coroner.

TOUCHING EPISODES.

Touching episodes were witnessed as the coroner directed his questions. Asked the age of his son, Rene, Benjamin Roy, of 1440 Prefontaine street, replied, "he was 14 years old, in fact today was his fourteenth birthday. He and his brother went to the show to celebrate. The other boy was saved." Both the Roy children were under 16 years of age.

Prosper Martel came to identify the bodies of his daughters, Eve, aged 8, and Yvette, 7. His son, Philbert, aged 13, accompanied the little girls to the picture house, but escaped with injuries. He is at the Notre Dame hospital.

Relatives began gathering at the morgue shortly before five o'clock. An hour later, the place was congested and by nine o'clock many were waiting outside the building. There was a constant stream of new arrivals.

All persons who were given a certificate of death by Coronor McMahon were told that they could return in two hours for the body. Morgue employes were preparing to cope with the situation which would develop when the many hearses started to arrive.

SEATS ABOUT 1,000.

The Laurier Palace Theatre bears the civic number 1683 St. Catherine street east, two streets east of Moreau street, a main artery, and six streets east of Pie ix Boulevard. It has been in operation several years. It is a 2-story building with a stone and brick front. The seating capacity is about one thousand.

The orchestra seats about 800 persons, while there is a large gallery which fills the back of the house and runs on either side. The place has four exits, two at the front of the house into which lead the stairs from the balcony and two at the side leading into a lane, with a Sortie on Desery street.

After the fire today the orchestra ceiling beneath the balcony was badly damaged while the floor of the balcony was burned through in spots. The ceiling at the back of the balcony was also damaged by the flames and the glass in the windows fronting on St. Catherine street were broken. The lower floor suffered severe damage by water.

The owner of the Laurier Palace moving picture theatre is A. Lawand, who resides at 92 Sherbrooke street east.

WHAT LAW STATES

What action will be taken by the authorities with regard to the disaster has not yet been learned, but attention has been called to the fact that the provincial laws lay down that no children may be admitted to a moving picture theatre in the Province of Quebec under the age of 16 years. The prohobition has been in force since the inception of the act, and the provision reads:

"No person or persons in charge of a moving picture hall where shows are given by means of a cinematograph, and, in the case of a company or partnership, no manager or other person in charge of the establishment shall receive in any way, at such shows, any child less than 16 years of age unless such child be accompanied by his or her father, mother, tutor or teacher, or by a guardian specially authorized by the father or mother."

There is an exception to this rigid restriction, passed by the legislature in 1919, where special provision is made for the admission of children when special children's shows are given. This amendment reads:

"Notwithstanding the above provision, children less than 16 years of age may attend exhibitions of moving pictures without being so accompanied, when the advertisement of the exhibition announces a program only of pictures authorized for children by the board of censors of moving pictures, according to the provisions of section 16, and of no other picture."

The section in question refers to children's films as those dealing solely with patriotic, instructive or humorous subjects.

The penalty for admitting children under 16 is a fine of up to $50, or in default of payment, imprisonment up to one month for the first offence, and in the case of subsequent offences of not less than $50 and not more than $10, or imprisonment for two months in default of payment.

DENIES EXPLOSION.

Denying the rumor which had prevailed among the crowd that the fire started from a film-roll exploding, Max Reid, manager of the Laurier Palace, said that he first discovered the flames under the floor of the balcony close to the operator's room. He said that there was every indication of a short circuit from wires which would be under there. The location of this place in the floor is just in front where the film projector is installed in the gallery. The audience rushed for both exits.

The exits, the manager said, were in good order and there was no obstruction due to their construction. Those on the floor, he said, had little difficulty with the exits there. On the east side of the gallery the exit is a stairway similar to that on the right, both opening into the front foyer. The children had not stopped to think of the west stairway, but piled down the east, where their progress was barred by the crowd which pushed its way out from the main floor of the theatre. A few had descended the west stairway.

KNOCKED DOWN IN RUSH

Antoine Girouard, aged 16, of 2142 Nicolet sereet, who was taken to the Montreal General Hospital said that he went to the theatre with two of his brothers. The trio were seated in the balcony.

