

# Street improvements topic of controversy in 1907

"A called meeting of the city council next Tuesday night will be held to again take up the matter of extending the city's corporate limits. The council sees that the citizens are demanding that the streets be made passable and a sewerage system constructed, and, in order to raise more money, the council will bring more houses into the corporate limits."

— *Bloomington Evening World*, May 22, 1907.

The Bloomington City Council had several things on its collective mind when they met in the early summer of 1907. One member remarked that he had visited other Indiana cities smaller than Bloomington where improvements were far ahead of the ones here.

On the agenda for the councilmen were several projects. Explained the newspaper, "Indiana avenue is to be opened and improved from Seventh street north; the east Eighth street improvement will be pushed to completion. Howe street may be improved from Madison street to Euclid avenue ..."

Not everyone was happy with the plans. The county clerk representing the South Side Stone Company objected to the proposed



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

improvements of West Second Street from Rogers Street to Euclid Avenue.

Then there was the matter of North Indiana Avenue. An ordinance called for the "opening and widening of Indiana Avenue from Eighth to 10th street.

Then there was the "re-improvement" of East Eighth Street from Walnut to Indiana Avenue. (That meant concrete curbs and gutters and cement sidewalks from Grant to Indiana Avenue.)

The extension of Indiana northward brought some advantages to the neighborhood. According to the *Evening World*, it "would give University Park residents another outlet into the city."

The extension had been prompted by the building of McCalla School and was considered a logical and useful thing to do.

But one of the property owners who was

well-known objected vehemently. It was Moses Dunn, who said that the paving of the street would cause a division of his property. He seemed to be the only objector.

Not all improvements led to a pristine Bloomington.

At the May 22, 1907, council meeting one council member said residents should be required to clean out the gutters in front of their houses, a suggestion not destined to improve the council member's chances at the next election.

Some of the elected officials were very much in favor of building a sewage treatment plant and requiring residents to put indoor plumbing in their houses.

Other council men pointed out that the tax rate was already too high.

Progress came slowly. Fifteen years later there were still complaints about changes. Residents of North College Avenue took their hostility to a council meeting.

Their complaint was the council's proposal to pave College Avenue to 16th Street.

There were 10 – six of them resident and four nonresident – who objected.

Perhaps the residents were unhappy

about the possibility of paying for the street improvement.

If they expected immediate satisfaction, they were disappointed. The *Evening World* of Sept. 22 reported that "Councilman Lewis made a motion to refer the remonstrance to the city engineer for checking up, and in case the petition did not show a majority of the resident property owners having protested, the improvement be made in the usual manner."

Another proposal mentioned at the meeting sounds a little strange today.

"An ordinance was passed under suspension of rules making it unlawful to cut or excavate any city street without first obtaining a permit from the city clerk and requiring the depositing of \$100 with the clerk for each opening as a guarantee that the street will be put back in precisely the same shape as before being cut, without bump or depression within ten days after the opening is made."

Presumably city street repairmen were exempt from the latter provision and still are.

In spite of objections, Bloomington's streets began to extend in all directions. The growing pains could also be called progress.

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