

'Cops and robbers' was simpler a century ago

One of the basic premises of a career of crime is that stealing is a shortcut to acquiring money — one that bypasses the tiresome and time-consuming method of working for a living. The author Zane Grey was still trying to master a McGuffey reader when the Southern Indiana town of Tunnelton exploded in gunfire equal to anything the famous writer of "westerns" would later devise.

The year was 1882. A quartet of



Looking back

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males had money on their minds — someone else's. Their exploits were colorfully described in the *Bedford Banner* and reprinted in the *Bloomington Republican Progress* of Feb.

15.

Apparently, the four men — Ed Willoughby, Zachariah Whitted, Virgil Wilson and Nicholas Bond — decided that a piddling, one-stop robbery wouldn't satisfy their financial appetites. Their plan for the Tunnelton haul included: burglary of the saloon of Armenius Meyers; looting of the residence of Thomas Clark; and forcing M.T. Guthrie — by using pincers on his tongue, if necessary — to reveal the combination of his store safe. Cold-blooded

murder of any of the victims who didn't cooperate was also part of the plan.

But Willoughby had second thoughts about the whole thing and decided he wanted no part of the one-night crime wave. He passed the word someone about the plan and added an important piece of information. Explained the newspaper article. "A part of the programme also was to fire a building in the edge of town to draw the attention of the people, while they

(the gang) were proceeding with their work."

Strangely missing from the account is any mention of who was responsible for law and order in Tunnelton. It vaguely relates, "After Willoughby told this, the citizens began to prepare for the outlaws."

The strategy was a stake-out near the saloon. "After dark a body of men were posted behind a freight car, near the saloon, and other

see Looking, page A9