

# Teachers given little respect in mid-1800s

*"The general feeling was that anybody could teach if he could read and spell and cipher a little."*

— James Woodburn, IU professor and Monroe County teacher

Although the first constitution of the state of Indiana — adopted in 1816 — had some high-sounding words about the value and necessity of education, it was many years before those words began to bear fruit in the state. And Monroe County was no exception.

In his family history, the late James A. Woodburn, a professor of history at Indiana University, included recollections of his father, also named James, who taught in county schools after graduation from the IU. Despite



## Looking back

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7-11-1987

the presence of the university and a female seminary, ignorance and indifference to education were as prevalent here in any other place in Indiana.

The elder Woodburn apparently worked his way through IU by taking time out to teach in and around Bloomington. The local attitude toward education in those days can be found in the referendum of 1847: should In-  
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