

The automobile brought excitement to Bloomington

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ride. The Glide touring car may have been Harris's pride and joy, but in August 1913 it ended in a ditch at the corner of Eighth and Indiana, with two wheels broken and a mowed-down tree to be replaced for some owner.

Residents of Second Street complained bitterly that someone with a new truck was making a noisy trip through the neighborhood every morning before 6 o'clock. The *Star* boasted that already \$15,000 had been invested by Bloomingtonians in the new-fangled automobiles. The state was quick to make provision for licensing, and the *Star* reported that some \$600 had been collected from Bloomington residents. (License plates were \$5 for a car of 25 horsepower or less and \$8 to \$10 for more than 25 horsepower.)

In October 1913, a young man was arrested at the Graham garage. He was wanted on a warrant from Union City, where he had asked for a demonstration drive, held up the salesman at gunpoint, tied him to a tree and driven away in a cloud of dust down the country road.

Perhaps the most ingenious use for the new automobiles was devised by some Bloomington practical jokers. The story had its beginning as a car full of Elks headed east of town to the lodge's outing at a fairgrounds.

Suddenly their ride was interrupted by four men — rigged out as bandits — ambushed the car and forced the occupants to get out. The *Bloomington Telephone*, in reporting the incident, described what happened next. "The masked men . . . lined them up side-by-side along the road and took all their money and valuables. The victims were then ordered back into their machine and told to drive on. As the auto moved off, one of the supposed bandits fired a gun in the air and the driver of the machine pretended to be shot in the shoulder."

The elaborate hoax included the doctor who dressed the driver's "wound" with a red-ink-stained bandage, and the Bloomington police department. Chirped the *Telephone* of June 6, 1913, "Not until this morning did any of the four discover that the hold-up was a fake and that their friend had not been shot."