

Youth died of hydrophobia in 1890

Toward the end of the 19th century, Frenchman Louis Pasteur was taking his research and experiments in the area of the dread disease, hydrophobia, seriously enough to set up an institute in Paris. The first successful vaccination for rabies came in 1885.

Even so, the medical breakthrough was too late for Malcom Lamkins, a Monroe County youth of 19. The account of his death was graphically described in the July 8, 1890, edition of the *Bloomington Telephone*.

Actually, the story began in June, when Lamkins and his father, George, had gone to the area of Newark in Greene County to do some work. A stray dog that was acting strangely wandered onto the property of the people the Lamkins



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were boarding with while doing their work. The dog decided to stay and took up residence under the porch of the host family.

According to the *Telephone*, "... young Lamkins was told nothing of the appearance of the animal. He went to church Sunday evening, and when he returned and entered the yard, the dog came from under the house, where it had been hiding, and started for Lamkins. He attempted to ward the animal away, but it succeeded in jumping at his

face and inflicting a slight wound over the eye. It also bit him on the leg, though neither injury was serious. . . ."

The young man's father was sufficiently suspicious to have his son's wounds cleansed and inspected by Dr. James Maxwell in Bloomington. The physician apparently administered a standard remedy — that of cleansing the wounds with nitric acid and the application of a salve.

Apart from the account in the *Telephone*, the boy's story can be found in C. Earl East's book, *Relive It . . .* Neither source indicates what Dr. Maxwell may have thought the boy's chances were. But what the father did next may be very puzzling to contemporary readers.

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