

Concerning Polk Township, no news was good news

EDITOR'S NOTE: This column is running today because computer problems kept it from running Wednesday.

"A man could not even trust his neighbor in those days. The southeastern part of the county, covering Polk Township, became a notable place for counterfeit coins and government bills."

— From the Lawrence and Monroe counties history published in 1914.

On June 27, 1897, some of the readers of the Bloomington *World* were probably amused by an anonymous letter to the editor that appeared on the back page. It was



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

from a resident of Polk Township, who signed himself "Growler."

His complaint was that the newspaper shamefully neglected that part of the county, never printing anything about the doings of its residents or the beauty of the landscape there. The tone of the letter

was very much tongue-in-cheek, the writer made his point with some suggestions for improvement of the situation.

Growler wrote, "We don't care a snap when Miss Gad-about leaves for a visit to the quarries, or when Miss Trot-around come here with her children, nor do we care how many red headed students or angelic young maidens are going to be married some time. We can beat that sky high down here in Polk."

There were plenty of Polk Townshipites who could be found on the square any day — persons who could furnish lots of tidbits about

the doings of people down that way. They had a distinctive look and couldn't be missed, he explained.

In printing little about Polk Township, the *World* may have more-or-less written the place off as unnewsworthy, except when one of the residents ran afoul of the law. And some of them certainly did.

Both of the Monroe County histories have little separate accounts of the founding of the townships. In the books the problem of counterfeiters in Polk Township in the 1840s and 1850s is described.

The Lawrence and Monroe counties' history pointed out, "The hilly

country, the impenetrable ravines and thick morasses afforded ideal haunts for gangsters of all description, and to make a bad matter worse, the law was inadequate to check their depredations. It came to a point where men of high reputation in the communities could well join hands with a criminal gang, and either steal something or make counterfeit money, and then come back to civilization with his ill-gained spoils and resume the perfectly 'respectful' life he had led hitherto."

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