

Whitehall Sneak Thief

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The thief made his appearance again after suspending operations in his line for a few weeks. This time he made his appearance at the home of Mr. and Mrs. F. D. Glazier, which he entered last Saturday evening, 9 December 1903, while the occupants were at the Glazier store.

The thief boldly unlocked the front door of the residence, walked through the lighted sitting room into the bedroom where he turned on an electric light and proceeded to rifle bureau drawers at his pleasure. This time he was not looking for jewelry as Mrs. Glazier's gold watch laid on the bureau in a plush case and it was not taken. For his trouble the thief secured a few old coins which it will be hard work for him to dispose of.

When the first snow arrived this winter, the Glaziers noticed several footprints leading across their yard and when they arrived at the front door, they found that someone had been there and then walked around to the back door, but the person did not secure entrance to the house that evening.

The tracks gave indication that the person making them wore about a No. 8 shoe of the Douglas make and style. The footprints left by the Saturday night visitor appeared to be of the same size and shape.

There are several strange features in the thievery that has taken place in this village recently. Every home entered has been well lit by electric lights. On every occasion the thief made sure that no one was at home before he made his visit. This proves that he is not fond of unexpected company while at work and that he is lacking in nerve. It also appears that all the thefts have been committed in the early evening, that is, about train time. This proves that the thief is someone who has the whole evening to himself but must be home early.

His mania is for ready cash and on only one occasion has he taken jewelry although at nearly every home visited, he could have taken a quantity of silverware and jewelry. The thief's career will probably be ended by a load of buckshot.

On 22 March 1906 the local paper reported that at last Whitehall's sneak thief, who had been plying his nefarious trade so successfully for the past several months, had been captured, but not until after becoming so bold that he fearlessly climbed onto the roof of A. T. Linderman's residence at eleven o'clock on Wednesday morning, 21 March. After walking

over thirty feet on the peak of the roof he entered an upstairs window. This window faced the alley and during the thief's trip across the roof he could have been seen from many points, but by mere chance he entered unseen and later told the officers he had become so accustomed to the work that he didn't even feel afraid of being discovered.

As soon as he entered the house, he began looking for souvenirs of the occasion, at least it looks that way as he took nothing of any particular value. He secured a small bag from an upstairs room for the convenience of carrying away his plunder. He then went downstairs and raised the curtains on the north side of the house and this very act gave him away. If he had been a trifle bolder, he probably would have started a fire and assumed complete proprietorship. In his search he found an album containing European souvenir postal cards and from these he selected a half dozen that struck his fancy and deposited them in the bag, along with two old pipes, a gold thimble and some other articles hardly worth stealing.

After dinner when Miss Nina Nelson was returning to the Nelson store, she noticed that the curtains in the Linderman house had been raised since morning and went at once to pass this information to Miss Winnifred Linderman who happened to be in town for the day. Miss Linderman at once decided that someone must have entered the house, but thinking the thief had left, the two young ladies started out on their detective work. Before reaching the house, their nerves vanished and Mr. Nelson's clerk, John Keller, consented to accompany them. John took the key and opened the door and at first glance saw the thief sitting on the floor in the billiard room. He started in a confused and hurried manner to make his exit but by the time he had unlocked the back door and rushed out the young ladies were on the spot and could have caught him as he ran past them. It was found that he was taking things out of a darned bag. Marshall Hinman was at once notified and the chase began.

The thief headed up the marsh and when Marshall Himan and others were following on his trail, he passed them in the bushes and returned home about four o'clock. A strange feature is the fact that he was not seen returning home.

After due deliberation and an interview with the boy's mother and after it was proved that the boy was lazy, had a poor reputation and kept the poorest of company, Miss Linderman swore out a warrant for his arrest and Deputy Sheriff Haseltine and Marshall Hinman made plans which caused the boy's capture.

At about nine o'clock, Hazeltine surmised that no one would remain out on so wild a night so he visited the boy's home and found the thief in bed. He was taken to the city jail where he confessed to having robbed W. E. Pierce's last fall, to entering J. J. Gee's residence and stealing watches, and also to entering the Linderman residence several times, but he denied the other thefts that had been committed in this village in the past several months

and he also denied having an accomplice. He said he could not refrain from entering the houses although he stole little and that it is probably a good thing that he was caught. He was taken to the Muskegon jail where the sweat box will probably bring out more confessions.

The lad who was about 18 years old had been living in the saloons and in the pool and gambling rooms in Montague all winter. People here have been afraid to leave their houses in the evening as they thought the burglar might appear in their absence, and now all feel relieved.

Gabriel Gabrielson, the Whitehall housebreaker, was brought before the court and pleaded guilty to the charge of entering A. T. Linderman's house in this village on March 21, with the intent to steal. He will be sentenced before the end of the term. He made a full confession to Sheriff Clinger on Tuesday and admitted breaking into the Pierce, Linderman, Gee and George Covell residences and the question is now raised, who visited F. D. Glazier's residence. The job has the same ear marks as the others. Before Tuesday Gabriel denied that he had entered the Covell residence but now he admits that he entered the house through the basement by removing one of the furnace air pipes and crawling through a register. He thoroughly ransacked the house and took clothing, pictures, coins, a watch and a pair of suspenders, but all that he confessed taking was the old coins, which he threw in the lake thinking they were of no value, the suspenders, which he threw away on Covell's dock and the watch which he told the officers they could find at his home in his overcoat. He seemed to be cheerful and will probably own up to all the jobs the next time he is approached.

