

"Crime Stories of 1900, Part II"

Carroll County Times article for 23 April 2000

By Jay A. Graybeal

In last week's column, I described several burglaries that took place in April 1900. The "night hucksters" became bolder and committed two more serious crimes that month. The April 23rd issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper reported on a robbery of the Mt. Airy Post Office:

"The postoffice and drug store of Mr. Walter R. Rudy, at Mt. Airy, was raided by burglars about 2 o'clock, Thursday morning, and stamps amounting to \$950 and \$300 in money taken by the robbers. The story of the burglary is substantially as follows, as told by Mr. Charles C. Riddlemoser, assistant night operator at the telegraph office in Mt. Airy. Mr. Riddlemoser went to a pump nearby to get a bucket of water and seeing the door of the drug store, which is also the postoffice, open, and supposing that Postmaster Rudy's clerk, Mr. C. D. Routzahn, was in the store, called to him, but was surprised by a masked man presenting a revolver to him and compelling him to go inside and sit down on the bucket he had with him to get water.

After blindfolding and searching Mr. Riddlemoser the robbers proceeded to blow open the safe with dynamite. The safe was completely demolished by the explosion, blowing the door wide open. A large hole was made in the ceiling and another in the floor. After rifling the safe, taking the stamps and money, two of the robbers left and the third watched Mr. Riddlemoser until the others were at a safe distance, when he was released.

After the explosion Mr. E. L. Shipley, the night telegraph operator, thinking Riddlemoser was overstaying his time, went to look for him and arrived just in time to see the robber leaving.

This is the third time the postoffice at Mount Airy has been robbed, but the loss on previous occasions was comparatively little. The robbery was evidently done this time by professionals. The door of the postoffice was forced with a jimmy, which the burglars left when they retreated.

Before going the burglars searched Riddlemoser, he says, and as only some small change was found on him he was told to keep it and get himself a few 'bracers in the morning, as he would doubtless need them after this experience.' Mr. Riddlemoser says the three men wore masks, that one was very tall and wore a black overcoat. He was unable to describe the third man.

Postmaster Rudy received \$650 from the Citizen's National Bank of Frederick last night for Jones & Co., bankers, but being afraid to have too much money on hand, sent it to Mr. Jones; otherwise it, too, would have been stolen."

A highwayman also accosted a Taylorsville store clerk as he walked to his home near Sam's Creek:

"A highway robbery and apparent attempt to murder young Mr. Adam Lindsay, a clerk in Mr. Frank Zepp's store at Taylorsville, was made near Sams Creek some time before midnight Saturday. Mr. Lindsay lives near Sams Creek, and goes home every Saturday night after the close of the business at the store. He travels in a dogcart, and was driving in such a vehicle when the assault was made upon him. He was on a byroad about a half a mile from his home, and jogging leisurely along, when a shot rang out from the roadside, and a bullet passed through his hat from side to side, and so close to his head that he

was so stunned he lost consciousness, and must have fallen from the cart, as his side was bruised, though there were no other marks of violence on his person.

That Mr. Lindsay was not killed after he fell is probably accounted for by the fact that, finding him unconscious, his assailant found further violence to prevent identification unnecessary. Mr. Lindsay thinks he was chloroformed. When he became conscious he found himself lying in the road with his horse and cart nearby, and he was not long in discovering that robbery was the motive of the assault upon him, as his assailant had gone through his pockets and taken all the money he had on his person, amounting to \$7 or \$8. The affair occurred within a few miles of the place where William Wood, an aged citizen of New Windsor, was assaulted and robbed on the public highway in broad daylight a year or two ago."

Unfortunately, the historical record does not reveal if Mr. Riddlemoser took the post office burglar's advice to have a few "bracers" following his harrowing experience.

Photo caption: A bucolic county road such as this one near Linwood was the scene of an nighttime attempted murder and robbery in April 1900. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Grace Fox, 1979.