

Would-be auditor fights for his county seat

At first, Simeon Pedigo thought he had won the election for auditor of Monroe County in 1877. That was because when the votes were counted, Pedigo had 45 more than his Republican opponent, Silas Grimes.

That would have been the end of the matter, except that Grimes asked for a recount. The second time the votes were counted Grimes has a majority of 4.

And so, the case was sent to the circuit court in Orange County. Some information important to the case was not allowed by the judge in Paoli, and he ruled in favor of Grimes.

According to the *Saturday Courier*, that information was crucial to an impartial decision. "In other words, the ballots had been doctored after they were voted on the night of the election. Democratic and Republican judges and inspectors of the election were ready to swear that no such ballots as some that were found on the recount were in the box on the night of the election ..."

In point of fact, those same persons also were willing to swear that they didn't make any mistakes when they were counting the ballots the first time. Meanwhile, Grimes paid the fee for his bond as auditor and took office.

Pedigo and Democratic friends were not



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

willing to let it go at that. The candidate appealed to the Indiana Supreme Court.

That court was more thorough. Apparently, affidavits were taken from witnesses in Marion Township (later merged with Benton) as to how they voted. Reported the *Saturday Courier*, "Forty witnesses swore they voted for Pedigo, 12 swore they voted what was given to them for the straight Democratic ticket and named the men who gave them the tickets. These men swore the tickets they gave out had Pedigo's name on them."

Continued the newspaper, "The re-count showed only 44 votes for Pedigo, yet now we have the sworn evidence that at least 52 men voted for Pedigo, which confirms the suspicion that the ballots were 'doctored' before the Thursday following the election, when we should have expected the time up to the day of the re-count."

Pedigo wrote a letter from Harrodsburg to

the *Saturday Courier* angrily denying some allegations in the *Bloomington Telephone*. The latter newspaper charged that Pedigo had offered Grimes \$1,000 to 'compromise' himself. Pedigo branded the charge as an 'outrageous falsehood.'

In the end, the State Supreme Court ruled in favor of Pedigo. His attorneys stated that they would apply to Judge Pearson at Bedford for an injunction forcing Grimes to give up the office. Grimes' lawyers countered with the fact that their client already held the office of auditor and would not give it up.

A side issue in the case was whether Indiana University students were entitled to vote in Bloomington. The issue hinged on whether the individual intended to settle down in Bloomington after commencement. The *Evening Courier* article of Oct. 29 contained an explanation of who among the students might legally vote.

Finally, after the State Supreme Court awarded the election to Pedigo, there was were celebrations in Bloomington and Harrodsburg. Commented the *Saturday Courier*, "The decision was received with loud applause by the large crowd in the Auditor's office, and then they adjourned to the porch, and all sent up three rousing cheers for Sime-

on Pedigo.

According to the newspaper, people in Harrodsburg also went wild. The *Courier* reported that it receive a dispatch which read "Come down and bring the boys; we are going to have a jubilee tonight."

The *Saturday Courier* attributed the victory to Divine Providence. "It seems that the had of Providence directed that this great wrong should be righted, and made these Republican officials the instruments through which it should be done."

The *Saturday Courier* did not blame the inaccurate recount on Grimes. The newspaper said "In justice to Major Grimes, it is proper to state that no one here believes he had a hand in 'doctoring' the ballots ... There is proof that Major Grimes wanted to get out of the contest long ago."

In the same edition, the editor of the *Saturday Courier* reported that Susan B. Anthony had been in town within the week to speak at a Women's Suffrage Convention of the Fifth Congressional District. Concluded the newspaper, "It is almost needless to say that the lady fully sustains her reputation as an eloquent and able speaker."

But that's another story.

H-T 3/10/97