

Billy the bloodhound earns weight in kibble

CITY BLOOD HOUNDS

(Headline in Bloomington Telephone, Feb. 2, 1907)

People in Bloomington were becoming concerned about an increase in petty burglaries, and the city council responded by buying three bloodhounds. The *Telephone* of Feb. 2, 1907, informed its readers that the adult dog and two puppies were Muncie-bred.

Of the puppies the newspaper explained, "One of these will be trained to be a 'man dog' and the other taught to trail horses. It is expected to soon have the dogs pay for themselves by hiring them out to other cities when needed."

In another article on the same date, the *Telephone* revealed that the three dogs cost \$50 and added, "The purchase of the dogs was kept a secret as much as possible so as to give them a good chance in their first workout."

The adult dog, named Billy, got a chance to prove himself almost immediately. Reported the newspaper, "Another one of the



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

series of petty robberies which have been going on for some time around the square took place last night, and the Kahn Clothing store was broken into. The burglars gained entrance by breaking in a back window and prying open the money drawer and secured about \$21 in change."

The investigating officers were Chief of Police Johns and Policeman William Shinn. The only evidence they found was a pair of gloves with the initials "F.M.C." on the windowsill where the break-in occurred.

Johns and Shinn decided it was time to put Billy to work. The *Telephone* described what happened next. "Three times the dog circled through the store, went out the back door and down the alley to the front door of

a house on Fourth Street."

As a result of the tracking the police arrested Charles Carr, a 14-year-old boy on suspicion. Charles was already out on his own recognizance for breaking a window at the Tournier Hotel.

Since their arrival in town, Shinn had been assigned to keep the dogs, because, as the *Telephone* put it, he "has always been somewhat of a canine fancier..."

The newspaper had great hopes for the dogs. Under a headline, "MORE WORK FOR 'BILLY', the *Telephone* described the dog's next exploit. "Billy, the bloodhound, is proving very near as good an advertising proposition for the city of Bloomington as the Gentry dog and pony shows. Last night a bunch of yeggmen blew open the safe of one of Ladoga's principal stores and escaped with considerable booty."

Summoned to Ladoga, "Billy and Shinn hopped the 7:45 "plug" north. . . . This will be 'Billy's' third try out, and the officers are confident that he will make good if given a fair chance." Some of the other "tries"

were likely to be petty thefts, since there was also an increase in purse-snatching.

In still another burglary, Billy got a chance to track an intruder, but it was not his fault the man got away. On March 8 the *Telephone* reported that the Dillman & Campbell store at Clear Creek was burgled.

Dillman had had the precaution to have an alarm installed, and wired to his house. When it went off, he grabbed his shotgun and an assistant, Roy Dodd, and headed for the store. While they were running in the front door, the thief was going out the back door. Dillman fired once and believed that he peppered the intruder with shot.

In his haste, the thief dropped his derby hat, and undoubtedly Billy was given that to sniff before he began his run. He followed the trail until it ended abruptly at Ketchan's. Concluded the *Telephone*, "...the thief evidently caught a train south. Thinking he might stop at Bedford, Mr. Dillman went to that city this morning and with the aid of the police to look for him there."

Next week: The burglaries have tragic consequences.

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