

# David Starr Jordan's first impressions

"The central square of town was marked by the courthouse, then a shabby building surrounded on Saturdays by the saddle horses and teams of the neighboring farmers...."

The observer was David Starr Jordan, seventh president of Indiana University. His impressions of Bloomington are found in his *Days of a Man*, a memoir published in 1922.

JORDAN, a professor at Butler University, had come to Bloomington in 1879 to judge an oratorical contest and left town with a new position as professor of natural history at IU.

"Presumably, however, we made a modest impression upon our arrival in town, for the official committee who came to meet me returned to the college reporting that 'The professor was not on the train. No one got off but two drummers (salesmen) who went straight to the hotel.'"

Jordan described Bloomington's population base as "mainly from the South" and

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## Looking Back

By Rose H. McIlveen

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"largely of Scotch descent, often Presbyterian in faith, Republican in politics, and fairly rigid in all their beliefs."

Jordan and family settled into "a modest frame affair" on the east side of North Morton Street, a stone's throw from the Showers Furniture factory. Only one street in town was covered with gravel. The others were "impassable" after it had rained. Pedestrians had to ford the muddy streets on rough cubes of limestone. Flat slabs of stone, which can still be seen in