

# A personal tragedy in 1913

In Monroe County tragedy has worn many faces. But perhaps none was more grim and heart-wrenching than on that day in 1913 when Mack Hurst lost faith with the value of life.

Things hadn't been going so well for the stoneworker. In fact, he was losing the battle that would decide whether he or alcohol was in charge of his life. Hurst and his wife were separated when he lost the battle.

Not that he endangered his body to the point of death. It was his mind that was going — a mind messed up with bootleg whiskey.

There is evidence that he had tried to pick up the broken pieces of his clouded perceptions of life. In the late summer of that year of 1913, Hurst had told some of his former co-workers that he would "reform" and go back to work. His wife had also tried to help in her way, going to his rescue when he was physically ill. She had also



## Looking back

By Rose  
McIlveen

5-6-1987

petitioned the Monroe County court to have him declared insane so that he could get what little help was available at that time. Her efforts were thwarted when a "commission of doctors" found he was sane.

Rena Hurst and her children had begun to make a life for themselves. They rented rooms a big house on the northeast corner of Morton and Seventh streets. Rena's daughter, Maude, who was 15 or 16 years old, worked at the Field mitten factory and was the major bread-winner for the family.

When Mack Hurst's brother,

Charles, died early in September, there was a hint by the stoneworker to friends of things to come. Mack was heard to say, "In two weeks I'll be out in Rose Hill, too."

Despair must have overcome him after a futile attempt at a reconciliation with his wife and family. In its Sept. 23 issue, the *Bloomington Telephone* related that on the evening of the 18th, Mack Hurst met his daughter, Maude, on her way home from work and told her that he wanted, at least, to rent a room in the large house.

Whatever Maude may have said to her father will probably never be known, but the prospect of that conversation may have been his last wisp of hope. In gathering information to write about the tragedy, a reporter for the *Telephone* was able to learn that

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