"I noticed flame shoot up through a crack in the floor, and immediately everyone rushed from the balcony," said the boy. "I got down the stairway to within five steps of the bottom, when I was knocked down by the rush on the stairway, and fell, with people piled over me. Three dead boys were beneath me when the police raised me, and above me five or six injured boys had to be removed before I could be reached. The stairway was blocked with the rush of the crowd, and people were lying about on the steps. While I was crushed and lying on the steps the firemen began to play the hose over us, and no doubt it was due to this action that more of us were not burned to death. When I was picked up I was soaked with water, but my life had been saved."

Girouard, in addition to contusions, was also slightly burned, but will recover.

NO DIFFICULTY IN LEAVING

Albert Makin, aged 12, of 522 Marlborough street, was sitting in the orchestra with his older brother. He says he had no difficulty in leaving the building. "As soon as we heard screaming and smelt smoke we began to run to the lobby. There was lots of room to get out. I didn't see anybody getting hurt or suffocated. It was terrible in the theatre, though. Everybody was shouting and yelling and the place was full of smoke and it was like a fight going on upstairs."

Roger Frappier, aged 13, of 1837 Davidson street, escaped by jumping over the balcony to the lower floor. "I didn't see where the fire was, but I smelt smoke and heard everybody shouting. There were several men shouting that everybody should remain seated and there were some ushers trying to keep the people quiet. But there were others who up and hollered "fire' fire," and told us to get out quick. I began to run up the aisle to the stairway in the rear, but smoke began to get in my throat and I could not get up that far. I ran back and jumped into one of the aisles. Everyone down stairs had got to the rear of the theatre by that time and I ran back and went out the front door. I guess I hurt myself when I landed down stairs but I was too excited to notice it."

ONE OF PARTY MISSING

The Frappier boy had gone to the show with his two half brothers, Paul and Roland Leduc, aged 11 and 13, respectively. Of this party, two escaped and this evening Roland was still missing. Paul Leduc saved his life by crawling through the mob on the stairway. He does not know how he managed to reach the street. He was bruised and stepped on but was not seriously hurt in making his escape.

Roger Frappier was still unnerved several hours after the fire and told of seeing terrible sights in the balcony before he made his leap to safety in the orchestra. He says he saw a mother attempting to make her way out with a baby in her arms.

The family or Octave Quintal, 2103 Joliette street, lost three of its members in the fire. Sylvia, aged 8, was attending her first movie show. She perished with two brothers, Adrien aged 13, and Hildergarde, aged 9.

Constable Albert Boisseau, of the Tetreauville station, also lost three children. The constable was off duty at the time but was nearby and went to the scene of the fire a short time after its outbreak. He assisted firemen and police in removing the dead and hurt from the building, working with feverish ardor because he knew that his son and two daughters had gone to the theatre.

After several bodies had been laid out in front of the building to be placed in the morgue wagon, the constable recognized the second body he examined as that of his son. Later when all efforts to locate the other two children failed, he went to the morgue and found the bodies of the other two children there. The dead children are Germaine, aged 13; Roland, aged 11, and Yvette, aged 8.

FOUND IN HOSPITAL

Relatives of Violette McCray, aged 6, of 1885 Lafontaine street, mourned her loss when they could not find her after the fire, but some hours later they discovered that she had been removed to the Hotel Dieu Hospital, injured. The relatives came to the fire station opposite the theatre where some of the bodies were placed awaiting the arrival of the morgue conveyances, and when they were told that all the bodies had been removed, set out for the morgue. They held out little hope that the little tot had been saved.

The McCray child went to the theatre with Lucienne Decelles, aged 12, who lives at the same address in Lafontaine street. The Decelles child, who lost sight of her little charge when the mad rush for the exit began, escaped but was brought to her home in a taxicab, unconscious. She probably suffered a fractured rib and minor internal injuries when she was trampled on the stairway.

Victor Lee, organist of the Mission Church, St. John Baptist, who in 1915 was leader of the orchestra at the Laurier Palace Theatre, when told of the terrible catastrophe last evening, expressed the opinion that a short circuiting of the electric wires might have caused the fire. He spoke of the theatre as it had been at the time when he knew it and said that it was an old wooden building, which had originally been two stores. It was very poorly supplied with exits, having in fact only the front door and main entrance for use as exits.

