

Cause of death speculation is finally laid to rest

On the last day of his life John Rush, a farmer, went out to his field where he had stock "running at large." The *Bloomington Telephone* reported to its readers what was unusual about the man's death.

On Nov. 1, 1901, the front page stories that were featured dealt with arrests of two men for assault on John Cole, a Dolan farmer, and the wedding of Elfrey S. Hunter and Ella Moore.

Rush's death was also reported on the front page in two separate articles. The first one simply said that on Oct. 31 the man had been found unconscious in his field.

Noted the *Telephone*, "A fracture of the skull over the ear showed the imprint of the hoof of a mule, but Mr. Rush was not able at any time to five any particulars of the accident."

The article also mentioned that the coroner had been summoned, and at press time was at the Rush home in the southeast part of the county.



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

But only two columns away on the same page was another article. The headline said, "FOUL PLAY SUSPECTED" and "Death of John Rush to Be Investigated by Coroner Rogers."

Apparently the physician was not satisfied about the mule-kick explanation. In fact, the Nov. 1 article elaborated, "While he has as yet formed no conclusions, the coroner stated that the wound in Mr. Rush's head has no appearance of a bruise or wound from a kick, but rather as though it had been made by some instrument with a sharp point."

The wound was about an inch and a half long, which seemed pretty small for a kick from the hoof of an animal. There was an-

other circumstance. The newspaper explained, "There is also (an) ugly rumor in the neighborhood that Mr. Rush had trouble with certain persons in the (Paynetown) vicinity."

And so the coroner, as the saying goes, withheld his verdict. The grand jury was still in session, and Judge Martin felt that a closer look at Rush was warranted. Translated, that meant the body was to be exhumed.

The *Telephone* used more gentle terminology. "Coroner Rogers, Dr. U.H. Hon and Undertaker Hunter went to the Knight cemetery this morning and took up the body of John Rush."

The newspaper revealed that Rogers had another reason for reserving judgment: the mule was not shod.

What Rogers and Hon found was "that the frontal bone had been crushed in the outer edges forming a circle about two inches in diameter, and in that circle was a narrow wound an inch and a quarter long and about

two inches deep."

The reader was not spared the additional detail that the body was in the process of decomposing.

Meanwhile, the newspaper gave the impression that Judge Martin may have held the grand jury in session for an additional day to hear what Rogers and Hon had to say.

Contrary to what the *Telephone* had reported earlier, Duncan, who was Rush's son-in-law and the person who had found him, said Rush had, after all, made a statement before he died. Rush said he was kicked by the mule.

Finally, on Nov. 8 The newspaper reported, "The death of John Rush, who was found unconscious in a field, is being investigated today. The general opinion seems to be that he was killed by the kick of a mule, as first reported. There is no evidence to connect anyone with the crime."

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