

Medical miracles were missing in the 1830s

Through the writings of persons like Richard H. Holman, an Indiana University student, and the letters of IU's first president, Andrew Wylie, one can get a sense of the grimness of a shorter life-expectancy in the 1830s.

Wylie, in a letter to his wife, who was visiting "back East" in the summer of 1835, lamented her absence, but warned her not to be in any hurry to set out on her return trip to Bloomington.

HE WROTE, "I must try and content myself the best way I can, till frost comes in the fall, when, if you live, you can descend the river without danger from the cholera."

Wylie had reason to fear that cholera might kill someone near and dear to him. Only two years earlier (in August 1833) classes at the Indiana Seminary were suspended when the disease swept across

Looking back

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the Midwest and Monroe Countians began to die of it.

(It should be remembered that the giants of medical science — Lister, Pasteur and Koch — were yet to make the discoveries that would arm doctors with enough knowledge to combat such diseases as cholera. Wrote IU historian, James A. Woodburn, of the epidemic of the early 1830s, "In Evansville the people

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