

# Beloved veteran's funeral was a community affair

The Bloomington community knew that General Morton C. Hunter's death was imminent, but when it actually happened, that didn't make it easier to bear. Obituaries at the turn of the century were usually flowery. His surpassed all others, and the genuine affection of local citizens was evident.

Some readers will recall that Hunter's house used to stand at the intersection of 11th and Walnut streets — a white frame neo-classic style house with massive columns.

In October of 1896, Hunter's health had seriously deteriorated, but he had suffered a stroke much earlier — in 1879. According to the *Bloomington Telephone* of Oct. 27, 1896, that stroke caused some paralysis, but it did not put an end to his varied activities.

The biographical sketch of Hunter in Theophilus Wylie's *History of Indiana University* indicates the strength of the man's influence. "Occupation and position lawyer, member of Indiana Legislature, Representative in Congress, Colonel in the army, Brevet General ..." Hunter had received a Bachelor of Laws degree from IU in 1848.



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

Wylie also noted that "Shortly before the severe illness with which General Hunter was afflicted he was widely spoken of as the Republican candidate for Governor of Indiana."

Despite all of the political honors to his credit, the man was best loved because of his Civil War record.

The biographical sketch in Wylie's book states that Hunter was "in all of the battles under General Thomas from Stone River to Chicamauga, and from thence with General Sherman in all his battles to the close of the war, including his march to the sea." The furious battle at the Chicamauga Creek in 1863 is described in some history books as a key battle, but those accounts do not do very much justice to individuals who played key roles in

the fight.

Lest there be any Bloomingtonian who did not know what Hunter did in that battle, the *Telephone* made it clear. "Some of the brigades on both sides were roughly handled, but the position occupied by the 82nd (Indiana) was held until it was relieved by a part of Gen. Baird's command late in the afternoon.

"When Gen. Hunter discovered that the weak line was giving way before those heavy (Confederate) columns, he ordered a charge. The regiment responded valiantly and retook the slight breastworks at a loss of nearly half its number." Hunter was considered "the hero of Snodgrass hill," according to the newspaper.

Hundreds of Monroe Countians and some out-of-towners filed past his casket in the Hunter house, and during his funeral the crowd not only filled the house but spread all over the lawn. The old Civil War veteran would have approved of the service conducted by the Rev. M.G. Allison of the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church. A choir from the church sang two hymns, one of them being "Nearer My God to Thee."

The selection of pallbearers reflected

Hunter's military and political life. They were Maj. J.B. Mulky, Capt. G.K. Perry, Dr. S.K. Rhorer, Maj. H.F. Perry, Capt. W.J. Allen, the Hon. Nat U. Hill, Senator Duncan, and the Hon. W.F. Browning.

The newspaper described the scene after the funeral. "The procession reached from the house on the north end of Walnut street to the public square. A touching incident was the old regimental flag of the 82nd Indiana ... carried by a few of the old veterans who had followed the flag in many terrible encounters in the civil war." The procession was led by the Mechanics Band and included Hunter's Phi Gamma Delta fraternity brothers, as well as members of the Masonic lodge and the Monroe County Bar.

Bloomington merchants paid tribute to Hunter by closing their stores during the funeral and burial. If Hunter had been asked what he thought his greatest accomplishment had been, he might have said it was the erecting of a monument at Chicamauga. He had headed up the monument commission in the years after the war and played a prominent role in the dedication ceremony.

H-T 6/22/98