

# Today's political rallies are pale version of past hoopla

Though today Democrats or Republicans may take part in the Fourth of July parade, the political party rallies of the past are just that — past history.

Theophilus Wylie, an Indiana University professor, came to the county in 1837. The year of the rally he described was 1880. Wylie wrote, "The Republican rally was the grandest we have had since the days of Lincoln. The ground was crowded to overflowing."

Out-of-town speakers were featured, the principal one being an Ohio senator by the name of Chance. Wylie, the man, was inseparable from Wylie, the teacher, and he put his estimate of the speaker in his diary. "On the whole good, but he (Chance) seemed some-



## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

times to verge on the profane."

Next up on the platform was a "Mr. Gibbs from Tennessee." Wylie described him as "a volunteer, though pretty old." Continued the professor, "... (he ) had rather too much of the buffoon about him. After speaking and amusing the people for half an hour, he was told his time was up. But he wanted to go on — and he had proceeded about a minute when he was rudely stopped by the glee club raising a tune."

Despite the fact that the speaker was windy, Wylie thought the interruption wasn't politically shrewd, adding, "Considering he was a republican from the South the treatment seemed to me to be rather shabby on the part of the managers."

Wylie didn't recall the name of the next speaker — only that he was from Alabama. In turn, he was followed by a Mr. O'Brien, an Irishman. Wylie deemed that man's speech as "eloquent and short."

Earlier in his diary, the professor had described another rally which began inside the courthouse, but had to be moved outside, to accommodate an overflow crowd. The speaker, a Senator Elliott of South Carolina, who was black, had been

given up on because he was late.

But Wylie decided Elliott was worth waiting for. "His language was good and speech at first very deliberate, rather slow, abounding in big words, not however, improperly used. As he warmed he spoke faster — his voice clear, very loud and distinct. (I) think that his articulation might have been heard on the top of our house. Subject matter good, though a little presy(cq)."

The crowd must have liked Elliott. Wylie wrote that the man spoke for over two hours and concluded, "The principal fault was that he was too long."

Present-day readers of Wylie's diaries could not mistake his politics, but they could fault his ability to

predict the outcome of an election. On Oct. 10, 1880, he had written, "I am by no means sanguine. The low and ignorant tag rag and bob tail will give, I fear, a Democratic majority."

That he was mistaken, was also recorded in his diary with a wry comment, partially in Latin. "Republicans carried the state — Indiana no longer the cauda canus australis" (the old southern tail of the animal).

Wylie's diary, which has been transcribed, deciphered and lovingly reproduced by IU Professor Emeritus Harry Day, includes a few notes about the victory celebration. "A torchlight procession last night — not much enthusiasm — people are tired hurrahing."