

Moving the university from Seminary Square

The fledgling Indiana University at the corner of Walnut and Second streets was doing about as well as could be expected when disaster struck in 1854. A fire destroyed the first College Building — a fire of very suspicious origin. The local newspaper speculated that the fire had been deliberately set by persons who wanted the university moved away from Bloomington.

Before the fire the campus (in what is now Seminary Square) consisted of a Seminary Building, professor's house, College Building, boarding house and laboratory building. As the university prospered, so did the adjoining property. Unfortunately, that very attractiveness threatened to encircle the campus and leave no room for growth.

Nevertheless, the trustees replaced the old Seminary Building in 1855, and the only complaints about the location were related to the building of the New Albany and Salem Railroad. There were sparks from the engines, and their noise



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

drowned out recitations in the classrooms.

The minutes of the trustees in the early years contain such mundane "housekeeping" chores as the moving of the university privy to a more healthful distance from the other buildings. There was also some attention given to the aesthetics with the planting of trees and shrubs to soften the starkness of the buildings. Perhaps the very first instance of town/gown cooperation can be found in the minutes of the Sept. 23, 1839, minutes: "Resolved that the committee on accounts be authorized to pass an order for \$25 to aid in making a sidewalk from town to the university campus."

see Looking back, Back page