

Identity of victim never learned in 1903 shoot-out

In the 1920s, 30s and 40s, a major Saturday morning treat was the showing of Western movies at the Harris Grand and Roxy theaters. It is unlikely that any of the young fans who enjoyed the violence of those cowboys knew there had been a real shoot-out near Unionville in 1903.

The incident began when two strangers appeared at the Indianapolis Southern Railroad construction camp in Benton Township, asking for work. Charles W. Spiegel, age 30, a subcontractor, agreed to take them on as teamsters.

The two new employees enjoyed dinner, supper and breakfast at the expense of the construction compa-



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

ny and acted as if they were going to work with the other men. Explained the *Bloomington Telephone* of Dec. 8, 1903, "After breakfast the two strangers deserted, leaving their teams standing in the stable. Mr. Spiegel was notified and followed them to Paisley's camp, about a mile this side, where he found them loafing and watching

the other men work."

Speigel's attitude was "No work, no pay," which included the free meals they had thus far received at his expense. Continued the newspaper, "Speigel threatened to whip both of them if they did not pay him. They then offered Speigel 75 cents for the six meals they had eaten, which was accepted and Speigel started back to the camp."

Unfortunately, one of the two men was heard to say, "Lets get the . . ." and he and his companion started shooting at Speigel. As the *Telephone* put it, "Their aim was bad and they missed their mark. Speigel turned, instantly drew his revolver from his pocket and fired

three shots, which was all the cartridges his weapon contained.

In the exchange of gunfire, one of the attackers dropped down behind a log, and the other hid behind one of Paisley's horses, which was hit by a bullet. That particular assailant soon took to the woods and disappeared temporarily.

Speigel reloaded his gun, but the man behind the log was already dead from a shot in the neck.

Witnesses later reported that the other assailant came out of the woods long enough to rifle the pockets of his companion and disappeared again.

The law is obliged to take note of violence in one way or another. The

Telephone informed its readers, "The shooting was witnessed by at least 100 men employed at Paisley's camp, and Speigel states that he will have no trouble in establishing his case of self-defense."

No one else had any problem sorting out the right and wrong of what happened, either. Speigel was accompanied to Bloomington by W.M. Spencer, the primary construction contractor of the Indianapolis Southern (which, by the became the Illinois Central Railroad). The examination given to the body by the coroner was perfunctory, and the prosecutor made one trip to the site

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