

# League fought drinking, gambling in 1895

"The committee which is pushing the investigation against City Marshal (George) Owens is not in it for fun . . . As one expressed it, 'We are in it for blood.'" *Bloomington Telephone*, Jan. 4, 1895.

Throughout Monroe County's history, there have been citizens who have sought to change the conduct of others according to perceived standards. For some 50 years the area was plagued by the activities of the whitecappers, who took the law into their own hands, appeared suddenly in the night and flogged or maimed so-called "wrong-doers."



## Looking back

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In the 1890s, some leading citizens of Bloomington — like the whitecappers — had attitude adjustment in mind, but night-riding appearances and anonymity were not to their taste. They called themselves the Law and Order League, and

their objective was to change some of the leisure habits of local residents and ensure that the laws were enforced.

The *Telephone* of Jan. 8, 1895, implied that the organization, which had been formed several years earlier, ordinarily conducted its investigations in secret, but were planning to go public for the first time. The newspaper informed its readers, "The Law and Order League investigation is the talk of the town. It was generally understood that the investigation would be secret — as is the rule — but the

committee thought it best to have everything open and above board, so that there could be no room for the acquisition that any one was being persecuted, so far as the Law and Order League was concerned."

The League's target was vice in general and gambling and drinking in particular. Their view was that the laws on the books were not only being ignored by Marshal Owens, but that he was also profiting from overlooking them.

It is not known how many members the league had on its roster.

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