

# Fires bring out heroism in those who heed the call

**B**loomington has had its share of heroes. In 1883, when the southwest corner of the square was in flames, the roof of the McCalla store fell down on Robert Foster.

He was trapped by falling beams and told his brave rescuers, "Boys, if you see that you can't save me, save yourselves." Fortunately, all survived. The unnamed men who struggled to free Foster were truly heroes.

Skip forward in time to Feb. 12, 1914, and you'll find a news story in the *Bloomington Telephone* about John Morrison's heroism. The building on fire was the Stimpson boarding house on North College Avenue.

The *Telephone* reported that Morrison was a Monon Railroad employee working at the round house in Bloomington. The person in danger was a little one, the 1½-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Stucky, boarders at the house.



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

It was not clear whether Morrison lived in the boarding house or happened to be there after the fire broke out. The newspaper of Feb. 13 described what he did.

"Morrison groped through the flames of the burning building and fought his way to the second story where he rescued the infant child..."

Getting to the second floor was hazardous; getting back was even worse. The *Telephone* continued, "Morrison descended as the flames were licking across the hallway, but he carried the sleeping babe in such a pro-

tecting way that it was uninjured."

The same was not true of Morrison, himself. Most of the crowd of was unaware of his brave rescue of the baby until the burns on his hands were being dressed.

Morrison had responded to a frantic cry from the baby's mother. When the flames erupted beneath the family's rooms, she had grabbed her 4-year-old son and rushed out of the house. It was apparent that the baby would have suffocated in a short time, since the smoke was intense.

Morrison was not the only hero in the Stimpson boarding house fire. Polly Crowe, age 77, was in the living room where the fire started. She, too, would have rushed out of the house, except for one reason. She was blind and didn't know which way to go. Crowe was sitting down, waiting for help or resigned to her fate when her niece, Parmella Stimpson,

led her out.

The firemen had another concern besides the boarding house. Only a few feet away was the Metropolitan livery barn owned by W.S. Wood. It was saved, but there was some damage to a house owned by the Monroe County auditor whose name was Kinser.

Very few of the belongings of those living in the boarding house were saved. The *Telephone*, as was customary in those days, reported the details of insurance liability. "The fire loss to the building is about \$1,000, which is fully insured in the Woolley & Barnhill for \$2,000 and the Walter Hottle agencies for \$1,000. The household goods of Mrs. Stimpson are insured for \$800 in the Woolley & Barnhill agency."

Concluded the *Telephone*, "It was a cold, stubborn contest for the fire laddies, but they gave a good account of themselves."

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