

News included a church brawl, a shooting, a body

In 1907-08 there were some strange things reported in the *Bloomington Telephone*. Here are three examples.

Readers of the *Bloomington Telephone* on Jan. 3, 1908, were informed on page 4 that two women got into a fight at the Handy Christian Church. Apparently, a whole lot of finger-pointing was going on while the reporter was trying to sort out what happened.

The main combatants were Mrs. Mamie May and two daughters and Mrs. Alice Shields and daughter. According to the newspaper, "Some alleged slighting remarks made by the Mays against Mrs. Macy Hays, the daughter of Mrs. Shields, caused the women of the two families to get together after the morning services and exchange some blows in the rear of the church."

Actually, the fight was no joke, and the women were deadly serious about their dispute. Continued the *Telephone*, "The two mothers mixed and exchanged blows while Emma and Myrtle, the daughters of Mrs. May, are alleged to have struck Mrs. Hays."

What caused the fight in the first place is not entirely clear, but it is known both fam-



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

ilies were in opposite ends of the church. Concluded the newspaper, "When the real trouble started, one of the Hays girls is said to have thrown her baby aside and entered into the fray. No one was seriously hurt."

On the same back page there was a story with an unusual headline: "4-YEAR-OLD GETS HOLIDAY GUEST OUT OF BED IN A HURRY." Though the headline hinted of some ordinary domestic event, it was hardly that.

Charles Allen lived near Ellettsville, and he had been spending the holidays with the family of Leonard Palmer in town (Ellettsville). On the evening before the incident described in the article, 4-year-old Cowden Palmer and Allen had been playing something like cowboys and Indians with a toy gun belonging to the boy.

The next morning young Cowden was

sent upstairs to wake Allen up for breakfast. Continued the *Telephone*, Cowden "thought to keep up the play of the night before and grabbing a gun off the table, began to fire."

There was a difference in the guns. The one Cowden picked up was his father's 22-caliber revolver. "...Allen, with a cry of pain and fright, jumped out of bed to disarm the boy."

Needless to say, no one was more surprised than Cowden Palmer, and the *Telephone* reporter added that the boy "had merely fired playfully when Allen did not get out of bed at once." The shot had hit Allen in the shoulder, and he was treated by a doctor and put to bed for convalescing purposes.

The family was very embarrassed and concluded that "neither real nor toy guns shall be the playthings of their little son in the future."

One of the most peculiar articles in the *Telephone* appeared on March 26, 1907. It was not exactly "non-news," but the connection with Bloomington was pretty slim.

In the Indianapolis traction terminal a young woman asked a "tram-caller" how she would go about checking a russet-col-

ored suitcase she was carrying to Fort Wayne. He pointed her in the right direction and thought no more about it.

After the limited for Fort Wayne left Indianapolis, the conductor sat down briefly to rest on a russet-colored suitcase to in the vestibule of the car. At Fort Wayne, the suitcase was still sitting there.

The *Telephone* article continued, "...he (the conductor) took the russet case unclaimed from the car after the passengers had left. At the car barn it opened accidentally, and the dead body of a girl baby rolled out." The writer didn't mention how the tram employees reacted to the shocking discovery.

The police had little information to work with in trying to solve the case. The Indianapolis employee remembered a few details about the woman, the most memorable of which was her hat with a big red plume. She also had on a white shirt waist and black skirt.

The only other clues were the newspapers in which the baby had been wrapped — Indianapolis papers of Feb. 15, March 9 and Jan. 26; a Logansport paper of March 15th; and a copy of the Indiana Daily Student of Feb. 14.

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