

Incident leaves one brother beaten, one jailed

"Harvey Alltop, aged 25, son of George Alltop, a farmer near Belmont, was found last night about dusk on the east pike near the H.B. Gentry farm in a semiconscious condition, his face terribly beaten and bruised, both eyes swollen shut and blood pouring from his mouth," *Bloomington Evening World*, Feb. 1, 1907.

Seasoned detectives know that one of the secrets of solving a violent crime is to look for the nearest person with a motive for committing it. And it did not take the authorities long to figure out that Harvey Alltop's brother, Elmer, was in debt.

Elmer's story to the sheriff was that Harvey was carrying \$275, and the implication was that the motive was robbery by an unknown person. Harvey's pockets had been emptied.

In describing the incident, the *Evening World* reporter had a problem with words. "The injured man was noticed sitting in a stooping condition on the pike by Joseph Bayne, who lives on the H.B. Gentry place." (One can sit or stoop, but not both at the same time.)

After his wounds were taken care of by Dr. Fred Batman, Harvey was brought into Bloomington and settled at the home of his



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

uncle, John Alltop, who lived at the corner of Maple and Third streets. Because of the blows on the head, he was not particularly helpful to Sheriff Ratliff in the investigation.

The newspaper commented that the evidence was conflicting. "According to the brother, Elmer, he paid the injured man \$275 here in town and was to pay him \$25 more this morning. They parted at the Henry & Kerr corner, and that was the last he saw of Harvey until he was brought in town frightfully beaten up. Elmer, it was said, left town this morning to bring the mother to the injured boy's bedside."

Elmer's story didn't jibe with what the sheriff heard the following morning on the phone from Belmont. It seems that the two brothers were seen together leaving Belmont on foot and heading west toward

Bloomington.

Under a dramatic headline — "BROTHER'S CONFESSION OF GUILT!" — the *Evening World* described the latest events of the case. "Thursday morning suspicion was fastened on his brother, Elmer, and near noon he fled to Brown County. Thursday afternoon he was captured by Chief of Police Johns and Policeman Shinn, brought to this city and placed in jail."

According to the newspaper, the authorities had put together a chain of circumstantial evidence around Elmer Alltop. Confronted with the evidence, the prisoner confessed that he was the guilty party.

His confession was printed in the Feb. 5 edition of the *Evening World*. The most telling point was that Harvey held a \$300 mortgage on Elmer's farm and needed the money to pay off a debt.

Elmer continued, "When we started walking to Bloomington, I carried a cane — a green hickory cane — I judge about one and one-fourth inches in diameter and three and one half feet long. That is the only thing I had in the way of a weapon, but Harvey had a thirty-two caliber revolver, but it was broken. It wouldn't shoot; he was bringing it here to Bloomington to have it

fixed."

Elmer clubbed his brother several times, dragged him away from the road and stomped on his throat. That would have killed most people, but Harvey Alltop was made of stronger stuff.

Elmer took the mortgages on his property out of Harvey's pocket and proceeded on to Bloomington. He had another money-making scheme in mind. Continued his confession, "I came on in to Bloomington and went to the post office and inquired if there was any mail for Harvey. He had claimed he was expecting a registered letter that had some eighty dollars in it. I met Charlie Alltop and went in the post office with him."

The *Evening World* described Elmer as "cold-blooded and remorseless," dramatic words which tend to sell newspapers. During his brief court appearance, Elmer was subdued.

He could not have filed an appeal on the basis that speedy justice had been denied to him. The attack occurred on Jan. 30. On Feb. 5 he pleaded guilty in court and was escorted on the train to the state prison in Jeffersonville. His sentence was 2-14 years in prison, a fine of \$1,000 and "disfranchisement" for 26 years.

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