

Former IU professor had own view of Southern Indiana

After the article about Southern Indiana and IU appeared in a New York City newspaper, the *Bloomington Telephone* reprinted it on Sept. 15, 1883, for the benefit of the readers. The author was Rufus Richardson, who had taught Greek at the university.

What the newspaper's readers may not have been prepared for was his East Coast snobbery and the implication that Bloomington was nothing but a backwater of the United States. Indeed, Richardson concluded his criticism of this area with these comments: "Under these circumstances it is not strange that letters often reach Bloomington, Ill., and lecturers telegraph to waiting audiences, 'Can't keep my engagement. Came by mistake to Bloomington, Illinois.'"

The editor of the *Telephone* was offended by Richardson's flippant writing, and couldn't resist printing a rebuttal at the end of the article.

It ran like this: "Small potatoes deserve small notice; and to fully explain the above it should be stated that Prof. Richardson, who



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

was here a single year, is its author. An eastern fop; and if we may judge from the above, an ignorant fool."

Richardson had written that during the Civil War Gov. Morton had to fight battles on two fronts — against the Confederacy within and without and that had the Confederacy succeeded in winning, Indiana would have willingly joined the Southerners. That was a reckless stretching of the truth.

Yes, there were Southern sympathizers in Indiana in general and Monroe County specifically. The pre-Civil War history of this area reflects the population's Southern heritage.

Prior to the outbreak of the war, there were some stormy meetings in the Court-

house — meetings during which some of the population vehemently opposed the use of force to keep the South in the Union.

One or two of the more vociferous speakers suffered from a bloody nose after the meeting.

It is also true that in the Southern part of the county there were Confederate sympathizers who went to the extreme of organizing in military units and marching in formation. But when a Union Army recruiter's life was in jeopardy, the State Adjutant General didn't hesitate to send some troops with a message that could not be ignored.

It is difficult to understand where Professor Richardson got his information about the governor fighting on two fronts. Yes, there were pockets of the underground organizations variously known as the Knights of the Golden Circle, Order of American Knights, Sons of Liberty, Stars, Peace Organizations and other titles.

The late Logan Esarey, a professor of history at IU, wrote, "There were perhaps 50,000 members then, though it is doubtful if many

of these were aware of the treasonable nature of the order." On the other hand, the state was in the process of furnishing 208,367 men for the Union Army.

In 1863, a man by the name of Gen. Henry B. Carrington was put in charge of the military district that Indiana belonged to. It didn't take him long to find out all he needed to know about the local clusters of Southern sympathizers.

It is unlikely that Professor Richardson was ignorant of what happened to Colonel John Hunt Morgan when he crossed the Ohio River, believing that he would be greeted with open arms. Monroe County historians have noted that church bells were ringing all over Southern Indiana, calling the local militias to defend their counties from Morgan, who was forced to flee across the state line into Ohio.

The other thing Richardson should have known was that "butternuts" (Southern sympathizers) knew better than to express any admiration for the Confederacy.

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