

Mayor's thirst for water projects angered citizens

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side of the coin was that more students placed a greater strain on Bloomington's less-than-adequate water supply. In June of 1914, then Governor Ralston had written, "I do not wish to be harsh in what I say, but it seems to me that they (the people of Bloomington) do not fully appreciate the serious consequences that may result to the student

body growing out of a water famine."

It is not known whether Mayor Harris resented the governor's comments, but the water shortages just kept coming and were gleefully reported by newspapers in other parts of the state, including Lafayette. Against the advice of university geologists, Mayor Harris had not only insisted on building the waterworks on

the west side of Bloomington, but on enlarging on it at a later date.

Meanwhile, the university had already dammed up Griffy Creek to help itself. The drawback was that the water from the university lake had to be pumped up a 220-foot hill.

The water issue proved to be John Harris's own personal political Waterloo. Having bragged about his accomplishment in the in-

stallation of the Leonard Springs plant, he was stuck with it. He bulldozed a 5-4 vote through the City Council to buy additional land adjacent to Leonard Springs and build a second lake.

As IU historian, Dr. Burton D. Myers, put it, "This announcement was supposed to end the controversy as to whether a permanent solution of our water problem would be found at White River or at Griffy Creek. Instead of the end, it proved the beginning of a struggle which dragged on nearly four and one-half years."

Though the mayor had a

band of loyal supporters, other local citizens, including some influential ones, had some real misgivings about pouring some \$100,000 more of the taxpayers' money into a leaky-sieve system that didn't work.

In insisting upon the Leonard Springs site, the mayor discovered he had taken on not only a disgruntled university community, but the young Bloomington Chamber of Commerce that was just beginning to flex its muscles in the political power structure of the city.

Next week: The four-and-a-half year battle.

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