

YEGGMEN, SOLONS, TOGAS, SAMMIES, VAMPS AND ALIENISTS

Do you know the meaning of these words? Most people probably do not. They are from a by-gone era, used in Mt. Vernon newspapers mainly in the early Twentieth Century.

YEGGMEN

Many newspaper headlines of this period were about like this: "Yeggmen Steal \$1,000," "Yeggmen Hit Local Bank," or "Police Arrest Yeggmen in Jefferson County." The term "Yeggmen" originated with the gypsies and meant a particularly clever thief. But it was popularized in the late Nineteenth Century by Allan Pinkerton of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. The press adopted the term and for a time it was used throughout the United States.

**Yeggmen Blow Safe
Divide State Bank;
Escape With \$600**

**Work Is Thoroughly Done and Safe Is Badly
Wrecked; Robbers Work Deliberately
and Take Everything in Sight Except a
Few Pennies, Which Evidently Were Not
Noticed; No Clue to Identity.**

Three explosions at intervals of wires leading in or out of Divide, about fifteen minutes each, and then took their time for the startled the people of Divide and work of blowing open and looting vicinity between 1 and 2 o'clock the safe. After the yeggmen left this morning, and resulted in their a walk of about two miles was necessary before it was possible to roughly wrecking the safe of the Divide State bank, and damaging give the alarm and notify the outside world of the robbery. the building to a considerable extent. The work of the yeggmen was complete and they escaped with about \$600. So far there is no clue.

Sheriff Is Notified
Sheriff Grant Holcomb was notified at an early hour and immediately visited the scene, but was unable to obtain any clue that was

Worked Very Leisurely

SOLONS

In the same time period local newspapers reported that "Solons Pass Tariff Bill" or "Solons Consider Treaty With Spain." The "solons" were legislators. Where did they get that term? Most educated people of the time were taught Greek and Roman history. Solon was a leader of ancient Athens in Greece and was known for his legislative reforms.

TOGAS

Most people know that a toga was a garment worn by the leaders of ancient Rome. In

the early 1900s local Jefferson County newspapers often had headlines like this: "Smith Enters Race for the Toga." They meant that Mr. Smith was running for a seat in the Senate, the upper house of our national legislature. The U. S. of course adopted this name from the Roman Senate where they all wore togas.

SAMMIES

"Sammies" was used in Jefferson County newspapers in the 1917 - 1918 period. That should give you a hint. The headlines were: "Sammies Triumph on Western Front," or "Sammies Defeat Huns." Most of us remember the American soldiers of World War I being called "doughboys" not "sammies." But the patriotic symbol Uncle Sam first appeared on a recruitment poster by James M. Flagg in 1916 and led to the nickname "sammies" for American soldiers.

VAMPS

"Vamps" first appeared in our newspapers about 1920. "Vamping" was often used in stories about young women called "flappers" and meant gaining favor by flaunting personal attractiveness. One newspaper story told of "flappers" in Chicago hitching rides with businessmen by using the "vamping" technique. Another local newspaper had a story about an "anti-vamping" law proposed in the legislature in Springfield.

Alienists

This term was also used in the old Jefferson County newspapers and certainly would confuse people today. They were not talking about creatures from Mars or illegal immigrants. They were referring to psychiatrists. The newspaper stories about a crime would say: "The court called for an alienist to examine the accused." Psychiatry was a new science in the late 1800s and the word, alienist, was used for about fifty years.

No doubt there will be many words from our time that will seem strange to people one hundred years from today.