

Horse-napper nabbed by friendly neighbor

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other points over the county.

Results of the phone messages were not long in coming. According to the newspaper, "Soon after a message from Whitehall stated that a stranger had passed driving Harrah's horse in a strange buggy."

What the thief did not reckon on was one of the little ironies of life that prove the downfall of the best-laid plans. Had he been driving a horse and buggy strange to the neighborhood of Whitehall, he probably would have gone unnoticed. The twist of fate that led to his arrest was that the horse was familiar to the residents of the area,

since Harrah, its owner, lived near Whitehall.

The message relayed to Bloomington contained the information that "the Hall Bros. and others gave chase, but in the meantime, Lemuel Tracy, who lives on Samuel Brown's farm two miles north of Whitehall, had noticed the stranger coming up the road, when he promptly arrested the man and with the assistance of the Whitehall citizens, held him prisoner until the arrival of Bloomington City Marshall (Ed) Johns and Frank Owens, who were in hot pursuit."

What is missing from the *Telephone* account poses an interesting question: How did the said Lemuel Tracy arrest the driver of a moving

buggy? The article does not suggest what was perhaps the obvious. Tracy may have used a gun to persuade the thief to come to a halt in his flight.

Back in Bloomington, the man had the ingenuity to create for himself an alias — that of "Murphy." Or, perhaps he merely dusted off an old one.

The *Telephone* informed its readers that the prisoner finally recalled that he was from Columbus, Ohio, but denied that he had anything to do with the theft. "He says he was drunk and that two men put him in the vehicle and forced him to drive away. He claims that he did not know where he was going and did not realize the trouble he was in

until after he was arrested."

In his first courtroom appearance, the horse-and-buggy-napper came up with another name, "Mike Potter." The irony of the man's escape route error did occur to the *Telephone* reporter, who seemed to have enjoyed the writing of the front-page story.

He commented, "A remarkable coincidence is that the man drove the horse in Whitehall, where it would be recognized by every man, woman and child in the vicinity."

The newspaper neglected to report the legal fate of Murphy, a.k.a. Mike Potter. But it is likely that the circuit judge gave him plenty of time to think about where he was going in the future.