

In 1895, Ellettsville community searched for missing boy

It wasn't what you would call a "manhunt," since the person everyone was looking for was a child. The month and year were December of 1895.

In a front page article the Bloomington *Courier* described the frantic efforts of authorities and volunteers in Ellettsville to find William Heady, the son of Thomas Heady. The latter was superintendent of the Perry Brothers quarry.

It seems that on a Saturday afternoon William left home, telling his mother he was going to walk to the house of his sister, Carrie May. She lived about 2½ miles away.

But William had not returned home when it was beginning to get dark, and his mother sent the boy's brother to retrieve him from his sister's. Related the *Courier*, "The young man (William's brother) was



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

considerably surprised to learn from his sister that the boy had not been there that day."

As the people of that community were considered to be compassionate when it came to a human emergency, many of them joined in the search for William — a search that dragged on through Saturday night and all day Sunday. In fact, the *Courier* estimated that "a good portion of the population of Ellettsville" was out looking for the boy.

The newspaper described the search. "Lanterns were secured, and the surrounding country was searched for miles in the hope of discovering the missing lad, but to no avail."

All kinds of possible mishaps were conjured up in the minds of the searchers. One of them was accidental drowning. So the village blacksmith fashioned a couple of hooks for dragging the creeks and streams in the vicinity.

Dramatically, the *Courier* continued the story. "But the dark waters failed to give up his form."

The parents next resorted to using the telegraph to send out an alarm within a radius of 100 miles. It was like a turn-of-the-century version of an all-points bulletin.

The be-on-the-lookout bulletins fi-

nally got results. The *Courier* does not say how many days it took for the authorities to find William, but it was probably not soon enough for the boy's parents.

It is not clear exactly why the Indianapolis police were watching for him in the railroad yard there, but, having heard the bulletin, they took him into "custody."

No doubt in the days afterward William had quite a tale to tell to his contemporaries, not to mention his parents and the authorities in Ellettsville. He was probably unaware of the amount of furor and fear he had caused.

Where was William all that time? Well, it seems that on his way to his sister's he encountered some tramps who talked him into going with them wherever they were

going.

Perhaps it was the lure of the life of the road that captured William's imagination. The *Courier* does not suggest that the tramps offered the young man any inducement to go with them.

As he related his adventures, William explained they all gone to Gosport, where they got on an I&V train headed north. At this point he may not have known where they were going.

Actually, where William was going was straight into the arms of the Indianapolis police and thence home to his "almost distracted family."

And, concluded the *Courier*, "... the excited populace of Ellettsville have settled down to the even tenor of their ways."