

Tragic news sensationalized in 1904

Tragedy, from page A1

sier had been forbidden by her father to continue to "see" a youth who lived on a nearby farm. Not that the girl's father had a particular objection to the boy. William Mosier just thought his daughter was too young to be involved in any dating.

Hepsie had apparently asked and gained her father's approval for her transfer to finish high school in Bloomington. In fact, it had been his intention to take her to town to buy her some new clothes for school.

In its account of the tragedy, a *Telephone* reporter indulged in a bit of hearsay, suggesting that after a particularly bitter confrontation between father and daughter on the subject of dating, Hepsie was supposed to have said that "some day she would end it all by killing herself."

Did the *Telephone* exceed the bounds of journalistic taste in its relating of the gory details of a shotgun death? By our standards today, the answer would be "yes." Some of the newspaper

readers must have felt a bit squeamish after reading the article.

But the act of a teen-age suicide and its geographical locality attracted some attention outside the Monroe County community. In a companion article, the *Telephone* pointed out that the Hepsie Mosier's death was the fourth young-female suicide within a 2-mile radius during a three-year period.

The phenomenon caught the attention of the Indianapolis *Star*, which commented editorially. It began, "The sufferings of very young people whose love does not run smooth commonly excites smiles among their elders; when the end is the tragedy of suicides the least sympathetic must sigh over the foolish waste of life. The worst of it all is the difficulty of convincing these victims of thwarted love that there is anything more in life for them."

The *Star* writer emphasized with those who felt the pangs of love keenly. There was also in the editorial a wisdom that comes only from having listened

to the "You can't remember what it was like when you were young" retorts of the man/child or woman/child.

Continued the editorial, "It insults the sentimental young creatures to be told that first love is pretty sure to be a transitory affair, and that in later years, if they will only take courage and resolve to live on, they are likely to thank heaven on their knees that they did not marry their first lovers."

The funeral of Hepsie Mosier was in her home, a common custom in those days of 1904. It was Elder Abraham Aley, a Christian Church "preacher," who was with the family and other mourners to remember the joy of Hepsie's having been in the world. Commented the *Telephone*, "Funerals far out in the country are devoid of formality. . . He (Aley) talked tenderly of the dead girl and paid a high tribute to her character."

The suicide of Hepsie Mosier and the others is perhaps a reminder that "The more things change, the more they remain the same."