

Bloomington dogged by controversy

"It (Indiana University) still continues to gain a firmer hold upon the confidence and affections of the community," reported IU Trustee Paris Dunning to the Indiana legislature in the 1830s.

Admittedly, the Bloomington lawyer who later became governor, was putting the university's best foot forward to impress the legislators at a time when the school was in debt and the faculty occasionally squabbling.

Looking Back

6-11-1983

By Rose H. McKiven

Dunning told the representatives that the IU enrollment "has been gradually, and steadily increasing" due in part to "the peculiar healthfulness of Bloomington . . . the morality of her citizens, or the cheapness of board."

APART FROM DAVID MAXWELL, who championed the cause of locating the state university in Bloomington, the town couldn't have found a better public relations person than Dunning. Undersealing the latter's praises of the Bloomington community, Maxwell, in his address to the "People of Indiana" in 1819, said, "The location of the University is universally admitted to be one of the healthiest in the State, and the surrounding scenery is romantic and attractive."

Three short years later IU student J. Borden wrote a letter home in which he said of Bloomington, "There is certainly less taste, less sense, higher prices and more rascality in this place than exists on any spot of ground of its size in United States, except some choice spots on Salt creek." More damaging — because it got into print — was an anonymous letter to the editor of *The Locomotive*, published in Indianapolis in December of 1852. It read in part:

"THOSE WHO HAVE an acquaintance with the place object to sending their children there on account of the litigious, quarrelsome, tricky character of a great many of the people there. The students become contaminated. I have often heard men remark that they never knew a politician educated at Bloomington who was not a Janus-faced political gouger."

It should be here noted that the motive of the anonymous writer who signed himself "Lover of Learning" — was to get the university moved to Indianapolis or a more central location. Less biased was Cornelius Perring, an English immigrant and art teacher, who was principal of

(Back page, col. 7, this sec.)