

Monroe County residents shook with fear in 1895

"Dr. G.B. Harris says the shaking of his bed was so noticeable that he thought he was going to be thrown against the wall, and he got up to see what was the matter." *Bloomington Telephone*, Nov. 1, 1895.



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

Mother Nature played a Halloween prank on Monroe County that sent people into town to do an informal sanity check on themselves. The prank was also an early wake-up call for most of the people in Bloomington.

What most of them didn't know initially was that they had been feeling the effects of an earthquake. Commented the *Telephone* in a front-page article "Persons on North College Avenue, West 6th Stret, and also down about the square all testify to the same sensation. All agree that the disturbance occurred about 5 o'clock, that the houses quaked..."

W.T. Breeden, proprietor of the Banner Store, had experienced two earthquakes earlier in his lifetime and recognized at once what it was. A local doctor, on the other hand, got up to check on an adjoining bedroom to see if someone had fallen out of bed.

Shortly news began coming into Bloomington on the telegraph wire. At New Albany an old Methodist Church was demolished by the jolt. The newspaper account also contained a quote from the *Bedford Democrat*. "There was an earthquake this morning or something very much like it. The shock

was distinctly felt in the Democrat office at 5:10. The shock lasted for about twenty seconds. At first it was thought to be the wind, but the peculiar sensation as if the building was being rocked on trembling waves led to the conclusion that it was an earthquake."

By Nov. 5, the *Telephone* had more information and had called upon Indiana University geology Professor V.F. Marsters for some interpretation. In fact, he was able to provide the newspaper reporter with two columns of explanation. The areas affected, according to the *Telephone*, were from Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico and from western Missouri to eastern Ohio. Continued the newspaper, "They all agree that the quaking was the most distinct and the most prolonged they had ever experienced in this State. ... At Indianapolis bricks from some tall chimneys

were shaken down. Loose objects on mantles fell to the floor."

Monroe Countians had barely recovered their feeling of security when Mother Nature struck again. The *Telephone* of Nov. 29 didn't really need to inform its readers. There was some visual evidence around town.

This time nature's visitor was a high wind of gale proportions. Explained the newspaper, "For 36 hours there had been more or less rain, but yesterday towards night ... the wind began to blow and by 10 o'clock the blowing was terrific."

Some Monroe Countians were truly alarmed as their houses literally shook with succeeding gusts. They were especially strong in the south of Bloomington, and some of the residents were prepared to leave their homes if necessary.

Explained the *Telephone*, "The tin roof on the south end of the

ware room of Collins and Karsell's mill was torn off. The wind swept fiercely over Kenwood and a number of trees were blown down. The tin roof of the opera house was badly damaged and squares were torn loose from their fastenings."

Other casualties of the storm were the skylight of Wilhite & Nicely photographic gallery; a considerable amount of fencing around town; sheds in the United Presbyterian Church hitching lot; part of the smokestack of the Model Roller Mill was broken off; and the bay window of Walter Woodburn's house.

The widespread storm affected an area from the Great Lakes to Texas. Hoosiers were luckier than Texans that time, at least. The *Telephone* reported that Texans got snow with their wind storm.

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