

# Runaway horse endangers two little girls in rig

*"Two baby girls in a rig behind a wild, runaway, driverless horse was the heart-sickening sight which business men on the south side of the public square witnessed yesterday afternoon about 4 o'clock, and which brought hundreds of excited people into the streets as if by magic." Bloomington Telephone, March 10, 1908.*

A popular subject for photographers at the turn of the century was members of family proudly sitting in their buggy. Horse-drawn vehicles were, after all, the fastest way of getting around town and county.

Nostalgia about that form of transportation often does not take into consideration one of the hazards. Specifically, a "spooked" horse will instinctively bolt.

Dwight Dill was driving his rig up to the square from the depot on March 9, 1908, with his two daughters, Alice, age 3, and Dorothy, 2, on the seat beside him. Suddenly, something frightened the horse and, according to the *Telephone*, it "jumped forward."



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

The newspaper continued, "Mr. Dill saw-sawed on the lines (reins) and it is likely (he) would have been able to control the horse had not the harness broke and allowed the buggy to run up on the plunging horse. When the rig ran onto the already frightened horse's flanks, the animal bolted with a mad rush."

As Dill was reaching for his two daughters, he was thrown out of the buggy in front of the First National Bank. Unchecked, the horse dashed on, tipping over another rig and nearly causing a delivery wagon horse to run away.

Witnesses were horrified when they saw the children in the runaway buggy. All too

many of them had seen similar accidents, some of them ending in tragedy.

Continued the newspaper, "... little Alice, the older of the two girls, was thrown to the curb. The little girl was gathered up unhurt in a bystander's arms, and the crowd raced after the runaway."

Dorothy had fallen off the seat into the bed of the buggy. The *Telephone* reporter pointed out that that probably saved the child's life.

Still pursued by would-be heroes, the frightened horse turned south on Washington Street, which didn't extend very far. The newspaper explained what happened next. "... at the Yelch laundry at the south end of Washington street, the rig ran into a fence post, turned almost completely over and threw the horse on its side — then the baby rolled out on the ground and was rescued from the wreckage."

It is possible that the bystanders and pursuers of the runaway horse expected the worst, when it came to the two little girls.

Those who were concerned were relieved and pleasantly surprised.

The girls were taken to their aunt's apartment in the Allen Building. (They had been living with her since their mother died.)

The news writer was elated to report that there were only a few minor injuries. Both girls were happily playing the next day as if nothing had happened. Dorothy had a bruise on her head from being tossed about in the bed of the buggy, and Alice's bruises were on her knees from being rudely thrown onto the hard street.

Concluded the newspaper, "The runaway was one of the most exciting (events) that ever took place in Bloomington, and for a few minutes the wildest excitement prevailed on the streets, men and boys running and shouting. In the general run, Policemen Theo Moore stopped a delivery wagon horse from bolting through the crowd. The men who witnessed the start say the runaway was caused by the harness breaking and the rig running up the horse's flanks."

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