

Newspaper exaggerated 1914 visit by revelers

To read an Indianapolis newspaper early in January 1914, you'd think Bloomington was the white-capping capital of America. (For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the term, it meant lynching, attitude-adjustment meted out by a "jury" of anonymous, masked midnight intruders.)

Certainly Monroe County had had its share of the shameful behavior of self-styled vigilantes, beginning with the Southern sympathizers who lynched a Union Army recruiter during the Civil



Looking back

By Rose
McIlveen

1-7-1989

War because he had the effrontery to visit their township. And then there were the men who lynched a man they thought harbored counterfeiters. "Crook" Mershon was shot in the jail by vigilantes in the belief that saving county taxpayers

the expense of a second trial was a worthwhile thing to do.

But the 1914 ridicule of Bloomington by the Indianapolis newspaper was far wide of the mark. The local *Weekly Star* had a good time at the expense of the capital city newspaper.

According to the *Star*, the incident was a case of high spirits, or rather, too much spirits. Reported the edition of Jan. 16, 1914, "The other night some men took on a little liquor and started out to have some fun. Out on West Ninth Street,

they crossed a field, one playing a mouth organ and the rest singing."

Their rambling took them to the house of Mrs. Sarah Kelly, where they made themselves generally obnoxious. When her companion, Charles Reeves, suggested that they take their boisterous behavior elsewhere, the group of revelers "chased him out of the house and beat him up."

The *Star* did not disclose to its readers how the Indianapolis newspaper got wind of the incident, but

see Looking back, page A8