

Clear Creek touted as paradise in 1897 news item

It was not clear whether the article about Clear Creek was a letter to the editor or what is known in the newspaper business as an "op-ed" piece. It appeared in Bloomington's *The World* of May 2, 1897.

The nostalgic piece was headed "CLEAR CREEK, A Beautiful Hamlet of Southern Monroe." It "reveals that the community was sometimes called "Clear Springs."

That particular name was not favored by the locals. *The World* explained that Reddy Austin, "a world famed confidence man," had sold John Stipp a quarry he (Austin) didn't own. It was Austin who had referred to Clear Creek as "Clear Springs," and anyone but a toddler-sized resident remembered that.

The writer described the community as having some 36 homes belonging to "thrifty farmers." The article makes it clear where the community came from. According to the author, the creek had an Indian name. "Old settlers tell me the stream took its name from Rosi-neah, an old chief of the Delawares who, when the first settlement was made, was en-



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

camped in a large hollow sycamore tree on the bank of the stream, remaining there for some time."

The writer left no doubt about the surrounding farm land, calling it the most fertile in the county, "well irrigated and productive of good crops." He continued, "Blue grass that has made for Kentucky an everlasting fame can be seen for miles in all directions, and the well-kept meadows with their carpet of this green verdure presents a pleasing spectacle to the 'city chap' enjoying a morning drive, as the bright rays of the early sun scintillate upon its dew-bedecked mantle."

Calling Clear Creek a shipping and trading point in the stock business, the writer recalled that many carloads of stock were shipped to

the Eastern markets until the price of the animals dropped so drastically that the farmers started growing wheat and corn instead. Then the hamlet gained some fame for another reason.

Explained the writer, "The Woodards, the Mathers, the Chambers, Smiths, Perrings and other notable Monroe County citizens refer to this town or immediate vicinity as their birth place. Many representative citizens who have long since passed down the dark valley, and are now sleeping in the city of the dead just in the rear of the old brick church, spend the greater portion of their lives in Clear Creek."

What Victorian-era historians would have called "progress" had caught up with Clear Creek near the turn of the century. It came in the form of "excellent pike roads to Bloomington."

By 1897, Clear Creek consisted of two general stores, a post office and a blacksmith shop, "presided over by Squire Rice ..." The writer reminded readers that the first quarry of the Oolitic stone belt south of Ellettsville

was opened up in the Clear Creek area.

It was Col. W.R. Woodward, general superintendent of the Monon Railroad, who went into a quarrying partnership with a member of the Crafton family on the Crafton farm near Clear Creek. Eventually, Woodward and Crafton abandoned the project.

After Woodward left the Monon, his 320-acre farm at Clear Creek, another of his investments, was bought by a Dr. J. G. Davis. According to *The World*, the Davis farm became a popular picnic spot.

The writer concluded the description of Clear Creek by commenting, "Though not boasting of being a large city, satisfied with only its one or two stores, telegraph station and post office, the citizens are contented to live through this life honestly and conscientiously, knowing that the black mark of crime has never marred the immaculate reputation of a law-abiding community."

Who was the author of the article? Residents of the Clear Creek may have guessed, but it was signed merely "Idler."

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