

Bloomington once popular center

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that the spot had been established $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Unionville in Benton Township, but had undergone a change. What was wrong with the original location was its location. It happened to be in the midst of a dense, snake-infested thicket on a ravine on a farm owned by William L. Moser.

SURVEYORS AT THE SITE had to inch their way in and out of the thickey sideways. Nevertheless, the *Bloomington Courier* had hastily erected a five-foot wooden marker on the spot, and the nation's newspapers had a field day over the fact that the center of the U.S. population was in the middle of a Hoosier thicket.

Some of the city fathers who were inclined to capitalize on such a windfall as a tourist attraction were dismayed. Obviously a thicket wasn't a saleable commodity.

Suddenly a Washington news dispatch informed bewildered Monroe Countians that a man with a PhD was at work rechecking figures to see if the original data was correct. *The Farm* reported that two mathematicians working independently had goofed on the original site, and it was clear that the new one would be west of Grant Street in Bloomington.

SURE ENOUGH, TO THE INTENSE relief of the city fathers, the spot turned out to be a grassy plot on the Showers Factory property. Naturally public-spirited Showers president W.N. Showers donated over \$1,000 for a flagpole and a cement platform for the marker. There followed, of course, an appropriate dedication ceremony. In later years a former local newspaper editor recalled only a few details about the program, except that it included a band, out-of-town dignitaries, and the inevitable speeches.

Americans of the "teen" years continued to take Greeley's advice and the center of population moved into Owen County near Whitehall in 1920. There a few enthusiastic residents erected a ten-foot wooden marker on the main road of the town. However, when Indiana University astronomer W.A. Cogshall calculated that the center of the U.S. population for the 20's was actually an old beech tree on a farm $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of the village, Whitehall residents lost interest.

PERHAPS, A COUPLE OF footnotes to the story are appropriate in closing. Disgusted Benton Township farm owner Moser sold his land and moved into town. In 1960 foundryman Fred Seward was instrumental in getting the round limestone marker moved from the Showers Factory site to the Courthouse lawn, which wasn't even in the running for the center of the U.S. population.