

# Residents bid 'good riddance' to Gaddis

Perhaps it was no coincidence that Tobias Gaddis suddenly "regained his sanity" when papers committing him to the Central State Hospital in Indianapolis were about to arrive in Bloomington. Actually, it was the man's fellow prisoners who noticed he had returned to normal.

Explained the Bloomington *Weekly Courier* of Oct. 18, 1907, "The other prisoners who were allowed to walk about the corridor with Gaddis, sent for Sheriff Ratliff and notified him that the reason of Gaddis had been restored Sheriff Ratliff went into the long cell and talked with Gaddis for over an hour."

In explaining his miraculous recovery, Gaddis said that he had been looking out the window of his cell and noticed a child talking to a dog. The sight suddenly snapped him back to reality.

There is not particular evidence that the newspaper reporter had his tongue in his cheek as he continued the account. "Gaddis declared that he did not know that an insanity commission had declared him insane, and was not aware that he had been



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

acting like a mad man for nearly two weeks."

His explanation was that this was not the first such "spell" he had had. In fact, there had been at least five others.

Said Gaddis, "The first one came on me nine years ago just after the death of my mother in Case County, Ky. Last year while at Muncie I had another one in which I was near death's door. Dr. Poland of Muncie treated me, and he will corroborate my story."

Gaddis claimed that he needed medical treatment, but could not afford it. He said that a probable cause of his mental troubles was that he had been kicked by a horse and suffered a crushed skull. "The pain is all in

my head and breast."

Apparently he was convincing enough to halt the commitment process. Even though he may have been relieved by that decision, further legal troubles awaited him. The *Weekly Courier* reported that the sheriff and Judge Wilson decided to proceed with taking Gaddis's stealing of canned fruit to the grand jury.

After admitting that he had shot a white-capper, Gaddis had been declared a hero. The attitude of the newspaper had shifted a great deal by Nov. 12. A *Weekly Courier* article of that date began, "Two murderers were brought into court at the same time today, each having been indicted by the grand jury." (Otis Allen, accused of killing his roommate at Sanders was the other prisoner.)

Gaddis pleaded not guilty and asked for a trial as soon as possible. The case was put on the court docket for the following week.

Since the canned fruit Gaddis was supposed to have stolen from neighbors was found under the floorboards of the house he formerly occupied at Victor, there was little

doubt about his guilt. He was sentenced to 60 days in jail for that charge and 30 days for living unlawfully with his Ruth.

He was not destined to serve the full sentence. In fact, Gaddis had other plans. On Dec. 16, the *Weekly Courier* ran the conclusion to the story that had held the (at times amused) interest of readers.

"Tobias Gaddis, the Kentuckian who killed Jesse Robinson, a supposed white-capper sometime ago, is gone. He was a 'trustee' at the county jail, and late yesterday afternoon took advantage of his freedom by shaking the dust of Monroe County from his feet."

Incredibly Gaddis walked into the Monon Railroad station and bought a ticket for Muncie and presumably a reunion with Ruth.

Concluded the newspaper, "How Gaddis secured enough money to buy a ticket from here to Muncie is unknown. There is no regret that he is gone, for he was being boarded at the expense of the county, and his absence is really good riddance. May he never return."

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