

City taxpayers balk at brick paving plan in 1903

The condition of city streets was on the minds of city councilmen early in November of 1903. In a front-page article, the *Bloomington Courier* suggested that the council was thinking of paving the streets and alleys around the square with brick.

"The matter has not been brought up in a council meeting, but it has been considered by the members. It is believed that these streets should be so improved as they are now in a deplorable condition, needing another heavy coat of crushed stone."

According to the article which appeared on Nov. 6, it was the responsibility of the city marshal to contract for and follow through with repairs on the streets. The readers of the *Courier* were informed in the article, if they hadn't already noticed it, that, "He (Johns) has put crushed stone on the following streets: Rogers, from First to Third; Second to Morton; Morton from Sixth to Ninth; College from Second to Fourth; Walnut between Fourth and Kirkwood; Fourth between Lincoln and Walnut; Kirkwood from Washington to Walnut."

The newspaper promised that more repairs to the streets would be made in the near future. But not everyone was pleased



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

about what the city council had in mind. Citizens' displeasure surfaced at the city council meeting of Nov. 5, 1903.

The article on Nov. 6 began, "Property owners remonstrated against vitrified brick, at last night's meeting of the city council. The necessary number of names were included in each paper."

The mayor, whose name was Dunn, called the roll and discovered that only a quorum of council members was present. Perhaps the others decided to stay home to avoid the controversy.

Anyway, work on the streets and alleys around the square was not first on the agenda. The *Courier* explained that Calvin Snodgrass complained about the "bad condition of a gutter and culvert on west Eighth street, which he asked the street committee to give attention to."

Capt. W.J. Allen led the charge against improvement of the alleys around the square. According to the newspaper, "It is necessary to have the names of two-thirds of the property owners, and the remonstrances contained three-fourths of the names."

There were other petitions placed before the council. The city had appropriated 28 feet of land belonging to Stephen McPhetridge to improve Grant Street, and he expected to be compensated for it.

City Treasurer W.A. Rice presented the council with the bill for the opening of Fairview and East Ninth Street. Residents on Fess Street wanted a new gutter and crossing on Fess.

Bloomington was still struggling with water problems. A contract to provide materials for 4- and 6-inch pipes went to the U.S. Pipe Company of Cincinnati.

Next came financial claims against the city, which the council agreed to pay. The two most expensive items on that list were owed to James Blair for crushed stone (\$180) and bills incurred by the water works at \$265.31.

What happened to the brick alleys for the

area of the square? Apparently, the city council wasn't able to get past the remonstrances until several years later. On Aug. 16, 1911, the *Courier* ran a front page article indicating that the approval of the council was finally obtained on Aug. 15. The brick can still be seen in the alleys.

Various city council business housekeeping-type items were considered by the men. Here is a sampling. "Mrs. Saro, representing Perring Blewett, asked that the city take care of drainage trouble caused by the building of East 3rd street bridge and raising the creek bottom. Water now backs up into the cellar, and he claims to have had a natural drainage before the improvements. Henry Alexander asked that weeds on 14th and Dunn be cut."

Then there was the complaint of D.E. Andrews. He said he would not pay his assessment, because he was charged for sodding he didn't get.

Finally, it was announced that Blair and Kerr were the recipients of the contract for paving those brick alleys leading into the square.

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