

# Sunday as 'day of rest' already a lost cause by 1887

*"That reminds me that last Sunday morning I was in front of the Post Office (I had been in after my mail) when a newsboy cried out, 'Here comes the Methodist rush.'"*

— **Bloomington Saturday Courier**, April 2, 1887.

In April of 1887, the editor of the *Saturday Courier* took upon himself to have a debate with himself in print on the front page with regard to the sacredness of the Sabbath. Apparently the question had been triggered by the announcement of a public debate on the subject between two men, presumably ministers of the gospel.



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

In the good old days, recalled the writer, Sunday was observed as it should have been. "There used to be a time when Sunday was a holy day as well as a church-going day. Then the Christian housewives would do their cooking on Saturday, and Sunday would be spent in attending religious worship and

reading the Bible."

By 1887, suggested the writer, the Sabbath had deteriorated to the point where it was a day of church-going only. "In the larger cities Sunday is the biggest day of the week for sport and recreation. Shows and beer drinking is the rage, and what is more, it is approved by the authorities for political reasons. For political reasons, they dare not oppose it."

Actually, noted the writer, even those who go to church and don't indulge in sports, recreation or beer-drinking are not entirely blameless. "While we may not work ourselves, we require others to work

on Sunday. If we want a newspaper, cigar, tobacco, oysters or meat or ice, something else good to eat, or anything in the drug line or our mail from the Post Office, or want to go off on the (railroad) cars, and many other things, we are sorely provoked when the men who run all those things are not on hand on a Sunday to wait on us."

In the not-too-distant past, recalled the writer, at least some people in Bloomington had a conscience.

"A petition was circulated not long ago asking the authorities to enforce a strict observance of the Sabbath, but I suppose it went

where all good petitions go — in somebody's wastebasket. Then a noted divine preached against the desecration of the Sabbath, and especially mentioned the opening of the Post Office on Sundays."

At that point, the writer confessed that he had rather mixed feelings on the subject. "I like to get my mail on Sunday, and would 'kick' hard if I couldn't get it. I also like to get my newspaper and other little things, but it must be understood that I am not so fanatical on the Sunday question that I would condemn a poor fellow, who has to

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