Whitehall seems to be free from thieves now as the housebreaker is away on an extended vacation.

On Friday, 4 May 1906, Gabriel Gabrielson, the young man who was caught stealing from the Linderman house was sentenced by Judge Sessions to Ionia for not more than five or less than two years, with recommendation of three years maximum.

On Thursday night, 3 September 1908, a traveling man at the Franklin House noticed a suspicious light in Ferrenbach's jewelry store in Montague and the officers were notified. Upon their arrival they found that the store had been entered by burglars and about \$60 worth of silverware and jewelry was taken. The burglars had broken into Jensen's blacksmith shop and stole some tools and had bored holes around the lock on the front door of the store. Failing in this effort they went to a rear window and gained entrance. One of the culprits was traced by the track of a wheel which he had stolen until it was certain he had headed for Muskegon and Sheriff Clinger was notified by phone. When Mr. Thief was

crossing the bridge into Muskegon he was met by Deputy James and another officer who commanded him to halt. He made a leap from his machine into the river and attempted to swim to the marshy banks of the stream hoping to escape into the marsh. A few shots into the air had no effect on bringing him back so Deputy James took careful aim and succeeded in wounding him in the leg. The shot dampened his courage, and he turned about, came to shore and surrendered himself.

It was then learned that he was a young man from Whitehall named Gabriel Gabrielson, who was only recently released on parole from the State Reformatory in Ionia where he was serving an indeterminate sentence for burglary, having two years ago broken into the home of A. T. Linderman of this village and lodged in the county jail.

It later developed that Gabrielson had been guilty of several other burglaries in Whitehall, chief among which was on 26 August when he entered F. D. Glazier's house and after appropriating several articles of value set fire to the house. The watch and other jewelry which he stole from Mr. Glazier's house he gave to a woman in Muskegon of the demi-monde type who on hearing of his arrest decamped to parts unknown. Most of the stolen property was recovered and returned after the arrest.

It seems that Gabrielson is a degenerate and Whitehall people against whom his depredations were chiefly aimed breathe a sign of relief under the realization that he is safely behind bars and likely to remain there for some time.

He had been employed in A. T. Linderman's factory in Muskegon and had evidently reformed but his craze for crime proved too strong for him.

The other party to the burglary had not as yet been apprehended but his capture is only a matter of time.

On Thursday, 8 October 1908, it was reported that Gabe Gabrielson, who was convicted of burglary the previous week and who had been confined in the county jail awaiting sentencing, made a sensational get-away Tuesday afternoon about four o'clock. Attorney F. W. Cook had been to the jail to consult his client, Charles Rutledge, and on his concluding his visit Deputy Dodge, who was acting as turnkey, unlocked the door to let him out. No sooner was the door opened than Gabe, who was standing near the door made a leap through. Deputy Dodge was taken by surprise but briefly grappled with the fleeing man. Breaking free, he slammed the door shut and started in pursuit. Gabrielson rushed through the corridors into the sheriff's office and into the alley with Dodge close at his heels. The desire for liberty and the knowledge that a long prison sentence awaited him lent wings to the feet of the escaping burglar and after a chase of four or five blocks through the alleys he managed to evade his pursuer and was lost from sight.

Gabrielson kept his liberty until Wednesday evening around 7:45 when he boarded an interurban car at Spring Lake bound for Grand Haven where he expected to take a boat to Milwaukee. The conductor of the car happened also to be a deputy sheriff of Ottawa county and recognizing Gabrielson from his description, took him in charge. He offered little or no resistance and Deputy James, upon being notified, came on the next car and escorted the prisoner back to the county jail. Gabrielson will now be watched closely and there is no chance that he will escape the punishment he so richly deserves for the crimes he has committed.

The 1910 and 1920 Census both showed Gabe as an inmate of the Michigan Reformatory in Ionia. No other information about him seems to be available after that time.

Gabriel Severin Gabrielson was born in Whitehall on 2 June 1888 to Gabriel and Matilda (ne Halgren) Gabrielson and was baptized in the Lebanon Lutheran Church on 1 July 1888.

Gabriel's father was a sailor on the Schooner Ida belonging to Captain Jacobson of this place. He had been sailing with Jacobson for a number of years and was a trusty man. The big three-mast schooner had left Chicago with freight for A. Mears and other merchants in town but encountered a terrible gale in mid-lake. She held her course, and when this shore was reached, she sailed up and down before the harbor vainly attempting an entrance. Finally, the captain headed back to Chicago and after weathering a fearful sea, Gabrielson was swept overboard and drowned on Saturday, 19 November 1887. He left a pregnant wife and year-old daughter, Gertrude (1886-1958), who were residing in Swedentown.

The 1900 Census indicated that Gabe's widowed mother Matilda was working as a laundress.

On 5 June 1906, Matilda married Carl August Johnson in the Lebanon Lutheran Church, and they had two children: Irene Eveline (1909-1964) and Carl Aleck (1912-2000). Carl August died on 10 September 1930 and Matilda died on 20 November 1934. They are both buried in Oakhurst Cemetery.