

Whole community contributes to clean-up day

"The first meeting of the health and sanitation committee of the Chamber of Commerce was held this afternoon at 4:30 o'clock in the rooms of the organization."

— *Bloomington Weekly Courier*, April 9, 1915.

After the turn of the century Bloomingtonians were concerned from time to time about the aesthetic appearance of the city. Health was also an issue.

Though littered streets and the accumulation of trash in back yards seemed to be someone other agency's concern, members of the Chamber of Commerce thought otherwise. The health and sanitation committee consisted of appropriate local people: W.E. Hottel, who owned a considerable amount of property in Bloomington; Dr. C.E. Harris, city health officer; Superintendent H.L. Smith, of the public schools; Professor J.J. Pettijohn, Indiana University extension staff; A.W. Tracy, staff of the *Bloomington Journal*; and Ensign John Purdue, Salvation Army.

Apart from the general welfare of local citizens, the committee had another motive. According to the *Courier*, "The committee will immediately prepare for an elaborate



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

clean-up of the city in anticipation of the delegates and visitors who will be here April 29 and 30 for the Indiana Editorial convention."

Continued the newspaper, "Every agency in the city will be requested to cooperate with the Chamber of Commerce and the city board of health to place Bloomington in the most presentable condition."

The plan of the committee was to stage a "Clean-up and Paint-Up Day." Dr. Harris had much broader concerns. In a meeting of the Chamber he outlined other things that needed attention: organization of an "Infant Welfare Station" to instruct mothers in infant feeding and care; reduction of Bloomington's already-low typhoid fever and diarrheal diseases by purification of

the water supplies, pasteurization of milk and better cleanliness of the preparation of food.

Other proposals were to immunize more people against diphtheria and put people suffering from scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough into isolation and to stop the spread of tuberculosis by hospitalizing active cases and getting home care for the rest. Above all, Harris urged widespread education about personal hygiene.

School children were enlisted in the committee's work. Dr. Harris and other local physicians talked to them about helping with the clean-up. As an incentive, the Chamber of Commerce committee had managed to get Smith to consent to a half-day holiday for the children to join their parents in the tidying up effort.

Meanwhile, the Chamber put out an appeal for owners of trucks or wagons to donate them, including a driver to carry off trash that was to be piled up in the alley intersections. The biggest reason for the removal of trash was to reduce the fly population of Bloomington.

As the *Courier* put it, "He (the fly) distributes samples of pestilence with a lavish

hand, and the goods always match the samples, whether you have ordered them or not. . . . A fly in the house is as dangerous as a rattlesnake, as filthy as a louse and as disgraceful as a bed bug."

Was the campaign successful? Indeed it was. The *Courier* reported that members of the Chamber put their efforts where their mouths were and contributed vehicles to carry off the trash. They were Worley Brothers, Gentry Brothers, Hugh Brothers, Fulwider & Company, Becovitz Brothers, Whitaker Grocery, Showers Brothers, Smith & Curry, Ross Fowler, T.H. Elgar, John C. Lanam, Ed Snoddy, Fred Fenneman and the Bloomington Coal Company.

Concluded the *Courier*, "The people of the city entered into the spirit of 'Clean-up and Paint-up' day with a vim and vigor which was surprising to many. Alleys and yards, back lots and out of the way places have assumed a spic and span appearance. Whole streets are cleaner than they have ever been before."

And, of course, Bloomington looked better when editors of Indiana newspapers arrived for their convention a week later.

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