

Janitor controversial early figure at IU

(Continued from page 1)
the theft inspired any investigation or retaliation. Considering the unpolished nature of some of the students, Mrs. Spicer was probably obliged to develop a boys-will-be-boys attitude about such pranks.

"Uncle Tommy," however, managed to stay in the good graces of administration and students alike, since his tenure as school janitor lasted 20 years (1870-90). A clue to the reason for his popularity could be found in an anonymous and unauthorized newspaper called *The Dagger*, which first appeared on the campus in 1873.

The unknown perpetrators of the paper took it upon themselves to offer sarcastic opinions of the faculty, administration and even the trustees. (The latter offered a reward for the names of the culprits, but there were no takers.)

Roundin'

The Senior Citizens' Action Congress will meet Tuesday at noon in the Center for Older Americans. The Big Red United Senior Citizens will be guests. All seniors are invited.

The Campus Community Arts Center is sponsoring an International Handicrafts Bazaar in the South Lounge of the Indiana Memorial Union Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. It is open to the public.

Though President Lemuel Moss and Amzi Atwater and some of the others at the university were severely criticized according to Clark, *The Dagger* said of Spicer that he was "the best janitor a college ever had. His only fault was his peculiar faculty for catching students in mischief, but he redeemed himself by not telling."

In his account of David Starr Jordan's administration as president of the university, Clark mentions that Spicer was given an assistant, since he was getting on in years. The assistance may also have been prompted by the fact that the university buildings were then being heated with a new hot water system, possibly too new-fangled for Spicer.

In today's slang the janitor's most controversial collaboration with the students would have been called "The Moss caper." Incredible as it may seem, Spicer got himself embroiled in some spying activities involving IU's sixth president, Lemuel Moss. The latter, a married clergyman, apparently was fraternizing with the female faculty member who taught Latin. Whatever the extent of their involvement, some of their meetings took place in her office/classroom on the upper floor of one of the university buildings.

The students were twittering about whatever they surmised was going on between the president and the Latin teacher. Representatives from each class were elected to do some spying, and "Uncle

Tommy" was enlisted to help. His part in the incident was to show them the attic area over the Latin recitation room and help them bore peep-holes in the ceiling. The affidavits signed by the student spies and presented to the trustees abruptly ended the career of Moss at IU. Clark states that "this may well be considered one of the most timely if socially unfortunate incidents in Indiana University history." (Moss was the last minister-president of the school.)

Whether there were any repercussions in regard to the janitor's part in the incident is not known. Apparently he did not get involved in any other student caper of the Moss magnitude. Spicer's resignation to the trustees on June 9, 1890, read: "I most respectfully tender to you my resignation." He also wrote that he hoped the university would "still grow in all directions."

It was remembered by students that after the university moved to Dunn's Woods from the Second Street site, Spicer continued to take visitors back to the old campus to see the chapel. Perhaps the sentiment of the students he befriended was best summed up on the October, 1890 edition of the *Daily Student*, which contained the following wistful item: "The old college chapel does not seem natural without 'Uncle Tommy'."

The Herald-Telephone

1800 S. Walnut

Bloomington, Indiana 47401

- CLIP AND SAVE -