

Article decried 'carousing of prostitutes' in 1881 Bloomington

There must have been many raised eyebrows behind copies of the Bloomington *Saturday Courier* on Aug. 20 in 1881. It is also likely that if the younger members of local families had any interest in reading the newspaper, that particular edition was mysteriously "unavailable" in the homes of various subscribers.

What had probably prompted an unprecedented censorship of the newspaper was a scandalous article on the front page. Its headline read: "Under the Gaslight, BLOOMINGTON AFTER NIGHT, Male and Female Prostitutes' Revelry."

It is important to remember that



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

one of the most infuriating characteristics of the Victorian era was its hypocrisy. In other words, the appearance of piety was infinitely more to be desired than the reality of it.

Began the *Courier*, "It will be a good thing for Bloomington when the carousing of prostitutes and

their male followers, after night-fall is stopped. There are many female prostitutes in this city who are employed during the day as domestics and spend the night in debauchery about the public streets and byways with their males companions."

Well, if that didn't set the local matrons to taking a closer look at their maids and cleaning women, what would it have taken? Actually, the juicy article set off speculation in several directions.

According to the *Courier*, "The principal rendezvous is the College Campus. It is on that spot that for years drunkenness and prostitution

have held high carnival after night-fall. In fact, the place has become so notorious that even many male and female prostitutes now seek other places where their night revelry can go on without being disturbed by others of their kind."

It should be remembered that when the newspaper referred to the "College Campus," that was in what we now call Seminary Square. The university did not move to Dunn's Woods until after the fire of 1883 destroyed a principal building at the Second and College location.

Dunn's Woods was one of the "other places" that was popular with "wrong-doers." More specif-

ically, the stone quarry and cemetery there were the chief attractions.

Related the *Courier*, "A gentleman had occasion to pass along Fourth street one night recently about midnight. On the Baptist Church steps he saw a couple covered up with a shawl; on the lumber pile on Kerr's corner there was another couple, and on the steps of Hind's gun shop there was still another. On another night, about two o'clock in the morning the same gentleman saw a couple coming out from the horse sheds of the Cove-

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