

# Storm interrupted drought in 1894

"The average annual precipitation throughout the state is 40 inches, distributed fairly evenly throughout the year. Some years, however bring drought, especially in the southern hills . . ." A Guide to the Hoosier State, 1961.

Perhaps the group of Monroe County businessmen who know most about the tendency of history to repeat itself are the farmers. Their own particular nightmare is frustrating — that they are largely at the mercy of the weather.

Certainly that was the case in the summer of 1894, when rain finally fell after a lapse of two months. Commented the Bloomington *Telephone*, of Aug. 14, "The drought just ended was one of the most serious in the history of Indiana, and was one of the longest. There has been but little rain since May, except about June 14th, when there was a good shower."

Among the casualties of the dry



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

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spell of 1894 were the crops of local farmers. The newspaper suggested that the corn by and large was lost, and that about half as many vegetables as usual would be available for Monroe County tables.

The rain that finally came in mid-August was a real gully-washer. Reported the *Telephone*, "It came yesterday evening about 6 o'clock, and for more than half an hour the fall continued until the streets and gutters were overflowing."

Although the rain was more than welcome, it hitchhiked on a wind-and-electrical storm that was not so welcome. In the wake of the storm, the Knights of Pythias, whose lodge

hall roof was damaged, were obliged to spend considerable time assessing the damage to their "regalia and other equipage."

Other roofs affected were those of a local resident and a business. Peter Martin had been repairing the roof on his house on North Walnut Street, and after the storm his surprised family sorted through wet household effects to see what could be salvaged. As for the business, the *Telephone* related, "The heavy wind damaged the roofing over Carmichael & Urmeys ware room in the Waldron block, and the rain came down through the roof and a great deal of damage was done to goods in the ware room, as about 12 barrels of sugar were completely soaked and virtually ruined; also several barrels of salt and a number of sacks of flour. Mr. Carmichael states that the damage is near \$100."

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