

IOWA HISTORY



Daughter of Circus Performer Manages Livery, Sells Cigars

“I would rather be a chambermaid in a livery stable than a doorkeeper in a church,” Julia Maria Teeple of Baldwin, Iowa, explained when asked about her unusual profession as a livery manager in 1894.

At the age of 7 Julia worked in the fields of her family’s farm. She preferred outdoor work to housework partly because the family employed a “cross” housekeeper whom Julia tried to avoid. As an adult, Julia developed a fondness for horses when she and her sister ran a farm “unaided and alone.” That love of horses was intensified when she was hired by Charles B. Tozer to run his livery business.

As manager of the only livery in Baldwin (population 400), Julia tended the horses of traveling sales people and provided a taxi service. When anyone needed a lift to a neighboring town, Julia hitched up and drove the team herself.

Much was made of Julia’s physique by the locals. She was 6 feet tall and “muscular in proportion to her size.” She may have inherited her build from her mother, Sarah, who had spent

two years touring with a circus. Sarah, or “Madam Moxley, the English Giantess,” was billed as the “largest woman in the world.”

Julia’s size served her well on at least one occasion. A traveling salesman arrived in town and spent some time at the saloon. By the time he came to Tozer’s Livery he was feeling the effects of the alcohol he had consumed. He hired Julia to take him to neighboring Monmouth, two miles west of Baldwin. On the way the man said some things that Julia considered “a trifle out of place.”

Calmly laying down the reins, Julia grasped her customer by the nape of the neck and his trousers and pitched him head first into the mud. Turning the team around in the middle of the road, she headed back to Baldwin. The salesman had to walk over a mile on muddy roads to the nearest farmhouse, where the farmer hitched up a team and took him into Monmouth.

In addition to her livery job, Julia sold cigars for F. Doubrawa, a cigar manufacturer in Maquoketa. As a traveling salesperson herself, Julia took orders from businesses all over the state. This sometimes required her to go into saloons to showcase her samples. But she was quick to tell people it was for business purposes only.

Although Julia made a living in traditional male professions, she made a point of maintaining certain feminine qualities. She said she never wore boots, drank, played billiards, or swore. She admitted that occasionally she did use “harmless slang” as “many other girls” did at the time. And although she never chewed tobacco, she didn’t say if she smoked cigars.

Most important, Julia said she had always worked for a living and never had time to “loaf on street corners.”

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Sources

“Likes Her Business,” *Decatur Daily Republican*, Mar 28, 1895.

“She Corrects the Fabrication of a Chicago Paper,” *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, Mar 30, 1894.