

Plenty of activity during July 4 celebration of 1903

In 1903, Bloomington celebrated the Fourth of July holiday on Friday, July 3. Why? Well, the scheduling might have had something to do with bringing the people into the downtown area stores for two days in a row.

Nevertheless, there was something for everyone in Friday program. The Fourth would not have been the same without a parade, and Bloomington certainly had one.

According to the *Evening World*, participants from each township marched separately. Marion (later merged with Benton) and Washington township residents assembled on the "north pike" at Eleventh



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By Rose McIlveen

Street; Benton and Unionville at Walnut Street; Salt Creek and Polk on South Walnut Street; Indian Creek and Van Buren on West Second Street at College; and Richland and Bean Blossom on West Eleventh Street and College Avenue.

The newspaper added, "A handsome prize is to be given to the

township making the best showing in the parade." There was nothing in the article to indicate whether the participants were expected to wear patriotic costumes.

The list of awards gives us a glimpse of a time when tastes and pleasures were less sophisticated. The categories and winners were: oldest citizen, John Hawk, 101; poorest looking vehicle in the parade, Will Blair Jr.; pie eating, Willie Runyan; mother of the largest family, Mrs. Isaac Mitchell, 11 boys and one girl; secret order making the best showing in the parade, Red Men; 100-foot race, Fred Seward; best decorated building, Bloomington

Fire Department; and the best looking girl from out of town, Miss Undergraff from Smithville.

Perhaps one other competition caused the most rivalry of all. According to the *Evening World*, "At three o'clock a jolly crowd of good looking women assembled in the court room to witness the pretty baby contest. There were 15 entries and it was the finest collection of babies ever seen in Monroe County. Rev. M.G. Allison, whose special fitness and natural abilities eminently qualified him for the position, was chairman of the committee on award, the other members being W.S. Bradfute and O.H. Cravens."

The winner was the child of Mr. and Mrs. Cron Thrasher.

Patriotic music goes with the Fourth of July, and the estimated crowd of some 5,000 people had the pleasure of hearing two bands. Announced the newspaper, "Bloomington's big celebration tomorrow will be started at 9:30 when music will be furnished by the Bloomington and Mitchell bands. The committee has arranged for band music all day and until 12 o'clock tomorrow night. The band from Mitchell is considered a fine one, and its members will be paid \$60 by the

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