

Hughes served as judge

Looking back, from page A1

roe and Brown Counties, Indiana, contains a lively account of a mass meeting in the Monroe County courthouse in October of 1861. After an address by Paris C. Dunning, Hughes took the platform. His remarks, according to the history, "took a bitterly sarcastic, caustic vein, cutting like a sword of Damascus steel at the heart of the rebellion. His splendid eloquence, effective imagery, fierce satire and impetuous logic carried his audience before him like a torrent. As he delivered thrust after thrust of wit and irony, and pungent mockery, he was frequently interrupted with tempests of cheers. It was conceded at the time to have been the best Union speech ever delivered in Bloomington."

Hughes' biography in *Officers* indicates that he had the audacity to run for the Indiana House of Representatives while maintaining only a nominal residence in Indiana. His gamble paid off, and he was the leader of the House in 1866. There followed two terms in the Indiana Senate, but his bid for the U.S. Senate failed.

It should be noted that Hughes had a short stint on the IU Board of Trustees. In June of 1857, he was appointed to fill a vacancy and served as president of the board until 1858. The university awarded Hughes an honorary L.L.D. degree in 1861.

It is not known whether his classified ad in the *Progress* in 1868 turned up any likely suspects. The

ad implied a great deal, but lawyer-like, he chose his words carefully. He wrote: "This second deliberate attempt on my life, is really no more unprovoked, though more cowardly, than the first, which occurred several days since; for I was not in any manner connected with the quarrel which has falsely been made a pretext to cover up the first."

Unfortunately, Hughes did not elaborate about the quarrel or participants. He added, "... I suggest to those prominent Democrats who conduct and uphold the Bloomington newspaper, that it is time they should consider what share of responsibility attaches to them."

But Hughes' destiny was not to be shot dead in Bloomington. His biography in *Officers* states that his death was caused by a fall from a carriage on Oct. 24, 1873, a month short of his 50th birthday. The incident happened — not in Bloomington, where he might have been safer after all — but in Maryland. He is buried along with his family in Rose Hill Cemetery, which indicates that he did, indeed, regard Bloomington as his home.

Of the man, *Indiana Magazine of History* commented: "Judge Hughes, with his magnificent intellect, his great learning, with his boundless ambition, with his unimpeachable honesty and integrity, with his ability as a lawyer and statesman, never reached the position in the State or nation commensurate with his attainments. He was lacking in tact ... and diplomacy ..."