

# Pamphlet created a stir in 1890

In the fall of 1890, Bloomingtonians awoke one morning to find a strange pamphlet on their front porches. By noon the pamphlet had stirred up a controversy that was to last nearly two years.

**THE CURIOUS DOCUMENT** — called a "bogus" because it was not sanctioned by Indiana University — fired verbal broadsides at the university faculty and some of the students. True, there had been earlier "boguses" circulated in the IU community, but the 1890 version was in language that was crude, vulgar and adolescent, even by today's standards.

Outraged townspeople and students collected

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Looking  
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By Rose McIlveen

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\$150 to reward anyone who would "snitch" on the culprits. Meanwhile, the *Bloomington Saturday Courier* improved its circulation by printing every juicy detail of the mystery as it unfolded.

IU President David Starr Jordan wasn't really amused, particularly when his office began receiving letters calling the "bogus" authors "dastards," "fiends," "vipers" and "corruptionists." Nevertheless, Jordan's reply to one critic was, "The boys were carried away with the excitement of a midnight adventure."

**LESS PHILOSOPHICAL** were the IU trustees, who, along with the administration of the university, were the guardians of IU's reputation. The following May the trustees took the dramatic step of hiring the legendary Pinkerton Detective Agency to find the culprits.

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