

HOLDS MANAGEMENT OF SPEEDWAY RESPONSIBLE

BROKE

CORONER'S VERDICT IN CASES
OF RACE VICTIMS.

NOT SUFFICIENT PROTECTION

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The coroner rendered verdicts in the cases of West, Jollif and Kellum today. In the cases of Bourque and Holcomb he gave out his verdict late yesterday afternoon.

His finding in the cases of the deaths of West and Jollif, who were spectators, killed while watching the races from a fence, last Saturday afternoon, being caught in the wreck of the National car driven by Charles Merg, is particularly emphatic in its criticism of the management of the speedway, the coroner declaring that sufficient protection was not given the public. His finding in the Jollif and West cases is summed up as follows:

Finding Summed Up.

"I find that the machine left the track after the bursting of the tire, leaped off the speedway and caught James West and Oris Jollif and killed them outright.

"I find by the testimony that the speedway or roadway at this particular point was in a very bad condition.

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"I find that the machine left the track after the bursting of the tire, leaped off the speedway and caught James West and Oris Joliff and killed them outright.

"I find by the testimony that the speedway or roadway at this particular point was in a very bad condition.

"I find, also, that the protection of the spectators and the public who paid their admission fee to see the races was very lax. There was no discipline among the guards and soldiers stationed there to guard the public from danger.

"I find, also, that there were danger signs and placards placed around the track, and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Company knew the dangerous condition that existed there and should have afforded the public more and better protection from accident and death."

Kellum Verdict.

The verdict in the case of Claude S. Kellum, the mechanic who was riding with Merz, is as follows:

"I find by the inquest that the cause of the accident was the bursting of a tire on the automobile driven by Charles Merz.

"I find by the testimony that Claude S. Kellum was the mechanic who accompanied Charles Merz in the automobile that was racing around the track.

"I find that the cause of the bursting of the tire, that caused the death of C. S. Kellum, was the unfinished track and that the Indianapolis Speedway Company put on the races before the track was completed and safe.

"I firmly believe that the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Company should have used more precaution and not have allowed the races to go on until the track was in good condition."

Bourque and Holcomb.

In the cases of the deaths of William Bourque and Harry Holcomb, who were killed on August 19 while racing in a Knox car, Coroner Blackwell declared the track to have been unfit for racing and does not take cognizance of the testimony of Carl G. Fisher, who said that he examined the Knox entry after the



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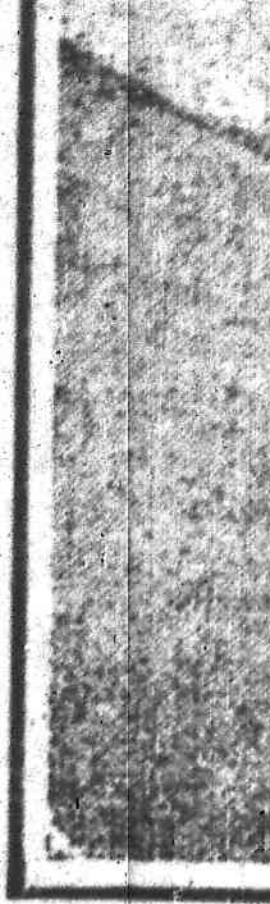
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Bourque and Holcomb.

In the cases of the deaths of William Bourque and Harry Holcomb, who were killed on August 19 while racing in a Knox car, Coroner Blackwell declares the track to have been unfit for racing and does not take cognizance of the testimony of Carl G. Fisher, who said that he examined the Knox entry after the wreck and found the axle plates of the machine broken and showing crystallization. The coroner renders the following as his finding in the Bourque and Holcomb cases:

"I, John J. Blackwell, coroner of Marion county, have examined all the witnesses and heard all the testimony in the cases of the deaths of Harry Holcomb and William Bourque, who came to their end on the 19th day of August, 1909, on the race track owned by the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Company from an automobile accident. Said accident was caused: First, by the race course not being in condition; and, secondly, that the machine swerved into an open ditch twenty inches wide and about two feet deep that was open for the reception of tiling to drain the low ground. This ditch was on the very edge of the track, and as soon as the machine struck the ditch it went to pieces, turned turtle, and killed Harry Holcomb and William Bourque.

Track Not in Condition.

"I find by my investigation that the roadway was not in condition for fast racing by automobiles; the broken stone that was placed on parts of the roadway, and especially for two hundred feet where Harry Holcomb and William Bourque met their deaths, was put on only a few days before and was not properly rolled or tamped. There was a coating of asphaltum placed on top of the broken stones in order to try to cement the stones together. But after the machines had been working on the track for a short time I noticed that the stone worked up through and it demonstrated to me that there was no foundation for this roadway and the hard usage and test it was put to.

"I am further satisfied that if this open ditch had not been in the position and place in which it was the two men could have ridden their machine and stuck to the track. As it was, they did not have one chance for their lives after they struck the ditch. I examined the

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An informal conference of lighted streets town business district city will be held members of the board representatives of Company, of Chicago office Tuesday. Anticipated the question company shall be permitted lights will be decided and board are concerned. The company proposes hundred ornamental town business district posts to the square of the lights as they with drinking and sample light was and Washington street for inspection, and comment.

In return for light company asks the advertisement on each post, the advertising space about seven has been estimated save the city \$14,000 bill, the mayor has scheme in view the amount.

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A. M. Collins, general Ayres & Co.; W. the New Denison Hotel; W. Lawrence, manager hotel; George W. & Co.; John N. of the New York confectionery dealer the plan.

If the offer is acceptable will require the satisfactory bond that it will carry the proposed ten-year the lights in good will probably be matter advertising matter ted

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"I am further satisfied that if this open ditch had not been in the position and place in which it was the two men could have ridden their machine and stuck to the track. As it was, they did not have one chance for their lives after they struck the ditch. I examined the machine and found it apparently in good condition excepting where it was knocked to pieces when it struck the ditch.

"It is clear to my mind that the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Company knew there was going to be a loss of life and limb. The surroundings indicated everything of that kind. They were prepared with a hospital, ambulance forces and every convenience to take care of the dead and the dying. Therefore from evidence here shown and testimony taken I hold the officers and manager of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Company responsible for the deaths of Harry Holcomb and William Bourque, and when the grand jury holds its next session I will recommend an investigation of the whole affair."

FISHER NOT SURPRISED.

Sorry Coroner Blackwell Feels that Way About It.

Carl G. Fisher, president of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Company, said this afternoon that he was not surprised at the tenor of the verdicts rendered by Coroner Blackwell.

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