

Dead beats

Merchants of 1884 declare war

All things considered, 1884 had started out to be a good year for everyone in Monroe County, except the Bloomington merchants.

THE TROUBLE WAS, they'd had it with credit customers who didn't pay their past-due bills. The war of the merchants was dramatically announced on the front page of the Bloomington Telephone of March 1, 1884.

The "large class" of delinquent customers were referred to as "Dead Beats." Furthermore, the undersigned merchants had decided to band together in mutual support, because their previous "forbearance with such had ceased to be a virtue."

The merchants' determination to collect their money was underscored by the additional revelation that they had each pledged \$100 as a bond guaranteeing to the others that they would put their bill-collecting efforts

Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

where their grumbling mouths had been. They also threatened to publish in three county newspapers the names of the dead beats. An extension of the publication was to be shared "black lists" of all offenders.

THE NAMES OF the members of the new mutual protection organization were: L.S. Fields & Co., J.B. Clark, W.W. Wicks, McPheeters & Shoemaker, A.H. Wilson, Moses Kahn, McCalla & Co., Peter Bowman, W.T. Blair, Collins & Karsell, H. Lindley, B.

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