

'Jones Club'

Kangaroo Court greeted jail prisoners in Monroe

"George Alexander, one of the illegal booze sellers, left the jail this morning. . . George has just completed a sentence of 30 days and says he had a good time. The first week he was in jail George says he was tormented almost to death by the bugs, but he finally became used to it." Bloomington Telephone, April 24, 1914.

"JAIL IS BUGGY SAYS GEORGE" greeted the readers of the *Telephone* in the spring of 1914. Unlike other local bootleggers, Alexander was unlikely to spend another 30 days as a guest of Monroe County taxpayers, for, as he explained to the *Telephone* reporter, during his incarceration in Bloomington his wife had set up a hotel and restaurant business in another town. So saying, Alexander boarded the 11 o'clock train for Limesdale, which is not far from Greencastle in Putnam County.

If indeed the former prisoner's allegation about the condition of the jail was true, it certainly wasn't the only problem there. Dubbed the "Jones Club" by the *Telephone*, the jail was located at 116 S. Walnut St. Local forensic history buffs should take note that the City Police Department was located in a rather curious place at 212 North Walnut St., now occupied by a restaurant.

The Jones Club got its name from that of the then county sheriff, Walter H. Jones, who had been duly elected by the taxpayers to keep law and order.



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

Together with his wife, Margaret, and at least one child, Harold, he had quarters in the jail building. Jones and family during the 1900 census taking were residing in Indiana Creek Township.

According to the *Telephone*, the regulars at the jail had a rather curious initiation ritual for newcomers. It seemed that they were soon greeted with a kangaroo court that was in session on a daily basis. It was known to deal out "a stiffer brand of justice than does any other court in the city."

Even worse, the newspaper alleged, "Former Merchant Policeman Al Jessup has been the official wielder of the strap." Needless to say, the prisoners got lashings according to the dictates of their kangaroo court. The punishments came in the denominations of 10, 20 or 30 lashes, depending upon the offense.

One example cited by the *Telephone* was that of three tramps — two little and one big one — who had asked for and received

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