

Robbery arrest leads to jail escape despite bail offer

“Escaped from jail! A prisoner by the name of John N. Stout liberated himself from prison Tuesday evening about dusk by dodging out the door just after Sheriff Adams had entered.”

Stout was not your usual prisoner. He had been accused of committing a crime against someone he should have cared about. But more about that later.

What was he doing in jail in the first place? According to the *Bloomington Telephone* of Nov. 23, 1894, Stout had been indicted for robbery and was waiting for his trial.

The *Telephone* described the crime. “...three men attempted to rob Benton Hough five miles north of town. Hough heard someone knock at the door and upon opening it, two masked men forced their way into the house and shot the lamp out of Hough’s hand.”

The men were looking for money. They



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

told Hough to go upstairs and get what he had.

Hough did some quick thinking and left the room. Before the two robbers could stop him, he locked the door.

That put an end to the robbery and the two would-be thieves left. Hough had given some thought to the identity of the robbers and related their names to the grand jury.

Unfortunately, the third robber stayed outside the house, and it must have saddened Hough to give the authorities that young man’s name. It was Stout, who had been

raised by Hough.

Hough was even willing to post bail for Stout. The *Telephone* explained why. “Stout was raised by Mr. Hough, and he believes that he would not have been in the robbery trouble only that his companions first got him drunk...”

Shortly thereafter, Stout did something that made the local legal system question his credibility.

The newspaper revealed that “A few days ago word came to Judge Miers that Stout wanted to marry a Mrs. Fielder, north of town, a lady 70 years old; and as Stout is just past 21, the Judge did not propose to have any such foolishness, and he raised Stout’s bond to \$2,000 and had him placed in jail again, where he remained until last night.”

Adams was carrying coal into the jail. Stout saw the opportunity of getting away by pushing past Adams and running out the

door. The *Telephone* described Adams’ response: “The sheriff was soon after him, and supposing that he would go out the front way he was ready to meet him, but in the meantime Stout had gone the rear way and ran down the south alley going by Dr. Tourner’s.”

Adams jumped on his horse, but it didn’t take him long to figure out that Stout was long gone. Two men checked out an area of Clear Creek, and Fielder’s house north of town, but did not find Stout.

The only thing Adams could do at that point was to post a reward for Stout. The *Telephone* printed it. “I will pay \$15 reward if he (Stout) is recaptured in Monroe County and delivered to me at jail. Or \$25 if captured in the State of Indiana, outside of Monroe County. Or \$50 outside of the State of Indiana and delivered to me. Wilson Adams, Sheriff of M.C., Bloomington, Ind., Nov. 20th, 1894.”

H-T 4/27/98