

Train tragedy on the trestle took the life of teen-ager

"The first accident on the new railroad happened with fatal results last evening at eight o'clock when Kenneth Neill was crushed beyond recognition, and Samuel Dillman miraculously escaped instant death by jumping from the engine."

— Bloomington Evening World, July 21, 1906.

Perhaps it was a fascination with trains that caused the death of Kenneth Neill or perhaps the after-dinner stroll to the station caused his death.

The *Evening World* explained that the 17-year-old usually went out for a walk after dinner.

"His parents thought he would be back soon, and retired early, leaving the light burning in the lad's room.

What Neill's parents didn't know was that the young man had gone to what was called the Kenwood Station of the railroad line that came to be known as the Illinois Central Railroad. The station was at the north edge of Bloomington.

According to the newspaper, the 7:20 accommodation train from Indianapolis had



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

just stopped to let off passengers. Then the train backed up across the trestle over College Avenue.

What happened next was described by the *Evening World*. "Samuel Dillman, who has charge of the engine over night, started to run the engine a few feet east of the trestle, as is customary for the purpose of cleaning the engine and getting it in shape for the next trip.

Mr. Dillman pulled the throttle, but in some way the lever refused to work, and the engine bounded ahead a short distance past the temporary station, where Mr. Dillman succeeded in stopping it."

From the moment when the engineer reversed the throttle, the engine was out of control. It charged back (at what the newspaper called "a frightful speed") across the College Avenue trestle and headed straight for

the parked coaches.

Seeing what was coming, Dillman did what any man would have done. He jumped out of the cab and rolled down the embankment.

Continued the *Evening World*, "The tender struck the luggage coach with terrific force, and the impact caved in the tender and front end of the baggage car, but not a wheel of the cars or engine left the track."

The tragedy was this: Neill had hopped up on the tender and failed to jump off before the impact. Another boy, Glen Woodward, the 12-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. John T. Woodward, had jumped off in time.

The *Evening World* was graphic in its description of Neill's injuries. "... his body was crushed against the baggage car in an unrecognizable mass. His left leg was cut off below the knee, both legs were broken in two places, his face was frightfully disfigured, one side being caved in, and his left eye gouged out."

If the newspaper's readers could proceed beyond that point in the story, they learned that Neill was taken to the Hunter Mortuary, and Dillman was taken to the home of his

father on West Second Street. Neill's parents didn't hear of their son's death until the following morning.

The funeral of Neill was conducted at the home of his parents on West 11th Street. The *Evening World* of July 23 reported that more than 500 people attended the service. The minister in charge was "the Rev. Lawrence" of the United Presbyterian Church.

There was a choir at the service made up of the Misses Elizabeth Gourley, Julia Wier, W.J. von Behren and Walter Frank Woodburn.

Also, noted the newspaper, "'The Broken Wheel,' a beautiful floral offering, was carried by Glen Frank and John Hartman. Pall bearers were George and James Currie, Glenn McDaniels, Roy Carnahan, Hugh Brown and Herman Wylie."

There must have been a time when railway companies became conscious of the liability of unauthorized persons hopping onto any of the cars. To the teen-ager, riding even a short distance on the tender must have seemed like fun. But what could be called an "attractive nuisance" in legal terms was eventually going to have its day in court.

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