The theatre as he knew it, Mr. Lee said, would seat about 700 and it consisted of a main floor with one gallery. The gallery was about half the size of the gallery in the Opera House in Saint John and contained the operating booth for the motion pictures. The generator was beneath the booth and this fact led him to suppose that since the fire was seen beneath the gallery there had been a short circuit there. There was a small celler beneath the auditorium and the heating apparatus was located there.

The Laurier Palace Theatre, Mr. Lee said, was not in the city proper but in Maisonneuve, which is the East End and in the French district. At the time when he knew it the theatre was owned by an Assyrian named Boosamera, who also owned the theatre at St. Lawrence street, near St. Catherines.

1926 IN REVIEW FOR ONE TENNESSEE FAMILY

Less than a lear ago twins were born to Mr. and Mrs. John Johnson, of Knoxville, Tenn. Then the other day triplets arrived. Here they are all five of 'em!

WINNIPEG-LONDON PHONE TALKS NEAR

WINNIPEG, Jan. 9—"It will not be long before Winnipeg as well as the eastern cities are talking to London by telephone," J. E. Lowry, telephone commissioner, said here.

"We are not a party to this present scheme of trans-Atlantic contact by telephone. I notice, however, that Toronto is mentioned as one of the cities which will get in touch with London and if Toronto can do that Winnipeg will not be far behind.

"Since we are in communication with Toronto steadily we can soon talk to London once the eastern city establishes contact."

MAY ELECTIONS IN QUEBEC UNLIKELY

QUEBEC, Jan. 9—Premier Taschereau Saturday discounted the rumor that provincial elections would take place early in May.

When told of the report he expressed surprise, saying that the question of elections had not yet received the slightest consideration as there was quite enough to do and think about in connection with the forthcoming session of the legislature.

Identified As Dead in Panic

MONTREAL, Jan. 9—The identified dead in the theatre disaster are:

ROGER COULOMBE, 11.
HILDEGARDE QUINTAL, —.
SYLVIA QUINTAL, —.
JEANNE D'ARC VIEN, 5.
GERMAINE BOISSEAU, 13.
MARCEL GIRARD, 9.
MARCEL RATTHE, 11.
MAURICE GRONDINES, 11.
YVETTE BOISSEAU, 8.
ROLLAND BOISSEAU, 11.
MAURICE GERVAIS, 14.
MAURICE DUMONT, 16.
MARTHE PAQUIN, 11.
BERNARD HOUDE, 13.
GEORGE MCLEARY, 8.
ROLLAND GUERIN, 10.
MARCEL BARIL, 15.
GERTRUDE SAUVAGEAU, 14
LOUIS PHILIPPE ROMILLARD, 11.
RITA MAHEU, 7.
JEAN LOUIS GAGNE, 13.
MICHAEL MURPHY, 14.
EVA MARTEL, 8.
YVETTE MARTEL, 7.
RENE ROY, 14.
ROLAND CLEMENT, 7.
FRANCIENNE OTIS, 10.
LEOPOLD TREMBLAY, 11.
YVETTE TREMBLAY, 8.
CHARLEMAGNE VINCENT, 11.
THERESE COUTURE, 14.
ALBERT READ, 11.
RAOULD BOUCHARD, 11.
ADRIEN GAUTHIER, 10.
JEAN MARCELLE DUMONT, 12.
ANTONIO MENARD, 12.
GASTON ARPIN, 6.
ADRIEN QUINTAL, 14.
CECILE MARTIN, 8.
GEORGES STONEFF, 7.
LOUIS EDWARD MORIN, 8.
SIMON SEGIN, 14.
ANDRE TELLER, 14.
ADRIEN HETU, 9.
ATHENU DUFOUR, 12.
RENE CHAMPAGNE, 16.
GABRIELLE TARDY, 7.
MARCEL LEVASSEUR, 9.
AUGE AIME LEVASSEUR, 15.
GERMAINE RIVARD, 14.
ANNETTE BISSON, 16.
FRANCOIS PESANT, 14.
GERMAINE DETONONCOURT, 12.
EDOUARD FRECHETTE, 12.
PHILIPPE NANTEL, 12.
JEAN GAGNE, 13.
ROMEO PELCHANT, 9.

