

# Jailed World War I veteran got benefit of the doubt

Once Major William Wilton Maddox had been returned to Bloomington from Washington, D.C., in November of 1921, he had no qualms about talking to reporters. The young man, a World War I veteran, had been accused to passing some bad checks here and probably elsewhere.

Unfortunately, his expectations regarding his wife and father-in-law did not materialize. Maddox had believed that his wife, Dorothy would come to Bloomington to help him in his defense. Instead, she went to Brazil, where her father was a much-respected judge.

When it was apparent that neither Dorothy nor her father planned to bail him out of what he called a misunderstanding, he began to speak openly and bitterly about his father-in-law. He was quoted in the Nov. 19 edition of the *Daily Telephone*. "Major Maddox makes the inference that his father-in-law, Judge Hutchinson, is trying to 'get' him, but this is not fair, it is said by those in a position to know."

The judge's defender said that he was convinced Maddox was "undesirable in every way." The accused young man was quoted as



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

having said, "I'm glad I won't be tried before my father-in-law." He added that from the day he eloped to Nashville with Dorothy the judge had been attempting to separate them and was telling unfounded stories about him.

During his days as a student at Indiana University, Maddox had traveled in what the newspaper called, the highest circles of Bloomington society. Those people came to his rescue, at least verbally. "Major Maddox was very favorably known to scores of Bloomington people, and they are inclined to believe that he is suffering from shell-shock and not entirely responsible for what he has been doing."

The *Telephone* of Nov. 23 reported that Dorothy Maddox had been trying to get her father to help her husband, but her mind was

changed by a letter. "Then the Major wrote a letter telling what he was going to do if Judge Hutchinson did not about-face in the matter, and the letter changed the wife entirely to the side of her father."

Apparently Maddox had bragged that he had enough ammunition to change the judge's mind. "I have enough friends in the legislature to impeach him enough friends in the United States Senate to drive him from power in the Republican Party."

At that point, Maddox's statements were full of bravado. Commented the *Telephone*, "Although nobody has hove in sight to go on the Major's bond, he makes big talk about being able to give any amount of bond money. Still in jail, the Major contends he can give a bond of either \$50,000 or \$100,000. The Major also talks of big men coming to his rescue — of army officers, United States senators and the like."

It didn't take his attorneys, Henley & Henley, very long to decide that Maddox needed a defense that would shield him from harsh punishment. The attorneys were hinting that the major's mind was unbalanced by his war

experiences — that if he was released from jail that very afternoon, he would start writing bad checks again.

Initially, Maddox told the court that he was not guilty, but on Nov. 30, according to Monroe County court records, his attorneys asked for withdrawal of the not-guilty plea. Instead, they filed a predictable one — that he was insane while he was passing bad checks.

The court then permitted Major Maddox to go under his own recognizance to the U.S. Marine Hospital in Louisville. His supervisor was to be Charles R. Turner, the prosecutor of Floyd County.

What became of Maddox? His case, No. 4907, was continued on the court records all through 1922 and into 1923. Presumably he was still in the hospital at Louisville, but that is not clear. Finally, on March 27, 1923, the court record reads, "This cause is ordered dropped from the docket on motion of the Prosecuting Attorney" From that point on, Maddox's future depended upon whether he bad check charges in other places.

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