

# A disaster at Ellettsville in 1884

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## Disaster, from page A1

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Wickens (a boy of 14), and William Matson.

None of the victims were killed outright, and they were carried to the home of George Matson, "over the hill to the west" (of the Mathews house). The *Telephone* commented, "... this was soon a scene only equalled by a hospital in the Civil War, as one after another the wounded were placed as comfortably as possible in the different rooms."

It should be recalled that coping

with the emergency in 1884 was hindered by the following things we take for granted today: availability of doctors (Ellettsville had a couple); no hospitals in Monroe County; no automobiles for transporting the injured to the additional doctors available in Bloomington; and no wonder drugs such as sulfa or penicillin for treatment. Nevertheless, those in charge coped as best they could. The *Telephone* reported, "As soon as the extent of the injuries were known, a telegram was sent to Dr. McPheeters asking for medical aid; and on the

freight going north Drs. McPheeters, Weir, Harris, Axtell, Maxwell and Capt. Allen and Dr. McGee went to the scene, remaining until the 4 o'clock train."

The *Telephone's* headline warned the readers of its "GRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE TERRIBLE EXPLOSION," and graphic enough it was to cause some squeamish readers to turn to other pages.

*Next week: Ellettsville copes with tragedy.*