

Article cast aspersions on city's women

"The Times' correspondent at Bloomington, the seat of the state university, sends the following little story which is good enough to be embalmed." — Bloomington Telephone, Jan. 13, 1883, (reprinted from the Indianapolis Sunday Times).

In the 1880s little newspaper wars were raging all over Indiana — wars spurred on by fierce competition for subscribers and the biases of editor/publishers. Indianapolis editors, in particular, did not particularly appreciate Bloomington and the presence of the university here.

A case in point is the Bloomington Telephone reprint of an article that had appeared in the Indianapolis Sunday Times at the beginning of 1883. According to the Times, an Indiana University student had written home to his father to report his current doings, which included getting himself engaged to a Bloomington widow.

Continued the Times: "... where-upon the old man wrote back: 'Go it, my boy, while you are young; I



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

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was engaged to the same widow when I was in college."

There followed in the Times article the worldly information that all college towns are populated with "a class of faded flirts, maidens of uncertain age or widows with perpetual youth, who never die and who never surrender. Their long and varied experience gives them great advantage over the unsuspecting young man who crosses their path, and as the years roll by, each succeeding class furnishes its quota of victims to their nature and irresistible charms."

Furthermore, the editor of the Indianapolis Times philosophized that dallying with Bloomington's

spinsters and widows was not only a rite of passage for male students, but useful learning as well. "No college town would be complete without these unselfish benefactresses, and the fact that it exists in Bloomington shows that the state university is not lacking in this branch of necessary equipment."

Did the aspersions cast upon local females go unchallenged? Well, their defense was not taken up by the Bloomington Telephone, for such an effort was unnecessary. The Times article struck a nerve in another Indiana college town.

Chirped the Greencastle Banner: "The brilliant imagination of the Times enables it to grow facetious; or, does the writer merely enlarge upon his own personal experience?"

Professing to know nothing of the "situation in Bloomington," the Banner accused the Times editor of being out of shape with the times and an old fogey. "Could he but see,

see Women, Back page