

Diary preserves flavor of life in the 1840s

Diary, from page A1

day, Jan. 27, Woodburn wrote: "Messrs Trimble and Williams left this college for Greencastle yester in consequence of an offence they received from Dr. Wylie, who reproved them for being in a shivaree at Dr. Dodds." (The shivaree was in celebration of the wedding of Findlay Dodds and Mary Wylie, a daughter of IU President Andrew Wylie.)

In the diary can be found notations about the misfortunes of Woodburn's friends and neighbors — William McCalla, thrown from a horse, his thigh broken; the death of William Curry Sr.; news about Monroe County men in the Mexican War; and "Albert Henry's team ran off in the plow and killed one beast yesterday."

The outlook of Bloomington's citizens was not entirely provincial. That is indicated by Woodburn's brief entry that on March 2 there was a meeting in the courthouse to discuss sending help during the Irish famine.

Woodburn's diary contains occa-

sional comments about the weather, and there was, of course, the normal rain and snow. Perhaps the most interesting item on that subject was about the courthouse: "Heavy rain. Sharp thunder; struck Court House, no injury."

Woodburn's role as teacher is also present in his diary. At the beginning of the excerpt he wrote: "Living in Bloomington in Mr. Murphy's house teaching school in a room joining." (Woodburn's son, James A., interjected his supposition about his parents' living arrangements. "Father and Mother were probably living in two rooms at Mr. Murphy's. How did they dispose of all their night lodgers?")

On May 15 Woodburn wrote: "I was sick on Wednesday, had no school." Presumably he was not paid for that day. There was, apparently, a vacation between March 25 and April 26. On the former date pupils were shown off at a "public examination," which demonstrated their prowess at Latin, algebra, English grammar and arithmetic.

The Woodburn history also includes diary notes James Woodburn wrote during a trip to the East.