

East Falls Past – Traffic at Ridge and Midvale

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Last month this column focused on P.H. Kelly’s annoyance with the speeding trolleys up Midvale around 1916. However, the traffic issues were much greater than this, particularly at the snarled intersection of Ridge & Midvale where horses, trolleys and cars competed in a busy space. The intersection was labeled a “danger point” – no traffic light, no policeman, no speed limits... The *Weekly Forecast* reported: “The lives of pedestrians crossing the street at that corner are endangered. The automobiles coursing up and down Midvale should be regulated as to the speed they may run, as witness the sad happening to a small child because of non-regulation.

The killing of little Evelyn Neudeck by a Crew-Levick auto truck on Midvale near Frederick Street brought home to the people of Falls in a most convincing manner that it is high time some steps were taken to control the automobile traffic on Midvale. For some time past it has been a veritable speedway for all kinds of machines. The operators seem to be obsessed with the idea that because it is in the Falls they can “cut loose and go the limit.” A similar situation formerly obtained with the trolley cars, until the matter was so forcibly brought to attention that “stop” signs were placed all along the avenue, with the result that the speeding of trolleys was abated.

The attention of the local Police Department is particularly called to this matter, as it is not only their duty to enforce the traffic regulations in this respect, but that they themselves comply with the rules also, they having been the worst offenders. Their patrol wagon on numerous occasions was seen speeding down Midvale at fully 35 or 40 miles per hour.

Reckless driving of all sorts is absolutely uncalled for, and should be wiped out before there are any more such victims as the little innocent of Good Friday last.”

Two years later (1918) the situation was the same. The *Forecast* wrote: “The narrow escapes of pedestrians from automobiles, trolley cars and horse-drawn vehicles that pass Ridge & Midvale in hopeless confusion have become so numerous lately that the matter becomes so serious as to be worthy of consideration by the police authorities at City Hall.

Hardly a day passes that, because of unregulated traffic, a child on his way to school is not almost drawn under the wheels of an auto or pedestrians “get away” unscathed from the trap resulting from an auto and trolley car “heading it up” to see which can cross in front of the other. Even drivers whip up their steeds to beat the others.

This intersection is a busy junction point, especially in late afternoon. A continuous line of trolley cars on the Manayunk division passes at the same time autos and horse-drawn wagons go in both directions along Ridge. The unregulated traffic will result in a fatality if the police department does not take a hand in this matter.