

Refreshing burst of snow brought danger with fun

Sometimes the fickle weath-erman of Monroe County relents and gives the local children enough snow to use those shiny sleds they get for Christmas. On such occasions, the downward slope of Third Street from Dunn to Lincoln was a popular place.

It was not always safe. On Feb. 4, 1895, the *Bloomington World* reported a near-tragedy connected with sledding. The boys had been coasting all afternoon on Saturday, the 2nd, and it was nearly time to go home for dinner.

Reported the newspaper, "... they decided to have one more race between the two big bobsleds before they went home." Down the sidewalk they went with one sled about 25 feet ahead of the other.

Continued the *World*, "When just as they passed Grant Street they



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

almost ran over a lady who was wheeling a baby in a carriage. This made the boys nervous, and as it engrossed their attention for a moment, they did not notice the mule team that had started across the walk and into the valley just in front of them until it was too late to save themselves." Some of the "they" of the story were Bert Ewing, Oscar Bates, Charles Clinton, Harvey Lowder, Bedford Peters, John Miller, Jap Murphy and "Smidge" Wilson.

There was no way they could

stop. As the newspaper put it, "With fearful velocity the first sled with its nine passengers struck the hind legs of the mules, knocking the animals down and hurling the boys against the front of the wagon and the mules' heels.

There was also the matter of the second sled, which had narrowed the lead and was close behind the other one. There was no question of stopping it.

Continued the newspaper, "The second sled being only a few feet in the rear, tried to miss the wagon, but struck the rear wheel. Otis Hughes, who was guiding the sled, was thrown against the wheel, and the other four boys were thrown against him."

Hughes, who had a couple of broken ribs and multiple bruises, and his passengers were lucky. The

boys on the first bobsled were not so fortunate.

Their injuries were enumerated: Ewing, broken nose and shattered bone over his right eye; Bates, very bad cut on his forehead, face and neck; Clinton, cut on his temple and bruises on his head and back; Lowder, cut on his forehead; Peters, kicked in the face (presumably by one of the mules); Miller, left leg hurt; Murphy, cut about the head; and Wilson, bruised on his back and hip because of the mule falling on him.

The accident brought the Bloomington medical community together to patch up the boys.

The *World* reported to its readers that the doctors were Harris, Rogers and Weir.

The driver of the mule team didn't get much sympathy. The

newspaper observed, "The driver of the wagon, David Gross, was not entirely blameless, as he had seen the sleds coming, but instead of waiting for them to pass, he had tried to pass in front of them ..."

It is either a coincidence or a great irony that the *World* of Feb. 6 contained an account of a Bloomington City Council meeting. On the agenda was a proposed ordinance that might have taken David Gross' mule-drawn wagon off the streets.

The ordinance began, "No vehicle shall be run in the city of Bloomington without a legal license. The money therefrom to be paid into the street repair fund. License for one year: For every wagon, cart, dray, omnibus or other vehicle, drawn by one animal, \$5; Drawn by two animals, \$6."

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