

2 women contribute to Bloomington lore

(Continued from page 1)

named. There are touches of humor in her recollections of early Bloomingtonians, which can be found in the *History of Lawrence and Monroe Counties, Indiana*, published in 1914. She recalled that some of the matriarchs of the county gathered to knit at her grandmother's house. It seemed amazing to Miss McCalla that some of the elderly ladies still went by the nicknames of their younger days — "Polly for Mary, Patsy for Martha, Betsy for Elizabeth, Sally for Sarah, and Peggy for Margaret."

No doubt Miss McCalla's reference to 25-cent turkeys delivered to the door would make a 1961 housewife a little jealous, but there are hints in her accounts that the good old days weren't all that great. She regretted that such drudgery chores — performed by the females of the family — as sugar, soap, starch, and candle making as well as the curing of meat and drying of fruit were pioneer housewife skills of the past.

AS SUPERINTENDENT of the Bloomington schools — perhaps the only female one of her time in Indiana — Miss McCalla certainly had the opportunity to observe early Hoosiers at their best and worst. She speaks with some pride of the time when Monroe County pioneer Col. John Ketcham remembered his promise to her father, then an orphaned boy, and gave him a horse.

On the less admirable side, early Monroe County society, according to Miss McCalla, was divided on the subject of dancing. Apparently some pioneers

regarded "every kind of dancing with abhorrence." Their objection was on religious grounds of course, and was carried to the extreme when they criticized a Mrs. McFerson for the daily callisthenics conducted in her school. They — the straight-laced — called the exercises the "Presbyterian sheepdance," the connection being that the teacher belonged to that denomination.

MISS MCCALLA MENTIONED briefly the role of the circuit rider in spreading the gospel to this community. One in particular, Lorenzo Dow, struck her as being "eccentric." She also tells about the visits to Bloomington of such prominent preachers as Alexander Campbell and the legendary Henry Ward Beecher.

At the time of the publication of Baynard Hall's satirical book about Bloomington, *The New Purchase*, Miss McCalla recalled that while her grandfather was laid up with "inflammatory rheumatism" the book was read to him. Unlike his fellow Bloomingtonians who took the book seriously, he thoroughly enjoyed it.

Scarlet fever struck the county in 1832, and according to Miss McCalla, the disease took every child that contracted it but two. One of the survivors was her mother's baby brother, Austin Seward, and the other was a Mrs. Mary Maxwell Shryer.

INTERESTING AS THEY are, the accounts of Mrs. Perring and Miss McCalla serve another purpose — that of reminding us that in some respects the so-called good old days left a lot to be desired.