

Monroe Countians really took politics seriously in 1890s

Voting fraud in Monroe County was the subject of Indiana University Professor Richard H. Dabney's letter to *The Nation* in its July-December 1888 issue. Although the letter refers to "floating" voters, Dabney could have cited other examples of the contrast between a university town and a county where some of the residents acted in a downright uncivilized manner around election time.

In September 1896, the Honorable Joseph E. Henley, a candidate, was scheduled to address voters in the Cowden School in Bean Blossom Township. According to the *Bloomington Telephone* of Sept. 11, "... just as Mr. Henley began to speak, a crowd of ruffians raised a disturbance with the threat that there never had been a Republican speech there and there never would be."

Undaunted by the threats, Henley told the crowd he was not the kind of man to be frightened by a bunch of bullies. Furthermore, he had driven 12 miles



Looking back

By Rose
McIlveen

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to make a speech, and he intended to do just that.

The "ruffians" got even by leaving the school, unhitching the horses of Henley's and his friends' buggies and turning the surreys over, "making it almost impossible to return to their homes."

Within the same week, two other Republican candidates were expected to speak at the Lick Skillet School in the same township. On that occasion, the ruffians changed their tactics. About 30 men and women entered the schoolhouse separately and noisily, disrupting the speaking. When all 30 had been seated, they rose in a body and

see Elections. Back page