

Three unsolved murders frustrated '20s law enforcers

"Judge Herbert Rundell, in his instructions to the Grand Jury impaneled yesterday morning, mentioned the unsolved murders of John Christy, Ellis Medlock and a man by the name of Oliphant."

— **Bloomington Telephone, Feb. 23, 1930.**

If by some trick of time reversal you could ask the local law enforcement officers of the late 1920s their definition of frustration, they would probably answer: Three unsolved murders. The newspapers of that time reveal it wasn't lack of trying on the part of officers or deputies.

Rundell's comments to the grand jury must have rankled them considerably since the Bloomington Police Department and Monroe Coun-



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

ty Sheriff's Department hadn't taken a casual attitude toward any of the crimes in the area, let alone murder.

Perhaps the most sensational of the murders was that of John Christy, age 33, who worked as a maintenance man for Indiana University and died as a result of gunshot wounds on Feb. 3, 1929.

Christy was unmarried and lived

with his parents on the northwest edge of Bloomington. According to the *Telephone*, on the evening he was attacked, he had paid a bill at the Dan Albright store, gotten a haircut and shoe shine at the barber shop and gone to a movie.

Christy was walking home and had progressed as far as Maple and Sixth streets, when he was apparently accosted by two men. Continued the *Telephone*, "It was learned from the residents that there was some very loud and angry talking preceding the gun reports — in fact, so loud that parties living on West Kirkwood Avenue — a block away, heard it. Residents of the neighborhood listened at their windows but could not distinguish what was be-

ing said."

One thing the neighbors did recall was that the words spoken were few, but vehement. The first shot fired at Christy went through the fleshy part of his leg and hit a stone fence between the home of Claude Daugherty and Robert Burns. That shot was at a range close enough to set Christy's coat on fire.

According to the newspaper, "Quick as a flash, another shot rang out, the bullet penetrating the abdomen." There was a third shot, but it struck the Daugherty front porch instead of Christy.

He staggered to the McAnnich grocery store, where an ambulance was called from the Allen Funeral

Home. Before he died, Officer William Weatherall and W.W. Allen heard him say that Christy thought he was being robbed. "They didn't give me time to throw up my hands, but began firing. I would have given them everything I had."

One of the bullets penetrated Christy's abdomen, passed through his bladder and lodged in his right hip. That was the one that killed him. He died at 7 a.m., the next morning in the Bloomington Hospital.

Subsequent investigation revealed that perhaps robbery was not the motive for the shooting. Several factors pointed in an entirely

see Looking back, page C2