

About an editor who left town in a hurry

One of the little unsolved mysteries in Monroe County history is why the promising editor of a local newspaper suddenly left town on the last day of February 1881.

In the early life of the county, some newspapers died before the readers had had an opportunity to become accustomed to the editorial style of those responsible for their content. It should be noted that early American newspapers usually had political axes to grind, the readers subjected to the biases of the owner or editor. Since Monroe Countians were essentially conser-



Looking back

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1-16 1988

vative, the mortality rate of Democrat newspapers was especially high. (The Bloomington *Advocate* lasted for 12 issues, the *Pressage* survived for three months and its successor also faded into history.)

According to the Bloomington *Telephone*, the *Hawkeye* was 10

weeks old when its editor, John A. Highet, boarded a southbound train and never returned. Apparently he did not want colleagues and local acquaintances to know that there would be no more editions of his newspaper, since his parting comment was, "I'll be back next Thursday, boys."

The *Telephone* was relatively kind in its account of Highet's disappearance, considering that the *Hawkeye* was "the competition." Calling the young editor "The Wayward Knight of the *Hawkeye*," the *Telephone* commented, "One week ago last Monday morning the

southbound passenger train carried away from our midst one not only noted for his writings and journalistic efforts of three months standing, but mourned for the debts he left unpaid."

There followed on the front page of the *Telephone* an account of specific amounts owed by Highet in the community — \$60 for the press; Mathews and Moore at Ellettsville, \$150; W.J. Allen, rent, \$8; National Hotel, \$31, and other "small debts." The fact that the young editor had engaged in some creative financing — borrowing money on a press he

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