

# Macadamizing in 1880s improved city streets

"Macadamize — to construct or finish a road by compacting into a solid mass a layer of small broken stone on a convex well-drained roadbed using a binder for the mass." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

In January 1884, Bloomington's "fathers" were patting themselves and the town on the back for such marvelous things as a building boom and other improvements.

Not the least of those improvements was resurfacing of some streets. We take the convenience of paved streets and sidewalks for granted, but it was not always so.

Consider the Bloomington of 1884. Crowded the *Republican Progress* of Jan. 9, 1884, "Street improvements began by the McAdamizing of the street around the public square, and of College Avenue. In 1871, Main Street, as it was called, was graded, guttered and stoned." (It should be noted that McAdam was the name of the British

Scottish



## Looking back

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engineer who thought up the road-finishing process that was named for him.)

In reading the *Progress* article we discover some interesting things about Bloomington of that time. For example, the north end of Main/College was called "Buskirk Hill." The newspaper described it as "a wooded pasture of hills and hollows, the best coasting place for the boys in town."

Boasted the *Progress*, "Now we have over five miles of McAdamized street. The very noticeable changes in this direction are on East Third Street and West Sixth

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