

Noses took a beating in township's early disputes

It may have been something in the water in Benton Township around the turn of the century. Whatever the cause, people who lived there at that time sometimes behaved rather strangely when they got "riled up."

Readers of the *Bloomington Evening World* and the *Telephone* were probably wondering why Benton Townshipians couldn't seem to find more appropriate ways to resolve disputes. The first incident was in 1896, when one of the residents came out on the short end of an argument. He lost part of his nose to a knife-wielder when a political argument got out of hand.

Only six years later, in another dispute, the weapon was a man's teeth.

On June 11, 1903, Jacob Richard-



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

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son was plowing a field, when he was interrupted by the sudden appearance of James Brummett. The latter's errand was for the purpose of retrieving his dog, which he said Richardson had been keeping.

According to the *Telephone*, "George Richardson refused to give the canine up, when a fight ensued. While the two were fighting, Jacob Richardson, the father, and John Richardson came up and a general combat followed.

From the two newspaper accounts it is difficult to tell which party suffered more. Related the *Telephone*, "Brummett was badly injured and claims that John Richardson bit off the end of his nose, and that Jacob Richardson attempted to kill him with a stone."

On the other hand, Jacob Richardson suffered a wound on the head and was, apparently, unconscious for several hours. His injury, according to Dr. Joseph Fritz of Unionville, was "of a very dangerous nature and may prove fatal."

The *Evening World* reported, "Brummett came to the city yesterday afternoon and at the office of Dr. Harris several stitches were taken in sewing up his nose. There was a scalp wound also on his

head.

Telephone readers were informed that when Brummett came to town to get his nose "dressed," he was arrested. He countered with suits against John Richardson for \$5,000 and for \$15,000 against George Richardson. The latter filed an affidavit against Brummett changing him with assault and battery with intent to kill.

There is an old-fashioned name for what happened on the Richardson farm. It is called, "an affray," a term that can be found in the early records of the Circuit Court.

It was then the responsibility of the sheriff and the court to sort out who did what to whom and see that justice was done to the injured party. In this case, there appeared to be two.

Attorney John R. East posted the \$500 bond for Brummett, since the firm of East & East was representing the man. The *Telephone* added that "Warrants were placed in the hands of Sheriff Thrasher for the Richardsons, and they will be brought in today (June 16)."

Tactfully, the newspaper also commented, "Both families are prominent in the eastern part of the county and have heretofore been regarded as peaceable, law-abiding citizens."

It was the *Evening World* that provided its readers with an additional piece of information - news that was likely to attract courthouse habitués and curiosity seekers. "The suits were each filed today and will come up in circuit court on the 22nd day