WINTER LECTURES BEGIN AT YARMOUTH

YARMOUTH, Pan. 9—The winter series of Sunday lectures, held under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A., opened in the Auditorium today with the Rev. Dr. A. H. Moore, president of Kings College, as the speaker. His subject was the two standards

PRIEST'S FUNERAL LARGELY ATTENDED

Solemn Services at Yarmouth For Late Rev. Fr. Ashley of St. John's

YARMOUTH, Jan. 9—A large congregation taxed St. Ambrose church to capacity this evening when a special solemn absolution for the dead was sung for the repose of the soul of Rev. Father John T. Ashley, of Torr Bay, Newfoundland, whose death took place at the Yarmouth Hospital on Thursday morning. The service took the place of the regular evening vespers and was most impressive.

At eight o'clock yesterday morning a solemn requiem high mass was held and following that the body laid in state in the church until last evening when it was conveyed to the Glebe House. This morning the remains were again taken to the church where they have been for the day.

Following the service this evening the body was placed on board the night express for Halifax en route to Torr Bay. It was followed to the depot by a long procession of adherents of St. Ambrose in autos while at the terminals many more gathered to pay their last respects to the departed priest. The bearers were Dr. Thomas Melanson, Messrs. R. W. E. Landry, Simon Amirault, Stillman Deon, Samuel Nichols, J. A. Murphy, C. J. O'Hanley Jr., and Harry McKinlay.

The remains were accompanied by Rev. Father St. John who was travelling with the deceased and the K. of C. of Yarmouth are sending Charles Pothier with Father St. John as far as Halifax.

5 STABBED AT CALCUTTA

Are Hindus in Parade and One Other is Injured by Brick Cast by Moslems

CALCUTTA, Jan. 9—Despite elaborate police precautions five Hindus were stabbed and one was injured by a brick thrown during a procession of 4,000 Hindus through the Indian quarter today.

Moslems who attacked the paraders followed them all along the route and reinforcements were sent from the police headquarters to control the crowds in the event of a general Hindu-Mo lem outbreak.

BABY'S SKIN is easily hurt. Many mothers protect it by bathing with no other soap than Resinol

Better Dressers Buy Big—
Henderson Bankrupt Sale

It isn't the Half Price idea alone that crowds the Henderson Bankrupt Sale with men fussy over their appearance. It's the style of the stuff that gets them, the quality, the choice. Most every Suit and Coat now on Sale not a month out of the best clothing factories in Canada. Sixteen thousand dollars' worth of the newest Suits and Coats yet to be turned into cash—and the old price knife says HALF.

Smartest Suits

Balloon Trousers—extra Trousers—Double Breasted or Single Breasted Models. The best designed, best put together Suits of the best Cloths they make up. Handsome new colorings and effects in Tweeds of every 1927 weave, solid Blue and Gray Serges of guaranteed grade, colorful hairline and check Worsteds of the most beautiful cloth that ever met your eye.

Two trouser groups start at $17.50.

Another lot of knockouts at $19.50.

The prettiest you'd ask for at $19.50.

At $23.50 a smashing selection—while at $26.50 and $29.50 they reach the limit. The place is packed full of these high grade new style Suits at Bankrupt reductions seen only once in years.

Other good Suits with regular Trousers Bankrupt at Half and Less at $14.50, $12.50 and $9.50.

Classy Overcoats

Hard to believe it when you notice price tickets of **$8.50 and $14.50** in fancy Tweed Overcoats in all the right colors and effects.

But when you hit $17.50 and onward—that's when you get real excited. Town Ulsters and Storm Ulsters of cosy thickness and softness in colorings that prove you a man of taste. Bankrupt at **$17.50**

Blue Chinchilla Ulsters and Chesterfields of guaranteed dye Bankrupt at from **$15.50**

And between **$19.50 and $32.50** the loveliest you ever looked at. Lots of them, too. Bankrupt Reductions that know no competition. Thank the cash-mad Creditors for all this. Come in and get a Coat you'll own for years.

Henderson
Bankrupt Sale

104 King Street—Open evenings.