

Missing worker was cause for town's concern

The many friends of Dennis Teaford, the American Express Company manager in this city, are much alarmed because of his failure to return from a trip to Louisville Saturday. — Bloomington Telephone, Feb. 3, 1905.

The trouble was, Dennis Teaford left Bloomington on Friday, telling his wife he would be back at the latest on Sunday evening. He wasn't.

Teaford's stated reason for going to Louisville was to inquire about a job opening in the handling of mail on trains. According to a friend, George Walker, Teaford had a letter stating he had passed an examination that made him eligible for the position.

His disappearance was first noted on the front page of the *Telephone* of Feb. 3. "The uneasiness is increased because Mrs. Teaford has heard not a word and knows nothing of his whereabouts. Understandably his wife was upset and feared that he had "been a vic-



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

tim of some misfortune."

The American Express Company had not reached a degree of prominence in the business world without some built-in safeguards about financial receipts. Their Indiana agent arrived in Bloomington and put a company person in charge over the office assistants.

An auditing agent of American Express made a preliminary report after only a superficial look at the books.

Explained the newspaper, "As to affairs in the office, the auditing agent of the express company volunteered the statement that the office had not been carefully conducted, and that some important details had not been

properly attended to which looked thoughtless."

The agent added that Teaford had worked for the company for seven years and was regarded as "one of their most trusted agents."

He had not worked in Bloomington for that whole time, the news article noted.

Naturally, there was some speculation about causes of the disappearance, other than misfortune.

Teaford's friend, Walker, stated positively that he knew of no unhappy domestic relations in the Teaford household.

The story continued to unfold in subsequent issues of the *Telephone*. On Feb. 4 it was reported that a Mr. Jones from the Greencastle office had been put in charge at Bloomington and, more significantly, Teaford's wife had discovered his clothes were missing.

The express company's initial analysis of

affairs at the office had concluded that it was mainly a matter of sloppy bookkeeping.

Teaford's missing clothes changed the direction of the investigation.

Such a close scrutiny of the office records could not be done overnight. The auditors labored on in the following weeks.

As the *Telephone* put it, "When the man disappeared so unexpectedly, people generally looked wise and wondered, ascribing the cause either to home or office troubles, for it was not the reasonable thing for a man to leave a good position and happy home without a word of explanation."

The April 18 edition of the *Telephone* revealed details that Teaford's friends had dreaded.

Next week: A lesson in doctoring financial records

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