

No riff-raff would be allowed at this holiday ball

"The holidays are to be further enlivened by a charity ball. The enterprise was set on foot by Mose Kahn and is meeting with the heartiest co-operation from all generous and public-spirited people." Bloomington Evening World, Dec. 12, 1894.

The whole idea behind the staging of the holiday ball in 1894 was to get all of the arrangements for it donated so that the proceeds could be given to the "Worthy Poor." The editor of the Bloomington *Evening World* entered into the publicity for the affair with good humor, noting, "The 'talking' of the newspapers will be donated. Talk is commonly supposed to be cheap, so the poor editor will not only get off easy, but



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By Rose McIlveen

may be so lucky as to be counted among that much talked-of class known as the "Worthy Poor."

As the arrangements were progressing, community leaders began to volunteer goods and services. The newspaper reported that Reed's five-piece orchestra would play, the Buskirk heirs would loan the use of the nearing-completion Knights of

Pythias Building on the south side of the square, and "chairs, drayage, heating, etc., will all be donated by the liberal-hearted business men of the city. Not a cent is to be paid out, and a goodly number of dollars are expected as proceeds which will be turned over to a competent committee for judicious expenditures in relieving the poor."

The projected ball was no ordinary dance. As the newspaper's editor explained, it was to be a "Domino Masquerade," one in which the patrons wore long gowns with hoods and collars or paper masks over their faces. Continued the editor, "This style of costume was selected on account of its simplicity

and cheapness."

He hastened to add, "A committee will be appointed to attend to the doors, to guard against the admission of any questionable characters, and if any such present themselves, they will be refused admission."

Though as of Dec. 6 the date for the ball had not been set, the *World* editor urged his readers to give serious consideration to attending and at the same time to pass the word along to other potential patrons. Some of those potential patrons may have felt that the planning had gotten under way rather late.

Kahn and his committee must have taken the hint, because on

Dec. 7 the *World* reported that Dec. 27 had been selected as the date. According to the committee, "Five hundred tickets will be printed and distributed to a committee of representative citizens who will be held responsible for the character of the person to whom they are sold."

It is not known how many people in Bloomington felt themselves too disreputable to buy a ticket. Some Victorians were not as fastidious about their behavior behind closed doors as they were in public. The *World* explained that "two fearless and responsible men will have

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