

Hero turned petty thief created trouble

He had the improbable name of Tobias Gaddis, and for a time he touched the lives of Monroe Countians in ways that afterward must have made them chuckle when they chose to think about him.

Gaddis, a native Kentuckian, had settled in the neighborhood of Victor and first came to the attention of local authorities in a rather violent manner. He shot someone, Jesse Robinson, to be exact.

The circumstances were described in the Oct. 1, 1907, issue of the Bloomington *Weekly Courier*. According to the newspaper, Jesse Robinson had been killed at Victor Tuesday night while attempting with others to whitecap Tobias Gaddis, who retaliated by firing his gun at the night-time callers.

(Whitecapping was a beating meted out by self-appointed vigilantes who usually wore masks. The extralegal practice had gotten completely out of hand in Indiana, and the state attorney general was attempting to stamp it out.)

Gaddis was regarded as a hero, but before he could enjoy the spotlight for very long, he was rudely jolted back to reality.



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

The *Weekly Courier* of Oct. 1 also reported that, "... Tobias Gaddis now occupies a cell in the Monroe County jail with the charge of petit larceny hanging over him. Gaddis was arrested Sunday evening by Marshal Johns upon a warrant sworn out by William Stutz of Victor, who claims that Gaddis took canned fruit of the value of \$4."

Though it may be supposed that honest-to-goodness heroes don't indulge in petty theft, it would seem that Gaddis was an exception. Explained the newspaper, "It is said that a search was made of the abandoned house of Gaddis at Victor, and that after prying up boards on the floor, the fruit was found." (The "loot" was four quart jars and two half-gallon jars of black-

berry jam belonging to Margaret Stutz.)

The newspaper also revealed the possible motive for the whitecapping of Gaddis. "Murmurings were heard against Gaddis the day following the tragedy (the shooting of Robinson), the claim being made that since his arrival into the Victor neighborhood, many articles had been missed by the farmers."

Had Gaddis merely paid a fine for the theft, there would be little else to relate about him. Instead, he denied the charge.

Taking up the narrative of Gaddis' troubles, the *Weekly Courier* informed its readers, "... when his wife called at the jail to see him a little while afterward, she broke down and wept as Gaddis came out of his cell. When searched Gaddis had four razors in his pockets."

The prisoner had apparently compounded his problems by engaging in some shady trading in Bedford. The newspaper of Oct. 4 explained it. "Frank Schaeffer arrived from Bedford yesterday evening to claim the horse and wagon recently sold by Gaddis to Parker Rogers, a farmer of the Victor neighborhood. According to Schaeffer,

Gaddis bought a bill of furniture from the Ferguson store at Bedford on the installment plan. Before he had paid for the goods, he traded the furniture to Schaeffer for the horse and wagon. Mr. Ferguson then replevined the furniture and Schaeffer is now here to get the horse and wagon back. Gaddis received \$30 for the horse and wagon."

Those sleight of hand dealings were quite enough to send Gaddis to the penitentiary, but it appeared that he had left a trail of unhappy people behind him in Greencastle, as well. During a three-day visit there he had been suspected of "borrowing" a horse, and stealing a woodsaw, pliers, 20 bushels of oats, vinegar, chickens and other items. He also left without paying several merchants.

Jesse Fields, Gaddis's attorney, was obliged to deliver some sad news to his client. Noted the *Weekly Courier* of Oct. 4, "Jesse Fields came to his (Gaddis') cell and informed him that the woman who has been posing as his wife, had left on the early train for parts unknown."

Next week: What became of Gaddis.

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