

Railroad laborers, locals often clashed

Regular readers of the Bloomington *Telephone* and the *Weekly Courier* were kept posted on the tragicomedy of the building of the Indianapolis and Southern Railroad in 1905-06.

Underfunded by its original Indianapolis investors, the construction work passed into the hands of the Illinois Central Railroad. It is not known if its management team was very experienced in dealing with foreign labor gangs. The misunderstandings that cropped up as the tracks continued to be laid, were probably in part the fault of some unscrupulous subcontractors.

Another factor that had bearing on the bad community relations of the Illinois Central was the inevitable clash between immigrant laborers and second-generation Midwesterners. The predominantly Italian laborers could speak little or no English and were poorly educated.

Brown County farmers had occasionally found little veins of gold in their fields. A front-page



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

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Courier article on April 6, 1906, bore an intriguing headline — "AFTER GOLD Italians Will Seek hidden Treasure in Brown County." Said the article, "The party is headed by Frank Ravollea, a young Italian engineer, and Charles Lorell, an ex-officer in the Italian army. The rest of the party is composed of workmen who have been employed on the new Indianapolis Southern."

Another little *Courier* article under the headline "WANTED FLOUR Italian Laborers Make Demand Upon a Farmer," wasn't so humorous. It was, however, a hint of things to come. It seemed that a contractor by the name of Cendella had not paid his laborers at their camp west of Bloom-

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