

Summer of 1915 proved pretty lively in court

During the period 1915-1917, the men who "sat on the bench" in Monroe County heard a lot of the usual charges. If some of the judges were caught napping on the bench, they could hardly be blamed.

Every once in a while, though, things livened up a bit in the courtroom. In the summer of 1915, a long-standing neighborhood feud ended up in court.

According to the *Bloomington Evening World* of Aug. 19, two females were in court, having resorted to violence to settle their differences. As the newspaper put it, "The end of a long neighborhood quarrel came yesterday evening when Mrs. Candace Dowling, West Wylie Street, was arraigned before Justice Rhodes to answer a charge of assault and battery on Mrs. Minnie Evans, South Rogers Street."

Actually, the fight had taken place on June 20, after a long series of arguments. On that occasion Dowling came into the neighborhood looking for her children while Evans was working in her yard.

Not infrequently in such cases there is some question about who started the fight,



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

which took place in an unimproved adjoining street. The women brought witnesses whose testimony conflicted on that point.

It should also be noted that the case had been "venued" from police court, because Dowling thought she could not get a fair trial there with John McCabe "on account of his being biased and prejudiced." Explained the *World*, "Mrs. Dowling then charged Mrs. Evans with provoke. Mrs. Evans pleaded guilty, paid her fine and then charged Mrs. Dowling with assault and battery. Mrs. Dowling, to make matters even filed a damage suit for \$3,000 against Mrs. Evans."

Commented the newspaper, "Some of the language that passed between the women

was repeated in the court, but was too profane and obscene for publication in a decent newspaper. The court found Mrs. Dowling guilty and fined her \$1 and costs."

On Jan. 9, 1917, the *World* reported that two little boys wearing short pants were in juvenile court to answer the charges of public intoxication. They had been found lying in the lumber yard of Showers Factory. It was noted by the newspaper that the boys had been in serious condition when found, but responded to treatment by a doctor. The source of their intoxication was whiskey. As the story unfolded, there surely must have been some snickers in the courtroom.

The *World* informed its readers, "In court today they told Judge Miers they had obtained the whiskey from their parents. The latter were also in court and when questioned said they were driving out in the country in a wagon and found eight large bottles of liquor concealed in a shock of fodder."

The parents testified that they drank some whiskey and passed out. Like father,

like son, the boys followed suit. Continued the newspaper, "Both fathers are in jail. The boys were excused."

Now there was a Bloomington man by the name of Edward Duncan, who had quit drinking with the help of the Salvation Army and remained sober for two or three years. Unfortunately he "began to drink again recently. He was found with a bottle like the ones in the possession of the two men above-mentioned. When brought into court today and asked where he obtained the whiskey, he said he bought it from a man, but did not know his name."

While he was at it, Judge Miers sentenced Luther Smith, a blacksmith, to six months at the penal farm for drinking and carousing, a violation of his parole. Concluded the *World*, "Judge Miers and Prosecutor Barclay are working hard to break up the trafficking in liquor and a number of other habitual drunkards are said to be slated for the penal farm."

It is not known whether any Monroe County farmers reported that their shocks of fodder had been vandalized.

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