

# Looking for bank robbers proved dangerous in 1923

Close on the heels of the sensational gang-style bank robbery in Spencer in November 1923, there was another at Edwardsport north of Vincennes. In that robbery an assistant cashier of the State Bank was shot and killed.

Though authorities had no reason to believe that that theft was related to the one in Spencer, it was inevitable that law officers in the southern part of the state were on the lookout for other such thefts. In fact, it was downright dangerous for armed men to travel together in packs looking for the lawbreakers.

On Nov. 22, the Bloomington *Evening World* alerted its readers to



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

just how risky serving in a posse could be. Datelined Brazil, the article related, "Four men were seriously wounded in a gun battle between a posse and Clay County officers when the two opened fire on each other by mistake during a bandit hunt near Cory, 10 miles southwest of here today. The two

groups were hunting for an auto which, it was believed, was driven by bank bandits planning to rob the Cory Bank."

As the days went by, the public probably began to believe that the Spencer bank robbers had gotten away with their theft, but on Dec. 6, the United Press was able to report that arrests had been made.

Quoted the *World*, "Eight men were arrested here today charged with being members of the gang of bandits which terrorized the town of Spencer a month ago and robbed the two banks of \$17,000."

The news had a very startling aspect to it, since one of the persons

taken into custody was Earl Lought, a former assistant prosecuting attorney for Knox County. The press association and the *World* were both skating on the thin edge of libel when they passed along to the reading public the following paragraph: "The men are all members of a gang which committed a number of petty robberies and holdups in the vicinity of Bicknell, according to (R.G.) Terrell" (chief of police at Spencer).

Continued the United Press and the *World*, "It was the common belief that some of the men who took part in the robbery were natives of Spencer and knew all the inner

workings of the banks and town."

At some point in the investigation, there was a theory that some of the Spencer bank robbers were from Bloomington. In fact, according to the *World*, five secret service detectives were sent to Bloomington to look into the matter. Added the newspaper, "As far as is known by the local police officials, however, they went away without any clues."

No doubt authorities in Southern Indiana counties began to relax as the procedures of the courts began to proceed against those arrested.

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