

"Crime Stories of 1900, Part I"

Carroll County Times article for 16 April 2000

By Jay A. Graybeal

Carroll Countians experienced a minor crime wave a century ago as reported in the local press. The April 7, 1900 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel reported recent thefts under the headline of "Burglaries and Robberies":

"The theory that an organized band of thieves and burglars is operating in and around this city and in other parts of this county is strengthened by several bold robberies perpetrated during the past week. Among these crimes was the looting of the store of Mr. J. Edward Evans at Carrollton, which occurred sometime during Monday night. An entrance to the store was gained by destroying the lock on the door.

Once inside, the burglars pursued their purpose in a very deliberate fashion and apparently without fear of detection. They ate of the cakes and confectionery found in the store quite freely and scattered some of these articles over the floor. They found several dollars in the money drawer, which, of course, they appropriated. Of the merchandise in the store they carried away apparently a good sized wagon load and it is supposed had a wagon with them for the purpose. It is difficult to estimate Mr. Evans' loss but it must be very considerable. Shoes, dry goods &c., were taken, to the value of probably more than \$150.

On the same night Mr. Vincent Yingling's premises, near this city, were visited by thieves who carried away a can of lard, a ham and thirty chickens; and the saloon of Mr. Chauncey E. Jerome, in this city, was broken into and a quantity of liquor and cigars carried away about the same time.

Several of our correspondents refer to the operations of night hucksters, evident allusions to the plunder of chicken and probably meat houses by thieves. The frequent recurrence of these depredations should put citizens on their guard and cause them to maintain a careful lookout for robbers.

It is said that the proceeds of the robberies told about in the Sentinel last week were hauled to Baltimore and disposed of in a rather open fashion. If the surmise is correct that the thieves operating in this section are taking their plunder to Baltimore and disposing of it there, their apprehension ought not to be a very difficult matter."

The same issue of the paper contained an article by the Mt. Airy correspondent describing a burglary in that town:

"On Saturday night last about midnight a robbery occurred in the store of Wm. Fleming. The burglary was not discovered until Saturday morning. When Mr. Fleming went into the store he discovered that there were shoes matches &c., all over the floor and lots of other articles. The amount stolen is not known. The thief cut two slats out of the window shutter, broke the plate glass window and crawled in. The robber is not known.

Night hucksters in this vicinity are becoming numerous."

Burglars also struck a prominent mansion in Taneytown while its owner was away in Washington, D.C.:

“ 'Antrim' Judge Harry M. Clabaugh's country residence at Taneytown, was burglarized on Saturday night last and a robbery perpetrated the full extent of which is not accurately known. Judge Clabaugh and his family are and have been in Washington during the winter and the house was closed. Sometime during Saturday night the judge's farmer, Mr. Witherow, noticed a light in the house and at once suspected the cause. Before he could take any steps to capture the burglars they disappeared, but it was found that they had broken open a bureau drawers and a trunk and had taken, among other things, two suits of clothes valued at four dollars and other less valuable articles; but in Judge Clabaugh's absence it could not be ascertained whether anything of greater value had been stolen. On Monday two young white men, Harry Feeser and Walter Angell, of Taneytown or vicinity, were arrested in Hanover, Pa., and brought to this city by Sheriff Motter, where Justice Wm. Moore committed them to jail for a hearing to-day, on the charge of having perpetrated the robbery."

The crime spree continued in April 1900 and next week's column will describe a bold Post Office robbery in Mt. Airy and a highway robbery near Sam's Creek.

Photo caption: "Antrim", the county home of Judge Harry M. Clabaugh in Taneytown, was one of several properties burglarized in April 1900. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.