

*The following document is a newspaper story about what happened to my great-uncle, Harry Goldschmidt, who was born on 5 May 1872 in Stolzenau, Germany and who died in New Orleans on 26 Sep 1896. This story was obtained from the archives of the Times-Picayune newspaper in New Orleans. I have converted it into an MS WORD document.*

*One should take into account that newspaper stories from this period were often sensational, and may not be 100% accurate. Nonetheless, at the time, this story was picked up by many other newspapers across the United States, including the New York Times - which printed a much briefer report. There are also other key documents (such as the Coroner's report) which can be found on Ancestry. These additional documents support the veracity of the Times-Picayune story.*

*The newspaper reporter refers to my great-uncle Harry Goldschmidt as "Harry Goldsmith" throughout. However, there is no evidence that Harry ever used the name Goldsmith.*

*Norman Streat*

---

*Times-Picayune Newspaper (New Orleans), 27 Sep 1896, page 10.*

## **A PRACTICAL JOKE ENDS IN TRAGEDY**

Pranks Played in a Boarding-House Part Two Friends

Harry Goldsmith, Angered at an Epithet, Seeks Retribution

And Failing, Fires Two Shots at Joe Goldstein,

Wounding Him Slightly, But Fearing Murder,

Puts a Bullet Through His Own Brain.



**Harry Goldsmith**



**Joe Goldstein**

*etched images from the Times-Picayune newspaper article*

The practical joker has a terrible and lasting lesson in the tragedy which occurred at Mrs. P. Fraenkel's boarding-house at 218<sup>i</sup> Bourbon Street, near Customhouse, early yesterday morning.

In this place there are a number of young men who, having boarded together for some time, are very friendly, and it was nothing uncommon for one of the boys to play a joke or trick upon a fellow-boarder for the purpose of having a hearty laugh. None seemed to object heretofore, and a few days ago one of the young men, in a spirit of fun, slipped a bar of toilet soap into the water pitcher in Harry Goldsmith's room.

It was not long before Goldsmith discovered this, and when he did he determined to avenge himself upon the trickster, and presuming that Joe Goldstein, who often played harmless tricks of this sort, was the guilty party, he waited on an opportunity to pay him back with compound interest.

Thursday night Goldsmith slipped into Goldstein's room, which is not far from his, and on the third floor of the building, and began his work. He dragged from under the bed two pairs of shoes belonging to Goldstein, one of summer canvas, and the other a bright new tan. He had some thick cough syrup, and this he poured into the tan footwear, while he pushed pins into the toes of the canvas shoes. When he had finished, he placed the shoes where he had found them, and, securing a hat, which did not belong to Goldstein, but to another boarder, he crammed it into the chimney, covering it with soot.

Goldsmith thought that he was undetected, but Mrs. Fraenkel's boy, a lad of 13, happened to see him at work, although he said nothing until he met Goldstein Thursday. The boy cautioned Goldstein, who has rather tender feet, to be careful about putting on the canvas shoes, and when asked for an explanation, said that there were pins driven into the toes. Goldstein saw that this was so, and picking up the tan shoes, he found that they were saturated with the liquid.

This angered him, and questioning the boy closely, he found out that Goldsmith was responsible for the work, and he made up his mind to call the young man to account as soon as he saw him.

After breakfast Friday morning Goldstein told Goldsmith that he would like to see him aside, and after quitting the dining-room he said:

"Harry, you have ruined my shoes. I want \$8 for them from you."

"Well, you can't get it," replied Goldsmith.

"Then I'll get it out of your hide."

Goldstein became ruffled and remarked that were it not for Mrs. Fraenkel being ill and the presence of ladies, he would begin at once to administer a good beating to him. But Goldsmith was perhaps cooler, and said that if such an attempt was made his assailant would fare badly, and intimated that he would use a revolver on Goldstein. No one thought for a moment that Goldsmith would be so rash, or was serious about the matter, though they knew that Goldstein would keep his word about thrashing Goldsmith, if payment was not made for the shoes.

That afternoon Goldstein intended to have another interview with Goldsmith concerning the matter, but the latter did not put in an appearance at dinner, having previously persuaded the cook to give him dinner, on the story that he had to go somewhere.

Goldstein was determined on seeing Goldsmith, and hearing that he went to the theatre he told some of his friends that he would await the arrival of the young man. It was some time around 1 o'clock yesterday morning when Goldsmith came to his room. Goldstein had drawn two chairs before the young man's room and when Goldsmith landed in the hallway he said:

"Wait down here, Harry".

