

# Petty thefts concern editor in 1867

What's wrong with Bloomington was the subject of an editorial in the *Progressive Republican* edited by William Gabe in the 1860s.

On Sept. 6, 1867, the editor wrote, "Bloomington has become famous for petty little lawsuits, in which one party is accused of having made mouths at the other, or else the defendant had been honest enough to inform plaintiff that he is a 'dreadful fool.'" These "trials" have become so common as to excite neither interest nor comment, and the popular feeling is that the individual who drafted the "provoke" act, ought to be compelled to publish a country paper till he is starved to death."

As annoyed as Gabe felt about slander suits, he was more con-



## Looking back

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cerned about another problem in the community — "petty larcenies that are daily, or rather nightly, committed within our corporate limits." The editor cited instances of missing wood, fruit, vegetables, poultry and "every description of provisions left in an unlocked room or cellar (that) disappear with provoking regularity."

Who were the culprits? Gabe indulged himself editorially in some speculation about that question. "Suspicion has been thrown

upon several large and illy regulated families, but for some unexplained reason, the persons who suffer from their depredations do not prosecute upon the abundant evidence secures."

Hardest hit, according to the editor, were families "living northwest of the railroad, (who have been) annoyed almost beyond endurance, within the past year by the characters alluded to -- all efforts to eject them having proved futile.

Though the culprits were undoubtedly taking short cuts to acquiring money, they were apparently not above putting out a little effort to appropriate some else's property. On Sept. 12, Gabe reported two more examples of

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