

Spanker's Branch historic creek

By ROSE WOERTZ

Special to the H-T

Back in the days when Bloomington was just a little county seat there were a couple of little creeks on the northeast side. Joining together near Dunn's Woods, they formed what the natives called Spanker's Branch, which meandered lazily across the re-located IU campus.

COURTING UNIVERSITY students whiled away their leisure hours along its banks, and the freshmen gleefully gathered to burn their "rhnie pods" in a year-end bonfire.

It was a Californian who had a hand in changing the Branch's quaint name. In 1881 Leland Stanford had decided to found a university and name it after himself. Searching the country for an academic man of sufficient stature to guide his namesake in its formative years, Stanford lured away IU President David Starr Jordan.

For his outstanding leadership the University

EDITOR'S NOTE: Contributions to the *Looking Back* column, which appears each Saturday, are accepted by *The Herald-Telephone*. They can be in the form of manuscripts (not more than 800 words) or pictures. Articles and pictures can be sent to: *Looking Back*, *The Herald-Telephone* P.O. Box 909, Bloomington, Ind. 47401. Pictures will be returned.

Board of Trustees deliberated about naming a building after Jordan. From California he in turn was quoted as having preferred to have that campus stream named after him instead. The Board obliged and elevated the branch to river status.

RENAMED THE JORDAN, it became a campus legend for generations. One early out-of-state student was said to have brought his canoe in anticipation of happy hours on the "river".

The Jordan assumed its picturesque role as a

drainage ditch until it was incorporated into the city's storm sewer system. But in the spring of 1931 during one of Bloomington's "monsoon" seasons the Jordan's banks were unable to accommodate the runoff when the skies dumped 6½ inches of water in a 24-hour period.

Residents between the campus and the square had to cross Kirkwood in a boat. (So widespread were the rains that two residents, Rodney May and Leland Woolery were drowned in rescue efforts at Dayton, In. and Lafayette.)

IN ITS COURSE ACROSS the city the Jordan runs in an irregular course out of Dunn Meadow across Indiana Avenue, under Dunn Street between Fourth and Fifth and zigzagged along South Lincoln by the Third Street Park.

Drivers who cruise down South Washington are probably unaware that they are passing over the Jordan at Smith Avenue. The river re-emerges at First and

(Continued on page 2, Col. 5)