

Only Four of Family Party Escape Harm From Electricity.

Two of the Victims Blinded and May Not Recover Use of Their Eyes—Others Suffer From Shock and Burns—Thousands Witness Accident.

Seriously Hurt.

William Traver, aged 56, 1002 Patrick street, suffering severely from shock at Hurley hospital.

Mrs. Harmon Blue, aged 33, of 1013 Root street, eyes blinded, sight may be permanently affected.

Mrs. Mary J. Blue, aged 53, 1013 Root street, body burned from hips down and in serious condition from shock.

Earl Brander, aged 19, 907 Prospect street, eyes blinded, may be permanently affected; body badly burned.

Others Injured.

Mrs. Harry Brander, aged 43, 907 Prospect street, badly burned across abdomen and on left arm and breast.

Harry Brander, aged 49, 907 Prospect, suffering from shock in legs.

Mary Blue, aged seven, 1013 Root street, burned about legs.

Willoughby Vermilya, aged 30, Fenton road, nose cut by flying splinter of tree, burned and shocked.

Mrs. Willoughby Vermilya, aged 28, Fenton road, suffering from burns and shock.

Arline Vermilya, aged seven, Fenton road, body burned from hips down.

Mrs. William Traver, aged 55, 1002 Patrick street, shocked and burned.

Daisy Traver, aged 18, 1002 Patrick street, shocked and burned.

Thirteen persons are suffering today from injuries caused by lightning which struck a tree under which they were gathered for a picnic at Thread Lake park yesterday noon. Only four persons out of the entire party which was in the nature of a family reunion escaped injury. Two of the victims are blind and their eyesight may never be perfectly restored while the others are suffering greatly from shocks and burns.

The fact that there were not a number of instant deaths caused by the bolt is attributed to the large number of persons in the vicinity of the tree. It is said the presence of so many helped to divide the shock while had there been only two or three present fatalities would have been almost certain.

The group of persons on which the lightning spent its force and tossed them about as if they had been toys were a few of those in the vicinity when the storm broke out of a clear sky. There were close to 3,000 persons in the park when rain began to fall. There had been distant rumblings of thunder, but no one suspected that the storm would be of an electrical nature in the park. Many sought the shelter of the pavilion while hundreds more stayed out beneath the trees and in automobiles. Members of the ill-fated party raised umbrellas and stood or sat on the ground beneath the tree. Within a few moments after the first heavy drops of rain descended there came a blinding flash and a roar of thunder. A big ball of fire ran down the oak tree above the people, splintering off big splinters. The members of the party stiffened out and toppled over.

Cries of Horror.

Cries of horror arose from those who witnessed the accident. Reports that any where from five to a score had been killed gained circulation as the first to the rescue found motionless forms scattered in every direction. There were several physicians in or near the park and these immediately set to work with the aid of amateur assistants to resuscitate the unconscious.

The prompt work of the rescuers undoubtedly helped to save the lives of half the party. While the work of rescue was being effected messengers started out to telephone for doctors and ambulances. The roads were in terrible condition between the end of the Saginaw street pavement at Fifteenth street and the entrance to the park on Puer avenue and the volunteers from downtown had difficulty in hastening to the scene.

Automobiles provided by people at the park and the police ambulance were used to transfer the injured to this city. All but William Traver revived so rapidly that it was not thought necessary to take them to the hospital.

It was not until this morning that it was learned that Earl Brander and Mrs. Harmon Blue had lost their sight. While their blindness is considered only temporary, physicians say that there is a possibility that their sight will be permanently affected requiring the use of glasses in the future. Mrs. Mary J. Blue's seri-

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LIGHTNING BOLT HITS TREE AND INJURES 13 AT THREE LAKE PARK

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ous condition is attributed to her advanced years and the fact that she was not strong physically. She suffered such excruciating pains all night that it was necessary to have attendants at her bed constantly.

Traver is Suffering.

William Traver in the hospital is also experiencing the severe pains. His arms and hands are seriously affected. Many of the others are also in pain this morning and probably will be for a number of days. Nearly every one of the victims seems to be affected in the lower limbs and they are unable to walk without limping painfully.

Willoughby Vermilya of Fenton road: "It seemed to me as if my whole body was on fire. I was struck across the nose by a long heavy piece of wood splintered from the tree and knocked down; then all became a blank. Never will I forget the awful feeling of fire in my body. I hope I never will have to experience another horror such as that."

To a Journal Reporter who visited the home of several of the injured this morning, the survivors told of their great thankfulness to those at the park who hurried to their rescue and probably saved the lives of several. Harmon Blue said: "There is one motorcycle rider in this town whom I would like to thank for his part in the rescue work. I do not know who he is but I am told he rode from the park in the rain and mud to this city to get more help. We want to thank all for the courageous manner in which they acted in our trouble." Mrs. Harry Brander also spoke of promptness and kindness shown by the rescuers.

The stories told by some of the victims this morning are very interesting. Some of the experiences of the survivors follow:

She Realized It All.

Mrs. Harry Brander, 700 Prospect street: "I guess I was about the only one struck who realized just what had happened. I saw the big ball of fire come down. Then I saw the people standing all about me begin to stiffen out and fall backward. That was the strange thing about it. Everyone seemed to become perfectly rigid and keel over backward instead of forward. My husband and I were thrown over backwards as the seat which we occupied was blown out from under us. I came to my senses and found Mrs.

Vermilya had fallen backward across my lap. I thought she was dead at first. Suddenly she began to regain consciousness. She then became hysterical and screamed terribly. We could not stop her. The sounds she made were terrible. I shall never forget the horror of it all. My husband I found stretched out beside me on the ground. My first thought was that he was gone but I was over-

joyed in a moment or two to see him showing signs of life."

Harry Brander: "I cannot remember anything that happened just before the accident except that I raised an umbrella when the rain began. The next I knew I was lying on the ground. Others around me frothed at the mouth. I could talk all right they tell me and I gave directions to the rescuers though I cannot remember saying a single thing."

Earl Brander: "They tell me that I talked and told them my address and tried to get out of the automobile when they brought me home, but I can remember nothing after I was sitting beneath the tree until I woke up when the automobile stopped in front of the house here. They

say the lightning peeled the bark off from the root on which I sat.

Harmon Blue: "I felt a flash of heat across the right side of my face and that is all I recollect until I became conscious again. I saw Traver lying on the ground with froth coming from his lips. Someone went to pick him up and I yelled, "For God's sake let him alone—he's dead—and help some of the others. My face was burned by the lightning and I presume that is when I felt the heat."

Freaks of Lightning.

The freaks of the lightning were numerous. Little Mary Blue and Aline Vermilya, each seven years old, stood holding tightly to the handle of an umbrella which was between them. The electricity hit the metal tip above the covering, split the handle in two and passed through the girl's bodies out into the ground.

There was not a comb left in the hair of any of the women. What became of them after the lightning drew them out of their hair is a mystery.

The group of persons had been scattered over a space of about 15 feet square and while the lightning threw them over backwards it seemed to draw them closer together, according to Willoughby Vermilya.

Earl Bradner has the figure of a tree stamped indelibly upon his breast by the lightning.

The only four of the party who escaped the shock were Ruth and Zora Vermilya, daughters of Willoughby Vermilya, Dorothy Blue and Bruce Brander. The three girls, all of whom were small, had crawled beneath a table which had been arranged for use by the picnic party. Brander had been leaning against the tree which was struck a few seconds before the crash. "Come on folks, I'm going to the pavilion," he called out and he turned just in time to see his relatives struck by the bolt. He was out of range and was not even shocked by the electricity.

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