

Nose bite led to months in Monroe Circuit Court

In June of 1903, it was the Monroe County Circuit Court's responsibility to act as a kind of referee in the case of James Brummett, who lost the end of his nose in an argument. Not that his opponents came off all that well — one of them received a severe cut on the head.

The argument took place on the Jacob Richardson farm in Benton Township, and the cause was who owned a particular dog. Brummett claimed it and after a confrontation with three Richardsons, came away without the end of his nose. He told the sheriff it was bitten off by Jacob Richardson's son, John.

Two sets of cases promptly appeared on the court docket. Three of them were (filed individually) James Brummett vs. Jacob George and John Richardson. Another set (also filed individually) was the State of Indiana vs. James Brummett, Jacob, George and John Richardson.

Brummett's attorneys were Rufus and John R. East, who had a partnership aptly known as East & East. In fact, it was John East who posted the \$500 bond to assure Brummett's appearance in court.

The records of the Circuit Court do not list the names of the other attorneys involved, but the Richardsons had plenty to choose from — Buskirk & Buskirk, Robert Miller and Arthur Hadley, Robert Miers and Edwin Corr and Eli K. Millen, to name a few. There is some evidence to indicate that the group were a truly a formidable "old boys network."

The problem in placing the blame in the fight was the lack of witnesses, other than those involved. Legally, that boils down to Brummett's word against that of the three Richardsons. Trying to retrospect a melee, usually brings out a jumble of fact from wishful thinking.

It may be remembered that Brummett's suit against the Richardsons could (collectively) cost that family \$15,000. It should also be noted that the price of a nose was considerably less in 1903.



Looking back

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16-14-1989

In the cases of Brummett vs. the Richardsons, on June 27 the defendants were "ruled to answer" the plaintiff's suit, and the cases were continued until Oct. 13, when the record indicates another continuance. The Oct. 15 action, the defendants filed demurrers to the complaint and were overruled.

On Oct. 16, the defendants filed an answer, and the plaintiff was told to reply, cases again continued. By that time the term of court had run out.

After New Years, on Jan. 30, 1904, the court ruled that the plaintiff (Brummett) should recover from the defendants (Richardsons) the costs of the continuances. The court record of April 28, 1904, reveals that the cause was dismissed with costs paid.

Then there were the cases of the State of Indiana vs. all of the men involved in the fight. They ran through a long series of continuances from June 23, 1903, through Feb. 13, 1904. Somewhere in the proceedings, the case of the State vs. George Richardson got lost from the records.

On April 23, 1904, the cases against the three men were dismissed on the motion of the prosecutor. It is possible that some or all of the participants were either getting tired of having to reappear in court or they simply didn't want to pay any more legal fees.

Possibly the only "winners" in the whole affair were the local attorneys. Perhaps Brummett felt that in recovering all of the costs of his suits, he was vindicated.

And what of the dog, the question of whose ownership caused the fight in the first place? Neither the court nor the newspapers took any further notice of it at all.