

Newspaper plays role in Christmas reunion

Imagine that your son is missing near Christmas. That is what happened to Joseph Birack, a quarryman living at Reed's Station near Bedford. The year was 1904.

News of the boy's disappearance was published in the Dec. 16 edition of the *Bloomington Telephone*. Birack put out a frantic call for information about his son. The information was printed in newspapers of counties adjoining Lawrence County.

The request read:

"Joe Birack, an Italian quarryman ... is anxious to find the whereabouts of his son Busey Birack, aged about 14 years, who disappeared from home Nov. 29th. The boy had given no warning that he was going away and had had no trouble at home."

There had been a little information about Busey. He had been spotted at Guthrie on Nov. 30, and the informant had thought the



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

boy was headed for Bloomington. He was described as small and having a dark complexion.

The call for information concluded, "Any one learning of the boy's whereabouts please telephone John Menn's saloon, Reed's Station, Ind., and receive (a) reward."

The *Telephone* was pleased with itself for getting quick results. The article about Busey continued, "In less than two hours after the Daily came out, the joyous news reached the heart-broken father that his boy had been found."

Busey hadn't bothered to tell anyone he

was leaving. His motive was apparently to "make his own fortune in the world."

As the boy headed northward from the Bedford area, he stopped at farmhouses to ask for work. Unfortunately, no one would hire him. Perhaps his youth was against him.

Then Busey arrived at the farm home of J.E. Weybright. The farmer, not knowing that the boy had run away from home, took pity on him.

According to the *Telephone*, when Busey arrived at the Weybright farm he was "chilled through and almost starved..."

There was another problem. Busey could speak barely any English. For that reason, Weybright didn't get much information from the boy.

Continued the newspaper, "He (Busey) was a willing worker, however, and the Weybright family were becoming attached to the little foreigner ..."

Then Weybright received his evening paper. It contained the missing boy report, and a call was made immediately to Busey's parents.

Concluded the *Telephone*, "Birack came up from Reed's Station Sunday morning and the meeting at the Weybright home between the father and son was indeed a touching scene.

The father was so overcome that he broke down, and he was profuse in his thanks to the Weybright family for the care and kindness shown his wandering son."

The *Telephone* was not privy to what happened when they got back to Reed's Station, except that the boy's mother was waiting for him.

There was no question about it, though. It would have been a very grim Christmas without Busey.

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