

## Mayor, chamber squared off

# Need for water sparked battle

Round one of the water supply contest of Mayor John G. Harris vs the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce and other influential citizens, had been won by the mayor when his project to expand the Leonard Springs plant got through the City Council by a 5-4 vote.

**WATER, OR RATHER** the lack of it, was the main topic of discussion at a Chamber of Commerce banquet on May 24, 1922. One of the speakers was Harry R. Kurrie, president of the Monon Railroad, "an interested water-user."

Despite the publicity about the concern of the chamber, within two weeks the council reaffirmed the Leonard Springs addition. The chamber countered with a unanimous rejection of the project, and the *Bloomington Daily Telephone* ran a full-page editorial that agreed with the chamber's position.

Undaunted by such formidable opposition, Mayor Harris took his \$100,000 proposed water project to the State Tax Board for approval.

## Looking back

By Rose McIlveen  
Third in a series

Even as the board was having hearings in the Monroe County courthouse, the area was suffering from 82 straight days "without a good rain."

On Sept. 8 the tax board nixed Mayor Harris's project. Their reasons were: \$100,000 wouldn't fix the water problem; taxpayers had the right to know how much it would cost to get the job done, and the \$35,000 price tag for the land was way too high. (It had been appraised at \$5,000, and some citizens had the uneasy feeling that

some kickbacks were built into the inflated price.)

**IN THE FACE** of growing opposition to the mayor's plans, two of his council votes defected and voted with a 6-3 majority to shelve the project and hire a Chicago engineering firm to assess the situation.

Countered one of the mayor's untrained amateur "water experts," quarry holes hold water. Therefore, "Limestone land will hold water."

Meanwhile, Bloomington's fire insurance rates increased as high as 42 percent after an inspection by state officials. Four Bloomingtonians, including Henry Gentry and John Cravens, persuaded the Slutz factory in Indianapolis to loan Bloomington a \$10,000 fire truck, which had been built for San Francisco. Showers furniture factory had resorted to hav-