

# Sickness almost shut down IU on more than one occasion

During its 173 years Indiana University has coped with both major and minor ups and downs of various kinds. Some of the "downs" included student health problems.

There was the cholera epidemic that swept across Indiana in the 1830s and arrived in Bloomington. On Aug. 10, 1833, according to IU historian James A. Woodburn, some people of the town were hastily burying George Johnson's servant who had died suddenly of cholera.

After a student from Indianapolis died in the same afternoon, and others within the next few days, the majority of IU students fled town. As a local judge put it, "Those who were able to secure conveyances or horses went in that way, but my recollection is that the great majority could not secure any sort of con-



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

veyance, and in their wild hurry to escape from the pestilence left town on foot."

Thanks to advances in medical science, the situation was entirely different in 1922 when a diphtheria epidemic struck the campus. The university had barely opened when it was discovered on Sept. 29 that three women in two sorority houses had contracted the disease.

As a precaution, Dr. James Holland, the university physician, quarantined the two houses. At the

same time, all students who were suffering from sore throats were told to get medical help at once.

Holland was obliged to announce on Oct. 2 that there were five new cases and scotched the rumor that the university was going to be shut down. Subsequent events were to indicate that he was very brave indeed.

By Oct. 6, 10 students were in quarantine in the university hospital, five of whom were kept over the weekend. Even so, the situation worsened.

In describing the events, Burton D. Myers, author of Vol. II of the history of IU, wrote, "On Monday, October 9, five new cases were ordered into quarantine and announcements were made in classes that we were threatened with an epi-

demic. Students were advised to present themselves at the office of the university physician to take the Schick test to determine their susceptibility or immunity to diphtheria."

Some 300 students took Holland's advice seriously. Fortunately, Eli Lilly Co. of Indianapolis had not merely responded to an emergency request for the test materials, but also sent Dr. E.G. Kyte from its research lab to help Holland with the tests.

On Oct. 10, taking a Schick test was no longer voluntary. Myers relates that a conspicuous box in the *Indiana Daily Student* announced the mandate that all students were to report to the physician's office.

Still university officials did not panic and shut down the school.

The statistics were frightening though. Myers wrote, "On Thursday, October 12, a total of 75 cases had been reported and 21 cases were in quarantine. Eight hundred had taken the Schick test, and most of those found to be susceptible had voluntarily taken the immunizing injections."

Holland and the university officials began to breathe more easily when on Oct. 19 they could announce that there were no new cases for three days. Holland warned that there were still plenty of "susceptibles" on the campus.

It was on Oct. 24 that the physician could announce that the epidemic had been stamped out. And Myers added, "The wisdom of establishment of the University Hospital for contagious diseases was again demonstrated."

H-T 1/6/93