

FRONTIER DIARY

Glenwood suffered robberies in early 1900s, too

BY WILLA SONCARTY

Registrar, Frontier Historical Society
and Museum

"Thieves respect property. They merely wish the property to become their property that they may more perfectly respect it."

— G. K. Chesterton

Doug Armstrong hurried his way to Glenwood Springs on the cold Friday night of Feb. 21, 1902. As he approached the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad bridge near the confluence of the Roaring Fork and Colorado Rivers, two men approached him. "Would you like to buy a pair of trousers?" the men inquired.

Armstrong sized up the situation. Both men appeared to be of unseemly character. It was dark. And this was not a clothing store. He declined their offer and promptly reported the incident to night policeman Perry Malaby.

Malaby agreed with Armstrong's assessment of the situation and contacted Sheriff Frank Adams and Undersheriff Mohr. The three officers found two men as described by Armstrong crossing the railroad bridge. With some resistance,

the two men were apprehended and their transport to jail began.

However, one prisoner grew nervous. He tossed something away just as he crossed the bridge's end. As the party neared the Denver and Rio Grande Depot on Seventh Street and Pitkin Avenue, he again thrust his hands in his pockets and hurled something into the street. With the coming of the morning, Sheriff Adams went to the two sites. After considerable searching, Adams recovered a large collection of skeleton keys, burglar's files, a Colt revolver and 29 silk handkerchiefs.

The following Saturday night Marshall Weidenhammer observed three suspicious men entering a Glenwood Springs rooming house. One he recognized as a street beggar. Feeling something was amiss, law enforcement officers raided their rooms. A search recovered several pairs of pants, suits, and overshoes. The clothing bore the tags of B.T. Napier and Co., a Glenwood Springs dry goods store. These three men were also arrested.

In addition to the burglary of Napier's store, break-ins and large thefts of merchandise were also reported at the stores

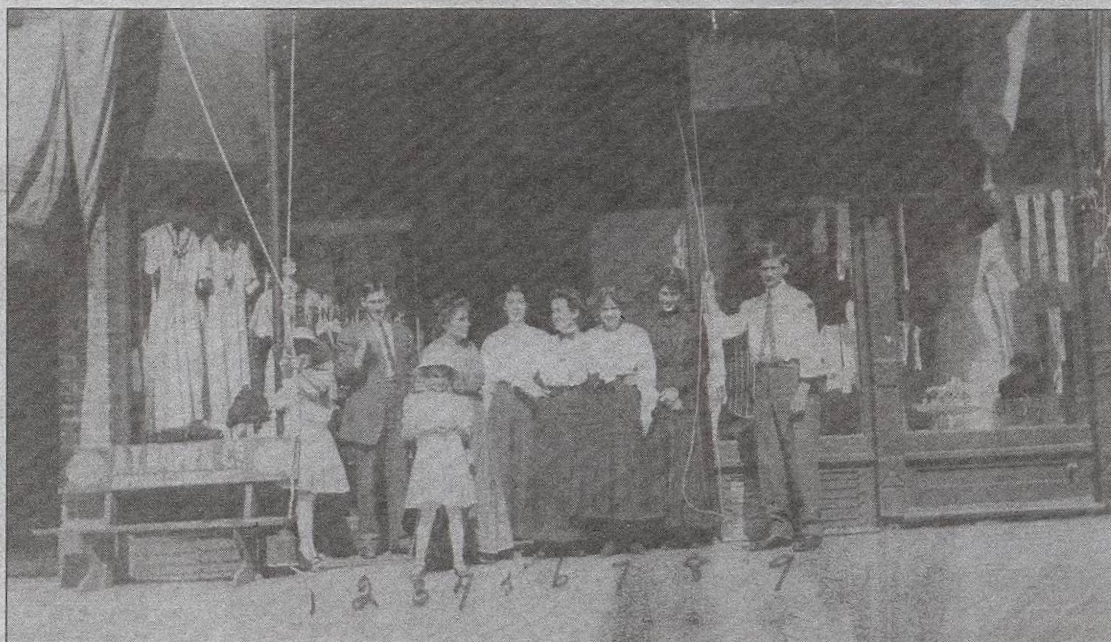


Photo Courtesy Frontier Historical Society

The staff of B.T. Napier and Co. pose for a photograph at their 808 Grand Ave. store, ca. 1910. In 1902, the store was robbed of merchandise; however, the robbers gained attention when they tried to resell the items on the street. Both burglars were caught and ultimately sentenced to five to 10 years at the Colorado State Penitentiary.

of Ritter and McRae in New Castle and of H.R. Kamm and Co. in Glenwood Springs. However, none of the merchandise found in the rooms could be linked to those two robberies.

Judge John Shumate heard the cases in District Court in mid-March 1902. The three men arrested as accomplices,

now identified as Frank Edwards, Frank Ryan and Edward Kelly, were found not guilty by a jury. However, the original two robbers, James Levere and William Mitchell, pled guilty to the Napier store burglary. Judge Shumate sentenced both to the Colorado State Penitentiary. They would

serve five to 10 years at hard labor.

"Frontier Diary" is provided to the Post Independent by the Frontier Historical Society and Museum, 1001 Colorado Ave., Glenwood Springs. Winter hours are 1-4 p.m. Monday and Thursday through Saturday. For more information, call 945-1448.