

Downtown dangerous for deputy prosecutor in 1911

July 6, 1911, was not a good day for at least one member of the legal fraternity of Bloomington. Although what happened to Deputy Prosecutor J.F. Regester could be considered one of the hazards of the job, he surely must have been surprised at the ferocity of the incident.

In the first place, Jesse Sipes had what you might call a real grudge against the deputy prosecutor. The latter explained about the grudge in court the next morning.

On the previous evening, the deputy prosecutor was downtown. In police court on July 7, he described



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

the incident for Mayor John Harris, who was presiding. "... I noticed a good-sized crowd had assembled near the Monon depot, and out of curiosity I went down to see what it was about. As I passed Edward Johns' saloon, I noticed Chief (Joseph) Hensley and (Jesse) Sipes

standing on the sidewalk engaged in conversation."

Continued Regester, "I approached them and heard Sipes say that I had mistreated him and (had) prosecuted his brother, Jack Sipes, last week for conducting a mummy show in an automobile on the street without a license. I informed Sipes that I was only doing my duty as an officer and enforcing the law, and that I had no malice against his brother."

Apparently, that wasn't good enough for Sipes, who continued to rant and rave. Hensley advised him to go on about his business.

His business was selling "electric belts," whatever that item was. Sensing that there might be trouble, Hensley went one step further in enforcement of whatever ordinance pertained to selling on the public streets — he told Sipes to get his selling operation off the sidewalk. Sipes moved to the Monon depot ground.

For the benefit of the readers of the *Bloomington Weekly Courier* who didn't happen to be downtown on that particular evening, the newspaper continued Regester's version of what happened next.

"Soon afterward I noticed Sipes

coming up toward me from the west, but had no idea of an assault. He approached me from behind and before I knew what had happened, I had been struck in the mouth and the blood began to flow freely from the wound. Then Sipes clutched at my leg and tripped me, falling on me."

Fortunately Regester was not too stunned to defend himself. He grabbed Sipes by the legs and held him down until Hensley came to his assistance. Actually, according to the *Courier*, Regester got in a cou-

see **Looking back**, page C5