

" Low Crimes and Misdemeanors in 1879"
Carroll County Times article for 23 May 1999
By Jay A. Graybeal

When Carroll County was founded in 1837, one of the first responsibilities of county government was the erection of a court house and a jail, evidence that crime and punishment was a concern. The historical record is filled with a variety of crimes that ranged from petty offenses to murder. An unusual number of lesser offenses were reported in the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper in the early spring of 1879:

"Pocket Picking—Flight Of The Accused—Chase By Officers

Louis W. Holmes, residing near Warfieldsburg, in this county, came to this city on Monday last with fifteen dollars in his possession. He paid several small bills, and then indulged in the "O! be joyful." On Tuesday he discovered that he had lost his pocket-book, containing six or seven dollars, and made oath before Justice Crapster, charging Columbus McElroy with stealing it. The necessary warrant and summonses were issued, and the accused had a hearing on Thursday morning. Mr. Theodore L. Fritchey appeared for the accused and D. N. Henning, Esq., for the State.

An number of witnesses were examined, and the testimony showed that Louis W. Holmes, Columbus McElroy and George Hooker were drinking and eating together on Monday night, at various places, up to about 10 o'clock that at that time they were in the saloon of John Myers, near the depot; that they got oysters there, and that Holmes paid for them, exhibiting at the same time money aggregating over five dollars; that Holmes took his change, put it in his pocket-book, put a gum band around that pocket-book and put it into his pocket; that Holmes and George Hooker left Myers' restaurant together, and that McElroy, who boarded with Myers, went to bed and remained there until the next morning; that Holmes and Hooker where seen on the street by several of the witnesses between 10 and 11 1/2 o'clock the same night; that near the Montour House Hooker had his hand in Holmes' pocket.

Upon this testimony McElroy was dismissed, and as the evidence pointed to George Hooker as the guilty party, it was determined to give him a hearing at another time. The witnesses and spectators went out, and with them George Hooker. Deputy Sheriff Macintosh was instructed to take charge of Hooker. He went up the street, and in a few minutes returned for a warrant for Hooker's arrest. The Justice told him that he did not need any, further than this order, and the Deputy, together with Bailiff Zeiber, started after Hooker. Hooker in the meantime gave leg bail. The officers started in pursuit and after a race of a mile and half or more Hooker was run into his mother's house. Bailiff Zeiber was beyond his jurisdiction, and the Deputy Sheriff not being armed with a written warrant for Hooker's arrest did not proceed to search for him. (March 29, 1879)

Five Dollars Fine

On Saturday night last William Taylor and Sebastian Sherman stopped Mrs. Catharine A. Sprinkle on the road, unhitched the horse from her wagon, took the gears off the horse and took them off with them, leaving Mrs. Sprinkle and her children in the road with a horse and wagon, minus harness. Mrs. Sprinkle made complaint before Justice Mikesel, who issued warrants for the arrest of Taylor and Sherman. They were before the Justice on Wednesday, admitted the act and were fined \$5 and costs. The harness or

part of it, belonged to one of them, but having proceeded unlawfully to obtain it had to pay the penalty. (March 23, 1879)

False Pretenses

Samuel J. Lidy, known as Jack Lidy, was before Justice Crapster on Wednesday of last week, on some trivial charge, and the Justice gave him until 4 o'clock the same afternoon to leave the city. Lidy had a coat and vest at the tailoring establishment of John Augustus Kretzer, which had been there for some time because he could not pay charges on them. On the day he was ordered to leave town, under penalty of being sent to the House of Correction, he forged Sheriff Wood's name to an order for the clothes and obtained them. Just before he left the city, which he had prepared to do, Kretzer learned that the order was a forgery, and had him arrested on the charge of obtaining goods under false pretenses, and Justice Crapster sent him to jail, in default of \$200 bail, to await the notion of the grand jury. (March 22, 1879)

Fight at Stonersville

A correspondent at Stonersville says there was quite an excitement in that little village on Wednesday morning, which grew out of a fight between Isaac Mehring and Lewis Haifley, two men employed by B. F. Shriver & co. The men had not been on good terms for some time, and have had several little squabbles. On Wednesday, after some quarreling, during which Haifley thrust his fist under the nose of Mehring. Mehring seized a hatchet, cut at Haifley and made a small gash in the head behind the ear, the force of the blow being lessened by Haifley catching Mehring's arm. But for the warding off of the blow, a serious, if not dangerous, wound must have been inflicted. Haifley then ran, pursued by Mehring with a club. (February 22, 1879)

Assault and Battery

Tuesday night somewhere among the wee sma hours, Constable Gist heard the cry of murder! in the neighborhood of his residence. Going out he found Wm. Green, proprietor of Green's Hotel, and Michael Hines engaged in a fisticuffs. Hines evidently coming out second. Hines though second in the fight, was first from the ground, as Green had him down. Constable Gist declared peace, and marched Hines around to the county institution presided over by Peter Woods, Esq. On Wednesday Hines made oath before Justice Crapster charging Green with "assaulting, beating, wounding and kicking" him and a head and face bruised and scarred bare evidence of his charge. The testimony was that Hines had paid for a night's lodging at Green's Hotel. Green says he told him to go to bed, and Hines said that he didn't. Hines wanted to sleep on a bench in the office, and Green objected. Green blew out the light and Hines lit it again, whereupon Green assaulted him and put him out. Hines during the fisticuffs said he would burn Green's house, &c. Justice Crapster fined Green \$2 and \$8 costs, and the State's attorney gave Hines fifteen minutes to leave the city. (February 22, 1879)

As the above crime stories indicate, Carroll County had its share of interesting cases. The stories also show that justice was usually swift and, in the cases of Jack Lidy and Michael Hines, resulted in the guilty party being run out of town.

Photo caption: An overindulgence in the "O! be joyful" in several local establishments led one man to become the victim of a pick pocket in 1879. This turn-of-the-century image shows Weikert's Saloon

decorated with flowers. The floor around spittoons shows the effects of poor marksmanship by some patrons. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Virginia Williams.