

Domestic shooting scandalizes the whole town

“A human, living, breathing play ... came into the hum-drum life of Bloomington yesterday afternoon and caused every man and woman to gasp in horror and in pity.” *Bloomington Telephone*, March 4, 1914.



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

the tragedy occurred.

In retrospect, one reporter for the *Telephone* dredged up some information to the effect that Tom Hardin sometimes went off for three days at a time without telling his wife where he was going. She was left to run the store by herself.

After the marriage was damaged beyond repair, the store was sold and Hardin bought another one in Bloomington. What he did afterward irked Jessie to the point where she filed charges against him. According to the *Telephone* of Feb. 6, 1914, she charged him with embezzlement, larceny and desertion. Apparently, he had transferred a sum of money to a different bank, and she had no

access to it. When he relented and gave her a share, the charges were dropped.

On the afternoon of March 3, he drove in a wagon to the house where his wife and mother-in-law were staying at Rogers and Howe streets and got into an argument with them. Jessie told him to leave, and he did so momentarily.

The *Telephone* described what happened. “No one saw the tragedy of this afternoon, but several of the ladies of the neighborhood heard the shots and then saw Hardin running down the street, the smoking revolver in hand. He passed Mrs. Harry Fowler and others, and as he ran muttered, ‘I’ve killed the two ———; I’ve killed the two ———.’”

Neighbors who rushed into the house found Jessie Hardin dead on the floor just inside the door. Her mother, who had been shot twice in the stomach, was crying for help.

Meanwhile, Hardin ran toward Rogers and Second streets where he headed east. If it can be said that there was the least bit of

humor in the situation, the *Telephone* reported that Chief of Police Hensley and Justice McCabe used a taxicab to pursue the alleged murderer. He was captured when he stopped at his store on South Walnut Street. The *Telephone* of March 3 noted, “Hardin had been drinking and smelled heavily of whiskey when arrested.”

His mother-in-law, Jennie Richardson, gave a preliminary statement to the police and was taken to the hospital. Dr. C.E. Harris did not give her much of a chance of recovery, but she survived the removal of the steel jacketed bullets.

The funeral of Jessie Hardin was held at the home of her grandmother, a Mrs. Miller, on South Lincoln Street. Immediately after his arrest, Hardin had asked repeatedly at the jail, “Is Jessie dead?”

The *Telephone* told its readers that the answer from Deputy Sheriff Flynn was that he didn’t know. Hardin replied, “Oh yes you do, tell me.” Next week: The case continues.

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