

Strange death stirred Bloomington's curiosity

Was it a case of murder or suicide? And who was the stranger found stabbed and decapitated under the North Rogers Street bridge March 31, 1909?

Not far away from the body the police discovered a bowler hat with the initials "W.H.R." inside, the victim's jacket and a knife with an open blade. In his pocket was a good meerschaum pipe, a penny and a good luck button which proclaimed, "Membership emblem in the Don't Worry Club."

The whole affair was complicated by rumors that spread over Bloomington — rumors that the police could not ignore. For example, there was the account of William McGuire, described by the Bloomington *Telephone* as a workman at the Oakes furniture factory.

According to the worker, as he was walking home along the tracks, about a block's distance from the



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scene of the tragedy, he came upon three men standing by a pile of crossties.

Of the incident, the *Telephone* reported:

"As McGuire approached, he heard one of the men say, 'Keep still. There comes somebody.' As he passed them with a cheery 'good morning,' which none of the men deigned to answer, McGuire heard one of the men say, 'What the devil's that fellow doing out at this time in the morning?'"

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