

Animal trainer tames the intruder

In the fall of 1896 — on Sept. 22 to be exact — Bloomington had a mini crime wave, which may have been perpetrated by a pair of visitors to Bloomington. Their particular classification in the something-for-nothing fraternity was "sneak thief."

In his book, *Professional Criminals of America*, veteran New York City detective Thomas Byrnes wrote in 1896 that the housebreaker and sneak were the most numerous category of thieves. "Locks and bolts cannot be relied upon as a rampart against these men . . . The average sneak thief laughs at the flimsy barriers, and can undo every one of them with a few simple instruments which he carries in his vest pocket."

With two exceptions, the housebreakers struck in the near downtown area. R.L. Wilson, an Indiana University student who was a boarder in the home of Monroe County Recorder J.W. Jackson at 209 E. Kirkwood, lost a \$50 gold



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watch. E.T. Treadway suffered the same fate, having made the task of taking his watch an easy one for the thief or thieves. Treadway had put the timepiece on a table next to a window with only a screen separating the watch from its new owner.

Switching from jewelry to food, the thieves raided the pantry of the Joseph McKinley home at 403 E. Third St. At 2 o'clock in the morning Violet Abel, who lived with her sister and brother-in-law, George W. Henley, at 322 W. Second St., heard noises in the upstairs hallway. As Henley was searching the house, a man ran down the back stairway and got away. Prior to his

search, for valuables, he had coolly lighted the gas jet in the back hall. His break-in yielded nothing.

The W.A. Fulwiders at 325 S. Rogers St., suffered the biggest losses. Entering a window in the side hall, the thieves took a gold watch, silver, cash and a new man's suit, totaling \$70. Fulwider saw the burglar, but was too sleepy to get a good look at him.

It was left to Frank Gentry, animal trainer and showman, to tame one of the felonious intruders, who made a basic tactical error. The thieves' first visit to the Gentry home, which stood on South Rogers Street on the McDoel Baptist Church property, happened about 8:30 in the evening when only a maid and a child were in the house.

Not as quiet as he could have been, the thief attracted the maid's attention when he tried to open a side door. Later at the front door he did not reply when the woman

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