

# Identifying the decapitated man

Bloomington Police Chief Johns received over 30 inquiries from persons in various parts of the country in regard to the decapitated man found along the railroad tracks under the North Rogers Street bridge on March 31, 1909.

Among the telegrams that arrived here was one dated April 6, 1909. It read, "Can you locate Will R. Robertson, traced to Bloomington Tuesday with delirium tremens?" The body's identifying marks — an abdominal surgery scar and a missing finger — were duly wired to the origin of the telegram — Ensley, Ala.

Thus, one of Bloomington's John Does was finally identified. Though some details of the horrible death remained unexplained, the coroner was no doubt relieved to rule the death a suicide during a fit of alcoholic depression.

Two of the main details in the



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By Rose McIveen

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case were left hanging around in the imaginative minds of those who liked the excitement of a mystery. First, he was a union member, who had been offered a job in the steel mills in Gary and was headed there. On his trip he was accompanied by a man the *Telephone* described as a railroad engineer named Elliott. The latter returned to Ensley.

Then there was the matter of Robertson having no identification or money. His relatives back home claimed that he had adequate means to pay for his trip to

Gary. Even stranger was the absence of his union card, essential for his employment at his trade in Gary.

Robertson, who left behind a wife and a child, was apparently excited about his job prospects when he left Ensley. Asked the *Telephone*, "What the people would like to know is just who is this railroad engineer Elliott who started out with Robertson, and why he returned home without him if Robertson had delirium tremens and was unable to take care of himself?"

According to an Ensley reporter who wrote a story for the *Telephone* and relayed it to Bloomington, Elliott accompanied Robertson as far as Millron in Rush County, Ind., "but Elliott returned home saying he had parted company with Robertson.

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