

Dunn died bitter about Bloomington land dealings

"The many friends of the venerable Moses F. Dunn at Bedford will be sorry to learn of his very serious illness."

— *Bloomington Daily Telephone*, Oct. 19, 1915.

Moses Dunn's life had run its course when he was 73 years old. The Bloomington native had long ago moved to Bedford, where he lay dying of heart disease.

The news of his death surely must have prompted a lot of speculation about what would be done with his considerable fortune, reputedly a quarter of a million dollars. There were no wife and children to mourn him. He died a lifelong bachelor.

Why were Bloomington tongues exercised at the time of his death? The *Telephone* added fuel to the speculation in subsequent issues.

Moses Dunn's family name was forever stamped upon the city of Bloomington, the



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

hometown he had angrily rejected. Money was at the heart of his anger.

First of all, he was one of the sellers of what was known as Dunn's Woods, the second campus of Indiana University. In 1883, after the fire on the old campus at the foot of College Avenue, the IU trustees decided to move away from there, because the school was beginning to be hemmed in by new development.

Though several parcels of land for a new campus had been offered at a lower price, Moses Dunn was willing to "sacrifice" 20 acres of the family homestead for \$6,000. The trustees under the leadership of David Banta

accepted the offer.

Dunn retained some of the family acreage that was north of Seventh Street, an area that came to be known as University Courts. Bloomington was moving eastward, and Dunn profited from the attractiveness of land close to the new campus.

After McCalla School was built, the city fathers felt that Indiana Avenue should be extended northward. In fact, the street was to be paved. Dunn opposed the paving, saying that it would divide his property. He lost that battle, and it embittered him greatly.

The *Telephone* of Oct. 26 noted that "A large delegation of the members of the local bar headed by Judge Miers will go to Bedford Sunday to attend (Dunn's) funeral." Many of the men had worked with the Bedford lawyer for years and had a healthy respect for his expertise in the courtroom. The newspaper had called Dunn "an orator of the highest class."

Perhaps some of the Bloomington delega-

tion were morbidly curious about the disposition of Dunn's huge estate. Its breadth and depth were described in his obituary. In addition to real estate, the man had amassed a library of valuable books.

Dunn had also stipulated in his latest will that the estate must be wound up at once. For that reason, the *Telephone* was able to print an article setting forth an enumeration of all of the beneficiaries.

From the newspaper's comments it is clear that mercenary persons in his life needed to take care that they did not offend him in any way, since he had a quick temper and a very long memory.

Commented the *Telephone*, "A well-known attorney of that city (Bedford) was named an executor for a time, and because he finally was against him (Dunn) in a lawsuit, another will was made." How frequently the will was changed is not clear.

Next week: Where did Dunn's money go?

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