

Carnival's morality questioned

Looking back, from page A1

of the Sabbath. Perhaps for that reason the Heth Shows ad also boasted that their amusement enterprise was the "cleanest" one on the road, a public relations precaution that the owners must have deemed necessary to attract "family" business.

According to the *Bloomington Weekly Star*, the police department began to field complaints from Heth Shows patrons that some of their attractions were thinly disguised gambling games. Not that the carnival complaints were isolated public reactions to a perceived "evil" in Bloomington. Within the month of June 1926, alone, a local sorority had felt it necessary to make a public apology for raffling off a hope chest, and a local minister had objected to the operation of a Cascades-area dance hall on Sunday. In that atmosphere, it was no wonder that visiting circus advertised that its repertoire included a "Christian" act.

The field research trip by Monroe County Prosecutor Simpson Robertson and Bloomington police indicated that the "guessing games" on the Heth Shows midway were not as harmless as they should have

been. The information gathered by the authorities prompted a meeting of no less than Bloomington Mayor John L. Hetherington, City Attorney J.B. Wilson, Police Chief Perry Cardwell and the prosecutor.

According to the *Weekly Star*, the men concluded that the Heth Shows had "violated its contract with the city in which it was promised that there would be no gambling." Commented the newspaper, "Officials stated that the various wheels and devices operated at the carnival, which at first had the appearance of harmless games, eventually brought numerous complaints from numerous citizens . . ."

A probably embarrassed police chief explained, "The carnival company was given a tryout because we felt that such amusement enterprises are in demand by the general public . . . but this will be a lesson to us, and the public may depend upon us never to admit another carnival company during the next four years of this administration."

It was reported also by the *Star* that on Thursday evening most of the concessions that had been closed down were seen packing up their wares "to move on to Bedford, where the show will exhibit next week."