

Detective posts reward for fugitive

In the fall of 1914 in Monroe County "who" a person was pretty much associated with who his relatives were and what he did for a living.

For that reason, most of the *Telephone* readers probably didn't have the faintest idea who the alleged murderer was in the Nunn/Scarbaugh case. In fact, the newspaper added to the confusion by getting one of the participant's name wrong in the initial account of the tragedy. John Scarbaugh became Scarbaugh when the *Telephone* got it right in the subsequent editions.

It may be recalled that the killing of Henry Nunn happened at Tony Scarpino's speakeasy near the Consolidated Stone Company after a night of drinking and crap-shooting. The reason why the two were not well known in the county was that they had migrated here from Kentucky only a few years before the tragedy.

The local police believed that Scarbaugh, who fled into the woods west of Hensonburg, was still hiding out there, and that they could get word to him via his wife. According to the *Telephone*, the message to Scarbaugh was that cards with his picture had



Looking back

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already been circulated in neighboring counties and that his chances of getting very far away were nil.

Sensing that his services might be needed, self-styled local private "detective" Charles "China" Harris surfaced. In a businesslike manner — if not an entirely literate one — he negotiated a contract of a \$50 reward for the return of Scarbaugh. (It should be remembered that Harris was known to do a balancing act along the no-man's land between the spirit and the letter of the law.)

Harris's contract said: "This agreement made this day between the police of the City of Bloomington, Indiana, and Charles Wesley Harris, operating oakere (Latin) for the sole and lone purpose of capturing the desperate and dangerous criminal Sampson Scar-taw, the said party of the second part, Charles Wesley Harris, shall

well and truly perform his duty as oakerer and capture the above named. Then said Charles Wesley (Chicken) Harris shall be paid the sum of \$50 for said service. Dated this 24th day of August 1914." Bloomington's legal community may have been holding in its sides to keep them from splitting, but Harris was off and running.

Meanwhile, the *Telephone* reported a bizarre incident in the pursuit of Scarbaugh. It seemed that after the murder, he had indeed taken to the woods and ended up at the farm of Tom Nelson, whose knowledge about the finer points of the law concerning harboring a fugitive, was somewhat lacking. According to Nelson, as reported to the *Telephone*, Scarbaugh turned up at Nelson's farm (a mile and a half northwest of the stone company) exhausted and frank about what had happened earlier.

His two hiding places were an abandoned house and a nearby thicket, and he might have stayed there longer than a few days had a "posse" of Bloomington and Monroe County lawmen not appeared. Caught in a rather embarrassing position, Nelson owned that Scarbaugh had been around

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