

Vigilantes got involved in Norman case

"White cap law, so called, is but the outgrowth of a vicious public sentiment — the outcropping of ignorance and selfishness and can only be applied successfully against the weak and defenseless . . ." Monroe County Judge Pearson, Bloomington Telephone, February 1889.

In the 19th century some Americans had an unfortunate attitude of being seriously judgemental about the beliefs and lifestyles of others. Such an attitude infected Monroe County on the occasions when self-styled vigilantes took the law into their own hands.

Bad blood among the members of a family/clan prompted some sensational headlines and soul-searching about the sanctity of the law in Monroe County in the winter of 1889. William Norman, a Polk Township farmer, had filed a suit against a man — also named Norman — for \$10,000 in damages. The



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By Rose McIlveen

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plaintiff's grievance was that he had been hauled out of bed at midnight and beaten so severely that he was black from the small of his back to his heels, was bedfast three weeks and still unable to work. The defendants were 12 men.

No doubt the Courthouse habitues were agog about the case that had everything — 100 subpoenaed witnesses and 11 Bloomington attorneys, the latter an array of legal talent that must have been a clear majority of the Monroe County Bar Association.

Regarding the case, the Bloom-

ington Telephone commented, "At all times the Courthouse has been crowded with spectators, eager to hear the evidence as it fell from the lips of the witnesses." Meanwhile, each side had exhausted its challenges before the following jurymen had been agreed upon: R.W. Farmer, Thomas Kilpatrick, A.J. Robinson, Joseph Lindsey, William Lee, J.L. Dowden, William Nunn, Perry O. Butcher, T.J. Bates, Thomas Brown, I. Milt Rogers and Joseph Myers.

As the plaintiff's own testimony was drawn from him by one of his attorneys, H.C. Duncan, it appeared that William Norman's main protagonist was his half-brother, Hezekiah Norman. William Norman's testimony was either hardly literate or the Telephone reporter lacked a good system of shorthand. Norman said, "I am a half-brother of Hezekiah Norman. Their was litigation some two or three years

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