

Case of the THIEF IN A RUT

IT WAS on a Saturday in April, 1934, that the first call came to the Auto Recovery Bureau at Detroit police headquarters. After identifying herself and giving an address on Maplewood Avenue, the woman said:

"There's a black car parked in front of my house, and I think it's a stolen one."

A squad was dispatched to Maplewood Avenue, where detectives found a 1933 black Buick sedan that had been reported stolen on Wednesday evening. The woman told police she had first noticed the car there on Thursday.

It was returned to its owner, who said it was undamaged and that nothing was missing. The police decided it had been stolen by a teen-

ager who had gone for a ride, then abandoned it, the most common form of auto theft.

Exactly a week later, the same woman phoned the police. "That black car is in front of my house again," she reported.

Skeptical, police called the owner of the Buick. No, he said, his car had not been stolen again.

But when detectives arrived on Maplewood Avenue, they found another 1933 black Buick sedan. It was the same model as the first and looked very much like it. It had been in front of the woman's home since Thursday, and it, too, had been reported stolen on Wednesday evening.

Was this the work of a teen-ager, possibly the same one? Police found

no immediate answer. Nor were they prepared for what happened next.

For three consecutive weeks, a stolen 1933 black Buick sedan appeared on Thursday morning in approximately the same location, and a report was made to them by the same woman.

Technicians found fingerprints on the cars, but they matched none on file at headquarters. Detectives questioned other residents of the block in an effort to determine what time the car had been abandoned. Many had noticed the Buick, but nobody had seen it being driven or parked.

From the testimony of a dozen people who remembered it, detectives learned it hadn't been there before midnight Wednesday, but

must have been abandoned during the early hours of Thursday.

On the sixth Wednesday night, detectives waited impatiently in the shadows. It was well after midnight when a 1933 black Buick sedan drew up to the curb and stopped. A young man slid from behind the wheel and walked directly into the arms of the waiting officers.

At headquarters, he confessed stealing six different 1933 black Buick sedans, and gave this explanation to the officers:

He had met a beautiful girl who consented to a date after he had described his 1933 black Buick sedan. Actually, the car belonged to his uncle, who usually let him use it. But on the Wednesday he had his first



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