Goldstein spoke in a rough voice, but the young man did as requested. The question of payment for the shoes was renewed, and Goldsmith held that he would not pay for them, for Goldstein had played tricks upon him. But Goldstein denied having put the soap into the water, and said that unless the shoes were paid for he would whip him good. Goldstein, in concluding, called the young man a puppy and was not complimentary in his remarks.

Goldsmith, when told that he would be beaten by Goldstein, remarked that he would kill Goldstein if it was tried, and with that turned to go to his room.

When it was over some of the boys teased Goldstein and asked him if he wanted any particular coffin. He said that he would like to have a pearl casket. Nothing more was thought of the matter.

Yesterday morning before 7 o'clock both Goldstein and Goldsmith were awake. As Goldstein went to the breakfast room Goldsmith rushed from out of his room to Goldstein, placed a pistol to his head, and said:

"Joe, are you going to take back what you said of me?"

"No," replied Goldstein, turning away.

"Take it back. I say," cried Goldsmith, whose body quivered with excitement.

Goldstein seemingly paid no heed to him, and was in the act of walking away when Goldsmith leveled the revolver and fired. The bullet struck Goldstein on the back of the head, and after walking a few steps away he reeled and fell to the ground. Goldsmith was not satisfied with this, and to make sure of his deadly work he sent a second bullet at his victim. The ball grazed the top of Goldstein's head and the blood began flowing profusely.

Goldsmith looked at the bleeding man for a moment. Then he backed a step or two, and, slowly raising the revolver to his right temple, he began pressing upon the trigger. His face was livid, his eyes distended.

Goldstein feebly tried to raise himself to prevent the suicide, but his strength was about exhausted. He tried to tell the boy that he was not hurt, and prevent him from committing his mad act, but the blood almost choked him. and it was impossible for him to say anything.

The hammer of the weapon burst the cartridge, and the explosion seemed even louder than the preceding ones. For a moment Goldsmith stood erect, then began to waver, and like a flash his body fell downward and struck the floor with a thud. Goldsmith was dead.

Max Landau, an employee of S.J. Schwartz and Co., a boarder, was an eye-witness to the tragedy, but he was powerless to prevent it. A colored domestic, named Molly, too, saw the affair in all its entirety, but in her weakness she could do nothing but stand speechless and horrified.

The shooting aroused every inmate of the house, and in a few moments the police of the Third Precinct reached the scene to make their investigation.

There was nothing for them to do, save notifying the coroner and telephone for the patrol wagon to take the corpse to the morgue. Goldstein was being cared for, the ambulance had been summoned, and the students were engaged in dressing the man's wounds, and Dr. De Montluzin, who had been telephoned for, arrived. The physician assumed charge of the case, and pronounced Goldstein's injuries painful but not dangerous. One of the wounds was in the

back part of the head, almost in the center, and ranged upwards, tearing away some bone, but injuring no part of the brain. The other wound was on the top of the head, to the right, and was reckoned nothing more than a good big scratch.

Coroner LeMonnier made his Investigation, and after examining the wound that penetrated Goldsmith's brain from the right temple, gave a certificate in accordance with the facts and turned the body over to friends.

Immediately an uncle of the deceased young man was telegraphed to in Montgomery, where he resides, as to what disposition should be made of the body. He telegraphed to a friend to take charge and make all arrangements till he arrived.

The body was sent to Sontheimer's undertaking establishment, where it was prepared for burial.

All through yesterday friends of Goldstein called at the boarding-house, where he was placed in bed, and he talked freely of the occurrence. His conversation to a Picayune man bore out the facts published above and in concluding his story he said that he deeply regretted the tragedy, but no blame could be attached to him for the foolhardiness of the young man.

Goldsmith was a man of about 25 years old and came to this country several years ago from Hanover, Germany, where he was born and has parents residing. The greater part of his kin in the states are located at Montgomery. Of late he has been despondent over his inability to get permanent and lucrative employment. Of late he has been solicitor for the New Orleans Debenture Company, and the Fidelity Building and Loan Association.

He came here with a young man named Henry<sup>ii</sup> Blumenthal who has been his constant roommate and companion since.

From those who know him it was learned that Goldsmith was quiet and industrious, but the disappointments that he had received of late had made him a little cross.

Goldstein is a jovial sort of a fellow and has friends innumerable. He has been employed as a drummer for T. Cohn, Weil & Co., wholesale dealers in hats, and is held in high esteem there.

---

<sup>i</sup> The newspaper story gives the address as 21 Bourbon St., but from other sources we know that the true address was 218 Bourbon St. This building no longer exists.

<sup>ii</sup> The newspaper story gives the name as Herman Blumenthal, but from other sources we know that Harry's close friend was actually named Henry Blumenthal. He lived at the same address.