

Quest for holiday stirred IU's first protest

Students of recent Indiana University history might be tempted to conclude that student protest here was born in the late 1960s and in the fateful spring of 1970.

NOT SO. An early (if not the earliest) active protest happened in the winter of 1896. Undoubtedly suffering from the mid-winter doldrums, some students looked ahead on the calendar and discovered that Washington's birthday fell on a Saturday. Thus they were cheated out of a holiday. Had there been any disposition on the part of the university administration to cancel classes, the question was moot, since classes weren't held on Saturday anyway. In this day of three-day holiday

Looking back

By Rose H. McIlveen

weekends, it is hard to imagine the university administration begrudging the students a day off. Lest any think that the officials were mean-spirited, it is well to remember that such a request was considered frivolous — roughly equivalent to Bob

Cratchet asking to spend all of Christmas Day with his family.

Near the beginning of February the students presented a petition to the faculty for a class-free Lincoln's birthday, which fell on a Wednesday, but the hopeful request was vetoed. On Feb. 12 the rallying cry of student protest was "bolt classes," and the entrance to Kirkwood Hall was the scene of the first round of a skirmish that was to last for a month. It started innocently enough with a small group of students and some college yells.

ACCORDING TO IU historian Thomas Clark, when the small group had swelled to "an audacious mob," they rushed into

Kirkwood Hall and dragged other students out of classes. Their invasion of the "English end" of Maxwell Hall was headed off by President Joseph Swain. Regrouping, the students returned to Kirkwood Hall. Same students — same tactics — same president — same result.

Frustrated, the students swarmed into downtown Bloomington and added a drum corps and standard bearer. Their next target was the university chapel. But the administration got unexpected assistance from the weather, which brought a cold downpouring of rain.

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