

Sale of cigarettes made illegal by 1905 Legislature

"If legislative enactment can put the cigarette, commonly known as the coffin nail, out of business, this particular form of smoking is doomed in Indiana." — *Bloomington Evening World*, Feb. 9, 1905

During the 1905 session of the Indiana General Assembly, tobacco lobbyists were frantically trying to head off the passing of a bill that would forbid the sale of cigarettes in Indiana, but their best efforts failed. The *Bloomington Evening World* of March 17, 1905, reported that smokers had an Indiana University alumnus to blame for giving the legislature the idea in the first place.

According to the newspaper, it was Robert Alexander Ogg (Bachelor of Science, 1872, Master of Arts, 1892) who suggested to his senator from the Kokomo area that some-



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

thing should be done about smoking. Added the *Evening World*, "The fact that Prof. Ogg is so well and favorably known in Bloomington makes his connection with this important measure a matter of special interest to the people here."

Money apparently had nothing to do with the issue. The bill originated in and was approved by the House Committee on Morals on its way to approval by both houses and the governor's signature.

As for local reaction, on March 11, the *Evening World* reported, "Since the anti-cigarette bill was passed there has been little change in the demand for cigarettes, Bloomington dealers say. The restricted demand from dealers who were afraid to place orders, fearing they might be caught when the law went in effect and lose their stock, was about offset by orders from dealers that anticipated an unusual demand from cigarette smokers desiring to lay in a stock for their own use, rather than begin buying outside the state as soon as the law becomes effective."

Local smokers weren't all that impressed with the law. On May 6, the *Evening World* commented that, "The dealers in Bloomington are strictly observing the cigarette law, but the smokers of the coffin nails

are getting bolder every day and are now seen on the streets daily with the deadly cigarette between their teeth. The Bloomington (police) officers are not performing their duty when they fail to arrest everyone who disobeys the cigarette law."

Meanwhile, in Indianapolis, two judges were having a difference of opinion about the new law. Judge Alford told the press that he believed the law encompassed possession of tobacco and papers to roll cigarettes, as well as selling. Judge Whallon of the Police Court in that city disagreed.

The farmers and supporters of the law underestimated the resourcefulness of the moguls of the tobacco industry. Their answer came in the form of a "new" prod-

uct that began turning up in Bloomington and other Indiana cities. The tobacco items were the same size as cigarettes and came in the same old boxes, according to the *Evening World*, but the label said "little cigars."

"There are the same number in the box, are the same price and size, but the difference is that they have a brown wrapper that looks like tobacco, even if it isn't tobacco at all," continued the newspaper.

The anti-smoking segment of the community decided to strike back. Explained the *Evening World*, "A radical enemy of the cigarette in this city has purchased a box of the 'little cigars' and will send them to a scientist at Purdue (University) to have the wrappers tested."

Next week: How the law fared.