

Lawyer advertised pension services in news space

There was a time when readers of newspapers could hardly tell whether the things they were seeing on the pages were real news or advertisements. Unlike today's ads, the ones of the 1890s could sometimes be found interspersed within a column of bona fide news items.

Readers of the Bloomington *Telephone* of July 1, 1890, may have wondered if local lawyer James. F. Morgan was subtly soliciting clients or just being public spirited. On the back page of the newspaper appeared an eight-inch paragraph which began: "James F. Morgan



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

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requests the *Telephone* to say to its soldier readers that he has a full and complete set of pension blanks, applicable to the new pension law now in force, having been signed Friday by the President."

The article further explains who

is covered by the new law and how much they can expect to receive. The beneficiaries of the pensions could be veterans who served 90 days and were honorably discharged, widows, minor children under 16 years of age and parent-dependents of soldiers. The pensions ranged from \$6 to \$12 a month.

The readers of the *Telephone* may have begun to suspect that Morgan was not entirely selfless when they came to the next part of the text. "Mr. Morgan has made many applications already, and deserves much

credit for the success he has had in getting pensions for worthy veterans. He is not flooding the country filled with self-praise, as some competitors are doing. He prefers to work hard for the veterans, (rather than be a "blow hard") regardless of race, color or previous condition of servitude, and to announce that he is at the old stand."

It should be explained at this point that Morgan was no Johnny-come-lately to Bloomington or the pension agent business. It was actually a sideline to his legal practice. A native of Monroe County, he was

born near Harrodsburg of a family that had bought land here in 1811.

Morgan had taught school (which included being principal at Stanesville) to put himself through college before reading law in the local firm of Buskirk & Duncan. He had also served the county as assistant prosecuting attorney. In addition to practicing law, he dabbled in real estate and was a local representative of several large insurance firms.

His claims of success in securing

see Looking back, page A7