

Memories of Bloomington in 1830s

Sometimes a trip to the library can be particularly rewarding — especially when it yields a little nugget of information about Monroe County history. A case in point is a little pamphlet, "Reminiscences of Indiana University," an address given by an elderly visitor.

THE ORATOR was George G. Wright, who certainly knew whereof he spoke, since he was born in Bloomington in 1820. His own personal history could well have been called a Horatio Alger story. His family was dirt-poor, and his father, who died young, laid bricks on the first Indiana University buildings. George's brother, Joseph, scrounged part of a university degree by doing

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maintenance chores and ringing the college bell. The height of Joseph's career was his election as the governor of Indiana, and when IU was in trouble, he made a dramatic appeal to the legislature on behalf of his alma mater.

It is not likely that times were much easier for George, but he, too,

had a career in politics, culminating in his election as a U.S. senator from Iowa. On June 11, 1889, he returned to Bloomington to address the IU alumni in the Methodist Church located at the corner of Seventh Street and College Avenue.

IT MUST have been a sentimental journey for the seasoned politician, for his address is full of little tidbits about his classmates and early Bloomington residents. After naming many persons whom he remembered from his childhood, Wright described a walk he had taken that very morning around town.

He said, "As I walked the street
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