

IOWA HISTORY



(Courtesy Library of Congress)

The interior of a typical general store in the early 20th century

New Market Businessman Missing in 1913

In 1910 New Market, Iowa, was a bustling community of 673 residents. There were three restaurants, two millineries, two hardware stores, two harness shops, and two doctors in town. FM Wiley ran a furniture store and undertaking business. There was one lumber yard (Rose & Moore) and two blacksmith shops (Heaten & Young and Arthur Littlewood.) In the entire county only nearby Bedford could boast more lawyers than New Market. And Winton R. Markley put out a “bright, newsy paper”—the *New Market Herald*. There were four general stores in town. There was plenty of competition among all the business owners; but when one went missing in the middle of the night in October 1913, everyone came out to search for him.

George Ambrose (also known as GA) Hanshaw owned one of the general stores. Late one night he got a phone call from his brother, James, in Bedford. Their mother, Elizabeth, was gravely ill in Missouri where she lived with other family members. The brothers needed to be at her side.

They made plans to travel together. James would come to New Market and from there the brothers would leave by train for Missouri. James estimated he’d be in New Market by about 3 a.m. They planned to meet at the home of their sister, Dora, who also lived in New Market.

When James arrived in town he learned that his brother had left his own house but had never arrived at Dora's. It was only a short distance, and the family was perplexed. GA seemed to have dropped out of sight. Neighbors were roused, and practically the entire town became involved in the search for the missing businessman.

It took a good deal of the rest of the night, but the whereabouts of GA was finally uncovered. Someone in the search party had heard a faint cry as he passed the train. He followed the sound to one of the box cars where GA was discovered and told his story.

When GA got James' phone call he immediately got dressed and started for his sister's house. As he passed the New Market bank something caught his attention. He looked in a window and saw a man crouched inside in front of the safe. He was drilling a hole into the door! Just as he was taking it all in, two masked men "loomed up" before GA. "Put your hands up!" they ordered. The men marched him to the railroad yards and locked him up in the box car.

The ruckus caused by the search parties looking for GA caused the would-be bank robbers to reconsider their illegal activities. They realized they weren't likely to remain undetected, so they fled as fast as they could—out of New Market.

The townspeople were happy because although the robbers had broken the combination on the safe, they fled before they could get their hands on the cash. Every cent was still in the safe!

Unfortunately, the Hanshaw family did not share in the joy. While they were thrilled to have found GA in good health and unharmed, their beloved mother did not recover from her illness.

Sources

History of Taylor County, Iowa: From the Earliest Times to 1910. By Frank E. Crosson, SJ Clarke, Publishing Company, 1910.

"Iowa Bandits Lock Citizen in Box Car," *Evening Times-Republican*, Oct 28, 1913.

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