

Whatever happened to those eligible bachelors?

It would be interesting to know what the boys in the news room of the Saturday *Courier* had been drinking at lunch before they put together the Oct. 8, 1881, issue of the newspaper. "Bachelors' Batch," which appeared on the front page, was not news and probably should have been placed somewhere else in that edition.

A couple of smaller headlines went with the story. "A Quantity of Loveliness Going to Waste That Should Go to Waist" and "A Good Place for Matrimonial Inclined Ladies to go a-Fishing" were written to attract the readers.

What did the article say? Here is the lead sentence. "The *Courier* prints below the names of all the old bachelors residing in Bloomington we can think of. The list is by no means complete, but as it is it will be found interesting reading for marriageable maidens of matured years, as well as widows of all classes."

The *Courier* writer suggested that the reason the men on its list of bachelors were unmarried was because of bashfulness. Continued the newspaper, "A desire to assist them to better their condition is the *Courier's* aim in publishing the list."

As for the female readers, the *Courier* staff thought that although 1881 was not a leap year, the women should not feel reluctant to write "lines of comfort and encouragement to any one of the list." Added the newspaper, "If



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

the ladies are any ways puzzled in making a choice, letters may be sent to the care of the *Courier*, and we will promise to make a good selection and deliver the letter to that person." The staff promised not to reveal the names of the female letter writers.

The lucky men mentioned in the article were George Atkinson, Sol Tannenbaum, Ellis Sluss, John Graham, Ike Walker, Chris Walker, James A. Atkinson, Milt McCollough, Columbus Browning, Ira Browning, Charley Alexander, Charley Tournier, Charley Maxwell, George Walker and Bill Moore.

Also listed were Lon Rogers, Dick Maxwell, John Shryer, James Gilmore, Charley Mitchell, Ed Hall, Dick Houston, Professor J.A. Woodborn, Will P. Rogers, Billy Blair, Walter Collins, James Robinson and T.S. Lyon.

The 1900 census for Monroe County, 1910 City Directory and records of Rose Hill Cemetery may indicate what became of some of the men. Many of them did not appear in any of the records, which may have meant that they left Bloomington.

The *Courier* listed George Atkinson as "well-to-do and eligible." He was 37 years old when the newspaper put his name in their list and died at the age of 92.

Ellis Sluss, who was 25 in 1881, was living in the home of his brother-in-law, Thomas Skirvin, in 1900. The newspaper said Sluss would "pop" (presumably the question) if he had the right opportunity."

Then there were Ike and Chris Walker, who were living in the home of Inas Walker in 1910. Noted the *Courier*, "Ike Walker is not such a confirmed old bachelor as some might think. Give him half a chance and see."

The newspaper contradicted itself in the information about James A. Atkinson. In the feature story about bachelors, it said (he has) "a stock of dry goods to start in with, and is only waiting for the golden opportunity." But on the same page there is a separate item which indicates that he was planning to sell off his dry goods stock.

Charley Tournier was 24 when his name was mentioned in the *Courier* story. The 1910 City Directory indicated that he was a tailor whose business was at 111 E. Kirkwood Ave, and he lived at 408 E. Fourth St. Yes, he did marry. His wife's name was Eva.

George Walker married a woman whose name was Alice. They lived 822 W. Sixth St. The *Courier* reporter noted that Walker was "chief of the loveletter department of the Post

Office and knows how to sympathize with the afflicted."

Praise for being the "hardest working bachelor of the lot" went to James Gilmore, whom the newspaper called "genial, honest and good-looking." He went into the laundry business and married a woman by the name of Amanda. Gilmore was 35 in 1881.

James A. Woodburn, who was a professor of history at Indiana University, took his time while he was looking for a wife and married a much younger woman, Carrie. The newspaper commented about Woodburn that he was "more addicted to books than to the ladies. The right kind of a teacher might, however, educate him up to a matrimonial standard."

James Robinson, eventually lived in the 300 block of South Washington Street. Yes, he did marry. His wife's name was Lillie. The *Courier* called him "A jewel in the crown of bachelorhood ... an energetic young business man with a brilliant future before him — providing he gets the right kind of wife."

Then there was Ed Hall, who married a woman by the name of Katherine. They lived at 312 N. Washington St.

Concluded the *Courier*, "There are just as good fish in the matrimonial sea as ever was caught." It also would be interesting to know whether any of the females of Bloomington took the article to heart.

HT 9/23/96