

Reward stirred up plenty of tips on Bedford murder

The nature of the crime against Sarah Schafer on Jan. 21, 1904, at Bedford, alarmed the town in a way that earlier murders had not. To put it differently, the murder of a female was bad enough, but rape as well, made it intolerable.

In fact, a visiting minister took the precaution of admonishing a congregation in Bedford. The *Bloomington Evening World* reported that he said from the pulpit, "Uphold the law; control your feelings; do nothing rash in case of an arrest."

An Indiana University student from Bedford, who was acquainted with Schafer, had reason to appreciate the minister's advice. Following a frustratingly cold trail, Bedford Marshal Frank Russell began



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

looking for her acquaintances and soon found Joseph Heitger.

In an interview with Schafer's landlady, Russell learned that the woman had once complained about Heitger. In the *Evening World* of Jan. 25, the dead woman was quoted as having told the landlady, "Mrs. Smith, don't you know that he tried to kiss me last night, and when I told him to stop or I would scream, he simply laughed . . . what

will people in Bedford think of me if he tells the story?"

But Heitger, depicted by the newspaper as from a "socially prominent family," had a very plausible alibi and witnesses to back up his story. A few days later while he was in Bloomington for a visit, the IU senior told a reporter, "There has been a lot of silly stuff printed, but I am not going to talk about the case at all. If I don't talk, I can't be misquoted. Like every good citizen, I want to do all I can to clear this thing up."

The *Bloomington Courier* of Jan. 29 reported that two new Pinkerton detectives had arrived on the train at Bedford. Meanwhile, at the inquest, three telephone operators were questioned about whether

they had overheard any "objectionable" long-distance conversations between Schafer and a man. Their answer was "No."

Two other leads presented themselves. A portion of a pair of suspenders was discovered in the Cook cab shed where the body had been found. Even more exciting was the information that a "mysterious stranger" who left Bedford on the Southern Railroad at 8 o'clock the night of the murder, had a red mustache.

Another suspect turned up in Louisville. A man by the name of Harry Behr. While passing through there, he stayed with a couple men who reported to the police that Behr had scratches on his face and blood on his shirt. He had said that

he "got the scratches in a fight with a woman."

The promise of a \$1,500 reward brought a whole host of cranks out of the woodwork in Bedford and elsewhere. The *Courier* of Feb. 9 described some of the frustration of the authorities. They had received a letter from a man who said Schafer's murderer was dead and would give no more information unless it was agreed that he could have the reward. Another letter from Michigan stated that the killer was in Elkhart. (Schafer's home town) and volunteered to go with authorities to point him out.

Commented the newspaper, "The authorities do not place much

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