

News of Lincoln's death recalled by professor's writings

Although April brings the promise of warmer weather and things blooming, there is a darker side to the month. School children may be able to recall that Paul Revere made his famous ride on the 18th, but less well known is the anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

It is one of the puzzling accidents of Monroe County history that the local newspapers of the Civil War era did not survive. Fortunately, Bloomington's reaction to the killing of the president of the United States is not entirely lost to us.

Indiana University Professors Theophilus Wylie and Amzi Atwater left us some detail of that time. Wylie was a prolific note taker about his life and that of his neighbors and friends. Atwater also wrote down his recollections of Bloomington history, which were



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

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According to Wylie, the word of the Lincoln assassination arrived on the telegraph on April 15. Wrote the professor, "He was shot by some miscreant in the back of the head and remained insensible till death." He contrasted the shock and sadness created by the news with the joy that Bloomingtonians had been expressing about the fall of Richmond, Va., and the retreat of Lee's army.

Continued Wylie, "Such a gloom as there was on every face and such a general feeling of sadness, never, I think, existed. All feelings of Joy for victories seemed at an end. Rejoicing turned to mourning."

According to Wylie, there was some confusion about which day and which event should be marked by citizens of Indiana. "About a week ago Gov. Morton issued a proclamation calling for the celebration of the fall of Richmond on next Thursday. The Governor then changed the day to that of mourning, humiliation and prayer. Next, hearing that the funeral would take place Wednesday, the authorities at Washington recommended all to observe that day. Governor Morton then ordered to change from Thursday to Wednesday."

In spite of the short notice,

Bloomingtonians observed the day in appropriate fashion. Wylie noted that, "All stores closed, crepe on almost every door. Flags draped in mourning, churches were filled."

Atwater recalled that in addition to the services in various churches, there was another held in the College Chapel. Wrote the professor, "The universal outpouring of grief and horror over his assassination was so great as to demand the tolling of bells and assembling of the people in churches and public halls in all the cities of the northern states."

Continued Atwater, "The feeling was so intense and the throng was so great as to fill not only every seat but every foot of standing room in the big chapel and crowd the doorways and all space back to the stairs."

IU President Cyrus Nutt had put the service together. Both Wylie and Atwater described it. Their approaches to the subject are from different perspectives.

Wylie: "Odd Fellows and Freemasons in their regalia and Dr. Gillett presiding. Mr. G. read passages of SS, appropriate to the occasion, then a hymn. Mr. Hopkins led in prayer. A Hymn. Then I lead in prayer. Dr. G. called for addresses." There followed some remarks by various persons.

Atwater: "It was doubtless some advantage to myself that as the youngest person on the program, I came near the end of the list and had been wrought up by the indignation of a dozen speakers and by the intense feeling that prevailed in that assembly. Thus Bloomington and the State University deeply mourned our martyred president."