

IU's place in Bloomington history not solid

"Now that the legislature is in session there is the customary renewal of the talk about the proposed removal of the state university from Bloomington. A meeting of the general assembly would be incomplete without the university removal gossip."

— Editorial in the *Washington Herald* and reprinted in the *Bloomington Weekly Courier*, Feb. 5, 1915.

Most of the move-IU-away-from-Bloomington agitators wanted to put the university in Indianapolis. In 1915 it was a different story.

The *Washington Herald* and *Bloomington Weekly Courier* on Feb. 5 informed its readers that a bill introduced in the Indiana General Assembly Senate suggested an alternative. "Now comes a proposal in the shape of a measure by a member of the state senate which provides for the consolidation of Indiana university and Purdue university at Lafayette."

If any of the newspaper's readers were not wide awake, the front page article would have jolted them rudely awake. Complained the *Courier*, "If this bill becomes a law, the great buildings at Bloomington



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

that have cost the state millions will be abandoned and expenditures of many millions will be made to harmonize the vast scheme contemplated for Lafayette."

And what would Bloomington get in exchange? Explained the newspaper, "The bill provides that the buildings and grounds at Bloomington are to be utilized for the institution for the care of the feeble-minded now at Fort Wayne."

Grumbled the newspapers, "... this is puerile, to say the least of it. There are enough buildings at Bloomington to supply a half dozen feeble-minded institutions, even if it were advisable to move the school from Fort Wayne, which it isn't."

The editor down at the *Herald* had done some homework, for he explained to his

readers that "The University of Wisconsin has had that state by the throat for many years, and the application of college-bred theories to the government of the state threatens to impoverish the taxpayers. They are told that there is added efficiency, but the increase is not worth the cost."

Furthermore, the writer posed this question: Who would benefit from such a merger? Answering his own rhetorical question, the editor wrote, "The benefit to Lafayette and the corresponding harm to Bloomington would come from this combination does not concern us, nor does it affect other communities in the state."

The newspaper suggested that if the university had to move, Lafayette is as good a place as any other. At that point in the article, the reporter finally got around to what had prompted the latest outcry of the move-the-university folks: Bloomington city officials' procrastination about remedying the city's poor water supply. Elaborated the *Herald*, "It is just as accessible as there is need for, and the insufficient water supply, if it is insufficient, may easily be remedied."

The newspaper reiterated Bloomington's

attractions. "Bloomington is an ideal situation for a college, high and dry on its base of living limestone, naturally one of the most wholesome spots in the state of Indiana."

The editorial writer at the *Washington Herald* also praised the town for its morality, although at times that opinion would have inspired some arguments, especially from the Women's Christian Temperance Union and some of the churches. "Furthermore, the moral tone of the city of Bloomington is second to no other city of Indiana. The complaints against Bloomington as a location for Indiana University may be set aside as frivolous."

The *Herald* editorial writer had a particular suggestion for the legislator who proposed the move: "It would be much better for the state of Indiana if the present legislature would put away the Van Auken bill as a measure impracticable and pay some attention to what is being taught in the colleges we have, instead of proposing more colossal expenditures for institutions of higher learning."

Next week: Other places to put IU.

H-T 8/9/93