

# The fight to keep Indiana University in town

While a few of the Indiana state legislators were agitating for merger of Indiana University and Purdue University at Lafayette, the editor of the *Bloomington Weekly Courier* was doing some research. The results were triumphantly reported in the Feb. 5, 1915, issue of the newspaper.

Apparently the backers of the Van Auken bill (advocating the merger) had not done their homework. The *Courier* editor was able to cite a very compelling legal reason why the university had to stay in Bloomington.

Explained the newspaper, "In 1854 the main building of Indiana University burned. At that time the State did not see its way clear to furnish the money to erect a new building. A large number of the citizens of Monroe County raised a sum of money for a building and presented this money to the (IU) Board of Trustees on the condition that 'the University shall forever remain in Bloomington.'

Continued the article in the *Courier*, "The Board of Trustees accepted the money on this condition (the record is shown in Mortgage Record B, pages 226-227 in the Recorder's Office of Monroe County, and at the first meeting of the Legislature after this transaction an act was passed (Acts



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

1855, page 203) providing that 'all contracts heretofore entered into by the Trustees of Indiana University for rebuilding the main University edifice be and the same are hereby legalized.' "

The editor also pointed out that the legality of the transaction between Monroe County and the Trustees and between the Trustees and the State of Indiana had been researched by such fine legal minds as Byron K. Elliott, one-time Indiana Supreme Court judge.

On Feb. 12, the *Courier* reported another Indiana city was doing some wishful thinking about IU. Dated Indianapolis, the front-page story began, "And now another city is after Indiana University. It became known here today that Representative Myers will either this afternoon or tomorrow introduce a resolution in the House for the

appointment of a committee to investigate a proposition of the city of Anderson for the removal of Indiana University to that city."

It seems that the mayor of Anderson, president of the Chamber of Commerce and other influential businessmen journeyed to Indianapolis to make an offer they thought the Legislature might not be able to refuse. As the *Courier* article put it, "They propose to duplicate without expense to the state all the Indiana University buildings if the state will vote to locate the university at Anderson."

Nor did the leaders of that city go to Indianapolis empty-handed. "They claim they have options on a fine tract of land at the edge of Anderson upon which is a well which has never failed in 18 years." Other inducements were electricity and heat at a reduced rate."

The *Courier* of Feb. 12 also reported that six of the seven men on the Senate Finance Committee had gone on record in opposition to Van Auken's IU/PU merger bill. The committee members may or may not have been aware that the contract between the IU Trustees and Monroe County stipulated that should IU cease to exist in Bloomington, the county was to be repaid the money advanced to the Trustees.

A delegation of Bloomington citizens made a trip to Indianapolis and returned with the assurances that the issue of removal had been "a tempest in a teapot." On Feb. 19 the *Courier* reported that the Van Auken bill would not even make it out of committee, even if the senator was chairman. Likewise, the proposal of the Andersonites was not seriously considered by legislators.

Finally, on March 12, the *Courier* celebrated the resolution of the issue with a tongue-in-cheek article under the headline, "MOVE PURDUE TO BLOOMINGTON." It suggests that the IU superintendent of buildings, Eugene Kerr, had seriously studied the possibility constructing mammoth barges to float the Purdue buildings down the Tippecanoe River and the Wabash to a place near Vincennes, thence along White River to Gosport and up Bean Blossom Creek to Griffey Creek.

Continued the article, "This would bring the buildings within two miles of the present University campus. By a simple and inexpensive device, Mr. Kerr can arrange the barges so that they will have low wheels with tires about four feet wide."

There is much more to the article. It is very amusing.

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