

First Armistice Day recalled

Citizens celebrate peace

It all began with the faint hum on a telegraph wire running into Monroe County. The news that traveled along that wire prompted the joyous blowing of a train whistle down in the McDowell locomotive yard on the south side of town.

THAT WHISTLE was shortly echoed by the city fire alarm and the whistles of the Showers Factory complex on the north side of town. Unable to sleep through all that ruckus, Bloomingtonians tumbled out of their beds at 2 a.m., on that crisp November morning of 1918.

The "war to end all wars" was over. Hastily dressing, many citizens turned up on the square to hug each other and shake hands and get a bonfire going to keep themselves warm. From all parts of town members of a band and Company "F" turned out to give the wee-hours-of-the-morning celebration a really festive air.

According to the *Daily Telephone* of Nov. 11, 1918, few of the celebrants even took time out

Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

for breakfast. Just after sunrise when the Showers Factory employees reported for work, they were informed that they were getting the day off. Public spirited general manager Edward Showers got them all organized into lines. They then adjourned to the square, where their boss made an impromptu speech standing on a box, which had been hastily set up on the southwest corner. Not to be outdone, the "Monon Shop Men" and the city band under the direction of Charles Stineburg got into the act, too.

MEANWHILE, on the IU campus, the students got the day off. By 2:30 in the afternoon the Students' Army Training Corps, forerunner of the ROTC, was in uniform and marching downtown and back to the campus to hear some patriotic speeches on Jordan Field.

According to the *Telephone*, in one part of the county — the Clear Creek area — the celebration inadvertently began a day early. Things had been pretty grim in the home of William Nikirk since he got word from Washington that his son, Homer, had been killed overseas the previous July.

Suddenly, on Nov. 10, the family was informed that there had been a mistake and that Private Nikirk had been recuperating nicely in a field hospital since mid-September. The communique was even more specific, informing the family that their son was suffering from having