

Doubts raised over new suspects in Bedford murder

Having unsuccessfully tried Jim McDonald for the murder of school-teacher Sarah Schafer in Bedford in 1904, the authorities doggedly renewed investigation.

According to the *Bloomington Evening World*, "Ever since the acquittal of Jim McDonald, who was charged with the murder of the pretty Latin teacher one year ago this month, there have been many people who believed that the right man had not yet been found, and the officers have during all this time followed every clue that seemed reasonable to apprehend the guilty man."

Suddenly, there were new arrests. The newspaper reported Frank Evans, a stone mill worker, and William Browning, a laborer, were taken into custody after warrants were sworn out against them. Explained the *Evening World* on



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

Jan. 19, 1905, "The arrests were caused by George Riley, a newspaper reporter formerly of Indianapolis, who has remained in Bedford since the Schafer mystery first developed, and by John H. Underwood, a lawyer, who signed the affidavit accusing the men of murder."

The newspaper indicated that there was some skepticism about the new suspects. "The arrest caused scarcely a ripple of excitement. Public sentiment seems to discredit the arrests, although some applaud."

Actually, the authorities should have paid a little more heed to the man-on-the-street wisdom in the matter. But perhaps the judgment of the law enforcement officers and leading citizens involved was clouded by their embarrassment at not having found the real murderer.

As it evolved, the "evidence" against Evans and Browning gave all the appearance of having been scripted by someone on a "bad trip." It seems that "Dude" Cook, Browning's ex-wife came forward with a story that the authorities could not afford to ignore. She said that a year after the murder her husband took her for a buggy ride to tell her that he had been involved in the murder and to give her a bundle of bloody clothing to get rid of.

According to the *Evening World*, there were a couple of problems

connected with the telling of her story. First of all, she had told differing versions, and second, she was deaf as a post and had to be shouted at during the questioning.

Futhermore, there were some very disturbing aspects in her account. Cook said she had been offered money to leave town. Her more sensational assertion was printed in the *Evening World*: "She said that Browning told her that Miss Eva Love (the murdered woman's roommate) and another lady gave Evans a lot of money just before the tragedy, near the cab shed. They wanted to get a letter from Miss Schafer's bosom which Miss Love and another person wanted to have in their possession."

No doubt by that time the citizens of Bedford were beginning to sit up and take notice, especially when they recalled that, although Schafer

had not been raped after all, the bosom portion of her dress had been ripped open by her assailant. Even more damaging were some other other (second-hand from Browning) allegations brought up in court: that a woman named Lizzie Kinser had tried to bribe Cook to leave town and that Bedford attorney, school board president and member of the investigating committee S.B. Lowe had told Evans one night before the murder to hire a rig and then take it to a point on Lincoln Avenue. At that point Evans turned the rig over to Lowe and Miss Love, and they got in and drove away in the buggy.

Lowe testified that he never told a detective not to trail Evans and furthermore he had never met in secret with Love or taken her buggy riding.

Next week: The next chapter.