

Plenty of crime in news of roaring '20s

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the Eagle Clothing Store, dropped by the Curry Buick garage at 214 W. Seventh Street to pick up a car. So had two "bandits," who picked out (at gunpoint) a new Buick six touring model. To ensure their uncontested departure from town, the bandits took Cathcart and the garage nightwatchman, Sherman Holsapple, with them as far as the Griffy Creek bridge.

While the thieves sped northward on the Dixie Highway toward Martinsville, the hostages phoned the authorities from the home of farmer John Marlin. Though Sheriff Curry (who also happened to own the garage), Indiana University police officer

Walter Peterson and a patrolman, Raymond Fowler, pursued the robbers, the latter had too much of a head start.

Less spectacular, but no doubt more intriguing for local newspaper readers, was a small article that appeared in the July 27, 1924, edition of the *Evening World*. Apparently 15 men from "prominent families of Bloomington" had scheduled an informal recreational activity along Jackson Creek "in the hills southeast of this city."

Their crap game attracted the attention of neighboring farmers, who called the event to the attention of the sheriff's department. Reported the *World*, "That the men were

well supplied to have a good time throughout the afternoon was evident from the speech of one just as the two officers were approaching the spot from the other bank of the creek. He said: 'Open the bottle!'"

By our standards today, news reporting in the '20s had some quaint terminology. Consider the docket that awaited Special Judge T.J. Loudon in mid-January of 1924. For his consideration, the police department had provided the following cases: "five plain drunks, one bootlegger, two traffic offenders and two juvenile culprits."

Meanwhile, in July of that year, Owen County Sheriff McCarty had resolved to

wage a campaign against "wreckless automobile driving." He and his deputies set up a roadblock between Spencer and Bloomington and arrested some drivers, including a member of the state police force (who was, presumably, driving wrecklessly).

Working conditions for Bloomington police were not exactly conducive to good morale. A special article in the *World* informed its readers that city officers received \$29 for a 12 hour-per-day, seven-day work week. After six straight days of 12-hour duty, it would not have been a wonder if an officer arrested his own mother by mistake.

Perhaps the most bizarre

case in that time period was an elaborate hoax played on a fifth-year Indiana University student, who claimed he was "on to all college pranks and could not be kidded." It seems that he and a companion went to the vacant house known as the "Simmons property" just off College Avenue on 11th Street.

Upon entering the house, they encountered a man who said, "You're the man who has been going with my wife. I've got you at last." He then fired at the student's companion, who fell.

When the student brought the police to the Simmons house, they found neither body or bloodstains. But presumably one IU student, at least, no longer boasted about how sophisticated he was.