

Early Bloomington driving was harrowing experience

In May of 1903, Indiana University Professor Arthur L. Foley was driving toward Indianapolis with his parents when they came to the outskirts of Hindostan. Suddenly there was a moving roadblock. It was a huckster wagon meandering down the middle of the road. The Foley car ended up in a ditch with a broken throttle and the professor with a notion about the future.

It took the form of a lawsuit seeking to determine what vehicles had the right-of-way on public highways. The issue was bound to come up sooner or later.

No doubt Bloomington's livery stable operators said the Henry



Looking back

By Rose McIlveen

Ford car was only a fad. But local males who could afford to buy one of the new-fangled inventions were fascinated with them. By 1913 there were enough automobiles in town to warrant speed limits. They were eight miles per hour in the business district and 15 in a residential area.

Limits aside, local men were hav-

ing a love affair with the accelerator. On April 26, 1912, the *Bloomington Weekly Star* reported that the police department had set up a speed trap on Third Street. Two plainclothes cops were timing cars over a short distance and thereby calculating their speed. The idea caught on, and the newspaper warned its readers that a pair of very un-official citizens were doing their own checking from a porch on North College Avenue and turning the names of the drivers over to the police department. The speeders were all prominent local businessmen.

Driving in Bloomington wasn't all

that safe in 1912-13. The town had only two miles of paved streets! Being able to move farther faster was irresistible to local auto owners, and, like Foley, they ventured into the surrounding counties. Nashville was a popular destination.

On Sept. 15, 1912, stone company owner Fred Matthews, Richard Barrett and two other men were in Brown County cruising along when their auto's "steering gear" broke. It careened off the road, struck a tree and wedged between two others. The *Bloomington Telephone* called their accident a "narrow escape."

Another Bloomington auto own-

er, Sanford Teeter, rescued Matthews and passengers and pulled the vehicle back on the road. Added the *Telephone*, "The machine was damaged considerable and will have to be sent to the factory for repairs."

It should be noted that there were local car dealers in 1912. They were the Bloomington Auto Co., 222 West Kirkwood, and Davis Hardware Co., 213-217 North College.

Almost a year later, another accident on the Nashville Road had a slightly more serious outcome. Eph Hughes and his wife had three

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