

Grand jury probe puts city on edge of 'spasm of virtue'

Perhaps it was the spectacle of one of Bloomington's "over-indulgents" being taken to jail in a wheelbarrow that prompted a grand jury inquiry in 1913. In its advocacy of the city council coughing up enough money to buy a squad car for the police department, the *Weekly Star* pointed out to its readers that wheelbarrows were not the only means of conveyance for drunks who could not find the shortest distance from where they were apprehended to the city jail.

Commented the *Star* on Jan. 3, 1913. "Several drunks have recently been taken to jail in a wheelbarrow, and often limber drunks are carried to jail on a policeman's back. But the latest method of transportation was witnessed on the streets last Saturday when Police Chief (Joseph B.) Hensely went down the street



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leading a horse with a helpless drunk on the animal's back."

Getting to the source of the problem — the overindulgence in the first place — the newspaper informed its readers that some of them had reason to be concerned about what the grand jury might find. Others could relax.

It was the blind tiger operators who might lose some sleep over being scrutinized at closer range than usual. And there was some justifiable cynicism in the *Star's*

approach to the investigative process.

"Bloomington is about to have another spasm of virtue. We are told that there is to be a vice crusade to clean up the town. Hope it is so, as the thing is going to the limit, according to reports," said the *Star* on Jan. 17.

Apparently, operators of blind tigers had taken a leaf from the pages of certain circles in Bloomington — circles whose major function was social, rather than profit-making. Chirped the *Star*, "The ladies, however, need not be alarmed. It is not likely that the Friday club, the Thimble club, the Conversation club, & c., will be raided. Nor is it likely that the bridge whist games will be pulled.

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