

## Student's 1836 diary explored

# 'Belles of Bloomington' recalled

Saturday was the "socializing" day of the week for Indiana University students in the 1830s. In his college-days diary Richard H. Holman, an IU junior, wrote in 1836, "On Saturday, they (students) black their boots, visit the girls, and perform various other duties incumbent upon them."

HIS DIARY does not indicate when he met Miss Sarah A. Tupman, but the first reference to that young girl comes between two other entries in which Holman expressed affection for another Bloomington girl, Miss Louisa Howe.

Of the former, he wrote, "I, yesterday, called upon Miss Sarah Tupman. Almost in love with her, I must not call on her more than once in three weeks, or I may fall in love, which heaven prevent."

Unfortunately, the diary gives little or no clues as to her identity. The Tupman family name does not appear in the 1830 or 1840 census for the county, nor is her father listed among

## Looking back

By Rose H. McIlveen

Bloomington businessmen of the 1830s. In fact, the only Tupman in Indiana in the 1830s lived in Vanderburg County.

Whoever she was, Holman occasionally referred to her as "cousin." It is unlikely that she was his cousin, but there is a possibility that she was related to someone living in Bloomington.

ALTHOUGH the IU junior continued to spend some time with Louisa Howe, he certainly did not heed his own resolve to limit his time with Sarah Tupman. On July 26, 1836, he wrote, "I

am in love. By my soul I am — With whom? Must I disclose 'the actual fact' with Miss Sarah A. Tupman — Yes, with Sarah A. Tupman. I cannot help it. She is worthy the love and envy of everyone."

In another entry Holman expressed his concern that the girl was "decidedly partial" to John S. Geiger, a fellow student, but philosophized, "Well, let her love him. On the whole it is best for me. I must not get involved in 'love scrapes' for some years to come."

The incredible part of Holman's attraction to the Tupman girl is that when he was being positively lyrical about her, she was only 13 years old. He wrote, "There is something irresistably attractive in her. She is young — remarkably young to be entitled to a seat among the ladies — not yet fourteen."

"She does not, I believe, return my deep feel-

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