

Railroad aided students, business

There was a point when Bloomington was the butt of that old joke about "You can't get there from here!"

ACTUALLY, WHEN THE Orchard Brothers' stagecoach routes had yielded to the primitive pufferbellies of the New Albany and Salem Railroad in the 1850s, Monroe Countians had made some progress when it came to communicating with the outside world. But incoming Indiana University students grumbled good-naturedly about the infrequent trains and being obliged to get off the trains and walk up the grades of the New Albany and Salem Railroad.

Too, some Bloomington businessmen thought another railroad through the city would be a means of improving business. There were manufacturing concerns here that were concerned about the two-way flow of raw materials and finished products.

Meanwhile in Indianapolis the Indianapolis and Southern Railroad was incorporated in 1899. The backers had plans to run tracks through Johnson, Morgan, Brown, Lawrence, Orange, Dubois and Warrick Counties to the city of Evansville. An alternate trunk line was also projected

Looking back

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to run through Monroe, Greene and Sullivan Counties.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE incorporators were not enterprising enough to amass enough capital for their young railroad. It remained a company on paper until February of 1902, when the company was re-organized. Bloomington businessmen, who were naturally interested in the company's plans, made a trip to Indianapolis to encourage the ISR to translate their plans into the reality of tracks that would come through Monroe County.

Indiana University had an interest in the accessibility of Bloomington because the coal it consumed could come to town more cheaply by rail, and its officials

wanted a switch to run close to the campus.

The next hurdle for the railroad officials was to appear before the Bloomington City Council to petition for permission to put their tracks across the city. On Dec. 2, 1902, before Frank J. Dunn, and councilmen Sanford Teter, John Potts, Fred Fess, Henry Splitgerber, Ellsworth Cowper and Isaac Walker, the railroad representatives pressed their case, and after some heated discussion the franchise was passed unanimously.

EARLY IN THE following summer Archibald White of Wall Street was persuaded to put some capital into the company, but ultimately he let the original investors down by not advancing any money.

Monroe Countians had already expressed their faith in the venture through a referendum. In July of 1902, the voters of Van Buren Township declined to give any financial help, while the townships of Benton, Bloomington and Perry promised assistance to the extent of \$88,882.

Enter Stuyvesant Fish, president of the Illinois Central Railroad and assorted members of his official family, who took a ride over the so-far laid tracks of the In-

dianapolis Southern Railroad. Having done so they decided to bail out the nervous original investors.

Matters began to move in high gear when the ICRR chief engineer supervised the remaining construction. The company surely must have had confidence in his expertise, since he advocated abandoning expensive work already done in the Smithville area and the great tunnel building by Bruce Head near Sanford.

RELOCATION MEANT that the old franchise issued by the city had to be scrapped. The second time around at the City Council meeting the City Merchants Association, forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce, appeared in force to oppose a new franchise. It was said that the merchants had been in sympathy with the Monon, which naturally didn't want any competition. Nevertheless, after considerable debate and a postponement, the new franchise was passed.

According to the *History of Lawrence and Monroe Counties, Indiana*, the first passenger train of the Illinois Central steamed into Bloomington on April 23.

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