

# Guns and frustration added up to a shooting

Scanning Monroe County history from its beginning gives the impression that through the years human nature hasn't really changed very much. Specifically, when frustrated, some people resort to violence and pick out a target for it.

A turn-of-the-century era event illustrates that point. How the law dealt with it is less important than the fact that it was caused by one of the flash points in human relationships.

It would be said that a man by the name of James Hall was determined to make a name for himself when he shot another man on the street in front of the *Bloomington Telephone* office. Actually, Hall probably wasn't thinking about publicity when he lost control of his anger. It was in September of 1904.

Employees of the Collins grocery must have been startled to hear two gunshots followed swiftly by the appearance of a man who was bleeding profusely from a wound in his leg. They did all the right things.



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

Having tantalized its readers with a headline, "TWO SHOTS," the *Telephone* continued, "... a man walked quickly into the Collins grocery, saying that he was shot. He gave him name as Edward Nicholson and then asked that a doctor be sent for at once."

Nicholson may have been unsteady on his feet. The *Telephone* revealed that the victim was "placed on the floor and made as comfortable as possible."

Gun shots are guaranteed to get the attention of the public, and the Hall/Nicholson confrontation was no exception. At 9 o'clock on a Saturday night it is likely that there were some people downtown for business or rec-

reation. The *Telephone* estimated that "hundreds" had gathered, but someone in the Collins store had the foresight to lock the front door.

Dr. E.C. Harris dressed the ugly wound in Nicholson's thigh, and made it plain that a store floor was not an appropriate place to probe for a bullet. The physician's immediate concern was stopping the profuse bleeding. Nicholson was taken to a boarding house.

Meanwhile, policeman Norman appeared to sort out the cause of such a rude disturbance of the peace. The *Telephone* supplied a description of what happened when Norman appeared on the scene, "... he (Norman) was confronted by James Hall, who said, 'I'm your man; I did the shooting, and I'm ready to go to jail, now don't ask me anything more.'"

Nicholson, on the other hand, was not reluctant to talk about the violent disagreement. The *Telephone* supplied the answer. "Both men work at Stinesville in the stone

mills, and it seems that Hall wanted to join a union that meets here (in Bloomington), and both men were in town. Nicholson — already a member — opposed Hall getting in and made a fight against him in the meeting place, which is upstairs in the Sudbury room, south College Avenue."

The quarrel between the two men continued downstairs on the street. Hall apparently expressed his frustration with a gun.

Bloomington had a city court presided over by Mayor Claude Malott. Hall was charged with assault and battery with intent to kill. He pleaded not guilty and was told his bond was \$300.

The case was delayed until Nicholson was physically able to testify in court. Unfortunately, records of the city court are not available in the Justice Building, but it is unlikely that Hall escaped punishment, either by fine or imprisonment.

H-T 7/27/98