

# Saloon smashed — so was 'preacher' — in 1902

The term "John Barleycorn" isn't used very much these days, but there was a time when it was commonly heard in relation to alcoholic beverages. People who used that expression probably thought they sounded sophisticated, but there wasn't anything superior about the effect the spirituous beverage had on human beings.

Take, for example, a couple of incidents reported in the Aug. 26, 1902, *Bloomington Courier*. The articles could have been printed side-by-side but were separated by two other pages.

Under a headline, "Women Smash Brown County Saloon," the newspaper related that the women of Belmont had had it with "John Barleycorn" in their midst. No longer content with grumbling among



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

themselves, the women of that community took action.

"Belmont, a small town six miles southwest of Nashville, was the scene of much excitement Wednesday night, when a mob composed of women of the neighborhood made a raid on the saloon and completely demolished it," said the *Courier*.

Had the dissatisfaction with the saloon stemmed only from the fact that some husbands were arriving

home somewhat inebriated that would probably not have been sufficient reason for the women to converge at the saloon on that August night. The *Courier* explained there were other problems. "The women complained of being insulted by persons at this saloon, as they went to church and to the post office, and that they were compelled to go through corn fields in order to avoid passing the saloon."

Taking the law into their own hands, the women began throwing rocks through the saloon window. The effect was that "... persons inside fell over the counter and boxes in order to get out, and several of them were struck by rocks."

Having caused the "evacuation" of the saloon, the irate women proceeded to demolish its inventory,

"completely wrecking it."

What about the owner? "The proprietor also fled, but says he will open up again, and a merry time is looked for at Belmont if he resumes selling liquor," concluded the *Courier*.

The other incident happened in Bloomington earlier in the month. According to the newspaper, a man by the name of Leman, who was supposed to be from Worthington, took a position in front of the First National Bank and began preaching. He then "proceeded to the levee (Morton Street), where he filled up on bad whiskey."

Intoxicated and sick, to boot, Leman disappeared from town. "... Marshal Johns concluded that if the fellow returned he would land him in jail," added the *Courier*.

Leman either thought Bloomingtonians had a short memory or that it was commonplace here for men to preach on the square, pass the hat and use the proceeds to get drunk. His memory was certainly not as good as the marshal's.

"The alleged parson arrived this morning (Aug. 26) and took his position in front of the Todd grocery store. He began at once to exhort sinners to turn from their evil ways and, as he proceeded, warmed up to the subject," continued the *Courier*.

Enter Marshal Johns, who invited Leman to be a guest of the Monroe County taxpayers for several days. It is not known whether the "guest" learned anything from the experience. At the *Courier's* press deadline it was reported that Leman still "languishes" in jail.